

We come this week to the tenth and final sermon on our short study on Church Life. Thus far we've seen the church exists to look up in worship, within in edification, and without in evangelism. If you remember, last week I suggested that evangelism can be summarized into two broad categories: personal and corporate.

By personal I meant, evangelism that takes place by letting our light shine throughout the course of our everyday lives, and by corporate I meant, evangelism that takes place by the church as a whole (commonly called outreach or missions).

Thus, corporate evangelism includes many things—it includes all forms of formal or corporate outreach—going door to door, street-preaching, passing out tracts at various events, ministering at homeless shelters, and various internet ministries—these would all fall under the broad category of outreaches.

But what I want to focus more specifically on this morning, is what's commonly called missions, which can be divided into local and foreign. "Local missions" refers to missionary activity within our nation, whereas, "foreign missions" refers to missionary activity outside of our nation (in other countries or nations).

- I. Missionaries are Sent by Local Churches
- II. Missionaries Start and Strengthen Local Churches
- III. Missionary Work is the Responsibility of Every Local Church

I. Missionaries are Sent by Local Churches

1. The English word "missions" comes from the Latin meaning "to send forth with authority or purpose."
2. It was used in the Vulgate (Latin translation) to translate the Greek word *apostello* meaning "to send forth."
3. Thus, in the strict sense, a missionary is someone sent by a church, with divine authority, to start and strengthen churches.
4. This brings us more directly to our first point—missionaries are sent by local churches (which implies three things).
5. (1) Sending churches must ensure the missionary is qualified—this is implied in the fact that the missionary is sent.
6. To send someone is to put your blessing upon them—it's to send them forth with your backing and support.
7. This then brings us to an important point—in the strict sense the term "missionary" isn't a Biblical term.
8. As I've said, it's derived from the Latin translation of the Greek word *apostle*—missionaries resemble in a qualified sense.
9. This point is important because, it admits Scripture nowhere provides a detailed description of a missionary.
10. This isn't an office of missionary—as you know, the NT Scriptures only describe the office of elder and deacon (not missionary).
11. Thus, the question becomes—What are the necessary qualifications to be sent by a church as a missionary?
12. Well, let me suggest the best answer to this question is—It depends on what is exactly meant by missionary?

13. In the strict sense, missionaries should be elders or at least men who are generally qualified to serve as elders.
14. But what happens is—most people broaden the term missionary to include those who help or assist missionaries.
15. Thus, in this sense, a missionary is any person the church sends to start and strengthen local churches.
16. Churches will sometimes refer to a "missions' trip" where a group with assist a church in another state or country.
17. Such people may help in construction, medical, or other ways, and consist of men, women, boys, and girls.
18. Thus, only in this qualified sense, can we refer to such people as missionaries, on a formal missions' trip.
19. Taken in its more formal sense—a missionary is a person judged qualified by the standards of Scripture.
20. And what standards are to be used to judge whether someone qualifies but the qualifications of an elder.
21. Let me also say (somewhat controversially), it's only in this qualified sense, we can refer to women as missionaries.
22. Personally, if a man is married and sent as a missionary, I don't think it's wrong to refer to them as missionaries.
23. This is especially true, if they are being sent to a foreign land that will necessitate unique qualities in a woman.
24. But simply put, in the strictest sense, a missionary is a qualified man, sanctioned and sent by a local church.
25. 1Tim.5:22—"Do not lay hands on anyone hastily, nor share in other people's sins; keep yourself pure."
26. These are Paul's words to Timothy, and form a warning against ordaining a man to quickly or unwisely.
27. It must be applied to men ordained to serve in our church, and to men sent to serve in others churches.
28. Brethren, simply put, mere desire to be sent as a missionary is not enough to actually be sent as a missionary.
29. Many Christians think, as long as you desire to go, you should go, and woe be that church that hinders you.
30. While God Himself sends missionaries, He ordinarily does so through the voice and backing of a church.
31. Acts 13:1-3—"Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, 'Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.' Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent *them* away."
32. (a) Barnabas and Paul ministered as members in the church at Antioch—they were known by the church (their grace and gifts were witnessed).
33. (b) Barnabas and Paul were called to serve as missionaries, v2—"As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, 'Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.'"
34. Notice, the church "ministered to the Lord (serving Him) and fasted"—this means they were seeking guidance.

