**THE MISSIONARY’S VISION**

***Acts 15***

Sunday School Lesson

*Understanding Missions*

Week 3 – 5/6/2018

**Introduction:** As we continue our study in missions, this week’s lesson focuses on the vision of the missionary. While our missions philosophy outlined the overall objective when it comes to missions, this lesson will focus more on the specifics of the missionary’s work and focus. As a church, it is important for us to have a clear understanding of what a missionary’s vision should be in relation to what the Bible teaches. This understanding will ensure that we are only supporting those missionaries who have a clear Scriptural vision in their ministry.

1. A MISSIONARY HAS A VISION FOR AN ESTABLISHED CHURCH. (ROMANS 1:7-11)
2. **Notice that an established church has proper governance (I Corinthians 12:27-31).** Whether the church is located in America or on the other side of the world, the same Biblical structure of leadership applies in the church. There is to be a pastor in the church, and as it grows, there ought to be other roles such as teachers and deacons. Unfortunately, we often tend to focus on one extreme or the other. Some missionaries are only focused on converts, and the spiritual growth of its members greatly suffers. On the other hand, there are those missionaries who are just looking to have a school for preachers more than a church. If it is an established church, it should have a diversity of members. Paul taught throughout the New Testament that the church is made up of various parts of the body. If all parts are not covered, the body is incomplete and needs better development.
3. **Notice that an established church follows a proven guideline (Romans 1:11; I Thessalonians 2:14).** In Paul’s letter to the church of the Thessalonians, he commends them for their willingness to follow the churches in Judea. This does not mean that they had to answer to those churches, but rather that they were willing to emulate their church after those other churches. As Paul travelled and started churches, his goal was to follow the same proven guideline and pattern. Although differing cultures may play a small role in a church’s dynamic, the missionary’s ultimate goal is to build a church following the same pattern as the church by which he was sent. Again, this does not mean that they have to be identical or that they lose their autonomy, but the reality is that the missionary is going to have to follow some type of pattern for that church. Why not utilize the pattern of his sending church?
4. A MISSIONARY HAS A VISION FOR A SELF-SUPPORTING CHURCH. (2 CORINTHIANS 12:13)
5. **Notice that never ending support stunts the spiritual maturity of a church (2 Corinthians 12:13-19)** The church at Corinth was known as one of the more spiritually immature churches during the early church era. We know this from Scripture, as Paul wrote multiple letters to them with the hopes of being able to move them to spiritual meat instead of milk. In chapter 12 of the second letter, Paul reminds them that he had never received any type of payment from them. The insinuation from this is that the church there was not willing to support a pastor, and they even made accusations that Paul was in it for their money. This showed their immaturity. Paul refers to the relationship as a parent and child. He hadn’t taken any money from them, because they were the child in the relationship. However, at some point, a child has to grow up and start taking personal responsibility.

1. **Notice that never ending support is dishonest to the sending churches (2 Corinthians 11:8).** In the prior chapter, Paul even tells the church at Corinth that he had “robbed” other churches to do service for their church. Paul does not use this term as a personal indictment, but rather he uses it to show the church that it was not right for them to keep taking money from other churches. One of the missionary’s goals should be for his people to understand how a church support structure works. This is not only the responsible thing to do, but it is also the ethical thing to do.
2. **Notice that never ending support for a pastor should be made by the local church (I Timothy 5:17-18; Acts 14:23).** As I mentioned in the first lesson, a missionary works under a local church. This means that they are either the pastor of that church, or they are helpers of that pastor (examples: John Mark, Silas, Barnabas, etc.). If a missionary stays at that church as it is established, then he should seek for the church to support him as part of being a self-supporting church, and he should end his missions support. If he is a planter, he will help the church set a pastor in place, and the church will provide adequate funds for that pastor. Afterwards, he will move and start another church or return back to his sending church.
3. **Notice that never ending support from a church is to *the* mission not *a* mission (Mark 16:15).** As a church, our goal is to have the gospel shared to every creature. For this cause, we ought to constantly be evaluating whether our giving is being effective in accomplishing that goal. If not, we should pray and seek for a better way to utilize our resources. As a pastor, I will never make a promise to a missionary to support them for life. Our commitment is to the mission. If they are following through on the mission in a Scriptural manner, we will support them as long as we have the means to do so.
4. A MISSIONARY HAS A VISION FOR A NEEDED CHURCH. (JOHN 4:35)
5. **Notice that a missionary should be seeking to serve in the field ready to harvest (John 4:35).** Missionaries must be careful to ensure that they are truly going to an area in need of the Gospel. Sometimes, we get caught up on the “popular” places, or we make assumptions about the need based on our idea of a particular region. There are some countries where there are five or six missionaries serving in towns smaller than Junction City. While I’m not saying with certainty that God did not call them, the point is that each missionary must ensure there is a need. Coming from Florida, I often think about the Miami area. There are over five million people in the metro area, and there are less than ten Bible-preaching churches that I am aware of. Yet, no missionaries ever seem to be called to the Miami area?
6. **Notice that a missionary must ensure that he has a call to go along with his burden (Acts 8:26-29).** Having a burden for a region must be followed up with a call for that area. A missionary must listen to the Holy Spirit to ensure that they are going to the right place. In Bible college, I knew many students who were dead set on being missionaries to a particular region. They liked the area. They had a burden for the area. Yet, they did not have a call to go there. Needless to say, very few of them ever made it to that field they were so dead set on when they were in Bible college. I’m reminded of the story of Paul going to Jerusalem. There are many Bible students who believe that Paul made a mistake by going and not listening to the warnings of others. While I am not certain whether that is truly the case or not, it does seem to provide us with an example of someone with a burden but not a call.

IV. A MISSIONARY HAS A VISION FOR A RESPONSIVE CHURCH. (MARK 6:1-11)

A. **Notice that the expectation is that the power of the gospel will yield a response (Romans 1:16).** It’s disappointing to hear so many missionaries on deputation talking about how hard their field is going to be. While I understand that they are trying to show the need of a particular area, you rarely hear them speak with confidence that God is going to do a great thing in that foreign field. Why are we so surprised when we hear back from them thirty years later, and absolutely nothing has happened in their church? Too many of our pastors and missionaries have lost vision and faith in the power of the Gospel. They are no longer convinced that a great work can happen in their city or country. Many are discouraged by their field before they ever even get there! We should seek to support missionaries who have faith that God is going to do something BIG.

B. **Notice that it was not referred to as quitting when Jesus left his own country (Mark 6:1-11).** I’m convinced that many modern-day preachers would have pointed a finger disapprovingly at Christ for leaving his home country so quickly. The Bible tells us that the people there rejected Him and were filled with unbelief. As a result, there was very little done there, and He moved on to other villages. He told his disciples to shake off the dust from under their feet. Often, we point to Old Testament examples of prophets that preached to the same people without ever having a response (Reminder: The Nation of Israel is God’s chosen people. They didn’t have many other options!). Yet, throughout the New Testament, there are many examples of preachers quickly moving through a city and on to the next. While only the individual missionary knows when God is leading him elsewhere, I believe there are some who stay in the same place beyond the intended time. They act as though going somewhere else would be viewed as a failure. At the end of the day, the missionary must follow God’s leading, as mentioned in the prior point.

**CONCLUSION**: The Bible says that without a vision the people perish. The same could be said about missionaries and their work. Without a good, Godly vision, missions ministries often fail and flounder. As a church, we should be thorough in ensuring that the missionaries we support have a Biblical vision for the work that God has called them to do. Otherwise, we are not being good stewards of the resources that God has enabled us to have.