



Missions Starting Point

The Missionary's Methods

Key Questions: *What does a missionary do to make disciples and plant churches?*

The Missionary's Goal

- **Review: What is a Missionary?**
 - **Definition:** A disciple of Jesus set apart by the Holy Spirit, and sent out by the church to cross geographic, cultural, and/or linguistic barriers to make disciples and multiply churches among unreached peoples and places.¹
 - While all Christians are called to be “on mission”, we often use the word “missionary” to refer to those whose station, vocation, nation, and location are tailored by God to reach peoples who have never heard the gospel.
- **Review: The Missionary's Goal**
 - Missionaries are called to make disciples, and the Biblical environment for discipleship is the local church.
 - Thus, missionaries are focused not only on evangelism, but also on healthy church development (whether planting, revitalizing, or otherwise contributing to church health).
 - Question: What do missionaries practically do to accomplish this discipleship and church-development task? What's their strategy and method?

Missionary Methods

- Based on Scriptural examples, the International Mission Board has summarized the missionary methodology with six components (See *Foundations*, pgs. 75-101)
 - Entry
 - Evangelism
 - Discipleship
 - Healthy Church Formation
 - Leadership Development
 - Exit

¹ Adapted from *IMB Foundations*, pg. 67

- **Entry**

- Research & Observation
 - **Acts 17:16-31, 22-23** // What did Paul do when he first came to Athens? What did he notice? How did that affect his message?
- Presence
 - **Acts 18:1-4** // What did Paul do help provide an avenue of presence among the people he was trying to reach?
 - Missionaries look for ways to stay and serve that are both full of integrity and a good fit for their skills and abilities.
- Communication Ability
 - **Acts 2:1-4** // What was necessary for the gospel to be understood when it was proclaimed?
 - Gospel communication and application happens best when a missionary knows enough of the language and culture to be able to discuss heart issues effectively.

- **Evangelism**

- Strategy
 - **Acts 17:1-4** // What was Paul's strategy as he entered a new city?
- Power
 - **John 3:6-7 & Romans 1:16** // What is the power that changes hearts?
- Contextualization
 - **Acts 17:22-31** // How did Paul share the gospel with his gentile hearers? How did this differ from how Peter presented the gospel in Acts 2?
 - **1 Corinthians 9:19-21** // What is the key to how Paul approached contextualizing the gospel?
 - Gospel bridges, broad seed-sowing, people of peace...
- Serve
 - **Luke 10:5-9** // What role do mercy ministries and acts of service play in missions?
- Reproducibility
 - Because evangelism is an important aspect of discipleship, new believers should be trained to go out and do likewise.

- **Discipleship**

- Primacy and centrality of the Word.
 - Bible storying
 - Bible translation

- More than just information transfer.
 - **Philippians 3:17** // Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us.
- Worldview permeation
 - A missionary helps new believers in a given culture to understand how the gospel affects how they navigate worldview issues, traditions, etc.
- Reliance on the Spirit
 - Missionaries teach new disciples how to walk in the Spirit through prayer, Bible reading, and church involvement.
- **Healthy Church Formation**
 - Desire to see healthy churches (see Twelve Traits) gather.
 - Health is a spectrum! (Don't expect to see qualities of a 200+ year old church in a new church).
 - Missionaries help provide instruction on the ordinances of the Lord's supper and baptism.
 - Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 2:38
 - 1 Corinthians 11:23-29
 - Goal is to train indigenous pastors to do the work, not become pastors.
- **Leadership Development**
 - Missionaries help identify and develop leaders to shepherd and serve the church.
 - Two offices:
 - Elders: Titus 1:5-9, 1 Timothy 3:1-7
 - Deacons: Acts 6; 1 Timothy 3:8-13
 - Three qualification categories:
 - Be – Character
 - Know – Doctrine (Titus 1:9)
 - Do – Teach, shepherd, pray, equip (Acts 6, 1 Tim. 3, Ephesians 4:12)
- **Exit & Follow-Up**
 - The primary aim of missionaries is to help plant healthy churches that go on to plant churches.
 - Once a healthy church is established, missionaries desire it to be self-sustaining.
 - There comes a point where missionaries "exit" a work, but exiting does not imply lack of care or absence of further assistance.
 - Romans 15:20

- The exit happens in stages, based on context. What are guidelines to know when exit is feasible?
 - Are indigenous believers participating in evangelism?
 - Is the church faithfully discipling believers whom God has entrusted to them?
 - Is the church within a people group faithfully participating in church planting themselves?
 - Is the church led by Biblically qualified leaders, and do they have systems in place to train new leaders?
- Missionaries prayerfully consider questions like the ones above to make judgements related to the wisdom of continued involvement.
- Like Paul, missionaries often will check-in with churches in which they've invested to answer questions and give further instruction.
- **Guidelines**
 - In all of the above tasks, missionaries want to avoid creating a sense of dependence.
 - Missionaries must also exercise caution in what patterns they set (intentionally and unintentionally) as they disciple new believers.
 - Missionaries need wisdom to know when they should hand over particular functions, even if it isn't performed to our standards.

Lesson Summary

- A missionary's methods are governed by their task: to make disciples who then meet as healthy local churches among a previously unreached people.
- A missionary's methodological focus will shift depending on the stage of development; early stages will be heavier on evangelism, whereas later stages will shift toward
- Contextualization is key in avoiding errors of accidentally confusing the western expression of Christianity with Biblical Christianity.
- Since a missionary's goal is to plant churches that plant churches, there comes a time when the missionary will need to exit the work.
- Missionaries can continue to invest and advise church plants, just like the Apostle Paul.

... I make it my ambition to preach the gospel, not where Christ has already been named, ... but as it is written, "Those who have never been told of him will see, and those who have never heard will understand."

Romans 15:20-21