

**AN INTRODUCTION  
TO THE  
STUDY OF CHRISTIAN MISSIONS**

by

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**CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT**

**A CHURCH MISSIONARY PROGRAM (Concluded)**

**VI. Training**

Not all the training of missionary candidates is carried on by Bible institutes, seminaries, and other missionary training schools. The local Church does its part. And it is not an insignificant part. As we have mentioned before, the most important part of the preparation of missionaries is done outside of the classroom. In fact, all four of the indispensables of missionary preparation can in some measure be provided in the Church.

But the Church doesn't need to carry on a missionary training program separate from the rest of its program of training young people. It should be just a part of that same program. The Church can't give the specialized instruction needed for foreign service. What it can and should do is train its young people to be good witnesses for CHRIST wherever they are. This is foundational. The special training they need to serve in other lands can be added elsewhere.

Let us take it for granted that the Church is sincerely and seriously interested in the development of its young people. It not only wants to see them continue faithful to the Church; it desires to help them grow in spirituality and leadership. It hopes to see them make some useful contribution to the work of the Church and to the whole cause of CHRIST. So it is willing to give special attention to the training of its youth. What, then, can it do that will be important in missionary training?

Let me mention five things.

First comes the matter of personal consecration and the spiritual life. Every pastor recognizes that this is part of his usual responsibility.

Among his Christian young people are some who were reared in the Church. Others have come into it out of non-Christian surroundings through conversion. It makes little difference. In every case they need to be brought to the place of personal dedication. Sometimes those who were brought up in Christian surroundings are the hardest to get to see their need of such dedication. But they cannot know the fullness of the Christian life until they make it.

A single act of dedication is not enough. No more so than the single act of joining the Church. It should set the course for our life; but, oh, how often we veer away to one side or the other and end up completely off course! We need training in the spiritual life. That is, we not only need to know the principles, but we need to have instruction in applying them to daily living, we need to have practice in doing it. We need to learn how to put first in our lives "**the kingdom of GOD and his righteousness.**"

Second is the matter of systematic Bible study. This, too, should be a part of the Church's usual ministry. Sometimes it is well done. Sometimes any young person who wants to can get in his home Church a good broad foundation in the teachings of Scripture. But often this is not so. Especially when most of the Bible teaching is left to the Sunday school and its often haphazard teaching under inexperienced teachers.

This is one of the great values of expository preaching. It is Bible teaching from the pulpit. And since so many never attend any but the preaching services of the Church, it is the kind of teaching that helps to raise the whole level of Bible instruction in the Church. That is, if it is well done. But then, if a young man is only going to attend one service a week - it is doubtful whether he will make much of a dent on the mission field.

But when listening to expository sermons, or even to Bible lectures given at the Church's mid-week service, the young people are passive. They listen and drink in - if they want to. But there is no chance for them to clarify their understanding by asking questions. There is no chance for them to express what they are learning, so as to fix it more firmly in their minds.

It is this purpose that the young people's society should fill. It gives the youth of the Church a chance to express what they are learning. And there is no surer way for them to fix a teaching in their own minds than to try to teach it to others. It encourages them to search the Scriptures for themselves and discuss its teachings among those of similar age and experience. With good counsel the young people's society can be an invaluable training school. Without such counsel it may become just an insipid social club. Or it may turn into another preaching service where young people are expected just to sit and listen.

But besides these things there is still a need for more systematic and consecutive study of the Bible. The Bible class is needed. It may be a part of the Sunday school. It may be held on some weekday evening. Whatever the arrangement, it is a serious and purposeful attempt to get the fullness of Scripture teaching instead of snatches here and there. Often such a class will make use of a correspondence course such as those that are offered by Moody Bible Institute. Sometimes examinations are given; sometimes not. Only a minority of the Church attend, but it is from this interested minority that the missionary candidates as well as Church leaders will probably come. And when they get to the training schools, the value of this Bible teaching in the home Church is soon apparent.

Personal witnessing is a third field in which the local Church can provide training. Perhaps it is more a matter of inspiration and encouragement than it is of instruction. Classes in personal evangelism have their place, but they are not much good without practice. Nothing can take the place of actually talking with men and women about the faith we have in CHRIST. Many do it

spontaneously in the enthusiasm of their new - found faith. But today, when the great majority of our Church members have been reared in the faith, this is not the rule. Most young people need to be encouraged to do it and they need to be shown how.

