

Contents

The Work Of A Missionary

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3rd edition, 2011

This book was first published jointly by NEMI and Africa Christian Textbooks (ACTS), PMB 2020, Bukuru 930008, Plateau State, Nigeria with the title *The Missionary and His Work*.

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Acknowledgments

The author wishes to acknowledge the use of illustrations and materials from the following sources:

The story in chapter 16 is taken from the article “A Pioneer Team in Zambia, Africa” by Phillip Elkins, found in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, ed. Ralph D Winter and Steven C Hawthorne, Pasadena, California: William Carey Library 1981 pp. 682-688.

Most of the material in chapter 39 is taken from lectures given to students of the Nigeria Evangelical Missionary Institute by Rev. Maichudi Kure, then the Director of the Evangelical Missionary Society of ECWA.

The author also wishes to thank many of her friends whose stories appear in this book. May God use your experiences to help many other missionaries. Amen.

Much thanks also to Rev. Kantiyok Tukura and Miss Ruth Cox of the Evangelical Missionary Society for many helpful suggestions which have improved the book.

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Introduction

A missionary means someone who is sent out with a message. That means there is someone sending him or her. It also means that he or she is going away to a different place.

A Christian missionary is sent out both by the Lord himself and by the body of believers, the Church (Acts 13:3-4). The message a missionary carries is how people can be reconciled to God. The missionary leaves his or her own place to go somewhere else. This could mean travelling a far distance from home. Sometimes the missionary doesn't travel far, but he goes to minister to people who are far from his own people in language and culture.

This means that a missionary is more than just an evangelist. He or she is an evangelist who works in an unfamiliar environment. Methods of evangelism that worked for him at home might not work in the new place or among the new people. Where she is going, there may be no pastors to disciple the converts. The missionary may have to be a pastor, teacher and dispenser, as well as an evangelist. As the work grows and progresses, the missionary's role changes.

Sometimes we hear it said that every Christian is a missionary. This is true if we mean that every Christian is supposed to help with the work of the Kingdom of God. But it is not true if we mean that the missionary is someone sent out to a different place. God chooses certain people for this kind of work. Then God calls them to do it. Every Christian needs to know what kind of work God is actually calling him or her to do in the Kingdom.

This book was written for all Christians who want to know about the work of a missionary. If God has called you to be a missionary, this book will guide you in how to carry on your ministry. If you are one of the people supporting missionaries, you need to know what their work is like so that you can pray for them. The book can be used in the classroom in Theological Training Schools, in study classes in local churches, and for individual reading. In some places in the book some scripture references are given. When you are reading through, please take your Bible and read these verses. They will help you to know if what the book is saying is actually taught in the Bible.

1. God's missionary plan in the Old Testament.

Why did God create human beings? God wanted them to worship him and to have fellowship with him.

But the first people disobeyed God and started hiding from him. The fellowship was broken. Right from that time, God put his missionary plan into action. Since then, God has been a missionary God, working to bring all the nations of mankind back to love and obey him.

God's plan was to choose one family who would remember God. This was the family of Abraham. God asked Abraham to leave his idol-worshipping family and depend on God alone. God knew that Abraham would faithfully teach his children after him to keep the knowledge of the true God (Gen 18:18-19). You can see that right from the beginning, God used people to carry out his plan. These were people that God called. God is still calling people today, through whom he is carrying out his plan.

God's call to Abraham is found in Genesis 12:1-3. God told Abraham, "In you all the families of the earth will be blessed." God repeated this again in Gen 18:18; 22:18 and 28:14. The apostles quoted this verse. Paul said that when God said this to Abraham, God was preaching the Gospel to Abraham beforehand. Galatians 3:8 says, "The scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith and announce the Gospel in advance to Abraham: 'All nations will be blessed through you.'" This means that this promise to Abraham was the promise that through Abraham's family, Jesus Christ the Saviour would come to the world and would be recognised and preached to the world. The good news would come to all the nations of the earth.

God made some promises to Abraham. He promised him children as many as the stars in the sky. God fulfilled this promise by making all believers to be the children of Abraham (Gal 3:7). God promised Abraham that all the families of the earth would be blessed through him. The physical Israelites failed to take the message of the true God to all the nations, but now, the believers are taking the blessing of salvation to every nation. God also promised Abraham to give him the land. The Israelites have not been able to keep control of their land at all times, but the believers are promised that they will inherit the whole earth (Romans 4:13 and Matthew 5:5).

God used Abraham to start his plan, and he also used Abraham's descendants to write the Old Testament. The books of the Old Testament were carefully taken care of by Abraham's descendants, the Jews. It was through the prophecies and teachings of the Old Testament that the people of Jesus' day were convinced that Jesus was the Saviour. The first disciples

were Jews. They started taking the message of salvation in Christ to the ends of the earth.

Jesus himself was also one of Abraham's descendants. So we can see that when God called Abraham, God was really starting his missionary plan to save the whole world.

Story

Throughout history, God has continued to call people to obey him and take his message to other parts of the world. Remember the story of Jonah? God asked him to go and preach in Nineveh. This was during the time when Nineveh was the capital city of Assyria. The Assyrians were the enemies of Israel.

Jonah was a prophet of God but he did not want to obey God. He knew that if he went to Nineveh to preach to them the people might repent. If the people repented, God would forgive them and bless them. Jonah did not want God to bless Israel's enemies. He wanted God to bless only Israel. Later, God forced Jonah to go and preach in Nineveh. The people did repent, and God did bless them. Then Jonah was very angry. God had to rebuke Jonah for his attitude.

Discussion Questions

1. If you could meet Jonah, how would you explain to him God's real reason for choosing Israel to be his special people? Read Solomon's prayer in 1 Kings 8:41-43. Do you think Solomon understood God's plan?
2. What connection is there between Abraham of long ago and Christians here in Africa today?
3. What would you say to someone who believes that there is nothing about missions in the Old Testament?
4. Are there some groups of people in Africa today that the Christians do not want God to bless?

2. Jesus as a missionary

When God called Abraham, his plan was that through Abraham's family he would send Jesus. Jesus was the one who paid for our sins so we would come back to God. He was the blessing for all nations.

A missionary is "someone who is sent". Jesus was sent into the world by the Father, so he is also our great example of a missionary. If you read

John's Gospel, you will see that many times Jesus said that he was sent into the world (for example John 3:17). Other parts of the New Testament say this too, for example Galatians 4:4, "But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son,..."

Jesus was sent with a special job to do. "My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work" (John 4:34). That is also part of being a missionary. His work was to bring glory to God (John 17:4), to teach the disciples (John 17:8,12), to seek the lost (Luke 19:10) and to save the world (John 3:17). As a missionary, Jesus obeyed his Father in everything and this resulted in the Gospel being preached to many. When he died, he could say, "It is finished" (John 19:30).

Near the beginning of his ministry, Jesus told his disciples to preach only to Israel (Matt 10:5-6). This was a step in Jesus' plan. Jesus planned to get the first converts and missionaries from the Jews. This was according to God's plan to use the family of Abraham to bring blessing to the whole world. After Jesus died and rose again, he told those same disciples that they should now take the message to the whole world (Matt 28:18-20).

The missionary work of Jesus cost him a lot of suffering. First he had to leave his home in heaven. He had to give up using much of his power (Phil 2:8). He had to spend long hours in prayer to his Father in order to get the power to do all his miracles.

This happens to us when we become missionaries too. We have to leave our homes and the place where we know people. We go to a place where it is much harder to do our work. We have to get our food, travel, etc. the way the local people do sometimes, and this can be frustrating for us.

All the same, Jesus really loved his missionary work. He said it was his food, the thing that satisfied him (John 4:34). He begged us to pray for more labourers to join the work (Matthew 9:38). When Jesus sent out the seventy disciples to preach, and they came back with a good report, Jesus rejoiced (Luke 10:21). He was eager, pressing forward to do the work (John 9:4 and Mark 1:35-39). Jesus' final command was that the work should continue (Acts 1:8). All this shows that Jesus was full of joy to be a missionary.

Jesus' missionary work included entering into the culture of the people and living with the inconveniences they had. He travelled all over the land of Israel on foot to preach the message. He witnessed to individuals and preached to crowds. Sometimes he preached in the synagogues and sometimes in the open air. He showed how the power of God could overcome the power of Satan by healing people and casting out demons. And he trained men to carry on the work after he left. Jesus' ministry lasted

only three and a half years, but it was successful. What he started has grown all over the world.

Story (from John 4)

One day Jesus and his disciples were trekking from Jerusalem in the south of his country to Galilee in the north. He was tired, and sat down by a well to rest while the disciples went into the town to look for food to buy. A local woman came to draw water from the well. Jesus asked her for a drink of water.

The woman was surprised that Jesus would talk to her. Normally, Jews like Jesus despised Samaritans like her and refused to talk with them or drink water they had touched. Jesus then surprised her even more by saying that he could give her living water.

She wanted the water, so Jesus told her to bring her husband. The woman confessed that she had no husband and Jesus revealed that he knew she had been living an immoral life. The woman then saw that Jesus must be a prophet. She asked him about true worship and he told her that God is looking for people who will worship him in spirit and in truth.

Then the woman asked him about Messiah. She must have heard some things about a Messiah, but was interested to find out more. She thought a prophet like Jesus might be able to tell her. Jesus told her, "I who speak to you am he". This made the woman rush back to tell the villagers about Jesus.

Discussion Questions

1. This story is about Jesus meeting with someone from a different tribe than his own. What things did he do and say which are a good example for a missionary today who goes to another tribe or people?
2. Jesus did not come at a time in history when there were good roads, motor vehicles, printing presses, radio, television or newspapers. Do you think this was an advantage or a disadvantage for his mission?
3. Did Jesus just do his missionary work day by day, according to whatever happened, or did he have a strategy and a plan for what he was trying to do? How can you tell?

3. Jesus sends out missionaries

While Jesus was on earth, he said that the Gospel would be preached in the whole world (Matt 24:14). After he died and rose again, he gave the command to the disciples that they were the ones who were supposed to do this. The command of Jesus is given to us in five places in the New Testament (Matt 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:46-49; John 20:21-22 and Acts 1:8). Jesus gave this command on the resurrection day, on the mountain in Galilee, and on the Mount of Olives just before he went back to heaven. He also said the same thing to the Apostle Paul when he called him (Acts 26:13-18). This command is mentioned so many times in the Bible because it is very important. When Jesus prayed to his Father in John 17, he reported that he was sending the disciples out, just as the Father had sent him out (John 17:18).

You should read all these verses and write them in one place, so you can compare them as you read the next part of this chapter. When we compare all these verses, we see that the command includes the following things:

1. GO: Matthew and Mark mention that we need to go out to new places to do this work, and Acts even says to the ends of the earth. We have to go to new places, new cultures and new languages.
2. The JOB to be done: Jesus mentions several things. In Matthew he said we should make disciples. A disciple is someone who forgets about himself and his own desires and follows the Master. It is not enough for us just to make "converts". In Mark, Jesus said we should preach. This means spreading the news around, so that many people can hear it. In Luke and Acts it says we should witness. This is preaching by telling our own experience of what Jesus has done for us. In Matthew it says we should teach. This is how we make converts into disciples. Teaching should be done in the church and in homes, not just in classrooms. Matthew and Mark also mention that the believers should be baptised.
3. The EXTENT of our work: In Matthew it says we are to go to all nations. This means to all tribes and language groups. In Mark it says we are to go to all the world, and to every creature or the whole creation. Nobody is to be left out. Acts says we are to go even to the ends of the earth. And Matthew says we should keep on in the work until the end of the age.

4. The ABILITY to do the work comes first from the Holy Spirit (John and Acts). He gives the power to do the job. Then Jesus also promised that he would be with us with his “all authority” (Matthew). See also John 14:12-14 and 15:16 where Jesus gave us the right to use his name in asking for help from the Father.

5. The RESULT of our work: Luke says that when we preach, people will repent and be forgiven of their sins. Mark says they will be saved. This is what God is aiming at in his whole plan of missions.

Story

William Carey lived many years ago (around 1800) in England. He wanted the Gospel to be taken to the people in India who did not know Christ. But most of the people in England believed that the reason the heathen were not Christians was that God was punishing them for their sins by keeping the Gospel message from reaching them. Some people also believed that God is so all-powerful that he did not need people to help him evangelize the world.

When William Carey studied the Bible he discovered that Jesus had commanded believers to take the Gospel to the whole world. He begged his church to start a missionary society, to send out missionaries. Finally they did and he went as their first missionary to India. He stayed there for over forty years and won many people to Christ. This proved that many of the heathen were lost just because nobody had gone to preach to them. We can see that, although God is all-powerful, his plan is to use people to preach the Gospel to those who have not heard, just as he used William Carey.

Discussion Questions

1. How far have Christians of today gone in obeying all the parts of the great missionary command of Jesus?
2. What are some of the things that make it hard to fully obey this command? Would Jesus give us an impossible command?
3. In Matthew 24:14 and Revelation 7:9 we read prophecies that the whole world is going to be evangelized. Do you think these prophecies make Christians want to relax in evangelizing the world or to work harder? Why? Did these prophecies make William Carey relax?

4. Missions in the New Testament Church

Jesus promised that after he left, he would send another comforter, the Holy Spirit. So the Holy Spirit is also a sent one, a missionary. He is part of God’s missionary plan to reach the world.

Remember in the last chapter, we said that the Holy Spirit provides the power for the work of missions. He is the one who sends out missionaries and directs their work.

In the book of Acts, we see that the missionary work could not even start until the Holy Spirit came (Acts 1:4-5). He came on the Day of Pentecost, when people from many countries were present in Jerusalem. He gave the disciples the ability to speak to all these people in their own languages, to show that the message should go to all nations. In his sermon that day, Peter reminded the people of the prophecy of Joel, that God’s Spirit would be poured out on all flesh. In Acts 2:39 Peter says that the promise of the Spirit was for “all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God shall call.” You can read Peter’s sermon in Acts 2:16-39.

So the Holy Spirit came to dwell in believers. Now they could do the work God would give them. In the book of Acts we see many Christians going out to do missionary work and we see the Spirit telling the missionaries what to do. Philip (Acts 8:29), Peter (Acts 10:19-20), the church leaders at Antioch (Acts 13:2-4), the church leaders at Jerusalem (Acts 15:28) and Paul (Acts 16:6-7) all got directions from the Holy Spirit about where to go and what to do. At first the Jewish believers did not want to accept Gentiles as believers unless they became Jews. It was the Holy Spirit who proved to them that Gentiles could be believers too (Acts 11:12,15-18).

Other believers also went out to do missionary work. Priscilla and Aquila moved from Corinth to Ephesus to start the church there (Acts 18:18-19,26). Paul’s missionary team included Silas, Timothy, Luke, and the representatives of other churches (2 Cor 8:23). The church in Thessalonica evangelized Macedonia and Achaia (1 Thess 1:8). The converts at Ephesus evangelized the province of Asia (Acts 19:10,26; Col 1:4,7; 2:1). The Philippians supported Paul as a missionary (Phil 4:14-18).

History also tells us that churches not mentioned in the Bible were started in other places. We do not know all the names of the believers who went to Egypt, Mesopotamia, India and Britain, but we know that very early churches were planted there.

