

THE CALL TO BE MISSIONAL

By Buck Baskin

Being Missional
Chapter 1: Without Jesus We Are Nothing
Luke 9:1-10

As a leader in your ministry, and just as a follower Christ, you probably know we are called to be missional. We are called to go out and reach others for Christ. The problem is, as with many things in our faith, we throw the phrase around in our sermons and conversations without ever stopping to think what it truly means or how it plays out in our lives. This leaves our lives with no direction and lessens the impact that our ministries have on our communities and in our world.

When it comes to missions this is very costly as this is our greatest calling. That is why we have created this study. While we will discuss the logistical steps of planning out mission trips and activities, this is not the main purpose of this study. Instead this study is about getting to the heart of what Jesus is calling us to do and how we can go about ensuring we are living up to this calling. The best way I know to do this is by looking at the first time Jesus sent out His disciples.

Take a moment to read Luke 9:1-10. If you are like me, you have read this passage several times and probably have even taught from it a few times. But it was not until I started thinking about missions that I slowed myself down enough to truly see all the truth that in this passage. Think about it. Isn't it amazing how when we take a little time we see that each verse and phrase in scripture holds great power? It is humbling and inspiring. But that is a lesson all in itself for another day. For now let's move on to seeing what this passage has to teach us about missions.

In verse 1, Jesus calls His disciples together and gives them power and authority. This teaches us the most important lesson of all. Without Jesus we are nothing.

Jesus is the one who gives us power and authority and Jesus is the one who gives us our mission and our call. With Him we can do even greater things than He did and without Him we cannot accomplish much at all. If you do not believe me just think about your life before Christ and think about some of the things that have happened in your life since you came to Christ. Sure on my own I might have made good grades, made some friends, and built a resume. But with Him I have seen things happen where I knew there was no way it could have been me. With Him I have seen lives changed. You see all that we can do does not compare to see someone's life being changed for all of eternity. We can never do that, but Christ can and He uses us as His instrument to spread this life-changing message.

If you still don't believe me, think about people throughout history. The disciples were scared and clueless, and then once they met Jesus they healed people and became so bold that they willingly lost their lives for following Christ. Paul had influence and power, but once he met Christ he planted churches all over Europe and wrote most of our New Testament. Think of someone like William Wilberforce. He had earthly power and influence, but once he came to know Christ he got to take part in starting the end of slavery not only in his own country but also all over the world. We could go on and on. And we would not even have to list famous people. You could list people in your life that you know made a drastic change once they came to Christ and left now left an eternal impact on this world. It is clear to see that our ability to live a life that is devoted to being missional and sharing the Gospel begins and ends with Jesus.

Before we move on to the next part of our study though I want to take a moment to consider one more thing. The disciples did not just know Jesus; they spent serious quality time with Him. By this time they had been with Jesus day in and day out for a considerable amount of time. While it only took Him speaking one word of power into their lives, they had been devoted to His teachings and committed to forming a strong relationship with Him. It is not just enough for us to sort of be connected with Christ. We must fully be committed to Him and devote every moment of our lives to knowing Him so we can go out and make Him known.

As we close this lesson take a moment to think about your life. How do you feel you are doing at being missional? What sort of impact are you having? I am sure you are accomplishing much but we can always accomplish more. But this does not happen on our own or by us planning better. It starts by us knowing Christ in a deeper way so that we can be empowered by Him to go out and do more than we ever thought was possible. Take a moment right now to pray and ask God to fill you in ways that you have ever known and giving you a fresh and new vision for the ministry He would have you to do in the world around you.

Being Missional
Chapter 2: Missions Are Spiritual And Physical
Luke 9:1-10

If you have been a Christian for very long you probably have noticed something. There seems to often be a divide among Christians as to what our role in the world is. One side says that our role is to be about winning souls and the other side says it is about helping those in need. And in order to make sure their side wins they completely reject the other side and anything they do. This creates an either/or Gospel.

This dates back to the early 20th century with the birth of the social Gospel movement. A group of people began to see all the physical needs around them and decided that this is what Christ was calling them to do. They felt this calling was so important and for so long had been neglected that they should fully focus in on this task and ignored everything else. In response to this the other side decided that they must reject the idea of meeting people's needs so that they would not look like they had bad theology and totally focused on sin and winning souls. While this is a very short and simple explanation of a very complicated situation it at least allows you to see the origins of a big problem that many of us still face today. We think that missions and living out the Christian life must either be about winning souls or doing good deeds.

