

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

by

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CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

A CHURCH MISSIONARY PROGRAM

WE HAVE ALREADY SAID something about the Church's responsibility to missions. Now we want to come to some practical suggestions for carrying out that responsibility. It is the local Church that we have in view, not the denomination. In fact, we want to think primarily of the Church of average size, away from the major cities. These are the ones who would most appreciate help. They are also the ones from whom a great part of the help for missions must come.

The life of any missionary program in a local Church depends largely on the leadership. Someone has to have the interest, the vision, the initiative and persistence to carry the program through. Normally the pastor should be that leader. People usually look to him for leadership, and in this matter they expect him to be better informed than the members. Besides, he must co-operate if missions is to be a Church concern and not just a fringe activity of a small group in the Church.

Now this doesn't always happen. The pastor isn't always willing or capable of taking the lead. Then it is up to someone else in the congregation, though he will have a much harder time. In any case it is important to win the support of the pastor. For purposes of our discussion here, we are going to assume that the pastor is the leader.

It is important that the pastor be sold on missions. That is, he needs to be really enthusiastic on the subject. The enthusiasms of the pastor tend to spread to the people. Not to everyone, but to many. And if the pastor is thoroughly convinced, the program is bound to follow. We may make suggestions that are helpful, but they are of no value apart from the hearty endorsement of the pastor. If he is only mildly interested, you may be sure that the program - even the most excellent program - will languish.

Three things the pastor needs to see if he is to be enthusiastic about missions.

One is a matter that we have already treated, that the Scriptures present missions as essential in the Church, and not as just an extra.

Another is that the Church itself will get a great blessing from taking a part in the work. This has been so amply proved by the experience of so many churches that sometimes we fear that a few pastors are taking up missions through wrong motives. They use them for their publicity value.

A third thing, which is not always so readily recognized by the pastor of a small Church, is that he and his Church have a really important part to play in the work. In fact, a great many of our best missionary candidates come from small churches. And proportionately, some of the small churches are far more generous in their giving than the large ones.

When the pastor is really in earnest about a complete missionary program for his Church, he will want to have before him several objectives. They may be stated as follows:

- (1) To create interest and enthusiasm for missions on the part of as many members as possible. He may not be able to interest everybody, but he should try it. The more who are interested, the greater the blessing.
- (2) To support that interest and enthusiasm with accurate and up-to-date information. Information is the food that interest grows on. But misinformation or out-of-date information can soon dull the appetite. It can't often be as up-to-date as the daily paper, and in some countries things don't change very rapidly, but when you quote as present facts statements published more than thirty years ago (as I have heard on several occasions) you are on shaky ground.
- (3) To secure as much prayer support for missions as possible. The missionaries on the field need this more than we realize. Their success depends on GOD's working through them rather than on their own unaided efforts.
- (4) To contribute material support for missions in as large a measure as possible. This is one of the objectives, but don't think of it as the only one, nor even as necessarily the chief one.
- (5) To provide personnel for the missionary enterprise. That is, to provide missionaries. *It is surprising how many people are willing to give their dollars but not their sons and daughters.*
- (6) To train prospective missionaries as far as the local Church can do that job. Sounds strange, doesn't it? How can a local Church train a missionary? Well, just look back at the indispensables in missionary preparation and see how much can be done at home and through the home Church.
- (7) To assist in such other ways as its particular circumstances may enable it, such as the promotion of joint missionary conferences, etc. The Church's objectives don't have to be limited to its own membership. Neither do its objectives have to be limited to the six mentioned above. Sometimes it can do more. And if it can, it should.

Now don't think that these objectives are separate and distinct from the other objectives of the Church.

They are closely related to them and sometimes actually blended with them. For instance, you can't busy yourself in the training of young people who may become missionaries without training some who will never be missionaries but will be better Christians.

Actually you can hardly promote the missionary objectives of the Church without benefiting the whole work of the Church.

The task abroad and the task at home are just two different phases of the same task. The Church exists for just two purposes: communion and evangelism. And evangelism in its full sense embraces the whole world.

Now for some practical suggestions in connection with these missionary objectives.

I. To create interest and enthusiasm for missions

1. The pastor's own ministry

Many a young pastor is called to a Church which has little or no interest in missions. When he himself is vitally interested, he often asks, "How can I get my people interested, when they can't see it?"

a. Don't try to force it on them.

There is no surer way of turning disinterest into opposition. Missions must come from the heart. Your first job is to find out just where the people stand. Then beginning at that point try to lead them out step by step. If they already have some sort of a missionary program, don't try to throw it out. Use it as a starting point for something better.

b. Get down to the fundamentals.