As Paul went around visiting the churches he taught them many things which made them know that they needed to do missionary work. The

missionaries planted missionary churches. Each new church knew right from the beginning its responsibility to go out with the Gospel.

1. Paul taught the new churches that God judges everyone according to what he does (Romans 2:6-10). However, everybody has sinned and good deeds cannot make up for bad deeds (Romans 3:23). The people who did not have God's Law still did things they themselves knew were wrong. The Jews, who had God's Law, did not keep it. So everybody needs salvation.
2. Paul taught them that there is no other name given among men for us to be saved by. Only in Jesus Christ is this salvation (Acts 4:12; 1 Tim 2:5). Paul said that, although it is true that whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved, people cannot call on him if they do not believe in him, and they cannot believe if they have not even heard of him (Rom 10:9-15). Therefore, some people must be sent to preach.
3. Paul taught them that all believers have spiritual gifts which are to be used for building up the Body of Christ (1 Cor 12). These gifts included evangelist and apostle (missionary). Therefore God has called and given gifts to some Christians to be missionaries.

Story

The Apostle Paul wrote a letter to the Colossians which is in our Bibles. Paul said that the people in Colosse had not met him personally (Col 2:1); he had only heard about their faith (Col 1:4). How did these people hear the Gospel if Paul had not gone to preach to them? Paul says that they heard the Gospel from Epaphras (Col 1:7). Epaphras was from Colosse (Col 4:12). He must have heard Paul preaching when Paul was in Ephesus. Then Epaphras went back to Colosse to take the message to them. He also seems to have taken the Gospel to other towns like Laodicea and Hierapolis (Col 4:13).

Later, Epaphras was with Paul when Paul was in prison in Rome (Philem 23). Even though Epaphras was not with the people of Colosse, Laodicea and Hierapolis, he still kept working for their growth in the faith by praying for them (Col 4:12-13).

Discussion Questions

1. How can a missionary be sure that the Holy Spirit is guiding his work?
2. How many reasons can you think of to show why we need to do missionary work?

3. What does the example of Epaphras show us about how the Gospel can spread?

5. Spiritual qualifications of a missionary

Every Christian is supposed to be a witness for Christ. Not all Christians will "go" as missionaries. Some Christians are supposed to work among their own people and in their own areas. But some are called to leave their homes and their own people to go to preach to people different from themselves. This is specially important when that other group of people does not have believers of their own who can tell them the Good News.

How will you know whether you are one of those who is supposed to be a missionary? One of the first things you can do is to see if you have the kinds of gifts and qualifications needed for the work. Let us look at the spiritual qualifications of a missionary.

1. The missionary must be truly born again. This means he or she has turned away from sin and has received the new life in Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit in his or her life. The person must be very sure that Christ has really saved him. And other people must be able to see that his life is godly, obeying God's word.

2. The missionary must be filled with the Holy Spirit. You will see this by the fruit of the spirit (Gal 5:22-23) coming out in your life. The Spirit will continually fill any believer who keeps his or her heart open and clean. The fruit of the Spirit needed most by missionaries is love. Missionaries must be able to love and do good to people who are different from them in age, in social status, in education and in tribe, even when the other people cannot do anything for the missionaries in return. Because the Holy Spirit longs to see people won for Christ, the Spirit-filled missionary will have a burning zeal to win the lost too. This will keep her or him going when the work is hard.

3. The missionary needs to have some spiritual gifts for missionary work. Some people like to learn new cultures, eat different food and learn new languages. Such people can fit in easily as missionaries. The Bible says there are gifts of teaching, evangelism, helping, administration, wisdom, miracles, healing, and others (1 Cor 12:7-10, 28-30; Rom 12:6-8; Eph 4:11) which missionaries can use in a new culture to build up the Body of Christ there. A missionary should be able to see that God has given him some of

these useful gifts and is blessing his use of them while he is still at home, before he goes out as a missionary.

4. A missionary needs to be a person who spends much time in prayer.

We must obey Jesus who told us to pray always and not give up (Lk 18:1). Also, there are many times in missionaries' life when they don't know what to do and they need guidance from God. It is also because Satan has blinded the minds of the unbelievers. If they want to win people for Christ, missionaries need to be able to pray against the powers of Satan, so that the people can be set free to receive the message of salvation. Even Jesus spent whole nights in prayer during his ministry on earth.

5. A missionary needs a servant attitude. God cannot bless a proud missionary. A missionary needs to know that she belongs so totally to God that God can ask her to do anything and she will obey. This means the missionary will also have to be a servant to the people he goes to preach to (1 Cor 9:19). He must not see himself as their master. He cares for their needs and prays for them. A missionary must be able to forget about his own rights. He can only do this if he believes that God will take care of him. God says, "I honour those who honour me" (1 Sam 2:30).

Story

John Wesley was an Anglican minister in England. When he was a student, he formed a "Holy Club" with some other students, so they could pray and do good deeds together. After his studies, he was ordained and went to America. He wanted to be a missionary to the Red Indians, who at that time were mostly pagans. When John got to America, the English colonists made him their pastor, and would not let him go to the Indians. After some quarrels in the church, John had to leave and go back to England.

On the way home in the ship, there was a terrible storm. It seemed that the ship would sink and all the people would die. John was very afraid. Also on the ship were some Moravian missionaries. They were not afraid. They were singing hymns to praise God and were happy to think they might be able to see Jesus soon. John realised that he was not sure that he would see Jesus if he died. He had been trying to be a missionary without being sure of his own salvation.

Finally the ship reached England safely. John started attending some of the meetings of the Moravians. One night, as he listened to God's word there, he realised that he could just trust Christ to save him, and all his sins

would be forgiven. John was born again that night. After that, he became a great evangelist and won thousands of people to Christ.

Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think John Wesley's work in America was a failure?
2. How can a missionary be sure he or she is filled with the Holy Spirit?
3. If you don't like to eat strange food and learn new customs, is that a sign that you are not supposed to be a missionary?
4. Ask yourself, Am I born again? Am I filled with the Holy Spirit? Am I using my spiritual gifts? Am I learning to pray more? Do I have a servant heart?

6. Other qualifications of a missionary

Besides the spiritual qualifications, there are some other qualifications that a missionary should have.

1. Physical qualifications. A missionary should be in good health and strong enough to do the work and not cause the mission a lot of expense with medical bills. A missionary often has to trek a lot, eat strange food, and live in uncomfortable places. If she is always sick, the work may not go forward very quickly. For this reason, a mission may decide not to accept somebody as a missionary if he is not in good health.

If you are sick a lot, but you know the Lord is calling you to be a missionary, you need to develop strong faith and pray that God will heal you or give you the strength to do the work.

2. Educational qualifications. The more education the missionary has, the better, so long as all that education does not dampen his or her zeal for the work. It is more important to be ready to learn new things and to think about how to put into practice what you know, than to have gone to school for many years. If you have a PhD but you never read new things, or think about new ideas, you will not be as useful as a person who did not go to school but is always interested in learning new things and putting into practice what she knows.

Besides general education, a missionary needs to know the Bible very well. Going to Bible School can help you in this but what you learn in Bible School or Seminary is not enough. You must be able to study the Bible for yourself at home. Many things come up in missionary work that you might

not have had to think about before. You will face new situations that were not discussed in the Bible School. If you do not know the Bible and cannot study it for yourself, you will not know what is the right thing to do and you will not be able to advise the converts. The converts need to be taught the Bible, so you need to know it well to teach them properly.

Missionaries should also be trained in how to be *good* missionaries. This means they know how to get close to people who are of a different culture and language than themselves. They should know how to tell others the Gospel in a way they can understand.

3. Character qualifications. There are also some aspects of a missionary's character that make him or her qualified to be a good missionary. A good missionary is able to work peacefully with other people. He should be able to obey orders and co-operate with his mission's plans. He should be able to think carefully before he does something and not just rush into things without planning (Rom 12:18; 1 Pet 3:8).

A missionary should also not be a fearful person. She knows that God loves her, and that God has chosen her and thinks she is precious. Therefore, she doesn't get so discouraged that she wants to leave the work. She can adapt to changes (2 Tim 1:7).

A missionary also needs to be humble enough to laugh at himself when he makes a mistake. When you are in a new place, you always make mistakes. People laugh at the way you talk and the way you do things. A good missionary will not get offended. He will be patient and learn from his mistakes (1 Pet 3:9).

It is important for a missionary to be able to show love and accept people from other tribes, without feeling that he is better than they are (Rom 15:7).

A missionary should not gossip and complain. She should be able to endure hard conditions if necessary (2 Tim 2:3; Phil 2:14).

4. Family qualifications. It is not required in the Bible that a missionary must be married. The Apostle Paul, one of the greatest missionaries, was not married. But if a missionary is not married, he or she must be morally pure.

The Bible does say that a polygamist is not qualified to be a spiritual leader (1 Tim 3:2,12). For this reason, most missions would not agree to send out a polygamist as a missionary.

It is true that no missionary is perfect in all of these areas. If you know you have some problems with these things, as you pray God will help you to improve. Because of these problems, some missionaries have had to leave

missionary work. But others were willing to improve. As they prayed, God helped them to overcome their faults and be good missionaries.

Story

A certain man was working in a bank. He did not have a high level of regular education and he had never been to any Bible School. However, he was always reading. He read books about the Bible, about different things all over the world. He knew about many things through his reading that students don't know.

Then God called this man to become a missionary. He successfully started many churches among a group of people that never had the Gospel before. He established a school for the children and started a programme to translate the Bible for the people. He went for a short course about missions and got many new ideas, which he put into practice in his work. He was a successful missionary and happy in his work.

Discussion Questions

1. How will a missionary behave when he secretly despises himself and is not very confident that God loves him?
2. What helped the man in the story to be a successful missionary, although he had little schooling?
3. What is the difference between being educated and being able to think intelligently?
4. Some people think that you should be a missionary if you are not qualified or talented enough to be a successful Pastor or worker. Based on the Bible's teaching about missionary work, what do you think of this idea?

7. Answering the missionary call

Some people think that the only way to know if God is calling you to be a missionary is if you have a dream or see a vision. The truth is that there are many ways that God can call somebody. Even in the Bible, we see that God used different methods to call different people.

Being called as a missionary is anything that makes you know that it is God's will for you to become a missionary. There are some things you can think about to test if you are really called:

1. Has God put a desire in your heart to do missionary work? Such a desire can come when you hear a good speaker challenge people for missions, but does this desire persist and keep on in your mind for a long time? If it does, probably God is putting this desire in your heart.

2. According to what we have studied, are you qualified to be a missionary? If you are not qualified, can you get qualified by getting more training, or changing some things in your life? Are you willing to pay the price to get yourself prepared to be a missionary? The price will include giving your time and dedication to get closer to God and let him make you into the kind of person he can use in missions.

3. Some of the ways God can call people are by dreams and visions, by God's conviction when you read the Bible, by circumstances such as people begging you to come and preach the Gospel to them, and by the advice of godly counsellors. For instance, Timothy was invited by Paul to join the missionary work (Acts 16:1-3). Has God been showing you in some other ways that you should be a missionary?

4. Remember that a missionary is a "sent one". He is sent both by the Holy Spirit and by the body of believers. This could be by your church, or by a mission society. Paul was called by Christ (Acts 26:16-18) on the Damascus road, but he did not go out as a missionary until the church sent him (Acts 13:1-4). Does your church or fellowship agree to send you?

Training

Once you are ready to be a missionary, how can you get the training you need? Going to Bible School, College or Seminary is very good. Also, study your Bible for yourself.

Besides basic training in Bible and ministry, here is a list of some of the subjects it would be good for someone who wants to be a missionary to study. Some of these subjects are taught in Bible institutions, and some are not.

1. Bible basis of missions. 2. Evangelism. 3. Discipleship. 4. Church planting. 5. Cross-cultural communication. 6. Customs of various cultures. 7. How to learn a new language. 8. How to get along with fellow missionaries. 9. Spiritual warfare. 10. Islam 11. African Traditional Religion. 12. Christian home and family. 13. History of missions. 14. Literacy in teaching adults. 15. Community development such as healthcare, agriculture etc. 16. Practical skills like building, bicycle and motorcycle repair, carpentry etc. 17. Church growth. 18. Counselling.

You can get books about some of these subjects from local bookshops. Many missions also give their staff training in these areas after they join the mission. Another way to get some training is to go and visit a missionary on the field and work with him for a few weeks. Get him to share his experience and wisdom with you.

In many parts of Africa we now have missionary training schools. A number of mission agencies have their own schools. Some seminaries and colleges are adding missions majors and courses. This is a good development.

Joining a Mission

Once you are ready to go as a missionary, you have to decide what organisation you will work with.

1. If your church has a missions programme or a mission board, you should contact them. Find out what training they require, what fields they work in, their policies, and whether it would be good for you to work with them.

2. If you do not belong to a denomination with a mission department, ask another denomination you think is good what they would want to see in you before they could send you as their missionary.

3. You could also visit the office of a non-denominational mission and find out if you could work with them.

4. You could get your own church or fellowship to form a mission society and send you out.

5. Some people just go out independently. This is very difficult because of lack of support, both financially and in prayers. Independent missionaries often have a hard time finding a good way to train the converts and establish good churches for them. A missionary who belongs to an organisation or fellowship has the help of his group with these things. He does not have to start all his church programmes for himself from scratch.

Being an independent missionary is not usually a good way to go, unless you are very sure there is no other way for you to obey what God is asking you to do.

Story

A certain pastor took an evening course in the seminary on missions. He felt that God was calling him to do missionary work. He travelled to an unreached place and got some information about the people there. Then he went to his denominational leaders and asked them to send him there to do missionary work.

Their denomination did not have any mission society. They refused to let the pastor go for the work. So he resigned from his church and went there independently.

He got a few converts, but they were not able to support him financially. After some time, he could no longer provide for his wife and children, so the pastor had to go back to the city. He started his own independent church, and got some members who could be giving offerings to support him. The city church took all his time, so he had no more time for the missionary work. He intended that the city church would sponsor him to go to the mission field, but for many years they were too busy getting established in the city to think about missions.

Discussion Questions

1. How would you counsel the pastor in the story above?
2. What are some of the advantages and disadvantages of denominational missions and non-denominational missions?
3. What can a missionary society do to help its missionaries get the proper training they need for the work?

8. Hindrances to answering the missionary call

A person may not be a missionary because God has called him to some other work. That is good. But there are also many other people God wants to call as missionaries, but they are not willing to obey the call, or they are confused. Here are some of the problems people have:

1. Some people are afraid to totally trust God with their lives. They have a wrong idea of God. They think God does not want them to be happy. They are afraid God will ask them to do some very hard things, with no joy or satisfaction in life. This is the devil's lie. If you yield to God, you may have to pass through some hard things, but you will find that God's will is good (Rom 12:2) and gives you a lot of joy.
2. Some people feel that if they join a mission they will not be free. They will have to obey their superiors and work as part of a team. But remember Jesus trained a team. We must be humble enough to believe God can speak to and through our fellow-workers on the mission.

