

Short Term Missions 101

Lesson 1: Our God Is A Missionary God

The English word “mission” goes back to 1606 A.D. from Latin words that mean; *a letting go, a sending away, releasing, to cause to go, letting go, to send off.*

Today the word has evolved to mean: *A ministry commissioned by a religious organization to propagate its faith or carry on humanitarian work or assignment. Also implied is a sense of sending, like sending a messenger to announce with word and demonstrate with deed the Good News that sets anybody free from anything that binds them.*

Simplified definitions for Christian missions,

Mission: Sending active messengers into another culture.

*Missionary: A person intentionally sent into another culture to be an active Gospel messenger in both word and deed.*¹

God has been actively sending messengers since very early in the human experience.

Abram

Genesis 12:1-3

1 Now the LORD had said to Abram:

*“Get out of your country,
From your family
And from your father’s house,
To a land that I will show you.*

*2 I will make you a great nation;
I will bless you
And make your name great;
And you shall be a blessing.*

*3 I will bless those who bless you,
And I will curse him who curses you;
And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”*

¹ Maximum Impact Short Term Mission, pg. 43

First a command.

This was a God given command. It was the LORD (Yahweh), which commanded him to leave.

Next we see that this was a command that required Abram to take action. *“Get out of your country.”* Leaving the US is too traumatic an event for many of us to consider. Yet that may be exactly what we need to do to fulfill the mission God gives us. There was no discussion, no rationalization of how it would be cheaper to stay home and send money, no nationalization – charity begins at home, we have needs here too, we have unsaved people here too, just get!

Then, he was told to get away from his family. Abram’s mission required him to not only leave his country – but also his family, his safety blanket, his support group.

Also, he was told to leave his father’s house – this is immediate family, not just aunt’s and uncle’s. For Abraham fulfilling his mission meant he had to leave his country, his home, and his father’s house.

Finally, this was a command to go without a destination specified. Did you ever say to God – I’ll go, but not to Africa, not to Asia, not too far away from my family, my friends, my loved ones. Abram didn’t have the luxury of deciding whether he wanted to go where God was sending him or not. Just go, get, leave – to a place I will show you. How incredible then the reaction of Abram -

4 So Abram departed as the LORD had spoken to him.

From the days of Abram fulfilling God’s mission has required “faith” from those who’ve attempted to do it. I’m reminded of Hebrews 11:6

...without faith it is impossible to please Him.

Next a promise

This blessing was first personal – *I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great.* It shouldn’t really be a surprise to us that:

John 13:16 Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. 17 If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.

It’s obedience that brings joy.

Then, not only will Abram be blessed, but he will also be a blessing. In fact, Abram is promised that, *in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.* Abram’s obedience would not only benefit him but the world.

Finally, the promise of protection

I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you.

God says to Abram, I will fight your battles, I will be your protector, I will be your guide. God's direction to Abram was:

Trust Me – I will lead you (vs. 1)

Obey Me – I will make your name great (vs. 2)

Lean on Me – It's My responsibility to be your protector, your avenger, the one who fights your battles. - (vs. 3)

In the New Testament God's still sending, many are unlikely candidates.

Paul

Acts 13-17

An unlikely candidate

Saul of Tarsus wasn't the typical person associated with Christian service. He hated the Church, hated Christians, and hated Christ.

1 Corinthians 15:9 For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

This great man of God considered himself *the least of the apostles*; in fact he said he was - *not worthy to be called an apostle* because he *persecuted the church of God*.

After coming to Christ Paul's new found zeal and passion for Christ meant that he spent much of his ministry and his life in general enduring great hardships and pouring out much of his life in prison. This too was part of Paul's calling:

Acts 9:10 *Now there was a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and to him the Lord said in a vision, "Ananias." And he said, "Here I am, Lord." 11 So the Lord said to him, "Arise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus, for behold, he is praying. 12 And in a vision he has seen a man named Ananias coming in and putting his hand on him, so that he might receive his sight." 13 Then Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem. 14 And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name." 15 But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. 16 For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake."*

But in Paul we learn that God can save and use anyone he chooses to.

