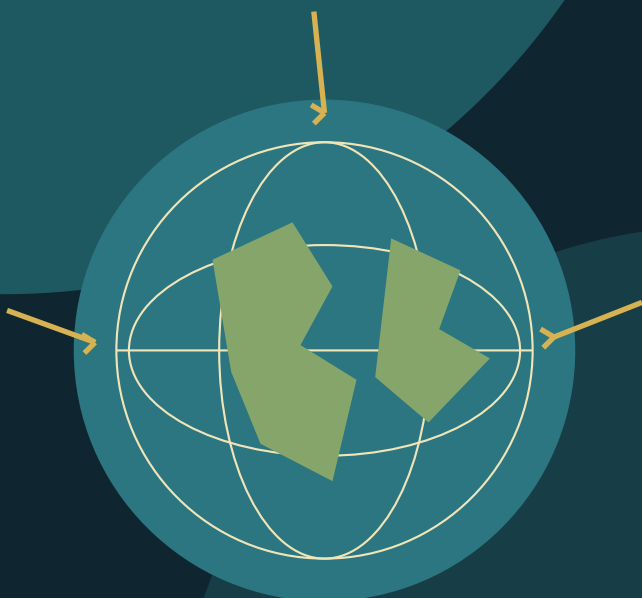


FIVE BIBLE-BASED LESSONS ON MISSIONS

TO THE WORLD WE GO

Re-thinking the Great Commission



W. A. DILLARD, D.B.L.

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RE-THINKING THE GREAT COMMISSION



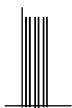
W. A. Dillard

To the World We Go

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By

W. A. Dillard, D.B.L.



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CONTENTS

Introduction	5
Important Message To the Teacher	7
FIVE BIBLE-BASED LESSONS:	
One: Going Presupposes Purpose	9
Two: Going Demands Goers	15
Three: Going Requires Means	21
Four: Going Necessitates Destination	27
Five: Going Underscores Knowing.....	33

INTRODUCTION

Being acutely aware of the abundance of sermon and literature materials on the subject, the author sought to produce a study, re-thinking the Great Commission, in a practical format especially designed to present background material which would lend itself to lively group discussion. He is convinced the subject is not overworked so much as is the method of its presentation.

Someone once said, "Nothing is ever really simple." This is certainly true of successful mission work. Let those who may have rested this subject as mastered, simple, or boring be challenged to give correct and progressive answers to the problems and questions herein. For the most part, it may be done, but not easily.

An attempt is made to cover many aspects of going to the world from the viewpoints of both individual church visitation worker and the missionary ordained and sent to a field of labor. Accordingly, one will be impressed with the many facets and background of the gigantic task which constitutes the primary purpose of the church in the world. While serving in the Air Force, the author was constantly taught that the primary purpose of the Air Force was to keep the airplane in the air. But, the ground support was tremendously large. It involved motor vehicles, supply houses, mechanics, fire departments, food service, clerical, medical, engineering, carpentry, and a host of other services. In a similar way, there must be supporting churches of many talents to maintain missionaries on the field and carry on mission work at home.

It is prayerfully hoped the presentation of this material, together with the ensuing discussion prompted by the questions sections, will make you think missions. Think progressively. And, be challenged to do more personally to accomplish the greatest work on earth.

W. A. Dullard, D.B.L.
1108 Griffey Drive
Benton, Arkansas 72015

IMPORTANT MESSAGE TO THE TEACHER

CAUTION: Dear teacher, this study is intended to be provocative. It will be unwise to enter the classroom unprepared. The format of these five lessons is constructed to make their presentation relatively easy and enjoyable, but only under prepared circumstance. There are three segments to each lesson.

First, an outline of each lesson is given to aid in the presentation. It is designed to aid your recall of the content of various segments.

Second, the content is presented, of necessity, in condensed form and in a manner to aid a natural flow of thought. You are encouraged to use additional materials, but you are also urged to use discretion as to time. If you have forty-five minutes of classtime, no more than fifteen to twenty minutes should be given to the presentation of the material.

Third, the discussion questions are presented in a deliberate, provocative manner. The main thrust and benefit of this study in adult classes will be realized from this section. The questions are not designed to evoke foredrawn conclusions, but to set the wheels of thought into motion. They will benefit your church when properly discussed and answered. Therefore, give the greater part of your class time to discussion of the issues presented, but be prepared to aid and direct the discussion.

Finally, it is hoped the discussion of the issues of the Great Commission raised here will provide impetus of positive decisions and activities that will glorify God, enhance mission opportunities and endeavors, and magnify your church.

LESSON I

Going Presupposes Purpose

Texts: Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:46-48

AIM: To underscore the primary purpose of the church and emphasize the need to direct attention and energy to it.

THE LESSON OUTLINE

- A. THE WORK OF THE CHURCH
- B. THE NATURE OF THE CHURCH
 - 1. Mission-minded Pastors
 - 2. Mission-minded Congregations
- C. THE CONDITION OF THE WORLD
- D. THE PERPETUATION OF THE CHURCH

THE LESSON

Often, purpose, though of great magnitude, is not clearly understood. When the Jewish nation faced possible extermination and needed aid, Mordecai reminded Esther, "And who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" Esther 4:14. Purpose may be likened unto a mighty river. Born of small mountain streams, it rages on to fulfillment. Small streams and eddies may flow out from it in apparent contradiction to its course, but the mighty bulk rushes on to the sea. So, there is purpose, mighty purpose in every church and in every individual in the church. The more one gives himself to study, meditation, and discussion of the things of God, the more he will understand and fulfill that purpose. And, the more he will avert wandering in backward, useless directions.

A. THE WORK OF THE CHURCH.

Depending on whom you ask, a great variety of answers may be given for the purpose of the church existing in the world. Such

answers range from true Biblical purposes to purely secular and social ones. What is the reason for the existence of your church? Without fear of much contradiction, it should be said that your church enjoys a good reputation as a spiritual institution in the community. This reputation should be enhanced by most every member being able to give an intelligent, Biblical reason for its existence, goals, and work.