The problem is that we are not called to an either/or life as a follower of Christ but instead to a both/and lifestyle. I have written something like this many times and I am glad to say that I think the day is coming where I will not have to write it anymore. As the church we have seen incredible awakening in the past few years. People are getting out of their pews, or chairs, and actually doing something. They are actually going out and sharing the Gospel instead of just talking about it. People are starting to realize that meeting only physical needs still leaves a huge whole in people's lives that can only be filled with a life changing relationship with Jesus Christ. Christians all over the world are starting to see how cold hearted and un-Christ like it is for us to offer people Jesus and leave them cold and hungry. It has been such a beautiful thing to see and I hope the growth continues. But things are definitely not perfect yet. There are still those who cling to one side or the other. There are still those who ignore parts of scripture. There are still those who in an overreaction to the bad examples on both sides of this issue, will reject one action or both. But this cannot be. As followers of Christ we are not called to sit on the sidelines and we are not called to choose either winning souls or meeting needs. We are called to do both.

We see this clearly in verse of our passage. Jesus tells them to go out and proclaim the Kingdom of God and to heal the sick. The Kingdom of God is things being made right again through Jesus. It is us finding healing from our sin and receiving salvation and also finding healing from the effects of sin. And while the Kingdom of God will not be complete until Christ comes back, we are to devote our lives to proclaiming it and ushering it in one changed life at a time.

The biggest way we do this is through sharing the Gospel. This is because you cannot be a part of the Kingdom of God without having a relationship with Christ. But the work does not end there. We also are to bring healing to people's lives. Now we may not be able to heal the sick literally but I will not rule it out because I never want to limit God. But we can be a part of healing the metaphorical sickness in people's lives because of their sin and the sin of those around them. We can provide them food, we can provide them clothing, we can provide them water, we can provide them housing, we can offer them jobs, and maybe most importantly we can provide them community. The list goes on and on because the opportunities are so great for us every day to be a part of changing the lives of others in so many ways.

Christ set this example for each and every one of us both in His teaching and the way we live. He never left any doubt of what He expected from us and He gives us the power to reach those expectations. Again and again we see Him touching lives by healing people, feeding them, welcoming them, and also forgiving their sins and giving them new life. But also in His teaching He called us to do the same. In fact in one of His most straight forward and powerful teachings in Matthew 25 He tells us that if we do not go out and meet the needs of others and offer them life change we cannot truly say we are one of His children. What is even crazier is He say that if we do not these things for others we are in fact ignoring and neglecting Him. Think about that. If you saw Jesus on the side of the road hungry would you leave Him hungry? If you saw Jesus alone would you leave Him alone? I would think none of us would say yes to these questions. But if we neglect the needy around us Jesus says this is exactly what we are doing because He is with them.

I beg of you. If you are on one side of the fence or the other on this issue, and are uncertain of what missions is really all about then read the Gospels. Read the words of Jesus and try to tell me that our role is not to both share the Gospel and meet needs. I will be more than happy to discuss this with you.

I will close this lesson out with a personal story. I was raised on the winning souls side.

Being Missional
Chapter 3: God Is Our Provision
Luke 9:1-10

Have you ever participated in the activity known as the trust fall? It is basically where you stand in a slightly elevated position while a group of people stands behind you. Then as the title suggests, you fall back and trust that they will catch you. While this may seem like a simple activity, this is not necessarily the case. Especially if you may have a fear of heights, do not know the people around you, or know there are other limitations. For example, I used to worry whether or not I would be caught since I do not do the best job of taking care of myself health wise. What is even more interesting to me is that even though I have seen this activity many times and have never seen it go badly, I still get nervous each and every time. And while this activity is designed to build unity and trust in a group of people I believe it has much to teach us about our lives as followers of Christ and how we are to totally trust in God as we go live out the mission that He has for us.

If you go back to the passage we are studying and look at verse 3 you will see this idea clearly stated by Jesus. He tells His disciples to take nothing with them: no food, no money, no extra shirt, not even a staff to prop themselves up on. This seems crazy to us as we live in a world where we plan out each and every step along the way, and much of the time we even have a plan B and a plan C. I know when I think about the trips I have taken, even mission trips I usually pack a backup set of clothes for each day just in case the weather changes or I get wet or dirty. While there is not necessarily anything wrong with being prepared I do believe our habits are very telling in how we view our relationship with God and the power He can have in our lives. If we were honest we would say that while we do trust in God we like to take care of as much as we can on our own just in case God forgets about us or is too busy to get to us. But God told His disciples, and is telling us today, that we should trust in Him for everything.