Paul was Spirit-filled

Acts 16:6 Now when they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia. 7 After they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them. 8 So passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas. 9 And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." 10 Now after he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them.

What a remarkable thing to be forbidden by The Holy Spirit to preach in a place. But look closely and you will find that Paul didn't just stop – he moved forward until he had no other options. He could have went back to Antioch and stayed but instead he kept forging ahead until finally there was nothing before him but sea.

Then, through a vision, God showed Paul that they should cross the sea and preach the Gospel at Macedonia. With Paul's obedience to the Spirits leading the Gospel leaped to another continent and gained a foothold into Europe.

Truly effective ministers are Spirit-filled, Spirit-led ministers.

Paul was a bi-vocational, short-term missionary

Bi-Vocational

In some instances Paul determined to not accept any support from those he ministered to. He did not condemn this, in fact he even stated that he had a right to receive it (and did later in his ministry), but for the sake of the Gospel (1 Corinthians 9:12), and for a period of time, he determined not to accept it.

Paul's trade was tent making. Acts 18:3 tells us that when he went to Corinth he found Aquila and his wife Priscilla who were tent makers:

3 So, because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and worked; for by occupation they were tentmakers.

He stayed with them and worked. He must have done the same thing while in Ephesus because in his farewell address to the Ephesian elders he says:

Acts 20: 34 Yes, you yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me.

Also to the Thessalonians he writes:

1 Thessalonians 2:9 For you remember, brethren, our labor and toil; for laboring night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, we preached to you the gospel of God.

I mention this not to cast doubt on any full-time Christian worker. Paul did not preach against that – in fact he took support from the Philippian church and thanked them for it. The point I want to make is,

Jesus called his *fishermen* disciples and told them he would make them *fishers-of-men*. Why wouldn't he have *tent-makers-of-men* or *accountants-of-men* or *construction-workers-of-men* or *insurance-agents-of-men*. God uses people that don't fit the mold of traditional-missionary service to perform His mission.

Short Term

While Paul is considered by many to be the premier apostle, preacher, writer, and missionary of the first century it is very likely that he never stayed more than two years in any one location. Donald Kitchen points out:

Paul... never spent a full four year term in any place but was constantly changing his field of ministry. His longest stay in any one place was two years (Ephesus). Many of his ministries were accomplished in time periods that would be considered as only a brief visit to the mission field. Paul, however, was used of God to plant churches in four different provinces and two continents.²

This may be a good time to define Short-Term Missions.

Short-Term Missions: The God commanded, repetitive deployment of swift, temporary, non-professional missionaries.³

Paul's *mission-trips* lasted anywhere from a few weeks (Acts 15:2-35), to a few years (Acts 18:23-21:16). Paul's strategy seemed to be that once he preached the Gospel and a Christian community was established he would entrust responsibility to the local leadership and *move on*. This is not to suggest that all missionaries should work this way – only that this is a viable option.

From Paul we learn that God can use anyone he chooses to use.

From Paul we learn that the only Spirit-filled, Spirit-led ministers are truly effective ministers.

You can have a secular occupation and still be used by God in missionary service.

Jesus

Galatians 4:4-5

4 But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.

² Maximum Impact Short Term Mission, pg. 210

³ Maximum Impact Short Term Mission, pg. 267

The scripture teaches us that Christ was *a Lamb slain from the foundation of the world*. Before the creation the Father knew He would have to send the Son to redeem the world. When He formed Adam from the dust of the ground, Jesus knew He would have to come and die for him and us.

Again, using the word we've come to know as "missions" or "missionary" there is an implication, *a sense of sending, like sending a messenger to announce with word and demonstrate with deed the Good News that sets anybody free from anything that binds them*. How fitting is that to describe the ministry of the Lord Jesus.

- Galatians 4 tells us He was sent by the Father
- Over and over He announced with word and deed the "Good News"
- He sets free those that are bound

Luke 4: 17 And He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written:

*18 "The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me,
Because He has anointed Me
To preach the gospel to the poor;
He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted,
To proclaim liberty to the captives
And recovery of sight to the blind,
To set at liberty those who are oppressed;
19 To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD."*

The Lord Jesus Himself, in a three year period, accomplished His mission and provided salvation for God's fallen creation.

