



Missions Starting Point

The Missionary's Destination

Key Question: *I feel called to go, but how do I decide where to go and what to do?*

Figuring Out the Details

- **Remembering Helpful Definitions:**
 - **Call to Salvation** – The gracious act of God by which he draws people to become disciples of Jesus and members of his church. Salvation comes through the proclamation of God's Word in the power of God's Spirit. Accompanying the call to salvation in Christ is a call to freedom, holiness, and suffering in Christ. This call provides the unshakable foundation of every believer's identity.¹
 - **Call to Mission** – The call to salvation induces a call to mission, for every person who responds to God's call receives Christ's command to make disciples of Jesus. Disciple-making is thus the God-given, Christ-enabled, Spirit-empowered duty of every disciple whatever his or her station, location, or vocation. In this way, every disciple plays an integral part in the eternal purpose of God to glorify his name through disciples made among every nation.²
 - **Call to Station** – Christ calls specific disciples to specific stations in and through which they exalt him on mission. For example, within the family Christians are called to be faithful sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, husbands and wives, fathers and mothers for the spread of God's glory. Some are called to singleness for the sake of mission. All are called to meaningful membership within his church.³
 - **Call to Service** – The gracious act of God by which he directs disciples to make disciples in a certain way, at a certain time, among a certain people, in a certain location, or through a certain vocation. Calls to service may be fluid, operating at varying levels and open to varying assignments from God.⁴
- Assuming one feels called, the next questions typically involve the details. Where should I go? What should I do when I get there? What organization should I go through? Should I go through an organization at all?
- These questions remind us of the dynamism of the missionary task; the answers to all of these questions could change over time.

¹ Adapted from the IMB's *Foundations*, pg. 65.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Adapted from the IMB's *Foundations*, pg. 66.

Discerning Next Steps

- **Value the Local Church: The Home and Hub of Mission**

- Throughout Scripture, the church is presented as the environment in which one grows in Christ's likeness and the base from which missionaries are sent.
- **Acts 13:1-4** // Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a lifelong friend of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. ² While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." ³ Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.
- **Romans 15:23-33** // ²² This is the reason why I have so often been hindered from coming to you. ²³ But now, since I no longer have any room for work in these regions, and since I have longed for many years to come to you, ²⁴ I hope to see you in passing as I go to Spain, and to be helped on my journey there by you, once I have enjoyed your company for a while. ... ²⁸ When therefore I have completed this and have delivered to them what has been collected, I will leave for Spain by way of you. ²⁹ I know that when I come to you I will come in the fullness of the blessing of Christ. ³⁰ I appeal to you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf, ³¹ that I may be delivered from the unbelievers in Judea, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints, ³² so that by God's will I may come to you with joy and be refreshed in your company. ³³ May the God of peace be with you all. Amen.
- **Acts 19:8-10** // ⁸ And he entered the synagogue and for three months spoke boldly, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God. ⁹ But when some became stubborn and continued in unbelief, speaking evil of the Way before the congregation, he withdrew from them and took the disciples with him, reasoning daily in the hall of Tyrannus. ¹⁰ This continued for two years, so that all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.

- **Be Faithful Where You Are**

- Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8:26-40)
- Paul and Silas in Philippi (Acts 16:16-34)
- Paul before the authorities (Acts 21 – 24)
- Exercise your gifts now so that you'll be ready then!
- "Nothing magical happens when you fasten the seatbelt on the airplane."
- You will discover your strengths and weaknesses before you get to the field.

- **Push Yourself in Evangelism**

- The more you obey the great commission, the greater your heart's affection for it grows.
- The more you share your faith, the less fearful it becomes.

- The more you train yourself to see opportunities for the gospel, the more perceptive you become to spiritual needs around you.
- The more you see spiritual need around you, the greater your affection grows for the lost.
- The more affection you have for the lost, the more like Jesus you become!
- **Observe Patterns in Abilities and Affinities**
 - God is sovereign over your skills and abilities. He's the one who gave them to you!
 - There isn't a promise that your past necessarily will inform your future, but it's a helpful place to begin.
 - Look back on your life and consider:
 - What skills do I naturally gravitate to?
 - What patterns of service have been fruitful?
 - What tasks do I "function" in?
 - What tasks do I "flourish" in?
 - Look back on your interactions with people and consider:
 - With what types of people do I seem to resonate with?
 - "Every time I'm with my Hispanic neighbors, we get along so well and conversation flows so easily."
 - "I've served in ESL classes for about 3 months now, and it seems like I gravitate toward interacting with my Chinese friends the most."
 - What spiritual backgrounds do I seem uniquely wired to address?
 - Atheism?
 - Agnosticism?
 - Buddhism?
 - Islam?
 - Etc.?
 - What cultures fascinate you?
 - "I've always enjoyed learning about Eastern cultures."
 - "If I could go anywhere in the world right now, it'd be France."
 - "I studied Japanese in college, and I absolutely loved it."
- **Cultivate Dependence through Prayer**
 - God speaks to us and opens doors for ministry through prayer (Colossians 4:2).

- Pray for people groups around the world every day – are there any for whom you feel an acute sense of urgency?
- Pray for ministries that participate in missions work – are there any which capture your attention?
- Pray for the persecuted church – does the awareness of persecution motivate you toward action in a specific way?
- ...These are just some of the ways that God can and does speak to us in prayer, prodding our heart and affections to respond in a unique way.

Finding the Right Pathway

- **Which Missions Organization?**
 - Most missionaries are sent in partnership with an organization who can assist with logistics, administration, and legalities.
 - While not a requirement, there is much wisdom to partnering with an experienced organization that can lend resources to supplement the church's mission in sending missionaries.
 - Some considerations as you look for partnering organizations:
 - Do they align with your and your church's theology and doctrine?
 - Soteriology?
 - Church-planting methodology?
 - Women in ministry?
 - Approach to ordinances?
 - If theological disagreement exists, will it affect your on-the-field work?
 - Do they financially support their missionaries? If so, what requirements are there? If not, what is their support raising model? Is it feasible for your family?
 - Does the organization provide pathways for service that align with your gifts and abilities?
 - Medical missions
 - Business as missions
 - Vocational missionary
 - Secular job-based platform (teaching ESL, etc.)
 - Are their additional requirements or expectations reasonable for your situation?
 - For example, what is their approach to language-learning?

- Will you be able to serve in your desired location and among your desired people group?
- How do organizations handle flexibility? What are the term lengths and expectations for time spent overseas?
- **With Whom Should I Go?**
 - Go with a team (Luke 10)
 - Go with those likeminded in doctrine (Philippians 2:2)
 - Go with those likeminded in strategy (Acts 15:36-41)
 - Go with those who complement your giftings (Romans 12:3-8; 1 Cor. 12:21-26)
 - Go with those with whom you get along (Acts 15:36-41)
 - Go with those who can hold you accountable in love (1 Timothy 6:3-4)
- **Other Considerations**
 - Which pathways best serve my spouse (giftings, expectations, etc.)?
 - Which pathways best serve my family (children, education, etc.)?
 - How will I be spiritually nourished overseas? What provisions are there for this?

Lesson Summary

- The missionary call extends beyond the initial desire to go into the details of service.
- The details of the call can be dynamic as we take steps of faith.
- The Lord directs our paths, and our proclivities may be helpful indicators of future direction.
- There are many questions to consider, and it's best to invite the church to pray alongside you for wisdom and grace.
- Ultimately, we trust that God will direct us where he wants us to be as we surrender to his will in our lives.
 - **Acts 1:8** // ⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

*Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.
In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.*

Proverbs 3:5-6