Foreign missions is not the real issue. The real issue is a vitality of faith that constrains us to witness for CHRIST. When the Church begins to feel its obligation to witness to others, missions will soon follow.

c. Use missionary illustrations in your sermons.

The story of missions is full of apt illustrations for most of the truths you will present in your regular preaching. You don't have to drag them in; they just fit. If your subject is persistence, you can find it illustrated in the life of William Carey, who claimed that as his only talent. If you are preaching on faith, Hudson Taylor can give you an excellent example. And it will be surprising if the people don't want to know more about these men after they have had a taste or two.

d. When the occasion offers, preach on missions.

This is one of the advantages of expository preaching. It would be hard to give a series of messages on any extended passage in the New Testament without dealing with missions in normal course. You don't have to look for a reason to deal with it; it comes in naturally. Or if you follow the Church calendar, Pentecost Sunday gives you an excellent occasion to speak on Missions - or Christmas Sunday.

2. Missionary speakers

Without doubt good missionary speakers can do more to stir up missionary interest than almost anyone else. But many pastors and leaders don't know how to get them or how to use them effectively.

a. Whom to invite

(1) Missionaries on furlough. These are usually the most popular speakers, because they can speak of their own experiences in the work. Many churches try to get missionaries "fresh from the field." Sometimes this may be all right, but many times the missionary needs to get a rest and get readjusted to home conditions and to a free use of the English language before he does much speaking. He will then do a better job.

(a) Those recommended by your denomination.

It is easy to get in touch with the deputational representative of your denomination's mission board and find out what missionaries may be available in your area, and when. But don't fail to ask for his recommendations. Some missionaries do best in a small gathering. Some have a special attraction for young people. Some, who are not gifted speakers, may be used only for a brief testimony.

(b) Those from well-known interdenominational missions.

Independent churches as well as many denominational churches enjoy the inspiration brought by some of these missionaries. Unless you have a particular missionary in view and know that he is making his own appointments, just write to mission headquarters for information. Write a good deal ahead of time if possible. And again, don't hesitate to ask about the capabilities of those who may be available. Not every good missionary is a good public speaker.

(c) Others whom you may know or who may be recommended to you.

Go slowly here. You are safest in inviting those who are from well-known missions. Some very able speakers represent works that are highly questionable. If you are not sure, investigate.

And don't invite the speaker until you are satisfied. (One pastor wrote us asking about a mission after he had completed arrangements for it to hold a conference in his Church.) It is easier to keep them out than to explain to the people later.

(2) Mission secretaries, deputation representatives, etc.

There are many times when these are to be preferred to the missionary on furlough. In fact, many of them are experienced missionaries who have been kept at home for this special ministry. They are usually effective speakers. These are the speakers to invite if you want a broad picture of the whole work of their mission. The missionary on furlough speaks principally of his own station and his personal experiences, but he doesn't always see how they fit into the whole program.

(3) Accepted candidates

Many churches pay scant attention to accepted missionary candidates. They haven't been on the field yet; they only know it at second-hand; so what kind of message can they bring? The answer is simply this: they can bring the inspiration of their example. If they are wise enough to make much of their personal testimony of the Lord's guidance, you will find that they will lead some of the young people to wonder if perhaps they might not be usable on the mission field, too. And they will move older people to deeper devotion by their example of youthful consecration. Even

where they are not given a whole Church service, you can give them a few minutes very profitably.

b. For what services?

This is largely a matter for the discretion of the pastor or leader. However, to get the greatest profit you will want to have a good missionary speaker at a time when the most people will be able to hear him. Don't use him as bait to increase attendance at an otherwise poorly attended service. He may increase the attendance somewhat, but the blessings of his ministry will be lost to those who didn't get there. And they are often the ones who need it most. And don't overlook the possibility of having him minister in the Sunday school and the Young People's classes. But by all means let him know ahead of time if he is to minister there.

c. When to invite.