This is not easy. Just like with the trust fall it is a scary proposition to let go and completely trust in others for our safety, security, and provision. But in this case we are not trusting in flawed human beings. We trust the God of the universe who holds the world in His hands and yet knows the very numbers of hairs on our heads. We trust in the God who feeds the sparrows and loves us far more than them. We have to let go. We have to let go of our fear. We have to let go of the way we have been ingrained with the idea that there are limitations in life and certain things are impossible. We have to draw closer to the God who loves us and knows us so that we know we have no other choice but to trust in Him.

But why? Why is this so important? Of course there is the idea of being obedient, and if you have been a follower of Christ for long you know that when we are obedient to God you know that things go far better than if you try to do things your own way. But beyond that there are key benefits to this

obedience. The main one being that God wants to bless us in ways we cannot imagine. God wants to allow us to accomplish things that we could never accomplish on our own. Sure we could probably pay for our own trip, pack our own food, and accomplish our own goals. And we may end up feeling good about our trip and have great stories to tell. But imagine if you allow God to work through you and at the end of the day or the end of your trip you cannot even begin to come up with the words to explain what happened and all you can say is, "God moved!" Not to mention that by allowing God to be your provision you will give others the opportunity to be used by Him to meet your needs so that more people are a part of the work of building the Kingdom of God.

I have seen and heard stories of this happening over and over again where people chose to give everything over to God and He showed up in mighty ways. Checks have mysteriously showed up right at a deadline to pay for a trip. Transportation has arrived right as a van broke down. Students were able to out of nowhere speak Spanish as they shared the Gospel with others. Our God is big and He is waiting to move. Will you put your trust in Him and let Him?

This will not be easy. We are an independent society and many of us have been taught to pick ourselves up by our own bootstraps. But God is telling us to rely on Him and trust in Him to do things we could never do on our own. This does not mean we are lazy. This does not mean that we do not use wisdom. Yes we should be good stewards of the time, talents, blessings, and wisdom that God has given us. But our faith should not be in those things. Our faith should be in God and we must be sensitive to what He is calling us to do even if it makes no sense to us or those around us. If you will do this, even in the toughest of times, even if it means you go out on the mission God has for you with no food, no staff, no money, and no change of clothes, you will see God move in ways you could not imagine on your own.

Being Missional
Chapter 4: Engage The Community
Luke 9:1-10

One of my favorite books is "The Irresistible Revolution" by Shane Claiborne. It is basically his journey of realizing how Christ was calling him to live and the incredible ride he has been on since then. If you have read or do read the book you may not agree with everything he says but you cannot help but be challenged by the authenticity in his words and actions and be inspired to do more with the life God has given you. In the book there are many great stories. One that stands out to me in particular has to do with an occasion where they were trying to assist a group of homeless families who were living in an abandoned cathedral. The city was trying to kick them out and Shane and his friends were doing everything they could to draw attention to the cause of the families and see change happen. Along the process many people came along to help. They would offer their services and sometimes just provide goods to meet the needs of all involved. One church in particular sent an interesting gift. I know their heart was in the right place but it shows how often we are distant and out of touch with the needs of those around us. They sent a box of microwaved popcorn. While popcorn is tasty, filling, inexpensive, and I suppose has some nutritional value, there is one glaring problem. How many homeless people do you think have access to a microwave?

While this incident is not the worst thing any church has ever done, and it is nice that they tried to reach out in some way, it highlights a very important thing for us if we are truly going to live our lives on mission for Christ. We cannot do real ministry from a distance. We have to get in there with the people we desire to reach. We have to know and feel their needs and struggles. We have to understand both the surface issues and the underlying problems so that we can come up with effective solutions. We have to get out of our church walls and go out to the people who we desire to reach. We see this clearly in the passage we have been studying. In verse 4 Jesus talks about staying in a home in the community. He also speaks of staying in the same home while you are there. There is so much that could be said about this short verse, including the reminder of God's provision in all things, but there are three things I want to highlight today.

First of all, being missional is not a come and see proposition. I am not completely anti-event. But far too often the only "outreach" we do is planning events that get people to come to our church. While there are times for these types of events it leaves so many needs unmet and so many people unreached. Instead we should be devoting our time to finding ways where we can go out and meet the people where they are instead of waiting around for them to come to us. Look for ways to go out and impact the parks and neighborhoods in your area. Find ways to get on the school campuses in your communities. Look for ways to create ministry opportunities at local events and business. But out of the walls of your church and go

beyond the gates of your neighborhood so they you can truly meet needs and do real ministry. This is what Jesus did. This is what the disciples did. And this is what just about every person who has been effective for Christ throughout all of history has done. We should follow the examples of Christ and others and take the Gospel out into the world.