Accordingly, let us review the purpose of your church as it fell from the lips of the Master and was recorded in the inspired gospels. Matthew 28:18-20 states: "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen." Then, in Mark 16:15 it is written, "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." Finally, in Luke 24:46-48 it is recorded: "Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things." From this compilation of Scriptures, it becomes abundantly clear that there are basic, fundamental reasons for the existence of your church to which all other reasons should yield. Specifically, these are to preach the gospel globally, to baptize those who receive Jesus as personal Savior, and to engage in a teaching ministry designed to cover all things Jesus taught. These things are inferred in the study title, "To the World We Go."

Moreover, the "Go" of the Great Commission has not lacked priority in the preaching of the Word, but often the Biblical purpose of going has fallen among those of lesser nobility. Points to prove, axes to grind, personal gratification, and fleshly pride have at times taken ascendancy in mission endeavors, but not to the glory of God. Therefore, however fundamental and repetitive it may seem, it must be remembered that the great and rightful purpose of going to the world is to impart the New Testament gospel and faith. Furthermore, it is the authorized work of the church to do so. Jesus commanded it. To willfully fail to carry out His commands is unthinkable.

B. THE NATURE OF THE CHURCH.

Birds fly, squirrels climb trees, and fish swim because it is their nature. There is a nature to almost all things, the church of the Lord Jesus notwithstanding. The Bible reveals the nature of the church in these words, "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth," Acts 1:8.

Frequently, the Lord used words in the imperative mood, that is, the expression of command. On the surface, Acts 1:8 appears to be such an expression. But, a closer examination reveals the phrase, "Ye shall be witnesses" is not in the imperative mood. It is in the indicative mood. This means it is not a command, but it is a statement of fact, a promise! Therefore, every New Testament church concerned with doing the work of God stands as the "Salt of the earth" and as the "Light of the world." It is its nature. Jesus staked His virtue as the righteous Son of God on the fact that the church of His origination, empowerment, and indwelling would retain this nature throughout the age. Subsequently, for nearly two thousand years it has done so. Also, the realization that God has used and continues to use human instrumentality to accomplish this is another great and rightful reason to go to the world with the gospel.

1. Mission-minded Pastors.

Furthermore, the enhancement of the reputation of your church as a missionary church magnifies its nature. Such enhancement involves heavy and widespread emphasis on missions throughout the church and is often effected through a mission-minded pastor. God-called preachers have a heavy burden, first and foremost, to reflect the nature of the Lord's churches. Basic in their surrender to the ministry is the desire to win others. Consequently, churches should aid their pastors in their quest for better visions and concepts of missions. Fortunate indeed is the church whose pastor has missions heavily on his heart. They would do well to allow and to aid him to visit the mission fields periodically. Such activity is invaluable in his pastoral leadership in mission endeavors.

2. Mission-minded Congregations.

The greatest commendation paid any church in the Scriptures is the commendation of Paul to the church at Thessalonica. He said, "And ye became followers of us. . . so that ye were en-samples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia. For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing," 1 Thessalonians 1:6-8. It has been said that a church will progress no further than its pastor, but many pastors have been discouraged and defeated in noble attempts in mission endeavors due to the indifference and apathy of their congregations. So, in a very real sense, a mission-minded pastor cannot lead any further than a congregation is willing to be led. The Thessalonian church and other New Testament churches were willing to be led in mission activities. They were mission-minded, witnessing everywhere, preaching the Word, praying for, and aiding others with their financial means. One is not left to guess about the nature of these churches and that is why they were going churches.

C. THE PERPETUATION OF THE CHURCH.

The church of Jesus shall indeed persevere and triumph. However, the individual churches who will do so must be going churches. It is interesting to note that the New Testament gives the origin, commission, ordinances, doctrines, requirements, purpose, and mission of the church, but nowhere speaks about how it should be disbanded or die. Jesus intends each church to perpetuate itself on the terms of the Great Commission. If a community dies, the church should continue in other communities. If it is a going church, it will. Nothing can stop it. Matthew 16:18 and Ephesians 3:21 guarantee church perpetuity. A close observation of Matthew 16:18 fortifies these thoughts. The verse says, "And I say.. unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Gates are entryways into walled cities. In ancient wars, an aggressive army would attempt to ram the gates and break them in order to gain entry and to conquer. The church is here portrayed, not as a walled city, but as an aggressive army. Even the gates of hell shall not prevail against the church honestly striving to accomplish its purpose. It is an encouragement to every church to take initiative, to go with the gospel. And, those

who do so will be blessed of God in perpetuating themselves into future generations.

D. THE STATE OF MEN IN THE WORLD.

Far from the least of purposes of going to the world with the gospel is that which makes the gospel truly good news—the lost condition of men. Modern times appear to be bringing a greater aversion to accepting and acting upon the Bible message as literal truth. Sin, death, hell are received as abstract ideas rather than realities. Casual observation reflects this resultant attitude to be not only in the world at large, but also in many churches. Nevertheless, unwavering warnings and evidence of these truths will make themselves universally known. Every hospital, undertaking establishment, and cemetery reminds one that men become ill and die.

Additionally, the Word of God emphatically states, "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned," Romans 5:12. Again, Romans 3:23 states: "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." What the Bible says about sin and death is unquestionably true. Moreover, what the Bible says about hell is also absolutely true. It is graphically portrayed in Luke 16. Relative to it, Jesus said, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish," Luke 13:3.

Consequently, this writer hopes the Lord's churches everywhere may be awakened to a new awareness of these eternal realities. Then, and only then, will the gospel be preached at home and abroad with such fervor and earnestness as it deserves. And, men, who might otherwise spend eternity in hell, will, by the power of God, be brought into the everlasting kingdom of Christ Jesus. So important is the preaching of the gospel that, unlike baptism and indoctrination which is delegated to the church alone, it is to be accomplished by many sources. Revelation 22:17 says that the Spirit, the bride (church), and him who hears are to say "come" to take of the water of life freely. Inasmuch as the church is also commissioned to preach the gospel and must do so to win men whom it can baptize and teach, so much the more reason it should be super busy about the first work.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. If the primary purpose of the church is to make disciples, baptize them, and teach them, how do you explain the following. Churches who go for long periods of time without seeing anyone saved? Why some baptistries are full of cobwebs, being used only once or twice a year or, in some cases, not at all? Is the power of God diminished? Has God abandoned His plan?