Invite your missionary speaker as much in advance as possible. Even when they live in your city you will sometimes find that their schedules are filled for several months ahead. And if they come from a distance you will want to reduce transportation costs by inviting them when they are planning to be somewhere in your neighborhood. That means your invitation should reach them when they are planning their itinerary. When a missionary responds that he will be able to be with you on a certain date, and that date is acceptable, be sure to confirm it in writing. That way there won't be any slip-up.

d. Financial arrangements

These are sometimes hard to make, because the missionary hesitates to put a certain price on his services as if he were a professional man. These suggestions should help:

- (1) Give at least what you would give to a regular pulpit supply, if the missionary takes a Church service.
- (2) If he comes from a distance, see that his transportation is cared for.
- (3) If he has to stay overnight, take care at least of his lodging.
- (4) Faith missionaries will not ask for remuneration and may even request that no collection be taken. However, this doesn't prevent your doing what we have mentioned above. Neither does it prevent your putting an offering plate near the door into which the people may drop an offering if they wish. There should be no outward pressure to give.
- (5) In some other cases churches like to take a freewill offering for the missionary in addition to, or in the place of, the regular Church offering.

e. If you don't want a sermon, tell him so. Don't blame the missionary for not giving a missionary talk in a Sunday morning service, if you didn't tell him what you wanted.

f. Conduct of the service

- (1) Make sure the missionary's time is not cut short by lengthy announcements and other needless preliminaries. If you want his message give him the full time to deliver it.
- (2) Lengthy introductions are unnecessary. Say just enough to tell the people who he is and to whet their appetites to hear him. Then sit down. The longer you talk the less time he has for his

message.

(3) If you can't be there, be sure someone capable is in charge. The speaker finds it very awkward to have to direct the service as well as give the message in a strange Church.

g. Hospitality

There are two aspects to the problem of providing lodging and board for the missionary speaker. From his point of view it is easier to relax if he is given a room in a hotel and gets his meals at a restaurant. But, aside from the money involved, staying in a Christian home gives him an opportunity for a unique ministry within the family.

This personal and familiar contact with the missionary is of great benefit to both parties. Many a family has testified of the blessing the missionary has been in the home; while the missionary finds that the family's interest in his work is now on a deeper, more personal basis.

The ideal host takes care of his guest, but in such a way that he doesn't feel burdensome or obligated.

e. Instructions to the speaker

Even the experienced missionary speaker likes to be told precisely what you expect of him.

(1) Be sure to tell him the exact time of the meeting, the length of time for the message, and the type of service it is to be. If your people don't like the service to run overtime, let him know. Some missionaries need this reminder.

(2) Tell him how to reach the Church, and if you are arranging accommodations for him, let him know it.

(3) If you want him to use pictures of any sort, find out if he will have his own equipment and let him know what you can provide.

3. Use of audio-visual aids

There was a time when the curios he brought back were the missionary's only visual aids in telling his story. Later he could show photographs, and later still the old black-and-white or hand-colored glass slides. It was left for the present generation to multiply these visual aids and add to them some of the advantages of sound.

It is seldom that a Church is prepared to care properly for a missionary museum. Missionaries have found to their sorrow that curios left with the home Church tend to disappear, or else they gather dust in some neglected corner. It takes the missionary himself to use them and make them live.

However, there are many newer aids that you can sometimes use, in the absence of the missionary, with real effect. Most important are slides, filmstrips and moving pictures, either with or without sound.

To find out what ones are available and on what conditions, get in touch with the mission board. Sometimes there is a small rental fee, while at others a free-will offering is requested.

Slides and filmstrips sometimes come provided with a lecture that you read as you show the pictures. At other times they have an accompanying record that you can play while you show the pictures. You may have to book moving pictures a good while in advance. They also call for an experienced operator.

These aids do require that the Church own or rent equipment if you are going to use them when the missionary is not around. Of course churches are using such equipment more and more commonly in all of their work.

For slides and filmstrips a 300-watt projector is usually strong enough for the average Church. A projector that can take both slides and filmstrip is preferred. Automatic slide changers are a great help and do protect the slides but they add to the cost of the machine. The best screen is usually a beaded type, either portable or permanently attached to the ceiling of the room where you show the pictures.

Motion pictures call for more expensive equipment. Of course you can use the same screen, but you need a good 16-millimeter sound projector. If the picture is not a sound picture you can still show it on the sound projector; but you can't show sound film on a silent projector.

A further word about the effective use of these aids.

A common mistake in the use of pictures is to expect the pictures to do the whole job alone. It doesn't work. The pictures may be the heart of the program but you need to plan the whole program carefully so that they will have their full effect. Your opening remarks should prepare the way for the pictures and can be as long as you think necessary for that purpose. But your remarks after the pictures should be as brief and to the point as you can make them, perhaps pointing the way to what action should be taken in the light of what you have just seen. But, no preaching!

There are several other audio-visual aids that we ought also to mention briefly.

You can get flannelgraph stories from the mission fields from several missions, and you can also buy them in Christian bookstores. They are particularly useful for children's meetings. You can also get recordings of missionary stories in Christian bookstores. Then, an increasing number of missionaries are taking tape recorders to the field and are sending home recordings. These are not yet available on a large scale, and the quality is not of the best, but people appreciate them a great deal when they are well acquainted with the missionary.