3. Some people are afraid of poverty and looking like a beggar when asking others to support them. But the Bible says that no-one goes to war as a soldier at his own expense. The whole church is responsible for missionary work, and if they do not support those who go, it is a sin on their part. Hudson Taylor, a famous missionary to China, said, "God's work, done in God's way, will never lack God's supply." This is true. Trust God to meet your needs.

4. Parents are afraid that if they become missionaries, their children will suffer because there may be no good way to care for them and send them to school on the mission field. Matthew 10:37 says we must love Christ more than our children. But we are also responsible to provide for them. If we are called, and trust God, he will provide for this too. Some missions have plans to help parents solve these problems.

5. Single people are often afraid to become missionaries because they are afraid they will not be able to find a suitable life partner on the mission field. It is a great advantage to be single on the mission field because single people have more time for the work. Paul was a single missionary. But if you know you need to marry, do you think this is a problem too hard for God? God has chosen a partner for you who also is called to be a missionary. You will find the person when you keep yourself in the perfect will of God.

6. Some people see missionary work as very hard and they are afraid they will not be able to do it successfully. This needs faith in God to do his work. Since God can do anything, and our trust is in him, we cannot fail to please him unless we fall into disobedience and unbelief.

7. Some people are so interested in further studies that they cannot listen to the missionary call. Education is not bad, but if it is making you disobey God, it will not help you. If you are patient and obey God, he will make sure you get all the education you need.

8. Some people see missionary work as dangerous since they may be going to live among hostile strangers. If Jesus had this attitude, we would still be in our sins. God will keep you alive and safe as long as your work is not done. If you are sure of heaven, you should not be afraid to die.

9. Some people don't want to be separated from their relatives and friends by going off to the mission field. But remember that Jesus promised if you

give up any of those people, he will give you 100 times more friends and relatives (Mk 10:30). You need to love Christ more than anyone else.

A person may not be afraid and he may be quite willing to be a missionary, but some things in his life may prevent him from going. Some of these things you need to avoid if you know you are called to be a missionary. If you are already involved in some of them, you need to pray that God will solve your problem so that you can go.

1. Some people have some heavy financial debts which they must pay back before they can go out as missionaries. If you are in debt, you are not free to move anywhere for Christ.
2. Some people are married to a partner who is against going as a missionary. If your husband or wife does not agree to go, you cannot go without breaking up your home, and that would make you a bad example to the converts and lead you into temptation. In this case you need to pray that God will change your partner's heart. If you are not yet married, make sure you marry someone who has the same missionary call as yourself.
3. Sometimes your family can stop you for some time from going as a missionary, especially if you are young. But be patient, and keep praying, God will make a way for you to go. Even if you finally have to disobey your family, you should keep loving them and praying for them.
4. If you are too sick to do missionary work, you cannot go. If it is God's will for you to go, he will have to heal you, and you can trust him for this.
5. If you have no Bible or missionary knowledge and training, you should get this first before you go as a missionary.
6. If you are the kind of person who cannot make up your mind and take a definite step, you will not likely go as a missionary. Even if you are not sure what to do, take a step and God will guide you by opening the way or closing it.
7. Some people have many invitations to minister. They may not know which to take. There may be a church calling you to be their pastor, another ministry wants you to work with them, and the missionary work is there too. Which one should you do? Remember that you cannot do everything. If Jesus was able to finish the work God gave him to do in his short lifetime,

so can you. Do not be afraid to say no to some of the invitations and needs you see, and just do the one God calls you to.

Story

A lady graduate was working for a missionary society in their office in the city. She felt God calling her to go out as a missionary and take the gospel to some remote villagers who did not know about Christ. But she was afraid to go because she was still unmarried. She was afraid she could not find a husband of her level in the village.

After some time, she decided not to disobey God any longer. She left the city and went off to evangelise the villagers. She got some converts and was teaching some of the ladies to read. She did not know that a man NYSC corper (on national service) was also posted near her village. He was a Christian, and when he saw how the villagers were without Christ, he felt called to take the gospel to them. He went to a missionary conference where he met the lady missionary. The two of them started co-operating in some projects to reach that area for Christ. Soon they discovered that it was God's plan for them to get married. The sister was now very happy that she did not stay in the city and marry a man who was not interested in missionary work. She and her husband are now doing the work together.

Discussion Questions

1. Let some people in your class or group tell the others how they became sure God was calling them to do his work or to become a missionary.
2. What do you think would have happened to the sister in the story if she had stayed in the city to look for a husband?

9. What place will you go to?

From our study we know that a missionary is somebody who is "sent". Therefore, if you are a missionary you will go away to some place different from where you usually stay. How can you know where to go? There are so many places where missionaries are needed. There are ways to learn about unreached areas.

In Nigeria we have the Searchlight Project which is surveying each Local Government Area in Nigeria. Their address is Box 10008, Kaduna. They may be able to give you information. Many mission agencies also have research departments. Your mission will know about the unreached areas.

If you join a mission, deciding where to go will not likely be a problem for you. Most missions try to find out places where the gospel is needed, and they have a list of places needing missionaries. Some are places where a missionary was working before but now he has left the place. Some of them are new places where no missionary has worked but the people need the gospel. The headquarters staff decide where to post missionaries. They will post you to a place where they think you will be useful. They may also transfer you later if they think this is wise.

If you are very interested in taking the gospel to a particular place, you can tell this to the mission leaders. The mission leaders usually try to post a missionary to the place he feels God is calling him to. We should pray for mission leaders to have wisdom in posting missionaries. If a missionary does not like the place he is posted to, he should be sure that his reasons are not selfish but godly.

Sometimes it may not be possible for the mission to send you to a place where you think God is calling you at first. You may have to be patient and go for a while to a place where you are needed. Later, as you continue to pray about it, if God is really calling you, he will open the way for you to go to the people he is calling you to. Sometimes a missionary goes to a place he did not want to go to, and then discovers that this is actually the place where God wants him to be.

Most of the people who live in Nigeria who do not have a chance to hear the gospel live in rural areas. Some live in places with no good roads, in mountains, or around the rivers near the sea coast. The gospel has not spread there because it was not easy for evangelists and missionaries to go there. Even now, if missionaries are posted to such places, they complain and ask for transfer. What will you do if you are posted to a difficult place? Do you think God the Father posted his Son Jesus Christ to an easy place when he sent him to this world?

A missionary who fully trusts in God knows that God is in control of where he is posted. If the missionary thinks the mission leaders are sending him to a hard place, he will not be happy. But if he knows God is sending him, he will be content and entrust all things to God in prayer. If a missionary knows that God himself has called him, then he knows that God is with him in that difficult place.

Story

A missionary was posted to a village full of shrines and idols. There were even shrines in the house where he slept. During the time of their idol-festival, all non-indigens had to leave the village or they would be killed. At

first, the missionary was very afraid to stay in the village. The noise of the idol worshippers kept him awake at night.

The missionary prayed about the situation and told God he did not like staying in the village. But God spoke to his heart and told him that he should preach to these people. Then the missionary was determined to serve God and believed that God would help him. He prayed fervently, and God protected him from all the evil powers surrounding him. He was able to win the friendship of the people, learn some of their language and get some converts in that place. Before it was time for him to leave, he was glad he had stayed there.

Discussion Questions

1. Is it better for a mission to decide from the headquarters where to post a missionary or should the missionaries themselves be the ones to decide where they will go?
2. What can a mission do to help the missionaries to feel happy about where they are posted?
3. What should a missionary do if he is posted to a place he does not like?

10. Where will you stay?

When a missionary goes to live in a new place, he needs a house to stay in.

Sometimes there is a convert living there who wants the missionary to come. He may offer to give a room of his house for the missionary to stay in.

If this is not possible, the missionary might go to the place and ask the chief or one of the local people to give or rent him a room or house.

If there is no place for the missionary to stay in the place where he wants to work, he might stay in a nearby town and make visits to the place until he can get a house there.

Later, the missionary or the converts might build a house just for the missionary.

If there are already other missionaries working in that place, the new missionary may be able to stay with them for a while.

Usually, the missionary does not find a place to live all by himself. His mission society will usually help him or her to find a place to live.

It is very good if missionaries can live at first in the same house with some of the local people. This will help them learn the language and culture

of the people faster. If they stay with another missionary or people of their own culture, the old missionaries will teach them about the local people from their own point of view. It is better if the new missionaries can find out about the local people from the people themselves.

The missionary needs to try to find out quickly how a good neighbour should behave in that culture. What should the missionary and his wife and children do so that the people will be comfortable and happy having the missionary family living with them? For example, if a missionary family is living in a convert's house, maybe the missionary's wife should help fetch water and firewood, help take care of the other family's children or do other things for the owner's family. Or maybe in that culture they don't expect her to do such things. Try to find out the right thing to do.

There are problems in living with other people. Maybe the local children will teach your children to do things you don't like. Maybe people will get tired of sharing their house with you after some time. When you have been there for a while, it may be good to rent, buy or build your own house, depending on the local situation. Your house should be like the houses of other people there. They should feel free to visit you.

Story

A missionary was sent to an area where there was no church but there were a few converts. One of the converts gave the missionary a room in his compound. The missionary stayed there with his family. The missionary's wife helped the owner's wife do the household work and cooking. The missionary family were able to learn a lot about the culture of those people.

The convert's wife was not a strong Christian like her husband. After some time she became unhappy that a room in their compound was being used by the visitors. The missionary could see it was causing a problem between the convert and his wife. The chief had given land to the missionary, but he had not yet had time to build his house. He decided to quickly build a house of cornstalks. It was the cold season, but the missionary family moved to the cornstalk house. A few months later they built a mud house and settled more comfortably. The missionary knew it was better to suffer for a while in the cornstalk hut than to cause a problem in the convert's family.

Discussion Questions

1. What are the advantages and disadvantages of living in the same house as some of the local people?

2. What will be the effect if the missionary's house is different from the houses of the local people?
3. Compare with others in the class what is expected as good behaviour of neighbours or families living together in your area.

11. How will you be supported?

Every missionary needs to eat, and he or she needs many other things too. In some missions, each missionary is asked to go and ask his friends or his church to make contribution to his support. In other missions, the mission pays a certain amount as allowance every month to the missionary. The mission receives donations from churches and individuals and uses the money to pay the missionary.

The Bible says, "The Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel." (1 Cor 9:14). When Paul got gifts from the Christians in Philippi to support him in his missionary work, he told them, "You sent me aid again and again when I was in need. Not that I am looking for what may be credited to your account...and my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus" (Phil 4:17 & 19). This shows that God is pleased with people who give to missionaries and blesses them. A missionary should be supported by the people of God, not by unbelievers (3 Jn 7).

Many times the money given by missions to their missionaries is not really enough to meet all their needs. If a missionary sees the money given to him by his mission as a "salary" and he is their "employee", he will be very unhappy. A low salary makes a worker feel unimportant. He may be angry at his employer and complain a lot.

However, missionaries should not see themselves as "employees". They are servants of the Most High God and God has promised to supply all their needs. The work they are doing is very important and they will be highly honoured in heaven. Missionaries must pray and trust God for all their needs. The money given by the mission is just a help. The mission does not have enough money to fully support all the missionaries. God will send the rest of the needed support in his own way.

As a missionary prays about his or her financial needs, God will provide in various ways. Sometimes the missionary has an opportunity to farm and grow some of his own food. Maybe she can do some small business. And God will send help unexpectedly as it is needed. If the missionary depends on the mission or certain people to meet his needs and not on God, he or she will be disappointed.

But a missionary also needs to be careful. Some missionaries engage in business, trade or farming to such an extent that they have little time for evangelism and teaching the converts. This will spoil your work, and make the local people suspect you.

Some missionaries spend a lot of time going around to people and churches to beg them for money rather than praying to God to supply their needs and getting on with the work. It is not wrong to tell the people of God about your need. But trust in God. Don't make a nuisance of yourself by begging.

Story

A missionary was working with a mission that did not usually send his allowance on time. In fact, sometimes he went for months without receiving anything from them. He was not working in his home country, so it was very difficult for him to live. At times he felt very bitter against his mission.

At last the missionary realised that he had been trusting in the mission and not in God. He decided to trust God fully. He forgave the mission for not paying him, and wrote to them that they should not send him any allowance again. He was going to trust God completely.

After that, the missionary found that God was taking care of him. Even though he had troubles and trials, when all hope was gone, God used to send help. For example, one day as he was trekking to a new place to preach, he hired a man to carry his loads. The man ran away with the loads, and most of the missionary's money. He had to spend the night outside. At first he felt very sorry for himself and wondered why God allowed this to happen. However, he continued his journey. When the missionary got back home, he saw a letter had arrived for him. He opened it, and inside was money of exactly the value of the money and property the thief had taken away. Then he knew that God was still taking care of him.

Discussion Questions

1. In what ways are missionaries like and unlike "employees" of the mission they work with?
2. What will happen to a missionary who believes the mission should supply all his needs?
3. What will happen to a missionary who believes she herself should supply her needs?

12. Handling money wisely

Money is a very powerful thing. As the Bible says, the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil (1 Tim 6:10). If you do not handle money wisely before God and men, you can ruin your ministry, your home and your life. However, with God's help, it is possible to be victorious over the power of money.

One of the qualifications for a church leader in 1 Timothy 3:3 is that he should not be a lover of money. He should not try to get money by dishonest means (1 Tim 3:8). Paul's testimony when he said goodbye to the elders of Ephesus was, "I have not coveted anyone's silver or gold or clothing" (Acts 20:33).

A missionary can get into a lot of trouble by borrowing money or buying on credit, especially from the people he or she has been sent to preach to. The people will feel that the missionary has come to exploit them. It is always dangerous to borrow money or take things on credit, because we cannot be sure we will be able to pay back. The person you are owing will not feel friendly to you, especially if you delay in paying. This will cause a lot of trouble for you, and the people will not like to listen to your preaching. If you are in need, trust God to help you. But do not borrow or buy on credit from the people you are sent to. The Bible says we should make sure we always clear all our debts (Romans 13:8).

Another thing that can cause a lot of problems between you and other people is lending money to them. In most cases they will not be able to pay you back. Then you will be tempted to hate the person who owes you, and also you will be without your money. If someone comes to borrow money, it is better just to give the person as a gift what you can afford. Then there is no question of expecting payment. Jesus said that when you lend, you should not expect to get the money back (Luke 6:34-35). So if you lend, lend generously and in love.

Another problem some missionaries have is being faithful about money. If some money is given you for a certain purpose and you use it for another thing, you are not faithful. For example, if you are given money for your children's school fees and you use it instead to buy a goat for Christmas, the people who gave you the money will not want to give you any more money. Unfaithfulness in money will stop God's blessing on you and it can even lead to your being removed from missionary service.

Stories

A certain had a problem with his eyes so his church collected money and gave it to him to buy eyeglasses. Later the missionary went to tell another person that he needed glasses. When the church found out that he used their money for another thing, they felt he was not faithful. He had to be removed from missionary service.

Another missionary complained that the people in the village where he stayed were always coming to borrow money from him. He used to tell the people he had no money, because he did not want to lend to them and he didn't want them to be annoyed with him for not lending. One day, a visitor gave him money in front of his house. He was annoyed with the visitor, because when the people saw he had money they came to borrow it from him. The missionary felt the visitor should have given him the money secretly so the villagers would not know he had money.