Second, being missional is about building community. We are designed for relationships. Christianity itself is built on community. If you think about the early church they immediately formed communities with each other as people came to Christ. And these peculiar and contagious communities did great things and drew others to Christ. We need to be out truly building relationships with others. We need to make connections with services that are already in place and see how we can support them. Because in the work of God in our community can be greater and the impact we see will be long lasting. Plus, it is in these relationships that we truly get to know people. In these relationships we truly begin to feel people hurts and understand their struggles. We can even begin to put ourselves in their shoes. Not only does this make them more likely to listen to our message but it also moves us towards brokenness so we can be more passionate about our work. Because when you put a name and a face to a cause or issue it has more meaning and that burning in your heart to do something about it will not go away. And possibly most of all, it is when you get around others and draw close to them that you can begin to understand where they are and the difficulties they may face in their lives. I am a firm believer that you should not talk about ending homelessness unless you have hung around with homeless people. You should not talk about changing schools unless you have spent time around students, on campuses or at school events, or talked to faculty members and parents. You should not talk about battling abortion unless you have talked to a pregnant teen or single mom and heard their pain and struggle in the midst of their moment of struggle. You should not talk about fighting poverty unless you have spent time with the poor. And you should not talk about big issues like drugs, alcohol, suicide, etc. unless you have spent time with those who feel like their lives are wrapped up in a terrible darkness from which they believe there is no escape. We have to take the light of Christ to the darkness and spend some time getting to know and understand the darkness.

Finally, being missional is not a one week opportunity. It is a life time commitment and we stay until the work is done. If you are investing in your community you stay invested until lives are changed or God tells you it is time for the work to be passed onto someone else. If you are working nationally or globally you find ways to continue that partnership throughout the year and continue to go back until the work is finished. Christ has not called us to short term mission opportunities that appease our consciences and raise our status in the eyes of others. He has called us to get our hands

dirty in darkest and most broken places and to commit to that work for the long haul.

The things we are discussing here are not easy. To be honest there are times I miss the days where I was distant from the brokenness of the world and did not understand what sin was really doing to people. But we are not allowed to keep our distance from brokenness and once we are around it we cannot turn back. Today, evaluate whether you are truly being engaged in the lives of those you are trying to reach. If not, repent now and work towards changing the way you see being missional and how you live this life out in the world around you.

Being Missional
Chapter 5: Go To The Hard Places
Luke 9:1-10

First of all, let me say that we are called to share the Gospel to the ends of the Earth. This means that everyone everywhere needs to hear the saving message of Jesus Christ. But it always amazes me that when people are considering where to go on a mission trip they spend more time evaluating and weighing out tourist attractions and shopping options than they do assessing where there might be work that needs to be done. In fact, time and time again, it seems like the less "attractive" a place is and the less "safe" a place is, the less likely it is that a group will go on mission there. And what is even sadder is that the common trend today is that when someone chooses to plant a church or start a ministry they look at income levels and population growth. Not so that they can assess the needs in a community and where might God want them to be, but instead so they can go to where the young rich families are.

This to me does not seem to me like the way Christ and His followers did and plan ministry. This does not seem like what Christ is calling us to. In fact I am sure it breaks His heart, as it does mine, to hear things like, "Things are so much better for our church since we left the hood and moved closer to the golf course." [Actual Quote]

God is calling us to the hard places. I believe we see a glimpse of this in verse 5. Jesus speaks of people not being welcoming. While there are other examples of our calling to go the hard places this is one that I think often gets overlooked. We are not necessarily to go to the places that are warm, welcoming, inviting, or even safe. We are not called to do market research to decide which area may be more likely to give or more receptive to a church.

I am not saying planning is a bad thing. I am not saying you are always going to go to the deepest, darkest jungle. I am not saying taking a day to relax on a mission trip is necessarily a bad thing. What I am saying is that there is a problem when our main focus is taking the easy and most glamorous road. There is a major issue when we are more focused on thinking as the world does about what is safe and what is possible instead of trusting God to do things the world cannot even imagine.