35. Yes, the Holy Spirit gave them specific direction and instruction, but it was given in response to prayer.
36. (c) Barnabas and Paul were sent by the church at Antioch, v3—"then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away."
37. Notice, v3 says "the church sent them away" whereas, v4 says "so, being sent out by the Holy Spirit."
38. In other words, the call to be a missionary, while it comes from the Spirit, is mediated through the church.
39. Thus, there's a sense in which that local church goes out in the person of the missionary to further the gospel.
40. Ian Tait—"The local church, recognizing its responsibility as the sending body, identifies itself with the missionary by the laying-on of hands. In the person of the missionary, the church itself is going out after the lost; part of the family is moving out to establish – on the same Rock – another spiritual home 'after its own kind.'"
41. (2) Sending churches must assume the responsibility of missionaries—the church goes in the person of the missionary.
42. That is, sending churches are responsible for overseeing and supporting missionaries sent out by them.
43. Ian Tait—"The missionary's own church is the sending body, and as such must recognize and assume its responsibilities. This does not mean that the responsibilities will not be shared with other churches, a missionary society, or friends of the missionary, but it does mean that the responsibility, in the first instance, rests with the church of which the missionary is a member. The concept of a missionary or any other Christian, not in membership with a church is a concept quite foreign to the NT."
44. (3) Sending churches must receive occasional updates by the missionaries—they must keep them informed.
45. Acts 14:26-28—"From there they sailed to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work which they had completed. Now when they had come and gathered the church together, they reported all that God had done with them, and that He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles."
46. Having been sent by the church in Antioch, back in Acts 13:1-3, Paul and Barnabas now return to Antioch.
47. Verse 26 says "they had been commended to the grace of God for the work which they had completed."
48. They completed the task and now returned to tell about it—they finished the task they were sent to do.
49. Although Paul was an apostle, and many would say the greatest apostle, he reported to his sending church.
50. All of the missionary activity within the book of Acts, surrounds local churches—it's missionary activity tethered to local churches.

II. Missionaries Start and Strengthen Local Churches

1. Here I want to come more to the activity of missions—what are missionaries fundamentally sent to do?
2. Well, to put it rather simple—they are sent to start and strengthen local churches—churches start churches.
3. This is the pattern we see throughout the book of Acts—churches send Christians to start other churches (and this is the pattern of Matthew 28:18-20).

4. We are to make disciples, gather them into churches through baptism, and then teach them to repeat the process.
5. This is in part what churches do—churches make churches—they are to duplicate themselves across the world.
6. What God told our first parents is true of the church—"Be fruitful and increase in number; multiply on the earth" (Gen.1:28).
7. (1) We must find a place—by this I mean, a place to target for a newly established local assembly (church).
8. Again, this can be local or foreign—it can be somewhere else in OH, USA, or else some other country.
9. Now, let me just say, there are many factors that must be considered in deciding on where to start a church.
10. (a) Obvious needs—by this I mean, we find places where there is little, if any, gospel light or witness.
11. Now, brethren, let me just say, for the past two hundred years, that meant sending missionaries overseas.
12. But over the past 50 years things have changed—in many ways the USA has become a mission field.
13. You know, we really don't need to go too far to see places where true and faithful churches are scarce.
14. For example, you see a side of town or a place within the state, where there's a need for a biblical church.
15. Or else, you think of other countries where the gospel has had little success for (in some cases) hundreds of years.
16. This means we must be mindful of what's happening outside our church building—there's a lot of needs in our city, state, country, and world.
17. (b) Personal burden—by this I mean, the Holy Spirit often burdens a people for a specific group of people.
18. Oftentimes, this burden relates to our past—if your born in China you likely have a burden for China.
19. Rom.9:3—"For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh."
20. Even though Paul was largely sent to Gentiles, he never lost his love for Jews, his people according to the flesh.
21. For me, it's people caught in drug addiction and poverty—what's common called urban or inner-city.
22. This is where my heart is and will always be—I will always have a special burden for such people and places.
23. Or else, think of the many men we've met you've been converted in their homeland, come to the US for training, only to be sent back to the homeland by an American church.
24. I met a man several years ago in our sister church in Montville NJ, from South Korea—he was saved in South Korea, came to the US for training, after about 5-6 years was sent back to South Korea as a missionary.
25. (c) Providential signs—by this I mean, the providence of God in opening various doors of opportunity.
26. In the book of Acts, the Spirit directly communicated to the churches, leading them to certain places.
27. Although the Spirit no longer directs in this way, nevertheless, we must remain sensitive to His leading.