2. Do you believe a church is taking its purpose seriously when it votes to spend \$300,000.00 in ten years for a building and in the same ten years gives only \$50,000.00 or less to missions?

3. It is said that the first church became bogged down with social problems necessitating the first deacons. An attempt was made for all members to share all their material goods as each had need. Was it an ill-advised plan of men or was it the leading of the Holy Spirit? Are we wrong in not following that plan today? Do you think this plan so satisfied and pleased the members that God had to allow persecution to come to break it up so they would fulfill their primary purpose? If this plan was Holy Spirit directed, but only intended for that special time to meet the special needs of so many, might the Holy Spirit direct your church to "break with tradition" to properly minister to your community when special situations exist?

4. The preacher preaches "Go" but he has never left so much as his home state to serve God. Is he hypocritical? What about you?

5. Some have reasoned, "We would help send our pastor on a mission tour, but it would only be a glorified vacation at the church's expense. Besides, I feel I need a vacation as badly as he does." How do you feel? Why?

6. Do you have a right to expect your pastor to be excited about preaching, soulwinning, missions when by your own apathy you insure nothing ever comes of his suggested leadership? How much responsibility do you really believe is **yours** to help his suggestions become reality?

7. In perpetuating the church, two attitudes are portrayed in the slogans, "Hold the fort," and "Storm the gates." Which do you believe should prevail in your church? Why?

8. Some men will profess to believe in the lost condition of men and a real burning hell for the finally impenitent. Yet, they will not witness to their neighbors. They may even actively resist mission efforts being started in their church. Rationalize this. Are they liars? Hypocrites? Is there any way they could be right?

LESSON II

Going Demands Goers

Texts: John 17:18; Romans 1:13-16; Acts 8:4

AIM: To show that God has a plan for, and uses missionaries of various talents on different levels of calling and service.

THE LESSON OUTLINE

- A. AN ASSEMBLY OF MISSIONARIES
- B. MISSIONARY CALLING
- C. MISSIONARY SELECTION
- D. MISSIONARY GOALS

THE LESSON

It has been said that every believer in the very hour of his salvation is enjoined by the Scriptures to go with the gospel. The Holy Spirit calls some to be pastors and teachers, some to serve as missionaries to other lands, but all to go to someone else with the gospel. It is as simple as recognizing the disease, sin, and the cure, Jesus.

A. AN ASSEMBLY OF MISSIONARIES.

A great evil took root in Christianity during the dark ages and it continues to be a problem today. It is the unbiblical clergy-laity distinction. While the ministry is recognized as a special calling, one must not fall into the trap of believing ministers alone are responsible for accomplishing the work of God. Jesus was pleased to commission His church to carry out His commands. Therefore, every member of His church is to carry out His commands to some degree. Each member has a role, or several roles, to play in doing the work, of the church. In a manner of speaking, each is the

extended hands of Jesus on earth. Obviously, God does not call everyone to pastor a church or go as a missionary to a distant land, but He does call on each one of His children to be witnesses at home. After all, winning souls at home is what a missionary does in foreign lands. So, whether at home or abroad, it is vitally important that lost men be won to Jesus. Consequently, the church of the Lord Jesus is to be an assembly of missionaries. Think what this would do and mean to your church, town, state, and country if every member took this fundamental truth seriously and worked at it consistently.

Additionally, many truths are learned, not only by doctrinal statements of the New Testament, but by the examples of the first churches as well. Consider the Jerusalem church mentioned in Acts 8:4. They were scattered because of persecution, but they went everywhere preaching the Word. Each one rightfully considered himself a vital, working part of the ministry of Jesus.

Another great example is the Apostle Paul. In Romans 1:13-16, he said some things about himself every Christian should make a part of his life. He reckoned himself to be a debtor to all men, to tell them the saving gospel. He was ready to witness wherever the opportunity afforded. He was not ashamed of the gospel, but recognized it to be the "power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth."

Moreover, the words of Jesus in John 17:18 forcefully drive this point home. He said, "As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world." Understanding and dealing with the profound impact of these words will cure any believer's case of the Christian "blahs." All over the country, it is possible to find churches, large and small, whose members are virtually asleep. The excitement is gone out of their Christianity. They may blame the preacher, the choir, the Sunday School teacher or any number of other people or things, but the truth probably is that they stopped being a vital minister of Christianity. Subsequently, they are not fulfilling the role Jesus gave them in John 17:18.

A logical question arises at this point. In what manner did God send Jesus into the world? If this can be answered, then it will be known just what Jesus meant when He said, "Even so have I also sent them into the world." While it is certain that more than one thing could be mentioned here, it is most important to notice another statement Jesus made relative to His being sent into the

world. He said, "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." Unhappiness will always result when one stops being an active minister and attends church simply to get for himself all he can out of the service or out of the preacher.

B. MISSIONARY CALLING.

Two examples, one from the Old Testament and one from the New Testament will teach one much of missionary calling. In Isaiah 6:8, the prophet said, "Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me." Then, in Acts 13:1-3, Barnabas and Saul are listed with others as teachers in the church at Antioch. The Scriptures say, "As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away."

Now, notice some contrasts as well as some comparisons of these two events. Isaiah saw a literal vision and heard the literal voice of God. Paul and Barnabas did not. God does not work in this way today. Isaiah was directly commissioned of God. Paul and Barnabas were not, but were commissioned by the Holy Spirit through the church. God works in this way today.

Furthermore, both Isaiah and the Paul-Barnabas team were students of the Word. They were active in the service of God, doing what they could in their place. By inference, it is doubtful that God will choose one to serve Him in great, far away mission endeavors who shows no aptitude for doing His work at home. In the New Testament example, the Holy Spirit worked on the heart of Paul and Barnabas and on the heart of the church members, too. It reminds this writer of his experience when announcing his call to the ministry. The burden to preach was very heavy, but he kept it a secret and prayed about it often. Then, when he announced his call to the ministry, he was surprised to hear other church members say, "I knew you would do this someday. I just didn't know when."

Without doubt, God is still in the business of calling pastors, missionaries, but those whom He calls to go with the gospel must be doers of the Word and that means going with the gospel at home.