We need to go to the difficult and hard to reach places. These places sometimes are our schools. Sometimes these places are the side of town no one goes to. Sometime these places are our atheist neighbors next door. Sometimes these places are the remote parts of the earth where our lives will literally be on the line for taking a stand for Christ.

I cannot tell you for sure where you will go. What I can tell you though is that many of us need a change of heart and change of attitude. When need to stop making our number one goal a comfortable and easy life. We need to instead be focused on laying our lives down for Christ and saying no matter what we will follow Him. Because He gave all for us so we must give all for Him.

Being Missional
Chapter 6: Obedient To God's Leading
Luke 9:1-10

Ideas like leaving a work unfinished, not reaching a goal, or backing down from a difficult situation are not things that come easy to me. Maybe that did at some time, but through my upbringing, experiences, and faith I have found that there is less and less quit in me every day. It is quite likely that you are exactly the same way. Which is why there is a good chance that verse 5 may puzzle you as it does me.

In verse 5 Jesus says that "if someone does not welcome you then leave their town..." This is odd to me because it almost appears that Jesus is saying that if things are hard walk away. That if people do not receive the Gospel the first time then we should give up on them. But in looking at Jesus' other teachings we know that this cannot be the case.

Instead I think something else is going on. I do believe this is a specific teaching for Jesus' followers on this specific mission. His time with them was short so there was not much time for investment. We see this in Jesus' impatience with people as He would often tell them give up everything now and follow me or walk away. But I believe there is another good lesson here.

In being missional we must follow God's leading. Not just for where God would have us to go, but also as to whom we should minister to and how long we should stay there.

This is so important for us because when we think of being missional we usually formulate a plan for what we are going to do, how long that will take, and what we want things to look like once we are finished. Then we stay there until the job is done. This is generally good unless we take it to far. The problem comes in when we end up working out our own plans instead of God. The problem is when we get so caught up in our plans that we ignore what God is telling us in exchange for the goals and dreams we had set for ourselves.

But God's plans are best and they are often vastly different than our own. And most definitely they will be different than the types of plans that the world would think we should have. If you are going to truly live a life that is missional you must surrender to God's leading and be sensitive to what He commands. Because He may tell you to reach everyone or He may tell you to only reach one person. God could tell you to stay someone for forever or He may tell you to be somewhere for one day. You might be commanded to stay in until the work is done or you may be in charge of planting a seed

and leaving so someone else can come in and finish the work. I think the main idea is that we cannot put God in a box and cannot get tunnel vision once we begin to formulate a plan for the mission God is calling us to. Instead we must be open and sensitive to God's leading and walk in His Spirit at all times.

Being Missional
Chapter 7: Our Mission Begins And Ends With The Gospel
Luke 9:1-10

Let's take a moment to review an earlier lesson. The Gospel, being missional, is a both/and proposition. We are called to share the good news of Christ's salvation and meet the needs of others. We are reminded of this in verse 6 as the disciples went out and proclaimed the good news and healed people everywhere. This is always good to be reminded of because we truly do tend to swing the pendulum to one side or the other when it comes to our lives on mission for God. And if we were honest, while we are out living our lives on mission, be it on a trip, in our communities, or just living our lives, we tend to lean towards doing good deeds and meeting needs. This is especially true when it comes to mission trips and mission projects.

Granted I do not know each of you, but to see if this applies to you, pull out the schedule from your last mission trip or mission project. Or if you do not have a recent example like this in your life think about the last few times where you truly reached out to others. Of those experiences, how much of your times were spent doing service projects or good deeds and how much was spent sharing the Gospel? If the majority of your time was not spent sharing the Gospel then change needs to take place.

Now to make sure you do not think that I am contradicting myself or going against scripture. Both things are very important and if we are choosing an either/or lifestyle then we are not being biblical. Also, hear that I love meeting needs. I am passionate about working with the homeless, I am a foster parent, and am constantly thinking of ways to not only meet needs but to fix the systems that create those needs.

The goal of all that work and planning though is to be able to share the Gospel with others. This in no way means that we treat people like targets who we merely help so that they have to hear our Gospel spill. No, we truly love those around us as God commanded us. But in the process we remember that we do not truly love them if we do not share the Gospel. Every time that we reach out to someone we remember that regardless of how much we feed them, clothe them, or what we provide for them, that their lives will be left empty unless they have a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

We must avoid falling into the trap of feeling good about ourselves because we did a good deed and realize that we have not truly done anything until we share the Gospel. Just as if we share the Gospel without meeting the other needs in a person's life we are cold-hearted and distant.