Conclusion:

Missions have been on God's heart since creation. Throughout time He has called fallen men to proclaim His Gospel.

Faith and obedience are the first steps to partnering with God to complete His mission on the earth. He has promised to never leave us nor forsake us and that if we cast all our anxieties on Him He will take care of us.

God can use any of us. Despite your past, your background, your preparation, God can use you. He uses those that are filled with the Holy Spirit and even those not in traditional ministry positions.

Jesus too was a cross-cultural missionary. He came in obedience to His Father to set captives free, heal the broken-hearted and give liberty to the oppressed. He offers life to all that believe on Him – and He calls those of us who have trusted Him as our savior to spread this offer to the world. He, in turn, sends us on His mission to fulfill His plan.

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Lesson 2: The Great Commission

Famous last words:

"Don't let it end like this. Tell them I said something." - Francisco ("Pancho") Villa

"Either that wallpaper goes or I do," - Oscar Wilde

"I don't have the passion anymore, and so remember, it's better to burn out than to fade away. Peace, Love, Empathy." - Kurt Cobain.

"Let me go to the Father's house." - Pope John Paul II

Jesus last words before He ascended into heaven made it clear of some specific things He wanted us to do:

Acts 1:8 But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." 9 Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. 10 And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, 11 who also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven."

And again in Matthew 28:19-20, in what we've come to call The Great Commission Jesus said:

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

First, The Command

Go. πορευθέντες. The word means, to go, to travel, to cross boundaries, sociological, racial, cultural, and geographic. Though it's often been depicted as a command it's really not. It's written in the passive voice and could be translated, being-gone. Or some have suggested as you go. Either way it becomes obvious that the "going" is not the main emphasis of the verse.

If it's not the command then what is? Making disciples is the command. The word is μαθητεύσατε. It is written in the imperative mood – a command. This is the mood which expresses action which is yet to be realized by the exercise of the will of one person upon that of another⁴. Jesus wants His will to take

⁴ Essentials of New Testament Greek – Summers, pg. 112

precedent over our own, He wants us to yield to Him – our Lord. Hudson Taylor said, The Great Commission is not an option to be considered; it is a command to be obeyed"

Also, it's written in the aorist tense which when written this way implies an action commanded that has not been completed yet. This is a command Jesus gave them that was to go forth from that time until it's completed.

It's also written in the active voice. We are to take action, do something, be proactive, intentional.

Words written in this imperative mood and the aorist voice and the active tense call for a specific, definite, decisive choice by the one receiving the command. It often expresses a sense of urgency.

His disciples knew without a doubt that Jesus wanted His disciples to make other disciples.

Our Method

1. Be Jesus' witnesses

This is an interesting word. It is the Greek word μαρτυρες, pronounced *martures*, the word became so synonymous with Christians losing their life as a result of their witness that it evolved into our English word *martyr*. In Biblical times, like today, witnesses were very important. Easton's Bible Dictionary says,

More than one witness was required in criminal cases (Deut. 17:6; 19:15). They were the first to execute the sentence on the condemned (Deut. 13:9; 17:7; 1 Kings 21:13; Matt. 27:1; Acts 7:57, 58). False witnesses were liable to punishment (Deut. 19:16-21). It was also an offence to refuse to bear witness (Lev. 5:1). So we see a witness was required to tell the truth, and simply, to tell it.