C. MISSIONARY SELECTION.

Special goers, missionaries, whether they are local, interstate, or foreign, come to be chosen, selected, or endorsed for these great tasks. As the Holy Spirit led the church at Antioch to separate Paul and Barnabas for missionary work, the Holy Spirit works in a very similar way today. It is the writer's belief that a close study and following of the New Testament pattern shown in Acts 13 will eliminate many missionary-church relationship problems. First, notice the Holy Spirit-called men were already in the church, actively serving God. These were Spirit-filled men who had the respect and goodwill of their church. **Second**, the church itself was a zealous church for the Word of God, a mission-minded church. Third, this was an endeavor of great unanimity in the church. It all may seem somewhat simple and idealistic. If so, it is because God was in it and it worked very well.

Consequently, it appears God will bless a church who is faithful in smaller tasks by giving it greater assignments and opportunities. In times past, churches and missionaries, have had difficulties in their relationships because this pattern was ignored. It is a sad state of affairs when a church will endorse their pastor to do mission work when he is inept at pastoral work and they simply want to be rid of him. It is bad business for a church to go out in search of a missionary simply because of the prestige of having one. It is an accident finding a place to happen when a missionary is running up and down the road looking for an endorsing church and one takes him on unaware of important background and circumstances.

Of course, in these highly mobile times, churches, pastors, and missionaries do successfully come together though they may not have known each other very long. This is especially true because of seminary students graduating, etc. However, it is only the greater part of wisdom for the missionary to know his endorsing church as well as possible. He should be sure the members of his church share his missionary burden. Likewise, it is wisdom for churches to know and share the burden of the men they endorse. As in the Antioch case, both the church and the missionary should be convinced that it is the will of God. Needless to say, much prayer will be required of both.

D. MISSIONARY GOALS.

Without differentiation as to scale or level of work, the goal of missionary work is the same. It may be summed up in two words, "Mature reproduction." The church member working one on one with a family member, schoolmate, friend, or fellow worker has winning that person to Jesus as his goal. Additionally, he wants to win him to service in the church and to aid him in learning the New Testament faith until he becomes a mature Christian. The church-endorsed missionary also works to see mature reproduction. In addition to winning individuals, he works to build a strong self-supporting church which will be a mature reproduction of his endorsing church. The term used most often is not "mature reproduction," but "indigenous" meaning self-sustaining spiritually, materially, socially and culturally within its native surroundings. Goers with the gospel realized these goals in the first century. They did not go out haphazardly, but with purpose as is reflected in their actions and finished work. God mightily blessed them then, and He still blesses mission work done His way today.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What evidence do you see today that points up the great distinction between clergy and laity in Roman churches. Is this getting to be a larger problem in Baptist churches? Do you have as much authority in your church as your pastor? Why do you think your answer is correct? Do you want the same decision-making rights, but less of the work rights?

2. "The church is an assembly of missionaries." Is this really true or is it just good preaching? Discuss when you last did something that could justly be called mission work. If your church were scattered, how many do you think would actively serve God to win others?

3. Has the gospel lost a lot of its power? If not, then why aren't men saved in greater numbers?

4. Does John 17:18 apply to you personally, or to the church corporately? Considering how little most Christians do for God, how can the conclusion that God used bad judgment in this verse be false? What could you do to reveal to others that you take this verse seriously?

5. Are you glad God works through the Holy Spirit and the Word to burden men for His work today? Would a heavenly

vision make any difference in your attitude or actions? Do you have less responsibility in the absence of visions?

6. At a large college a sign was posted, "Flunking law? Try the ministry." Do you believe men should arbitrarily select the ministry or do they have a call of the Holy Spirit? Will such men invariably display an inclination to God's work? What about Paul?

7. Your pastor is unpopular and/or inept at pastoral work. There is a surplus of funds in the state or national missions treasury. You talk it over with him and he agrees to be endorsed by your church as a missionary. What's wrong with that? Do you think missionaries should be experienced men? Should they have the ability to pastor a church? Should they be required to have a minimum amount of education? How would you feel about these things if God called you?

8. Should your church endorse a preacher as a missionary whom you do not know well and have not personally observed for any length of time? Why?

9. If the mission goal is mature reproduction, how long should a church patiently wait and support a work for that state of maturity? Is ten years too long? Should a mission be supported indefinitely? Do you have a right to be impatient with a missionary when you have won fewer souls to the Lord than he?

LESSON III

Going Requires Means

Texts: Romans 10:15; 1 Corinthians 9:14;
2 Corinthians 9:7; Hebrews 7:8

AIM: To stress the need for frank, open, updated stewardship and to accent strong, sound leadership in encouraging Christian giving to missions.

THE LESSON OUTLINE

- A. THE NEED FOR SUPPORT
- B. THE DANGERS OF SATISFACTION WITH TRADITIONALISM
- C. BOLDNESS AND CAUTION IN NEW FINANCIAL ENDEAVORS
- D. ACCURATE AWARENESS OF MISSIONARY NEEDS

THE LESSON

The Christian's wise use of money presents a great, multifaceted, and very rewarding challenge. Money talks. Find out where a man's money is and you will have found out where his heart is. Personal attitude toward God and His work is revealed by personal attitude toward material possessions. Mission endeavors do not want for money because there is a scarcity of it or because God did not give a good, reliable, sufficient plan. Lack of mission money is due to the selfishness and apathy of men. Consequently, one who would successfully challenge and motivate others to give to the work of God will not only greatly

aid mission endeavors, he will gain a better church member at home. Also, the one giving will lay up treasure for himself in Heaven. The practice of good stewardship offers everything to gain and nothing to lose.

A. THE NEED FOR SUPPORT.

Gone with the "good old days" is the idea that a God-called pastor or missionary should work at secular employment to secure his daily needs while he does church work after hours. It is not that most ministers feel they are too good to do such tasks. Paul worked occasionally to supply his needs. But, Paul realized the need for full time devotion to the ministry. Most of the time, he received his livelihood from other churches to continue serving God. This precedent was set in the Old Testament priesthood and is ordained of God for New Testament times. To the Romans, Paul wrote, "And how shall they preach, except they be sent?" Romans 10:15. In 1 Corinthians 9:7-14, Paul set forth strong reasoning points why ministers should be fully supported. He capped it off by saying, "Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel."