Discussion Questions

1. What should the missionary in the second story do to solve his problem?
2. Read Matthew 5:42 and Luke 6:34-35. Do you think missionaries obey these verses, and if not, why not?
3. What are the spiritual problems that cause some missionaries to be unfaithful with money?

13. Learning, respecting and following the customs of the people

When you go as a missionary, you will find that the people where you are sent do many things differently from the way you do them. They greet, dress, eat, take care of children, farm, and do many other things that do not seem right to you.

It is only a proud man who believes that his own way of doing things is the right way. They are right, and you are right too. So respect them and accept what they do. They are sensible people like you. If you do not accept them but despise them, they will not listen to your preaching.

Maybe some of the things they do, like getting drunk, are not pleasing to God. You know they will change these after they become Christians. Be patient. They do not have the Spirit of God in them yet.

The Apostle Paul was a Jew. But God sent him to preach to the Gentiles (Rom 15:15-16). Their culture was different from his. This is what he said about himself when he was preaching to the people of various cultures: "To

the Jew I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law) so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some" (1 Cor 9:20-22).

In this passage we see that Paul tried to follow the culture of the people as much as possible so as not to offend people and drive them away from the gospel.

In all of the things they do which are not sinful a missionary should try to fit in with the people. Dress in a way which makes you look normal and respectable in their eyes. Greet respectfully. Eat their food. Learn how to do things the way they do. Following their customs makes them feel that you love them. It helps you to understand how they feel and think. It also helps them to respect you and listen to what you say. Some of their customs, like dressing and greeting, you can learn quickly from just watching the people. But for some of the customs you will have to ask. For example, you might need to ask someone beforehand what you should do if you attend various ceremonies, or what you are expected to do to be a good neighbour, friend or tenant. Study their customs and ask them questions. Don't ask questions as if you want to condemn them. Ask because you really want to understand, do the right thing and fit in. When they see you are sincerely interested in them, they will help you. Try to get a very good friend among the people who will explain things to you and tell you if you are acting properly.

Story

A certain missionary came from a culture where the younger ones greet the elders by shaking hands. He went to a place where the younger ones greet the elders by lying down flat before them on the ground. The missionary took this to be that the younger ones were worshipping the elders. He said the people's custom was wrong and idolatrous.

When the people heard that the missionary was misinterpreting their culture, they were very angry. They refused to listen to anything else he had to say.

Later the missionary came to understand that the custom of prostration just meant normal respect for elders. Although it was hard for him, he tried bowing down to elders when greeting them. When the people saw that he now understood and accepted their custom, they were very happy. His ministry improved since the people were now ready to listen to him.

Discussion Questions

1. Why is it difficult for us to follow the customs of other tribes?
2. What could be the result if a missionary does not try to understand and follow the customs of the people he lives among?
3. How can you know if a particular custom of the people is really wrong for you as a Christian to adopt? Think about the story in this chapter.
4. Talk to a friend whose tribe is different from yours. Make a list of things in his culture that are similar to yours, and things that are different. Discuss with each other how important the things are which are different. What would each of you think of the other if he refused these things?

14. Learning the language of the people

Many missionaries do not bother to learn the language of the people they are sent to. They feel that they should preach to the people in Hausa or English. If the people cannot understand, the missionary gets someone to interpret for him. The missionary may feel that learning the people's language is a waste of time.

However, when we preach the gospel we are preaching something very important. We must preach it in the language the people understand best. Matthew 13:19 tells us that if someone hears the gospel but does not understand, Satan will snatch away the word from his heart.

If you as a missionary do not understand the language of the people, you will not really understand what the people think. You will not be able to understand their religion and what they already believe. You will not be able to find out what they are looking for in regard to spiritual needs. You may start from preaching parts of the gospel that do not interest the people or things they don't like, and drive them away from Christianity.

It is very important for you as a missionary to show the people that you love them. They will be more convinced if you try to learn their language. If you do not love people, you will not want to learn their language. If you love them and want to get close to them, you will learn it.

You can start learning from the things you need to say often. Learn the greetings, how to buy things in the market, how to ask for directions, how to ask for help and how to offer to help. Try also to learn how they talk about what they believe and what is important in their culture.

Learning language takes time. It may be more than a year before you can preach in that language. Learning and practicing the language will take up

most of your time. But if you do it, you will make a real impact on the people's lives for the gospel.

Once I visited a missionary. I asked if he was learning the language of the people. He answered, "No, the language of these people is too difficult." Then I asked, "Can your wife speak it?" "Oh, yes," he said, "she can now speak it quite well." "What about your children?" "Yes," he said, "I take my children along to interpret for me when I do visitation." Do you think the missionary's excuse for not learning the language was good?

Story

Some missionaries went to some people in northern Ghana. They did not know the language of the people so they preached to them through interpreters. One of the things they told the people is that Jesus is the Son of God. The interpreter translated the words "Son of God" into that language. Much later, the missionaries discovered that in that language, the words "Son of God" were what they called diviners. They found out that the result of their preaching was that some of the people thought that Jesus was the diviner of the missionaries. The missionaries did not discover this mistake until they learned the language of the people. They had to find a better way to tell the people who Jesus is.

Discussion Questions

1. What could a mission do to encourage its missionaries to learn the language of the people?
2. What are the problems of preaching through an interpreter?
3. What problems make it hard for a missionary to learn the language of a people, and what can he do to overcome them?

15. Find out about the area

If you want to reach an area for Christ, you need to find out what the area is like. The questions you need to know the answers to are:

1. What kinds of people live in this area? You need to know the tribes that live there. Are all the people in the area the same tribe? Is one tribe more numerous or stronger than the others? What kind of work do the people do? Maybe you will find out that in a place where you want to work, half the people are Hausas who do farming and half are Fulani herdsmen. Or maybe you are in a town where half the people are indigens and half of them are traders and workers from other states. What languages do the people speak?

What language can you use to make them really understand your message? Are there many people living in this area or just a few? Are people migrating to this place or mostly leaving it?

2. What is the religion of the people of the area? Do all the people have the same religion? What are the beliefs of their religion and how do they practice it?

3. What are the politics of this area? You need to know who the chiefs and traditional rulers are. Is there one tribe ruling over other tribes? How do they choose their rulers? Who has control over the use of land? Is the power of the traditional rulers strong or are there other people who really control things? How easy will it be for you to get converts and start a church considering the power and opinions of the rulers?

4. What is the geography of this area? By this we mean, where do the roads pass, what villages and towns are on each road? Are there hills or rivers that make communication difficult to some people? You should try to travel around your area so that you know it. Visit the nearby villages. Find out if the people in the place where you are staying have relatives and contacts in other places. Find out if there are schools and clinics in your area.

5. What kind of Christian work has been done in the area before? You need to know if any other church or mission has worked there or is working there now. Do they have churches? You should know where all the churches are. How successful have they been at getting converts? Try to find out why they are successful or why they failed. Maybe one tribe is responding to the gospel and another tribe is not. Why would this be?

If you ask these questions, and write down the answers in a notebook, it will help you to think about how to do your work in a way that suits this area. You will know the problems you will face and start praying about them. You will avoid some costly mistakes which might make your work fail. You will also find out some needs that other missions or government have not been able to meet. This will help you to plan how to help people spiritually and physically.

Story

A certain mission wanted to work among a tribe in north-eastern Nigeria. When they got to the place, they decided to do a survey and find out the condition of the people. They found out that another mission had a lot of churches among this tribe. Then they made a map of the whole area where the tribe lived. They marked all the churches in the area on the map. They also marked the hills, rivers and valleys. When the map was finished, they discovered that almost all the churches were in the valleys. The part of the

tribe living in the hills had almost no churches at all, even though many people were living in the hills.

The new mission had started their first church in the valley too. Now they saw that it would be more important for them to concentrate on starting churches in the hills.

Discussion Questions

1. What might be the result if a missionary does not take time to know the area in which he is working?
2. How did the survey described in the story above help the missionaries know how to plan their work?
3. You can read the description of a church-planting survey of a town (Jimeta-Yola) in Dr Paul Fritz's book "How to Plant and Grow a Church in Nigeria" pages 74-77.
4. Think about your own home town or village. Try to answer these questions about that place:
 - a) What kind of people live there?
 - b) What is their religion and how do they practice it?
 - c) What is the politics of the area?
 - d) What is the geography of the area?
 - e) What kind of Christian work has been done there before?
 - f) In the light of all your answers, what would be a good plan for spreading the gospel in your area?

16. Finding out the people's spiritual interest

Most of us have been taught how to do witnessing. What we usually tell people is, because they are sinners, they are going to hell. But if they accept Jesus Christ, they will be forgiven and go to heaven instead.

One missionary went to tell this to a certain tribe. The people, however, rejected the message. They said that since their ancestors are not in heaven, they would not like to go there. They prefer to go where their ancestors are when they die.

Why did these people reject the message? They do not believe they are going to hell, and they are not interested in heaven. What the missionary told them is true, but it did not touch any point they are interested in. What the missionary needs to do is learn the language and culture of these people. As he stays with them, after some time he will find out some fears and problems they have because of spiritual matters. When he tells them God's

answer to these problems from the Bible, they will be interested. From there they can begin to understand the gospel.

Jesus did this when he talked to the Samaritan woman at the well. He used her interest in water to start his preaching. He told her about living water (John 4:7-15).

The apostle Paul did the same thing when he preached to the pagan people of Athens (Acts 17:22-31). He saw many pagan shrines in the city. On one of the shrines was written, "To an Unknown God." From this Paul knew that they had an idea that there was a God they did not know. He said, "I am going to tell you about this God who has been unknown to you until now." This made the people interested in his preaching.

Both Jesus and Paul watched what the people were doing. A missionary can also ask people why they do some things, or what will happen if they don't do certain things, or how certain customs came about. As a missionary lives with the people he will experience some of the same problems that the people do. All these will help him to know their problems and what will interest them.

Here is another example of this in our own days from the country of Zambia:

Story

Some missionaries went to the Toka-Leya people. When the people heard the gospel preached to them by the missionaries, they felt it was "bad news". The missionaries preached that a man should have only one wife and that people should not drink beer. So the people rejected the gospel.

Later, a new group of missionaries came. At first they did not preach. They learned the language and culture of the people. They found out that the people said their tribe used to be close to God. Then they offended God, and he left. They wished they could contact God again. The people told this to the missionaries when the missionaries asked the people what they knew about how the world began and how the world became as it is now.

The missionaries also found out that the people were very afraid of a very terrible kind of evil spirit called *isaku*. The *isaku* spirits could kill people, and the people had no medicine strong enough to stop them. It was hard for the missionaries to find out this information. They heard people mention being afraid of *isaku* but nobody would explain to them what it was. They prayed and asked God to help them find out about it. Finally, they found a native doctor who agreed to tell them about it.

After discovering these problems, the missionaries started preaching. They started by teaching the part of the Bible that would interest the people. They told them about the Holy Spirit. They said there is a Spirit stronger

than any evil spirit. It is a good Spirit. If you have this Holy Spirit, no *isaku* can hurt you. This was good news to the people.

Next, the missionaries told the people that God also wanted to get in contact with them again. He had sent his Son to the world to show them the way back to God. Anyone who believed in the Son would be given the Holy Spirit.

Because of this, many people believed in the Son of God, Jesus Christ. They found out that the power of the Holy Spirit was real. One day when some of the converts went to preach in a village, an old woman who was a witch came to meet them. She told them they should not enter the village or she would punish them. The Christians came to the village anyway, and preached the gospel. The next day, they heard that the old woman herself was dead. This made many more people come to Christ.

Because the people could now see the value of the gospel, the Holy Spirit could speak to them about other things like drinking and polygamy.

Discussion Questions

1. Why were the first set of missionaries who went to the Toka-Leya people not successful?
2. Why do you think the new missionaries did not start to preach immediately?
3. What points of interest did the new missionaries find in the people to get them interested in the gospel?
4. In what ways are the Toka-Leya people of Zambia like some unreached tribes in Nigeria?

17. Fighting the spiritual powers

A missionary may know everything about learning the customs, culture and language of the people, and still fail in his missionary work. This is because the Bible says in 2 Corinthians 4:4 that the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers so that they cannot understand the gospel. In the parable of the sower, Jesus also said that when the word of God comes to somebody and he does not understand it, the devil snatches the word out of his heart so he cannot believe (Matt 13:19; Mk 4:15). This shows us that even if we learn all the language and culture of the people, and make excellent plans for evangelizing them, if we cannot stop Satan from deceiving them, we will not have good results in our work.

Jesus also told us, “How can anyone enter a strong man’s house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man? Then he can rob his house” (Matt 12:29). The strong man is Satan, and Satan has been claiming the lives of all the unbelievers. We want to go and snatch them from him, but he will not let them go without fighting. Satan will fight by making the hearts of the people hard, and by causing problems and difficulties for us. He hopes we will be discouraged and leave. Satan has claimed this territory for thousands of years. He wants to claim that it should be his forever. What are we going to do to stop his work?

Once a father brought his son to Jesus. The son had an evil spirit that was trying to destroy him. Jesus was up on the mountain praying, so his disciples tried to cast the demon out. They were not able to do it. When Jesus returned, he rebuked them for their lack of faith. Then Jesus cast out the demon. The disciples asked Jesus why they could not get the demon out. Jesus replied, “Because of your little faith” (Matt 17:20) and “This kind only comes out by prayer.” Some versions of the Bible add “and fasting” (Mk 9:29). The whole story can be found in Matt 17:14-23; Mk 9:14-29 and Lk 9:37-43.

This teaching shows us what we should do if we want to get real converts in our missionary work. We must have faith in God’s power to defeat the powers of Satan in that place. We must also spend time in prayer and fasting for the deliverance of the people. We have to bind the “strong man” Satan by our prayers. Remember that Jesus told us that when we go into all the world to preach the gospel he is with us always. He said, “All authority in heaven and earth is given unto me” (Matt 28:18). If that same Jesus who has all authority is with us, then when we command the powers of Satan in the name of Jesus to release the people, they will have to do it.

This kind of praying cannot be done by one half hour of devotional prayers every morning. The missionary will have to set aside some days of fasting and prayer for the work. Some missionaries take one day a week for fasting and prayer, or some hours each day for intercession. Your prayers for the people and the area are just as much a part of your work as going out to preach. Your going out will have no power unless you get the power first in your prayer time.

Jesus was the Son of God, but he laid aside his glory when he came to earth. He spent some nights in prayer to get the power and guidance from his Father for all his miracles. He did it this way to teach us how we too can get power and wisdom for our work. If Jesus had to do it, do you think you can succeed without it?

Story

In a village in Niger State, the people were traditionalists. The missionaries worked there for forty years but only had a few converts. The believers were praying that God would destroy the power of the god that had a hold on the people.

Then one day there was a fight in the village among the traditionalists about who was to be the new head of the blacksmiths. Some people were killed in the fight. The section of the town that was cheated decided to leave the traditionalist religion. They brought out all the secret things which the women must not know about, and showed them to the women. They said that anyone should go to any religion he or she wanted.

Many people had wanted to become Christians but they could not because of the power of their traditional religion. Now they started coming to the church. In the next few years there were hundreds of converts in that place. God had answered the believers’ prayers and destroyed the power of the “strong man” so that the captives could be free and come to Christ.