What are we witnesses of? First we tell what happened, listen to Paul,

1 Corinthians 15:1 Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, 2 by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. 3 For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures,

- **Christ died for our sins**
- **He was raised from the dead**
- **When we trust Him He gives us salvation**

While there may be more details than this, this is the essence of the Gospel. We have a message – our message is the Gospel. That Christ died to save sinners, that He rose again the third day, that those who believe in Him will have everlasting life. And while it may not seem so, people need this more than they need food, water, or a roof over their head. They need it more than health care, democracy,

or human rights. They need it because this is what reconciles them with Almighty God, the Creator, the Lord of Glory. They need it because one day they will stand before Him and give account of their life and then for eternity either exists with Him in His Glory or in eternal judgment, eternal torment, and eternal separation from God. *William Booth, founder of the Salvation Army said, "I must assert in the most unqualified way that it is primarily and mainly for the sake of saving the soul that I seek the salvation of the body."*

2. Teach them

Teach them what? – *teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you. Teach them about baptism and the power of the Holy Spirit. Teach them how to pray, how to love each other, how to trust God, how to treat each other, how to open the scriptures and how to look for Him in them. Teach them who Jesus is and what His mission is. Teach them what sin is and what breaks the heart of God. Teach them how to give and why we should have hope. All these things and many more are discipleship. Disciples are made, not born. They are taught – taught by someone that's been discipled, by someone who through the process of making disciples, is being discipled his or her self.*

Where Do We Do This?

πάντα τὰ ἔθνη, all the nations.

Let's focus on the word: ἔθνη; a race, that is, a tribe; specifically a foreign (non-Jewish) one (usually by implication pagan): - Gentile, heathen, nation, people. – Strong's. Jesus command is to reach every ethnic group. To make disciples among all the ethnics, or all the people groups.

To come to the conclusion that we shouldn't go to other countries, or cultures, or peoples on the grounds that there are lots of unsaved people here, or lot's of poverty here, or lots of needs here, is to miss the point. We are not commanded to make as many disciples as we can, in the easiest place we can. We are commanded to make disciples πάντα τὰ ἔθνη, *among all the nations.*

Jesus wants his people to move from their areas of comfort and into cultures other than their own and share the Gospel.

The Gospel is God's Cross-Cultural Initiative

Self-centeredness, ethnocentrism, and the tendency to stay among people who know us, look like us, and share the same values as us are natural and not easy to overcome. We can rationalize till the cows come home but it does not relieve us of the duty given to us by the Lord Himself to make disciples among all the ἔθνη. I must confess that I do not understand the attitude of many Christians to immigrants coming into this country – both legal and illegal. What an opportunity to make disciples among the ἔθνη, but nationalism seems to be taking precedent over the command of our Lord. I wonder if God in heaven is trying to show us something – if you don't go to them, I'll bring them to you!

The United States makes up roughly 5% of the world's population and yet we spend the majority of the time and money spent on our Disciple-Making Effort, along with the majority of Christian workers here. I do not doubt, as many have made argued, that the U.S. is a growing mission field. But again we cannot escape the clear command of our Lord to make disciples among all the ἔθνη. I cannot help but be

reminded of the words of Oswald J. Smith: "No one has the right to hear the gospel twice, while there remains someone who has not heard it once." And, of Jesus in John 10:16,

And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd.

The Acts 1:8 Strategy

1. Start Where You Are

In Acts 1:8 Jesus said, you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." Think of what this meant to the disciples; start in Jerusalem – where you are. Chesapeake, Huntington, Proctorville, South Point, look around you; look among the people you know the best, co-workers, friends, family. There is no shortage of people, hurting, discouraged, lost, people that need to know Jesus.

2. Move To Neighboring Communities

Then Judea, think of spreading your efforts from the Chesapeake area into the Tri-State – Huntington, Ashland, Ironton – Cabell, Boyd, Lawrence counties.

3. Branch Out To Other Cultures

Samaria. This is different. Go make disciples among people you hate. People of mixed race, people that don't agree with you about worship or nationalistic ideas. Go and make disciples among them.

4. Cover The Earth

To the end of the earth. This will require greater efforts, greater expense, and greater sacrifice. This will require you to invest yourself, maybe your life in a people that are not your own. But don't stop – keep going.

To summarize these two great verses:

Jesus is looking for people that He can empower with the Holy Spirit, to be His witnesses, starting where they are and spreading to the end of the earth, and do so till the end of the age, to make disciples of Him by teaching them the things we have been taught.

What will you do now?

John 4:35 ...Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!