Moreover, it is almost inconceivable that believers who strongly identify with the New Testament faith should be negligent in worshiping God rightly with their money, but they too often are. In 2 Corinthians 9:7 he said, "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver." The idea is that when all the church members give a proportionately fair share of their income to the Lord, there will be plenty of money for every facet of church work, including, and especially, missions. Perhaps the strongest New Testament Scripture on giving is Hebrews 7:8, "And here men that die receive tithes; but there he receiveth them, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth." In Paul's day the Old Testament priesthood still received tithes of the Hebrew people, but Jesus was also receiving tithes, not from the law system of worship, but from New Testament believers. No one should stop at simply tithing, but the New Testament affirms that tithing is right for New Testament church members. Furthermore, when all of the members tithe, there will seldom, if ever, be money problems in the program of that church.

B. DANGERS OF SATISFACTION WITH TRADITIONALISM.

Sometimes, well meaning Christians can become victims of tradition, even to the point of letting the work of the Lord suffer. There are churches who traditionally give the first Sunday night offering of each month to missions. Others give only the BTC offerings. Still others will receive mission offerings no other way but through a missions offering box located usually near the door. This recalls a story of a country preacher who went to a distant church to preach. He took his small son with him and upon arriving early found an offering box in the vestibule of the church house. He dropped in a quarter. Following the services one of the deacons told him the preacher was paid whatever amount the box contained. He opened it and found there his quarter only. His small son said, "Gee, Pop, if you had put more in it, you would have gotten more out." To be sure, there is a need for all of us to put a lot more into the work of God. When we do so, we will all get a lot more out of it. Even the tradition of tithing the general income of the church to missions can be stifling to the most worthy cause on earth. Wise is the church who is willing to do more than let stale tradition rule their mission giving. Often, breaking with traditional giving patterns needs only someone to suggest it. At other times and places it must be done with great care and wisdom. Paul was bold with the Corinthians in the matter. They were apparently accustomed to receiving an offering only when the need arose, but Paul commanded, "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come," 1 Corinthians 16:2. They may have moaned a little about breaking tradition, but they did it and the individual participation in missionary and benevolent activities became a great blessing to them.

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C. CAUTION AND BOLDNESS IN NEW FINANCIAL ENDEAVORS.

The monetary inflation rate in modern times brings additional financial problems to families, churches, mission efforts. But, they also bring opportunities to do more for those who provide adequate leadership. People have more money to give, but if not challenged, they will give no more than they did ten years ago. In the past decade, many churches, who have been challenged to do

so, have responded with surprisingly large amounts of money for missions, building programs, Christian education, etc. Obviously, what will work in one church may not work so well in another, but virtually nothing works until a leader teaches and challenges the people to do it. Perhaps the saddest failings of leaders in new endeavors are personal apathy, fear of the congregation, or rejection of a thing on the basis some group considered to be un-Scriptural is doing it. Church leaders should be cautious to determine if a method will harmonize with the Scriptures. Then, if it has merit, use it to the glory of God just as we do many hymns whose tunes were born in English pubs or in Protestant and Catholic churches, not to mention every major version of the Bible which is given to us by other than Baptist sources.

One relatively new financial endeavor is called Faith-Promise Missions. In 1969 this writer used faith-promises to secure needed money to renovate the church plant where he pastored. Success was immediate. He has since used the idea solely for missions with tremendous success and later expanded it into the church-wide financial program with excellent results. Almost without fail, mission money has been increased one hundred to three hundred per cent in churches using the idea. Recently, the author toured mission fields in Mexico and Costa Rica. While in San Jose, Costa Rica, he helped others in introducing Faith-Promise Missions to Hebron Missionary Baptist Church, Walter Goulding, Jr., pastor. This congregation is struggling to obtain land and build in an expensive surrounding and, though they were doing a commendable work in giving near five thousand dollars per year to missions, they promised by faith to give nine thousand dollars this year. I believe they will reach the goal.

In addition, there are other successful methods employed to increase mission money. However, the common denominator among them all appears to be challenging congregations to become personally interested and personally involved in missions through specific helps (prayers, money, other material helps) to specific missionaries and mission fields. The need to do maximum service in mission endeavors has never been more pressing than it is at the present. Church leaders must not fold their hands in acquiescence and be satisfied with the status quo when the potential of their church is two or three times greater than current output. The risk of opportunities lost and work that might never be done is simply too high.

D. ACCURATE AWARENESS OF MISSIONARY NEEDS.

Interest feeds upon knowledge, thus the more one knows about missionary endeavors, the more he is likely to be interested enough to participate in it to some degree. Accordingly, those churches which excel in missionary endeavors and support enjoy a high degree of individual knowledge and participation.

Therefore, a search for ways and means to successfully disseminate missionary information must always be a primary concern. Of course, there is no substitute for the enthusiasm an interested pastor may impart to his flock. And, this again underscores the importance of the church providing such leadership for itself by making personal tours of mission fields possible for their pastor.

Furthermore, churches may help themselves in this area by letter writing sessions, writing to missionaries and sharing the information on a regular basis. Also proven to be of great help is an active missionary committee composed of various segments of the church whose business is collecting and distributing missionary information to the church. This may be done by printing a condensed report of various individual reports received during the month, making and maintaining a special missions bulletin board, or several such boards, using a worldwide map poster indicating mission points supported by the church, etc. Moreover, a church should not miss an opportunity to hear a missionary on deputation as personal acquaintance with a missionary is the best assurance of interest in the work that will keep people vitally aware of mission needs.