28. For example, for our church, providentially doors have been opened for us to minister in Cuba and Columbia.
29. Doors have been opened—opportunity has been given—brethren, we must take these things to heart.
30. Or else, for example, you have a couple families that drive an hour from the south, that might be a nucleus (one day) of a church plant.
31. These are different ways doors are opened to us for the advancement of the gospel, and we must be open to them.
32. (2) We must have a plan—by this I mean, we must have a prudent plan to evangelize this specific place.
33. This might mean, we work with established churches—that is, we either send money or people to help.
34. But if we are looking to start a church ourselves, we need is a group of converts to serve as a nucleus.
35. Thus, we have a family that lives in an area that we're targeting, we start with Bible studies in their house.
36. Perhaps we go door to door in that area, but one way or another, we have to make our intentions known.
37. We have to begin to prayerfully develop a plan to evangelize that area so gather a base (core) of Christians.
38. (3) We must prepare a person—by this I mean, we must prepare someone to lead the missionary endeavor.
39. Now, it's also possible that we partner with other churches, who may be more equipped to provide the man.
40. But either way, if there is no existing church and pastor, then we need to raise up men who fill those posts.

III. Missionary Work is the Responsibility of Every Local Church

1. Let me begin with a clarification—I am not saying every local church will be equally involved in missions.
2. A young church or smaller church, may not have the resources and ability to do much by way of missions.
3. And yet, it nevertheless remains true, that every local church, regardless of size, can and should be missions minded.
4. (1) Every local church must train missionaries—that is, it must create an environment conducive to missions.
5. We must create a context that encourages men to become elders (or missionaries), locally and foreign.
6. Brethren, surely, we understand this is the job of the local church, and not seminaries or mission agencies.
7. 2Tim.2:2—"And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also."
8. Paul exhorts Timothy, within the context of the local church, train faithful men that they might train faithful men.
9. Some of us come from church traditions where the highest calling known to man was that of a missionary.
10. The impression was given, that if were not willing to go to Africa or Asia you were a second-rate Christian.

11. And furthermore, some of have seen the carnage this misguided zeal was caused and the damage it's caused.
12. Brethren, remember what I've already said—in one sense all Christians are missionaries (that is, with a small 'm').
13. But let us not fall into the opposite ditch, where we fail to encourage our young people to think in terms of missions.
14. And we do that by fostering an environment, within the church, that encourages young men especially, to consider the privilege of serving Christ as an elder in Canton OH, or in some other state or country.
15. (2) Every local church must support missionaries—that is, we must support missions with money and possessions.
16. Brethren, as you know, this is done in the first place by regular, proportionate, giving to the local church.
17. But it doesn't have to end there—you can give of your money and abilities to help churches near and far.
18. (3) Every local church must pray for missionaries—that is, we must pray that God would raise up and send forth missionaries.
19. Matt.9:37-38—"The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest."
20. As it so happens, this sermon falls on the last Lord's Day of 2019—what a wonderful way to finish the year.
21. Let us resolve, dear brethren, to do much better in 2020, both in our personal and corporate evangelism.
22. Thus, to motivate as we anticipate entering the new year, let me close this sermon with three motives.
23. Motive 1—The depravity of man—by this I refer to the native condition that all men (without exception) are born into.
24. Acts 26:17-18—"I send you, to the Gentiles, to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me."
25. Motive 2—The exclusivity of the gospel—by this I mean, no person can ever be saved without Christ.
26. Rom.10:13-15—"For whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved. How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of who they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent?"
27. Motive 3—The sovereign purposes of God—by this I refer to the purpose of God in saving sinners by the gospel.
28. From eternity past God not only elected a people, but He also selected the way in which they would be saved.
29. He chose a people to be saved by the gospel, through the missionary endeavors of His beloved people.
30. 2Tim.2:10—"Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory."
31. Far from hindering missions, God's sovereign purposes gives fuel to missions. It ensures a certain success.
32. God has not only decreed a people to be saved, but He's decreed also the means whereby they will be saved (Paul knew God had an elect people and He would use him as a means to bring them out of darkness into the light).