



MISSIONS AND MISSIONARIES

THE CALL OF BEING A DISCIPLE /
MISSIONARY TO THE WORLD

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Rev. Dr. Lahtaw, Zau Sam

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Matthew 28:19-20

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Preface:

The purpose of this booklet is to provide some information to those who are either considering going out onto the mission field, or have gone out as missionaries. We live in such a changing society where there are many ways to communicate the gospel of Jesus Christ throughout the world. Even though we are in a new age that is rapidly growing in technology, there are still some principles that one must know if one hopes to advance the kingdom of heaven throughout this world.

We have been commissioned to go out and make disciples (Matt 28:19-20). Built within the word **commission** is the word Mission. If we are truly followers of Jesus Christ we are all then called to reach out with our testimonies and with the teaching of the Word of God, with the hope of producing fruit that will last. Missions is something that we need to focus on as disciples and as a church, making sure that we clearly understand our purpose and goal for going. Again we are told in the Scriptures that the harvest is ripe, but the biggest problem right now is labourers (Matt 9:35-38), those who are willing to go out through self-sacrifice and serve our Lord Jesus Christ.

God desires that we reproduce and bear fruit for Him. As we commit to being His disciples we then go out to bring people to Christ, to see them baptized and to train them in the ministry of discipleship. Missions has always been at the very center of the heart of God. He has used people who have been kings, prophets, priests and just ordinary people to be witnesses of who He is to a lost world. In many ways Jesus Himself, even though He is God's Son, was sent forth by God as a missionary to this lost world so that He could give of Himself by dying on a cross, taking on our suffering and shame. But after the third day He rose from the

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grave and from that point all those who would believe in Him would have eternal life.

Our mission as disciples is to go out and share the gospel so that those who hear and choose to receive, will be set free from the bondages of this world. Or to put it another way - that through Christ the chains of sin and death can be broken for all eternity.

For the first 20 years of my ministry I was mostly consumed with pastoring various churches throughout Canada. I was involved in church planting in several communities. Then in 1996 the calling of the Lord on my heart, you could say, took a 180° turn and He called me into the mission field of discipleship making. Out of this call came the birthing forth of Project L.A.M.B.S. International, where we disciple, equip, mentor and strengthen the church by teaching the Word of God. We have gone to many countries of the world and literally seen thousands of people get disciplined and equipped to the place where they could work in the local church body in various areas and see fruit come forth from their labours as servants of Jesus Christ.

During those 40 years of ministry through hard knocks and study, I have learned what are some of the key challenges that today's disciple / missionary will face. We live in an ever-changing world and as we approach the last days there are many difficult times ahead for the church which sends out missionaries and for the missionaries who step out and follow after the heartbeat of God on their lives.

In the pages that follow are just some insights that I have gleaned as I travelled along the road both as a pastor and a missionary. As a pastor I was involved in sending out missionaries, and now as a missionary I am being sent out by various churches

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to fulfil the great commission of Jesus Christ. I pray that God will use this booklet to encourage, strengthen and help those who desire to serve as a disciple / missionary in other countries around the world. May our Lord keep you and strengthen you as you serve Him with all your heart.

Introduction:

What I've seen as I've travelled the world is that there is a lack, of a basic understanding of what it means to be both a short-term and a long-term missionary. When we are called by God to go to another place to present His gospel we need to go with a servant heart. We are not there to fulfill our will or our desires, we are there to bring the gospel of Jesus Christ to a needy people. These people need to hear the truth and need to see the truth and love of Christ flowing out through our lives so that their hearts may be touched in a new and life giving way.

There have been so many tragic things done by a sending church, sending out people who were ill equipped to face the new challenges coming at them from every direction. They would undergo things that would affect their body, soul and spirit in ways that they never dreamt would happen. The world is full of many wonderful people, but it is also full of people who want to destroy what you as a disciple / missionary believe in. Technology has opened up so many doors where people can learn a variety of things, but often they only get little pieces of different thoughts and over time become confused or even give up in believing that there is a God, who cares and loves them.

It is important to take a moment to define some words. First are the words *Disciple and Discipleship*.

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The dictionary states that this word disciple means one who is a follower, believer, supporter, devotee, student, learner. A disciple is one who follows after the imparted knowledge of a teacher and emulates the lifestyle of the teacher. In the New Testament people were called by Christ to follow Him and in so doing they became His disciples. (Both men and women can be called disciples).

Secondly we have the word “discipleship” which means a process of training and equipping someone. The disciples of Christ are commanded to go out and make other disciples, and this can only come through the discipline of discipleship training.

Secondly, let’s look at the words *Mission and Missionary*. The word mission means an assignment, task, work, charge, undertaking, operation. God has commissioned all disciples to be missionaries in His harvest field. The harvest is ripe; God commissions His labourers to serve each day, whether in the home, job, neighbourhood or around the world. Missionaries are sent out ones that God calls to deliver, on His behalf, the Good News of Jesus Christ. The missionary is an ambassador who represents the Kingdom of God. Jesus gave the Great Commission to all disciples in Matthew 28:16-20.

Being a missionary means doing missions and being a missionary, in many ways, is like having a box full of puzzle pieces, each piece being unique and having a purpose but most importantly, these pieces must be assembled and connected in a proper order so that one can see the whole picture. Missionaries so often get little training and they go out with a bucket of ideas that are mainly birthed forth through many years of North American or European traditions. It is time that we rethink about the methods and ways of doing missions that the Bible itself has laid out for us.