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Lesson 3: The Importance of Prayer

The saint who advances on his knees never retreats – Jim Elliot

The Importance of Prayer

Time and time again the scripture exhorts us to pray. We are told:

Psalm 55:17 Evening and morning and at noon I will pray, and cry aloud, And He shall hear my voice.

Luke 18:1 Then He spoke a parable to them that men always ought to pray and not lose heart.

Philippians 4:6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God;

Colossians 4:2 Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving;

1 Thessalonians 5:7 ...pray without ceasing,

James 5:16 Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.

These and other passages remind us of the significance of an effective prayer life. Why is prayer so important? Paul Borthwick in his book *A Mind For Missions*⁵ says that,

...prayer reminds us of who is in charge.

Psalm 46:10 Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!

The Almighty God is in charge, he will accomplish His purposes. Prayer teaches us to slow down, or stop altogether, and listen to God.

When we pray we acknowledge that He is the Lord of the Harvest (Luke 10:2), and as Lord we know that it is to Him we will give account of our lives.

Jesus taught his disciples' to pray, Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

...prayer changes us

⁵ Paul Borthwick, *A Mind For Missions*, pg. 54-61

Richard Foster writes, "To pray is to change. Prayer is the central avenue God uses to transform us." It is not by coincidence that those God uses greatly are typically true prayer warriors. In missionaries lives like: Hudson Taylor, George Muller, Jim Elliot and many more God has through prayer, both their own and others for them, forged a vision in their hearts, a yearning to reach the world for Christ without regard for their own safety or their own lives.

Prayer changes us because as we learn to listen to God He changes us and unites us with His will.

...those who pray change the world

The scripture gives us many examples of this:

1. *Hannah*
2. *Nehemiah*
3. *Daniel*

But world-changing prayer is not just for bible characters. Some post New Testament saints come to mind. (Some were mentioned in the last paragraph.) They prayed, and God answered. Their perseverance and faithfulness in prayer paid, and still pays, dividends.

Through prayer the whole church can join any mission team anywhere. God responds to the prayers of His people to cultivate and reap His harvest. We must conclude that God is calling us, both goes and senders to stand-in-the-gap and pray. And rejoice that he has given us a great opportunity to boldly go before His throne and partner with Him and other believers all over the world in world evangelism.

Why Our Prayer-Life Breaks Down

*If all of these things are true about prayer – especially as it concerns ministry – then why don't I utilize this God-given communication device He's given me? John Piper in his book *Let The Nations Be Glad*⁶ observes this:*

"Life is war... Prayer is a wartime walkie-talkie for the mission of the church as it advances against the powers of darkness and unbelief. ...But what have millions of Christians done? We have stopped believing that we are in a war. No urgency, no watching, no vigilance, no strategic planning, just easy peace and prosperity. And what did we do with the walkie-talkie? We tried to rig it up as an intercom in our houses and cabins and boats and cars-not to call in fire power for conflict with a mortal enemy, but to ask for more comforts in the den.

*This stinging indictment both hurts and rings true to me. Recently someone at our church said, "if you're not sick or out of work, we're probably not going to pray for you!" While we acknowledge that we should pray for these things, I do wonder if they should be the things that dominate our prayer-lives. An outsider would wonder if we felt that God's ultimate goal for us was not our holiness but our happiness. They might also question the authenticity with which we sing *Rescue The Perishing*, or, *Take My Life*, or,*

⁶ *Let The Nations Be Glad*, pg. 41

Where He Leads Me I Will Follow when our prayers reflect our tendencies to want to stay where we are, just like we are, and let the rest of the world worry about themselves.

And what may be worse is the frequency with which I do not pray at all.

How Do We Turn It Around?

*So what do we do now? How do we become prayer-warriors? How do we unite with others and create an atmosphere of prayer in our churches, our ministries, and in our everyday lives? Again, from John Piper's *Let The Nations be Glad*, he cites A.T. Pierson⁷:*

"Every new Pentecost has had its preparatory period of supplication... God has compelled his saints to seek Him at the throne of grace, so that every new advance might be so plainly due to His power that even the unbeliever might be constrained to confess: "Surely this is the finger of God!"