4. The missionary library

The Church that gives serious attention to a Church library never has reason to complain of the results.

No other investment pays such valuable dividends for so small an amount invested. If it doesn't work out well you will find the cause in one of these three things: either you didn't have a dependable librarian at all times, or your choice of books was poor, or you weren't willing to spend money for new books and to keep the library up. The biggest problem is the librarian,

unless the Church has a full-time secretary who can handle this matter. It needs someone who is really interested and will be faithful to the task, someone who will keep accurate records and be available at regular times for the borrowing and returning of books.

The biggest mistake in the choice of books is to get those you think the people ought to read rather than those they want to read. You may have to have a certain number of reference works, but most of the books should be of the sort that nearly everybody is interested in reading. When one person likes a book he is sure to recommend it to someone else. But remember that tastes differ.

Of course no library will continue to be used if it doesn't continue to add to its list. Some of these can be gifts from interested friends, which are usually the older books, but you should add new ones constantly, too. To know what books to buy, unless you read them yourself, consult the reviews in some dependable Christian magazine. Publicize these books, too, so that people will want to read them. If you have a bulletin board available, you can put the jacket of the book on the board, together with a review of it.

What missionary books should go into the library? If your library is small you will want very few reference works and serious study books. The larger the library, the more of these you may include. A large part of the books will probably be in the nature of missionary stories and biography. Here is an annotated list which we believe will be interesting and useful. It contains books for children as well as for adults.

CHILDREN

Aunt Theresa's Missionary Stories (three booklets) - Stories told in popular KYB Club on radio station WMBI.

Forty Missionary Stories, Margaret Eggleston - A popular collection for children.

Jungle Doctor series (nine books), Paul White - Outstanding stories by a medical missionary to Africa.

Year of the Tiger, John Bechtel Fiction. - A touching story of life in China for older children.

Cannibal Country, Charles Ludwig

Big Peanuts, Lucilda Newton - Stories of East Africans by authors who have lived there.

STORIES OF MISSIONARY WORK

Mountains Singing, Sanna Barlow - Experiences getting missionary recordings of Philippine tribes.

Under a Thatched Roof in a Brazilian Jungle, Rosemary Cunningham - A missionary family's life in an Amazonian jungle.

Nests Above the Abyss, Isobel Kuhn - Lisu tribespeople of southwest China receive the Gospel.

Sand and Stars, Ruth Stull - South American experiences by a popular missionary speaker.

The Blood Hunters and Gongs in the Night, Mr. and Mrs. Gordon H. Smith - Among the tribespeople of Indo-China.

Cheng's Mother, Irene Forsythe Hanson - Delightful story of a Chinese Christian by her adopted daughter.

Adventures with GOD, Jenny de Mayer - An unusual missionary in little-known lands of the Middle East.

Blossom of the Crag and Lin of Willow Valley, Marie Barham - Well-told tales from China by a missionary of the C.I.M.

BIOGRAPHY

The Moffats, Ethel Daniels Hubbard - Masterful brief biography of a famous missionary couple.

Hudson Taylor's Spiritual Secret, Dr. and Mrs. F. Howard Taylor - A blessing for those who haven't time for the two volume life of Hudson Taylor.

C. T. Studd, Cricketer and Pioneer, Norman P. Grubb - Ever-popular story of an unusual missionary figure.

Rees Howells, Intercessor, Norman P. Grubb - A new biography of a somewhat different sort.

Bible Agent in Spain, Walter McCleary - Condensed account of experiences of George Borrow.

Personal Life of David Livingstone, D. Blaikie - Still considered the best biography of the renowned missionary.

These Sought a Country, K. S. Latourette - Key missionary figures by the foremost historian of missions.

William Carey, F. Deaville Walker - Recently republished account of "the father of modern missions."

Brief biographies by Basil Miller deal with many missionaries.

MISSIONARY PRINCIPLES AND HISTORY

The Foreign Missionary, Arthur J. Brown - Still the most interesting and comprehensive book on the subject.

In Training, Rowland Hogben - How to prepare for missionary service.

Ambassadors for CHRIST, Mildred Cable and Francesca French - What a real missionary should be and do.

The Bible Basis of Missions, Robert H. Glover - Valuable studies by a well-known missionary doctor, teacher and leader.

World Missions, Martha Moennich - General survey based on personal visits.

The Progress of World-Wide Missions, Robert H. Glover - Still a most readable history and survey, though not now up-to-date.

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