Discussion Questions

1. Compare what will happen if the missionary fails to learn the culture and language of the people, or if he fails to fight Satan through prayers. Can we say one is more important than the other?
2. Billy Graham is an evangelist who held crusades all over the world. He refused to have any crusade in a place unless the prayer committee started their work months beforehand. Why do you think he did this?
3. Do you think that you pray enough? If not, what hinders you?

18. The power of your holy life

The proverb says, “Actions speak louder than words”. As you start your preaching in that place, people will be watching you to see if you yourself live by what you preach. If not, they will never pay attention to you.

They will watch how you use your time. Are you lazy? Some missionaries find it difficult to actually go for preaching. They spend a lot of time on their farms, or in going to town or to mission headquarters on various errands. They don’t spend time for prayer. It is hard, when you are in a strange place, to discipline yourself to do gospel work. The devil too will try to make you feel unwilling to do it.

One of the things you can do to help yourself is to make a schedule and put it on your wall. Set the times you will use for prayer and personal Bible

study, for family devotions, for witnessing, for visiting other villages etc. You need some time for recreation and rest too, but make sure it is not too much. If you spend half the day every day playing draughts with your neighbour, people will think you are not serious with God, and even God may think so!

People will also watch how you move with other people, especially the opposite sex. You must be more careful than normal so that no-one will suspect you, and so that you will not fall into temptation. Never be in a room with the door shut with any person of the opposite sex except your wife or husband. If you are talking to a person of the opposite sex alone even in the church building, keep the door open.

Another thing people will notice is whether you show love and kindness to other people. Are you patient and ready to help? Do you welcome visitors?

Your honesty is also important. Always make sure you keep yourself free from love of money or desire for material things that would make you compromise. Pay people what you owe them on time. If somebody gives you his thing to keep, keep it carefully and give it back when expected. If people learn that you always tell the truth and keep your word, they will respect you and listen to what you say.

You must not gossip or slander other people, or tear them down with your words. If someone tells you his personal problem, you should keep the matter to yourself. Be a true and loyal friend to other people.

When the Apostle Paul talked about his ministry, he was able to say that he had done the gospel work faithfully (Acts 20:18-20, 26-27). He had preached the whole gospel to them, and lived a holy life in the midst of trials. This is also like what Samuel was able to say to the people when he retired (1 Sam 12:1-5).

It is true that sometimes you will do what you believe in God's sight is right, but people will misunderstand and accuse you anyway. In that case, it is God's job to defend you and you can put your trust in Him. It says in 1 Peter 3:16-17, "Keep your conscience clear, so that, when you are abused, those who revile your good behaviour in Christ may be put to shame. For it is better to suffer for doing right, if that should be God's will, than for doing wrong."

Story

Once a Christian primary school teacher was posted to a Muslim village in Bauchi State. In that village, Muslims thought it was too worldly to listen to the radio, so they could not hear the gospel that way. Most of the "Christian" traders and workers in the village also seemed very worldly to

the villagers. They used to wear clothes that did not cover their bodies well, they spent their evenings playing cards, and they often chased the girls. For this reason, the villagers considered Christianity to be a very worldly religion, not worthy of the greatness of God.

The new school teacher was different. He did not play with the other "Christians" in the evenings but was seen studying the scriptures and praying in his room. Even at the school he did not chase the class six girls. His serious life made some of the young Muslim men take an interest in him. They visited his room in the night for conversations about spiritual things. As they saw he was serious about the things of God, they respected him. They told him that he would be even more respected if he should start wearing Hausa dress. He followed their suggestion and started wearing their clothes.

The result of this was that several of the young men finally became Christians. They had seen the truth through the holy life the young teacher was living, and that let them listen to his words of witness. In fact, so many people started taking an interest in the gospel that the government heard about it and he was sacked from his job.

Discussion Questions

1. Why was the teacher in the story successful in winning Muslims to Christ? What was the price he had to pay? Do you think it would have been better for him to keep quiet about his Christianity?
2. What kinds of rules do you think a missionary should make for himself about contacts with the opposite sex?
3. Why are some missionaries tempted to be lazy in their use of time?

19. Evangelizing people who have never heard before

Most people do not decide to believe in Jesus Christ and become Christians the first time they hear the gospel. Usually a sensible person wants to think about a new idea for some time before he decides to accept it.

One of the first things you want to do in evangelism is to find out how close the people are to understanding Christianity already. There are different steps in this.

1. Some people have never heard of Jesus Christ or the Bible. They are not in favour of the message or against it, because they don't even know it.

2. Some people have heard the name of Jesus Christ, and maybe something about him. Maybe they have heard that he was a prophet, that he did miracles, or that Christians say he is the Son of God. But what they have heard is not much. They don't think about it in their daily lives. Some of these people think that Christianity is good, some of them think it is bad.

3. Some people may have heard quite a bit about Jesus. Maybe they have been to church before and heard the message of salvation, but they have never repented and become Christians. Some of these people have hardened their hearts against becoming believers. Some of them are still thinking about it, and one thing or another is hindering them from repenting.

The way you will witness to people at step 1. is different from the way you will witness to people at step 3. You cannot rebuke people at step 1. for their unbelief, because they have never heard the message before. If you present them with the gospel and ask them to repent that very day, hardly any of them will respond. They have not had time to think about what you have said, to understand it and decide they will believe it. Some of them may tell you they want to repent. You do not know their real reasons for saying this. Maybe they want to be polite to you, or maybe they think you will give them something. This type of convert will disappoint you in the end. It is better to go to them many times and explain very well to them what it means to be a Christian. Then when they decide, they know what they are doing.

Story

Some missionaries in Senegal went to a group of people who had never heard the gospel before. They told the people God had sent them with a message. The people said they were interested in hearing the message, so the missionaries started having regular meetings to explain it. They did not call this "church" or "fellowship". It was a time for explanations.

The missionaries started teaching from the story of creation in Genesis. They taught next about Adam and Eve, the fall of man, Noah, Abraham and the other Old Testament people. Then they taught how the prophecies of the Old Testament were fulfilled when God sent his Son. They taught how he preached, lived, died and rose again. This teaching took about one year. At the end of the year, the missionaries asked if the people wanted to put their trust in Jesus to save them and take them to God. The people told the missionaries that they believed that the message was true. They had been accepting everything as it was taught, and now that the missionaries had explained how Jesus can forgive us and take us to God, they accepted this too. From that time on, the meetings became a church, because it was made

up of believers. The missionaries counselled with each individual to make sure each one had put his own trust in Jesus.

Discussion Questions

1. Do you think the missionaries in Senegal in the story took too long in explanations before they asked the people if they believed?
2. Suppose you go to a village where the gospel has never been preached before. You gather some people, preach a basic gospel message and ask those who want to repent to put up their hands. What do you think will happen? What will you do then? What other way could you have approached this village?

20. Evangelizing people in traditional religion

As we mentioned in chapter 16, many people in African Traditional Religion may not find the gospel interesting in the way we sometimes preach it. To them it seems like bad news, because it forbids drinking and polygamy. It sends children off to school so that they don't come back to the family in the village much any more. It disrupts respect for elders and ancestors who have died. And it does not solve the most important problems of life, like how to get fertility, to keep society together and to have protection from enemies.

We need to remember that the traditionalists believe in God. This helps us in our evangelism. They know that God is all-powerful. But they sometimes think God is too far away to help them. We are bringing good news about a way that ordinary people can get close to Almighty God and get his help for their everyday problems.

Fertility, harmony and protection are important to traditionalists. These are all very good things. We need food and children, we need peace and co-operation in society, and we need protection from enemies. God is interested in all these things. We need to preach about him in such a way that the people will see that God can help them even more than their gods and ancestors. As a missionary, you need to believe very strongly that only God can help and any other powers are dangerous. How will you show that you believe this?

Of course, missionaries have used agricultural methods and health care services to help people. But health and farming are also important spiritual matters. The missionary must show the people that it is God who has given us hospitals and fertilizer. But he or she must also show people that prayer

is powerful for these things. He prays for his farm and his children. He gives the firstfruits of his farm to God. He has special prayers for rain when it is needed. And he has faith in God to meet all these needs.

A missionary should notice the times when the people appeal to their gods and ancestors. They may do this in the farm, when children are born, and on many other occasions. As a Christian, the missionary should pray to the true God at these times instead. He or she should not tell the people to stop what they do to protect and help themselves without giving them something better.

Missionaries can also help keep peace and harmony in the society. They can do this by making friends with the chief or other authorities and co-operating in any community activities that are not against the commands of God. Missionaries should pray for the community. They should teach wives, children and young people who get converted to be helpful and respectful to their husband or parents. They should teach the duty of Christian young people to help their people even if they go away to school. Missionaries should be more interested in people learning to read so they can read the Bible than in getting them education that will take them away from helping in the community. Whenever possible, missionaries should preach first to the heads of families and get their permission for members of their families to hear the teaching. All these will help the community to see that the missionaries are not trying to bring trouble to the community.

In spite of all these, Jesus did say that he came to bring a sword, and not peace. This is because some people will become Christians while others will not (Matt 10:34-37). We know the gospel will change things, and the believers will be misunderstood. But we don't want to make more trouble than is necessary.

Another part of the good news that we bring is that the Christian has protection from the evil powers of witches, curses and other kinds of medicine and magic. This is because Christians submit themselves totally to be owned by Jesus Christ. Jesus will take care of his property. He will not protect anyone who is only pretending to be a true Christian. Missionaries who teach this will be tested. They will have to prove with their own lives that the power they have is stronger than the power of witchcraft.

Story

Once there was a drought in a certain area. All the crops in the farms were being lost because of lack of rain. The Christians started to pray that God would show his power to the people and let the people know that Jesus is the only Saviour.

First the traditionalists did their ceremonies to make the rain come. They offered sacrifices and did all that the native doctors said to do, but no rain fell.

Next the Muslims tried. They slaughtered a ram and used all their greatest powers. But no rain came.

Finally it was the time of the Christians. They waited for some time after the Muslims did their own, so that nobody would think that the rain came for any other reason than prayer to Jesus.

The day of the prayer meeting for rain, many of the Christians came to church with umbrellas. They really believed that God was going to send rain. The believers started to pray. They stayed in the church for some hours, asking God to show his power. The clouds filled the sky, and the rain came down! The Christians were glad they brought their umbrellas because they needed them to go home. After this, all the people in the town knew that it was more powerful to pray in the name of Jesus Christ than any other way.

Discussion Questions

1. What things in the beliefs of traditionalists can help us to explain the gospel to them?
2. What mistakes have missionaries sometimes made in preaching the gospel to traditionalists?
3. What problems do the traditionalists know they have which the gospel can help to solve?

21. Evangelizing Muslims

Muslims are different from traditionalists. They believe in one true God. They are against worshipping idols. They believe in heaven and hell and the judgement day. These things are all like Christianity.

But Muslims are like traditionalists in that they are interested in fertility, harmony and protection. Many still do magic to get these things. They believe very much in dreams and visions.

Muslims are interested in holiness and pleasing God. Most of the religious things they do are to please God. They hope that God will accept them and forgive them on the judgement day. But they are never sure that God will forgive them. This is one of the problems Muslims have. We bring good news to Muslims because we tell them how someone can be sure that God will forgive him or her.

There are several things that can help Muslims to accept our message. First, we must show them that we are really holy people. We should dress like them, covering our bodies well. We should do what is right, be truthful and godly. We should show proper respect for the Bible. We should not openly eat things that Muslims consider unclean. We should not start by talking about things that Muslims think are wrong, such as the Trinity.

Also, we must show love to Muslims. We can help them when they are in trouble. This will show them that we are also preaching the message of Jesus to them because we love them and know that it is good for them.

Muslims also need to see the spiritual power in Jesus Christ, just as traditionalists do. When we put our faith in Jesus for help and he answers us, this will help convince them. We can pray for Muslims in the name of Jesus so that he can show them himself that he loves them.

Because Muslims believe a lot in dreams, we should pray that God will give them dreams to show them that Jesus is the true way.

We should try to explain the doctrines of the Bible which are different from Islam in a wise way. You can get help on how to do this by reading some books on Islam and Christianity. Some doctrines that are different are 1) What is God like? (the Trinity, Son of God). 2) How can sin be forgiven? 3) How can you know you will go to heaven? 4) Who is the prophet Muhammad? 5) Is the Qur'an from God? 6) Have the Christians changed the Bible? There are other differences between the beliefs of Muslims and Christians. We need to know how to explain our beliefs without making Muslims very angry.

One of the problems that Muslims have when they want to believe in Jesus Christ is that they will be persecuted by their fellow-Muslims. The missionary needs a lot of faith to help converts trust God to protect them. Missionaries may have to allow converts to stay in their house and help them in other ways. The missionaries will then be persecuted too. Missionaries should be ready for this and have their faith firmly in Christ.

It is good if converts can still live with their people. That way their people will be able to see the change Jesus has made in their lives. If there are a number of Muslim converts living near each other, it is good to have meetings just for them. They can be taught the things they need to know. If they go to a regular church they may not get their questions answered and other believers may not be ready to accept them.

Sometimes missionaries don't know what to do with a new Muslim convert. Because he is being persecuted by his people, this may cause trouble for the missionary. Some missionaries try to send new Muslim converts away to Bible School immediately. This is not the best idea. The new Christian needs time to grow in his faith and learn how to deal with his

new situation before he goes to Bible School. In Bible School he will be put into a strange environment with people of a different culture. All the adjustment may be too much for him.

Also, he should not go to a Bible School meant for training pastors unless he knows God is calling him to be trained for ministry. Instead, the missionary should have special classes for converts from Islam to help them grow in the faith. Maybe the missionary society could have special dry-season classes for new converts from Islam from the various stations where they can come together and get lessons to help ground them in the faith.

Story

Remember the story about the Christian school teacher in Chapter 17? In that story we said that several young men decided to become believers in Jesus because of his life. Now that they were believers they needed to be taught and have Christian fellowship. There was no church in their village. The nearest church was seven kilometres away. For a few Sundays they tried going there. It was a long way to trek every week. But the service was strange to them. They had many questions and problems which Christians who were not from Muslim backgrounds did not have. In the church, nobody had time to help them with their special problems. The other Christians, who were not from a Muslim background, were suspicious of them.

The school teacher decided to try to send some of them to Bible School. Only one went. Fortunately, that one was very intelligent and adaptable. He was able to survive in the school and learn to grow as a Christian. Today he is a preacher. But the other converts went back to Islam after the teacher left their village.

Discussion Questions

1. What do you think could have helped more of the converts of the teacher to continue in the faith?
2. What will happen in your witnessing to a Muslim if you start by telling him that Jesus is the Son of God?
3. What are some of the things that will help to convince a Muslim that Jesus is really the only way to God?