Think of it this way. Without the saving message of the Gospel all we did was cook some nice food or build some pretty houses. But with the Gospel we permanently change lives, families, communities, and the effects that sin has had on them.

If need be take some time repenting of the ways where you have only halfway done the job. Then ask God to help you be motivated by the spiritual emptiness in people's lives. Pray that He allows you to see how sin and its effects, in one way or another, have led to this need and brokenness. Pray that He allows you to see that without the saving power of Jesus Christ you are only doing half the job. And pray for the courage to speak the truth into people's lives so that they may know our Savior who can supply all they need.

Being Missional
Chapter 8: The World Will Not Understand
Luke 9:1-10

Somewhere along the way many of us as followers of Christ got this idea that if we lived the way that God was calling us to, if we lived a missional life, that things would be easier and more people would like us. I may be alone in having allowed this mindset to be a part of my vision for what the Christian life was like, but just in case I am not I want to make sure you know this is a myth.

It seems crazy right? Going out and loving people, telling them that God is offering them forgiveness of their sins, meeting their needs, helping to heal the brokenness in their lives, are things that you would think would make people roll out the red carpet for you every time they saw you walking down the street. But this simply may not be the case. In fact, often the best-case scenario is that people see you as peculiar and do not understand. Why do I say this?

If you look at our passage in verses 7-9 the disciples have been going out and doing the work that Jesus commanded them to do, and incredible things begin to happen. In fact, they were so incredible that people assumed there was no way it was the disciples doing them and it must have been John the Baptist raised from the dead. Quick side note, if we are obedient to Christ He will do things through us that we could not imagine and the world will not fully comprehend.

Now, back to our story. The people could not believe that these ordinary men they had known before were now doing these incredible things. The disciples were spreading the Good News with authority. People were being healed. And they could not get their minds around how this change could possibly have happened. These men were not in respected positions. They had not had any formal training like their other teachers and leaders. Yet they were doing greater things than all of the rest of their religious leaders and teachers. Things were so strange in fact they felt the need to go all the way to Herod and tell Him what was going on. Which leads us to another free lesson, when we are truly being missional word spreads fast without any extra marketing push on our part.

But what does this part of our passage mean for us? Beyond the things we have already mentioned I think there are two big things we need to see. First of all is that we cannot assume that people's lives will automatically be

changed because of our work. Hopefully they will but it may take time for them to fully understand the change they need to make. They may have to work through many things before they come to the point where they finally give their life to Christ. But regardless of whether this happens immediately or not we work until their lives are changed for all eternity by a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

Second, we need to remember this is not about our fame. Many people may read this story with disappointment and wonder how Peter, John all the other disciples felt when no one was saying they were great and instead were just wondering who else must be doing this work. This is because, deep down we have a desire and hope that if we do great things for God we will get noticed and maybe even gain a little fame. We live in a fame-addicted culture and the church is not immune from this. But we must follow the examples of the disciples. In our work we must be humble and not care about receiving fame and credit. Instead we must care about God receiving glory and Jesus name being proclaimed. Over and over again I am amazed at how each time someone wants to give them fame or credit, they always point back to Jesus. You see this again and again in the book of Acts and in the letters of the New Testament. We must be the same way. Are you? I want you to really think about this before you answer. Imagine you go around sharing the Gospel and every person in your community gets saved and no one knows you were the person who was out sharing. Imagine you find a way to provide homes for everyone in your area and homelessness is eradicated around you, yet no one ever mentions your name or even gives you a thank you. Imagine you find a way to raise funds and end up providing clean water to every person in the world and you receive no recognition for your efforts. Would you be okay with this? Would you be able to deal with receiving no fame as long as God's name became great all over the world?

If you were honest how would you answer these questions and others like do you have the patience to stay with people until their lives are changed? You need to ask yourself these questions and answer honestly if you are going to truly live a missional life.

Being Missional
Chapter 9: Praise God for What He Has Done
Luke 9:1-10

As we near the end of our journey in studying how to live a life that is missional, it is important to reflect back on what God has been teaching us, see how we have grown, and praise God for all of it. I encourage you to take a moment to do this now.

This exercise is not just important at the end of a study though it is important for us to do regularly in our lives. Especially in moments where God has moved, has used us to reach others, or times where He has brought us out of a storm. Why?

There are really two reasons. First of all, taking time to reflect back and praise God helps us to ingrain in our memory what God is doing. This way when the next challenge comes around we will be ready and know that God is with us therefore no one can stand against us. We will take on every task with the expectations that God will do great things and that the possibilities of what can be accomplished through us in His power are endless. The second benefit of reflecting back and praising God though is just as important as the first. In fact it may be more important. When we take a moment to praise God we are helping ourselves remember who the one is doing the work. As you live a life that is missional God will do great things through you. The temptation though is to begin to get an inflated ego and take all the credit. This leads to a steady downward spiral of you trying to gain attention and losing sight of what God has called you to do. God is the one who works through us and He is the one who deserves all the glory and credit.

The disciples help to teach us this principle in verse 10. When they arrive back they report to Jesus what they had done. I find this important because we can assume Jesus, being fully God and fully man, already knew what they had done. But they still find it important to tell Him. We should be the same way. Even though God already knows the work we are doing since He is the one doing it, we should still tell of the incredible things that are happening around us. Now, in this passage it does not specifically say the disciples took time to praise God, but you have to think they did assuming just a little while ago in their life most of them were fisherman and tax collectors. But even if they did not, this could be understandable because a lot was going on and they still did not fully understand. Hence they doubt Jesus can feed the 5,000 in the following verses. But once Jesus died and rose from the dead, commissioned them to go, and filled them with the Holy Spirit, something drastically changed in each of them. They were no longer timid. They were no longer scared. They were no longer self-centered. Instead they boldly proclaimed the good news to all they could find and regardless of the circumstances they gave God all the glory.

We too know that Jesus died and rose from the dead. We too have been commissioned to go. And we also have been filled with the same Holy Spirit.

Now, we also must go out and proclaim the good news to all that we can find and meet the physical needs of those around us. We must build Christian community everywhere we go so that the impact we make can last far beyond when we leave. We must trust that God can and will do big things through you and I in the world around us and then remember to praise God when He does and give Him all the glory. Are you ready? I hope so because we do not have much choice. The call is to go and the time is now. Let's start doing nothing less than changing the course of history for all of eternity today.

Being Missional

Chapter 10: A Practical Guide To Missions

While being missional is more of a spiritual prospect than a logistical one, there are some very practical tips that can help you be effective as you prepare for your missions work. Especially if you are in a leadership position at your local church or organization, which I assume most of you are. Therefore, I want to close with a quick ten step guide that I hope will help you as you either get started or improve upon where you are as a leader of a ministry who is missional.

1. Pray

I always start here so there is no confusion about the heart of missions. Missions are an outpouring of what God is doing in your life. Therefore we must start with prayer and make sure our heart is right. We must ask for a clear vision and direction. But most importantly we must cry out to God to work through us because He can do bigger things than we could ever imagine and without Him we are nothing.

2. Start At Home

So often when we think about being missional we automatically start brainstorming a mission trip to a third world country or some neglected part of our own nation. But in the process our own home ends up being neglected. If you are truly going to be missional you need to start by looking for opportunities to serve those around you in your own community. Maybe you get involved in things on a school campus. Maybe you go out and care for the homeless. Maybe you adopt a neighborhood or apartment complex. Or maybe you just go out to the mall or a park and share the Gospel. The main thing is that your mission work must start in your day to day lives as you reach out to those around you. Because what good is it to travel clear around the world if you have never talked to your neighbor across the street or the person in the desk next to you? In fact I encourage you to make this a requirement. Find ways for the students in your ministry or whoever is in the organization you lead to serve in your community. Then tell them that if they are not taking part in at least one of those opportunities or some other opportunity in your community they cannot participate in other trips that go out to other places. This way they understand that missions is a lifestyle not just a short term trip and that there are spiritual and physical needs all around them.

3. Look At What Is Already Going

There truly is nothing new under the sun. If you have a thought about a missions project or ministry idea there is probably someone doing it already. Therefore, instead of starting your ministry you need to first look and see what is already out there. This way you can support the work that is already going and build upon the relationships that those people are building. Plus you can learn from the experience of others. Now, if these ministries are not in

your community or God calls you to start something new then so be it. But I would not start with that mindset. The reason is that looking for what is already there can save you time and stress and often have a far greater impact. Not to mention that often when we start a new ministry much of our desire is to bring attention to our name or the name of our church. I know this is not always the case but this can be a trap that many ministers fall into. Humble yourself, use wisdom, and do not be afraid to partner with others that are already in the work that you wish to do.

4. Start Something New If Needed

This principle and the last one apply to any kind of mission project you do, from local all the way to global. If for some reason you cannot find something that someone is already doing that fits what you believe God is calling you to, then it is time for you to ask God to give you a vision to start something new. This will take research and planning but remember the things that we have talked about. Do not be afraid, regardless of how big the task seems, because God will do great things through you if you are obedient. In starting something new we again of course consider what God has laid on our hearts but there are other things to consider in that which can help us narrow down to our vision to what the work is we will be doing. You need consider things like where the biggest needs are, which areas are most neglected, what are the talents and interests of your group, what are their resources, and many other things that can help give you a framework in which to make the most informed decision.

5. Plan Meticulously

By this I do not mean to plan in such a way that you put God in a box or push Him out altogether. But I do believe that we serve and organized and creative God who wants us to be careful stewards of what He has given us, including time, talents, and resources. Therefore you need to plan every little detail of what you think might be needed. A great thing to do is to picture that you are in a meeting with leaders, students, parents, fellow staff members, etc. , and imagine all the questions they might ask you. Then plan so as to answer all of those questions. Here are a few things to consider: cost, need for passports, dangers, health care options in case of an emergency, a contact person, age requirements, dates, needed training or skills, language and cultural differences/barriers, transportation both to the trip and while on the trip, climate, food and water, etc. Now this list is not exhaustive but you get the idea of how detailed you need to be. I also want to warn you of a couple of things. First of all, do not assume that just because you are doing a local mission trip that some of these things do not apply to you or vice versa. For example, language and cultural barriers are not just for international trips. These barriers can exist even in your own community. Second, do not be afraid to throw your meticulously planned trip or activity out the window. This can be important if you feel things are not

working or especially if God is leading you in another direction. Just be flexible and trust God regardless of how chaotic it feels or how angry people get.

6. Know The Rules

I put this after the last step because I do not want anything to hold you back in your dreaming and planning. But once you have your plan, or while you are making it, you need to make sure you know the rules, regulations, and laws of your church and/or organization and the place where you are going. Your church may have rules on where you can go or how long you can stay there. There may be cost restrictions. The place you are going may not allow people of a certain age in or have laws that are vastly different than what you are used to. Either way you need to know these things so that you can stay out of trouble while you plan and while you are on your trip.

7. Find Leaders

You are not designed to do this alone and you cannot do this alone. Going at this alone does not make you more spiritual or a better leader. In fact it will make you weaker since you will wear down and you are not in community as God called you to be. You need to find leaders who can help put your vision into action. You need to empower others to lead and serve and allow them to use their talents and abilities to reach out to others. This may not be easy for those of us who are control freaks but our ministries and we will be better off for this.

8. Cast The Vision

It is not just enough to have a great plan. You have to communicate that plan. Once you are ready, and the sooner the better, you need to get the word out to everyone who matters: your fellow staff members so they can support you and spread the word to their ministries, your leaders and students so they can buy in, and your parents so they can understand where you are leading their students and why. And this more than just sharing details. This is about inspiring people to something greater. Yes you give them the logistics and details but you also give them the bigger picture. For example we challenge our students to leave the country on a trip before they graduate. The adult Small Group that I teach has a commitment to serve at least once a month locally and to go global at least once within four years. Mentioning challenges like these or explaining why you are doing all of this helps you rally more support and draws more people into getting involved.

9. Empower Your Students

This step is so important yet often overlooked. The danger in doing missions and doing all this planning is that it ends up being all you and your students just get to do a few good deeds at the end. This causes them to miss out on so many great opportunities and they graduate with no idea of how to truly

do ministry and outreach. This may not happen the first time, as we have already talked about planning meticulously, but as quickly as possible you want your students to realize and know that they are empowered and need to go out and do ministry on their own. Of course you still support them and help them but do not let them think that ministry and missions only happen every once in a while and definitely do not let them believe that it can only happen when someone else plans it.

10. Build Relationships

Finally, make sure that your missions involve relationships. You need to first of all build relationships with your leaders and students. This way you will be a more supportive and effective ministry team that will be in this for the long haul. But you also need to build relationships with the places you go. This is done two ways. First of all you do this by engaging the culture you are visiting. Go beyond your projects and make sure that you are actually having conversations with people, getting to know them, and build relationships. Second, and I close with this, look for partnerships you can form where you can keep up with what is happening throughout the year and go back regularly, be it once or twice a year internationally or every day or week locally, to the same place until the work is done. This is true missions, not one day or one week hit and run trips and activities. Instead, long lasting relationships are what makes a lasting and eternal impact.