Finally, should there be any doubt that your church is desperately in need of this type of activity, a little test will be most revealing. Sometime, without warning, ask members of the congregation to write down (without looking at a poster) the names of only six of the many missionaries serving the churches of the American Baptist Association. Should several actually be able to do this, ask them to write down their fields of labor, their wives' names, how many children they have, their sex, age, and how much money the missionary is paid. Find a church wherein several members can do this and you will have found a church informed, interested in, and doing much for missions.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Sometimes, missionaries complain that they are inadequately supported. They feel like the proverbial stepchild. Do you believe a missionary worthy of church endorsement is also worthy of a fulltime, livable salary? Should he receive less, the same, or more than your pastor? Why?
2. If all the church members practiced tithing, then, ideally, ten families could support a pastor full time, another ten could support a missionary full time and another ten or so could take care of other expenses of the church. Do you know of any churches of thirty families who support both a full time pastor and a full time missionary? Why doesn't this happen more often? Do you believe in and practice tithing?
3. It is very easy for a pastor not to challenge his church in money matters and thereby escape the wrath of a few tightwads, but do you think he has a specific duty to do so? How have you helped encourage others to give? Are you open to other successful methods and ideas to increase mission offerings? In your opinion, why isn't your church doing more? What are you going to do about it?
4. Have you ever stopped to consider seriously the financial potential of your church? How do you rationalize a small church in Costa Rica, Japan, or Australia giving more proportionately to missions than yours when they are smaller, but more open to other methods? Are they wrong? Are you right?
5. When did you last give a mission offering to a specific missionary of your very own initiative?
6. Can you make at least three suggestions as to how your church could become better informed and more interested in missions? Will you help to implement these?
7. How many missionaries are working in your state? Who are they? How many missionaries are endorsed by the A.B.A. to serve in interstate and foreign fields? Name only six.

LESSON IV

Going Necessitates Destination

Texts: Acts 1:8; Mark 5:18-20; John 4:35

AIM: To focus upon the idea that going with the gospel means accomplishing the God-given task with or without distance being a factor.

THE LESSON OUTLINE

- A. DESTINATION MAY EQUAL ACHIEVEMENT
- B. TOP-HEAVY OR ONE-SIDED EFFORTS
- C. ROMANTICISM AND HOLY SPIRIT LEADERSHIP
- D. THE WORLDWIDE FIELD

THE LESSON

Inasmuch as the Great Commission involves the total church it is apparent that God has a specific purpose and plan for every member. Sometimes little is accomplished because opportunities are looked down upon as small and insignificant. This problem is by no means limited to the average church member. Many pastors and missionaries also wrestle with it. At such a time it would be well to remember Isaac. One easily identifies with the colorful life of Abraham and the adventurous life of Jacob, but what about Isaac? All he did was re-dig some old wells. Yet it was the will of God for his life and he served as the indispensable link from Abraham to Jacob.

Helen Keller once said, 'I long to accomplish a great and noble task, but it is my chief duty to accomplish tasks as though they were great and noble. The world is moved along, not only by the mighty shoves of its heroes, but also by the aggregate of the tiny pushes of each honest worker.' Truly, without regard to calling or status in God's work, that individual who throws himself into whatever opportunities are his will accomplish great things for God. And, what could be greater than helping someone find salvation in Jesus and understanding of the New Testament faith?

A. DESTINATION MAY EQUAL ACHIEVEMENT.

Going to the world with the gospel may entail a long journey for some as it did for Paul, Silas, Barnabas and others of Bible times. However, for most Christians it means going to friends, family members, schoolmates, fellow workers, relatives, etc. It obviously is not the will of God for all of His people to be foreign missionaries, but it is His will for each believer to go to unbelievers with the message of salvation. In this sense, winning someone to Jesus, even witnessing whether someone is immediately saved or not is the achievement that equals destination, that is, going to the world with the gospel.

Moreover, that God wills for many to serve on the homefront in this way is evident by both historical and present Christianity. Additionally, it is noted in such places as the fourth chapter of John that the woman at Jacob's well was not used to travel other lands, but she won many men of Samaria to Jesus. Furthermore, the maniac of Gadara whom Jesus saved and healed is an example. He wanted to accompany Jesus to other lands, but it was not in the plans of Jesus for him to do so. The Bible says, "And when he was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil prayed him that he might be with him. Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee. And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel," Mark 5:18-20.

Truly, God is to be thanked for those who answer the call to "Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost part of the earth." These noble soldiers of the cross are worthy of prayers and support. Yet, most Christians will reach their God-given destination in

Jerusalem (your city or town) by fervently going with the gospel on a one-on-one basis. That opportunities abound on the homefront is underscored by Jesus' words in John 4:35, "Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest."

B. TOP-HEAVY AND ONE-SIDED EFFORTS.

Still, the constant and pressing need for all the saints in Jerusalem (your town) to be busy witnessing must not keep the church so occupied that it forgets the rest of the world. This is always a danger even as it was in the first church. God allowed persecution to arise to scatter that church into other areas of the world. Now, there are places in the "Bible Belt" where great numbers of churches exist. Such churches, as well as those elsewhere, should use their combined strength financially, didactically, and influentially to reach out with all due speed and concern lest the Lord allow some outside force to make them missionaries by being scattered.

On the other hand, such concentration of churches has often been the recipient of undeserved criticism through witticisms that may make "good preaching" but not necessarily good sense. One such saying is, "Why should anyone hear the gospel twice until everyone has heard it once?" If the implication of this quotation were logically followed, it would prevent the maturation of a single New Testament church; hence, it is unwise and unscrip-tural even though its original intention to appeal to missionary service is good. To be sure, there are areas which appear to be one-sided, top-heavy with the Lord's churches, but one must remember that it is from them that the prayers, preachers, and money come forth to make worldwide missions a reality.

C. ROMANTICISM AND HOLY SPIRIT LEADERSHIP.

There is often a sizable gulf between human enthusiasm and actual Holy Spirit leadership. Perhaps nothing has made this gulf more obvious than the destination of many "would be" goers with the gospel. Most Christians with even a small amount of experience have been, or know someone who has been, greatly disappointed in apparent failures. They picked out someone to go to with the gospel with great expectations that the people would receive it. Instead, the Christian was turned away and perhaps

crudely rebuffed. Now, it was not wrong to go to that person with the gospel, but it is sheer romanticism to believe that the Holy Spirit especially superintends and brings to salvation all to whom we choose to witness. It has been demonstrated, however, that often the Holy Spirit's presence and work has accompanied a particular witnessing session by some person being saved other than the one directly witnessed to.