22. What is a church?

A church is not building. It is a fellowship of people who believe in Jesus Christ. The Bible tells us that the Church is the body of Jesus Christ, and he is the head (Romans 12:4-5). The Church is the Bride of Christ (Eph 5:23-27; 2 Cor 11:2). The Church is the family of God (Eph 2:19). It is the flock with God as shepherd (Acts 20:28). It is a building for the Holy Spirit to live in, and the building blocks are individual Christians (1 Pet 2:5). The Church is a new “people”, like a new nation or tribe (1 Pet 2:9-10). All these show us that, in God’s eyes, the church is a group of believing people, not a building. We sometimes call a building a “church”, but if it is not the meeting place of a group of people who are really born again and belong to Christ, it is not even a church. You cannot have a church in any place until you have real converts. Just making a building and putting a signboard at the front will not make it a church in God’s eyes. Just gathering people together on Sundays who are not yet converted, is not a church. You have a church when the believers meet together.

The church meets together regularly. What do they do when they meet together? Let us examine the Bible to see what a missionary is supposed to do in the new church he is starting. We can see this from the example of the early church in Acts 2:38-47 as well as some other passages.

1. The first thing a church is supposed to do is *worship* (Acts 2:47 and 13:2). Worship is not the same as having a Sunday morning service. Worship is praising God, adoring him, telling him that we love him, saying how great he is, telling him that we will love and obey him always. We can do this in songs, in prayers, and in testimonies to each other. Mostly we do it in songs. The church should learn to sing their praises directly to God, and to think about him and mean what they are saying in the songs. It is good to have many songs in the language of the people for praising God, so that the people will really understand what they are saying to him. Songs of this kind are really prayers that we sing to God. During worship, the believers feel that they are in the presence of God. They enjoy fellowship with him. They are happy because they are close to God.

2. The next thing a church should do is *fellowship* with each other (Acts 2:42 and Hebrews 10:25). We need to show our love to each other and to strengthen each other in the Christian life. Unfortunately, in many churches, the people only get to hear and be encouraged by the preacher. They don’t get to know each other and show love and appreciation for each other. A

missionary needs to plan the meeting times of the church in such a way that the members will have a chance to strengthen each other and show love to each other. The thing that encourages fellowship most is often working together. As choir members prepare music, Sunday School teachers plan their work or church elders make decisions for the good of the church together, fellowship becomes richer.

3. Another thing the church should do is *teaching* from the word of God (Acts 2:42; 6:3-4; 11:26; 1 Tim 4: 6,11,13; 2 Tim 2:2; 4:2; Titus 2). The Lord gives the church some people to be teachers (Eph 4:11 and James 3:1). Not everybody is a teacher. Teaching is mentioned many times. It is very important. The believers must grow in their understanding of the word of God through good teaching.

4. The church should also have time for *prayer* (Acts 2:42; 6:4; 1 Tim 2:1-4,8). This is part of the church’s ministry. By prayer, the church can make a lot of things happen. They should pray for their own needs, for their community’s needs, for missionary work, and for the nation. Prayer is part of the work of the church.

5. The church needs to celebrate *baptism* and the *Lord’s Supper* (Acts 2:42; 1 Cor 10:16; 11:23-26; Matt 28:19; Acts 2:38; 8:18). Baptism takes place once for each believer, and the Lord’s Supper is to be conducted often, for all the believers. These are commands of Jesus to his people. If we want to obey him, we need to do them.

6. The church needs to take care of the *physical needs* of its members. This means helping those who are in need (Acts 2:44-46; 4:34-35; 6:1; 20:35). The members must be taught to do this, and then they must do it. Help can be in the form of money or food or going with someone to take care of him in the hospital. We all belong to one family in the church and we have to take care of each other like a family.

7. The church needs to go out to *witness* (Acts 2:47; 8:4). They should organise themselves to go for preaching as well as going individually.

8. The church needs to exercise *discipline* (Matt 18:15-20). If one of the members is not living like a Christian and is bringing shame to the name of Christ, the rest of the members have to deal with the problem. Some examples in the Bible are found in Acts 5; 1 Tim 5:1-2; Titus 3:10; 1 Cor 5:5; 2 Cor 13:2,10; and 1 Tim 1:20. The believers need to look at what the

early Church did to offenders and decide together what to do to a brother who is not following Christ properly.

In the chapters that follow, we will discuss how a missionary can put each of these things into practice in the church he starts.

Story

A certain missionary had gone to an unreached area. He preached to the people and got some converts, so he started having Sunday meetings with them. They built a church building to meet in. Unfortunately, this missionary did not know about the eight things a church should do. So he didn't teach the people to do some of them. He didn't teach them that part of the work of the church is to pray. They didn't usually have prayer meetings. He didn't teach them about witnessing so they left him to do all the evangelism. The missionary found out that the church he had started was weak. Whenever he was away a few weeks it almost collapsed. He was sure that if he should go away for two months, the church would stop functioning.

Discussion Questions

1. How well did some churches you have attended do the eight things a church is supposed to do?
2. Why is it necessary for a church to do all of these things?
3. What are some ways a missionary could make sure that his converts understand and start doing these eight things?

23. Finding a meeting place

In order to witness to unbelievers and teach new believers, you have to meet them. Where will you do this?

In the beginning, you have to go where they are. They will not likely come to you. Go to their homes. If you are not allowed to go inside, there will probably be a place outside the house where the men sit to talk. A man missionary can sit and talk with them. You can also meet people in the market, at the well, at the motor park, or at any other place where people meet.

Once you have got some interested people who want to know more, you will have to find a regular place to meet them. This should be a place that is a bit quiet so they can concentrate on the teaching. If they are not yet converted, it may need to be a place where they do not have to commit

themselves by coming to the church building. Let them decide the best place to meet you. Maybe they will like to come to your house. Maybe there is another place they can suggest. If you have a church building and they want to come there, they can do that. If you do not have a church building yet, you might want to build a room or a shelter near your house as a discussion room. Think about how you can best discuss with people and teach them without making them uncomfortable.

Once you have some real converts, it is time to start a church. If you start a "church" before you have people who are really born again, the community will have the wrong idea about what a church is. This will make the church weak. A church is not a building. It is a fellowship of people who believe in Jesus Christ. They meet together regularly. Where will they meet?

In the Bible times, the churches did not have their own buildings. They met in the homes of the members. In some communities, you cannot get land to build a church building. That does not mean you cannot have a church. You can meet in the home of one of the members, or even under a tree. The important thing is to meet frequently.

If the community leaders are not absolutely hostile, you should inform them about your meetings. Let them know where the meetings will be and what kind of things are done in the meeting. This will help them not to be suspicious of you.

It is good if you can meet in the same place all the time. This will make sure people are not confused about where the meeting is to be. If you cannot meet somewhere permanently, meet in one place for a while, then change to another place for a while. Make sure your members know that the church is the people, not a building. Teach them about this from the Bible.

Sometimes you can rent a hall for meetings. Where will you get the money to do this? It is best if the members provide their own meeting place. They should donate the money for the hall. If they cannot do that, they should fast and pray for the Lord to provide them with a place to meet. This will help them to increase their faith and act together as a fellowship. Sometimes the mission headquarters provides the money to rent the hall. But if the headquarters does too much, the members will feel that their church belongs to the headquarters and not to the members. Then they will not work so hard to make the church a success.

Sometimes you can get land to build a church. How should it be? Will it be built of zinc or wood or mud or cement? What kind of roof will it have? Again, the church should be built by the members themselves with whatever they can afford. If they need more than they can afford, this will help them pray for it. If the members are in charge of making their own

church building, they will know that they are the people responsible for the welfare of all aspects of the church. They may hire or beg someone to help them make the church building, but they should be the ones to make sure it goes up. The missionary should explain to them the danger of expecting other people to do it all for them. The one who pays is the one in control. If the members are in charge of the building, they will build a kind of building that is suitable to their area. Of course the missionary will help build the church because he or she is one of the members. But you should remember that it is not “my” church but “our” church.

Story

Some Muslims became Christians. They decided to be meeting together to help each other and to attract other Muslims who were interested in Christ, instead of joining already existing churches. They thought about whether they should build a church building. Some of them were getting their houses burnt down by other Muslims who wanted to persecute them for turning to Christ. They decided that if they built a church building, the Muslims would probably just burn it down. So they met in some of their homes instead. Not having a building did not stop them from having fellowship and being a church.

Discussion Questions

1. What may be the result if a missionary gets a lot of money and goes to build a church building in a community without consulting the converts much?
2. What will you do if you are a missionary in an area where the chief will not release land for a church building?
3. How did the early Church manage to have strong churches without any church buildings?

24. Teaching the converts the Bible

Acts 2:42 says that the first converts devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching. The apostles were teaching them the word of God. How can you teach your converts the word of God in the church? This is an important part of making the converts into disciples. Jesus said, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations...teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you” (Matt 28:19-20).

We are told that new believers need the milk of the word, not the meat at first. The missionary will not start teaching from the book of Jeremiah or Revelation. There are some basic things he can start teaching:

1. Teach the people about the creation of the world and how sin came into the world.
2. Teach the people about the coming of Jesus Christ to the world.
3. Teach them what Jesus taught us about how to live (such as in the Sermon on the Mount in Matt chapters 5-7).
4. Teach them about the power of Jesus over demons and all wicked powers. Use the miracles of Jesus to teach this.
5. Teach them about the death and resurrection of Jesus and what it means for us.
6. Teach them about the coming of the Holy Spirit and about the power of the Holy Spirit in a believer's life.
7. Teach the people how to be sure they are really saved.
8. Teach them what happens to a believer when he or she dies.
9. Teach them about the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.
10. Teach them about God's love for us and how to experience it.

You will also teach them about the eight things a church is supposed to do. For example, you will teach them about baptism and then baptise them.

Some of these things that you should teach from the Bible are summed up in the Apostles' Creed. It might be a good idea to get your members to memorize the Apostles' Creed and to teach them the meaning line by line with supporting passages from the Bible.

Some of your converts will not be able to get a Bible right away. Some of them cannot read. So it is important for them to memorize some parts of the Bible so that they can meditate on it when they are not in the church. Some good parts for them to memorize are the Lord's Prayer, 1 Corinthians 13, the 10 Commandments, Psalm 23, and other verses about topics you are teaching. You can also ask them to compose songs from passages in the Bible. This will help them to remember the teaching of the Bible. Whenever one of them puts into practice what he or she has learned from the scripture passages, let him give a testimony. Ask them how they are putting it into practice.

You can teach the Bible in Sunday School, the Sunday sermon, in morning devotions, home Bible study groups, and in most meetings when the church meets. Sunday School is very good because usually only the real believers attend. You can teach them deeper things. Some missionaries don't hold Sunday School for the converts. This means they have less opportunity to teach them the word of God. It also means that the children

do not get much teaching. Most children do not understand much from meetings for adults. They need someone to teach them on their level.

You will probably need to have devotions with the converts every morning to teach them how to meet with the Lord every day. This will be before they start the day's work. You also need to teach those who can read how to have their own daily devotional time and Bible study.

Story

Dr. McGavran was a missionary in India. He tried to find out what made Christians strong and why some were weak. He did a lot of research, and he found out that some people who joined the church for what looked like the wrong reasons (such as material gain) had turned out to be strong Christians while some people who had joined the church because of what looked like the right reasons (they wanted Christ to forgive their sins) turned out not to be very strong in faith. He found out that the reason was that the people who were taught the Bible very well after their conversion became strong, but those who were not taught were weak.

Discussion Questions

1. How can you make sure that you teach all these topics to your people?
2. How will you know if your members have understood the teaching you have given to them on these basic doctrines?
3. Read Hebrews 5:12 to 6:2, 2 Peter 1:5-8 and Ephesians 4:13-16. What will your members be like when they are mature?
4. What are some different methods of teaching the Bible?

25. Starting and running the Sunday School

One of the best ways to teach your converts the word of God is in the Sunday School classes. This is a time every week for Bible teaching which is divided into classes. There should be separate classes for the adults, the youth, the big children and the small children. This is so that each group can be taught according to their level of understanding.

Running a Sunday School involves some planning. You need places for all the classes. You need equipment, like blackboards and pictures. You need teachers to teach all the classes. And you need lesson materials. Sometimes you need to train the teachers too. Does all this seem like too much work? If you don't do it, most of your people will not learn the Bible and they will not know how to grow and live as good Christians.

The Sunday School classes do not all have to be inside a building, but they should all be in the shade. You can build some shelters or meet under the trees when it is not raining. If it is raining, you might have to have more than one class inside the church building. This could be very noisy. At first, when the classes are small, you might be able to have some of them in a room in somebody's house or in a primary school. All the classes do not have to be in the church premises. They do not all have to be at 9 am on Sunday morning. But they should have a regular weekly time and place to meet. For example, the adult Sunday School class might be at 9 am while the Youth Class is at 12 noon, or on Mondays at 4 pm. Getting teachers for Sunday School is often a problem. Usually at first, if the missionaries are a couple, the husband takes the adults and youth while the wife takes all the children. As some of the converts start to grow and mature, they can be given parts of the class to lead, and trained to teach. Then more classes can be divided out of the two main classes. The missionary can have a teacher training class in which they go over the lesson for next Sunday and how to teach it.

It will be very hard for the busy pastor/missionary or a new teacher to write and plan the lessons for himself. You likely need to buy a Sunday School book with lessons already written. This is where your mission should help you. They should be able to advise you about where to get lesson books. The lesson book should be the kind that gives training and suggestions to the teacher on how best to present the lesson. The teacher must be faithful in preparing the lesson beforehand if the material is to be useful in the lives of the students. You can also look for lesson books that teach the parts of the eight things a church should do which your people need to learn (like ELFON lesson books).

Your supporting church can also help you with Sunday School. Ask them to help you find good pictures or old lesson books that have been used in the church and are not needed, or help you buy some new materials. If there is a well-established church nearby, some of their members may come and help you as Sunday School teachers.

Story

A certain missionary had been working in an area for about two years. He had fifty converts coming to the church, but they mainly came for Sunday service. He didn't have any Sunday School.

One day when he was talking with some of them, he discovered that they didn't know who many of the famous people in the Bible really were. He used to mention people like David, Noah, Samson, Andrew and Barnabas in his sermons, but he found out the members didn't know who they were and

so they sometimes didn't understand the sermons. He decided that they needed Sunday School.

He went to visit the pastor in a nearby town and asked him to lend him an old Sunday School book. It was about the book of Genesis. He called the adults for class every week while his wife took the children and taught them the same story. At the end of the classes, everybody came together and answered questions about the lesson. After a few months, the members told the missionary that they were understanding the Bible and his messages better.

Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think it took so long for the missionary to start having Sunday School?
2. What else do you think the pastor from town could do to help the missionary with his Sunday School?
3. Why does Sunday School often teach the Bible to people better than preaching?

26. Teaching the converts to pray

Prayer is a very important part of the life of the church and of an individual Christian. It is through prayer that we get the power and wisdom to be successful in anything we do. When we are praying, God often puts it into our minds what we should do. If you do not teach your converts to pray, they will never be strong in the Lord.

We have the right to come to God directly because Jesus has brought us near to God. If your converts were Muslims before, they have a different idea of what prayer is than you do. They are used to doing *Sallah*. Some people who were traditionalists before have their own idea of prayer from their former religion. You need to teach the converts that prayer is just talking to God, and that it is only through Jesus Christ that we have free access to come to God.

In talking to God we can say different kinds of things. We can worship and praise God. We can confess our sins. We can thank God for his blessings, we can pray that God should help other people with their physical and spiritual needs, we can ask God to help us with our own needs. All these things are important in prayer.