I certainly am not an expert on this subject but here is a list of action-items I have gleaned from many over the years:

1. Start Where You Are

We may not be prayer giants, but we can start. Begin now! Ask God to give you consistency in your prayer-life.

2. Develop An Attitude of Prayer

When Paul said, pray without ceasing he certainly didn't have in mind that we would always be on our knees locked up in a prayer-closet 24/7. Let prayer become an attitude. May our lives be a living conversation with Him-as though he were with you at all times. (He is!)

3. Find A Prayer Partner

Find someone whose schedule meshes with yours and use each other as prayer accountability partners.

4. Start With A Few Principles⁸

Some of these prayer-principles come from Paul Borthwick and some from me,

- *Start with worship*
- *Confess our sins*
- *Start small*
- *Pray specifically, If you are praying for a missionary, read his/her newsletter and pray over them*
- *Give thanks*

⁷ *Let The Nations Be Glad*, pg. 67

⁸ *A Mind For Missions*, Paul Borthwick – pg. 62

- *Intercede for someone else*
- *Then, pray for your requests*

5. *Find A Personal Plan*

- *What specific time of the day works best for you?*
- *When will you meet with your prayer partner?*
- *Consider using the same location*
- *Try using a prayer journal*

6. *Pray Strategically*

7. *Pray Intelligently (Informed)*

Don't be afraid to use information you gain from research about the location or the nature of your particular prayer request. (The Sunday paper can be a trigger to pray.)

8. *Pray By Faith*

George Bernard Shaw said, "You see things; and you say, 'Why?' But I dream things that never were; and I say, 'Why not?'" What a great approach for the Christian to take in prayer. Paul seemed to take that approach as he wrote to the Ephesians,

Ephesians 3:20 Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, 21 to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

9. *Pray Cross-Culturally*

Pray for someone that is different than you. Pray for someone in another country, someone you've never met or maybe will never meet. Pray for someone that causes you fear.

10. *Pray For Our Mission*

Pray that God would, even now, be preparing the hearts of the people we plan to minister with in the Dominican Republic. Pray that we would have good attitudes. Pray that selfishness and pride would be left at home.

In conclusion remember this:

***"Satan laughs at our toiling, mocks our wisdom, but trembles when we pray." –
The Kneeling Christian***

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Lesson 4: Cross-Cultural Sensitivity

“A missionary friend of mine once said, ‘Things were simple before I went to Africa. I knew what the African’s problem was, and I knew the answer. When I got there and began to know him as a person, things were no longer simple.’”
– Elisabeth Elliot

Duane Elmer in his book *Cross-Cultural Servanthood* tells of spending time with some international Christian workers. He asked them, *what could missionaries do to more effectively minister the Gospel of Christ in your culture?* The answers he got surprised him. Many said they valued the missionary presence and the love they felt from them. But many said, with hesitation but conviction, *“missionaries could more effectively minister the gospel of Christ if they did not think they were so superior to us.”*⁹

How easy it is to give an impression of superiority among those of different cultures. Often it is done subconsciously on our part but the damage is done none the less. How is it that those with good motives, who intend to serve are perceived this way. And could it be that this attitude is more than just a perception by the host-country, could it be this superior attitude was a reality we ignore in ourselves. But the problem is more than a superior attitude. Sometimes the problem results from what Elmer calls *cultural-misrepresentation*.

Principles of Servanthood

Duane Elmer lays out seven principles of servanthood.

1. Humility: The posture of a servant
The parable of how the monkey served the fish.¹⁰
2. Openness: Welcoming others into your presence
3. Acceptance: Communicating respect for others
4. Trust: Building respect in relationships
5. Learning: Seeking information that changes you
6. Understanding: Seeing through the others eyes
7. Serving: Becoming like Christ to others

⁹ Cross Cultural Servanthood: Serving The World in Christlike Humility, Duane Elmer, pg. 15

¹⁰ Cross Cultural Servanthood: Serving The World in Christlike Humility, Duane Elmer, pg. 27

In Acts 17 we learn from the Apostle Paul displayed these principles and entered another culture and ministered effectively.