The subject of personal evangelism is too big for us to deal with it here. But we can make one or two suggestions. Young people will usually do better at first if at least two work together. Even if one tends to take the lead and do most of the talking, the other is still learning from their joint experience. Also, to keep up interest in this personal witnessing, there ought to be a chance to tell others about it - to share experiences. Testimony meetings are unheard of in most churches today, and the churches have lost more than they realize by dropping them. The pleasure we take in any experience is greatly increased by telling someone else about it. And if this is true in our personal religious experience, it is doubly so in the matter of witnessing to others.

In the fourth place there are opportunities for leadership and service that the local Church can provide. This is extremely important in missionary preparation. It is amazing to see how many young people enter missionary training schools without any previous experience in Christian work. In the case of recent converts to Christianity this is of course understandable. There hasn't been time for them to get such experience. Perhaps we can excuse it, too, on the part of those whose Christianity was largely formal and superficial until shortly before they entered. But there are many others who might have been willing to work but they needed opportunities and guidance - especially guidance.

It is true that a missionary has to learn to take the initiative in such things. Young people who always have to be told what to do don't make good missionaries. But on the other hand, the Church leaders don't always welcome initiative on the part of the young people. And they don't always see the leadership possibilities in many of them. As we have said before, leadership is not merely a matter of natural talent. And even where that talent exists, it needs encouragement and guidance.

The wise Church deliberately gives responsibility to its young people.

And it is not just the responsibility for running their own young people's society. Every bit of Christian service is a part of training - especially where they have to lead others. And in every Church there are many services in which the young people could have a part. Of course they often teach Sunday school classes - though they usually need more instruction and counsel for the job than they get.

High school boys can develop into very acceptable ushers. Games at the Sunday school picnic, and even other parts of the program, can often be turned over to the young people. Older young people can sponsor younger groups, sometimes with better understanding and greater success than adults would have. Some churches have found it worth while to turn over an occasional evening service to the young people, letting them plan and direct it all except the sermon.

Others have encouraged the forming of "Gospel teams" and other such groups who carry their witness to neglected places, to jails, missions and even other churches. And we could extend the list indefinitely. The important thing is that, while the Church benefits from their services, these young people are getting invaluable training for missionary service.

One last suggestion has to do with schools.

When a young volunteer offers his life for missionary service, he usually knows that he will need to get some special training. But being young and enthusiastic, he doesn't want to spend any longer getting that training than he has to.

It is at this point that his pastor can render a real missionary service. If the pastor has the young person's confidence he can direct him to those schools and courses of training that will best meet his need.

- He can see to it that he doesn't try to short-cut his preparation.
- He can tell him where to get the special advice that the pastor himself may not be able to give.
- He can encourage him to go ahead in spite of difficulties.

One major difficulty that faces many candidates is the financing of their training. Even in schools where no tuition is charged, the student still has many other expenses. Should the Church help him? Especially since he is going to be a missionary? Some do. Some churches include in their budget a certain amount to be used in helping their young people get training for Christian service. They believe it is a sound investment of the Lord's money. And that can be very true.

But there are problems.

There are always some who begin their training and never complete it. There are others who finish their training but never enter the service they intended. How is the Church going to feel about these young people? Will it condemn them for accepting its help and then not carrying through? Will it make them feel like debtors?

Again, there are some whose choice of a mission board is not what the home Church would prefer. But because the Church has given them some financial help in their training, they feel obligated to accept the choice of the Church or pastor. Or if they don't, they are afraid they will offend the folks back home. Should young people be tied down with financial strings to the choices others make for them?

Such problems can be solved. But we need to face them in order to solve them. Let's face them frankly. Let's urge our young people to follow the Lord's guidance. And then let's show our confidence in Him and them by offering our help with no strings attached. Let them be responsible to Him, not to us, even as we also are responsible to Him. Let His Gospel and the glory of His name be our chief concern, and not our own interests. Only so can we fulfill our missionary obligation.

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