There are some teachings and prayers in the Bible which we can look at as examples of the kinds of things people can say to God. For example:

Matt 6:9-15; 7:7-11; Lk 11:1-13; 18:1-14; Acts 4:23-31; Eph 1: 15-19; 3:14-21; 6:18-20; and many of the Psalms.

Your own example of prayer counts a lot. Do your converts know that there are certain times you should not be disturbed because you are praying? And during those times, are you actually praying? If so, your converts will see that prayer is important.

You should also pray with them in their houses when they face any problem. But make sure the people do not see you as the one who prays for them. Teach them that they are just as able to pray and get help from God as you are. All believers are priests before God. Teach them to pray for themselves and for others.

Regular prayer times should be organised by the church. Make sure your prayer meeting is not mainly Bible Study. You need to give real time to prayer together. Sometimes you should have all-day prayers or all-night prayers, especially at times when you feel the need of extra help from God.

Sometimes people don't know the power of prayer because they never pray for definite things. They just pray, "God, bless this church." Then they are not sure if the prayer is answered or not. But if you pray, "God, give us the money to buy roofing materials for the church," or "God, please help Malam Audu to become a Christian," you will know when God has answered, and this will strengthen your faith.

Teach people to pray in their own tribal language. Let them know that God can understand them when they pour out their hearts to him. God hears prayer in every language. Also, when people pray in tongues, they do not know what they are saying to God. Teach them to pray in a language they understand well. God needs to hear the cry of people's hearts. This will make it easier for people to learn to pray. They will have the joy of communicating with God.

Story

A missionary lady used to go to read the Bible and pray with a new convert in her house. They did the Bible study in English because the convert could speak English very well and the missionary did not know the convert's own language.

The missionary wanted to teach the convert to pray, so after they met a few times, the missionary asked the convert to lead in prayer. The convert was very shy to do this. She tried a few times to do it, but the prayer was very short.

Finally one day the convert asked the missionary if she could pray in her own language. The missionary was very happy for the suggestion. This time the convert prayed a long prayer and really told God her problems.

Another time the convert's child was very sick. The missionary prayed for the child in English and the mother prayed in her language. When the child got well, the mother was more encouraged to keep praying to God and not go to other spiritual powers for help.

Discussion Questions

1. What is the best way to learn to pray?
2. Why is it that often a church "prayer meeting" has more preaching than prayer?
3. How can your converts use prayer to help speed up the evangelization of their area? For example, if Satan our enemy is hardening people's hearts against the Gospel, how could the teaching of Luke 18:1-8 help us to have the victory?

27. Teaching the converts to worship

As we said in chapter 22, one of the important things a church is supposed to do is worship God. In the Old Testament, worship was very important. There were singers kept in the temple all day and all night, just to sing God's praises (1 Chron 9:33). Serving God includes worshipping him.

Worship is praising God, telling him that we love him, saying how great he is, lifting up his holy Name. The angels also praise and worship God (Ps 103:20-21; Rev 5:11-12). Worship pleases God and it also strengthens our faith. God does not ask us to worship him because he is so proud, but because he is worthy of our thanks, and he knows that praising him will do us good.

Sometimes when we don't know what to say in worshipping God, we can use some parts of the Bible to teach us how to do it. One of these parts is Psalm 103. It lists so many things to thank and praise God for. If you go through this Psalm verse by verse, praising God for each thing you see there, you will really see what it is to worship God. Many other Psalms are good for worship. You can also see how they worship God in heaven by reading Revelation 4:8-11 and 5:9-14.

Some choruses that we sing in church are good for worship. These are songs that praise God and tell how great he is and thank him.

During worship, the people have to concentrate on God. Their minds must be on him. Remind the people to sing their worship to God directly. Satan knows the power of praise and tries to stop us from doing it. We sing and

say our praises boldly to God to shame the devil and show him that we are not afraid to stand with God. This helps to weaken Satan.

In some cultures they get people to sing songs like the traditional praise singers do for important men. But instead of singing for big men, they sing for God. There are many ways you can find to praise and honour God which fit into the culture of the people.

You should keep part of your meeting time just for worship. Use songs, prayers and Bible readings that honour God. Explain to the people that worship is one of the things God has called his people to do for him.

Besides singing and praying in the church, Christians need to get used to praising God even when they are alone, worshipping him in their hearts on the farm, on the road, in the market. This is one way we can keep up our fellowship with God at all times.

Besides the things we say, there are also things we can do to honour God. Giving our offerings to God's work is one way of showing him praise. Obeying his commands also praises God. All these can be a part of our worship.

Story

In 2 Chronicles 20 we read the story of what King Jehoshaphat did when the Moabites and Ammonites were coming to fight against him. First Jehoshaphat prayed. He started his prayer with worship and praise to God (v 6). Then he spoke about God's promises (v 7-9). Next he told God the problem he was facing, and asked God to judge the enemy (v 10-12). God answered through the prophet Jahaziel to say that the people should not be afraid. God was going to fight for them. They should go to meet the enemy at the Desert of Jeruel, and stand firm and see the deliverance of the Lord.

When Jehoshaphat and the people heard God's answer, they worshipped the Lord (v 18-19). When they went to the desert next day as God had commanded, Jehoshaphat appointed singers to praise and worship the Lord. They went in front of the soldiers. The Bible says, "As they began to sing and praise, the Lord set ambushes against the men of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir who were invading Judah, and they were defeated" (v 22).

When the people of Judah got back to Jerusalem, they went straight to the temple to worship God again for his deliverance (v 28).

Discussion Questions

1. The Bible says, "Worship the Lord in the splendour of his holiness; tremble before him, all the earth" (Ps 96:9) and "God is spirit, and his

worshippers must worship in spirit and in truth” (Jn 4:24). How do you think we can do this better in our churches?

2. What part did worship have to play in the story about Jehoshaphat above?
3. Tell some things in your own culture that can be used to show how much you honour and worship God.

28. Teaching the converts to witness

If you have some good news, the natural thing is to tell it to other people. If your converts have really found the message of Jesus to be good news, they will go and tell their friends and neighbours even before you teach them to do it.

The problem comes when other people who hear the good news do not see it as good news. If they reject the news and the person who brings it, it will not be so easy to tell it to them. If a convert is afraid that other people will not like him to tell them the message, he will feel shy to do it. The devil likes us to feel shy. He will make that feeling even stronger in our hearts.

You need to sit down with your converts and try to find out any reasons why other people might want to reject the message. Is there anything you can do to help them? For example, if they reject the message because they see it as a foreign religion, can you show them that it is for everybody? If they reject the message because of demonic powers controlling them, can you do some extra warfare praying to drive away the demonic powers or weaken them? You and your converts should have some prayer times for the people in the area you and your converts want to witness to.

Your converts can tell you what it was that made them decide to accept the Gospel, or the things they like now about being a Christian. This will give all of you some ideas about how best you can make other people in the area want to accept the Gospel. These are things you can start with in your preaching.

You should not just go and get a method for witnessing or some tracts for witnessing from another place without knowing that the message and method of those things will actually interest the people in your area.

You have to find out what is the best method of preaching in your area. In some areas, open air crusades are good. After the meeting, you can talk with those who are interested individually and lead them to put their trust in Christ. But in some areas, like Muslim areas, open air preaching is not very good. Instead you need to go about, make friends with people and talk to

them one by one or in small groups. In some areas, you can visit people in their homes. In some areas, it is forbidden to go into homes, but maybe ladies can go in to visit other women. Make your plan according to what will work in your area.

You and some of your converts should go out together for preaching. They will learn a lot about how to witness by watching you. In your normal outreach, take some of them along. At first they may watch you do it. Then they can help to say part of it. Later, they do the talking while you listen and pray. After that, they will go out to witness without you. At this point, you should get them to train others just as you trained them. This is the method Jesus used. The twelve disciples travelled around with him and watched him minister. They helped him. Then later, he sent them out two by two without him.

Another thing you could consider doing is selling Christian books and Bibles in the market on market day. This will give you a chance to talk to people who come to look at the books. The converts can start taking care of this bookselling when you are not there. They can also start going out in groups to do witnessing without you.

When you and your converts are witnessing, make sure you make people understand that the Great God who created us all wants to be close to each one of us to bless us. He seems far away now because our sins have separated us from him. However, God sent Jesus Christ to the world to bring us back to God. He did this by dying on the cross. He took the punishment for our sins. Now anyone who believes in Jesus will be forgiven for his sins. He and God can be close again. This means that the power and protection of God are upon the believer. The believer must not trust in any other power or god. Besides help in this life, God will then take the believer to be with him in heaven after he dies.

These are the things you will preach, but you have to decide what part of your message to start with and how to present it so that the people in your area will be interested and understand.

If you start making your converts very different from the people around them, they will not be able to witness easily. Encourage the converts to keep living with their people and participating in the community in any ways that are not sinful.

People often become Christians because their close friends or relatives have become Christians. One thing you can do is to concentrate prayers and witnessing on friends and relatives of the converts. This will help the church to grow faster.

Story

Some missionaries in Kaduna State got some converts in the villages where they were working. They began to take the converts out with them for witnessing and preaching. The converts too started to help with the preaching. This made them more interested in studying the Bible. People asked them questions about the Bible which they could not answer, so they needed to learn more.

After a couple of years, the converts were going out to distant places for witnessing. God blessed their work and some new churches were started. The missionaries were happy because the Gospel was spreading more rapidly through the converts.

Discussion Questions

1. What can a missionary do to help the same thing happen in his work that happened in the story?
2. Will the method that helped the missionary himself to become a real Christian be the right method for him to teach his converts to use in witnessing to their people? How can he tell?
3. What makes it hard for Christians to witness?

29. Teaching the converts to celebrate baptism and the Lord's supper

Every religion has ceremonies. The ceremonies help the people to be unified. They also help them to understand the spiritual realities and the teachings of their religion.

Christianity has many ceremonies. Some of these ceremonies are Christian ways of doing ceremonies already found in the culture. Some examples of these are weddings, naming ceremonies and funerals. It is very good for Christians to honour God on all these occasions. There are also two ceremonies given to us from the Bible. God commands us to do them. We must teach our converts to do them in the churches we start.

The first of these ceremonies is baptism. This is the Christian initiation ceremony. It is a sort of picture to show how a new believer dies to his old self and is raised to new life in Christ (Rom 6:3-11). It also shows how a new believer is spiritually baptized with the Holy Spirit. He is united to the Body of Christ (1 Cor 12:13).

The Bible says that every Christian should be baptised (Matt 28:19; Mk 16:16 and Acts 2:38). Christians do not all agree about how the baptism

should be done, but that is less important than knowing that we should do it. When a new believer asks to be baptised, it is a way of him showing publicly that he is entering a new way of life.

Just as in traditional initiation ceremonies, the person to be initiated should be taught some things about his new responsibilities. We usually have some kind of baptism class to make sure the new believer knows the meaning of baptism and what is expected of him as a Christian. But this should not be too long. Baptism is just the beginning of the Christian life, not a graduation from instruction. Anyone who is truly born again has a right to be baptized.

Different churches also have rules about who is allowed to baptize new converts. You will have to follow the rules of the organization you belong to. I think it is good if churches can give any missionary they send out the right to baptize new converts. This allows the church to grow and spread faster.

The second ceremony given to the church by God is the Lord's Supper (sometimes called Holy Communion). Jesus told us that we should do it in remembrance of him, to remember his death until he comes back (Matt 26:26-29; Mk 14:22-25; Lk 22:19-20). The apostle Paul said we should examine ourselves and make sure we take the Lord's Supper reverently (see 1 Cor 11:23-32).

The Bible does not tell us how often we are to take the Lord's Supper. Some churches do it every day or every week, and some do it only once a year. I think it is good to do it often enough that it is a real part of church life. This ceremony teaches us about the importance of the death of Jesus. It can be used to teach the converts.

Churches have different rules about who is allowed to serve the Lord's Supper. I think it is good if a missionary can be given the right to serve it so that his members can be taught to observe it. But you will have to follow the rules of your organization. Churches also disagree over whether someone needs to be baptized before he or she can take the Lord's Supper, or only needs to be a believer.

Story

In a certain place, a young girl was converted. She was baptized after being taught the meaning, and showing by her changed life that Jesus had really come to live in her heart.

The next time the church held the Holy Communion service, she took part for the first time. The pastor read the passages about the Lord's Supper from the Bible. As she ate the bread and broke it with her teeth, she thought about how Jesus' body had been broken on the cross for her. She felt a great

joy that she was able to take part in this ceremony and do it exactly as her Lord Jesus had commanded her. It made her feel close to Jesus. This made her realize that there is joy in obeying the Lord in other things too. Because of this, taking the Holy Communion strengthened her faith and her love and obedience to the Lord.

Discussion Questions

1. What can a church or mission do to make sure baptism and the Lord's Supper are practiced regularly by all the churches?
2. Why are these ceremonies useful in the life of the church?
3. Can you think of any methods you can use to help new converts understand the meaning of baptism and the Lord's Supper?
4. Some churches do not allow anyone to take the Lord's Supper in their churches unless that person was baptized or confirmed by that denomination. What do you think Jesus would do?

30. Teaching the converts to fellowship and care for each other

Jesus told his disciples, "By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for each other" (Jn 13:35). The new Christians in the new church must be taught to help, encourage and love each other as one family.

The example of the missionary counts a lot. Do you love and accept the converts as part of your family even though they are from a different tribe than you are? The Bible says about Christians that at one time they did not belong to the same people but now they do, for they are the people of God (1 Pet 2:9-10).

The church meetings should not just be a time when the converts gather to hear the missionary talk. There should be time for the members to talk to each other. When a member has a problem, the others should take it as their responsibility to help him or her. Members should feel free to share with each other what is going on so they can pray and help. This means they must trust each other.

In the early church, some of the rich members sold some of their property so that they could give the money to help poor members of the church. The church used to take care of widows.

In fact, most of the places in the New Testament where Paul is talking to the Christians about giving money, all the money is to be used to help poor

Christians (eg 2 Cor 8-9). Paul rebuked the Christians at Corinth because they did not share their food (1 Cor 11:17-22). When they would not share, it showed that they didn't really love each other, and they were greedy.

In practical terms this means that if any member has a naming ceremony, a wedding, a funeral, or if any member is in the hospital or his house burns down, or he can't work, or he has been falsely accused to court, or any other thing, the rest of the members must support him as a member of the family.

We know that families also do projects together, like building a family house, or sending the junior ones to school. They plan together how to do it. In the church, we should plan together how to build any buildings we need, how to support anyone we want to work full-time for the church, how to buy church supplies, and other projects. We should plan how to make the church grow by supporting and working on evangelism and missionary work.

The church in your place is just a branch of the wider Church belonging to Jesus Christ. There are some projects which the wider Church does together, like supporting the Bible Society, or some denominational projects if you belong to a denomination. Your church should take part in these too as they are able. Teach your people to show love both to their own local church and with other believers in other places. In the Old Testament times, the people of God were commanded to give one tenth of their income to support the work of God. In the New Testament, we do not go by a law but by love. Love for Christ and his people should make us want to give even more than the people in the Old Testament did to obey the law.