- Humility: The posture of a servant

16 Now while Paul waited for them at Athens... Something as simple as waiting shows us Paul's humility and patience.

Also notice in vs. 17, he reasoned. He didn't command.

- Openness: Welcoming others into your presence

"Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious; 23 for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD.

- Acceptance: Communicating respect for others

"Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious; 23 for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD.

Though it provoked him in his spirit, and though he was moved to preach to these people even though the rest of his team was not yet with him, Paul did not ridicule, criticize, or openly condemn the people for worshipping these false idols.

Perhaps this attitude of Paul's earned him the right to say,

"29 Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man's devising. 30 Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent,"

...without being killed by those that worshipped those gods.

It should be noted here that by talking about acceptance I am in no way saying that Paul accepted the Athenian gods as being of equal value to the true God. Paul was not a moral-relativist, he believed, and preached to the Athenians, that it's time to move from ignorance to repentance and to worship the true and living God. I'm merely saying that we can learn a lot by his approach to these heathen Greeks.

- Trust: Building respect in relationships

It should be noted that while many called Paul a babbler and a proclaimer of foreign gods, they did at least give him the opportunity to speak to them.

- Learning: Seeking information that changes you

Again, though Paul was provoked by the idolatry he saw, he seemed to use it to adapt his strategy for preaching to the Athenians.

“Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious; 23 for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD.

It says in this passage that he, *perceived, passed through and considered* their objects of worship. And from this approach he was able to talk to them about The *Unknown God* that these superstitious people ignorantly worshipped.

Also, note that Paul quoted their own poet to them, *as also some of your own poets have said, ‘For we are also His offspring.’ How did Paul know this if he had not become something of a student of that culture.*

- Understanding: Seeing through the others eyes

Paul did this as he spoke to them about their *Unknown God* and from the words of their own poet.

- Serving: Becoming like Christ to others

Once he was finished...

32 And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked, while others said, “We will hear you again on this matter.” 33 So Paul departed from among them. 34 However, some men joined him and believed, among them Dionysius the Areopagite, a woman named Damaris, and others with them.

Some mocked, some speculated, but some believed. And Paul allowed the believers to join him and he no doubt began the process of discipling these new believers.

Practical Steps

Now, what do we do with this information:

- Humility: The posture of a servant

Realize that our culture is not right in all that it does. We want to make disciples of Jesus not ourselves. What the people we visit need is to be more like Jesus, not to be more like Americans.

- Openness: Welcoming others into your presence

Stretch yourself. Try new foods. Learn a few phrases in your host-country's language and try to use them. Don't be afraid to fail.

Hand out: 10 ways to ruin your mt

- Acceptance: Communicating respect for others

Please be careful how you respond when you see something that may look totally ridiculous to you. Don't criticize their customs or leaders. Don't criticize their politics.

This might be a good time to think about taking pictures. Don't assume you can just walk up to people and start taking pictures as though they were animals at the zoo. Ask permission, be sensitive to their feelings.

- Trust: Building respect in relationships

Don't say, *I'm going to write you, or I'll be back next year*, if you don't intend to do it. I've found that while our memories are short many of the people in third world countries will be so moved that a white "rich" American would care about them they will remember you for a long time. Don't let good memories turn bitter by not following through on a promise.

- Learning: Seeking information that changes you

Duane Elmer points out that learning has three aspects. The first you can start now:

1. Learn about them

Read books about the host-country. Check out websites. Find the country's national newspaper on line and read articles. Learn about their history – who were their founding fathers, who are their sports heroes, their entertainers, etc. What is the average income of the people, how does that compare to the average income of people in the U.S.

2. Learn from them

Be willing to learn from the people of your host-country once you get there. Let them show you how they work, how they cook, how they keep house, etc. if you're going to be a teacher you better become a learner.

3. Learn with them

This is perhaps the most productive. When you learn together you create a common bond. True fellowship is achieved.