Furthermore, this writer knows men who have honestly believed the Holy Spirit was leading them to do mission work in a particular foreign country only to learn after personal preparation and considerable expense that entry into that country was solidly blocked. They then chose alternate fields of labor and realized great success. Most Christians are familiar with the famous "Macedonian vision" given Paul in Acts 16:9, 10, but one must not forget the Bithynian attempt mentioned in Acts 16:7. Bithynia was a large country with many people. Paul assayed to go into Bithynia, but the Holy Spirit stopped that effort. The Holy Spirit closed one door of opportunity but opened another. And, rather than pouting in disappointment with dampened enthusiasm, Paul quickly seized upon the opportunity to preach the Word in Europe, determining that the Holy Spirit was leading in a quite different direction.

Also, most ministers and many other Christian workers have experienced an excited, determined effort to go to a particular person, but before reaching him were deeply impressed to go to another. Perhaps the other was someone in the hospital. There he had the opportunity to comfort or lead to Jesus a precious soul moments before he slipped out into eternity. In such cases one can only bow in thanksgiving that he followed such impression, intuition or whatever it may be called, because in retrospect he realizes it was the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

In view of the great strength of human romanticism, one may wonder how he may know he is truly following the leadership of the Holy Spirit in every proposed outreach. The obvious answer, of course, is that often he cannot know for certain. The general work of the Holy Spirit is known. It is set forth in definitive terms in the Gospels. The general will of God is known. It is set forth in plain unmistakable terms in the Gospels. It is the will of God for every believer to go to unbelievers with the gospel. One may not be able to encircle the globe, but each one can effectively be used to change his personal world. Therefore, whether it be a

person, family, town, or foreign country, the proper destination is the unsaved. If one will busy himself in God's work in the doors of opportunity that are presently open to him, the Holy Spirit will providentially open such other doors that should command his attention and action. When this happens, it will be so obvious in retrospect that God will be rightfully given the credit and the glory.

D. THE WORLDWIDE FIELD.

How large is the field of the church's endeavor? According to the terms of the Great Commission, Matthew 28:18-20, and the parable of the wheat and tares, Matthew 13:36-38, the field is the world. It is important to know the term "world" refers to the aggregate of men living under the laws of sin and death. It is a different term to that of "earth" which refers to geographical location. The difference in these terms underscores that "world," men living under the laws of sin and death, begins right where you are.

Naturally, the "world" engulfs the earth as men have spread over the entire planet. In this respect, the Great Commission is truly great. Consider that there are approximately two hundred fifty nations on earth and the work of missionaries of the American Baptist Association is being done in some portion of only twenty-five. Although the great majority of communist nations have blocked missionary endeavors, there are still many countries whose doors are open. Forcefully then, the words of Jesus fall upon this generation, "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest," Matthew 9:37, 38.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Destination normally refers to geographical location. Jesus used the names of specific places such as Jerusalem, Samaria, Judea, uttermost part of the earth. Discuss how churches could be in all these locations and still not have reached their destination? Is your church reaching its destination? What part are you playing in helping it to do so?

2. A local association of churches has a great number of churches in a small area. One church has trouble, divides, and the association pays a missionary a full salary to work with a faction

of the divided church to establish yet another church in the crowded area. Is this right? Is it mission money misused?

3. An enthused missionary on deputation wants others to join him on a foreign field. He emphasizes the open door, great opportunities, God's will, and says its all there waiting and all you need to do is decide to go. Do you agree this is correct? Why do you feel as you do?

4. Some people are afraid to talk about, promote, and pray for particular mission fields for fear God will put it on their heart to go. Is this a justified fear? Is this the way God works? Can such persons be right with God if they are unwilling to accept God's will whatever it may be?

5. If the Holy Spirit is actually leading a missionary, how can he possibly be mistaken about where the Holy Spirit wants him to go?

6. If the field of mission endeavor is the world, what does that mean to you? A personal responsibility to encircle the globe? Your personal world? When does it involve both?

7. How many nations can you name where the churches of the American Baptist Association have no active voice?

LESSON V

Going Underscores Knowing

Texts: Luke 6:39; Matthew 16:17; 1 Corinthians 2:14

AIM: To accent that a well-trained mind and spirit are indispensable to the emotional enthusiasm of goers who would do the work of the Lord.

THE LESSON OUTLINE

- A. KNOWING BY PERSONAL EXPERIENCE
- B. KNOWING THE FIELD AND ITS SUBJECTS
- C. KNOWING HOW TO OVERCOME OBSTACLES
- D. KNOWING HOW TO LEAD A WORK TO AN INDIGENOUS STATE

THE LESSON

Knowledge is indispensable to Christianity. It is a "know so" religion. Someone once observed that the word "know" is employed over two hundred times in the Bible and the word "guess" is not used at all. The world is full of philosophers who will tell you what they think, but it is important that those who go with the gospel join with Paul in the many instances in which he said, "I know." Personal knowledge varies. One may know a little about many things or much about a few things, but above all one must know to use the knowledge, wisdom, and experiences of others. Going to the world on the basis of a "know so" salvation experience, one will increase through continued study and experience to be usable of God in greater capacities.

THE VALUE OF PERSONAL EXPERIENCE.

Going to the world with the gospel implies that those who go are adequately prepared and have the necessary expertise to properly impart the gospel. Certainly, preparation levels vary with personal calling, but some preparation is a must, the indispensable of which is the ability to relate personal experience with the Lord. In Luke 6:36 Jesus spoke a parable saying, "Can the blind lead the blind? shall they not both fall into the ditch?" The contextual setting of this verse emphasizes the tendency of men to issue instructions that are false. Most everyone has some philosophy about religion, but few really know what they are talking about when it comes to the way of salvation and to service that is pleasing to God.

On the other hand, the "knowing" of those who go should not be considered difficult and complicated, especially to those who go on a local level. It is a matter of having a personal experience to share. Consider that Paul told the Corinthians, "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned," 1 Corinthians 2:14. The import of this verse is forcefully illustrated in Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus in John chapter three. He could not understand the new birth even in earthly terms. Also, when Peter rightly declared Jesus to be the Son of God in Matthew 16:17, Jesus told him he could not have known this except God had revealed it to him. These instances underscore the fact that every born-again individual has an invaluable treasure of God-given information to share with all men everywhere.

