**MISSIONS PHILOSOPHY**

***Matthew 28:18-20***

Sunday School Lesson

*Understanding Missions*

Week 1 – 4/22/2018

**Introduction:** While the terms *mission* and *missionary* are not recorded in the Word of God, these terms have become commonplace among our churches. Although these terms are universally used, there can be significant differences among churches over the definition and execution of missions work. Our responsibility as a church is to search the Scriptures to ensure that we are properly applying Biblical principles to develop our missions philosophy. During this series of lessons, we will develop a solid foundation to help us better understand how to implement our missions program.

1. EVERY LOCAL CHURCH HAS AN INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY TO THE MISSION.
2. **Notice that there are three parts to the mission (Matthew 28:18-20).** As a church, our responsibility is to preach the gospel, baptize new converts, and teach them the Truth. To summarize it, we are to make others into disciples of Jesus Christ. This is our very clear-cut mission. When a church begins to speak of its missions program, this should include anything that focuses on fulfilling the mission outlined above. There should also be an urgency, focus, and desire within the church to see that mission completed, even if it can never be fully accomplished.
3. **Notice that there are four places for the mission (Acts 1:8).** Jesus told His followers that they were to share the mission in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the earth. When we think about missions, we often jump straight to the uttermost part of the earth. Yet, these four places can be applied as our city, state, country, and world. Why do so many churches neglect their own city, state and country by focusing solely on the world mission instead? It is quite the paradox to try to understand how the biggest giver of missions in the church is also the one who never bothers to share the gospel with his friends and neighbors. Perhaps, the answer is that we don’t view missions as an individual responsibility. We’ll write the check to the missionary going to the foreign land, as long as he is the one doing the work! A true view of missions looks for individual opportunity first to share the gospel, with a hope that those converts may be the one’s going to Samaria to share the gospel.
4. **Notice that there are five people assigned to the mission (Ephesians 4:11).** The Bible tells us that God has appointed different roles for the purpose of fulfilling the mission. The first two roles were apostles and prophets, and we do not see these roles active in our current day. An apostle was one who was an eye witness of Jesus Christ. God used this role to rapidly spread the gospel in the early church days, and to record Scriptural accounts of Jesus for us to read two thousand years later. Regarding prophets, there is nothing left to prophesy that would further the mission today. John has already prophesied the end. The other roles are evangelist, pastor, and teacher. An evangelist is not what we think of the role today. It simply describes someone who devotes themselves to sharing the gospel. Philip was referred to as an evangelist, and the only message he ever preached was a salvation message. He was a deacon in a local church. We are all to be evangelists. Paul told Timothy to do the work of an evangelist, even though he was also a pastor. He didn’t want Timothy to forget the mission! Lastly, pastors and teachers have been given to train more evangelists for the mission and to exhort the existing one’s as well…Notice, throughout all of these roles, there is no mention of a specific role for a missionary. It doesn’t exist!
5. EVERY MISSIONS EFFORT HAS AN INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY TO A LOCAL CHURCH.
6. **Notice that converts are added to the church (Acts 2:47).** God designed the local church, and He commanded us to not forsake the assembling of ourselves together. In Acts, we see that new converts were added to the church daily. The church is the place for Christians to find help and strength. If a man goes to another city, state, or country to share the gospel, he should go with the intent of starting a local church. While there is nothing sinful with having a school or a Bible study group, these are not the same as having a local church. There must be a place for these new converts to receive teaching and preaching from the Word of God, and in accordance with how God structured the church. The desire out to be to start a local church that functions in the same capacity as the church from which the missionary has been sent out of.

1. **Notice that God uses those who are serving in a local church (Acts 13:1-4).** In the book of Acts, we see that God called out some of the men at the church in Antioch. When He called them, they were already ministering to the people there. When it comes to missions work, it does not start when you are sent to another country. The missions work starts at the time that you trust the Lord for salvation. You join a local church, and you start serving in whatever capacity the Lord has prepared for you. It’s hard to have confidence in a man who is looking to carry the mission to another country, when he so rarely carried the mission in his city and church.
2. **Notice that Paul and Barnabus returned to their sending church after the work had been completed (Acts 14:22-28).** When Paul and Barnabus were called out of the church in Antioch, they went through various cities and started many local churches. They were not called to be pastors; consequently, the Bible says that they raised up elders (pastors) to lead each of these churches. Throughout their journey, Paul and Barnabus would frequently report back to the church in Antioch. Finally, when their mission was completed, they returned back to their local church. They immediately got back to working on the mission there in Antioch. It is clear that they held themselves accountable to their local church, and the local church was able to rejoice with them in all of the great things that they had seen done through the power of the Lord.
3. EVERY PERSON HAS AN INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY TO INVEST IN THE MISSION.
4. **Notice that the saints in Corinth were commanded to invest in the mission (I Corinthians 16:1-7).** In this chapter, Paul plainly commands the members of the church to collect financial resources for the purpose of the mission. Further, he tells them that this money will be used for his travelling and for the travelling of others whom he brought with him to share the gospel. He also instructs them that they collect the finances weekly to ensure that there is not a need for a large collection when he arrives back at Corinth. Notice that Paul was not begging for financial aid. His command shows the general expectation that the individuals in the local church are to be more than willing to invest in missions.
5. **Notice that Jesus instructed us to make a Heavenly investment (Matthew 6:19-34).** We are to be totally invested in fulfilling our mission. Jesus instructs us to die to ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Him. In Matthew, He provides further instruction that our focus should be on Heavenly things. He instructs His followers to take no thought for earthly things such as food and clothes. We are to focus on the mission and let God provide for us. Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness. God uses the abundant giving of those who follow this teaching to take care of other believers. If our focus is on fulfilling the mission, our needs will be met, and we will be able to help others in their mission work.
6. **Notice that Barnabas’ initial investment towards the mission grew substantially (Acts 4:36-37).** If you have read through Paul’s various journeys, you know that Barnabas played a big role in helping Paul share the gospel to the Gentile world. What you may not have noticed is where Barnabas’ work first started. In Acts 4, we see that Barnabas made a big investment in the mission after he was saved. He sold his land and gave the money to the work of God. If his story ended there, we would probably commend Barnabas for this investment. However, we see that his investment in the mission of God only continued to grow after that. When we invest ourselves into the work of God, it is not a one-time investment. The more we give the more the Lord will burden our hearts to do more for Him.

**CONCLUSION**: The first question we ought to ask ourselves concerning missions is whether we have the right philosophy of what our responsibility is. Missions is not just about writing a weekly check to take care of some missionary in China. Missions is a life committed to seeing souls saved, people baptized, and new disciples made. Let’s ensure that we are doing everything that we can to seeing the gospel shared to those in our Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the world!