**THE MISSION BOARD**

***Ephesians 6:10-20***

Sunday School Lesson

*Understanding Missions*

Week 6 – 5/27/2018

**Introduction:** One of the most contentious topics concerning foreign missions often revolves around the use and selection of a mission board. There are some who believe that mission boards are unscriptural; consequently, they will not support any missionaries affiliated with a board. There are others who believe that mission boards are necessary, and they will only support missionaries who are sent through a board (often a specific board which they have worked with in the past). As always, we ought to just seek the answer from the Word of God and not allow ourselves to get caught in the middle of an unproductive debate. The Bible answer to mission boards is that there isn’t one. The distinct role of the mission board is absent from Scripture, just as there is no mention of a missionary, revival preacher, Bible college, music leader, church secretary, choir, etc. Instead of focusing on whether a missionary should be affiliated with a board, we will focus on applying Bible principles to the idea of a mission board. When the Bible does not give us a direct answer to a practice or behavior, we must apply these principles to the situation to determine what our philosophy should be.

1. A MISSION BOARD SHOULD NOT HAVE AUTHORITY OVER A MISSIONARY. (ACTS 15:1-4)
2. **Notice that a missionary should have the same autonomous mindset as any local church pastor would have (I Peter 5:1-3; Act 14:23).** When the missionary arrives in the field, he should not have his actions dictated by a mission board. He is to establish a church, as the Lord leads and directs him to. As we mentioned before, the missionary is either going to the field as a pastor or church planter. In our local churches here, we identify as independent because we believe that the Scripture teaches the autonomy of the church. If that autonomy applies locally, then that autonomy also applies on the foreign field as well. We must be careful not to have a double standard in how we view local churches compared to foreign churches. Remember that every local church is foreign to someone else who is somewhere else!
3. **Notice that the missionary is accountable to his sending church(es) (Acts 15:1-4).** In Acts 15, we see that there were some questions that had come up regarding the church planting that Paul and Barnabas had just completed. Their sending church in Antioch was very happy with the work that was done, but there were some questions from the church in Jerusalem (which would have been the original sending church for the one in Antioch). Paul and Barnabas were happy to go to the church in Jerusalem and give an answer for the work that was done. Missionaries are called out and supported by the local church. As a result, they are accountable to those churches. This does not mean that they answer to them, but it does mean that they can expect for their support to be discontinued if the sending/supporting church can no longer endorse their teachings.
4. **Notice that a mission board should be accountable to a local church (Acts 2:47).** Every born again believer should be a part of a local church body. This is clearly defined throughout the New Testament. This is another point of contention. Some board directors believe that they should not be a part of a local church. If it is a ministry help, it is best to conduct it under the local church. Surely, each of the board members are active members in a local church. If they are, then they are accountable to the local church for the ministry that they are doing for Christ.
5. **Notice that a mission board shouldn’t send or recall a missionary (Acts 13:1-5).** Again, the missionary is ultimately sent by the local church. A mission board should only be viewed as a ministry help. They should not have the authority to recall or send a missionary. If a missionary no longer follows through on their statement of faith, they can stop helping the missionary. Ultimately, though, the local churches that have sent and support that missionary will have to decide individually if they will continue to support that missionary.
6. A MISSION BOARD SHOULD BE A BENEFIT TO THE MISSIONARY. (PHILIPPIANS 2:4)
7. **Notice that the mission board should have the same goal as the missionary (Philippians 2:4).** The goal of those working for the mission board should be to see the mission carried out. Unfortunately, there are some mission boards who are more interested in running their business than getting missionaries to the field. Churches should be wary of mission boards that take large fees out of the missionary’s monthly support. A missionary should never feel that their mission board is more of a burden than a help to them.

1. **Notice that the mission board should be an administrative help to the missionary (2 Timothy 4:13).** One area that a mission board can be very helpful with is the area of administrative work. In the New Testament, we see that Paul had several people who were there to help him administratively. The Bible does not speak of them in great detail, but we know that they helped Paul write and deliver the New Testament to the early churches. As a missionary is preparing for the field, it can be a great help to have a mission board who is active and diligent in the administrative aspect of the ministry.
2. **Notice that the mission board should be a teaching help to the missionary (I Peter 5:5).** A mission board should be helpful in educating the missionary of some of the aspects of the mission field. There is a great amount of detail that goes into foreign missions. It can be very beneficial for the young missionary to have an older missionary to guide him through some of the basics of the work. This does not mean that the missionary needs daily classes on what to do, but some guidance can definitely be helpful.
3. **Notice that the mission board should be a preaching help to the missionary (Colossians 1:28).** A mission board can be a big help in getting Bibles printed and shipped to the foreign field. Finding the best translation of the Bible for a given language can be difficult as well. Often, a mission board will have information regarding other missionaries who are preaching in that same language. This can be especially challenging for missionaries once they are already in the field. Not only can they help with Bibles, but they can also help with the printing of gospel tracts. While these are things that the missionary is able to do on his own, any help in furthering the work of Christ is always welcome.
4. A MISSION BOARD SHOULD BE A BENEFIT TO THE LOCAL CHURCH. (EPHESIANS 5:29)

1. **Notice that the mission board can give confidence to a local church (Acts 15:21-21).** In Acts 15, we see that the church in Jerusalem sent men with letters to essentially endorse the work that Paul and Barnabas were doing. When Paul was first converted, there were men who vouched for him among the other believers. One benefit that a board should provide is confidence to a local church that the missionaries are of like faith. While this does not negate the responsibility of the local church to be thorough in asking questions when that missionary presents, it does help to give a general basis of their faith. The challenge here is that missionary boards change, and local churches rely too much on the name of a board rather than ensuring the missionaries are of like faith.
2. **Notice that the mission board can help with communication and ease of support for the local church (I Corinthians 14:40).** While a pastor and missionary are perfectly capable of communicating directly in this modern age of technology, sometimes wires get crossed when two people are thousands of miles away. Whether it’s the delivery of financial support or an update from the field, a mission board can assist in making it easier for the two parties to stay in contact. As mentioned with the prior point, the danger can be that the church relies on the mission board to stay engaged with the missionary. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of the local church to check in with the missionary and ensure that their support is being given wisely to someone who is carrying out the mission.

**CONCLUSION**: While this lesson did not definitively give a position on mission boards, it should have at least provided a framework for what our expectation should be in working with a mission board. Certainly, the mission board can be a help to both the local church and the missionary, but we must be cautious to ensure that they are helping in a way that would be pleasing to the Lord.