Consequently, theological terms and doctrinal explanations are not especially beneficial to unbelievers. They want to know what happened to you, what God did for you, how you came to know God. Later, when men come to know Jesus, there will be time and opportunity for the teaching and discussion of doctrinal matters. Forceful indeed is the individual who is able to say to his friends as Paul did, "For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day," 2 Timothy 1:12.

A. KNOWLEDGE OF THE FIELD AND ITS SUBJECTS. Most everything done well gives the appearance of ease to the casual observer. However, there are normally huge amounts of preparation supporting expertise in any endeavor. Actual performance is as the proverbial tip of the iceberg. This principle is no less true in missionary endeavor.

Moreover, applying this principle of preparation is a key to success on

the home front, too. Personal workers in your church may not need to study the field and its subjects as a foreigner would, but it always helps to know something about the personality and background of your prospects. Failure to be alert to as much of this information as possible may well result in undue problems being created in attempts to enlist them into God's service.

Those who would be missionaries to other states or to foreign lands must spend much time in a thorough study of the peculiarities of the land and its people, including language if it is different. One preacher attempted to serve churches in another state but could never avoid saying, "This is the way we did things in Arkansas." In a matter of time, those whom he sought to serve were wishing he would go back to Arkansas. Similarly, two missionaries went to a foreign country. One fought obviously hard to repel foreign customs and to display his Americanism. The other opened himself to acceptable cultural changes, picked up on native expressions, became aware of their holidays and in general, became one of them. Needless to say, the latter enjoyed much greater success in building a lasting work for God than the former.

Finally, concerning the ministry, some jovial chap will invariably roar, "What a job, just three sermons a week!" If your pastor or missionary makes working for God look easy as he does as effective job, thank God for him. He is doing his homework, the extent of which is more greatly appreciated by those who would join him in personal endeavors for the Lord.

B. KNOWLEDGE TO OVERCOME OBSTACLES.

Everyone from the church visitation worker to the foreign missionary will attest to many obstacles to be overcome in telling the world about Jesus and winning men to Him. These include the personal, spiritual attitude of the worker, verbal abuse by others, doors being slammed in one's face, competition with endless events, activities that tie up precious time, objections of the prospect, harassment by various governmental agencies, lack of money, cultural shock, disappointment and discouragement, and the list goes on.

Obviously, Satan siezes upon every opportunity to create an obstacle for any Christian worker. Peter calls Satan our adversary who walks about as a roaring lion "seeking whom he may devour," 1 Peter 5:8. His advice is to engage in a ministry of steadfast resistance to him. James called upon believers to, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you," James 4:7. Perhaps the most damaging and subtle work of Satan is creating an atmosphere of discouragement and defeat within the Christian worker. Jesus told Peter that Satan desired him that he might sift him as wheat, Luke 22:31. Realizing this danger, Paul warned the Corinthians to be especially careful of their personal attitudes, "Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices," 2 Corinthians 2:11. In Matthew chapter four, the encounter of Jesus and Satan is recorded. Jesus overcame Satan by wise use of the Scriptures. The Revelation saints overcame Satan by "the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death," Revelation 12:11.

Inasmuch then as we can "do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me," Satan can be overcome. Human obstacles can be overcome. But, overcoming obstacles depends upon knowledge, especially knowledge of who you are, whom you serve, and what your God-given mission in life is.

D. KNOWLEDGE TO ACCOMPLISH THE SPIRITUAL AND MATERIAL END OF AN INDIGENOUS CHURCH.

It is evident that few, if any, churches are filled with members who are all knowledgeable enough to bring a church to a spiritually and materially indigenous state. Yet, it is assumed when a New Testament Church is organized such knowledge does exist within that church by their having attained that state themselves. Subsequently, there are those in most churches who are adept at personal work. Others excel in teaching. Some excel in financial ability, etc. These things combined under the capable leadership of a knowledgeable, spiritual pastor and blessed by the presence of the Holy Spirit make the church capable of spiritual maturity and perpetuation.

However, the weight and responsibility of most all these things are felt by those who go to other lands to tell the world about Jesus. Such missionaries must not be immature and unlearned. It is inherent that most such men be expert in evangelism, doctrine,

public relations, finances, mechanics, clerical affairs, construction, psychology, and much more.

So, whether one is a church visitation worker or a foreign missionary, the goal is much the same—to bring people to a spiritually mature state whereby the church may continue, or come to the point of continuing on as a self-supporting unit. This goal realized will assure the continuation of one's labor for many generations to come and/Or until Jesus comes again to take His people home. It is a good plan because it is God's plan. By this plan the whole gospel is to be preached by the whole church to the whole world.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. If personal experience with Jesus is required to effectively witness to others, should personal pastoral experience be required of preachers endorsed by churches to represent them on foreign fields? Why do you feel this way?

2. How much spiritual truth does God expect one to comprehend on his own? To what degree does God work to impart spiritual knowledge? Why can't believers understand matters dealing with security of the believer, the church or its ordinances? What experiences have you had discussing these things with unbelievers?

3. Discuss the Bible statement, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" Who is your greatest enemy? How big must an obstacle be to stop God's people from doing His work? What obstacle stopped you recently? Name some effective ways to overcome obstacles. Why didn't they work for you?

4. What is meant by the term "indigenous church"? Is a church indigenous when it is organized? If not, why should it be organized?

5. Make a list of ten things you can do to serve God. If you cannot think of ten, consult your pastor.

6. Do you believe missionaries should have formal Bible school education before going on a mission field? How much? Why do you feel as you do? Could there be an exception?

7. How much of your church should be involved in mission work? Is that much currently involved? What are you willing to do to encourage greater participation?

ABOUT THIS BOOK



The Great Commission is the primary work of the church, but faithful mission work requires more than enthusiasm. It calls for biblical purpose, prepared workers, adequate support, wise destination, and practical knowledge.

In five Bible-based lessons, W. A. Dillard leads churches, teachers, and mission workers through the responsibilities of taking the gospel to the world. Each lesson includes an outline, focused instruction, and questions designed to encourage thoughtful discussion and faithful action.

Practical and challenging, this study calls local churches to recover their missionary purpose and equips believers to participate intelligently in the work Christ commanded.



W. A. DILLARD, D.B.L.

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