- Understanding: Seeing through the others eyes

Stop comparing everything you see with how we do it or how it is at home.

- Serving: Becoming like Christ to others

Remember the words of Jesus...

Matthew 25:31 "When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. 32 All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. 33 And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. 34 Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: 35 for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; 36 I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.'

*37 "Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? 38 When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? 39 Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' 40 And the King will answer and say to them, '**Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.**'*

Short Term Missions 101

Lesson 5: Sharing With Others What Jesus Has Done For You

"One thing I know: that though I was blind, now I see." – John 9:24-26

Top 10 Signs You're In A Bad Church

1. The church bus has gun racks
2. Ushers ask "Smoking or Non-Smoking?"
3. Karaoke worship time
4. No cover charge, but communion is a 2 drink minimum
5. Choir wearing leather robes
6. Services are B.Y.O.S. -- "Bring Your Own Snake"
7. ATM in the lobby
8. The Bible they use is the "Dr. Seuss Version"
9. Staff consists of "Senior Pastor, Associate Pastor, and Socio-Pastor"
10. The only song the church organist knows is "Innagaddadavita"

In our second lesson we talked about the Great Commission. One key aspect of fulfilling the GC is evangelism. But how do we do that?

Hearing the Gospel Shouldn't Be a Negative Experience

So, what are we supposed to do?

Acts 1:8

But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

Paul

Acts 16:25-34

A Word About Attitude

But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. (vs. 25)

Paul and Silas after being beaten and thrown in jail – not for something they did wrong, but something they did right – sang praises and prayed. And the prisoners were listening!

How we handle ourselves in our daily lives, during times of stress, temptation, trouble, and disappointment will preach more of a message than our lips will.

Don't be a grumbler, whiner, or a complainer. Don't be a gossip. Get along with your teammates, agree to disagree, don't give yourself, your team, your church, your country, your savior, a bad name.

A Word About Conviction

26 Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were loosed. 27 And the keeper of the prison, awaking from sleep and seeing the prison doors open, supposing the prisoners had fled, drew his sword and was about to kill himself.

Then he called for a light, ran in, and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. 30 And he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

God sent a tactical earthquake. This jailer, who may have been the fellow who a little earlier was bold enough to beat them publically, is now reduced to thoughts of suicide. Notice:

- It's origins were from God – you can't do it
- Immediately his hopes were shattered and he had nothing but disappointment to look forward to
- The persecutor is now humbled, open, ready to be taught and directed

A Word About The Gospel

- **It Should Be Shared With grace**

But Paul called with a loud voice, saying, "Do yourself no harm, for we are all here."

How many of us would have been tempted to let him kill himself, especially after the way he treated them. Perhaps Paul saw himself in this man – a persecutor of the church, now humbled and trembling.

...what must I do to be saved?" So they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, (30-31)

- **Accurate**

Be careful of adding stipulations that the scripture doesn't include. Don't rely on clichés.

- **Clear**

Be careful of using "churchy" words that an unsaved person wouldn't understand or may not have a biblical understanding of: blessings, deliverance, conversion, converted, hallelujah, receive Christ, gospel, born again, etc.

Salvation Bracelet

- *Start with a 10' piece of string*
- *Tie a single knot about 4 inches from one end.*
- *Slide on one bead of each color in the sequence listed.*
- *Tie another knot after the gold bead.*

-
- *First Knot-When you were born, God loved you and planned your life. (John 10:10)*

The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.

- *Black Bead-Sin separates us from God. (Rom 3:10)*

...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

- *Red Bead-Jesus shed His Blood on the cross to pay for our sins. (Romans 5:8)*

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

- *White Bead-We are cleansed and forgiven when we believe on Jesus Christ as Savior. (Acts 10:43)*

...all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins.

- *Green Bead-Believers grow spiritually by praying, reading the Bible, and sharing Jesus with others. (2 Peter 3:18)*

...but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.

- *Gold Bead-We will share heaven and glory with Jesus forever. (Revelation 21:1-3)*

Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God.

- *Last Knot-When we die, each of us will stand before God. (Hebrews 9:27)*

And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment...