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EQUIPPING THE MEMBERS OF MARANATHA
BIBLE CHURCH IN AKRON, OHIO,
TO ENGAGE IN MISSIONS

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EQUIPPING THE MEMBERS OF MARANATHA
BIBLE CHURCH IN AKRON, OHIO,
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This project is dedicated to those who have not yet trusted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior; may all have the opportunity to hear who he is, what he has done, and how he is able to give eternal life through faith in him.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ASMS	American Society of Missiology Series
<i>BBR</i>	<i>Bulletin for Biblical Research</i>
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
<i>BSac</i>	<i>Biblioteca Sacra</i>
EEC	Evangelical Exegetical Commentary
ICC	International Critical Commentary
<i>JETS</i>	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
<i>JRT</i>	<i>Journal of Religious Thought</i>
NAC	New American Commentary
NICNT	New International Commentary of the New Testament
NIVAC	New International Version Application Commentary
NTC	New Testament Commentary
SP	Sacra Pagina
TNTC	Tyndale New Testament Commentaries
ZECNT	Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament

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PREFACE

This dissertation is intended to bless Maranatha Bible Church with many more years of fruitful involvement in global missions. I would like to thank my parents for investing in my education, my dad for his hard work and leadership in our home, and my mom for her loving patience and teaching. Thank you to my fellow elders and staff members that have encouraged and served with me. Thank you to friends throughout my life who have loved and taught me. Thank you to my children Arabelle, Eliza, Samuel, and Annelise, who supported my studies and understood why I spent time on this important project. Last, thank you to my wife Erica, who has always supported, listened, served our family, and loved me throughout this process.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20 is not only a command for Christ's followers but an exciting way to join in the work God is accomplishing presently. At Maranatha Bible Church in Akron, Ohio, the members desire to see this work carried out. While the church possesses enthusiasm and a heart for spiritually lost people, individuals may lack clarity in how they can be involved in this assignment. Do they know what they can do to advance the gospel in their own context? Do they know how to be a part of the Great Commission?

The solution to this lies in mobilizing the members through a missions involvement pathway that encourages them to play a part in making disciples. This pathway would help clarify their role in how and where they can be involved. This project sought to provide direction for the church to be more effective in missions involvement through a curriculum that furthered people's knowledge of the biblical task and missions pathway.

Context

Maranatha Bible Church in Akron, Ohio, began in 1995 when a group of believers gathered in the auditorium of Springfield High School. From that beginning, the church has experienced steady growth from year to year and has planted six autonomous, area churches. It is non-denominational, baptistic in doctrine, and elder-ruled. The reputation of the church is one of teaching the Bible in an expository way. Throughout the church's history, a heart for missions has been evident. This project focused on

enhancing the missions ministry of the church, which has several strengths and weaknesses.

One quality is that the church values prayer and regularly encourages prayer for missions partners. This is accomplished through different levels of involvement and commitment. The church provides a daily prayer guide that includes the church leadership and partners. The church regularly has a missions partner highlighted during the prayer focus of the weekly worship service. There are also regular prayer meetings for current needs of missionaries. Adult Bible Fellowships and home groups have been assigned to pray specifically for two or three missionaries, and this relationship is improved when these partners are able to visit the church and spend relational time with these groups.

Another strength is the sacrificial giving towards missions by the church. The church began with a designation of 10 percent of the church budget going towards missions, but that has steadily increased and is now 20 percent. The church has begun a new tradition of having a Special Missions Project the week after Thanksgiving that includes several components that meet specific and timely needs of partners. While the church leadership has sought to ambitiously challenge the church body by setting the financial amount at a level that will stretch people to give sacrificially, every year the church has met the goal and accomplished the projects. The church has proven over time that they love to give to meet needs.

Partnerships are a strength of the church as well. Many partners have been supported for nearly as long as the church has been in existence. While there is continuity, there are also new partnerships formed regularly that help infuse the church with new opportunities to bless a new part of the world. The church has approximately forty-five partnerships that are spread throughout North America, South America, Europe, Africa, and Asia. The church bases the geographic approach for involvement on the model set forth in Acts 1:8. First, witnesses of Christ begin at home, then to

surrounding regions, and eventually to the ends of the earth. Special attention is given to unreached areas where the population is less than 2 percent Christian, and the main emphasis is on the New Testament practice of planting churches.

A fourth strength would be a consistent involvement by church people in missions trips. While there are some regular trip members who seem to take a trip each year or every other year, a survey has shown that new trips seem to attract new people. Most trips have at least one brand new person and someone who has been on a trip before. One strategy in planning trips has been to have a variety of opportunities with varying levels of cost, types of ministry, and locations. Trips are planned through existing partnerships, and there are usually four or five adult trips a year to go along with four student trips.

While the church is certainly missions-minded, there are also areas for growth. Even previously mentioned strengths in the area of missions need to be continuously cultivated as long as the need for the gospel to go forward remains. Those who attend the church would likely say that the missions element of the church is strong, but the reality is that it could be stronger. For example, even though the church is strong in giving, members could give out of a sense of obligation or even as a way to substitute finances for their own time and energy. People could be willing to pray for missions when they are not willing to give financially towards it. Any of the previous strengths could be improved in these ways.

One weakness would be a lack of a clear, communicated path for people to be progressively more involved. A church member should be able to explain how they are involved in helping accomplish the Great Commission. While not all can be goers, church members can be senders in ways that are encouraged by the church leadership. A spectrum of ways to serve in missions would help give members an individual strategy for growth. This path could progress from entry-level involvement and commitment to a more mature and developed participation.

Another weakness is the church's approach to developing and sending missionaries from within the church. There are some partners that have come from within the church body, but it is more common to support missionaries that other churches are sending. From the group that has been sent by Maranatha Bible Church, none are doing what the church would emphasize on the mission field: planting churches. One partner is currently engaged in discipleship but needs to be more connected to local churches. Other now retired partners were school teachers. Another couple from the church served to strengthen marriages and families. While all of these are certainly good and worthwhile endeavors, they do not fit the primary emphasis the church leaders desire in missions: planting churches. It is essential to design some sort of pathway to develop members to join in church planting efforts in some way. While the church is dependent on the Holy Spirit to provide specific spiritual gifts that enable people for ministry, the church leadership must not simply shrug off the responsibility to train, develop, and send church planters. Spiritual gifts beyond evangelism and pastor/teacher would contribute to a church plant. Just as 1 Corinthians 12 explains, the body of Christ will be made up of many parts. Members at Maranatha Bible Church should be encouraged to use their gifts to their maximum potential and should see the opportunities that exist in the area of church planting.

Limited relationships after short-term missions trips could also be identified as an area of weakness. After a missions team returns, there may be sporadic interaction with people from the trip location, but the church has not emphasized or given specific encouragements later on to continue to further those relationships.

The weakness that seems to be the most glaring is the lack of a pathway to get more people involved in varying degrees of missions. While there is undoubtedly some very good involvement currently, the benefit of expanding participation would lead to an increase of the already good things happening. An expanding involvement would serve to bless the entire church by reproducing in the church members the heart God has for the

world. It would connect worship and discipleship that happens within the church to the critical next step: reproducing believers and churches.

Rationale

This project addressed the weakness of defined missions engagement by preparing a pathway and curriculum that clarified, instructed, and motivated members towards increased involvement. This project was necessary for several theological and practical reasons. The first theological reason for this project is the importance of obedience to the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20. When Christ told his followers to make disciples, the plan for multiplication was clear. It may seem to a church member that this task is for someone else, but every disciple who follows Jesus is part of this plan. Individuals must understand how they can be obedient in their own lives to this command.

The second theological reason for this project was the church's need to understand the importance of a broader involvement geographically as taught in Acts 1:8. The Lord wants to use witnesses locally, regionally, and globally to the ends of the earth. Thankfully, the church has investment in each of these areas. This project helped members see ways they can serve at home, in Northeast Ohio, in the United States, and even in foreign countries.

The third theological reason for this project was to inspire church members to gladly support others involved in missions around the world as an application of 3 John 5-8. Increased engagement leads to more investment, prayer, and encouragement for partners the church supports. While it would be too much to ask members to intentionally know each of the approximately forty-five partners, they can and should have a personal connection with at least one. This project encouraged them towards that end.

The first practical reason for this project was that increasing member engagement would enhance the strengths and address the weaknesses previously listed. I

debated between focusing on developing a sending culture or equipping each member to be more involved. As people become more active and see the fruit of their participation in missions, they naturally consider how they could be even more effective, and God could use their involvement to begin shaping their heart and desires to be sent out by the church for full-time missions work.

A second practical reason for this project was to build upon a solid foundation in need of expansion. This was not a situation where the existing ministries needed to be torn down to start again from scratch. Our existing strengths provide tremendous potential for expansion and development. Increasing missions engagement addresses each previously stated weakness. The church grows in maturity and effectiveness when each part of the church is equipped to work as it is designed (1 Cor 12; Eph 4). While there will always be room for growth, providing clear steps provides the people of the church with everything they need to serve. Missions need not be a great mystery to people that leads to feelings of guilt and thoughts of being useless. Instead, church members should be able to be excited about their role and clearly see how their gifts and service provide real impact for God's kingdom.

A third practical reason for this project was to give the leadership of the church a tool to use in discipling people towards missions. Church members should be encouraged regularly, and leadership in the area of missions at Maranatha Bible Church should never be a factor in limiting how people are being used. Conversely, the leadership should be an equipping resource for people of the church to trust for direction and development.

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to equip the members of Maranatha Bible Church in Akron, Ohio, to engage in missions in a way that challenged members to

consider their role in the Great Commission, encouraged involvement, and emphasized the importance of partnership.

Goals

The following goals gave direction and action steps to this important task. These provided a progression to ensure that this project was able to be measured and proven to be successful.

1. The first goal was to develop a practical pathway for missions engagement by church members.
2. The second goal was to assess the understanding and attitudes towards missions by church members.
3. The third goal was to develop a curriculum for missions engagement that explained the pathway.
4. The fourth goal was to increase understanding and encourage proper attitudes through the missions curriculum and class.

Research Methodology

Successful completion of this project depended upon the completion of these four goals. The first goal was to develop a practical pathway for missions involvement by church members. This goal was measured by the completion of a visual pathway that could be reproduced and communicated in various formats. This pathway was approved by the Missions Committee of the church, which was made up by a portion of the elder board. This goal was measured by using the Missions Pathway Evaluation Tool and considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of the evaluation criterion met or exceeded the sufficient level according to the rubric used for evaluation.

The second goal was to assess the understanding and attitudes towards missions by church members.¹ The assessment sought to show understanding of the

¹ All of the research instruments used in this project were performed in compliance with and approved by The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to use.

church's role and priorities in missions, as well as understanding how members specifically can play a role in the Great Commission. This goal was measured by administering the Mission Knowledge and Practice Survey before and after the missions overview class to determine the effectiveness of the teaching. This goal was considered successfully met when a *t*-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive statistically significant difference in the pre- and post-survey scores.

The third goal was to develop an 8-session curriculum for missions teaching that explained the pathway. This missions overview class sought to inform and motivate people towards mission involvement. This goal was measured by the completion of the curriculum and approval by the Missions Committee using the Missions Curriculum Evaluation Rubric. This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of the evaluation criterion met or exceeded the sufficient level according to the rubric.

The fourth goal was to increase understanding and encourage proper attitudes through the missions overview class. At the completion of the class, members grew in ways that impact their future involvement. This goal was measured by re-administering the Missions Knowledge and Practice Survey after the missions overview class to determine the effectiveness of the teaching. This goal was considered successfully met when a *t*-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive statistically significant difference in the pre- and post-survey scores.

Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations

The following definitions of key terms are used in the ministry project:

Mission. This project uses Christopher Wright's definition: "Mission, from the point of view of our human endeavor, means the committed *participation* of God's people in the purposes of God for the redemption of the whole creation. The mission is

God's."² This definition is helpful and applicable because it describes how believers today are engaging in God's plan of redemption. Believers do not choose the mission; they join and participate in God's revealed mission.

Missions engagement. This term refers to active participation with any item on the missions pathway.

Missions partnerships. The church officially recognizes missionary families, individuals, and organizations and partners in their ministry through prayer, mutual involvement, financial support, and meaningful relationship.

Pathway. This refers to the information regarding the progression of ways people can be involved. Members are able to understand ways to be involved through the clear and consistent presentation of this information in a variety of ways. While the information was covered through the Missions Curriculum, it was also readily available on a printed card. The pathway is reproducible as a digital tool for use on an announcement screen, website, etc.

Relational partnerships. This term emphasizes the interaction church members have with missions partners.

One delimitation applied to this project. The group to be surveyed and taught the curriculum will be a selection of adults from an Adult Bible Fellowship, similar to a Sunday school class. This group meets on Sunday mornings as a medium size class, and the group provides a good opportunity for testing the effectiveness of the curriculum as they represent a sample of typical church members. If the curriculum proves to be effective, it can be taught in each Adult Bible Fellowship. The curriculum could even be recorded to be viewed online or by small groups that meet during the week. The idea is to

² Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 66 (emphasis original).

test the curriculum on a sample group before expanding the potential for how it can be used throughout the church.

Conclusion

The Great Commission deserves our best efforts. If God has chosen to use local churches and individual believers as ambassadors for the gospel, then the members of each church must be successfully equipped to do their part. This project will seek to enable the people of Maranatha Bible Church to engage effectively and obediently to this all-important task. The church's impact will be stronger as each individual member pursues their own unique role in missions. Chapter 2 provides a biblical foundation for why this subject is vital to every local church.

CHAPTER 2

THE BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR MISSIONS ENGAGEMENT

This chapter explains how the Bible instructs disciples of Jesus to make disciples, both locally and abroad, and to support missionaries who make disciples. An exegesis of Matthew 28:18-20 supports this thesis by showing the missionary task of making disciples who make disciples. Acts 1:8 gives a strategic progression of witnessing locally, regionally, and to the ends of the earth. In 3 John 5-8, John teaches the importance of supporting those in ministry. As local churches evaluate their own role in carrying out God's mission, the path clearly begins with the authority of Scripture. While the entire New Testament, in some way, serves to show how followers of Jesus carried out his mandate to "Go into all the world to proclaim the gospel to the whole of creation" (Mark 16:15), these three select passages serve to give key directive points regarding the task, the strategy, and the means.¹

Matthew 28:18-20: The Missionary Task of Making Disciples Who Make Disciples

When Jesus shared his final moments with his disciples, he presented them with his parting instructions. While recorded differently in other Gospels (Mark 16:15; Luke 24:44-49; John 20:21), the Matthew text gives a clear and compelling explanation of Jesus's mandate while including elements consistent with "OT commissioning narratives."² These elements would include an introduction, confrontation, reaction,

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from the English Standard Version.

² W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, vol. 3, *Matthew 19-28*, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), 676. Drawing on

commission, reassurance, and conclusion. This structure, which begins in verse 16, reinforces the significance of this mandate in light of the whole of the biblical narrative. Clearly, it is an important turning point in Scripture.

Throughout the Old Testament, creation and the fall of mankind gave opportunity for God to implement his plan of redemption. Through the Abrahamic Covenant in Genesis 12, the Mosaic Law given in the Pentateuch, and the prophecies of a coming Savior, God's people learned of his love and desire to save them. Regarding Matthew's Gospel and Jesus's ministry occurring after four hundred years of prophetic silence, D. A. Carson and Douglas Moo note, "Matthew's gospel is foundational not only as one looks backward to the scriptures of the old covenant but also as one looks forward to what the church became."³ Jesus's earthly ministry is the turning point. He fulfilled the need that was made clear throughout the Old Testament for a Messiah and promised to build his church (Matt 16:18) of which he is the Head (Eph 1:22; 5:23; Col 1:18) and Chief Shepherd (1 Pet 5:4). Matthew 28:18-20 provides his instructions for his followers that detail how his church would grow, and walking through the text verse by verse gives opportunity for an accurate understanding of what exactly Jesus was telling his followers to do.

In verse 18, Jesus states, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." The word used for "authority," ἐξουσία, can be translated as "power" or "right" and refers to the "power of decision making, especially as the unlimited possibility of action proper to God authority."⁴ After displaying his power over nature through healings, miracles, and ultimately his death and resurrection, Jesus could make this claim

scholarship from B. J. Hubbard, examples of Old Testament commissions would include Exodus 7:2, Joshua 1:7, 1 Chronicles 22:13, and Jeremiah 1:7.

³ D. A. Carson and Douglas J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 164.

⁴ Timothy Friberg, Barbara Friberg, and Neva F. Miller, *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament* (Victoria, BC: Trafford, 2005), 157.

with the full trust of his disciples. His rule and reign have no end or limit. He has the right and authority to command his will in any and every dimension of heaven and earth, past, present, or future. Simply put, all must follow his commands. Steven Hawthorne points out the four “all” statements present in the Great Commission text, which include “all authority,” “all nations,” “all that Jesus commanded,” and Jesus’s presence and help “always.”⁵ Only the Creator and Lord of the universe could rightly assume the scope of authority that Jesus does here. Yet, Craig Blomberg notes that Jesus “is still in some sense distinct from the Heavenly Father, so that Matthew can use the divine passive in speaking of his having ‘been given’ this authority.”⁶ He is simultaneously both a giver and recipient. While the relationship of the Trinity is simple yet mysterious, the picture here is that Jesus Christ has rightfully shown and been given the authority to give the instructions he is about to say. Carson writes, “The spheres in which he now exercises absolute authority are enlarged to include all heaven and earth, i.e., the entire universe.”⁷ The authority is unquestionably his.

While understanding the all-encompassing scope of Christ’s command, there is also a highly personal nature as well. R. T. France points out, “At the heart of this new community of faith is the risen Jesus himself, as he had said he would be (18:20): they are to be *his* disciples, obeying *his* commandments, and sustained by *his* unending presence among them. This new international community will be *his* ekklēsia (16:18), because it is *he* who now holds all authority in heaven and on earth.”⁸ This balance of universal extent with a focus on the specific person of Jesus reinforces his lordship. What

⁵ Steven C. Hawthorne, “Mandate on the Mountain,” in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, ed. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne, 4th ed. (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2009), 126-31.

⁶ Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew*, NAC, vol. 22 (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 431.

⁷ D. A. Carson, *Matthew*, in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Abridged Edition, New Testament*, ed. Kenneth L. Barker and John R. Kohlenberger III (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 133.

⁸ R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 1561, Scribd.

a message for all people, that the Creator God of the universe is using his authority to invite people into a personal relationship with him!

Jesus's explanation of authority being over both heaven and earth bring to mind the Lord's Prayer from Matthew 6:9-13, where he instructs his followers to ask God the Father for his will to be done on earth as it is in heaven. With this closing commission, Jesus is showing that "he will bring the future and unite the earthly world of humanity with the heavenly world of God and the angels."⁹ This Great Commission is part of God's plan in preparation for eternity. His strategy moves forward, from the ministry of prophets to Jesus incarnate and now to entrusting his followers to become his ambassadors (2 Cor 5:18-20).

Having established Jesus's power and role in giving instruction, verses 19-20 record Jesus's command: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you."

With Jesus's ascension moments away, the disciples would be looking for their new "marching orders." A concise and informative statement about Jesus's will and expectation for them directs their lives and decision-making from this point forward. What were they to do? Go and make new disciples. The verb for "go" is *πορευθέντες*, of which Cleon Rogers notes, "The aorist aspect makes the command definite and urgent. It is not 'if you happen to be going' or 'wherever you might be' but rather 'go and perform an act.'"¹⁰ They must purposefully happen together. This intentionality would be necessary if indeed disciples of Christ were to be made from "all nations." Christopher Wright weighs in by explaining the verb is not an imperative, but rather "a participle of

⁹ Davies and Allison, *Matthew 19-28*, 683.

¹⁰ Cleon Rogers, "The Great Commission," *BSac* 130 (1973): 262.

attendant circumstances, an assumption.”¹¹ He writes that the main command is to make disciples, and the disciples “will have to go to the nations as a necessary condition of obeying the primary command.”¹² Carson agrees regarding the main command, noting, “The rest of the verb forms are participles, though they function like imperatives.”¹³ The syntax matters; it is needed for a proper understanding of what Jesus meant and what is to be obeyed. This is not a case where they were to go first and *then* focus on making disciples. This delays the urgent task. Both commands must be taken together: as they were going, they were to make disciples.

The verb μαθητεύσατε is aorist active, which means as an imperative it could be translated as “to make someone be or become a disciple of someone.”¹⁴ This verb occurs just four times in the New Testament, with three found in Matthew’s Gospel (13:52; 27:57; 28:19).¹⁵ This last use is the only time it is used imperatively.¹⁶ While not used ubiquitously throughout the gospel, the infrequent use actually serves to strengthen the impact of such a command. Jesus models disciple-making to these men during his entire public ministry, and now this command includes them in the process.

While the disciples had earlier been included in spreading the news of the kingdom, it was strictly for Jewish people.¹⁷ Matthew 10:5-7 records Jesus’s specific instructions: “These twelve Jesus sent out after instructing them, saying, ‘Do not go on a road to Gentiles, and do not enter a city of Samaritans; but rather go to the lost sheep of

¹¹ Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible’s Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 34.

¹² Wright, *The Mission of God*, 34.

¹³ Carson, *Matthew*, 133.

¹⁴ Friberg, Friberg, and Miller, *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*, 251.

¹⁵ David Jacobus Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, ASMS (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011), 73.

¹⁶ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 73.

¹⁷ D. Edmond Hiebert, “An Expository Study of Matthew 28:16-20,” *BSac* 149, no. 595 (July-September 1992): 339.

the house of Israel. And as you go, preach, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven has come near’” (NASB). This shift is a confirmation of not only Jesus’s plan to reach the Jewish *and* Gentile world, but it also shows his trust in empowering his disciples to be the message-bearers.

Where are Jesus’s disciples to go? When Jesus instructs them to make disciples of “all nations,” to whom is he referring? This phrase *πάντα τὰ ἔθνη* must be carefully considered. With the audience for Matthew’s Gospel being largely Jewish, the issue of whether “all nations” *includes* Israel or means *beyond* Israel can be addressed by the qualifier “all.”¹⁸ John Piper notes the phrase “occurs in the Greek Old Testament nearly one hundred times and virtually never carries the meaning ‘Gentile individuals’ but always carries the meaning ‘all the nations’ in the sense of the people groups outside of Israel.”¹⁹ He concludes, “There is no good reason for construing this to mean anything other than that the missionary task of the church is to press on to all the unreached peoples until the Lord comes.”²⁰ This understanding comes from taking Scripture as a whole. While God had a plan for Israel to serve as a “light for all nations” (Isa 42:6; 49:6; 60:3) throughout the Old Testament, Jesus, the “Light of the World” (John 8:12) to both Jews and Gentiles (Acts 26:23), made it possible for his followers to now serve as “lights” to those who do not believe (Phil 2:15). All people groups need to hear the good news of Jesus’s death and resurrection. Carson observes, “Matthew’s gospel returns to the theme introduced in in the very first verse—that the blessings promised to Abraham and through Him to all people on earth (Ge 12:3) are now to be fulfilled in Jesus the Messiah.”²¹ He argues for a comprehensive application, to make disciples everywhere

¹⁸ France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1566.

¹⁹ John Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad! The Supremacy of God in Missions*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1993), 167.

²⁰ Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad!*, 188.

²¹ Carson, *Matthew*, 133.

without distinction.²² Luke’s Gospel records Jesus saying, “Repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning in Jerusalem” (Luke 24:47). Davies and Allison note regarding the scope, “We believe it includes Israel: universal lordship means universal mission.”²³ Mark’s Gospel records the instruction as, “Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation” (Mark 16:15). This global approach requires a local beginning that spreads outward. This principle will be covered further in Acts 1:8.

In verse 19, part of the command then is to baptize disciples in, or into, the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. While the intention of this study is not to give a full explanation of the wonderful meaning and symbolism behind baptism, there is a key point to understand. Baptism identifies a disciple as a public follower and member of the body of Christ, and this identification is a key component as the names of the Trinity are listed. A new disciple is a new creation (2 Cor 5:17), and when this public testimony takes place, the believer is informing observers that their newfound faith and trust are in God: the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The specific names and persons of God are on full display so there is no doubt as to allegiance or specificity.

The command to baptize is supportive of the main command of making disciples. D. Edmond Hiebert explains, “It involves four activities, indicated in the verbal terms, “go” (*πορευθέντες*), “make disciples” (*μαθητεύσατε*), “baptizing” (*βαπτίζοντες*), and “teaching” (*διδάσκοντες*).”²⁴ His point: “The three participles, grammatically dependent on the main verb, denote activities related to the accomplishment of the central assignment.”²⁵ Davies and Allison agree it is best not to see baptism as one command in a

²² Carson, *Matthew*, 133.

²³ Davies and Allison, *Matthew 19-28*, 684.

²⁴ Hiebert, “An Expository Study of Matthew 28:16-20,” 347-48.

²⁵ Hiebert, “An Expository Study of Matthew 28:16-20,” 348.

series, but as supportive of the general imperative.²⁶ In other words, making disciples is the command, and part of obeying that command is going, baptizing, and teaching. Craig Blomberg clarifies, “The truly subordinate participles in v. 19 explain what making disciples involves: ‘baptizing’ them and ‘teaching’ them obedience to all of Jesus’s commandments.”²⁷

The disciples are then to teach new disciples all that Christ taught. Readers with presuppositions about education may understand this “teaching” to be focused on content and knowledge, that disciples would be able to repeat back the things Christ taught. But Jesus takes it much further. Hiebert writes, “The content and aim of this further teaching is ‘to observe all that I commanded you’ (τηρεῖν πάντα ὅσα ἐνετειλάμην ὑμῖν). The present tense ‘to observe’ (τηρεῖν, ‘to be keeping, observing, fulfilling’) indicates that the teaching must involve not just what is taught but also the resultant life-long committal to obey the message.”²⁸ Jesus is not desiring students who only hear—he is clear about his expectations. The goal in teaching is a transformed life. When followers *observe* Jesus’s teaching, they do not just know what their teacher knows, but they become what their teacher *is*. For the multiplication of disciples to occur, this must be the case. This approach is the only way to prepare disciples to make new disciples. The design is for disciples to obey all commands, even the commands given in this passage.

Verse 20 shares Christ’s promise: “And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” Jesus’s presence is both reassuring and empowering. His followers can put their hope in his company without fear of his leaving. R. T. France observes, “It is thus entirely appropriate that the last words of Jesus in this gospel, ‘I am with you all the time until the end of the age’ echo the title with which he was first introduced in 1:23,

²⁶ Davies and Allison, *Matthew 19-28*, 686.

²⁷ Blomberg, *Matthew*, 431.

²⁸ Hiebert, “An Expository Study of Matthew 28:16-20,” 352.

‘Immanuel—God with us.’”²⁹ The disciples were ordinary men receiving a mandate to reach the world by making followers of Christ; how would they approach such a monumental task? Jesus provides hope and comfort, not through a guarantee of success or a promise of results, but rather through his very self. He would be with them at all times, in all places, in every step of their obedience.

Churches can follow this charge both corporately and through individuals within the church. Not all believers can go the ends of the earth, but they can support and pray for those who do. Hiebert writes, “The story of the early church and of the church throughout history demonstrates that this commission is not a command to each individual (more are called to stay at home than to go) but to the Church as a whole.”³⁰ The church needs both senders and goers. Different gifts may be needed even to obey the different parts of the command. An evangelist will focus on unbelievers, while a pastor/teacher will focus on teaching new followers how to obey. The Great Commission can and should be a focus for local churches as they seek to obey Jesus’s instructions together.

Acts 1:8: A Strategic Progression of Witnessing Locally, Regionally, and to the Ends of the Earth

The book of Acts is another turning point in human history and the biblical narrative. In contrast to the Old Testament model where Israel would serve as the example to the world, Acts shows how the disciples carried out the Great Commission through a centrifugal gospel force outward from Jerusalem. Jesus’s empowering claim in Acts 1:8 presents not only the source of effectiveness for his disciples, but also a strategic approach for their next steps. Jesus says, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea

²⁹ France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1561.

³⁰ Hiebert, “An Expository Study of Matthew 28:16-20,” 348.

and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8). Walking through the verse step by step shows both source and strategy.

The first section of the verse presents the promise of the Holy Spirit’s power. The term *δύναμιν* refers to power, might, strength, or the ability to produce a strong effect.³¹ The disciples had seen the power of Jesus’s words throughout his ministry, so his promise here brings full expectation it would be fulfilled. The context of this promise occurs after verse 6, where the disciples ask Jesus about restoring the kingdom to Israel. Their anticipation and understanding of the “kingdom” was limited, so Jesus corrects them with a proper perspective on how this kingdom would become global.³²

The disciples’ personal experience is noteworthy as they can provide a fair account. Darrell Bock defines a witness as “someone who helps establish facts objectively through verifiable observation.”³³ He explains, “This objectivity and fact-based quality of the witness are why the direct experience of Jesus’s ministry and resurrection are required of Judas’ replacement in Acts 1:21-22, a passage that shows what stands behind Luke’s use of the term.”³⁴ They did not need to learn new things in order to share; they could simply retell the things they had seen and heard.

The content of their message is to focus on Christ: his life, teaching, miracles, death, resurrection, and thus, forgiveness of sins through his finished work. Eckhard Schnabel sees the personal nature of this witness, writing, “The personal pronoun (*μου*), emphasized by virtue of being placed before ‘witnesses’ (*μάρτυρες*), underscores the fact that Jesus is the principal of the apostles’ ministry as he mandates what they say and what

³¹ Friberg, Friberg, and Miller, *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*, 121.

³² John B. Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, vol. 26 (Nashville: Broadman Press, 2001), 85.

³³ Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 64.

³⁴ Bock, *Acts*, 64.

they do as his witnesses.”³⁵ The term *μάρτυρες* describes the disciples’ role in giving a personal testimony about Christ.³⁶ It is used in Acts thirteen times, the highest number of any New Testament book.³⁷ This high usage that follows in successive chapters indicates the obedience to this directive command in the first chapter.

The Holy Spirit was to give power to the message the disciples would give. While Jesus had promised them the “Spirit of truth” was coming during his ministry (John 16), they were unaware of the timing and that the Day of Pentecost would come soon in Acts 2. God’s design was for the Spirit to give fruit to their testimony. Craig Keener, while giving an overview of the Holy Spirit’s role and activity throughout the book of Acts, writes, “The Spirit empowers and directs believers for cross-cultural mission in Acts.”³⁸ This truth serves as both comfort and motivation. Regarding comfort, if God himself is actively providing fruit when a message about Christ is given, it removes fear, doubt, and self-dependence. Regarding motivation, God’s role and activity provide a strong incentive . . . he can reach to a person’s heart and soul and produce his intended response! Keener puts it this way, “In the promises of Luke 24:47-49 and Acts 1:4-8, Jesus emphasizes the need to depend on God to fulfill the commission he is giving; the Spirit is both necessary and available.”³⁹ This promised power equips followers of Christ with everything they need to serve as witnesses.

This admonition repeats the emphasis Jesus gave his disciples in Luke 24. He shares in Luke 24:44-47 how he fulfilled Old Testament prophecy and provides

³⁵ Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), chap. 1, “Acts 1:1-14,” sec. 13, para. 5, Kindle.

³⁶ Polhill, *Acts*, 85.

³⁷ Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Acts of the Apostles*, NTC (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1990), 54.

³⁸ Craig S. Keener, “The Spirit and the Mission of the Church in Acts 1-2,” *JETS* 62, no. 1 (March 2019): 28.

³⁹ Keener, “The Spirit and the Mission of the Church in Acts 1-2,” 29.

forgiveness of sins, instructing his followers to begin in Jerusalem and proclaim his name to all nations. The similarities between this account in Luke's Gospel and Luke's Acts account are intentional. Luke's emphasis of Jesus's commission is consistent. In verse 48, he declares the disciples as witnesses of who he was and what he had done, and in verse 49, Jesus promises the Holy Spirit to clothe them with power. This repetition of the task and empowerment should make the calling for followers of Jesus abundantly clear.

Richard Longenecker uses this passage as a summary of the book of Acts when he observes, "The mandate to witness stands as the theme for the whole of Acts."⁴⁰ Simon Kistemaker agrees, "In this text, Luke presents the theme for the entire book."⁴¹ Indeed, the rest of the book shows the providential expansion of disciple-given witness and the growth of the church, but it all starts with Jesus's explicit instruction for the Spirit-empowered witness to move outwardly.

With the disciples' awareness of the source and role they had, Jesus gives them the progression that would take place. This is the second key emphasis of this verse: the progressive strategy. John Polhill observes, "The geographical scope of Acts 1:8 provides a rough outline of the entire book: Jerusalem (1-7), Judea and Samaria (8-12), the ends of the earth (13-28)."⁴² As Luke writes Acts, these sections are marked with a summary statement. Acts 6:7 marks the first: "And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith." The fruitful ministry would expand into Judea and Samaria, as promised, in Acts 9:31: "So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied." Regarding the ends of the earth, the final verse

⁴⁰ Richard N. Longenecker, *Acts*, in Barker and Kohlenberger, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Abridged Edition, New Testament*, 382.

⁴¹ Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Acts of the Apostles*, 53.

⁴² Polhill, *Acts*, 85-86.

in the book of Acts (28:31) states that as the apostle Paul ministered in Rome, he proclaimed God’s kingdom and taught about Christ “with all boldness and without hindrance.” This phrase “suggests that the story has not reached its final destination—the witness continues.”⁴³ When Jesus gave his promise in Acts 1:8, he did so knowing exactly how the church would expand in detail. His words were both prophetic and effective.

Relating to this church expansion, Acts records a shift in the effectiveness of disciples making disciples. Eric Geiger and Kevin Peck observe that in Acts 2:47, the church *added*, but in Acts 6:1, the church *multiplied*.⁴⁴ The exponential growth is part of the design from the Great Commission, that disciples would not simply add disciples, but would make disciple who *make* disciples. In this way, the disciples would not serve as a limitation for the spread of the good news about Jesus. They were restricted in terms of how far they could travel, how many people they could serve as a witness, and how long they would live. But in obediently sharing their Spirit-empowered testimony of the person and work of Jesus Christ, they were sharing a message that could spread more effectively through new disciples to new areas.

Another aspect of the spread of the gospel is that while it began in Jerusalem primarily with Jewish people, it spread throughout the Roman Empire to Gentiles also. Isaiah 49:6b presents similar language to Acts 1:8, “I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.” The parallels are striking: light is witness, and this witness extends everywhere people are. The direction changes from the Old Testament to the New Testament, from primarily inward as the nations looked to Israel’s covenant relationship with God, to now outward as the witness went forth from Jerusalem to the nations.

⁴³ Polhill, *Acts*, 86.

⁴⁴ Eric Geiger and Kevin Peck, *Designed to Lead: The Church and Leadership Development* (Nashville: B&H, 2016), 189.

The fulfillment of this passage does not mean Jewish ministry has ended, but rather by including Gentiles it spreads to the very end of the earth.⁴⁵ Regarding the “ends of the earth” in the Isaiah passage, Bertram Melbourne notes, “Even in Jewish usage, the phrase is not limited in meaning. It can refer to Assyria, Babylon, and Rome (not remote countries); to surrounding nations; and to distant lands.”⁴⁶

Before discussing the ultimate destination in more depth, it is helpful to examine the geographical progression presented before it, beginning with the disciples’ location at the time of this instruction.

Jerusalem has been part of Israel’s rich history since the time of David and served as the location for God’s temple. As the site of the crucifixion, the disciples would have stayed there in that city while mourning their teacher’s death.⁴⁷ They also had been instructed by Jesus himself in Luke 24:49, “And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.” In the two books that Luke authored, he focuses on Jewish ministry primarily in his gospel, and moves to emphasize the “Gentile mission” in his historical account of Acts.⁴⁸ Polhill observes, “It is not by accident that Jerusalem came first. In Luke’s Gospel, Jerusalem was central. . . . The story of Jesus led *to* Jerusalem; the story of the church led *from* Jerusalem.”⁴⁹ Jerusalem serves as the center of this mission, where the gospel would go forth proclaiming salvation through the Savior who was buried and rose again in this important city.

⁴⁵ E. Earle Ellis, “The End of the Earth (Acts 1:8),” *BBR* 1 (1991): 124.

⁴⁶ Bertram L. Melbourne, “Acts 1:8 Re-Examined: Is Acts 8 Its Fulfillment?,” *JRT* 57/58, no. 2 (2001-2005): 6.

⁴⁷ Craig S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary*, vol. 1, *Introduction and 1:1-2:47* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 1946, Scribd.

⁴⁸ Keener, *Acts*, 1:1950.

⁴⁹ Polhill, *Acts*, 86.

The areas of Judea and Samaria, west and north of Jerusalem, are regions that “are probably to be taken together.”⁵⁰ Judea likely refers to the Jewish Davidic kingdom, with its population spread through that region, and Samaria is part of that broader region, but is “mentioned separately because of its non-Jewish constituency.”⁵¹ Keener notes, “Thus the disciples are to start with the ancestral capital, spread to the rest of Jewish Palestine, and then (shifting from primarily topographic to primarily cultural distinctions) to Samaria.”⁵² Schnabel adds that while Judea likely includes Galilee (see Acts 9:31), Samaria is distinct culturally as a region where they “rejected the Jerusalem-centered history of salvation.”⁵³ This progression forms a logical strategy. The gospel would not skip over the very city the disciples were in to spread outward; they would start at home. Next, they were to share with people similar to them in other areas. From there, they could cross cultural and linguistic boundaries even in their own region. Beyond that, the gospel would spread to new areas, cultures, languages, and worldviews.

As for “the ends of the earth,” are readers to understand this as a figure of speech, seeing that there is no actual “end” to a spherical earth? Or does this reference the end of the known world at that time? Scholars have debated how to interpret exactly what Luke meant as he wrote this phrase. We see a clear progression geographically from Jerusalem outward throughout Acts. Edward Earle Ellis recaps the geographical spread of Christian witness throughout the book: Acts 1:1-7:60 (Jerusalem); 8:1-11:18 (Judea and Samaria); 11:19-12:25 (Syria); 13:1-16:10 (Cyprus and Asia Minor); 16:11-19:22 (Greece); 27:1-28:31 (Rome).⁵⁴ But did Luke see Rome as the fulfillment of Acts 1:8? Was that the end of the known world and, therefore, “the ends of the earth?” While the

⁵⁰ Polhill, *Acts*, 86.

⁵¹ Polhill, *Acts*, 86.

⁵² Keener, *Acts*, 1:1950.

⁵³ Schnabel, *Acts*, chap. 1, “Acts 1:1-14,” sec. 13, para. 6, Kindle.

⁵⁴ Ellis, “The End of the Earth (Acts 1:8),” 123.

biblical authors were not experts in worldwide geography, Jesus, as Creator, knew every inch of the world he created. He chose to use this phrase, but are we to understand it to be connected to the Hebrew sense from Isaiah, or strictly the Greek sense from Acts? Melbourne summarizes, “From the Greek perspective, the phrase implies that the Gospel should be preached even to the extreme or rural parts of the inhabited world. From the Jewish point of view, the phrase signifies that the Gospel should be preached to surrounding nations but not to the exclusion of distant lands. In sum, the evidence implies that the Gospel should be preached everywhere.”⁵⁵ Schnabel agrees, “In Acts 28, Rome is not portrayed as a goal or fulfillment of the early Christian mission, but as a new starting point from which the gospel was proclaimed ‘with all boldness and without hindrance’ (Acts 28:21).”⁵⁶ Thomas Schreiner suggests that after the expansion from Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria in Acts 9:32, “every locale in Acts from this point on represents the spread of the gospel as it goes to the ‘end of the earth.’”⁵⁷ He continues, “The ‘end of the earth’ (ESV) represents the areas where gentiles live, denoting those who live outside Israel and the land of promise.”⁵⁸ This can be confirmed by looking at Acts 13:47, where the apostle Paul, in response to Jewish resistance, quotes the Isaiah 49:6 passage to teach that Gentiles are included in God’s plan of salvation. Keener adds, “The mission’s expansion here is expressed geographically, but Acts develops it ethnically as well, so that the gospel crosses all barriers.”⁵⁹ Bock agrees, writing, “The phrase ‘end of the earth,’ then, is geographic and ethnic in scope, inclusive of all people and locales.”⁶⁰

⁵⁵ Melbourne, “Acts 1:8 Re-Examined: Is Acts 8 Its Fulfillment?,” 6.

⁵⁶ Schnabel, *Acts*, chap. 1, “Acts 1:1-14,” sec. 13, para. 8, Kindle.

⁵⁷ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Handbook on Acts and Paul’s Letters* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019), 34, Scribd.

⁵⁸ Schreiner, *Handbook on Acts and Paul’s Letters*, 41.

⁵⁹ Keener, *Acts*, 1:1943.

⁶⁰ Bock, *Acts*, 65.

Acts 1:8 serves to provide a missional structure to the rest of the book, but it extends even to present day. There continue to be places and peoples that have not yet heard a Spirit-empowered witness regarding Jesus Christ. The “ends of the earth” are still being reached, with tremendous opportunity for churches that choose to obey this calling.

3 John 5-8: The Importance of Supporting Others in Ministry

With the *goal* of making disciples who reproduce and the *strategy* of progressing locally outward, the *means* of this work comes into focus. Who carries out this work? While many travel geographically to make disciples, some support the work of those going. This section will focus on the biblical command to support others who are actively engaged in gospel ministry. An exegesis of 3 John 5-8 will show how important this task can be.

The apostle John writes in this letter to Gaius, a believer with a common Roman name that makes it difficult to identify him as potentially the same person in other Bible passages.⁶¹ In verse 5, John commends Gaius for his faithfulness working for the brothers (or brothers and sisters)⁶² in Christ first mentioned in verse 3. In verse 4, John refers to his spiritual “children,” not with a sense that he is their actual father, but that he has helped raise them to spiritual maturity. The family references reinforce the idea that God the Father has adopted believers to be sons and daughters and heirs with Christ (Eph 1:5, 11) in God’s family. This familial approach extends even to those Gaius has not met yet.

John’s point is that the service Gaius has provided is a demonstration of faithfulness. In verse 6, John observes that even though the brothers are strangers, unknown beforehand, Gaius was still loving and supportive of them. It is one thing to do

⁶¹ John Painter, *1, 2, and 3 John*, SP, vol. 18 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2002), 366-67.

⁶² Painter, *1, 2, and 3 John*, 370.

a kind deed for a friend, but helping a stranger requires another set of motives.⁶³ The Greek syntax seems to imply (without certainty) that “Gaius was hospitable to fellow Christians, *especially* to those who were strangers to him.”⁶⁴ The brothers received such meaningful ministry that they testified to Gaius’s love before the gathered believers of the church. While the church is not specified, Gary Derickson explains, “The preposition ἐνώπιον and the anarthrous ἐκκλησίας indicates the report came at ‘a’ meeting of the congregation,” which contextually would likely be John’s church.⁶⁵

John’s encouragement, which is the central point of this passage,⁶⁶ then becomes a focus of this study: “You will do well to send them on their journey in a manner worthy of God” (3 John 6b). How can believers do well in sending others? How can this be done in a “manner worthy of God”? The answers to these questions can help enable believers to be a part of wonderful gospel expansion in other parts of the world, especially today in a globalized era.

In the first and second century, it was common for “travelling teachers” to serve through Western Asia.⁶⁷ When John wrote about sending them on their journey, the verb *προπέμπω* can be understood as helping with whatever is needed for travel, be it food, funds, or transportation.⁶⁸ This enabled the brothers not to simply benefit from Gaius’s hospitality during their time together. His support would extend to provide for their journey after their stay. Without this type of support, gospel teachers could not continue to do their work.

⁶³ Karen H. Jobes, *1, 2, and 3 John*, ZECNT (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 300, Scribd.

⁶⁴ Jobes, *1, 2, 3 John*, 301.

⁶⁵ Gary W. Derickson, *1, 2 and 3 John*, EEC (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2014), 1289, Scribd.

⁶⁶ Jobes, *1, 2, and 3 John*, 299.

⁶⁷ F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles of John* (Nashville: Kingsley Books, 2018), 206.

⁶⁸ Derickson, *1, 2 and 3 John*, 1290.

How was this support done in a manner worthy of God? This is a figure of speech from the Greek world referring to actions that furthered a secular god's reputation, and John uses it here to show how "Gaius' loving deeds brought praise to God."⁶⁹ When believers love as God loves, they show God to the world as the source of love (1 John 4:7-8).

Another way that supporting others can be done in a manner worthy of God is the idea that it may be done in a way that God approves.⁷⁰ God's people were called throughout Scripture to support those who dedicated themselves to ministering to others. Going as far back in the Old Testament as the tribes of Israel, the Levites were able to serve the Lord because of the contributions of others. Numbers 18:21 says, "To the Levites I have given every tithe in Israel for an inheritance, in return for their service that they do, their service in the tent of meeting."

In the New Testament, Jesus and his disciples were supported by Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna, "and many others, who provided for them out of their means" (Luke 8:3b). The apostle Paul argued that those "who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel" (1 Cor 9:1-4). While Paul was also a tentmaker by trade (Acts 18:3), he still wrote to the Romans, "I hope to see you in passing as I go to Spain, and to be helped on my journey there by you, once I have enjoyed your company for a while" (Rom 15:24). His intention was not for profit or material gain, but simply to be able to have his needs met as he did the work of ministry. Jesus referenced this idea when he sent out his disciples (Luke 10:7). This is the same circumstance found in 3 John.

As the apostle John encourages Gaius, his phrase "you will do well" could be interpreted as a polite way of introducing a request.⁷¹ John writes that he "will" do well to

⁶⁹ Derickson, *1, 2 and 3 John*, 1292.

⁷⁰ Derickson, *1, 2 and 3 John*, 1292.

⁷¹ Jobes, *1, 2, 3 John*, 303.

send them in a manner worthy of God. This future tense indicates that John expected him to continue this ministry in the future. John Painter observes that John contrasts Gaius with Diotrephes later in this letter (3 John 9-10) by stating, “The exhortation is meant to encourage Gaius to continue the good work even in a context where Diotrephes is exerting negative pressure to prevent hospitality to the brothers.”⁷²

In verse 7, there is a clear reason for this type of support. These brothers had gone out “for the sake of the name.” Gary Derickson writes that Gaius was providing for the needs of saints who were serving Christ by depending on the body of Christ.⁷³ He observes that the phrase used, ὑπὲρ γὰρ τοῦ ὀνόματος ἐξῆλθον, means “for they went out on behalf of the name,” signifying a connection between their actions, Gaius’s support, and Christ’s reputation.⁷⁴ This is indeed a powerful testimony to all involved: those receiving, those giving, and those observing. When believers provide for others to do the work of ministry, they serve as participants in the ministry themselves, just as Paul counted the Philippian church “partners” in the gospel (Phil 1:3).⁷⁵

Following this reasoning in verse 8, John summarizes: “Therefore we ought to support people like these, that we may be fellow workers for the truth.” F. F. Bruce points out that “the pronoun ‘we’ is emphatic,” meaning that the task of support falls on fellow believers since it is not the Gentiles’ role.⁷⁶ The word “ought” is ὀφείλομεν, which as a figure of speech points to “a sense of indebtedness to someone for something.”⁷⁷ Painter observes this wording may refer back to 1 John 4:11 as “the grounding of the love command in the revealed love of the Father in the Son,” as well as the opportunity to be a

⁷² Painter, *1, 2, and 3 John*, 371.

⁷³ Derickson, *1, 2 and 3 John*, 1292.

⁷⁴ Derickson, *1, 2 and 3 John*, 1292.

⁷⁵ Derickson, *1, 2 and 3 John*, 1294.

⁷⁶ Bruce, *The Epistles of John*, 208.

⁷⁷ Friberg, Friberg, and Miller, *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*, 289.

fellow worker for gospel truth.⁷⁸ The Greek clause indicates both intention and result: the intention is to support the work, the result is to be a “fellow worker.”⁷⁹ This is an opportunity for believers to provide in meaningful ways so that others will have the opportunity to hear the gospel and respond.

The text of 3 John 5-8 presents a compelling example for modern-day believers to follow. As it follows the biblically normative principle of supporting those set apart for ministry, it provides a picture of teamwork, that through loving assistance a supporter can actually be a part of the ministry work that is being accomplished. For Christians today, the opportunities are many. A believer could mirror Gaius’s service by providing hospitality, but the application can be widened to include anything a partner in ministry would need. Financial support, prayer, encouragement, or other acts of service could play an important part in sustaining their work. For churches, this means their local group of believers could be involved in pioneering gospel ministry anywhere in the world in meaningful ways. With technological advances in communication, relationships can happen across continents. With accessible transportation, visits here or there mean that true partnerships can exist on a global scale. There have never been more opportunities to be a “fellow worker.”

Conclusion

These passages show how Scripture teaches essential components to engage in God’s global work. God has blessed the church with clear and emphatic instruction regarding the task, strategy, and means of their role in his work of bringing good news to the nations. Regarding the task, Matthew 28:18-20 shows that obedient followers of Jesus will intentionally disciple others to become obedient followers as well, which includes going, baptizing, and teaching. Acts 1:8 describes a strategic witnessing approach that

⁷⁸ Painter, *1, 2, and 3 John*, 372.

⁷⁹ Jobses, *1, 2, 3 John*, 305.

begins at home with God's Spirit as the source and moves to other cultures and ethnic groups. Third John 5-8 shows how believers play an important role by supporting others who are involved in this ministry.

These passages serve as a foundation for church understanding and engagement in global missions. As these texts are explained to believers, they are given opportunity to respond with their involvement. In the next chapter, specific applications show practical ways to focus an obedient response.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL, PRACTICAL, AND HISTORICAL ISSUES RELATED TO MISSIONS ENGAGEMENT

Introduction

With a biblical basis for present day believers to be participants in God's work of redemption locally and around the world, specific application is needed. This chapter will explain how prayer, relational partnerships, and short-term trips have proven throughout church history and into the present to be effective tools for missions engagement at the personal and church level. Without these key components, missions efforts will either lack the power for ministry, the people to minister alongside, or a starting point for further, long-term work. After explaining and reflecting on the importance of these elements, they will prove to be foundational for a missions engagement pathway.

Prayer

Prayer has proven throughout church history and into the present to be an effective tool for missions engagement at the personal and church level. Some may see prayer as a formality, as an appropriate way to open or close a church meeting, or simply as something that is done before the real work starts. Historically, effective and impactful servants would disagree, as we will discover.

At the heart of prayer is trust and dependence. In any missions endeavor, there is only so much a human being can do. A mature Christian will realize the value, importance, and joy that comes from giving needs over to the Lord. A. W. Tozer notes, "As we go on into God we shall see the excellency of the life of constant communion where all thoughts and acts are prayers, and the entire life becomes one holy sacrifice of

praise and worship.”¹ His point is well made: the Christian life is not lived in isolation, but rather in continual communication with the Lord as evidence of complete reliance. A mature believer, in any activity for any goal, walks in dependence on the Lord to act.

While prayer is a basic component of a spiritual life, many struggle with practicing it. Oswald Sanders explains, “Prayer is the most ancient, most universal, and most intensive expression of the religious instinct.”² He contrasts this idea with the reality that many fail to delight in it and do it.³ How could believers miss such an effective and joyful tool? A focus on biblical instruction provides the right perspective.

A Biblical Basis of Prayer for Missions

In Luke 10:2, the Lord Jesus himself gives clear instruction that his followers are to “pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.” While human reasoning would expect the object of prayer to be for the harvest itself, Jesus instead points to the need for the Lord to send out laborers. In this way, God is seen as the sovereign provider over the process of salvation. Leon Morris observes that God calls, sends, and even those who labor for him depend on him for more workers.⁴

In Ephesians 6:18, the apostle Paul instructs the believers in Ephesus to “pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests” (NIV). While this command certainly gives freedom for praying about any number of needs, Paul focuses their prayers for him on a central theme in verses 19 and 20: boldness in sharing the gospel. Commenting on this section, Thomas Schreiner rightly attributes prayer as the “means” by which the gospel is effective.⁵ Paul is trusting God to work through his bold

¹ A. W. Tozer, *The Root of the Righteous* (Camp Hill, PA: Christian, 1986), 82.

² Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), 85.

³ Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership*, 85.

⁴ Leon Morris, *Luke*, TNTC 3 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 199.

⁵ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Handbook on Acts and Paul’s Letters* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019), 292.

words; thus, the need to ask God to do it! E. K. Simpson and F. F. Bruce note regarding this passage that when missionaries face discouragement, they could find a boost knowing that other believers are holding them up in prayer, taking part in their ministry through this crucial support.⁶

In Romans 10:1, the apostle Paul writes regarding Israel, “Brothers, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved.” Paul’s compassion was coupled with his conviction to do what would most help them: pray for their salvation. Douglas Moo explains, “Paul makes clear how deeply he feels about the failure of Israel to embrace the salvation God offers in Jesus.”⁷ This type of heartfelt concern for the lost can help fuel prayers towards people that believers have never personally met.

These passages show prayer to be indispensable to the work happening through missions. While prayer is not the ultimate goal, it helps give God’s resources and attention to the goal of presenting the message of Jesus Christ to those who have not yet believed in him. John Piper explains, “The proclamation of the gospel in Word and deed is *the* work of missions. Prayer is the power that wields the weapon of the Word, and the Word is the weapon by which the nations will be brought to faith and obedience.”⁸ To this point, while only certain followers of Christ will have a specific role of proclaiming the good news of salvation in an unengaged area, any believer is able to participate in this important ministry wherever they may find themselves. Prayer as a starting point can be employed anywhere at anytime. Gailyn van Rheenen argues, “All mission endeavors—because they are God’s work—must begin with worship and prayer.”⁹

⁶ E. K. Simpson and F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on the Epistles to the Ephesians and to the Colossians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 155.

⁷ Douglas J. Moo, *Romans*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 328.

⁸ John Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad! The Supremacy of God in Missions*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 63 (emphasis original).

⁹ Gailyn van Rheenen with Anthony Parker, *Missions: Biblical Foundations and Contemporary Strategies* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 37.

Missionary Dependence on Prayer

The writings of influential missionaries reflect their high view of prayer, and they serve as an example of the biblical principles previously emphasized. If modern missions enthusiasts believe they can reproduce the results of historically impactful workers by following their methods, they would do well to recognize the importance they placed on prayer.

In his *Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens*, William Carey began with an emphasis on prayer before challenging his readers to consider the financial opportunities to support missions. He wrote, “One of the first, and most important of those duties which are incumbent upon us, is fervent and united prayer.”¹⁰ Prayer brings a united purpose within the church, and as Carey stated, “Many can do nothing but pray, and prayer is perhaps the only thing in which Christians of all denominations can cordially, and unreservedly unite.”¹¹ This point certainly emphasizes the reality that while people have varying levels of ability, finances, and opportunity, the one thing any and all can do is pray. It is noteworthy that Carey’s appeal for finances and resources was not in place of prayer. He rightly observed the priority of beginning with a dependent plea for the Lord to act.

The Native American missionary David Brainerd, as Jonathan Edwards comments, had a special reliance on God for his missionary work. Edwards writes regarding Brainerd, “How sensible was he of his own insufficiency for this work; and how great was his dependence on God’s sufficiency! How solicitous, that he might be fitted for it and to this end, how much time did he spend in prayer and fasting, as well as reading and meditation; *giving himself to these things!*”¹² Edwards goes on to note how

¹⁰ William Carey, *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens* (Leicester, England: Printed by Ann Ireland, 1792), 77.

¹¹ Carey, *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians*, 81.

¹² Jonathan Edwards, “Reflect. V.,” in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 2, ed. Edward Hickman (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1997), 455 (emphasis original).

this example of prayer would benefit missionaries in particular.¹³ During his ministry to Native Americans, Brainerd's diary shows his constant dependency and heartfelt reliance on prayer. He records how he would intercede to lift up the focus of his missionary endeavors, such as a September 8, 1745, entry: "I cried to God for the enlargement of his kingdom in the world, and in particular among my dear people."¹⁴ Even on his deathbed, Brainerd continued in earnest prayer, for his own family, church, candidates for ministry, and for the "reviving and flourishing of religion in the world."¹⁵

George Müller, whom the Lord used to provide for over ten thousand orphans while he lived,¹⁶ valued prayer as the proper expression of an inward faith. Throughout his autobiography, he records instance after instance of the Lord's provision for him and his ministry as he sought the Lord, not man, to supply any need. While many may question whether this approach to life and ministry causes distraction or worry, Müller responds, "Rather than causing anxiety, living by faith in God alone keeps my heart in perfect peace."¹⁷

J. Hudson Taylor, regarding his own sister praying for his salvation, wrote, "I was led to feel that the promises were very real and prayer was a sober matter-of-fact transacting of business with God, whether on my own behalf or on behalf of those for whom I sought His blessing."¹⁸ This level of faith corresponds to the biblical teaching of Jesus in John 14:14, that he will do anything his disciples ask in his name.

¹³ Edwards, "Reflect. V.," 456.

¹⁴ David Brainerd, *An account of the life of the late Reverend Mr. David Brainerd* [...] published, by Jonathan Edwards, A.M. Minister of the Gospel at Northampton (Boston: Printed for D. Henchman, 1749), 163, <http://name.umd.umich.edu/N05034.0001.001>.

¹⁵ Brainerd, *An account of the life of the late Reverend Mr. David Brainerd*, 250.

¹⁶ George Müller, *The Autobiography of George Müller* (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 1985), 232.

¹⁷ Müller, *The Autobiography of George Müller*, 41.

¹⁸ J. Hudson Taylor, *A Retrospect: The Story behind My Zeal for Missions* (Abbotsford, WI: Aneko Press, 2015), 11.

More recently, Jim Elliot, in his journal eight years before his travel to Ecuador and tragic death, wrote of his high view of God's power to work out his plan of redemption. He prays, "Forgive me for being so ordinary while claiming to know so extraordinary a God," while adding, "He gives faith to pray for revival among His people in this country."¹⁹ The Lord certainly answered Jim Elliot's prayers, as God gave him the blessing of going and sowing the seeds through his martyrdom for the fruit of new believers among the Auca tribe.

These instrumental leaders show how the biblical commands for prayer can be an essential starting point for mission work. The application for churches today is to give prayer special consideration and emphasis. Church leaders must lead in it, plan for it, and provide for it. Any resource, challenge, or encouragement is well worth the attention, as God blesses dependence on him for his work. With prayer as the foundation, other means may be promoted to engage in the work of missions.

Relational Partnerships

Solomon observed, "Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their toil" (Eccl 4:9). Just as the Lord provides prayer as a means of dependence, he provides a community of believers to accomplish his work so that no one person can or should seek to do it alone. Relational partnerships have proven to be an effective tool for missions engagement. The apostle Paul clearly valued and utilized partnerships, with one example being Philippians 1:3-5: "I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now." This potential for gospel-driven relationships still exists today. As believers learn more about missions work around them, the potential is there to develop personal relationships, serve locally or abroad, and offer

¹⁹ Jim Elliot, *The Journals of Jim Elliot*, ed. Elisabeth Elliot (Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell, 2008), 98.

encouragement and support. While relationships take time and effort, in a globally connected world, technology and the ability to travel provide opportunities like never before to have regular, meaningful interaction with anyone on the planet. The potential for partnerships exceeds those of Paul's day, when letter-writing and in-person visits were slowed by the limitations of his time. Churches and church leaders may now enjoy the benefits of instant communication, global video calls, and daily commercial flights as tools for connecting with workers around the world.

Before beginning a meaningful partnership, it is helpful to define what a strategic partnership may look like. How should partnership work?

Strategic Partnerships

Daniel Rickett provides a helpful definition of partnership: "A partnership is a complementary relationship driven by a common purpose and sustained by a willingness to learn and grow together in obedience to God."²⁰ A complementary relationship means that it goes both ways so there is a reciprocal benefit to both parties. The benefits may be different, but the common purpose Rickett mentions means that a desire to obey and please God drives the relationship. The approach is not, "What is in it for me?" That attitude only leads to disinterest if personal desires go unfulfilled. Rather, in a strategic gospel partnership, the leading question is, "How can we both help further the message of Christ to the lost?" One party may offer prayer support, giving, encouragement, or a listening ear. The other party may offer stories of both praises and prayer requests from the field. With a focus on ministry goals, Rickett develops his explanation: "A complementary partnership is the association of two or more autonomous bodies who have formed a trusting relationship and fulfill agreed-upon expectations. They do this by

²⁰ Daniel Rickett, *Building Strategic Relationships: A Practical Guide to Partnering with Non-Western Missions* (Enumclaw, WA: Partners International/WinePress, 2003), 13.

sharing complementary gifts and abilities in order to achieve a common goal.”²¹ In this way modern day believers can share in the type of partnerships the apostle Paul had with the Philippians, the Colossians, or the Thessalonians, where they shared a deep concern and celebration for the growth of the gospel.²²

If the New Testament command and model to make disciples of all nations is followed, the gospel will cross cultural boundaries to new areas. While many partnerships that Maranatha Bible Church will share will be those of Americans sent out from the United States, other partnerships will and *should* be across cultures. National partners give the benefit of indigeneity, cultural understanding, and promising relationships that already exist on the field. These types of relational partnerships require special attention and intentionality. Sherwood Lingenfelter, an intercultural professor, stresses the importance of a Christ-like model of building trust and promoting servanthood.²³ This accomplishes obedience to the apostle Paul’s goal in 1 Corinthians 9:22, to become all things to all people by adapting to *their* ways and cultural expressions.²⁴ This takes great humility, as the temptation is strong to think of one’s own culture and worldview as superior. Adding to the complexity is that one partner (typically Western) can bring the “bulk of the necessary financial resources,” requiring maturity, selflessness, and godliness for partners to function equally.²⁵

²¹ Rickett, *Building Strategic Relationships*, 15.

²² An example of this may be found in Colossians 1:3-6, where Paul shares the encouragement he finds in not only their own faith, but in the way the gospel is spreading throughout the world. The main cause of celebration is the success of the gospel in the church at Colossae and elsewhere.

²³ Sherwood G. Lingenfelter, *Leading Cross-Culturally: Covenant Relationships for Effective Christian Leadership* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 16, 48.

²⁴ Sherwood G. Lingenfelter and Marvin K. Mayers, *Ministering Cross-Culturally: An Incarnational Model for Personal Relationships*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 116.

²⁵ A. Scott Moreau, Gary R. Corwin, and Gary B. McGee, *Introducing World Missions: A Biblical, Historical, and Practical Survey*, Encountering Mission, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015), 286.

How does this work out practically? In the context of Maranatha Bible Church, the leadership selects missions partnerships. The elder board, with the missions committee as a subset, vets and approves potential partners. As the leaders of the church establish a partnership, the church members help give meaning and depth to the relationship. This can be accomplished through church members making a personal investment into these relationships. Churches that lack this can fall into a “pay and pray” model, where financial support and occasional, uninformed prayers mark the limited connection. David Horner describes the alternative: “Partnerships and relationships that begin with genuine care for the individual are more likely to result in an environment conducive to sustained effort over the long haul.”²⁶ When church members have the opportunity and encouragement to engage with cross-cultural partners, the potential for reciprocal benefits begins.

Contextualization: Expect Differences

While the desire for cross-cultural relationships may exist, believers must expect differences. Noted missiologist A. Scott Moreau shares that for the Christian faith to reach “every community in the world,” evangelicals must understand the values and rules of a given culture and choose an appropriate and effective method to contextualize methods and processes.²⁷ It is not simply being friendly, as friendliness may take different forms. Biblical commands and functions must be culturally formed. Pastor Tim Keller gives a concise definition of contextualization: “It is giving people *the Bible’s answers*, which they may not at all want to hear, *to questions about life* that people in

²⁶ David A. Horner, *When Missions Shapes the Mission: You and Your Church Can Reach the World* (Nashville: B&H, 2011), 147.

²⁷ A. Scott Moreau, *Contextualization in World Missions: Mapping and Assessing Evangelical Models* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2012), 22.

their particular time and place are asking, *in language and forms* they can comprehend, and *through appeals and arguments* with force they can feel, even if they reject them.”²⁸

The largest way this may play out are differences in worldview. Jayson Georges summarizes three main culture types as Honor-Shame (collectivistic, behavior based on community expectations), Guilt-Innocence (individualistic, behavior based on justice and laws), and Fear-Power (animistic, behavior based on the unseen spirit world).²⁹ While ideas like contextualization and worldview are more important for a cross-cultural worker to understand, these basic principles should help a church member as they begin personal relationships with field workers. Learning more about these topics will equip believers to understand, relate, and encourage partners on a deeper level.

Practical Applications

How would all of this affect a local church and engagement in missions? The practical applications could include several ways individuals can participate.

First, they can support trusted partners through giving. The church can promote the opportunities and give real-life ways to help. Many with the spiritual gift of giving are looking for the best ways to use their resources.

Second, they can develop a personal relationship with a partner. This could either be someone sent out or an indigenous partner. The relationship would be based on the principles previously described and provide a special attachment and encouragement.

Third, they could build relationships with international refugees coming to live in the city. For Maranatha Bible Church, the International Welcome Center is a local ministry started by one of the church’s autonomous church plants. Serving could mean anything from helping residents have basic necessities for daily life, teaching them

²⁸ Timothy Keller, *Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 89 (emphasis original).

²⁹ Jayson Georges and Mark D. Baker, *Ministering in Honor-Shame Cultures: Biblical Foundations and Practical Essentials* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2016), 18-19.

English, or training in other practical day to day functions like how to use an oven, open a banking account.

Each of these represent potential ways for members to be personally involved. As these relationships deepen, the bond between church members and missions engagement only becomes stronger.

Short-Term Trips

Short-term trips are a third tool for missions engagement at the personal and church level. A short-term trip could serve as a first step beyond someone's comfort zone. William Carey, in his influential and timeless *Enquiry*, argued against the pursuit of comfort and familiarity: "On the contrary the commission is a sufficient call to them to venture to all, and, like the primitive Christians, go everywhere preaching the Gospel."³⁰ Comfort and a fear of the unknown can be powerful deterrents to someone even considering going, so a short-term trip can be a good start. It would seem unwise to move somewhere without first visiting, and similarly, a week or two-week missions trip could provide an experience that could lay a foundation for future trips, heavier involvement, or even a long-term move.

In assessing the assumed value of short-term trips in missionary development, Scott Moreau writes, "The tremendous upsurge in the number of short-term workers without any corresponding increase in the ranks of long-term missionaries indicates the assumption is wrong."³¹ While he admits that more data is needed, his point is well made. Perhaps the need is not for more short-term trip participants, but for an emphasis on the short-term trips done well and with the right participants. Garry Friesen explains, "Your involvement in world missions while still at home provides excellent preparation for

³⁰ Carey, *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians*, sec. 4, para. 8.

³¹ Moreau, Corwin, and McGee, *Introducing World Missions*, 279.

serving abroad.”³² There may be a variety of types of trips that a church can offer, with differing levels of demand or maturity needed, but just like with long-term missionaries being sent out, the church should have some type of evaluation and invite those who are being faithful at home.

Trips should provide an honest glimpse of day-to-day life and avoid a tourist mentality. In this way, trip activities would serve to offer true help, as opposed to just “entertaining” guests. A key to providing trips that are authentic and genuinely helpful is utilizing the relational partnerships previously discussed. A member with an existing relationship with the partner can hit the ground running in many ways. Invested trip members may already know many specifics before they arrive, from past prayer requests, stories, and even conversations.

Another key for effective short-term trips is helping trip members develop their “cultural intelligence.” David Livermore argues that anyone serving cross-culturally, especially those involved in short-term trips, should seek to be more effective in understanding their own blind spots and possible “colonialist tendencies” in order to better serve and minister with a high CQ, or “cultural intelligence.”³³ He encourages trip leaders to ask national churches *how* short-termers should be involved, as opposed to asking them to be involved in the work the short-term team is pursuing there.³⁴ Sadly, it is very possible for trips to function backwards, with the team members being the focus instead of the work on the field. The good news is that trips *can* work well, it simply requires an intentional emphasis on letting local partners plan and lead.

³² Garry Friesen with J. Robin Maxson, *Decision Making and the Will of God*, 25th ed. (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2004), 338.

³³ David Livermore, *Serving with Eyes Wide Open: Doing Short-Term Missions with Cultural Intelligence* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 13-15.

³⁴ Livermore, *Serving with Eyes Wide Open*, 94.

Livermore explains that serving on short-term trips with cultural intelligence is “a way to enhance how we live out our eternal mission as people—to reflect God’s glory to the world.”³⁵ So many benefits are possible, but they demand a Christ-like humility and emphasis on service.

From Short-Term to Long-Term

One of the benefits of a short-term trip is that it can be used to help develop a long-term commitment to missions. As Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert observe, “A healthy, effective trip is merely one piece of a larger commitment to learning and engagement with what God is doing around the world.”³⁶ It may open participant’s eyes to unexpected needs or give greater conviction to the importance of serving back home. It may motivate returning members to live differently with more intentional decision-making. God can use the experience abroad to provide further sanctification and maturity, convincing believers that in many ways they need to continue living as if they were still on a trip serving him.

In this way, church members can learn that a short-term trip is not a substitute for daily missional living. Christopher Wright explains, “Mission, from the point of view of our human endeavor, means the committed participation of God’s people in the purposes of God for the redemption of the whole creation. The mission is God’s. The marvel is that God invites us to join in.”³⁷ Wright’s emphasis on committed participation is a healthy perspective for believers, especially in the West where compartmentalization is so common. When believers want to “check a box” to serve the Lord on a trip, they miss the greater joy and meaning of what God has saved them to do in their daily lives. A

³⁵ Livermore, *Serving with Eyes Wide Open*, 165.

³⁶ Steve Corbett, Brian Fikkert, and Katie Casselberry, *Helping without Hurting in Short-Term Missions: Leaders Guide* (Chicago: Moody, 2014), 25.

³⁷ Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible’s Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 67.

trip can provide a means for the Lord to help an individual learn about what he calls them to do in regular obedience in everyday situations.

Os Guinness clarifies, “Calling is the truth that God calls us to Himself so decisively that everything we are, everything we do, and everything we have is invested with a special devotion and dynamism lived out as a response to his summons and service.”³⁸ In this way, there is no time clock to check in or out, nor is there an imaginary line that dictates what a Christian should be willing or unwilling to do for the Lord. Everything is God’s.

As church members begin to evaluate whether or not they should go abroad, Matt Rhodes encourages them to pursue wisdom in making that choice, as opposed to the popular theory of needing special revelation from God or an inner feeling.³⁹ He points out that short-term trips can help provide information needed for wise decision-making as he notes, “Short-term and medium-term mission trips can help young people learn enough about the field to know whether they have the grace to serve overseas as long-termers.”⁴⁰

As church leaders begin to recognize those who are fruitful and passionate about serving the Lord with their lives, they may begin to encourage them to go on another trip, a longer trip, or perhaps consider a full-time role. God could use a leader’s observation of someone’s effectiveness or invitation to further involvement to fuel that person’s desire to go. When the *need* and *opportunities* are considered, the importance of whether or not it is a full-time or part-time role is diminished. David Bosch reasons that an ideal relationship in ministry between “clergy and laity” combines in such a way that

³⁸ Os Guinness, *The Call: Finding and Fulfilling the Central Purpose of Your Life* (Nashville: W Group, 2003), 4.

³⁹ Matt Rhodes, *No Shortcut to Success: A Manifesto for Modern Missions*, 9Marks (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2022), 204-11.

⁴⁰ Rhodes, *No Shortcut to Success*, 215.

“it becomes impossible to distinguish who is doing what.”⁴¹ The priority is not whether someone becomes a full-time worker, but rather that they are faithful in missional living in a way that is obedient to the Great Commission.

A Bridge to Sending

Short-term trips can be a key step towards determining someone’s future role in missions. It may plant a seed of desire that grows over time. They may begin to ask questions about whether or not they can succeed on the field or have the necessary skills to flourish there.⁴² When someone is ready to commit to go long-term, the next step is to be sent. David Hesselgrave and Keith Eitel emphasize, “A missionary is not just someone who *goes*, but someone who is *sent*.”⁴³ Can any person or group send? Just as the church in Antioch sent Paul and Barnabas, God calls local churches to send out their own. Responding to the modern trend that missions agencies are now more typically helping to recruit, train, and send, Bradley Bell explains, “The *missio Dei* as defined by the Scriptures has always beckoned the local church to take the leading role.”⁴⁴ George Miley argues that local churches and missions agencies (and networks) are interdependent with agencies empowering local churches in strategizing church-planting among all peoples.⁴⁵ They must work together, with Miley explaining that churches and missions organizations (apostolic organizational structures) help each other: “Without mission organizations, apostolic impulses in churches will be inadequately cultivated and

⁴¹ David Jacobus Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, ASMS (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011), 473.

⁴² Rhodes, *No Shortcut to Success*, 230.

⁴³ David J. Hesselgrave and Keith E. Eitel, eds., *Paradigms in Conflict: 15 Key Questions in Christian Missions Today*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2018), 195 (emphasis original).

⁴⁴ Bradley Bell, *The Sending Church Defined*, 2nd ed. (Knoxville, TN: The Upstream Collective, 2020), 40 (emphasis original).

⁴⁵ George Miley, *Loving the Church, Blessing the Nations: Pursuing the Role of Local Churches in Global Missions* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 2003), 23, 26.

ultimately wither. Without local churches, needs within mission organizations for rootedness, resources, and personal care will remain only partially and inadequately addressed.”⁴⁶

Garry Friesen argues that candidates need consultation and affirmation: “The New Testament records the involvement of local churches in recognizing, choosing, and sending those best suited for international outreach.”⁴⁷ This was true for Paul and Barnabas in Acts 13, where the leaders of the church in Antioch knew them and their readiness and giftings.

Where are they to be sent? Gailyn van Rheezen shares that the criteria for selecting an area to work includes the extent to which the area is evangelized, the receptivity of the area to the gospel, and the leading of God in missionaries and their senders.⁴⁸

What are they sent to do? Van Rheezen argues that while missionaries could be involved in many different roles, the priority is initial evangelism that leads to planting churches, discipleship in these churches, and leaders being trained to reproduce the process.⁴⁹ This is essential to understand from the very beginning so that those sent are those best equipped to meet these goals. Do candidates have a considerable amount of gifting, experience, and effectiveness before they go? Are they going to do something they have never done before? How are they sharing their faith and teaching others currently?

This emphasis on evangelism, discipleship, and church planting is repeated by George Miley: “Our most straightforward and comprehensive goal in blessing a people is

⁴⁶ Miley, *Loving the Church, Blessing the Nations*, 140.

⁴⁷ Friesen and Maxson, *Decision Making and the Will of God*, 338.

⁴⁸ Van Rheezen and Parker, *Missions*, 456.

⁴⁹ Van Rheezen and Parker, *Missions*, 126.

to establish a grassroots movement of spiritually vibrant, culturally relevant churches spreading throughout the people.”⁵⁰

Forming an Involvement Pathway

These components can help inform a well-rounded approach for churches to recommend. Currently, how do other missions-minded churches encourage their members to be involved? A non-exhaustive survey of church websites provided limited direction or specific application to biblical principles. While a church may not be able to include a full explanation of missions involvement on their website, the missions components emphasized do give a snapshot of what is expected or encouraged in these churches. The following churches were chosen by their influence or reputation for missions.

The Austin Stone

Their “For the Nations” initiative provides an excellent clarification that everyone has a part to play, whether as a goer or by “sacrificially giving their time, money, or efforts to support the work God is doing around the world.”⁵¹ The webpage is designed to encourage three main ideas: learning about the nations through classes offered, going to the nations through short, mid, and long-term trips, and sending to the nations through advocating, caring, giving, and praying.⁵² Overall, this example proved to be the most descriptive of practical ways for anyone to be involved.

⁵⁰ Miley, *Loving the Church, Blessing the Nations*, 40.

⁵¹ The Austin Stone, “For the Nations,” accessed February 27, 2023, <https://www.austinstone.org/initiative/for-the-nations/>.

⁵² The Austin Stone, “For the Nations.”

The Village Church

The pathway for this Flower Mound, Texas, church seems to be intentionally simplistic. They encourage prayer (with no specific resource or direction), giving, and going (emphasizing short-term trips), while also including a section on those they have sent.⁵³ Their large missions staff listed shows a clear priority for mobilizing those in their church, so perhaps the simple approach has proven to be effective.

Bethlehem Baptist Church

The Global Outreach page for this influential church encouraged people to pray, nurture (long-term opportunities), care (via a Barnabas team), and visit (short-term trips).⁵⁴ Each of these components included a more nuanced description with copious resources and links. The page also included a lengthy list of upcoming global missions events.

The Summit Church

This church included their global missions under the general category of “serve.” Their pathway encourages people to go (short-term trips), become a long-term missionary, pray, give, and learn.⁵⁵ They seek to challenge everyone by stating, “We want to send every member—to our neighborhoods and to the nations. Everyone at the Summit can be a part of making disciples of all nations, whether through praying, giving, or going. How is God sending you?”⁵⁶ This approach assumes involvement and encourages evaluation, which is helpful.

⁵³ The Village Church, “Global Missions,” accessed February 27, 2023, <https://thevillagechurch.net/ministries/global-missions/>.

⁵⁴ Bethlehem Baptist Church, “Global Outreach,” accessed February 27, 2023, <https://bethlehem.church/global-outreach/>.

⁵⁵ The Summit Church, “Serve Internationally,” accessed February 27, 2023, <https://summitchurch.com/serve/internationally/>.

⁵⁶ The Summit Church, “Serve Internationally.”

Grace Community Church

While this church website has an extensive section on missions philosophy, the practical ways listed to get involved are an encouragement to commit to care (learning about ministries), pray, and give.⁵⁷ Short-term trip and local outreach opportunities were listed in a separate section of the website.

Long Hollow Church

While this church is known for making disciples, the ways listed on the website to “get involved with missions” conspicuously only highlighted two ways: going (short-term trips) and serving (locally).⁵⁸ There were links to more information on church planting, adoption and foster care, internships, and partnerships.

Calvary Church

This Lancaster, Pennsylvania, church stated their intention to “help every person in our church find a place to invest in proclaiming God’s glory” and emphasized going (short-term trips) and prayer (through a specific prayer guide).⁵⁹ There was a brief invitation to help care for their ninety global partners.

The Upstream Collective

The Upstream Collective is not a church but a ministry focused on helping churches become sending churches. Their website includes perhaps the most comprehensive description of practical ways for believers to be involved. They challenge church leaders to consider eight ways for people to be involved in missions: caring for sent ones, praying for sent ones and the nations, giving, welcoming internationals,

⁵⁷ Grace Community Church, “Faith Promise,” accessed February 27, 2023, <https://www.gracechurch.org/outreach/faithpromise/>.

⁵⁸ Long Hollow Church, “Get Involved with Missions,” accessed February 27, 2023, <https://longhollow.com/next-steps/get-involved-with-missions/>.

⁵⁹ Calvary Church, “Global Ministries,” accessed February 27, 2023, <https://www.calvarychurch.org/ministries/global/>.

mobilizing future sent ones, going short-term, going mid-term, and serving on the church missions leadership team.⁶⁰ These line up well with the culture and opportunities at Maranatha Bible Church and best reflect the ideas already considered by this author.

Conclusion

The historically effective elements presented in this chapter combine to form meaningful ways for believers to engage in missions in their local church. The ways other churches present missions opportunities can help give context to how it would be best presented specifically at Maranatha Bible Church. When assembled in a logical progression, the members of Maranatha Bible Church may begin to see their own practical involvement and potential next steps. A pathway could look like this:

1. Pray

- a. A prayer guide, both digital and in print, could be utilized to inform the church body of the missions partners, what they do, and how they need prayer.
- b. A public prayer focus on a missions partner can be included in the weekly worship service.
- c. Social media and electronic communication can be used to share urgent prayer requests.
- d. Regular prayer meetings may be held to give concentrated prayer to missions.

2. Serve

Partnerships with service opportunities can be regularly highlighted, with an encouragement to use spiritual gifts for the good of the ministry.

3. Invest

The church can provide regular opportunities to give to special needs for partners.

⁶⁰ Mike Ironside, "Overview of Sending Church Element 5: Involving the Entire Church," The Upstream Collective, March 8, 2021, <https://www.theupstreamcollective.org/post/involving-the-entire-church-sending-church-element-5>.

4. Welcome

Through the church's partnership with the International Welcome Center, church members may be encouraged to minister to refugees that come into the area.

5. Visit

Regular short-term trips may be planned with an emphasis on understanding the partner ministry, seeing the real-life operations, and an invitation to consider future involvement at a deeper level.

6. Mobilize/Care

This step would involve those who, through involvement in the steps above, would want to proceed even further to help mobilize a sent partner or care for those the church has sent.

7. Go

This final step would be the desire of individuals, couples, families, or teams to pursue, with the affirmation of the church, to become a cross-cultural worker.

This Missions Engagement Pathway would provide clear, and, in many cases, successive steps for church members to practice as their heart grows with a desire to obey the Great Commission.

These tasks must be embraced by the entire church, with members knowing their role. The church is God's plan to reproduce the church, and as George Miley explains, "Because starting churches among unreached people groups is the way to complete the Great Commission, the entire church must be a part of owning this responsibility."⁶¹ Towards this end, this project seeks to empower and equip Maranatha Bible Church for individual involvement and ownership of this task.

⁶¹ Miley, *Loving the Church, Blessing the Nations*, 183, 189.

CHAPTER 4

PATHWAY AND CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

The challenge of shepherding an entire church to engage in missions is both daunting and freeing at the same time. Missions engagement is daunting due to the complexity of providing simple steps that apply to all church members in various stages and situations in life. However, in following the progression of biblical study and historical examples, there is an element of joy and confidence in simply presenting timeless principles for believers to apply in their own context.

This chapter will explain the process and challenges of developing two resources for the church: the “Missions Involvement Pathway” and the “Engaging in Missions” 8-week curriculum that explains and promotes the pathway. The time period of this project was fifteen weeks from February 2023 to May 2023. While much of the development of the Missions Involvement Pathway occurred over the course of this project, this time period served as the focused period of presentation, evaluation, and finalization. The first three weeks of the Engaging in Missions curriculum drew heavily from the research for this project to provide a biblical foundation, but the lessons were completed during this time period as well.

The Missions Involvement Pathway

This project focused on equipping the members of Maranatha Bible Church to engage in missions, and a tool entitled “Missions Involvement Opportunities” was developed to serve as a resource for members.¹ This resource is available as a handout for

¹ See appendix 1.

anyone at any time and will continue to be highlighted during teaching opportunities or periodic missions moments during the worship service. It is available with other church ministry information, as well as in the church Missions Hallway, which also contains the Prayer Guide and large photos and descriptions of each missions partner.

This pathway was developed in response to the research done in chapters 2 and 3 of this project, with the goal of compiling a practical list of ways people can engage. The progression is meant to give an opportunity for increasing involvement, with each successive opportunity requiring a greater commitment from the individual. This idea proved to be one of the main challenges of this project and will be explored further in the evaluation. The goal was not to add any and every practical way to engage in missions, but rather to lay out opportunities that flowed from the project and fit the context of Maranatha Bible Church specifically.

Weeks 1 and 2

The progression of design and implementation began with this study and then moved toward preparing a rough draft for discussion. Weeks 1 and 2 consisted of finalizing a first draft to present to the Missions Committee of the church, which contains six of the ten church elders.

After organizing the previously discussed elements, the Missions Involvement Pathway was developed into eight steps that moved from more universal application to specialized missions involvement. The pathway includes ways to obey the Great Commission and emphasizes the church's priorities in carrying it out: disciple-making and church planting.

The first opportunity in the pathway is prayer. Ephesians 6:18 instructs believers to pray in the Spirit about all things with all kinds of requests. This can be specifically applied to our missions efforts by lifting up the church's missions partners using the MBC Prayer Guide, a resource freely available digitally and in print format at

the church. Anyone in the church can do this, no matter the age, season of life, busyness, or other factor. As a biblical command, everyone can and should pray.

The second opportunity is to invest, with the biblical appeal from 2 Corinthians 9:7 to give cheerfully. Matthew 6:21 is also referenced, as Jesus teaches that our treasure reveals the true desire of our heart. Regular giving is encouraged, as well as directed giving to special missions projects.

The third opportunity is to serve through the church or the church's local partners. Ephesians 4:12 shows how church leaders are to equip church members for service, and while the pathway does not give specific directions for how or where to serve (there would be too many to list), there are other avenues for people to discover this. The pathway is meant to give people direction on what they can do, not necessarily outline the specific steps to do each element. There are two distinct and intentional encouragements for service. First, in following the church's priorities and the task of the Great Commission, joining or leading a local discipleship group does impact the worldwide task, as healthy and growing churches will produce disciples locally before sending out members as disciple makers globally. Second, following the design of 1 Corinthians 12, church members can best serve by using their spiritual gifts to strengthen the body.

The fourth opportunity is to welcome internationals into the area in a very specific way. Maranatha Bible Church has a newly formed partnership with the International Welcome Center, a ministry of one of the church's local church plants.² Through working with a government agency, individuals or families in the church are able to build relationships and provide needs for refugees and asylum seekers from around the world. This type of practical connection is helpful in giving local people

² International Welcome Center, "Home," accessed February 27, 2023, <https://www.theiwc.org/#/>.

international influence, but also in potentially preparing future sent missionaries from the church to work with people from other cultures. The biblical basis for this is from Galatians 6:10 (doing good to all people) and Hebrews 13:2 (showing hospitality).

The fifth opportunity is to care for the church's missions partners through relationships. The primary means to do this is through the Adult Bible Fellowships that meet each week and have assigned missionaries, or through the church small groups that are able to voluntarily sign up for a missionary. The emphasis is on prayer and encouragement, as illustrated through the partnership the apostle Paul had with the Philippian church (Phil 1:3-5).

The sixth opportunity is to visit, which is another way of encouraging short-term missions. While a short-term trip can have great value, presenting them with this term helps give perspective that members only participate on the ground for a short time, emphasizing the need for long-term workers. The church plans short-term trips through partnerships, with Philippians 2:25, 29-30 showing another example of Paul's relationship with the Philippian church. The two-part goal of short-term trips is to experience the mission field and assist partners in ministry.

The seventh opportunity is to mobilize by regularly having conversations and encouragement within the church for increased missions participation. If someone is engaging in missions themselves, they will have experiences and benefits to share with someone else. They can invite them to engage in the pathway just as they have done. In this way, more church members will be challenged, not just from pastors and leaders, but by their fellow church members. First Thessalonians 5:11 gives instruction for believers to encourage each other in light of the day of the Lord, and thinking in terms of eternity gives emphasis to intentional, missions-focused living.

The eighth and final opportunity is to go long-term and become a sent missionary from the church. The specific challenge is to pray about going to a mission field long-term and discuss next steps with the church leadership. Acts 13:2 shows how

God affirmed the leaders of the church in Antioch to set apart Paul and Barnabas to be sent. By challenging church members to pray and ponder a long-term opportunity, the hope is to make this a more common evaluation and consideration, that simply being a part of the church leads to at least the possibility of moving towards long-term missions.

The design of these opportunities is meant to engage and stretch individuals to think beyond where they are currently and be used in new ways to help complete the Great Commission. After considering the opportunities, the pathway is also meant to give encouragement that they are playing a part in the ways they do engage.

Week 3

The presentation of the first draft took place at the end of February in week 3. As an initial Missions Involvement Pathway was presented to the Missions Committee, a tension formed as there were questions regarding the goal of the pathway. Knowing that most people of the church will not “complete” the pathway towards full-time missions work, does the pathway communicate a process that most will never realize? In other words, is it setting people up to fall short? An alternative proposal was to use these steps as opportunities. One member suggested simplifying the progression to “Pray, Invest, and Engage,” with steps 3 through 8 being options for people to engage. While that idea may be easier to communicate, it would lack the desired progression and challenge the opportunities are meant to convey. This dilemma proved to be a central issue regarding the pathway.

There were no objections to the ideas behind the steps themselves, as the Committee was supportive. The opportunities reflect what we do and capture the ways to be involved. None of the steps stood out as irrelevant or out of place. The steps do build on one another with increasing expectations of time or resources.

One step that could have been included was the basic principle of learning and practicing sharing the gospel. How can the Great Commission be accomplished without

this foundational task? It was agreed on that this would be communicated generally and through evangelism and outreach training.

Another step that could potentially be added was “learn,” with the challenge being to join in a specific missions study or class. One reason this was not included was that the church seeks to educate the big picture of missions in the worship service through the preaching of God’s Word and the missions segments presenting partners and prayer needs. Often there are explanations concerning reaching the unreached, the emphasis on church-planting and training and compassion ministries. The goal is to present not only what is happening, but why it is happening and the purposes behind it. There is certainly a need to dig deeper. The course “Perspectives on the World Christian Movement” has been offered in the past with great success, but participation decreased in numbers after the third offering. The desire is to present Perspectives or a similar class into a larger ministry education plan that is yet to be developed. This involves more than just missions, but also things like basic Bible study methods, spiritual disciplines, and other fundamental Christian practices.

In the past, one of the members had suggested the topic of giving be included, which did make it into the list of steps. The church generally does not overemphasize giving, only mentioning it when the Bible passage taught mentions it. This approach seeks to remain biblically faithful, but it could lead to new members missing basic Christian practices that may not be taught for a significant time period. This led to a larger discussion on a discipleship pathway.

If a person regularly attends Maranatha Bible Church, what are they consistently being challenged to do? If someone gets saved through the ministry, how are they disciplined? These big picture questions arose out of the Missions Involvement Pathway discussion, because if people are challenged very specifically in the area of missions, what other specific instruction do they receive? The danger that exists if missions is not a part of a larger discipleship program is that different areas of ministry

may be seen in competition with each other. A church attender may be asked to be involved in numerous “pathways” at the same time, leading to confusion and frustration. An outreach pastor may have a list of ways to engage lost people, the discipleship pastor may create a list of steps for spiritual growth, and so forth.

While the way forward regarding a larger discipleship plan is not specific to this ministry project, it is a necessary step for the church to take. I will seek to emphasize the need for synergy and cooperation from each ministry area. As for the Missions Involvement Pathway, it was agreed upon by the Missions Committee to label and promote the steps as “Missions Involvement Opportunities.” The Missions Pastor will seek to balance the ideas of merely presenting and encouraging involvement with the crucial task of increasing involvement.

One of the goals of the pathway is to encourage and develop future missionaries, and this will not happen without challenge and progression. A gentle encouragement to stretch beyond where one would naturally be involved could lead to sacrificial obedience that inspires even deeper involvement than was previously expected. As specific examples of missionaries being developed within the church happen, it will foster a culture where members will expect more of themselves and not be shocked when they feel a conviction that they could even go themselves.

Overall, the Missions Committee discussion was extremely helpful, as it challenged the specific purpose of the Pathway and revealed larger ministry needs. There was the right spirit of support and a healthy exchange of different ideas.

Week 9

During week 9, the Missions Involvement Opportunities were presented to the rest of the Elder Board for feedback, but without the rubric. A non-Missions Committee member opined that presenting the opportunity to welcome internationals through the specific ministry of the International Welcome Center was too narrow. While it is more

particular than other opportunities, it was determined that the benefit of giving such a clear step outweighed the restriction. Overall, the entire elder board was supportive of the opportunities presented for missions involvement.

Week 14

During this week, the Missions Committee was asked to complete a formal evaluation of the “Missions Involvement Opportunities” through a rubric.³ There are six members, and I abstained from evaluating, while one member did not complete the rubric. This meant four unique evaluations, and the results showed strong support.⁴

Three of the four maintained that the goal of the missions pathway was clearly stated in an exemplary way, with the fourth saying it was sufficient. The same pattern occurred in evaluating that the need for engagement was clearly stated. There was full agreement that the material was biblically faithful and theologically sound. Three of four members felt the pathway was sufficiently organized, practical, appropriate, and challenging, with the fourth seeing these areas as exemplary.

One member stated an area that needed attention: obstacles that may hinder involvement. He wrote they were “not referenced on the handout card, but discussed in the topics of the curriculum.” This showed the need to explain the opportunities. They will be most helpful when taught through the corresponding curriculum. With space limitations and a desire for simplicity, the Missions Involvement Opportunities resource will not be able to address every obstacle.

Each evaluation stated that the pathway, when explained, will promote involvement in missions at the church, with two grades of “sufficient” and two grades of “exemplary.” One member commented, “This missions pathway accurately and concisely communicates Maranatha Bible Church’s emphasis on missions, and it provides church

³ See appendix 2.

⁴ See appendix 3.

members with an array of options for involvement.”

In the goals section for this ministry project, the goal for the Missions Involvement Pathway was for 90 percent of the evaluation criterion to meet or exceed the sufficient level. With one evaluator rating only one area needing attention (as previously discussed), this meant that of the 4 evaluators rating 9 areas each, 35 of 36 areas met or exceeded the sufficient level. This translates to 97.222 percent, thus meeting the goal.

As indicated, church members will benefit most from the pathway when it is clearly explained, giving the need for the accompanying curriculum. The next section describes the overall approach, lessons, and evaluations and explains the effectiveness of the teaching.

Engaging in Missions Curriculum

The purpose of the Engaging in Missions curriculum was to develop an 8-week series that lays a biblical foundation and motivation for church members to know their role in following the Great Commission by utilizing the Missions Involvement Pathway.

While the initial plan was to develop the lessons weeks in advance of teaching, the preparation mainly occurred the week before each lesson. This helped to enhance the delivery of the content, as it was fresh and at the front of the teacher’s mind. Before each week of teaching, the lessons were sent to the Missions Committee for review and feedback. Occasionally the members of the committee would send encouragement, but the main evaluation came in week 14 through the teaching rubric.⁵

The adult class surveyed meets every Sunday morning in a classroom at the church during the first worship service, and attendees then attend the second worship service. Being familiar with many of the class members helped give opportunity for several personal examples throughout the class time. Each lesson was approximately 40

⁵ See appendix 4.

minutes in length. The first three weeks of teaching primarily emphasized the exegesis of the three passages of this study to set the foundation for the pathway.

Weeks 4 through 14

The following describes the lessons that were prepared. Each description contains the topic, biblical text, and a brief overview.

Lesson 1

In lesson 1 of the curriculum, which was prepared in week 4 of the project, the lesson emphasized that everyone can play a role in the Great Commission and walked through Jesus's words and commands in the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20. The challenge was for everyone to learn through the series the ways they personally are responding to the Jesus's instructions. This lesson was foundational. The Missions Involvement Pathway was not shown intentionally until lesson 4 in order to lay the groundwork for people to know exactly what they are obeying. In other words, people need to know "what" and "why" before they learn "how."

The main idea was that believers play a role in this stage of God's plan for the world, and Jesus commands his disciples to go and make disciples, to baptize them, and to teach them to obey him. Class members were challenged to see themselves in this process and consider the role they fulfill.

Before the first lesson, an explanation of the series was provided and initial surveys were completed by the class. Each class member was given the "Missions Knowledge and Practice Survey" and given a control number so they could be anonymously identified and matched for the post-series survey.⁶ A total of twenty-seven surveys were initially completed.

⁶ See appendix 6 for the survey and appendix 8 for the pre-class survey results.

Lesson 2

In lesson 2, prepared in week 5, the focus was how the Great Commission was carried out in the book of Acts. The title of the lesson was “Acts 1:8: A Strategic Progression of Witnessing Locally, Regionally, and to the Ends of the Earth.” The big idea was that Acts 1:8 provides a model for a geographic progression of disciple-making that is carried out in Acts and can be used present day. The intent was to encourage the class to see how God’s global plan is being fulfilled and that Jesus’s instruction for a strategic, growing spread of Christian witness was not only carried out in the New Testament, but continues to this day.

Acts 1:8 specifically shows both the source and strategy for the gospel to grow. The Holy Spirit is the power behind a witness and the source of effectiveness. The strategy is for believers to share what they had seen, heard, and experienced so that others can trust in Jesus as well. Geographically, Jesus’s instruction was to start locally in Jerusalem, spread regionally and culturally to Judea and Samaria, and even globally to the ends of the earth. Summary statements for sections of the book of Acts record how these instructions were specifically fulfilled. The class was shown how this approach influences the church’s partnerships and the desire to have local, regional, and global disciple-makers.

Lesson 3

In lesson 3, prepared in week 6, the lesson was titled “Ministry Partnership.” As the last of the three introductory lessons that lay the foundation for the pathway, the goal of this lesson was to show the value of sending and supporting others who do the work of ministry. The big idea, from 3 John 3:5-8, was that the Bible commands us to support others who are actively engaged in gospel ministry. Verse 6 explains a key point, that we are to send others in a manner worthy of God. We send through providing whatever is needed, and in this way serve, as verse 8 puts it, as “fellow workers.”

The reason this lesson helped lay a foundation for the pathway was that it gives biblical support for the ideas of investing financially and caring for ministry partners doing gospel work. Many people may be unaware that these actions flow out of obedience to Scripture. They help reinforce the reality that the Great Commission requires a personal investment. Key applications from this lesson included showing hospitality, providing encouragement, financial support, and prayer support.

Lesson 4

In lesson 4, prepared in week 7, the focus was prayer. Several passages were presented to convince class members that prayer is the starting point for missions, and everyone can do it. After a review of the foundational passages, the class was ready to walk through the Missions Involvement Pathway. Luke 10:2 showed how believers are to pray for more workers in the harvest. Ephesians 6:18-19 instructs Christians to pray for the Lord to give words and boldness in sharing the gospel. Romans 10:1 shows Paul's prayer for the unsaved.

Part of the inspiration to pray these prayers came from historical examples of servants God used in the past in missions. William Carey, David Brainerd, George Müller, J. Hudson Taylor, and Jim Elliot all provided unique illustrations of their dependence on the Lord. Two practical applications were presented: the church Prayer Guide that includes missions partners, and an appeal to commit to a special churchwide prayer emphasis for personal evangelism and missionary development.

Week 9 of the project was the week of Easter Sunday, when adult classes do not meet. This week was utilized to present the Missions Involvement Pathway to the elder board, as discussed previously.

Lesson 5

In lesson 5, prepared in week 10, the lesson centered on a challenge to invest and serve, the next steps of the pathway. The main idea was that giving to missions is an

investment into eternity, and serving locally contributes towards obeying the Great Commission. In terms of investing, two passages helped show that giving to missions is an investment in eternity. Second Corinthians 9:5-7 encourages cheerful giving, and Matthew 6:19-21 illustrates that your physical resources show your spiritual treasure. In terms of serving, Ephesians 4:12 showed how equipped believers build the spiritual maturity of the church, which helps advance the Great Commission.

Thankfully, Maranatha Bible Church has a good track record of both giving and serving, and these ideas were able to be given as encouragements as opposed to glaring needs. Giving financially can be done at any time, but more specific application was spent on serving. Church members can serve through discipleship and using their spiritual gifts at the church or through numerous local missions partners around the area. Specific opportunities were communicated to the class.

Lesson 6

In lesson 6, prepared in week 11, the steps covered were to welcome and care. The main idea for the class was to engage opportunities the church has to welcome internationals coming to the area *from* the nations, as well as care for partners who go *to* the nations.

Church members can welcome through a specific partnership with the International Welcome Center, providing for them to serve with providing tangible goods or practical training. Galatians 6:10 instructs believers to do good to all people, and Hebrews 13:2 encourages hospitality to strangers.

The church can care for sent partners by building a prayerful and meaningful relationship through adults classes or small groups. This models the type of deep connection the apostle Paul had with the Philippian church in Philippians 1:3-5. The lesson also covered helpful partnership principles and how the church adopts new partners.

During week 12 of the project, the author had a previously planned ministry trip and was not in town to teach the curriculum. A substitute teacher presented an outreach and evangelism lesson that complemented the missions material. Preparation continued for the last two weeks of teaching.

Lesson 7

In lesson 7, prepared in week 13, the focus was on visiting through short-term missions trips. The main idea was that short-term trips can be an effective way to meet practical needs of partners while giving exposure to their ministry. While there are no clear examples of trips in the New Testament the way they are done today, there are examples that prioritize helpful partnership visits. Philippians 2:25-30 shows how Epaphroditus was sent, received, and provided what was needed for partnership. Acts 20:1-2, 5-7 show that Paul prioritized short-term visits of encouragement.

Practically, the class was warned about the dangers of selfish tourism, a sense of being a type of savior, creating dependency, and poor stewardship. On the other side, trip benefits could include assisting existing partners in helpful ways that benefit their year-round ministry. The exposure for trip members on the trip could also lead to long-lasting and impactful missions involvement.

Lesson 8

In lesson 8, prepared in week 13, the final two steps were to mobilize and go. The main idea was that believers can encourage others to prayerfully consider their involvement in missions and pray to ask if God would call them personally to go serve him on the mission field. First Thessalonians 5:11 shows how we can encourage others with the gospel in a way that builds them up, which leads to gospel-centered living. Acts 13:1-3 shows the process of God calling Paul and Barnabas to be sent out from the church in Antioch. In application, we can mobilize others towards a focus on the gospel

and involvement in the Great Commission, while also praying through our own potential to go.

After lesson 8 was given, class members were given the same Missions Knowledge and Practice Survey given before lesson 1. A control number meant the results could be compared.⁷ Of the twenty-seven original class members who were present to take the pre-class survey from week 4, only sixteen were present for week 14 for the post-class survey. This could be attributed to the fact that week 14 took place on Mother's Day and class members may have had other plans.

Week 15

In week 15, this author was invited back to the class to do a debrief of the curriculum in a discussion style format. While there was a lot of affirming feedback, one key concept continued to emerge: the need for missions involvement to flow from a discipleship pathway that helps prepare mature believers who are ready to engage in meaningful ministry.

Goals Assessment

This project included four goals, which can now be assessed. The first goal, as already mentioned, was met when the Missions Involvement Pathway was developed and approved by the Missions Committee, meeting over 90 percent of the evaluation criterion.

The second goal was met by successfully administering the first Missions Knowledge and Practice Survey to assess understanding and attitudes towards missions by a sample set of church members. Those initial results will be discussed below in comparison with the final results.

⁷ See appendix 8 for post-class survey results.

The third goal was met when, after the completion of the study, the Engaging in Missions curriculum was completed and evaluated by the Missions Committee using the “Missions Curriculum Evaluation Rubric.”⁸ The rubric results gave exemplary scores on both interpretation of Scripture and biblical theology across all four evaluators. Results were balanced between sufficient and exemplary regarding the scope of the content and the biblical and contextual approach to missions. In the pedagogical evaluation, all scores for having a big idea and participatory interaction were exemplary, save one sufficient grade. Finally, in terms of practicality, the evaluators gave two exemplary grades for clear details of how to engage in missions, with two sufficient grades. Three evaluators felt the course would help participants know their role in missions sufficiently, and one felt it was exemplary. One elder wrote, “Individuals who work through this curriculum will have a solid foundation for missions, and they will be provided with opportunities to evaluate and consider their own involvement in missions.” Overall, with 32 of 32 criterion at or exceeding the sufficient level, or 100 percent, this goal was met.

The fourth goal was met when the *t*-test analyzing pre-curriculum and post-curriculum surveys produced a positive, statistically significant difference in the scores. This analysis will be covered in the next section.

Survey Results

After the teaching was completed, the results from the pre-class and post-class Missions Knowledge and Practice Survey were compiled. The *t*-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive, statistically significant difference between the pre- and post-curriculum survey scores⁹. The mean score increased from 89.563 to 103.875, and the *t*-stat was 4.467, greater than the critical one-tail of 1.753. The p-value was less than

⁸ See appendix 4 and appendix 5.

⁹ See appendix 9 for t-test results.

0.05. These statistics show that the teaching did make a positive difference in the understanding of the participants.

The topic that had the greatest statistical increase was item 1, which stated, “I can effectively explain principles found in the Great Commission.” The sum of the score shows a 20-point increase. There were three areas that showed the next greatest increase of 18 points. These were item 3, “I can explain the progression found in Acts 1:8,” item 14, “I can explain practical ways to connect with partners,” and item 19, “I know how I can help fulfill the Great Commission.” This was especially encouraging because the first and last statements that centered on obedience to the Great Commission were the primary focus of the curriculum.

The smallest increase was item 10, “I understand how giving plays a role in missions.” This only had a 4-point increase, which is understandable because as a whole, the church has a longstanding reputation for being a sacrificial and giving church. The church is already mature in this area, so class members followed that trend through an existing understanding of the value of giving.

One surprise was to see how many surveys could not be utilized due to the fact that the participants were not in attendance. As church attendance becomes more inconsistent culturally, this will need to be thought through. How can curriculums and church-wide emphases take into account spotty attendance? Throughout this class, a review was built into the introductions to help those who were in attendance to pick right back up where the material left off and to help those who had missed the previous week.

Another mild surprise was that some questions showed a lower score after the class was completed. How could class instruction *decrease* a participant’s knowledge and practice? Perhaps they thought they knew more than they did at the beginning of the class, and the teaching helped show how much more they have to grow and learn.

One last surprise would be the initial high numbers many participants gave to their missions knowledge and practice from the survey before the first class. Is this due to

effective missions teaching previously, or was there a false self-evaluation that individuals are more equipped than they actually are? Without learning from those anonymous participants individually, there is no sure way to know.

Conclusion

Overall, the results show the Missions Involvement Pathway and Engaging in Missions curriculum were well received and produced positive results. This ministry project met all measurable goals, but the challenge moving forward is to translate the guidance and teaching into real world practice. This author attempted this project for tangible outcomes, that people who are not praying would pray, those not giving would give, those not serving would become involved, and so forth.

Moving forward, the Missions Involvement Pathway is in the hands of the Missions Pastor, and tools are only useful if they are properly utilized. Will it be talked about? Will other leaders reference the opportunities it contains? How will the Missions Pastor provide loving accountability to those who have been taught their need to engage? These questions fall outside of the realm of a short-term ministry project and into the day-to-day ministry of this local church.

Regarding the missions curriculum, there is still discussion as to whether it should be taught in each adult class, whether small groups offer a suitable teaching opportunity, how it should be presented in student ministry, or if it is best served as an elective class taught periodically as part of a strategic educational plan. The content itself may need to be contextualized for a specific audience, such as the high school ministry, if it is used beyond an adult classroom. For both elements of this project, only over time will the church see how this material needs to be changed or modified. If the material is contextualized to Maranatha Bible Church's situation and opportunities, then as the church changes, so will the material.

As this project was selected, there were two clear needs. The first was for Maranatha Bible Church members to grow in their missions engagement, and the second was for the church to grow to have a culture of sending out missionaries. Thankfully, and by God's grace, the church is growing in both areas. This project has served as a catalyst for brave steps forward in publicly praying for two great needs: a greater burden in the church for the spiritually lost, and a specific request asking for the Lord to raise up a missionary team the church could send out to an unreached people group to evangelize and plant a church from new believers. In answer to these prayers, stories of gospel opportunities and prayer requests for lost people by name have begun to be a regular occurrence from leadership and throughout the church. Several individuals and families have come forward with an interest in being sent out to the mission field. It is an exciting time in the life of the church! Moving forward, prayer, trust in the Lord, and obedience will mark this season more than a pathway of opportunities or missions curriculum. While God may or may not choose to use these specific tools, his unstoppable global plan will continue in redeeming people from every tribe, people, and language.

CHAPTER 5

PROJECT EVALUATION

If the Great Commission is not yet complete, and if the Lord has entrusted the task of making disciples to his church, then churches must be serious about engaging in this mission. Pastors and elders who oversee disciple-making and missions cannot expect this all-important assignment to merely happen. Leadership must intentionally challenge their people, which has led to this ministry project.

This project began with the stated goal of equipping the members of Maranatha Bible Church in Akron, Ohio, to engage in missions in a way that challenged members to consider their role in the Great Commission, encouraged involvement, and emphasized the importance of partnership. This evaluation will provide a look into how well this project met that overall goal, as well as the four specific goals that were stated. Perhaps most importantly, this chapter will also chart a path forward for the church in ensuring lasting impact from this project.

Evaluation of the Project's Purpose

A purpose of equipping people to engage in missions can sound unclear and unmeasurable, but this project sought to give tangible steps with noticeable results. The overall purpose communicated this by breaking it down into three objectives.

The first objective was to challenge members to consider their role in the Great Commission. For this to happen, a basic first step is to know what the Great Commission is and know how to follow it. While solid, biblical teaching has been a characteristic of the church for years, there has also been turnover among the church members with several church plants going out and new visitors coming in. Teaching about the Great

Commission seemed to be the right way to start, and this teaching would give opportunity to challenge and give guided direction in individual roles in helping to complete it.

The second objective was to encourage involvement in the Great Commission. For this to happen, clear, unambiguous steps would help people know productive ways to be involved. These steps were then organized into a pathway that can be taught, referenced, and promoted. The Engaging in Missions curriculum that was taught in an adult class is ready to be taught in other classes, whether as a part of a regular group or as an elective for a short-term group. The visual Missions Involvement Pathway that was produced has been ordered as a reference card that will be utilized by the church for years to come. These tools will serve to direct people to be involved in specific ways.

The third objective was to emphasize the importance of partnership. As the church has a great roster of missions partners, this was not hard or foreign to explain. Church members regularly see and hear missions partners in the worship service as part of missions prayer highlights. The church hosts missions conferences where members have full access to engage in personal conversation to learn about partners and their ministries. The Missions Involvement Pathway, then, logically and progressively highlights partners through the first six of the eight steps. In every way, partners are esteemed and valued.

The purpose of this ministry project proved to be helpful and well-focused. Throughout this process, the need for individual clarity on Great Commission involvement has only become clearer. This project has served in many ways to be a “jumping off” point for ministry. With full conviction that everyone can serve towards completing the Great Commission in their own unique way, the task ahead is to help church members and attendees by explaining and motivating them toward their own personal contribution.

Evaluation of the Project's Goals

In many ways, time will tell if there is a drastic change church-wide as this material is presented and encouraged. For the time period of this project, and as stated in chapter 4, each of the project's four goals were met. Walking through the goals gives opportunity to discuss the success of each.

The first goal, to develop a practical pathway for church members to engage in missions, was met after church leadership affirmed the final version. Is the pathway effective long-term to promote missions engagement? The potential is certainly there, but the key is in having a specific tool with practical examples for direction for church members. It is too broad to simply say, "Everyone in our church should be involved in missions." The more specific the steps, the more helpful they are.

The second goal, to consider how the church understood and approached missions, was met in one measurable way through the sample of adults surveyed. A fuller survey, beyond the scope of this project, could help, but it would need to be on a much larger scale. In the past, the Senior Pastor has periodically done a survey of the church during the worship service, but it is rare and done with careful planning. This type of survey would only need to be done if the leadership felt the results of the Missions Knowledge and Practice Survey were abnormal. Given the size of the test group, there is no reason to think they were.

The third goal, developing a curriculum that explains the missions approach and engagement opportunities at the church, was met when the Missions Committee gave the needed rubric scores when evaluating the lessons. As with any teaching opportunity, the instructor can only control what happens inside the classroom. Once the ideas have been communicated and the class time ends, the students are on their own to apply the information or just return to their previous way of life. The lessons were designed to inspire and motivate, but most importantly to communicate biblical thinking and action

regarding missional living. While group application cannot be measured, it is possible to confirm that each lesson covered the needed topics, which they did.

The fourth goal, increasing understanding and right attitudes towards missions through the curriculum, was met when a *t*-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive statistically significant difference in the pre- and post-survey scores. Beyond the testing, there was positive feedback and appreciation for the teaching. As discussed in chapter 4, the only discrepancy occurred when individuals *decreased* in their knowledge, according to how they scored their own knowledge level. This was likely due to a generous assessment of how much they knew before the class. After walking through the material, perhaps they began to see how much they needed to learn and lowered their score.

These measurable goals show a promising start, but moving forward the church will need to establish new metrics to evaluate success. The Missions Committee could periodically assess each step in the pathway to discuss effectiveness, as well as consider the response each time the Engaging in Missions curriculum is taught. The church elder board meets yearly in November for a retreat to discuss spiritual issues of the church, approve the next year's budget, and learn about the state of the church ministries. When the missions ministry of the church is presented, these two areas could become a point of yearly review in discussing how church members are being challenged and taught.

Another potential step would be to challenge church members to provide some type of feedback to show how they are involved. This would require some sort of online survey or checking a box on a response card. It could also be a part of a short-term missions trip application. One of the requirements for people to go on a trip is that they are actively serving, so that could be a natural point of accountability and encouragement to be involved in missions.

The exciting thing about meeting these goals is not that this project means it is the end of an era at the church, but rather the beginning. The goals were met, so new goals can be developed to advance missional thinking and practice at the church.

Strengths of the Project

One strength of this project has been the specificity in application. There should no longer be a question in church member's minds when it comes to how they can be involved. The steps are clear. The pathway is a tool the Missions Pastor or any church leader can use to lovingly shepherd people towards more meaningful involvement. Because the pathway has been made available as a printed resource, it is readily accessible by anyone at the church. It is also ready to be promoted digitally on the church website, a Sunday morning slide, or as part of a discipleship program encouraging service. Even if it needs to be modified in the future, having this initial pathway gives a starting point, as well as an expectation that involvement is what is expected from everyone who attends.

Another strength is the progression of the pathway. Because the level of commitment increases with each step, it can be used to challenge people and grow them step by step towards the mission field. As someone prays, the Lord may burden their heart to act towards helping to meet needs, so they give. As someone gives, they may be moved to act on their investment and serve in a local way. This may lead to a desire to impact the world right here at home through serving internationals. This type of ministry can lead to an appreciation of foreign workers and a desire to connect and care for those working overseas. As this happens, individuals will be motivated to visit and serve with them short-term. After the trip, they will be motivated to tell others about how these areas in missions have become impactful and invite them to do the same. Missions-minded church members will continue to consider their role and prayerfully investigate the potential of an increased role, even overseas long-term.

This type of progression has not been the normal way to think at Maranatha Bible Church. Missions involvement has been encouraged, but not in these specific ways that lead to continual growth. The prayer is that expanded growth would occur, not only in the number of people doing missions, but in the depth to which they are involved. This project has helped raise the bar and level of expectation for church members.

One of my favorite aspects of this project was that through the study of Scripture as well as church history, great encouragement can come through those who have gone before us in missions. I was able to use many examples that have had a personal impact on me, from the sacrifice of William Carey, the devotion of David Brainerd, the prayerfulness of George Müller, and the focus on the unreached from Jim Elliot. These faithful believers can serve as examples, even in modern times. These men lived out many of the elements the Bible emphasizes and can serve as inspiration for believers today.

Weaknesses of the Project

While this project has been helpful, there are always weaknesses and things that could have been done more effectively. In retrospect, there are a few things this project exposed that need to be addressed.

The main weakness is that this project assumes that church members are faithful disciples who are growing in their obedience and relationship with Christ and are effectively sharing their faith with others. This project was not meant to address those areas of the Christian life for church members, and every project needs to start somewhere. The weakness has more to do with the timing and progression of how the church is discipling their members.

As discussed in chapter 4, missions opportunities need to complement other areas of service within the church, logically flowing out of a clear discipleship pathway. Currently, the church emphasizes three points of action steps for every member to take:

connect, grow, and serve. The issue that has arisen, even through the course of this study, is that these terms are not clearly defined. Members of the leadership team may explain what is expected differently from each other, as there is no guiding definition or explanation that is consistently communicated.

While this is a weakness, the counter argument is that biblical principles and consistent expository teaching are regularly communicated. If anything should guide a church, it should be the Word of God, not a clever or memorable phrase that is manmade. The solution does not lie in emphasizing the Bible less, but in making it clearer for people to grow. Clarity and communication are needed for the design of the ministry after someone trusts in Christ for salvation. There is not currently a new believers class that explores basics of the faith and how to follow Jesus. The church does have a two-week orientation class that explains how the church began, what ministries are offered, and how people can get involved. Beyond this, people are left on their own to navigate how they will grow. Adult Sunday morning classes, small groups in homes, discipleship group, men's groups, women's groups, and even prayer meetings are all encouraged, and it is left up to the individual how to connect. This project would have been better if it had come *after* a discipleship pathway was constructed. This will be explained further in the next section of this evaluation.

This look at discipleship leads to another weakness of the project: the emphasis is on the Great Commission and making disciples, but the Missions Involvement Pathway does not include making disciples. It is assumed it is already happening through involvement at the church. The project would be stronger if missions involvement was explored after the foundations of a church member's Christian walk were defined.

What I Would Do Differently

Throughout this project, the need for alignment in ministry philosophy among church leadership has not only stood out, but grown more clear over time. Working

backwards, if a church is to send disciple makers, they must be able to define or describe how they make disciples through the church. I have been a part of discipleship pathway planning in the past and will continue to voice support for this to be agreed upon by church leadership. Regarding this ministry project, my desire would have been to give specific missions steps *in conjunction with* an existing discipleship pathway.

As mentioned, the general encouragement for people attending the church is that they would do three simple things: connect, grow, and serve. A way to communicate this in a way that challenges and prepares mature disciple-makers could be to explain it with the following approach.

Connect, Grow, Serve

Maranatha Bible Church exists to help believers in Jesus Christ connect, grow, and serve. Please consider how we can help you connect, grow, and serve.

Connect

We encourage everyone at Maranatha Bible Church to be in a community where you can know others and be known by others. In these communities, you will receive regular accountability and encouragement, which leads to valuable connection with the church. The ways you can connect include ABFs (Adult Bible Fellowships), Connect Groups (home groups), discipleship groups, and men's and women's studies. These groups will equip you with a foundation for growth.

Grow

In your community, the goal is for you to grow in Bible knowledge and obedience. Your leader will help you develop your own unique Spiritual Growth Plan that will teach about how to walk with the Lord daily in prayer and Bible study, how to learn from the Bible studies you are in, and how to be a generous person who loves, gives, and serves.

Serve

As you grow in your faith, you will be ready to serve others by using your spiritual gifts. Serving also includes sharing what you are learning with others, investing in other disciples, and reproducing by inviting others to follow Jesus. As a serving Christian, you will be ready to be a part of the Great Commission. See the Missions Involvement Opportunities resource to learn how you can become a global Christian.

A Need for Alignment

Alignment is absolutely crucial. Just as a child should have the consistency of a father and mother holding them to the same standard, church members who are being disciplined in their faith should joyfully be invited to grow in a way that is clear and consistent. The above framework for explaining how to connect, grow, and serve would obviously need more detail and cohesion, but the idea is to challenge people with one step at a time and not to overwhelm them with too many things to do too soon.

In my role as Missions Pastor, I serve as part of a pastoral team, with each pastor tasked with a different responsibility. The goal is synergy and collaboration, so that our ministries would complement each other instead of competing. Other pastors serve in the role of outreach and discipleship, and the three of us have had many conversations about complementary ministry. Missions involvement should flow naturally from the process of evangelism and discipleship, as a person matures in their Christian walk and obedience.

This project has helped show the need for leadership to clarify and inspire people to have a plan in place for their next steps. There is more work to be done at Maranatha Bible Church in the area of a discipleship pathway that equips lost and new people to trust in Christ, get baptized, know what they believe, and learn to observe all that Jesus commanded. The staff has had discussions about wanting this to be a clear process that does not provide 10 steps in discipleship, 9 steps for evangelism, and 8 steps

for missions. It would be too confusing for the average church member and perhaps cause mental fatigue in having too many applications at once.

While this need has been evident throughout this project, I do not have clear regrets about how this tension was handled. Humility and teamwork are needed moving forward, and this project helped clarify the issue. Thankfully, the leadership has great unity, and all the pieces are in place for accomplishing this task.

Another tension that has to be managed is the urgency to obey the Great Commission and lead others to do so, while also maintaining a faithful ministry at home in everyday life. Acts 17:26 shares how God appointed times and places for people to live, and there must be trust in God's leading to know whether that situation of local influence needs interruption to leave for global ministry. This is another part of this project I would do differently. I would include the Outreach Pastor to help people have a better grasp of evangelism as well as the Discipleship Pastor to help think through how to disciple someone. I believe the ideal pattern is to learn to do these things at home before thinking through how to do them elsewhere. Given the current arrangement, missions is not able to be promoted *out* of another program. The closest thing would be discipleship groups, but these are new to the church and just getting started,

Overall, these areas will be addressed, and if this project has helped reveal the need for synergy and alignment, it is another blessing for the church. There is optimism for a more cohesive plan to be formed.

Theological Reflections

This project has caused many theological issues to be brought to life. The first is a classic missiological question: Is the Great Commission an individual or corporate command? This author, as well as the church leadership, has long held the belief that the answer is that both play a role. Individually, it is not practical for all to go to the ends of the earth, but, as this study has shown, it is possible for each and every member to have a

contribution. Some may be making disciples through personally sharing the reality of an Almighty God, the universal problem of sin, the salvation that is found by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, and the blessing of forgiveness through a heart yielded to him. Some may serve to baptize those new disciples. Others may serve in a teaching role, helping them follow all of Jesus's commands. All have something to offer, and everyone should be excited about using their spiritual gift(s), season of life, and unique personality to help accomplish the mission.

Another theological reflection is the design of the Great Commission. If more disciples make more disciples, more churches will be established. If each church takes responsibility to do all they can to complete the Great Commission, where could that lead? What would happen if God led more churches to engage their members to be more involved in missions? Maranatha Bible Church has helped plant six local churches, and five are thriving while still developing their missions ministry. I would like to serve as a resource for them to engage their members, and as these churches plant more churches, do the same for them.

A theological question this study has not addressed is whether all believers need to have a role towards those three elements of the Great Commission specifically. Is being a faithful member who exercises spiritual gifts in a missions-minded church enough? In other words, is a believer being *disobedient* if they do not do at least one element of the Missions Involvement Pathway? While this question could be further explored, this author and project have taken the approach of pursuing the joy found in being a participant in the Great Commission. This task does not need to be approached out of obligation, but rather as an excited and fulfilling ministry that takes part in what God is doing in the world.

Personal Reflections

This project was pursued because, after years of experience as the Missions

Pastor, there was a conviction that the church was being too comfortable in approaching missions. If the church continued their past trajectory, how effective would we be in reaching the unreached? Would we effectively involve members and prepare future missionaries? Thankfully, this project has set our church on a new trajectory.

Moving forward, this project has been a helpful beginning to a two-phase plan to send missionaries and develop a culture of sending. This project is essentially phase 1, with the goal of clarifying involvement by each member in the Great Commission. Phase 2 will involve preparing a specific development track for those in step 8 of the pathway, praying and evaluating their own call to full-time missions work. Although this will take years of development before sent missionaries are on the field serving, this is not about one generation of missionaries going out. The desire is to see a culture of sending that effectively prepares and equips mature believers to be a part of what God is doing in unreached people groups around the world.

In classwork for this degree program, I was able to put together a recommended plan for churches to promote ministry involvement and evaluate their own people and whether they may be called to full-time ministry. This evaluation looked for an internal desire matched with external qualifications of character, giftedness, and fruitfulness. Ministry leaders should actively encourage those they lead to at least pray and consider the possibility of a ministry role. From there, leaders can present ministry needs both local and global, help process a calling to ministry, program a clear discipleship pathway, and promote believers to serve in appropriate ways to help foster calling effectively.

From a personal standpoint, this process is how I desire to serve the Lord. While my wife and I have prayed and considered going to the mission field, through personal evaluation and the input from others, I feel best suited to serve in my current role as the Missions Pastor. This does not mean staying in my comfort zone, but rather using my opportunities and training to do my very best work for the Lord in equipping

the people of our church and the partners we support. This project has helped further prepare me for fruitful years of doing this, Lord willing.

Was this project harder or easier than I expected? As with any project of this scope, different components were easier, but many were more difficult. The design of the ministry project is well-defined and focused. Beginning with ministry and context assessments helped give a thorough analysis in choosing a project topic, although going into this degree program I knew I wanted to do something that included equipping and sending members. The process helped clarify exactly which area to focus on and satisfied my initial idea for what I wanted to work on.

The biblical exegesis in chapter 2 was very enjoyable, as the passages I studied will serve a central role in my ministry moving forward. Conducting a broader and deeper study than I had before in those passages was helpful. The chapter was so beneficial that the three passages studied were included in the Engaging in Missions curriculum.

The broad focus allowed in chapter 3 proved to be a challenge, but once the decision was made to focus on prayer, relational partnerships, and short-term trips, the writing became more focused toward elements that would help with the pathway. In hindsight, each element of the pathway could have been researched and explored, but chapter 3 was formative in developing the elements themselves.

For the project research, the Missions Knowledge and Practice Survey and corresponding analysis was new territory and managing it was a small challenge. The evaluation rubrics were helpful but could have required more specific feedback to be even more constructive.

Chapter 5 has proven to be helpful in providing an opportunity for contemplating my own challenges and growth. In a time when many rush to task after task, much can be learned from careful analysis and review.

The process of writing and working through each chapter of this ministry

project required a new level of discipline in writing. The challenge included balancing many different topics at the same time while trying to bring them together in a logical and cohesive way. To do this, I needed to take it step by step and trust the process. While there were times the many elements seemed overwhelming, continuing to work and stay organized proved to be the right approach. Outlines helped combine the big picture with the individual steps. Throughout the many trains of thought, problems to figure out, and research to be done, the best course of action was simply staying focused on what needed to be done next. The discipline this project helped further develop will prove useful in future ministry tasks.

Overall, this ministry project has been helpful both professionally and ministerially. I would not only do it over again with a different topic but would recommend it for others seeking to grow in their skills and training.

Conclusion

This project attempted to equip the members of Maranatha Bible Church in Akron, Ohio, to engage in missions. Not only has this occurred on a smaller scale, but it has set the church up for years to come with material that will be taught, referenced, and reproduced for the rest of the church and future visitors. While the true impact of this ministry project will not be seen for some time, it has caused growth even beyond the area of missions. Perhaps others in the church will pursue similar projects for the areas of evangelism and discipleship in the future.

Thankfully, members of the church are beginning to come forward to indicate their desire to potentially be involved in full-time missions, so there has already been fruit from the prayer emphasis and initial communication about the desire to grow in how the church does missions. If everyone increases their involvement, the potential for impact is truly exciting.

The Great Commission is too important for a casual approach, and sadly, modern culture would like to reduce followers of Christ to a casual Christianity. Pastors, and, in this case, pastors with the responsibility of missions, have an eternally meaningful ministry of helping to mature believers to be a part of God's global plan.

Ephesians 4:12 indicates that spiritual leaders are to equip the saints for the work of ministry, and this project has attempted to do just that. Through the Engaging in Missions curriculum and the Missions Involvement Pathway, lasting resources now exist to motivate and mobilize the members of the church towards greater missions influence. May God use this specific local church as part of his global and eternal plan to glorify himself through redeeming people from every tribe, nation, and tongue!

APPENDIX 1

MISSIONS INVOLVEMENT PATHWAY

The following graphic shows the two-sided card created as a product of this study. It is available both digitally and in print format as a resource for ways that members of the church can be involved in the Great Commission. It also includes an overview of missions at the church with several priorities.

MISSIONS AT MARANATHA BIBLE CHURCH

OUR PURPOSE STATEMENT:

“Out of love for God and people, Maranatha Bible Church obeys the Great Commission by making disciples and planting churches, teaching, and serving others for the glory of Jesus Christ.”

Who does the work of missions:

- Our local, regional, and global partners (Acts 1:8). See our partnerships at mbc95.org/meet-our-partners.
- All of us! Get involved through the opportunities on the reverse side.

Priorities:

- Sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ (Romans 1:16)
- Local, regional, and global church planting (Acts 14:21-23)
- Unreached People Groups (Romans 15:20-21)
- Indigenous leadership and discipleship (Acts 14:23)
- Long-term partnership (Philippians 1:3-5)
- 20% of Maranatha's giving is designated to missions (Matthew 6:21)

For more info, mbc95.org/missions



330.645.2681

1424 Killian Rd. Akron OH 44312

MISSIONS INVOLVEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20 records Jesus instructing His followers to MAKE DISCIPLES.

YOU CAN BE A PART OF GLOBAL DISCIPLE-MAKING AND CHURCH PLANTING AS YOU:

Pray

Use our MBC Prayer Guide to regularly bring our missions partners before the Lord (Eph. 6:18).

Invest

Give regularly to MBC and special projects for our worldwide impact for the Gospel (2 Cor. 9:7; Matt. 6:21).

Serve

Join and lead a discipleship group, volunteer with our local partners, and use your spiritual gift(s) to build up the church (Eph. 4:12).

Welcome

Through our partnership with the International Welcome Center (theiwc.org) serve internationals moving into our area by meeting needs with the love of Christ (Gal. 6:10; Heb. 13:2).

Care

Build a meaningful relationship with our missions partners through your ABF or Connect Group by providing prayer and encouragement (Phil. 1:3-5).

Visit (Short-term)

Be a part of a short-term missions trip (Go Team) to experience the mission field and assist our partners (Phil. 2:25, 29-30).

Mobilize

Challenge those around you to engage in missions as you have, encouraging them to pray through their involvement (1 Thess. 5:11).

Go (Long-term)

Pray about the possibility of God using you on the mission field long-term (see mbc95.org/nextstepsinmissions) and discuss these next steps with the church leadership (Acts 13:2).

APPENDIX 2

MISSIONS PATHWAY EVALUATION RUBRIC

The following rubric was used by the Missions Committee to evaluate the missions pathway described in the goal section of chapter 1.

Name of Evaluator: _____ Date: _____

Missions Pathway Evaluation Rubric					
1 = insufficient 2 = requires attention 3 = sufficient 4 = exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
The goal of the missions pathway is clearly stated.					
The need for engagement is clearly stated in the missions pathway.					
The material presented in the missions pathway is faithful to the Bible.					
The material presented in the missions pathway is theologically sound.					
The components of the missions pathway are well-organized and concise.					
The components of the missions pathway are practical and useful.					
The components of the missions pathway are appropriate and challenging.					
Obstacles that may hinder involvement in the missions pathway have been stated.					
Overall, I believe the pathway, when explained, will promote involvement in missions at MBC.					

Other Comments:

APPENDIX 3

MISSIONS PATHWAY EVALUATION RUBRIC RESULTS

The following rubric shows the results of the evaluation of the Missions Pathway by the Missions Committee.

Missions Pathway Evaluation Rubric					
1 = insufficient 2 = requires attention 3 = sufficient 4 = exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
The goal of the missions pathway is clearly stated.			x	xxx	
The need for engagement is clearly stated in the missions pathway.			x	xxx	
The material presented in the missions pathway is faithful to the Bible.				xxxx	
The material presented in the missions pathway is theologically sound.				xxxx	
The components of the missions pathway are well-organized and concise.			xxx	x	
The components of the missions pathway are practical and useful.			xxx	x	
The components of the missions pathway are appropriate and challenging.			xxx	x	
Obstacles that may hinder involvement in the missions pathway have been stated.		x	xx		“Not referenced on the handout card, but discussed in the topics of the curriculum.” One survey marked “NA”
Overall, I believe the pathway, when explained, will promote involvement in missions at MBC.			xx	xx	

Other Comments: “This Missions Pathway accurately and concisely communicates Maranatha Bible Church’s emphasis on missions, and it provides church members with an array of options for involvement.”

APPENDIX 4

MISSIONS CURRICULUM EVALUATION RUBRIC

The following rubric was used by the Missions Committee to evaluate the missions curriculum described in the goal section of chapter 1.

Name of Evaluator: _____ Date: _____

Missions Curriculum Evaluation Rubric					
1 = insufficient 2 = requires attention 3 = sufficient 4 = exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
Biblical Accuracy					
Each lesson was sound in its interpretation of Scripture.					
Each lesson was faithful to the theology of the Bible.					
Scope					
The content of the curriculum sufficiently covers each issue it is designed to address.					
The curriculum sufficiently covers a biblical and contextual approach to missions.					
Pedagogy					
Each lesson was clear, containing a big idea.					
Each lesson provides opportunities for participant interaction with the material.					
Practicality					
The curriculum clearly details how to engage in missions.					
At the end of the course, participants will be better equipped to know their own role in missions.					

Other Comments:

APPENDIX 5
MISSIONS CURRICULUM EVALUATION
RUBRIC RESULTS

The following rubric shows the results of the Missions Committee evaluation of the missions curriculum.

Missions Curriculum Evaluation Rubric					
1 = insufficient 2 = requires attention 3 = sufficient 4 = exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
Biblical Accuracy					
Each lesson was sound in its interpretation of Scripture.				XXXX	
Each lesson was faithful to the theology of the Bible.				XXXX	
Scope					
The content of the curriculum sufficiently covers each issue it is designed to address.			XX	XX	
The curriculum sufficiently covers a biblical and contextual approach to missions.			XX	XX	
Pedagogy					
Each lesson was clear, containing a big idea.			XX	XX	
Each lesson provides opportunities for participant interaction with the material.			X	XXX	
Practicality					
The curriculum clearly details how to engage in missions.			XX	XX	
At the end of the course, participants will be better equipped to know their own role in missions.			XXX	X	

Other Comments: "Individual who work through this curriculum will have a solid foundation for missions, and they will be provided with opportunities to evaluate and consider their own involvement in missions."

APPENDIX 6

MISSIONS CURRICULUM SURVEY

The following survey was used with pre- and post-curriculum students to evaluate the effectiveness of the teaching.

Missions Knowledge and Practice Survey

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to identify your current understanding of biblical missions and how the participant may put those principles in practice. Nathan Kurcsak is conducting this research for the purpose of collecting data for a ministry project. In this research, you will answer questions before the project and you will answer the same questions at the conclusion of the project. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*, and at no time will your name be reported or identified with your responses. *Participation is in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.* By completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this project.

By completion of this survey and checking the appropriate box below, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

- I agree to participate
 I do not agree to participate

Part 1: Missions Knowledge

Directions: Answer the questions and statements below using the following options: (1) place a check by multiple-choice answers, and (2) based on the following scale, circle the option that best represents your agreement with the statement:

SD = Strongly Disagree
D = Disagree
DS = Disagree Somewhat
AS = Agree Somewhat
A = Agree
SA = Strongly Agree

- | | | | | | | | |
|----|---|----|---|----|----|---|----|
| 1. | I can effectively explain principles found in the Great Commission. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 2. | I understand what the Bible teaches about missions. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 3. | I can explain the progression found in Acts 1:8. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 4. | I understand the importance of the differences in Acts 1:8 locations. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 5. | I understand the principles taught regarding partnership from 3 John. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 6. | I understand the church's approach to missions partnerships. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |

Part 2: Missions Practice

7.	I can explain the importance of my involvement in missions.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
8.	I understand how God uses prayer in missions.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
9.	I have a strong grasp of what and who to pray for regarding missions.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
10.	I understand how giving plays a role in missions.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
11.	I understand how serving locally impacts missions.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
12.	I know how to welcome internationals locally and see the benefit.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
13.	I understand why connecting with partners is important.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
14.	I can explain practical ways to connect with partners.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
15.	I understand how missions trips can serve partners.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
16.	I understand how trips help churches.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
17.	I know my role in encouraging missions involvement.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
18.	I understand the importance of sending missionaries.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
19.	I know how I can help fulfill the Great Commission.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

APPENDIX 7

MISSIONS CURRICULUM

The following is the 8-week curriculum titled “Engaging in Missions” that was taught to the adult class and is ready to use in other teaching environments.

Maranatha Bible Church – Engaging in Missions Week 1: An Overview of the Great Commission

Main Idea: Because the Lord has entrusted the Great Commission to us, everyone should know how to fulfill their role in making disciples of all nations.

Outline:

1. The Great Commission and Maranatha Bible Church's Response
2. The Great Commission is a turning point in Scripture.
3. The verbs of the Great Commission:
 - “go” (πορεύθεντες)
 - “make disciples” (μαθητεύσατε)
 - “baptizing” (βαπτίζοντες)
 - “teaching” (διδάσκοντες).
4. Application: We should each learn our role.

Talk:

In Matthew 28:18-20, we read,

“And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (ESV)

This is our mandate, these are our instructions, this is the Lord Jesus Christ giving clear, unmistakable instructions and direction for his followers and, in turn, for our churches.

Are we doing it? Are you doing it? We want to begin an 8-week study on how you can be involved in carrying out the Great Commission, and we are going to do this as honestly, and hopefully as practically, as we can.

We have a number of ways you can be involved, through our church, in God's plan to reach the world with the gospel. We don't want this to be simply a lesson where you acquire some new knowledge but never do anything about it, we want this to be clarifying for you to be confident in using your life to impact eternity.

I will make you a promise: I will not try to make you feel guilty for not wanting to move to the Middle East and become a missionary. If God is providing for you to do that, I will support and encourage you, but that decision is not for everyone.

What *is* for everyone? What is for *you* in the realm of missions? John Piper is blunt when he writes we have three options in obeying the Great Commission: go, send, or disobey. Let's rule out disobey, we will not go in that direction. That leaves going and sending. How can we do those effectively? Throughout this 8-week series, we will be challenged to consider our role in carrying out the Great Commission.

Today we will simply walk through this passage in Matthew 28 and we will seek to understand what Jesus was instructing. Next week we will learn more about the geographic expansion of the church in the book of Acts that was given in the very first chapter. Our third week will focus on partnerships from 3 John. And then in weeks 4-8 we will walk through opportunities for missions involvement and the Biblical basis for doing that. You will be the first to see a new graphic we are promoting as a tool to help people engage in missions. I told you that you were guinea pigs.

My 7 year old son loves football, and I mean, he loves it so much, when he volunteered to pray for our family dinner, he bowed his head, put his hands together, and like he was a quarterback, he accidentally said, “Settttttttt!” like he was going to snap

the ball! Because he lives and breathes football, it is like it is part of who he is! But a football team is a great illustration for what we are talking about. The quarterback can throw because the receivers run routes to go out and catch. The running back can run because the linemen run out to block. The kicker can kick because the long snapper snaps and the holder holds. It all works together.

At our church, we have some big goals, and we invite everyone to play a part, to know your role, to plug into the spot you should be in. You have a place on the team carrying out the Great Commission. Looking at the big picture, there are a number of ways we'll talk about for you to get involved. Here is our purpose statement as we approach missions:

“Out of love for God and people, Maranatha Bible Church obeys the Great Commission by making disciples and planting churches, teaching, and serving others for the glory of Jesus Christ.”

This is a summary statement of what our church supports and strives to do in missions. Obeying the two greatest commandments, we love God and just as He does, we love people, and our love and joy in Him motivates us to obey the Great Commission, so let's discuss what that means.

Let's walk through Matthew 28:18-20. This passage comes at the end of the longest Gospel book, after Jesus's ministry, death, and resurrection, and after he had instructed his disciples to go to a mountain in Galilee to see Him. This is His message to them.

“And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (ESV)

We call this the Great Commission, and it is consistent with commissioning passages in the Old Testament.¹ God specifically commissioned Moses and Aaron to speak to Pharaoh in Exodus 7, God commissioned Joshua in Joshua 1, Solomon in 1 Chronicles 22, and the Prophet Jeremiah in chapter one. Listen to what God says to Jeremiah:

“But the Lord said to me,
“Do not say, ‘I am only a youth’;
for to all to whom I send you, you shall go,
and whatever I command you, you shall speak.”

Throughout the Bible, God tells people where to go and what to say. He is God, He has that right.

I share these Old Testament passages because we need to see this as an important turning point in Scripture. Our Bibles have a natural dividing point when we look at the Old and New Testaments. Even historically, there were 400 years of silence between them. But God's revelation through Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, God incarnate, and Jesus's subsequent life, ministry, and death and resurrection are the fulfillment of all God was doing in the Old Testament. Everything points to Him. Everything.

From the very beginning of time, Colossians 1 tells us creation was by Him and for Him. And when we read about the Fall in Genesis 3, Jesus is promised even then. And

¹ W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, vol. 3, *Matthew 19-28*, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), 676. Drawing on scholarship from B. J. Hubbard, examples of Old Testament commissions would include Exodus 7:2, Joshua 1:7, 1 Chronicles 22:13, and Jeremiah 1:7.

as God progressively reveals Himself throughout the Old Testament, these prophecies that foretold Christ look forward to this time, when Jesus would accomplish all that He intended, all that was needed, a satisfactory atonement for God's children, victory over death, and glorification as the Risen Savior. It happened! He did it!

So we see creation, the fall, redemption, and restoration through Christ. Basically, the Old Testament, plus Jesus = the Gospel. We see our need for Him, and the Gospel is that Jesus died, was buried, and rose again as Lord over all. So why am I telling you this passage in Matthew is a turning point and not the end of the story?

Because of what Jesus says. He doesn't say, "I won, you're my disciples, come on up to heaven with me, it's over, time to celebrate."

He tells them the next step of His plan, which prepares for the church age, the next part of God's unfolding plan for human history. Jesus was the plan for the Old Testament, and now that He's come, He gives the next plan. Here's what he instructs.

Respecting His authority, we are to make disciples. "Authority" means "the power or right to give orders, make decisions, and enforce obedience."

Jesus has the total right over all creation, it has been given from God the Father, and it is the first "all" in this passage. Do you notice the "all's" in this passage? How many do you see?

I count four forms of the word "all". All authority, all nations, all commandments, always with Jesus presence.² Another theme in this passage is the possessive language. Jesus says His disciples, commandments, by His presence, His church (Mark 16:15, a parallel commission) because He holds authority.³

So because Jesus has all this authority and all this ownership, this is a big deal. I am a missions pastor, but I also, as your Bible teacher today, do not want to exaggerate the importance of this passage. But I do not feel as though I am exaggerating. I am taking the words and the timing of these words by the Lord of All and communicating their importance. Jesus knew his disciples, He had spent three years with them, and He could have said, "Hey guys, one more thing..." Instead, He prefaces His instruction with His authority to give the full weight of His command.

He tells them to go and make disciples. We need to talk about the original language a bit here. The Greek shows the importance of intentionality a little more than our English translation.

The word itself for making disciples is not frequent in the New Testament, but instead of negating the importance, I believe its rarity emphasizes it.⁴ Jesus modeled this for them, and now after His completed mission, He commands it from His followers. "Do what I did so that it spreads to every nation."

How do we do make disciples?

We see four activities, indicated in the verbs, "go" (*πορεύθεντες*), "make disciples" (*μαθητεύσατε*), "baptizing" (*βαπτίζοντες*), and "teaching" (*διδάσκοντες*).⁵

² Steven C. Hawthorne, "Mandate on the Mountain," in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, ed. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne, 4th ed. (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2009), 126-31.

³ R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 1561, Scribd.

⁴ David Jacobus Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, ASMS (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011), 73.

⁵ D. Edmond Hiebert, "An Expository Study of Matthew 28:16-20," *BSac* 149, no. 595 (July-September 1992): 347-48.

Go, baptize, and teach are dependent on the main verb, make disciples.⁶ We shouldn't necessarily see them as a series of sequential steps, but rather as a whole command to be done. You do it all at once. As you are going, making disciples *involves* baptizing and teaching to obey. This is not just teaching for knowledge, but teaching for obedience.

When followers *observe* Jesus's teaching, they do not just know what their teacher knows, but they become what their teacher *is*. For the multiplication of disciples to occur, this must be the case. You don't want a copy of a copy, where the quality becomes worse and worse the further you go. Jesus is saying they should teach for transformed lives, in every area these new disciples are to be obedient. We don't water it down, we give the full teaching and help them obey towards being a true disciple, who makes more true disciples.

What step happens in this room every week?

Who is being taught?

So then how do you see yourself within this process? Are you being disciplined, or preparing to disciple? Does that question make sense to you? If we see this command of Jesus as one command with different facets, if we see someone become a disciple, being baptized, and learning to obey everything Jesus said, then how do you see yourself in the process? Is it focused on your own life and progress through what he is saying? You could say to yourself, "Become a disciple? Check, I did that. Be baptized? Check. Learn to obey all of His commands? Well, that's going to take a while..."

I want to encourage you, you are not only being disciplined, but you are preparing to disciple, and while that sounds daunting, Jesus has great news.

The disciples were ordinary men receiving a mandate to reach the world by making followers of Christ, so how would they approach such a monumental task? Jesus provides hope and comfort, not through a guarantee of success or a promise of results, (Which He could have provided) but rather He gives hope and comfort through His very self. He would be with them, at all times, in all places, in every step of their obedience.

In other words, the Great Commission is challenging, but by Christ's very presence it is possible and, to be honest, the best thing we could focus on with our lives.

So should the *church* do this with each person using their gift, or should individuals have a role in the Great Commission? Is the great Commission a corporate or individual mandate?

The answer is yes...both. Maranatha Bible Church can follow this command both corporately and through individuals within the church. Not all believers can go to the ends of the earth, but everyone can support and pray for those who do while making disciples at home. The church needs both senders and goers. Different gifts may be needed even to obey the different parts of the command. An evangelist will focus on unbelievers, while a pastor/teacher will focus on teaching new followers how to obey. The Great Commission can and should be a focus for local churches as they seek to obey Jesus's instructions together. As individuals obey it, the church obeys it.

Our desire at Maranatha is that everyone, whether they are a young student, a housewife, a bus driver, a businessman, a retired person, whoever it is, that they would know HOW they can obey the Great Commission. The Lord entrusted this task to us! His disciples made disciples and their witness eventually found the way to our own lives. We are God's plan for making disciples, and what a joyful way to spend your life.

So we begin our series with the goal. We're going to talk about how to meet that goal, and we will not be pursuing our comfort, we will be pursuing our design and opportunity. We will see ourselves as servants ready for whatever God wants. The

⁶ Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative*. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 66.

missiologist Christopher Wright asks, “I may wonder what kind of mission God has for *me*, when I should ask what kind of me God wants for *his* mission.”⁷ God is in charge, we’re not picking and choosing what we want, we are discerning how God wants to use us.

So this is something you will see emphasized here more and more. Pastor Steve, our discipleship pastor, doesn’t want to see us complete a life-long curriculum in order to check those boxes and die as a really smart person. He sees our discipleship as completed *only* when we pass it on, when we learn something and share that with someone else.

This is something we’re going to be working on, and we’re here to help you. As Maranatha grows to become more effective in carrying out the Great Commission, it is going to happen through each of us seeing ourselves as part of carrying it out. Your pastors are not supposed to do it for you. We are supposed to equip you to serve to build up the church towards Christlike maturity. I want to close in prayer that God would even use our series in here towards that end, that He would bless us to know how we can play a role in the work He is doing.

⁷ Wright, *The Mission of God*, 534 (emphasis original).

Maranatha Bible Church – Engaging in Missions
Week 2: Acts 1:8 - A Strategic Progression of Witnessing Locally,
Regionally, and To the Ends of the Earth

Big Idea: Acts 1:8 provides a model for a geographic progression of disciple-making that is carried out in Acts and can be used present day.

Outline:

1. Power: Our effectiveness through the Holy Spirit
2. Witness: Our witness from personal experience
3. Gospel and Church Expansion: Local, Regional, and Global
4. Application: We use this progression currently at Maranatha Bible Church. We desire to have local partners, regional partners, and partners reaching the ends of the earth.

Talk:

Let's look at a globe, thinking about *how* carrying out the Great Commission is going to work. We learned last week the task for us and our church is to make disciples *as we're going* and to baptize and teach these disciples. Jesus said to make disciples of all nations. I know there's a lot of smart people in here, who can guess the current number of nations or countries in the world?

There 195 countries the United Nations currently recognizes, plus Vatican City and the State of Palestine. That's a lot of countries, and the world recently went over 8 billion people in population. That's a lot of people, and as we can see from this globe, that's a lot of ground to cover. Can we do it? Can we reach the nations, or probably more accurately translated "people groups", with the Gospel? I'll give a spoiler alert: the Great Commission is happening. Col. 1:5-6 summarizes this well when it says:

"Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel, which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and increasing—as it also does among you, since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth."

Is it happening here where we live in Akron or at Maranatha? Is it bearing fruit and increasing here? We could give testimony like the church in Colossae that we hear and understand God's grace. We just baptized 11 people last month, we're baptizing plenty of more people next month, and we hear testimonies of how the Gospel is growing here. We're so thankful for that.

But if we look at this globe, it seems a tall task. The disciples may have had a hard time believing this could actually happen. Truthfully, we can have a hard time believing God can use us as part of this global plan, but He is doing it, and today we want to explain how.

This morning we'll talk about the book of Acts, starting in chapter 1, and we'll see how Jesus's words at the beginning of the book come true through the rest of the book. Why would we ever doubt, right? Jesus is the King of Kings and has human history under His rule. Please find Acts chapter 1.

Acts is an amazing, amazing book. It is the closest narrative we have to present day Christianity. Isn't that amazing? To read about Christians who looked back at Christ's death and believed in Him and went to church and shared the Gospel just like us, it's really incredible to me.

The book of Acts is another turning point in human history and the Biblical narrative. In contrast to the Old Testament model where Israel would serve as the example *to* the world, Acts shows how the disciples carried out the Great Commission through the Gospel going *outward* from Jerusalem. Jesus's claim in Acts 1:8 empowers His disciples. It presents not only the *source* of effectiveness for his disciples, but also a strategic *approach* for their next steps. Jesus says, "But you will receive power when the

Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8, ESV).

Our big idea is that Acts 1:8 provides a model for a geographic progression of disciple-making that is carried out in Acts and can be used present day.

Walking through the verse step by step shows both source and strategy.

Power: Our effectiveness through the Holy Spirit

The first section of the verse presents the promise of the Holy Spirit’s power. The term δύνάμιν refers to power, might, strength, or the ability to produce a strong effect.⁸ The disciples had already seen the power of Jesus’s words throughout his ministry, so his promise here brings full expectation it would be fulfilled.

Who can give an example of a time Jesus said something before it happened?

He said they would find a donkey in Jerusalem for Him to ride on, He predicted His own death, Judas’ betrayal, Peter’s denial, His resurrection, and the disciples could trust Him when He foretold something, they had no reason to doubt anything He said.

The context of this promise occurs after verse 6, where the disciples ask Jesus about restoring the kingdom to Israel. Their anticipation and understanding of the “kingdom” was limited, so Jesus corrects them with a proper perspective on how this kingdom would become global.⁹ They were thinking Israel’s physical kingdom, but Jesus was describing His spiritual kingdom. This kingdom would grow through the power of the Holy Spirit.

How does a reliance on the power of the Holy Spirit embolden our witness?

There is no pressure, responsibility, or effectiveness in *you* trying to save anyone. *God* saves. God convicts through His Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit can use your words, your personal witness, and He can give them power. The power is not rooted in us, it doesn’t come from us, we receive it.

The Holy Spirit was to give power to the *message* the disciples would give. While Jesus had promised them the “spirit of truth” was coming during his ministry (John 16), they were unaware of the timing and that the Day of Pentecost would come soon in Acts 2. God’s design was for the Spirit to give *fruit* to their testimony. Bible commentator Craig Keener, while giving an overview of the Holy Spirit’s role and activity throughout the book of Acts, writes, “The Spirit empowers and directs believers for cross-cultural mission in Acts.”¹⁰

This idea should serve as both comfort and motivation. Comfort, because if God himself is actively providing fruit when a message about Christ is given, it removes fear, doubt, and self-dependence. It provides motivation, because God’s role and activity provide a strong incentive... He can reach to a person’s heart and soul and produce His intended response! Craig Keener puts it this way, “In the promises of Luke 24:47-49 and Acts 1:4-8, Jesus emphasizes the need to depend on God to fulfill the commission he is giving; the Spirit is both necessary and available.”¹¹ This promised power equips followers of Christ with everything they need to serve as witnesses.

This repeats the emphasis Jesus gave his disciples in Luke 24. Let’s take a look at that, please flip over to Luke 24.

⁸ Timothy Friberg, Barbara Friberg, and Neva F. Miller, *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament* (Victoria, BC: Trafford, 2005), 121.

⁹ John B. Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, vol. 26 (Nashville: Broadman Press, 2001), 85.

¹⁰ Craig S. Keener, “The Spirit and the Mission of the Church in Acts 1-2,” *JETS*, 62 no. 1 (March 2019): 28.

¹¹ Keener, “The Spirit and the Mission of the Church in Acts 1-2,” 29.

Jesus shares in Luke 24:44-49 how he fulfilled Old Testament prophecy and provides forgiveness of sins, instructing his followers to begin in Jerusalem and proclaim his name to all nations. The similarities between this account in Luke's Gospel and Luke's Acts account are intentional. Same author. Luke's emphasis of Jesus's commission is consistent. In verse 48, he declares the disciples as witnesses of who he was and what he had done, and in verse 49, Jesus promises the Holy Spirit to clothe them with power. This repetition of the task and empowerment should make the calling for followers of Jesus abundantly clear. The rest of the book shows the providential expansion of disciple-given witness and the growth of the church, but it all starts with Jesus's explicit instruction for the Spirit-empowered witness to move outwardly.

So Jesus is setting the stage for this outward expansion, but before that let's talk about the idea of witness.

Witness: Our witness from personal experience

The disciples' personal experience is noteworthy as they can provide a fair account. Darrell Bock defines a witness as "someone who helps establish facts objectively through verifiable observation."¹² He explains, "This objectivity and fact-based quality of the witness are why the direct experience of Jesus's ministry and resurrection are required of Judas' replacement in Acts 1:21-22, a passage that shows what stands behind Luke's use of the term."¹³ They can just tell it as they saw it. They did not need to learn new things in order to share; they could simply retell the things they had seen and heard.

The content of their message is to focus on Christ: his life, teaching, miracles, death, resurrection, and thus, forgiveness of sins through his finished work. The term μάρτυρες (where we get our term for "martyr") describes the disciples' role in giving a personal testimony about Christ.¹⁴ It is used in Acts *thirteen* times, the highest number of any New Testament book.¹⁵ The fact it is used so often throughout the book shows the obedience to this verse we're studying.

Now let's talk about some geography. The Gospel expansion started out locally, progressed regionally, and then continued to grow, and we will get into how that played out.

Gospel and Church Expansion: Local, Regional, and Global

We read Acts 1:8, but now we're going forward in Acts through a series of summary statements. This is not a "sword drill", but we are going to move through the book very quickly by looking at verses that summarize a section. Our Bibles are inspired, but our chapters and verse markers are not inspired, those were added later, so after seeing Acts this way, you may wonder why they put the chapter and verse distinctions where they did. I am going to share the section, description, and we can read the summary verse listed as well.

The basic outline is Jerusalem in the first 7 chapters, Judea and Samaria in chapters 8-12, and the ends of the earth in chapters 13-28, so Jesus's words in Acts 1:8 were both prophetic *and* effective. He knew the church would grow this way when He commanded it. Let's take a look.

Acts 1:1 – 6:7

¹² Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 64.

¹³ Bock, *Acts*, 64.

¹⁴ Polhill, *Acts*, 85.

¹⁵ Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Acts of the Apostles*, NTC (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1990), 54.

The church in Jerusalem, predominately Jewish
Summary verse: 6:7

Relating to this church expansion, Acts records a shift in the effectiveness of disciples making disciples. Eric Geiger and Kevin Peck observe that in Acts 2:47, the church *added*, but in Acts 6:7, the church *multiplied*.¹⁶ The exponential growth is part of the design from the Great Commission, that disciples would not simply add disciples, but would make disciples who *make* disciples. In this way, the disciples would not serve as a limitation for the spread of the good news about Jesus. They were restricted in terms of how far they could travel, how many people they could serve as a witness, and how long they would live. But in obediently sharing their Spirit-empowered testimony of the person and work of Jesus Christ, they were sharing a message that could spread more effectively through new disciples to new areas.

Why start in Jerusalem? That was where the disciples were after Jesus's death and resurrection there, but there is more to it than that. Jerusalem has been part of Israel's rich history since the time of David, and served as the location for God's temple. As the site of the crucifixion, the disciples would have stayed there in that city while mourning their teacher's death.¹⁷ They also had been instructed by Jesus himself in Luke 24:49, "And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high." In the two books that Luke authored, he focuses on Jewish ministry primarily in his gospel, and moves to emphasize the "Gentile mission" in his historical account of Acts.¹⁸ John Polhill, a Bible commentator, observes, "It is not by accident that Jerusalem came first. In Luke's Gospel, Jerusalem was central... The story of Jesus led *to* Jerusalem; the story of the church led *from* Jerusalem."¹⁹ Jerusalem serves as the center of this mission, where the gospel would go forth proclaiming salvation through the Savior who was buried and rose again in this important city.

God never does anything on accident. Jerusalem is a meaningful starting point. But the Gospel continues to grow.

Acts 6:8- 9:31

The church grew in Judea, Galilee, and Samaria

Summary verse: 9:31

The areas of Judea and Samaria, west and north of Jerusalem, are regions that "are probably to be taken together".²⁰ Judea likely refers to the Jewish Davidic kingdom, with its population spread through that region, and Samaria is part of that broader region, but is "mentioned separately because of its non-Jewish constituency."²¹ One commentary notes, "Thus the disciples are to start with the ancestral capital, spread to the rest of Jewish Palestine, and then (shifting from primarily topographic to primarily cultural

¹⁶ Eric Geiger and Kevin Peck, *Designed to Lead: The Church and Leadership Development* (Nashville: B&H, 2016), 189.

¹⁷ Craig S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary*, vol. 1, *Introduction and 1:1-2:47* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 1946, Scribd.

¹⁸ Keener, *Acts*, 1950.

¹⁹ Polhill, *Acts*, 86.

²⁰ Polhill, *Acts*, 86.

²¹ Polhill, *Acts*, 86.

distinctions) to Samaria.”²² Another commentary adds that while Judea likely includes Galilee (see Acts 9:31), Samaria is distinct culturally as a region where they “rejected the Jerusalem-centered history of salvation.”²³

Think about the growth happening, it makes sense. The gospel would not skip over the very city the disciples were in to spread outward; they would start at home. Next, they were to share with people similar to them in other areas. From there, they could cross cultural and linguistic boundaries even in their own region. Beyond that, the gospel would spread to new areas, cultures, languages, and worldviews. We see that.

Acts 9:32-12:24

The church expands to Gentiles
Summary verse: 12:24

This section includes Acts 10, where Cornelius, a Roman Centurion, sends for the Apostle Peter, Peter has his vision, he preaches about Jesus, and Acts 10:45 says, “And the believers from among the circumcised who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles.”

The church grows beyond this, now through the ministry of the Apostle Paul.

Acts 12:25 – 16:5

The church expands under Paul’s leadership to modern-day Turkey
Summary verse: 16:5

So we are now beyond Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, but are we to the “end of the earth” yet? Let’s take a look at this globe again.

Where is the end of the earth? If you believed in a flat earth as many did, perhaps then it would be easier to find when you got to the edge. But the earth is round. Where is the end?

Do we try to find the point farthest from Jerusalem? I was curious about this, so I searched and discovered that it would be New Zealand. Specifically, for major populations, the farthest city of over 500,000 people from Jerusalem is Auckland, New Zealand. So, we need to ask, are we looking for New Zealand as we work through Acts for this to be realized? You will hear my answer in a just a minute, let’s keep going.

Acts 16:6 – 19:20

The church expands westward to modern-day Europe
Summary verse: 19:20

Paul’s missionary journeys are effective and fruitful, he is preaching the Gospel and people are getting saved, churches are starting. He receives the Macedonian call in chapter 16, they make their way to Philippi, just glance through the cities they are visiting up to Ephesus in chapter 19, then we see our summary verse.

Acts 19:21-28:31

The church expands from Jerusalem to Rome
Summary verses: Acts 28:30-31

Much of this section is about Paul himself, his journey to Jerusalem, his appeal to Caesar, and then his journey to Rome. And when we get to the end of Acts 28 and the end of the book, we read our summary verse.

²² Keener, *Acts*, 1950.

²³ Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), chap. 1, “Acts 1:1-14,” sec. 13, para. 6, Kindle.

Do you think Luke, as the author of the book of Acts, saw Rome as the fulfillment of Acts 1:8?

Is Rome symbolic of the end of the earth? Is it a bridge to the end of the earth? Jesus, as Creator, knew every inch of the world he created. He chose to use this phrase. So Luke's intention is to record what Jesus said, so he did that. As for how we understand it, I am going to give you some interpretations from some Bible commentators.

Eckhard Schnabel writes, "In Acts 28, Rome is not portrayed as a goal or fulfillment of the early Christian mission, but as a new starting point from which the gospel was proclaimed 'with all boldness and without hindrance' (Acts 28:21)."²⁴ This makes sense because of the peace the Roman empire gave and the roads and just the freedom and access to go and spread the Gospel. God ordained that period of human history to have incredible Gospel opportunity. Thom Schreiner suggests that after the expansion from Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria in Acts 9:32, "Every locale in Acts from this point on represents the spread of the gospel as it goes to the 'end of the earth.'"²⁵ He continues, "The 'end of the earth' (ESV) represents the areas where gentiles live, denoting those who live outside Israel and the land of promise."²⁶ Craig Keener adds, "The mission's expansion here is expressed geographically, but Acts develops it ethnically as well, so that the gospel crosses all barriers."²⁷ Darrell Bock agrees, writing, "The phrase 'end of the earth,' then, is geographic and ethnic in scope, inclusive of all people and locales."²⁸

So while New Zealand is not mentioned in the book of Acts, we see the Gospel going out everywhere, geographically, ethnically, and now we're part of it.

Acts 1:8 serves to provide a missional structure to Acts, but it extends even to present day. Our church leadership sees this as a model for us to emulate. We want to make disciples locally, around us, and there continue to be places and peoples that have not yet heard a Spirit-empowered witness regarding Jesus Christ. The "ends of the earth" are still being reached, with tremendous opportunity for churches that choose to obey this calling.

We use this progression currently at Maranatha Bible Church. We desire to have local partners, regional partners, and partners reaching the ends of the earth.

²⁴ Schnabel, *Acts*, chap. 1, "Acts 1:1-14," sec. 13, para. 8.

²⁵ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Handbook on Acts and Paul's Letters* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019), 34, Scribd.

²⁶ Schreiner, *Handbook on Acts and Paul's Letters*, 41.

²⁷ Keener, *Acts*, 1943.

²⁸ Bock, *Acts*, 65.

Maranatha Bible Church – Engaging in Missions
Week 3: 3 John 5-8 – Ministry Partnership

Big Idea: The Bible commands us to support others who are actively engaged in Gospel ministry.

Gaius had shown hospitality to Christian strangers, likely at his church.
Key verse (v. 6) = Send others in a manner worthy of God

How do we send well?

1. Help send with whatever is *needed*. (v. 5-6)
 - a. This includes both time with them and the time after they leave
 - b. Do it in a way that mirrors God’s generosity
 - c. Do it in a way that God would approve (see the Levites in the OT. Num. 18:21, Luke 8:3b, 1 Cor. 9:1-4, Romans 15:24)
2. Support work “for the sake of the Name” (v. 7)
 - a. This is a testimony for those receiving, those giving, and those observing.
 - b. This is the idea of partnership (Phil. 1:3), freeing them to do ministry
3. Consider our partners as fellow workers (v. 8)
 - a. The pronoun “we” is emphatic, it falls on us!
 - b. The Greek clause indicates both intention and result: the intention is to support the work, the result is to be a “fellow worker”.

Application:

- Hospitality
- Financial support
- Prayer
- Encouragement
- Acts of Service

There are more ways than ever to be a “fellow worker”!

Talk:

Welcome to Week 3 of our series on how we can engage in missions and meaningfully contribute to the Great Commission being carried out. Week 3... we’re making progress! We have already covered some pretty meaningful passages in Matthew and Acts, but maybe they were more well-known to you. Today we’re in 3 John, and if you know that well, I’m impressed. A quick review, we saw the goal of the Great Commission in Matthew 28 is to make disciples who make disciples, and the strategy from Acts 1 and the rest of the book is to progress locally outward. That brings us to week 3, where we have to ask an important question. If this is what we are supposed to do, are we doing it alone? Are we on our own for this mission?

I thought about having a mini-field trip for our class where we would get up and take a quick trip around the hallway to go down our mission hallway and see all of our beloved partners. Thankfully, we are NOT on our own, we are glad to have ministry partners who are doing the task of disciple-making and church-planting all over the world. If you are discouraged by the way this world seems to be headed, take a walk down that hallway and think about how our partners are reaching people. There is so much good work happening and we can be encouraged by how God is using them.

For week 3, let’s talk about ministry partnership. 3 John is the third to last book of the Bible, just one chapter, and we will be in verse 5-8.

Our big idea is that the Bible commands us to support others who are actively engaged in Gospel ministry. We are supporters, and 3 John 5-8 will show how important this task can be.

Let's read 3 John 1-8 together.

The Apostle John writes in this letter to Gaius, a believer with a common Roman name that actually makes it difficult to identify him as potentially the same person in other Bible passages.²⁹ It's strange for us to think of Gaius as a common name, do you know anyone named Gaius? In verse 5, John commends Gaius for his faithfulness working for the brothers (or brothers and sisters) in Christ first mentioned in verse 3. In verse 4, John refers to his spiritual "children", not with a sense that he is their actual father, but that he has helped raise them to spiritual maturity. As we think about discipleship, what a reminder for us, maybe you have someone in your life you would see as a spiritual "parent" in many ways, or maybe you are striving to be a spiritual parent to others. Mike and Bev, mom and dad, you've got your weekly family gathering here, which means Christmas can get expensive, right? It is a blessing to invest in others in such a way that it becomes like a family connection. The family references in this passage reinforce the idea too that God the Father has adopted believers to be sons and daughters and heirs with Christ (Ephesians 1:5, 11) in God's family. This family idea extends even to those Gaius has not met yet when we start reading about his brothers and sisters in Christ.

John's point is that the service Gaius has provided is a demonstration of faithfulness. In verse 6, John observes that even though the brothers are strangers, unknown beforehand, Gaius was still loving and supportive of them. It is one thing to do something nice for a friend, but helping a stranger requires another set of motives.³⁰

Have you ever had someone you didn't know pay for your food or drink in a drive-thru? I hear about this, I haven't experienced it. I don't know if you need to time it right, go after church, get behind a luxury car, I don't know if there's some kind of trick to it, let me know. If you are going to do something kind for someone you don't know, there still has to be a *reason*, correct? Why is Gaius so kind?

The Greek wording seems to imply (without certainty) that "Gaius was hospitable to fellow Christians, *especially* to those who were strangers to him."³¹ The brothers received such meaningful ministry that they testified to Gaius' love before the entire church gathering. So it was a situation where it was so helpful and meaningful to them that they had to share it, they wanted to let the entire church know how much it helped them.

Look at verse 6.

John's encouragement, which is the central point of this passage, then becomes a focus of our study today: "You will do well to send them on their journey in a manner worthy of God" (3 John 6b, ESV). How can believers do well in sending others? How can this be done in a "manner worthy of God"? The answers to these questions can help enable us to be a part of effective Gospel ministry in other parts of the world, especially today in a globalized era. I can pull out my phone and call people right now in any time zone, we can video chat, face to face, with people on the other side of the world! We can visit them, we can welcome them, we can be involved in their ministries. All of that is certainly possible.

²⁹ John Painter, *1, 2, and 3 John*, SP, vol. 18 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2002), 366-67.

³⁰ Karen H. Jobes, *1, 2, and 3 John*, ZECNT (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 300, Scribd.

³¹ Jobes, *1, 2, 3 and John*, 301.

Who has seen the movie Jurassic Park? They made like 20 of them, but I am talking about the first one. In the first one, Jeff Goldblum’s character makes an interesting point when he talks about the decision to create modern dinosaurs. He says, “Your scientists were so preoccupied with whether or not they *could* that they didn’t stop to think if they *should*.”

So we have the *opportunity* to know others carrying out the Great Commission, but just because we can, does it mean we should? This is our big idea today, that the Bible commands us here to support others who are actively engaged in Gospel ministry. Let’s get into our passage.

In the first and second century, it was common for “travelling teachers” to serve through Western Asia.³² When John wrote about sending them on their journey, the verb *προπέμπω* (*propempo*) can be understood as helping with whatever is needed for travel, be it food, funds, or transportation.³³ This enabled the brothers to not simply benefit from Gaius’ hospitality during their time together. His support would extend to provide for their journey after their stay. Without this type of support, gospel teachers could not continue to do their work.

If you’ve ever hosted people at your house, you know about this. When you host someone, the assumption is that you are going to feed them. If they need an extra pillow or blanket, or they forgot something, you will provide for them. And then when they leave, you can even pack them a lunch for the road or something else that will send them off well. This is the situation we are reading about. Gaius helped send them with whatever they needed. It could have been finances, the specifics are not listed here, just the manner in which it was done. So as we walk through the passage, our first section from verse 5-6 show we can send well by providing whatever is needed. This includes both time with them and time after they leave. The focus is on what they need.

How was this support done in a manner worthy of God? This is a figure of speech from the Greek world referring to actions that furthered a secular god’s reputation, and John uses it here to show how “Gaius’ loving deeds brought praise to God.”³⁴ When believers love as God loves, they show God to the world as the source of love (1 John 4:7-8). It mirrors God’s generosity. We mirror God’s behavior in other Biblical ways, we forgive *as* the Lord forgave us, we are holy *because* God is holy. This is why we seek to be generous with our partners. The classic stories of sending second-rate items to missionaries like used tea bags should make us cringe. Be generous, God is generous.

Another way that supporting others can be done in a manner worthy of God is the idea that it may be done in a way that God approves. God’s people were called throughout Scripture to support those who dedicated themselves to ministering to others. Going as far back in the Old Testament as the tribes of Israel, the Levites were able to serve the Lord because of the contributions of others. Numbers 18:21 says, “To the Levites I have given every tithe in Israel for an inheritance, in return for their service that they do, their service in the tent of meeting” (ESV).

In the New Testament, Jesus and his disciples were supported by Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna, “and many others, who provided for them out of their means” (Luke 8:3b, ESV). The Apostle Paul argued that those “who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel” (1 Corinthians 9:1-4). While Paul was also a tentmaker by trade (Acts 18:3), he still wrote to the Romans, “I hope to see you in passing as I go to Spain, and to be helped on my journey there by you, once I have

³² F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles of John* (Nashville: Kingsley Books, 2018), 206.

³³ Gary W. Derickson, *1, 2 and 3 John*, EEC (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2014), 1290, Scribd.

³⁴ Derickson, *1, 2 and 3 John*, 1292.

enjoyed your company for a while” (Romans 15:24). Paul didn’t want profit or material gain, but simply to be able to have his needs met as did the work of ministry. Jesus referenced this idea when he sent out his disciples (Luke 10:7). This is the same circumstance found in 3 John.

As the Apostle John encourages Gaius, his phrase “you will do well” in verse 6 could be interpreted as a polite way of introducing a request.³⁵ John writes that he “will” do well to send them in a manner worthy of God. This future tense indicates that John expected him to continue this ministry in the future. Commentator John Painter observes that John contrasts Gaius with Diotrephes later in this letter (3 John 9-10) by stating, “The exhortation is meant to encourage Gaius to continue the good work even in a context where Diotrephes is exerting negative pressure to prevent hospitality to the brothers.”³⁶

I am trying to think, could we come up with examples where generosity is bad? Can you think of one? When would kindness be a bad thing? This is how we want to live. Those of you who provide snacks for the ABF, have you ever regretted it?

In verse 7, there is a clear reason for this type of support. These brothers had gone out “for the sake of the name”. Similar to the Apostle Paul, the idea is providing for the needs of saints who were serving Christ by depending on the body of Christ. This is a powerful testimony to all involved: those receiving, those giving, and those observing. When believers provide for others to do the work of ministry, they serve as participants in the ministry themselves, just as Paul counted the Philippian church “partners” in the gospel (Philippians 1:3).

Let’s pause for a moment, because I want to anticipate a possible question you may have. I can speak as a pastor who, like the Levites in the Old Testament, receives a living from serving the Lord. I am not a sent partner, but I make a living through the church. Do you know the question I am going to address? What *kind* of living? What kind of lifestyle are God’s people to provide? Should it be extravagant, because God is so generous? Well, we have some sad examples of that with televangelists or these pastors who have private planes and mansions and all of that. The required characteristics for leading God’s church include that you shouldn’t be greedy for gain (Titus 1:7) or a lover of money (1 Timothy 3:3), so I would argue that those pursuing luxury are disqualified. On the other hand, do you want those you support to be in poverty? Does that please the Lord? The answer lies somewhere in between. I like Proverbs 30:8-9:

“Remove far from me falsehood and lying; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is needful for me, lest I be full and deny you and say, “Who is the Lord?” or lest I be poor and steal and profane the name of my God.” In following the pattern of this passage in 3 John, we want to provide for needs. I believe that’s a healthy approach.

Looking to verse 8, John summarizes: “Therefore we ought to support people like these, that we may be fellow workers for the truth” (ESV). Commentator F.F. Bruce points out that “the pronoun ‘we’ is emphatic”, meaning that the task of support falls on fellow believers since it is not the Gentiles’ role.³⁷ The word “ought” is a figure of speech that points to “a sense of indebtedness to someone for something.”³⁸ That’s what the word means. Because you’re in debt, you *should* do something.

What are possible ways we are indebted?

³⁵ Jobes, *1, 2, 3 and John*, 303.

³⁶ Painter, *1, 2, and 3 John*, 371.

³⁷ Bruce, *The Epistles of John*, 208.

³⁸ Friberg, Friberg, and Miller, *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*, 289.

This could be dangerous. John Piper calls this the “debtor’s ethic.”³⁹ This is where you think, “God provided salvation for me, now I owe Him, so my motivation in doing things is to make up this debt.” That can lead places you shouldn’t go. It can lead to a wrong motivation. We have to be careful when we sing, “Jesus paid it all, all to Him I owe.” While it is true He owns everything and we owe everything to Him, we can’t think in terms of earning back our salvation. The Gospel says we can’t earn it, we could never earn it, the *gift* of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. So let’s be careful with the debt logic. But John says we “ought” to support workers like these, which could mean we are indebted to them for their work, for their sacrifice and role and how they are doing what they should do, meaning we should fulfill our role as well.

The Greek clause indicates both intention and result: the intention is to support the work, the result is to be a “fellow worker.”⁴⁰ This is an opportunity for believers to provide in meaningful ways so that others will have the opportunity to hear the gospel and respond.

You, as a Maranatha Bible Church member or attender, through your giving, have investments all over the world. I recently had a meeting with a representative about my 401k, retirement, Roth IRA, savings, mutual funds, index funds, all these terms, but do you think we’ll care at all about those investments when we’re in heaven? I think these partner investments will mean more to us then.

So we see from verse 8 that this role falls on us as fellow believers, and when we do support, we become fellow workers. What a great concept!

Big picture, 3 John 5-8 presents a compelling example for modern day believers to copy. As it follows the biblically normative principle of supporting those set apart for ministry, it provides a picture of teamwork, that through loving support a believer can actually be a part of the ministry work that is being accomplished.

Let’s talk about application, because the opportunities are many. A believer could mirror Gaius’ service by providing hospitality, but the application can be widened to include anything a partner in ministry would need. Financial support, and again, you provide this through your church through your giving, but I know many that give beyond.

You can support through prayer, and we’ll talk about this next week.

Encouragement, this class is an encouraging class, the cards you write every week, it’s awesome. We can encourage partners. You could provide other acts of service that play an important part in sustaining their work.

For churches, this means their local group of believers could be involved in pioneering gospel ministry anywhere in the world in meaningful ways. With technology and communication, relationships can happen across continents. With transportation, flights that go everywhere, visits here or there mean that true partnerships can exist on a global scale. There have never been more opportunities to be a “fellow worker.”

³⁹ John Piper, *Brothers, We Are Not Professionals: A Plea to Pastors for Radical Ministry* (Nashville: B&H, 2002), 34.

⁴⁰ *Jobes, 1, 2, 3 and John, 305.*

Maranatha Bible Church – Engaging in Missions
Week 4: Missions Involvement Opportunities - Prayer

Big Idea: Prayer is the starting point for missions, and everyone can do it!

Outline:

Review:

The goal = Making disciples

The strategy = Progressing locally outward

The means = Partnerships

Luke 10:2 = Pray for workers

Ephesians 6:18-19 = Pray for God to use words, give boldness

Romans 10:1 = Pray for people to be saved

Talk:

Here we are in Week 4, we will be halfway done after this lesson, and in some way it may seem like we're just getting started. This is because missions is such an undertaking, we have been talking about the message of the Bible, the whole world, human history... it doesn't get bigger than missions and God's design to reach the world with the message of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

But we're going to start making it smaller and more specific. We've done a lot of set up so far, and just to review, we have said the goal is making disciples who make disciples, the strategy is progressing locally outward, and the means, as learned last week, is partnerships, we support those who are doing Gospel ministry.

Today we want to start working through how we can be involved as individuals. All of these big and grand ideas are Biblical and foundational to what we will begin to talk about now. What does all of this mean for you? What does it mean for me? For our church? The rest of our series on "Engaging In Missions" will focus on 8 things we can be doing, practically, to be involved in carrying out the Great Commission.

Before we talk about these 8 ways, we should clarify, these are not the 8 things that summarize what every Christian should do. This list doesn't start with loving God or loving people, and it does not even include sharing your faith, which is foundational, as we read, to the Great Commission and Acts 1:8. These 8 ways assume you are doing those things and instead are focused on how to help carry out the Great Commission as a church. Let me show them to you as a map of our next 5 weeks including today.

Prayer, investing through giving, serving, welcoming, caring, visiting, mobilizing, and going. These are the ideas we will be focusing on, and you are the first group of the church to see these. As we work through this, we will be doing another survey at the end of the 8-week series and we want to this to truly help our church, so feedback is welcome.

Today, we just have one topic, one word, one application: Pray.

Prayer is entirely Biblical and has proven throughout church history and into the present to be an effective tool for missions engagement at the personal and church level. Some, sadly, could see prayer as a formality, as just a good way to open or close a church meeting, I have heard those kinds of prayers referred to as a "zipper" prayer, you use it to open and close. Some may view prayer as simply something that is done before the real work starts. In a moment we will hear about some historical figures that believed otherwise; they were dependent on prayer.

Our big idea is that prayer is the starting point for missions, and everyone can do it! Have you ever had or given an excuse for why you are *not* doing something? We have all made excuses, but please let me share with you the worst excuse I ever heard. I was at a party where there was extra cake, and at the end we were trying to give away the extra cake so someone would put it to good use. There was a college student, and college students are perfect for leftovers, right? We asked him if he wanted to take some cake

home and his response was, “No thanks, I’m too busy.” Too busy? Too busy to eat cake? We can get into excuses, we can be creative with excuses, but we’re going to discover there is no reason why you should not be praying. Anyone can do it, anywhere, for as long or short as they choose. What excuses have we made for not praying? (Distractions, not enough time, too tired, etc.)

Let’s talk about prayer together. At the heart of prayer is trust and dependence. If we’re honest about missions specifically, there is only so much a human being can do. We need to ask God to do the work. He has the wisdom and ability to do things we cannot do. A mature Christian will realize the value, importance, and joy that comes from giving needs over to the Lord. A.W. Tozer notes, “As we go on into God we shall see the excellency of the life of constant communion where all thoughts and acts are prayers, and the entire life becomes one holy sacrifice of praise and worship.”⁴¹ His point is right: the Christian life is not lived in isolation, but rather in continual communication with the Lord as evidence of complete reliance on Him. A mature believer, in any activity for any goal, walks in dependence on the Lord to act.

But while prayer is a basic component of a spiritual life, many struggle with practicing it. Oswald Sanders explains, “Prayer is the most ancient, most universal, and most intensive expression of the religious instinct.”⁴² He contrasts this idea with the reality that many fail to delight in it and do it.⁴³ It’s so basic, but people don’t do it. Why? How could believers miss such an effective and joyful tool?

If we’re honest, we would say we struggle with any activity we need to regularly obey. Any perfect people in here? We’re imperfect, so we need to always go back to our Bibles, back to God’s design for us. Let’s read our Bibles, starting in Luke 10:2.

In Luke 10:2, the Lord Jesus himself gives clear instruction that his followers are to “pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest” (ESV). While we might expect the object of prayer to be for the harvest itself, Jesus instead points to the need for the Lord to send out laborers.

Why do you think Jesus instructs his followers to pray for more workers, as opposed to saying we should pray for more harvest?

God is the sovereign provider over the process of salvation. God saves, grows, calls, sends, and even those who labor for him depend on him for more workers.⁴⁴ This isn’t just about more people getting saved. This is about God working sovereignly, through people, to not just save them, but give purpose and include them as ambassadors for Himself. When we pray for workers, we are praying for their obedience that will lead to others getting saved. What a great way to pray!

One way to apply this verse was modeled to me by one of my mentors, Pastor Steve Marshall. After Steve served as my youth pastor in middle school and high school, I was able to work with him for many years, and he applied this verse by setting a reminder in his phone every day at 10:02 AM to pray for God to send workers to the harvest. That is one way to do it. There is nothing magical about the time, but you could consider something similar that works well for you. If you use the parallel passage in Matthew you could pray at 9:37 or 9:38.

Speaking of that passage, one commentator said the word for “send out” could be translated as “thrust out”, and it could even refer to workers who are already in the

⁴¹ A. W. Tozer, *The Root of the Righteous* (Camp Hill, PA: Christian, 1986), 82.

⁴² Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), 85.

⁴³ Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership*, 85.

⁴⁴ Leon Morris, *Luke*, TNTC 3 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 199.

harvest who need a fire lit to thrust them out of their comfort zone into the spiritual needs around them.⁴⁵ We can follow Jesus's command here very simply, pray for more workers.

In Ephesians 6:18, the Apostle Paul instructs the believers in Ephesus to “pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests” (NIV). While this command certainly gives freedom for praying about any number of needs, Paul focuses their prayers for him on a central theme in verse 19: words and boldness in sharing the Gospel. So prayer is the “means” by which the Gospel is effective. Why else would Paul ask for prayer for it? Paul is trusting God to work through his bold words; thus the need to ask God to do it! Does that make sense? God is going to use the words of preachers, evangelists, anybody who shares their faith and their hope in the Gospel. Because we trust in Him to use those words, we need to pray, we need to ask Him to give us the words you want us to use, give us the boldness, work through the process. When missionaries face discouragement, they could find a boost knowing that other believers are holding them up in prayer, taking part in their ministry through this crucial support. I have experienced that. There have been times I have been on a trip and have the confidence people are praying for what I am doing and I am so thankful they are. Like we talked about last time, you become a fellow worker in that way.

In Romans 10:1, the Apostle Paul writes regarding Israel, “Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved” (ESV). Paul's compassion was coupled with his conviction to do what would most help them: pray for their salvation. Bible commentator Douglas Moo explains, “Paul makes clear how deeply he feels about the failure of Israel to embrace the salvation God offers in Jesus.”⁴⁶ This type of heartfelt concern for the lost can help fuel prayers towards people that believers have never personally met. Pray for lost people, pray they would be saved. We pray for workers to go share with them, pray for God to give us right words and boldness, and pray for people to get saved.

These passages show prayer to be indispensable to the work happening through missions. While prayer is not the ultimate goal, it helps give God's resources and attention to the goal of presenting the message of Jesus Christ to those who have not yet believed in him. John Piper explains, “The proclamation of the gospel in Word and deed is *the* work of missions. Prayer is the power that wields the weapon of the Word, and the Word is the weapon by which the nations will be brought to faith and obedience.”⁴⁷ Any believer is able to participate in this important ministry wherever they may find themselves. Prayer as a starting point can be employed anywhere at anytime. Gailyn Van Rheenen argues, ““All mission endeavors – because they are God's work – must begin with worship and prayer.”⁴⁸ So, from a Biblical standpoint, we need to do it, but I want to add another level.

The writings of influential missionaries reflect their high view of prayer, they lived out these principles. If we are going to follow in their footsteps, we would do well to recognize the importance they placed on prayer.

William Carey, the “Father of Modern Missions”, wrote an influential book, so influential in fact, that today we would think, “Yeah, isn't his point kind of obvious?” But

⁴⁵ D. A. Carson, *Matthew*, in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Abridged Edition, New Testament*, ed. Kenneth L. Barker and John R. Kohlenberger III (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 47.

⁴⁶ Douglas J. Moo, *Romans*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 328.

⁴⁷ John Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad! The Supremacy of God in Missions*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 63.

⁴⁸ Gailyn van Rheenen with Anthony Parker, *Missions: Biblical Foundations and Contemporary Strategies* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 37.

back in 1792 it was not. He wrote a book called “*An Enquiry Into the Obligations of Christians To Use Means For the Conversion of the Heathens*, and before challenging the financial opportunities to support missions, he began with an emphasis on prayer. He wrote, “One of the first, and most important of those duties which are incumbent upon us, is fervent and united prayer.”⁴⁹ Prayer brings a united purpose within the church, and as Carey stated, “Many can do nothing but pray, and prayer is perhaps the only thing in which Christians of all denominations can cordially, and unreservedly unite.”⁵⁰ His point certainly emphasizes the reality that while people have varying levels of ability, finances, and opportunity, the one thing any and all can do is pray. It is noteworthy that Carey’s appeal for finances and resources was not in place of prayer. He rightly observed the priority of beginning with a dependent plea for the Lord to act.

The Native American missionary David Brainerd, as Jonathan Edwards comments, had a special reliance on God for his missionary work. Edwards writes regarding Brainerd, “How sensible was he of his own insufficiency for this work; and how great was his dependence on God’s sufficiency! How solicitous, that he might be fitted for it and to this end, how much time did he spend in prayer and fasting, as well as reading and meditation; *giving himself to these things!*”⁵¹ During his ministry to Native Americans, Brainerd’s diary shows his constant dependency on prayer. He records how he would intercede to lift up the focus of his missionary endeavors, such as a September 8th entry: “I cried to God for the enlargement of his kingdom in the world, and in particular among my dear people.”⁵² He died as a young man, just 29. Even on his deathbed, Brainerd continued in earnest prayer, for his own family, church, candidates for ministry, and for the “reviving and flourishing of religion in the world.”⁵³

George Müller, who the Lord used to provide for over ten thousand orphans while he lived in Bristol, England, valued prayer as the proper expression of an inward faith.⁵⁴ Throughout his autobiography, he records instance after instance of the Lord’s provision for him and his ministry as he sought the Lord, not man, to supply anything they needed. We live in a low-uncertainty culture, we want to have everything safe and secure and planned and guaranteed and insured, but this is a different way of living. While many may question whether this approach to life and ministry causes distraction or worry, Müller responds, “Rather than causing anxiety, living by faith in God alone keeps my heart in perfect peace.”⁵⁵

J. Hudson Taylor, regarding his own sister praying for his salvation, wrote: “I was led to feel that the promises were very real and prayer was a sober matter-of-fact transacting of business with God, whether on my own behalf or on behalf of those for

⁴⁹ William Carey, *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens* (Leicester, England: Printed by Ann Ireland, 1792), 77.

⁵⁰ Carey, *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians*, 81.

⁵¹ Jonathan Edwards, “Reflect. V.,” in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 2, ed. Edward Hickman (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1997), 455 (emphasis original).

⁵² David Brainerd, *An account of the life of the late Reverend Mr. David Brainerd* [...] published, by Jonathan Edwards, A.M. Minister of the Gospel at Northampton (Boston: Printed for D. Henchman, 1749), 163, <http://name.umdl.umich.edu/N05034.0001.001>.

⁵³ Brainerd, *An account of the life of the late Reverend Mr. David Brainerd*, 250.

⁵⁴ George Müller, *The Autobiography of George Müller* (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 1985), 232.

⁵⁵ Müller, *The Autobiography of George Müller*, 41.

whom I sought His blessing.”⁵⁶ This level of faith corresponds to the biblical teaching of Jesus in John 14:14, that he will do anything his disciples ask in His name.

More recently, Jim Elliot, in his journal 8 years before his travel to Ecuador and tragic death, wrote of his high view of God’s power to work out his plan of redemption. He prays, “Forgive me for being so ordinary while claiming to know so extraordinary a God,” while adding, “He gives faith to pray for revival among His people in this country.”⁵⁷ The Lord certainly answered Jim Elliot’s prayers, as God gave him the blessing of going and sowing the seeds through his martyrdom for the fruit of new believers among the Auca tribe.

These quotes come from some of the most influential believers of the last few hundred years. We can look back at how God used that level of faith. They show pretty clearly how the biblical commands for prayer can be an essential starting point for mission work. The application for churches today is to give prayer special consideration and emphasis. Church leaders must lead in it, plan for it, and provide for it. Any resource, challenge, or encouragement is well worth the attention. As a Missions Pastor, I want you to know I understand the responsibility of that. We want our church to be well-challenged and well-resourced. Next week, with prayer as the foundation, we’ll continue to talk about ways to engage in missions.

Some items of application:

We have a Prayer Guide, and I wonder what God would do if everyone at Maranatha was consistently praying through it. It is designed to be used over a month, and then you reset and pray through it again. There are so many benefits of using it, but the main idea is to consistently pray for the leaders of our church and our partners so that God will bless and use them. You will become more and more familiar with our staff, our elders and deacons, everyone at the church, as well as our partners. Some names, because we have this on the website, need to be initials, but you can always ask me who these people are. I will make a promise to you as well to keep this updated. We currently update it every 6 months, there are a few changes each time, but get a new one, download a new one, you can trust it is the current version. It is on the website as well as at the welcome center and in our missions hallway.

Please commit to the church-wide prayer emphasis as well, that we would be praying for our church to have a burden and be effective in personal evangelism, and that we would be sending out future missionaries from Maranatha.

Let’s believe in the power of prayer in a way that helps us do it consistently.

⁵⁶ J. Hudson Taylor, *A Retrospect: The Story behind My Zeal for Missions* (Abbotsford, WI: Aneko Press, 2015), 11.

⁵⁷ Jim Elliot, *The Journals of Jim Elliot*, ed. Elisabeth Elliot (Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell, 2008), 98.

Maranatha Bible Church – Engaging in Missions
Week 5: Missions Involvement Opportunities – Invest and Serve

Big Idea: Giving to missions is an investment into eternity, and serving locally contributes towards obeying the Great Commission.

Outline:

1. Giving to missions is an investment in eternity.
2 Cor. 9:5-7 = Give cheerfully.
Matthew 6:19-21 = Your physical resources show your spiritual treasure.
2. Serving locally supports the Great Commission.
Eph. 4:12 = Equipped believers build the spiritual maturity of the church.

Talk:

Welcome to week 5 of our series on “Engaging In Missions”. We know the goal is making disciples, we progress outwards, and we utilize partnerships. Knowing that, my pledge to you is to give you 8 really great ways to engage in the Great Commission, and last time we talked about prayer, which is the first and foundational way you can be involved with what God is doing.

We are talking about two ideas today that are opportunities to be involved in missions, and that’s how we are going to approach them. Investing, or giving, and serving are two broader categories that are part of the Christian life, and even as we approach some Biblical passages describing these two ideas, we won’t do a full study on either one with applications *beyond* missions. We are going to read the passages, but focus more specifically on how these relate to missions. Our big idea is that giving to missions is an investment into eternity, and serving locally also contributes towards obeying the Great Commission. Giving and serving.

We all love gifts, don’t we? Something can happen as you get older, your perspective of gifts changes. Let’s walk through the progression. When you’re a baby, anything anyone hands you is a gift, you don’t have a concept of possession, you just play with whatever is in front of you. When you’re a kid, you love toys as gifts. You look through the toy catalog dreaming of all the fun toys you could own and play with. When you’re a teenager, you want cool shoes, nice headphones, things you can actually use, or at least impress people with. What about adulthood? How do gifts change in adulthood? What are your thoughts?

One perspective is that in adulthood the thought behind the gift is more important than the actual gift. Meaning becomes important. As we look at giving towards missions, we have a perfect combination of these ideas. When we support missions work, we not only provide something useful, we also send a message of support and appreciation. Let’s find 2 Corinthians 9.

In 2 Corinthians 9:5-7, we read about the Corinthian church preparing a gift in advance for when Paul comes. This is part of a broader section in 2 Corinthians, and if we had time we could see how it fits in the book and with the encouragement in chapter 8 to be generous. Here Paul is encouraging the church to give to “the ministry of the saints.” I wish we could spend a lot of time in all of chapter 9, because there is so much here about giving. But Paul encourages the church to give to other believers. This same encouragement is what I am giving to you right now.

In his second letter to the Corinthian church, one of the issues Paul writes about is a collection for the poor at the Jerusalem church that we read about in Romans 15:26. In Jerusalem, conversion to Christianity meant you were in the minority so that could affect you financially. On top of that, the Jerusalem church had a lot of pressure to provide for others, you had a Jewish and a Roman tax, it was tough. So Paul organized a collection from Gentile churches to help with the needs and give believers the opportunity to help other believers elsewhere through giving.

So what should that giving look like? I am going to borrow some terms from Warren Wiersbe:⁵⁸

Three kinds of givers:

Sad givers: Those who give and feel they are missing out on the things they could have used the money to get. They say, "I'm missing out by giving."

Mad givers: Those who give because they were told to give, they feel obligated and don't really want to give at all. They may not say it, but think, "I don't really want to give."

Glad givers: Those who understand the principle of sowing and reaping and are willing and excited to invest in something eternal. They have been shown so much grace that they jump at the opportunity to show grace to others. They say, "I want to invest in this!"

With those terms in front of us, let's read 2 Corinthians 9:5-7.

5 So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to go on ahead to you and arrange in advance for the gift you have promised, so that it may be ready as a willing gift, not as an exaction.

6 The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. 7 Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

What a phrase for us to remember and live out, that God loves a *cheerful* giver. That's the phrase we want to take away from this passage, but as we think about giving, and specifically to giving towards missions, there are some things Paul gives us to think about.

If we give sparingly, we will reap sparingly. If we give bountifully (or abundantly or generously or fruitfully), we will reap bountifully (or abundantly or generously or fruitfully). So what is missions worth to us? What kind of return do we want? Do we want to give little for a little return, or largely for a large return?

Now I say this knowing the church I am in. This church has proven over and over and over to be a generous, missions-giving church. And that is an incredible understatement. Last year alone we gave over a million dollars towards missions. A million dollars! Is that real? It's incredible. I am so thankful for the way this church gives. But the encouragement from this passage is not about amount, it is about attitude. Verse 5 emphasizes willingness, verse 6 is about generosity, and verse 7 is about being excited to give.

So let's look back at our terms: in what ways are you tempted to be a sad giver (missing what feels like is *your* money) or a mad giver (giving out of obligation)?

This is such a test for us, isn't it? We have the tendency to live according to our income, or, especially in America, to try to live *beyond* our income. So when we have opportunities to willingly live on less, it seems like a disadvantage, or a reason to be sad or mad. So this comes down to attitude. What kind of attitude will we have in giving or refusing to give?

Jesus also emphasized a heart attitude in Matthew 6. This is part of the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7, and this section focuses on treasures in heaven as opposed to earth. You still get the treasure, it is just a matter of timing. Now, or later? Treasure for a very short earthly period, or for an eternal, heavenly period?

Look at Matthew 6:19-21, and we will focus on verse 21.

19 "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, 20 but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where

⁵⁸ Warren Wiersbe, *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary: New Testament* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2007), 528.

neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Do you see the heart attitude in verse 19 even before we get to verse 21? Do not lay up *for yourselves* treasures on earth. Don't be selfish with your resources. Your resources will show what you really value. Think about our culture today. What do people spend a lot of money on? Things that make them more comfortable, things that entertain them, things that make them look better. Self!

A very practical way to get our focus *off* of ourselves is to give, to invest, to think beyond ourselves. Do I want to focus on what I want, or what others need?

In His sermon, Jesus doesn't divide our resources between spiritual and material, they all work together. Your physical resources show your spiritual treasure.

If you love God, if you love what God loves, if reaching people for the Gospel seems like a good investment to you, then we have opportunities for you here. But we are not going to over-ask, if you've been at this church any period of time you know that asking for money is not something you see often. Your regular giving goes towards missions. 20 percent of our budget goes to missions, with special gifts it has gone well beyond that. From time to time we have special offerings, always in the Fall, but periodically as well. Maybe the Lord would impress on you other things you could be doing. I just want to invite you to give, or continue giving, because giving to missions is an investment in eternity.

Just to be transparent, I will teach on this because I believe it is Biblical, but our church is doing very well in this. Our leaders give, our people give, and I may teach this differently if we weren't giving. But thankfully, giving is happening, let's just check our own hearts to be glad, cheerful givers who are excited about how God can use our resources on the mission field.

Time to switch gears, we're switching topics. Let's talk about serving. Could serving here help accomplish the Great Commission? Yes, yes, yes, and yes.

Let's think about it this way: Do we need thriving local churches here to help local churches thrive elsewhere? Absolutely. We can think about the design God has put in place for the local church from Ephesians 4.

Let's read 4:11-16.

¹¹ And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, ¹² to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, ¹⁴ so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. ¹⁵ Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

In verse 11 we see God provided gifted people to the church so that the saints in verse 12, those who are believers in Christ and made righteous by Him, will be prepared and trained and taught (equipped) to do ministry, which is building up the church spiritually towards maturity. There is a progression here. You have evangelists doing their job of sharing the Gospel message, (step one) and people get saved. Step two, the shepherds and teachers then equip these new saints to do ministry, which is part of their maturation process. This ministry leads to step 3, where the whole church benefits through spiritual maturity. Remember the Great Commission progression? As you are going, make disciples, baptize them, and teach them to obey all that Jesus commanded, and as that happens, they will then go and make new disciples. There is a process, a goal, steps to reach.

Is this what we are doing? Does this process describe what is consistently happening at our church? Does this sound like a process you are in which you are involved? What would you say is the next step for you?

As we talk about service, this idea from Ephesians 4:12 matters. We're building the body of Christ through the work or ministry, or the service, that we do. In what ways are you building up the body? How does your service help grow the body?

These are hard questions. My goal in asking them is to challenge each of us to consider how to serve in meaningful ways. The good news is that God has given us, at salvation, spiritual gifts that we can use, that provide joy and effectiveness when we use them.

You have a teacher here whom I appreciate. He is using his gift of teaching. You have a gift, and let me encourage you to know it, and then use it, and then understand how it builds up the body, because isn't this a process you want to be involved in?

This is the idea we are recognizing: serving locally supports the Great Commission as it matures the church. We have children's teachers down the hall who could be teaching future missionaries. We have deacons who meet needs in our church so that we can function as a body. We have musicians who help us sing, ushers who help us sit so we can learn, preachers sharing the Word, prayer leaders lifting up prayer requests, hospitable people hosting individuals and groups, all kinds of different ways to serve that help grow the church.

So what can we do about all of this? Some simple applications:

Application:

-Invest and give as the Lord leads and provides.

-Join or lead a discipleship group, contact Steve Bogran for more information about these. They are designed to help you grow as a disciple, with the intention of starting your own group after a year. Individual, personalized discipleship in a group of 3 or 4 that meets at any time with a specific goal of reproduction. This helps fulfill the Great Commission!

-Use your spiritual gifts to build up the church, both within and outside of our walls.

Inside our walls:

Use your gift! Contact Pastor Rob Stopp for a Body Life Survey if you need help knowing where to serve.

Outside of our walls:

-Summit Missions (sorting clothes and donations)

-Broken Chains (leading Bible studies with inmates)

-Haven of Rest and Refuge of Hope (serving dinners)

-ICU Mobile and Pregnancy Solutions (miscellaneous needs)

Let's pray for us to be disciples who invest and serve.

Maranatha Bible Church – Engaging in Missions
Week 6: Missions Involvement Opportunities – Welcome and Care

Big Idea: We have opportunities to welcome internationals as the nations come here to us, as well as care for partners who go to the nations.

Welcome

Through our partnership with the International Welcome Center (theiwc.org), serve internationals moving into our area, meeting needs with the love of Christ (Gal. 6:10; Heb. 13:2).

Care

Build a meaningful relationship with our missions partners through your ABF or Connect Group and provide prayer and encouragement (Phil. 1:3-5).

Lesson:

Week 6 is here, and as we continue to walk through practical steps for how to engage in missions, let me encourage you to think about the big picture. Jesus gave the Great Commission to His followers, and as we see how the task of making disciples was obeyed, it was from home outward, and included supporting partnerships. So we have been challenged to think through, starting here at home, how we can be involved in carrying out the Great Commission? This doesn't need to be mysterious; it doesn't need to be motivated by guilt that we're not doing enough, we can actually find a lot of joy in knowing how to be a part of what God is doing.

Our first step was prayer. Anyone can pray, anywhere. At a minimum, would you consider praying regularly for the task of the Great Commission? Pray for new disciples, pray for partners, pray for those who have not heard the Gospel. We have also talked about investing (or giving) and serving. You know your season of life and how your resources and time and effort could be used to help make disciples.

Today, we'll focus on welcoming and caring. Here is a loaded question:

When have you felt most welcomed and why?

Welcoming involves showing special attention, value, communicating that you are glad to have someone present. It is polite to make it clear that you have prepared for the person to come because you were thinking about them before they even came, you were looking forward to them being with you. So these ideas of welcoming and caring go together.

Here is our big idea for today: We have opportunities to welcome internationals as the nations come here to us, as well as care for partners who go to the nations. Both of these ideas involve caring for people, showing kindness, loving people... the second greatest commandment. So let's unpack these two ideas of welcoming and caring.

Welcome

In the larger view of history, our country is very, very young, and everyone who is here had some relative who came to a new country. We all have that in common.

How many nationalities do we have represented in this group? My last name is Hungarian, but I have much more diversity than that in my ancestry. Who has European roots? Where else?

Without this becoming political, the reality is that we have a steady stream of individuals and families coming to our country from other countries. Not only that, but they are coming to the Akron area. One of our church plants, Grace Bible Church in New Franklin, has begun a ministry called the International Welcome Center, and there could be a tremendous opportunity for worldwide influence even right here at home through working with refugees and immigrants. We talked about serving last week and listed some different local ministries where you could volunteer, so why single this ministry out? What is unique about ministering to internationals?

I believe as we gain more exposure to international ministry, it will stretch us as a church, it will give more stories and experiences and, hopefully, lead to a greater desire in some of our people to *go out* internationally. The word “normalize” can have negative connotations currently, but it can be a good thing to normalize certain things. Wouldn't it be incredible to have international ministry be a normal thing here at Maranatha? Wouldn't it be awesome to welcome some of these international families into our church? We've already seen that to some degree, but let's work to take the mystery out of international ministry, as I believe that will move us a step closer to being a sending church.

There are no secrets on my end, I said it in front of the church a couple weeks ago, we need to grow as a sending church. When you come to this church you are surrounded by mature disciples, so... let's go make disciples! Let's send out individuals and families and teams to go make disciples of all nations! This is where we are headed with this. Welcoming internationals can be very strategic, but also in and of itself be an excellent way to show the love of Christ.

What does the Bible have to say about this?

Please find Galatians 6. Galatians is a great book to study. Paul describes the Gospel, not as something we do or work for, but something we receive by faith. Galatians 2:16 could be considered as a key verse for the book, which says, “A person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ.” Paul writes about living by faith, about walking by the Holy Spirit, and as we get to chapter 6, about how that works out in the relationships we have.

The verse we want to highlight today is 6:10.

Galatians 6:10

So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.

In verse 9, Paul says not to grow weary of doing good because persistence will lead to reaping the reward. So, with reaping at stake, keep doing good, use your opportunity to do good to everyone. The phrase “as we have opportunity” does not refer to the breaks in your schedule or even to the unique circumstances of opportunity. The wording in the original language points more to the idea of the opportunity of life, the time you have on this earth. John MacArthur explains it this way: “A believer's entire life is his unique but limited opportunity to serve others in the Lord's name.”⁵⁹ So we don't wait back for openings in our schedule, we take our life as an opportunity to do good things. We seize the day, we utilize the time, we make our days count.

This idea of doing good could look any number of ways. Doing good for someone means their life is better because of what you have done. You have helped them, you have improved their situation, you have shown kindness that makes a difference in their life. And we can't ignore our brothers and sisters in Christ and walk right past them on our way to strangers, we have a responsibility to them as well. But Paul starts with the command of doing good to everyone.

A couple verses that extend this thought are in Hebrews 13.

Hebrews 13:1-2

Let brotherly love continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

Hospitality was vitally important in ancient times⁶⁰, and it can be a lost art in our individualistic society currently. That actually makes it stand out even more. To welcome

⁵⁹ John MacArthur, *Galatians, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1987), 191.

⁶⁰ Leon Morris, *Hebrews, in The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Abridged Edition, New Testament*, ed. Kenneth L. Barker and John R. Kohlenberger (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 1008.

someone you don't know, that is a powerful testimony. They *have* to ask the question internally, "Why are they helping me?" It is a clear, unmistakable opportunity to show the love of Christ. Verse 1 refers to "brotherly love", so is this command for hospitality only for believers to other believers? The author of Hebrews references entertaining angels, which is likely pointing to Abraham welcoming the three strangers in Genesis 18.⁶¹ There is a consistent message in the Bible of showing kindness to all. Look at these verses:

"Do not oppress a foreigner; you yourselves know how it feels to be foreigners, because you were foreigners in Egypt" (Exodus 23:9).

Leviticus 19:33, "When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat them."

Going from Genesis, Exodus, and Leviticus all the way to the other end of the Bible in Hebrews, we see the value of showing kindness and hospitality to people you don't even know. It's a very Biblical idea. We can do this with internationals moving to our area.

Care

Let's switch gears and talk about our missions partners and caring for them as they go out *to* the nations. Like we said in week 3's session, we can be "fellow workers" with those who are out sharing the Gospel as the Apostle John taught. But is it merely financial? Is there more we can do for our missions partners than just "pay and pray?"

I would like to propose that you can build meaningful relationships with our missions partners through your ABF or Connect Group and provide prayer and encouragement. This group for years has enjoyed Benny Mathews and Roger and Kathy Scarbro. Thank you for that. Relational partnerships are so Biblical.

The Apostle Paul clearly valued and utilized partnerships, with one example being Philippians 1:3-5: "*I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.*" Opportunities for this kind of gospel-driven relationship still exist today, and for us specifically at Maranatha! As we learn more about missions work our partners do, the potential is there to develop personal relationships. This will take time and effort, but in a globally connected world, technology and the ability to travel provide opportunities like never before to have regular, meaningful interaction with anyone on the planet. Paul's technology was letter-writing and in person visits. What do we have today? What is our technology? For most of us, right in our pocket is one of the most amazing, compact inventions in all of human history. We enjoy the benefits of instant communication, global video calls, and beyond that even daily commercial flights as tools for connecting with workers around the world. You know we have missions trips, but let me tell you we have Maranatha people going and seeing our partners outside of those all the time. I get to see that and hear about that; I know you don't have that opportunity to know that. But let me just share with you that happens a lot. Why do that? Why be in relationship? Why write and connect and even travel? Paul wrote it, for partnership "in the Gospel". The Gospel is the goal, that it would go out and be shared. Paul was thankful to have this kind of relationship, he said he thanked God for the Philippian church. Why? He says it. "Because" of their faithful Gospel partnership.

One of the great things about relationships is that you have someone there in the ups and downs. Our partners have praises! They have prayer requests! They have ups and downs. Don't wait to hear about them, you can be in relationship for yourself. But let's be honest, Maranatha has a lot of partners. What is the encouragement here? I am not asking you to be in relationship with all of our partners. But would you consider being in relationship with one or a few?

⁶¹ Morris, *Hebrews*, 1008.

Our partnerships don't happen by accident. We take it very seriously, prayer, discussion, it is a process over time. I'll get to that in a moment.

Daniel Rickett, a missiologist, provides a helpful definition of partnership when he writes, "A partnership is a complementary relationship driven by a common purpose and sustained by a willingness to learn and grow together in obedience to God."⁶² A complementary relationship means that it goes both ways so there is a reciprocal benefit to both parties. The benefits may be different, but the common purpose Rickett mentions means that a desire to obey and please God drives the relationship. The approach is not, "What is in it for me?" That attitude only leads to disinterest if personal desires go unfulfilled. Rather, in a strategic gospel partnership, the leading question is, "How can we both help further the message of Christ to the lost?" One party may offer prayer support, giving, encouragement, or a listening ear. The other party may offer stories of both praises and prayer requests from the field. With a focus on ministry goals, Rickett develops his explanation this way: "A complementary partnership is the association of two or more autonomous bodies who have formed a trusting relationship and fulfill agreed-upon expectations. They do this by sharing complementary gifts and abilities in order to achieve a common goal."⁶³ In this way modern day believers can share in the type of partnerships the Apostle Paul had with the Philippians, the Colossians, or the Thessalonians, where they shared a deep concern and celebration for the growth of the gospel.

How does this work out practically? In the context of Maranatha Bible Church, the leadership selects missions partnerships. The elder board, with the missions committee as a subset, vets and approves potential partners. As the leaders of the church establish a partnership, the church members help give meaning and depth to the relationship. This can be accomplished through church members making a personal investment into these relationships. Churches that lack this can fall into a "pay and pray" model, where financial support and occasional, uninformed prayers mark the limited connection. David Horner describes the alternative: "Partnerships and relationships that begin with genuine care for the individual are more likely to result in an environment conducive to sustained effort over the long haul."⁶⁴ This is what we want here. This is what makes Missions Conferences so fun. It's not "What was your name again? Where do you serve?" Instead, it's, "It's awesome to see you in person!" That's what we want: Caring for partners in a relational and meaningful way.

Application:

Build relationships with international refugees coming to live in the city. Consider seeing the opportunities at the International Welcome Center (theiwc.org). These range from one time needs assessments of new families to ongoing relationship and training.

Serving could mean anything from helping residents have basic necessities for daily life, teaching them English, or training in other practical day to day functions like how to use an oven, open a banking account, drive a car, etc.

Develop a personal relationship with a mission partner, and please give grace for their busy schedules in communication! This could either be someone sent out or an indigenous partner. The relationship would be based on the principles we described, base it on the Gospel and do your best to encourage them.

⁶² Daniel Rickett, *Building Strategic Relationships: A Practical Guide to Partnering with Non-Western Missions* (Enumclaw, WA: Partners International/WinePress, 2003), 13.

⁶³ Rickett, *Building Strategic Relationships*, 15.

⁶⁴ David A. Horner, *When Missions Shapes the Mission* (Nashville: B&H, 2011), 147.

Maranatha Bible Church – Engaging in Missions
Week 7: Missions Involvement Opportunities – Visit (Short-term missions)

Big Idea: Short-term Missions trips can be an effective way to meet practical needs of partners while giving exposure to their ministry.

Outline:

1. The point of short-term missions trips is not traveling, it is partnership.
2. Phil. 2:25-30 shows how Epaphroditus was sent, received, and provided what was needed for partnership.
3. Acts 20:1-2; 5-7 show that Paul prioritized short-term visits of encouragement.
4. Short-term visits have dangers
 - a. Selfishness
 - i. Tourism, sense of adventure
 - ii. Savior-complex, sense of satisfaction
 - b. Dependency
 - c. Poor stewardship
 - i. Inventing things people can do (i.e. work trips due to language and time barrier) vs. doing the most important things
 - ii. How many full-time workers could serve year-round for the cost of one team to come?
5. Short term visits have benefits
 - a. Assisting existing partners in helpful ways that benefits their year-round ministry (win-win)
 - b. Exposure to missions that is long-lasting and impactful

Lesson:

We're in week 7 of our series of Engaging In Missions. What have we learned? How have we been encouraged to think? Maybe most importantly, how have we been challenged? All of this is headed towards your own personal takeaways. I am not teaching for me. The goal of our series is for you to excitedly play your own part in the Great Commission Jesus gave.

So we start with the Great Commission, which is Jesus telling us to go and make disciples. We see that happening in Acts as disciples went outward from home, and we see in the New Testament how partnerships were effective in Gospel ministry.

We have been encouraged to pray, give (invest), serve locally, welcome internationals, and care for partners. For today, we're talking about short-term missions trips. You have to expect some pictures with that. Pictures of other places, unique environments, food, all the things that are different around the world.

I have pictures from world class cities, postcard-beautiful locations, wild animals, oceans, you name it. Travel is an exciting thing.

Let's clear something up. Travel is not missions. Can you hear me loud and clear on that? Travel does not equal missions! The true highlights of my trips include our partners.

The point of short-term missions trips is not traveling, it is partnership. This is a more Biblical way to think of what we are doing, and we'll look at some Scripture passages in a moment to affirm that. Now I will admit that short-term missions trips are relatively new, and we don't have an apples to apples comparison between what we see in the Bible and what we practice. Part of that is because we now have unprecedented opportunity to travel around the world that people before us never had. We could be in Australia tomorrow. Generations before us have not been able to say that. So the Bible is written in a time that short-term trips were not as accessible and practical as they are now. But the principle will remain the same, and let's express that with three "P"s:

The three P's of short-term missions: partnership, partnership, and partnership.

This is our clear goal and our big idea. Short-term missions trips can be an effective way to meet practical needs of partners while giving exposure to their ministry. This can be an element of partnership.

Please find Philippians 2 for our first example of this. In Philippians, Paul is focusing on joy, and in the second chapter, we see two mature believers who he sees bringing joy in his relationship with the church in Philippi. In Philippians 2:19, we read about Timothy. He is serving as a liaison, a go-between, a messenger between Paul and the church. Paul was in prison while he wrote, he says so in chapter 1, and Timothy is useful as an encourager.

But we want to start in verse 25 and learn about Epaphroditus. Paul has some kind things to say about him and we want to see how he may serve as an example of things we can aim to do in our own short-term trips. Let's read starting in Philippians 2:25.

Philippians 2:25-30

Some important things to note about this trip.

First, Epaphroditus is sent. Paul sends him. A visit is planned because Paul sees the necessity of it, as he puts it in verse 25. Here is the recap: The church in Philippi had sent a gift to Paul through Epaphroditus (as we read in Philippians 4:18), it seems as though on his way to deliver the gift, he became very ill, he gets the gift to Paul in prison, likely in Rome, and Epaphroditus recovers. There may have been some miscommunication about Epaphroditus' condition, and Paul wants to send him back as an encouragement to the church. His recovery from being ill, Paul seems to say, was God's mercy in healing him. So he is better, and Paul wants to send him. He's very special to Paul, you can see the personal description and deep relationship Paul had with him in verse 25, so Paul knows the value of sending him personally. So that's the first thing. Epaphroditus is sent.

Second, Epaphroditus is received in verse 29. Paul encourages the church to receive him with joy and honor. There is both sending and receiving, everyone has a part in this visit. The church already knew him, they sent their gift with him to Paul, but now, as he carries this letter that we're reading back to the church, you would think they would have joy just naturally to see that he is okay. So why do you think Paul instructs them to receive him with joy, and not just temporary, non-lasting joy, but joy *in the Lord*, a deeper joy? Look at verse 28, 29, 30, I believe the answer is in there. Why did Paul instruct them to have joy in welcoming him?

I believe Epaphroditus provided joy because of the meaningfulness of this partnership and how he risked his life for this partnership. This is how important this partnership was to everyone involved. Traveling from Philippi to Rome was over 800 miles, and you had the Adriatic Sea to navigate. Not easy, but completely worth it. This partnership mattered. It meant something. This relationship was deep, and Epaphroditus was willing to make this trip all over again, even after his life was in danger! This doesn't sound like a promotion for short-term trips so far, does it? Let's make sure we get the whole picture. There is so much joy here because this partnership mattered so much, and that's our third point.

Third, Epaphroditus provided what was needed for partnership in verse 30. Read verse 30 again. He was doing the work of the Lord. He risked everything. Why? To complete what was lacking in the partnership.

These principles are helpful for us today. We have the opportunity to travel, just about anywhere. But why travel? If it is to send financial gifts, we have banks and Western Union and wire transfers for that kind of thing. But is it possible for us to have this kind of deep partnership that we just read about today?

I would love for our prayers, our giving, our service, welcome, care, all of the things we have already talked about to *lead* to a deeper relationship where there is *joy* in sending, *joy* in receiving, and we can have a full and deep partnership. We have to keep moving this morning, but let's look at one other example in Acts 20. We know that Paul took missionary journeys, let's look at that.

Acts 20:1-2. This is during Paul's second missionary journey.

Andy Johnson, a pastor and missions author, points out that while the Apostle Paul often stayed in a location for a brief time, he moved on due to opposition or rejection, not because he intentionally planned a short visit.⁶⁵ Acts 20:1-2 may have been an exception.

“After the uproar ceased, Paul sent for the disciples, and after encouraging them, he said farewell and departed for Macedonia. When he had gone through those regions and had given them much encouragement, he came to Greece.

Andy Johnson continues to explain that Paul's shorter visits were not necessarily to plant new churches, but to encourage existing churches.⁶⁶ Church plants are not a hit and run. They take roots. We would never want churches to feel like they are on an island, however, and true encouragement and fellowship can be pretty impactful for a church's staying power. Look at verses 5-7:

These went on ahead and were waiting for us at Troas, but we sailed away from Philippi after the days of Unleavened Bread, and in five days we came to them at Troas, where we stayed for seven days. On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul talked with them, intending to depart on the next day, and he prolonged his speech until midnight.

So Paul was spending shorter amounts of time encouraging these believers. This could be seen as a short-term trip, ours look a little different, but I at least want to show you another example of a brief visit with a specific purpose.

So let's talk about what we do today, and our encouragement for you to go on a short-term trip. Here are some dangers and benefits of short-term missions.

Some of this is taken from a book entitled “Helping Without Hurting in Short-term Missions” by Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert.⁶⁷ I just read this book and it has some good takeaways. Here is my list:

1. Short-term visits have dangers
 - a. Selfishness
 - i. Tourism, sense of adventure

We don't plan tourist trips as a church, but there could still be that motivation. I try to encourage people to look at the function of the team instead of the location, just take the location out of the equation in your evaluation of whether or not you should go. Pray about it, ask God to know your heart. By the way, we don't have any trips planned to Hawaii.

- ii. Savior-complex, sense of satisfaction

Another danger is the idea that our team going is solve every problem or have a monumental impact that will change the trajectory of our partner's effectiveness. We go to serve, to assist, to help, to meet a need, but not to surpass the things our partners do there everyday. A part of that danger is this desire for us personally to be the difference-makers. We may only be satisfied if *we* get to lead someone to trust in Jesus, or *we* get to put the final brick in the church building that will be used for a century. That puts us at the center, and we don't want that.

- b. Dependency

Another danger of a short-term trip is the idea of the local believers developing a dependency on our team coming. This could be financial, it could be practical, it could be

⁶⁵ Andy Johnson, *Missions: How the Local Church Goes Global*, 9Marks: Building Healthy Churches (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 89.

⁶⁶ Johnson, *Missions*, 89.

⁶⁷ Steve Corbett, Brian Fikkert, and Katie Casselberry, *Helping without Hurting in Short-Term Missions: Leaders Guide* (Chicago: Moody, 2014).

in roles. Some examples would be a team coming and doing a community event where we bring all our Western supplies and decorations and candy and we have a big, exciting party. What happens the next week after the team leaves and the people of the community come back to the church expecting the same big event? Or is it possible that the local church believes they need a team from the West to come and do their events for them? Those are the kinds of things we need to think about beforehand. The goal is to empower, not foster a sense of dependency. The danger is very real though, because if we are going to travel and go and serve, we want to feel like we are needed, so we try to create a role where we are essential. We want to focus on empowerment instead.

c. Poor stewardship

We have been given quite a bit, so we want to use it wisely. With the opportunity to go and serve, we may try to invent things we can do. If I go to Argentina, and I don't know Spanish, I am not going to be as effective in evangelism or discipleship. How much evangelism and discipleship can you do in a week anyway? But I could mix cement or paint a wall, take a picture, put it on my social media, and feel pretty good about it.

What's the solution to this? Let our partners ask us to come, let them choose what they need the team to do, and focus on that partnership. For you to know, our church tries to send teams that are invited, that help empower the ministry that is happening already on the ground.

Another aspect to this is this possibly uncomfortable question: How many full-time workers could serve year-round for the cost of one team to come? As a church, we try to have balance in this and of course want to be good stewards.

Missions trips can be very good, let's close with some benefits:

First, our goal is assisting existing partners in helpful ways that benefits their year-round ministry. This helps make trips a win-win for us and them. I'll use Josh Whitman, a church planter in Italy, for example. Josh loves having Maranatha teams come. He loves it. Teams enable him to help develop relationships in the city that he may not otherwise be able to develop. This summer our team is helping them host a community Bible camp for kids. His church does not have the manpower to do it themselves, but our team will provide help and the opportunity to serve about 30 kids from unchurched, unsaved families. Our team is excited to share the Gospel, and Josh is excited to serve his community. It's a win-win. Josh can follow up with them in the weeks after the trip. Josh can't run this camp by himself, or with his limited volunteers from his church. These are the kinds of ways we can help.

Another benefit is exposure to missions that is long-lasting and impactful. There are people in this room that can tell you the impact a past trip has had on them. There is something almost indescribable about going overseas and worshiping and serving and fellowshiping with believers in another culture and language. You experience Christian unity in a unique way. We really do have Christ in common, when we don't have much else in common.

Let me close with a quote:

“Short-term trips are an opportunity to learn from, encourage, and fellowship with believers around the world in the context of long-term engagement with God's work, focusing on understanding His body and our role in it more fully.” – Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert⁶⁸

I appreciate this as a summary of the things we have talked about. Partnership is the main idea, and we welcome and care for our partners from here, but from time to time we can go to them and help them, encourage them, and learn more about what they do. Let's remember our big idea: Short-term missions trips can be an effective way to meet practical needs of partners while giving exposure to their ministry.

⁶⁸ Corbett, Fikkert, and Casselberry, *Helping without Hurting*, 46.

Maranatha Bible Church – Engaging in Missions
Week 8: Missions Involvement Opportunities – Mobilize and Go

Big Idea: Encourage others to prayerfully consider their involvement in missions, and pray to ask if God would call you to go serve Him on the mission field.

Outline:

1. 1 Thessalonians 5:11 shows how we can encourage others with the Gospel in a way that builds them up... leading to Gospel-centered living.
2. Acts 13:1-3 shows the process of God calling Paul and Barnabas to be sent out from the church in Antioch.
3. In application, we can mobilize others towards a focus on the Gospel and involvement in the Great Commission, while also praying through our own potential to go.

Lesson:

The Great Commission matters! Jesus's command to go and make disciples of all nations matters! God has entrusted to us, *us*, His church, this responsibility. So how seriously do we want to take it? Do we want the Great Commission to be a nice set of verses we think about when we have a Missions Conference here, or do we plan to do something about it, getting involved, using our gifts and resources and opportunities to obey it?

I want to encourage you, as we finish our series today on “Engaging In Missions” with week 8, embrace your role and your own participation. Don't shy away, don't be half-hearted, but be encouraged that you can find joy in being a part of God's plan for saving the world. Throughout this series, we have tried to stay away from a motivation of guilt or obligation, but I want to stress that even more today, that we can be excited about the part we play in completing the Great Commission. We will not disobey the Great Commission, we will obey it.

A brief review: the Great Commission means to make disciples, we do that right here in our very church and community before moving outward, we value partnerships, and towards this goal we pray, we invest, we serve, we welcome, we care, and we visit through short-term trips.

Today our key words are “mobilize” and “go”, and our big idea is that each of us can encourage others to prayerfully consider their involvement in missions, and you can pray to ask if God would call you to go serve Him on the mission field.

Let's begin in 1 Thessalonians 5. In thinking about mobilizing others, I am going to ask for your help in this. I may be the Missions Pastor, but that only means I help equip our church for ministry. It would be bad if church consisted of your ABF teacher teaching and your pastor preaching, and that was it. There is a goal in all this, to equip you to obey and serve and for God's Word to be taught in a way that *changes* your life. I am asking for more from you than just coming and sitting and listening. Help be a part of what God is doing, first in you, and in those around you. Let's read from 1 Thessalonians 5:9-11.

1 Thessalonians 5:9-11:

⁹ For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁰ who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him. ¹¹ Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.

The primary context of the encouragement in verse 11 is this section on the Day of the Lord and reality that believers will not face God's judgment and wrath as the unbelieving world will. However, in this specific section from verses 9-11, Paul is encouraged that instead of facing wrath, we are saved, we can live with our Savior Jesus Christ whether we are alive or dead. We are encouraged by the Gospel, the true good news that Jesus saves us!

Is that the kind of news you can keep to yourself? Is this the kind of news we should be celebrating, not just on Easter but really whenever the church meets together? We can encourage each other to think and live the Gospel. The guarantee we have of Jesus's presence, that we live *with* Him, means we can encourage other to regularly express a Gospel life. Our lives are His.

Some practical ways to encourage others:

- Share the ways you love being engaged in the Great Commission.
- Share about a missions prayer request that was answered recently.
- Share how God has been providing through your church for missions.
- Share about your desire to make disciples and how it motivates your service in the church.
- Share about a short-term trip you went on.
- Encourage people like this: "God has given us everything we need to be a part of the Great Commission, how can I help you know your part?"

When we think of the concept of "building up" from this passage, is there a better way to encourage someone than to help point them to the Lord and a life of meaning and service? What a way to combat the lies our culture gives of finding meaning in temporary things. Let's mobilize others through our encouragement.

Our eighth and last way of engaging in the Great Commission is to go. Let's read Acts 13 as an example of what God can do here at Maranatha.

Acts 13:1-3:

"Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a lifelong friend of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. ² While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." ³ Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off."

So as the Antioch church is worshiping and fasting, the Holy Spirit says, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." The burden of calling is not on the church leaders; they are simply to set apart those whom God has already called. The leaders of the church were to set Paul and Barnabas apart, but it was clear that God had already set them apart. The application for the church today is to follow this same pattern. Trust God to raise up those He calls, and then recognize and send them in response.

As we read about how the church sent these men in Acts 13, the word for "sent" means to release them or set them free.⁶⁹ This means the focus would be on their future ministry and not the ministry they left behind. This is a *new* work, and how God planned to expand his church, and we see that in the next chapter. The term for the "work" (ἔργον) that was Paul and Barnabas' mission is the same word used at the end of Acts 14.⁷⁰ We find them returning to Antioch at the end of that chapter: "And from there they sailed to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work that they had fulfilled" (Acts 14:26, ESV). So the sending process begins with God for His purposes, is supported through the church that sends, and leads to a fruitful work. The impact is clear: "And when they arrived and gathered the church together, they declared all that God had done with them, and how he had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles" (Acts 14:27, ESV). This is awesome. God calls, the church sends, fruit happens.

Could you see this happening in your own church? Could this happen at Maranatha Bible Church?

⁶⁹ John MacArthur, *Acts 13-28, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1996), 7.

⁷⁰ Friberg, Friberg, and Miller, *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*, 171.

I believe it can, and maybe more importantly, I believe it will. We've sent some in the past, I would love to see God send more. Who's next? We could take a group vote, like we're on an episode of Survivor and voting someone off the island. Let's talk about this for each of us, how would we know if we were called?

Let's start with faithfulness. Why start there? Because there is a universal call that God gives to anyone and everyone. Like Acts 1:8 shows, all disciples are witnesses, all believers are to use their spiritual gift to build up the body, 1 Corinthians 12:7. So if you are going to be faithful as you are sent out, you really need to be faithful in doing it here before you are sent.

We should also mention an internal desire. 1 Timothy 3:1 is an example of this, where someone "aspires" to serve as a leader in the church. Do you want to go?

As church members begin to evaluate this, Matt Rhodes encourages them to pursue wisdom in making that choice, as opposed to what we see and hear often where people describe a special revelation from God or an inner feeling.⁷¹ He points out that short-term trips can help provide information needed for wise decision-making as he notes, "Short-term and medium-term mission trips can help young people learn enough about the field to know whether they have the grace to serve overseas as long-termers."⁷² This wisdom is not only for individuals, but also for church leaders. A short-term trip is helpful if we follow the progression of faithful here, faithful on a short-term trip, before you are faithful long-term.

As church leaders begin to recognize those who meet the character qualifications, have giftedness, and are fruitful and passionate about serving the Lord with their lives, they may begin to encourage them to go on another trip, a longer trip, or perhaps consider a full-time role. God could use a leader's observation of someone's effectiveness or a leader's invitation to further involvement to fuel that person's desire to go. Garry Friesen argues that candidates need consultation and affirmation, writing, "The New Testament records the involvement of local churches in recognizing, choosing, and sending those best suited for international outreach."⁷³ This was true for Paul and Barnabas in Acts 13, where the leaders of the church in Antioch knew them and their readiness and giftings.

What are they sent to do? There could be lots of roles, but the priority is initial evangelism that leads to planting churches, discipleship in these churches, and leaders being trained to reproduce the process. We have to understand this from the very beginning, so that those sent are those best equipped to meet those goals. Do candidates have a considerable amount of gifting, experience, and effectiveness before they go? Are they going to do something they have never done before? How are they sharing their faith and teaching others currently?

This emphasis on evangelism, discipleship, and church planting is clarified by George Miley, who writes, "Our most straightforward and comprehensive goal in blessing a people is to establish a grassroots movement of spiritually vibrant, culturally relevant churches spreading throughout the people."⁷⁴ We want to see this happen, in an unreached people group, through our church.

At Maranatha we have something called "Next Steps In Missions", which you

⁷¹ Matt Rhodes, *No Shortcut to Success: A Manifesto for Modern Missions* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2022), 204-11.

⁷² Rhodes, *No Shortcut to Success*, 215.

⁷³ Garry Friesen with J. Robin Maxson, *Decision Making and the Will of God*, 25th ed. (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2004), 338.

⁷⁴ George Miley, *Loving the Church, Blessing the Nations: Pursuing the Role of Local Churches in Global Missions* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 40.

will be hearing more about. We want to provide opportunities after short-term trips for those exploring this idea of going full-time. I just wrote a letter to our young people inviting them to this program. It is customizable, and it really starts with a conversation where we examine these ideas of giftedness and fruitfulness. There may be unique opportunities from there to plug people in where they could get more experience and have God direct them as they're moving and serving, as opposed to just sitting and waiting for the call. This could be short or mid-term.

Let me outline where Maranatha is headed. Right now, we're learning about how to be engaged in missions. This is phase one. This series will be taught to other ABFs, all the Connect Groups this Fall, and wherever anyone will listen to me teach about it.

Phase two is what we're praying toward, that as each of us are engaged in the Great Commission, God would build a church of disciple-makers where we have such momentum and excitement in evangelism and discipleship, that God creates an environment that leads to sending. To encourage you, we've been praying as a church for God to send missionaries from Maranatha. I just had a conversation with a member here who has a heart for unreached peoples and is praying through how God would use them. God is already answering our prayers.

So you will be seeing more and more happen at our church, as I help design a program to develop missionaries here, and as we continue to ask God to send *from* our church. But it starts with you and me, it starts with all of us knowing our role and engaging in the Great Commission. Please take this list seriously. Please take the task and command seriously. As William Carey said, "Expect great things from God, attempt great things for God."⁷⁵

⁷⁵ Thomas Armitage, *A History of the Baptists; Traced by Their Vital Principles and Practices, from the Time of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ to the Year 1886* (New York: Bryan, Taylor, 1887), 581.

APPENDIX 8

PRE- AND POST-CLASS SURVEY RESULTS

Table A1. Pre-class survey results

PARTIC	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11	Q12	Q13	Q14	Q15	Q16	Q17	Q18	Q19	TOTAL
Survey 1	4	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	3	6	4	6	6	6	6	4	105
Survey 2	4	4	3	4	2	4	4	5	4	5	4	2	5	3	5	4	4	5	3	74
Survey 4	4	5	5	4	3	4	5	5	5	5	6	4	4	3	3	5	4	5	5	84
Survey 5	4	5	3	3	4	5	5	6	6	5	6	4	5	4	4	4	4	5	3	85
Survey 6	4	4	4	4	3	4	4	6	4	6	5	4	4	3	5	5	4	4	4	81
Survey 7	4	5	4	5	3	4	4	5	5	5	5	4	3	4	4	5	3	4	3	79
Survey 12	6	6	6	6	6	6	4	6	6	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	5	93
Survey 15	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	94
Survey 18	5	5	4	4	5	6	6	6	6	6	6	5	6	5	6	6	5	6	5	103
Survey 19	2	2	2	2	2	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	4	3	4	5	3	5	3	64
Survey 20	4	5	4	4	5	5	4	5	5	6	6	4	5	5	5	6	4	5	4	91
Survey 21	1	5	1	2	4	6	3	5	5	6	6	5	5	5	6	6	6	6	5	88
Survey 22	6	6	6	6	5	6	6	6	5	6	6	6	6	5	6	6	6	6	6	111
Survey 23	5	5	5	5	5	5	6	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	96
Survey 24	5	5	4	4	4	5	5	5	5	6	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	92
Survey 25	4	4	4	4	5	5	5	5	4	6	5	5	6	5	5	5	5	6	5	93
SUM	66	77	66	68	67	80	76	85	80	86	84	68	78	67	78	82	73	82	70	1433

Table A2. Post-class survey results

PARTIC	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11	Q12	Q13	Q14	Q15	Q16	Q17	Q18	Q19	TOTAL
Survey 1	5	6	6	5	5	5	5	6	6	6	6	5	5	4	6	5	6	6	5	103
Survey 2	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	114
Survey 4	5	5	5	5	5	5	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	108
Survey 5	6	6	6	5	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	5	6	6	6	6	6	6	5	111
Survey 6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	114
Survey 7	5	5	4	4	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	6	4	5	5	4	6	5	91
Survey 12	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	6	6	105
Survey 15	4	5	4	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	4	5	5	90
Survey 18	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	114
Survey 19	5	5	4	5	4	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	4	90
Survey 20	4	5	4	5	5	6	4	6	5	5	5	3	5	4	5	6	4	5	4	90
Survey 21	5	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	6	5	5	6	5	6	6	98
Survey 22	6	6	6	6	6	6	5	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	5	6	112
Survey 23	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	114
Survey 24	5	5	5	5	5	6	5	5	5	6	6	6	6	6	6	5	6	6	6	105
Survey 25	6	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	6	5	6	5	6	6	6	5	6	6	103
SUM	86	88	84	85	84	89	85	90	88	90	89	83	90	85	90	90	85	93	88	1662

APPENDIX 9
T-TEST RESULTS

T-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means		
	<i>Pre-Test Total</i>	<i>Post-Test Total</i>
Mean	89.5625	103.875
Variance	140.395833	88.3833333
Observations	16	16
Pearson Correlation	0.289737	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	15	
t stat	-4.4673538	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.00022589	
t Critical one-tail	1.75305036	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.00045178	
t Critical two-tail	2.13144955	

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ABSTRACT

EQUIPPING THE MEMBERS OF MARANATHA BIBLE CHURCH IN AKRON, OHIO, TO ENGAGE IN MISSIONS

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2023
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. John M. Klaassen

This project was designed to increase the participation of the members of Maranatha Bible Church in the missions ministries of the church. This process involved surveying a select group to gauge the effectiveness of teaching a missions curriculum and providing a pathway that gives a progression of involvement. Members were challenged to know their role in accomplishing the Great Commission and given specific ways to engage. Chapter 1 describes the ministry context, rationale, purpose, goals, research methodology, definitions, and delimitations of the project. Chapter 2 provides a biblical basis for following the Great Commission by making disciples both locally and abroad and by supporting partnerships. Chapter 3 explores best practices of missions-minded churches and shows how those churches emphasize prayer for the nations, love for their partners, and service locally and abroad. Chapter 4 gives information about the project implementation, and chapter 5 provides an evaluation and conclusions.

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