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The moment that the disciple / missionary steps out across a cultural boundary there is a whole host of new things that one needs to learn and clearly understand. There are hundreds of different people groups around the world using different scripts, speaking different languages and holding to a variety of unique cultures and traditions. It is interesting to note how many times the book of Revelation states that in heaven every tribe and tongue and nation and people group will be represented (Rev 4:9; 7:2; 10:11; 11:9; 13:5; 14:6; 17:15). I believe this is something that we as disciples / missionaries need to spend a lot of time pondering on and asking the Lord how we may be able to bring the gospel of Christ Jesus to these various people that are part of His creation all over the world.

We need to remember that as a disciple / missionary we are representing a body of believers where Jesus Christ Himself is our head. Through the Church we become commissioned and sent out. We should endeavor to work closely with the sending churches because we are told that there is strength in numbers. There are too many missionaries on the mission field, who feel left alone and deserted. We should never get to the place where it becomes the “them and us” factor. We are called to do and walk this ministry out together. The church today is busy doing many things, but often has little communication with their disciple / missionary out on the field. Mind you, it is also true that the missionary does not communicate very well with the churches either.

Because the harvest field is ripe and the labourers are few, we need to take the calling that God puts on our heart, to go out to that specific harvest field that He has directed us to and bring in His harvests. We are told that we are His hands and feet and that He will never leave us nor forsake us (Deut 31:6; Josh 1:5).

We are called to be His ambassadors to a lost world. Even the Scriptures tell us how beautiful are the feet of them who bring good news (Rom 10:15). Many people groups around the world have lived for hundreds of years in bondage to Satan and his demons, but Christ has come to set the captive free (Gal 5:1) and He does this by commissioning and empowering us to go not in our strength and ability but in His strength and ability.

I trust that you will commit completely to following Jesus Christ as His disciple / missionary to wherever He may lead you and guide you in the days ahead, and that you will keep your eyes focused on Him.

1. Mission Call

*“Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor me his prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us and **called** us with a holy **calling**, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began,” 2 Timothy 1:8-9*

The key to any kind of successful ministry must be first built on a clear calling from God as to what it is that one should be doing and where one should be doing it. Our calling is critical to everything that we will do for the Lord, because when we have a clear calling then we can also have a true faith that will carry us through both the difficult times and the times of blessing. We must remember several things about the purposes of God. His most important calling on your life is to make you more like Him. Ministry that we do for Him is as an extension or fruit of His calling on our lives. The key purpose of God working through us is to draw us closer and deeper into a personal relationship with

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Him and the fruit of that relationship is a ministry or a mission that will draw other people to Him as Saviour and Lord.

Let us take a moment to look at the word *call*. It means to cry out, to summon, to attract attention, to desire to speak or communicate with, to bring a person into a specific service or ministry. Today Christ calls out to all, but not all will heed the call, but those who accept will receive the power and eternal life of Christ Jesus. The Master called the disciples and they followed. Throughout time God has been calling people to service, for example: Abraham, Gideon, and Samuel just to name a few. Today He calls people to be His disciples and to become part of the body of Christ.

▪ **God's Calling**

The truth of the matter is God is calling all His followers to serve Him in one form or another. Some will be ministers who have been called to serve at home or at their job. Others will be called into ministries that may take place in their country or even to go abroad. Some people will be called to do both short-term and long-term ministries; others will do it full-time with some type of remuneration.

We can see from the life of Paul the dramatic results of God's calling on his life. Many of us will not have such a dramatic encounter where God literally knocks us off our horse and blinds us physically until we are ready to see spiritually (Acts 9:1-30). It is also interesting to note that even after Paul had this dramatic encounter he took time to speak with the key leaders of the church in Jerusalem (Acts 9:26-29) and he also took time to go out, as it were, into the wilderness and spend time with God working through a clear understanding of the call that God was giving him to be a minister and servant to the Gentile peoples.

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We can see how Paul reminded Timothy about the calling of God on his life. He tells Timothy, *“fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also **called** in to have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses”* (1 Timothy 6:12). Even though Timothy was a young man, Paul continued to remind him of his heritage and how God had gifted him through the laying on of hands (1 Tim 4:14). Timothy was not only being mentored by Paul concerning the Scriptures and the ministry that he would be involved in, but it wasn’t long before Paul released him, by the power of the Holy Spirit to go out as a missionary and to help share the good news of Jesus Christ. He was to instruct the leadership of these new churches on how to have faith and to live as a disciple for Christ Jesus.

God’s calling on our lives needs to be sure and firm. We are to be like the wise builder who builds his house upon the rock and when the winds and waves come the house stands firm (Matt 7:24-27). I tell you the truth that when you go out as a disciple / missionary there will be many kinds of winds and waves that will batter you, but because you firmly understand the call of God on your life you will be able to overcome, not because of who you are but because of who He is in you.

We should not fear coming before the Lord and asking Him questions so that His calling can be made more clear within our lives. We should question the Lord: “Where is it, that you want me to go? To what people do want me to minister? How and with whom should I go? Why are you calling me to this place and to a specific people group? What are some of the first steps that I should begin to plan and walk out as I get ready to serve You?”

- **God’s will**

The next most important part of one’s calling is to make sure we are clearly walking in the will of God. Scripture clearly



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