**LOCAL MISSIONS 1: GOD’S DESIGN**

***Acts 2***

Sunday School Lesson

*Understanding Missions*

Week 7 – 6/10/2018

**Introduction:** As mentioned in our first lesson on missions, there ought to be both foreign and local missions work. This could probably more aptly be referred to as direct and indirect missions. Direct missions work is the individual’s personal involvement in their community to share the Gospel. The indirect missions work is in financial and prayerful support for someone else’s direct missions work. To summarize, we should be doing the work ourselves and helping others with their work as well. Every church that has been planted around the world since the first church is a result of both direct and indirect missions work. Nobody starts a church completely on their own. God always has others there to help them with the work. As we look at the local missions work, we are going to apply the principles outlined in the early church established in Jerusalem. This church represented the local missions work of the disciples.

1. GOD DESIGNS A SPECIFIC PLACE FOR A SPECIFIC PEOPLE. (ACTS 1:11-12)
2. **Notice that the disciples had a certain understanding of their fellow Jews (Acts 2:29).** In Acts 2, we see the disciples preaching to the Jews that were there in Jerusalem. Peter mentions the patriarch David in verse 29. Being a Jew himself, Peter was able to easily understand the perspective of the Jews and explain the gospel of Jesus Christ to them. While this does not mean that all of them were eager to accept the message, it does show God’s pattern for local missions work. He uses local people to reach the community. One of the challenges of a foreign missionary is that he has to learn the people of that country. Paul, himself, acknowledged that he had to become all things to all men as he carried the Gospel to the world around him.
3. **Notice that the disciples spoke the same language as their fellow Jews (Acts 2:3-12).** In verse three, we see that the disciples were given the gift of tongues to help reach the local community. Keep in mind that the Jews had been in captivity for several hundred years. They had been spread out throughout the Roman empire, and they had adapted to many different languages. They did not commonly speak Hebrew anymore. For this cause, God gave the disciples the ability to have the people hear in their own respective tongue. While we do not have the same problem today in our local community, there is a principle that can be applied here. The local people are reached with the local language. You can apply this to the literal language here in the community, but you can also apply this as a metaphorical language. God puts us in a community, and we are able to speak and relate to the people that we find there. A great example in our community is the ability to speak the military language. This ability can be a great asset in speaking to those in the community who are much more responsive to someone who is speaking the same language that they like to speak.
4. **Notice that the disciples had a special interest in their fellow Jews (Acts 2:39).** When we think of foreign missionaries, we often think about the calling that they have. That calling to reach a foreign field is coupled with a burden for the people of that field. Every presenting missionary mentions the burden that God has put on their heart for those people. Unfortunately, we do not always equate that with the burden that we should have for the local people. These are our neighbors, our co-workers, our fellow Americans, and in some cases even our family. Truthfully, our special interest and burden for them should not have to be manufactured or given. There ought to be a natural burden for them. What a shame that a missionary to a foreign field often has a greater burden than we have for the people living all around us!
5. **Notice that the disciples had to overcome skepticism from their fellow Jews (Acts 2:7,13).** While God prepares people for the local work of missions, Jesus also reminded us that our home front can also be the most challenging place to carry the Gospel. The disciples experienced the same issue in Jerusalem. While it was ultimately a place that saw many souls saved, Jerusalem also had its fair share of skeptics. There were several who mocked when the disciples started speaking in various tongues. In chapter three, there were those of the Jewish religious sects that set ought to stop the disciples. We must understand that local missions work can be just as challenging as the foreign field. However, we are still the one’s that God has chosen to reach that area. We must follow through on that calling regardless of whether it is convenient or comfortable for us. God will give us the grace and the endurance to continue in spite of the skeptics that we may encounter.
6. GOD DESIGNS A STANDARD PATTERN FOR THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL. (ACTS 5:42)
7. **Notice that the disciples went to where the people were (Acts 5:20-21).** There is a question that has been posed in recent times regarding the method of sharing the gospel. Some do not feel that going house to house is an effective method for sharing the Gospel. While the house to house method that we use today may not be the identical method that was used in the New Testament (although vs. 42 does say that they went house to house), the pattern is consistent. That pattern consists of going to where the people are. This is what the disciples did when they went to the temple, the marketplace, or even in the street. For those who do not share the gospel from house to house, they must ask themselves honestly where the Gospel is shared from. Are they alternatively willing to share the Gospel in the supermarket, on the job site, or in other public places?

1. **Notice that the people came to where the disciples were (Acts 5:15-16).** In verses fifteen and sixteen, we see that the people would come to where the disciples were at. They would sit in the streets where they knew that Peter was going to pass by. Today, this would be akin to those who come to church looking for the Truth. This could also be those who approach you on the job or in the neighborhood because they have heard that you are a Christian. Where do they hear this from? They hear it from those to whom you have gone to. This is the process of the Gospel. Those who hear will tell others who haven’t, and those people will come looking for the answer. If we do not do part one of this, we can expect that we will not have much results in part two. This is also why it is good to have a visible local church that people can come to when they are seeking more from this life.
2. **Notice that all of the believers played a part in sharing the Gospel (Acts 2:41; 11:19).** There are some who believe that the Great Commission is reserved just for preachers. They might not openly profess this, but they generally view evangelism as a work reserved just for the one who is employed by the church. The Bible tells us that believers in general were sharing the Gospel with others. In Acts 2, we see that 3,000 people were saved and baptized in one day. Given the number of people, there is no way that the twelve disciples handled this by themselves (unless it were by some unrecorded miracle). They would have each needed to baptize a person every two minutes for the eight hours of daylight that they had! We also have accounts of other men such as Stephen and Philip who preached the Gospel.
3. GOD DESIGNS A SINGULAR PEOPLE FOR THE PROMOTING OF THE GOSPEL. (ACTS 2:42-47)

1. **Notice that a singular purpose will produce a singular people (Acts 2:46-47).** Throughout the first several chapters of Acts, we see that the believers had a cohesiveness that is rarely seen in churches today. They took care of each other’s needs. They were in constant fellowship with each other. They continually were praising the Lord together. How did they have a church that was so solidified and lacking of any discord? The easy answer is that the church was unified in the work of local missions. If people have a unified purpose, they can overlook a host of offenses and potential disagreements.
2. **Notice that a singular people will promote a positive message to the world (Acts 2:**47). Notice in verse 47 that the believers had favor will all the people. How did this happen? Again, the answer is a result of their unified effort of sharing the gospel and carrying out the local mission. The people saw that the Christians were genuinely concerned with their eternal souls. They were not being sent mixed messages by the believers in the early church. When a local church is unified in its purpose, it will see a greater response from the community it is in.

**CONCLUSION**: We must take our responsibility in local missions seriously. As mentioned before, a church that only supports foreign missions and neglects local missions is a church that does not truly have a burden to reach the lost. We must do our part to directly carry out the Great Commission in our local community. The people in our town are counting on us to do our part for the Lord. It does not matter the size or the location of the area. God has a desire to reach every person living on this planet. Let’s make sure we are following through on Jesus’ command!