So a lot in fellowship has to do with giving our money. Teach your converts that they can afford to give to help others and for the work of God because God has promised to provide enough for them if they do (Phil 4:18-19; 2 Cor 9:6-8).

Fellowship also has to do with giving our time. We can help somebody who has a ceremony to do the cooking. We can go and advise a family having problems. We can visit and sympathize when someone has died. We must pray for each other's needs.

These things may seem like burdens or duties. It is only when there is true love in the church that people are happy to do them. Love is not just when you feel like it. Sometimes love is like a promise you make to do somebody good whether you feel like it or not. The way love behaves is found in 1 Corinthians 13.

Story

In the early church some of the first converts were very poor people. Maybe some of them were driven away from their families or jobs. Some of them were widows and orphans. The believers did not allow them to suffer. It says in Acts 2:42-47 that the believers shared all they had. Some of them sold things they had to get money to help those in need. They always met together for fellowship and prayer. New people were becoming believers all the time.

The apostle Paul gave his converts some teaching about helping each other. You can find it in Acts 20:35.

Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think the believers helped each other in this way?
2. Read 1 Tim 5:16 and 1 Thess 3:6-10. What can the church do about members who seem to want more than they really need from the church family?
3. What can a missionary do to make sure the members of the new church know and love each other?

31. Teaching the converts about church discipline

Every family, organization or society has expectations for its members to follow. If the member breaks the rules, he has to pay some penalty or leave the society.

The rules of the church should not be those made by people, but the ones laid down by God in the Bible. The Bible clearly tells us many things that are sins which a child of God is expected not to do. What should a church do when some of the members start doing wrong things?

When this happens it is very serious for several reasons. First of all, the person who is sinning is in danger because he is not walking in obedience to the Lord. He needs to be restored to fellowship with God or God's punishment will fall on him. Secondly, when those outside the church see the bad behaviour of a member, they will speak against the Lord Jesus Christ and say that he has no power to change people. This makes it harder for new people to be won for Christ. And thirdly, when a church allows sin to go on among the members without doing anything, God's blessing will no longer rest on that church. Satan will be able to attack them more. So something must be done.

The first thing we try to do is to restore the brother or sister who has gone into sin. Galatians 6:1-2 says, "Brothers, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Look to yourself, lest you too be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." We can see here that we are to try in a loving way to persuade the one who has sinned to repent and turn away from that sin. Jesus taught the same thing in Matt 18:15-20. If the brother will not listen to the rebuke and repent, the elders should go to him. If he still refuses, the whole church should try to persuade him. If he still refuses, he is no more considered a part of the church. At this stage, the discipline is given publicly.

If the person repents of his sin, he should be publicly welcomed back into the fellowship of the church. How can we tell if someone has truly repented of his sin? First, he has to pay back or make right anything that he is able to. Then he has to be sorry enough to be humble and accept any conditions that the church lays on him. In some churches they do not allow the person to have any leadership position or to take the Lord's Supper for some time. Sometimes they will ask him to make a public confession and apology before the church. We should remember that Paul in 2 Cor 2:6-8 said that the man who had done wrong had enough punishment, and the members should now show love to him again so that he would not be discouraged. Church discipline is not meant to punish the person, but to bring him back to being a dedicated Christian again. Christ has taken the punishment for our sins. The discipline should not be so much that it only makes the person bitter.

The time to teach the converts about church discipline is right at the beginning, when you are preparing them for baptism. This is so that all of them will know what is expected of them as members of the church, and will agree to the method of discipline. The discipline should be agreed on and carried out by the whole church or by the elders, not just by the missionary or pastor. If there is no discipline, the church will be destroyed by sin. The missionary should teach the people that he or she is under the same rules as they are. If missionaries fall into sin, they must be disciplined.

Story

A certain pastor was caught in sexual sin. His denomination disciplined him. They removed him from his church and told him he must not preach again for a certain number of months.

At first the pastor said that he was sorry and that he would keep to the discipline. But before the time was over, he left the denomination and went to start his own church.

Discussion Questions

1. Why are some churches afraid to discipline their members?
2. Which sins do churches usually give discipline for? Do churches discipline people for sins like pride, jealousy, slander and grumbling? Do you think they should?
3. Was the discipline in the story of the pastor above successful? How could it have been improved?

32. Teaching the converts to read

Many missionaries go to places where a lot of their converts are illiterate. This means they cannot read the Bible for themselves. Many of them are too old to go to primary school, or maybe there is not even any primary school for the children in the area. It is the duty of the missionary to make it possible for his converts to learn to read so that they can read the Bible.

In many places where missionaries go, the people can understand one of the languages which is written down. There are books to teach people to read. If there are converts who need to learn to read, you should start a literacy class. If they can afford to buy books, ask them to buy one of the books on learning to read that you can find in bookshops in the town. The missionary should buy the teacher's book so that he or she will know how to teach the class. The class should meet at least two or three times a week. If you meet only once a week, the people will forget what they learned between lessons.

Maybe the people where you work cannot afford to buy the books. Then you should buy one student's book and one teacher's book. Write the lessons on the blackboard for the students. Or you can teach one or two people and then let them use their books to teach others. Each person who learns to read can have the duty to teach one other person, and the book will be passed around.

You should make a blackboard to use in teaching. It will be useful in many ways. If you have a church building, you can plaster one end of the church and paint it with blackboard paint. If you want a blackboard that you can move, you can get a piece of plywood and paint it with blackboard paint. Remember to get a rag to clean it, and some chalk to write on it.

Whenever you go to town, look for some easy-to-read books in the language your people are learning to read. Try to get some for your people to buy so that they will have something to read. It may be too hard for your people to read the Bible first. Find something easier for them to start with.

If they don't keep reading once they have learned, they will never be good readers, and your work will be wasted.

What if the language of the people you are evangelizing is not written down? Maybe there is no Bible in their language. You should try to get the community interested in having their language written down. If the community is interested, they can contact people like the Wycliffe Bible Translators to ask for someone to come and help write the language and translate the Bible. When they do this, they will also make books to teach the people to read. This will take some years, so the sooner you can get the community interested, the better.

When you are teaching people to read, you should be careful to teach people properly according to their ages. You should have separate classes for the adults and the children. Usually it is good to have separate classes for the men and the women. It is better to start with teaching the adults, especially the elders who are interested. The elders may be embarrassed if the children learn to read and they are not able to.

Teaching adults is different from teaching children. Adults must be respected in the class. Even if they are illiterate, they are not stupid. They are very wise about many things. Do not treat them like children in the class. Be patient and encourage them.

Story

A missionary went to work in an area where all the people were illiterate. He got some converts and started to teach them to read. He had a class for the adults. There was a school for the children in the village, but most of the children did not go to school.

Because the people learning to read were all adults, the missionary decided to call the learning time a "meeting" instead of a "class". He did not want the old men to think that he was disregarding them or treating them like children. He did not make them put up their hands to ask questions, or get permission to go out. He asked their advice about the kinds of things they wanted to learn to read, and tried to act like somebody serving them rather than like their master. This was because he wanted the old men to keep on being leaders of their people.

Discussion Questions

1. What do you think of the missionary's class discipline in the story?
2. How can a missionary find a way of getting Bibles, books and notebooks for the converts who want to learn to read?
3. How important is it for the converts to learn to read?

33. Teaching the converts to minister: spiritual gifts

The Bible teaches us that every believer has some spiritual gift from the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12:1-11). The spiritual gifts are given so that each member of the body of Christ will be useful. Each member gives his own service to the church so that all of them will grow and the church will prosper. Nobody's gift is unimportant. All are needed (1 Cor 12:12-26).

There are lists of spiritual gifts in different parts of the New Testament. They are found in 1 Cor 12:8-10 and 27-31, Rom 12:6-8, Eph 4:11 and another one is mentioned in 1 Cor 7:7 (remaining unmarried). The lists are not all exactly the same. That means that each list is not complete. We don't know if there might even be some other gifts of the Spirit which are not mentioned specifically in the Bible.

A spiritual gift is an ability that God gives someone to do something which builds up the church spiritually. Some of the gifts give a person the power to do miracles. But some of the gifts give people the power to do ordinary things (like "helping") in a way that really encourages Christians. For example, when some people sing special songs in the church we just enjoy it, but when other people with a spiritual gift sing, we are really touched and encouraged spiritually.

If you believe the Bible's teaching about spiritual gifts, you must believe that they are for every Christian. This means that your converts have spiritual gifts too. When God makes a church, he gives gifts to different people in that church so that the whole congregation can enjoy all God's blessings.

One of the things you must do as a missionary is look for the spiritual gifts God has given to your converts. God will give some gifts to them that he has not given to you. When you see that someone has a gift that is useful to the church and the work of the Kingdom of God, you should help to develop it and encourage the person to use his gift so that everybody will be blessed by it. If you know the person is secure in his faith, you should not be afraid to put him in charge of some things. You should be praying that God will raise up some people who can be trained as leaders. As you observe them you will see them using their gifts and you will know how to encourage them.

Sometimes missionaries are afraid to trust the converts to look after things. They think the converts will not be ready to handle the church for many years. Maybe such missionaries do not trust God to teach the converts how to use their spiritual gifts. Maybe they are not willing to pray for the converts so that they will be able to handle the responsibility. Maybe they

are afraid that the converts will become better ministers and be more recognized than the missionary. Missionaries should be careful that they are not acting from pride or jealousy. A missionary must try hard to help the converts become even better ministers than he or she is. He should not be afraid to hand over authority to the converts. If he does not let them help and learn how to lead the church, they will become frustrated. There will be no way for them to use the spiritual gifts God has given them. This will spoil the church in the end. Lady missionaries often find it easier to hand over authority and leadership to the men converts than men missionaries do.

Story

The Apostle Paul preached in Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe on his first missionary journey. He could not stay very long in each place because of persecution. On his way home he visited them again. He encouraged them, and dedicated some elders in each place from among the converts to lead the church (Acts 14:21-23). After that, Paul visited them from time to time. Other apostles and missionaries also visited them. Paul wrote letters to them. He prayed for them continually. But he did not stay and lead the church. Fortunately for Paul, in each place there were elders converted who could likely read and knew something about the Old Testament.

Discussion Questions

1. Do you think that Paul's method of making converts to be the leaders of the church can work today? If not, what changes can we make in the method to suit our own situation?
2. Write down all the spiritual gifts mentioned in the Bible passages of this chapter. Give some examples of Christians you know that you think have certain ones of these gifts and what makes you think each person has that gift.
3. What might be the problem if a church has existed for a long time and none of the members are willing to take any leadership responsibility?

34. Teaching the converts to start new churches

Many of the churches started in the time of the apostle Paul were not started by apostles. They were started by people who heard the message and went back to their villages or on to the next town to preach the message and started meetings for believers. There are not enough missionaries in the world for us to be able to obey Jesus' command to take the gospel to every

person. The only way this can be done is if many Christians become preachers and start churches without being full time pastors and missionaries.

A person does not need to go to Bible School for many years before he can start a church. The missionary can train someone to start a church right there in the mission field. The converts are watching how the missionary does his work of starting the church. This is the example they can follow.

A missionary should look among the converts and see if there is anyone who has some spiritual gifts and natural abilities which could make him a good person to start a church. For example, in some areas an older man who is wise and mature and respected could start a church.

Probably at first, this man would go out for preaching with the missionary. As he watches how it is done, and then helps do it too, he learns how to witness and win converts. Now he is ready to start his work.

The man goes to another place, maybe his home village, and preaches to the people there. Maybe he gets some converts. Now he comes back to the missionary to report that he has converts. What should he do next?

Then the missionary teaches the man how to hold baptismal class for the converts. The man goes back to his converts and gets them ready for baptism. Then they can be baptised in the method used by that mission. The man asks the missionary what he should do next.

Then the missionary teaches the man how to hold teaching classes like Sunday school, or how to hold literacy classes, or some other programmes that the man can see the new church needs. Eventually, the missionary should teach the man how to do all the eight things a church is supposed to do.

The missionary does not go there himself or herself to do any of these things, although he or she might go to visit sometimes when he is invited for something special. He teaches the man how to do it and the man goes to do it. In this way, a new church has been started, and a new pastor is being trained. As each new thing is needed in the new church, the missionary teaches the man how to do it, and the man goes and does it. Later, when the new church is established, the man should train one of his own converts to start a new church, just as the missionary trained him. The missionary too will train another person in the first church to go and start another church in another area. This keeps on going and many churches are planted.

Story

A missionary was posted to an new area. He did his survey and found out that there were many villages without churches. He went for witnessing in about five villages and got converts in each one. The villages were too far

apart for the converts to easily come to one place for meetings. Also, there was some argument about which village the meetings should be held in.

Because of this the missionary tried going around and holding services in all the five villages. He discovered that this was too difficult. He was too tired and could not train all the churches properly because of lack of time. Finally he told all the converts they had to come to the village where he was living for all the meetings. Because of this, some of the converts could not come and they went back from being Christians.

Discussion Questions

1. What might have been a better way for the missionary in the story to reach the five villages?
2. What could happen if the missionary goes along with the man he is training to start a new church to "help" him do the work of the new church?
3. If we want every new church to be started by someone who has been to Bible School, Bible College or Seminary, how will that affect how fast the church can spread?

35. The unmarried missionary

Some missionary societies in the past did not accept anybody to be a missionary who was not married. But this is changing. Paul was a single missionary. Some of the great missionaries of the past like Mary Slessor were single. God has used single people, and he still calls them today to be missionaries.

In the Old Testament, it was normal for everybody to get married. However, God commanded the prophet Jeremiah not to get married because of all the things that were about to happen in the nation. God can still call some people to serve him today without getting married. See Jesus' teaching in Matthew 19:10-12. Paul said that single people can concentrate more on serving the Lord (1 Cor 7:28-35). Some people also may be single missionaries for a time before they get married.

There are some disadvantages of being a single missionary. The single missionary may be lonely. Because of this, it is better if two single missionaries are posted together to help each other. If a missionary is lonely, he or she must beware of the temptation to be bitter against God for not giving a life partner. This is a test of faith, and the missionary should keep trusting God. The single missionary might also be suspected by

people. They might think he or she is not normal, or is committing immorality. Sometimes ladies chase a single man missionary and bother him. Such ladies might not be a suitable person for the missionary to marry, but they are presenting temptation to him all the time. Men may also chase a single lady missionary. A single missionary's family at home may trouble him or her a lot too, wanting to know when they will marry.

Another problem for single missionaries is that in some places, people do not consider you to be a man or a woman until you have married. They just see you as a small boy or girl and not listen to what you say. They may not allow a man missionary to minister to the women. If he had a wife, she could minister to the women while her husband ministers to the men. A lady missionary may find it hard to minister to the men.

However, there are some advantages that a single missionary has. Single people have more time for missionary work. They do not need to take so much time with taking care of the children, cooking, fetching water and so on. When they are planning their programme for ministry, they don't have to worry about the family disturbing them. Single people can travel about easily. They can be transferred quickly to where they are needed. If there is an emergency, they are usually available to help. If a missionary is needed in a dangerous place, it is better to send single missionaries. Another advantage the single missionary has is that sometimes the wives or husbands of married missionaries lose interest in missionary work. The partner may pull him or her away from the work. Also, a single missionary does not need as much money as a married one. Any extra money he or she gets can be used to help buy things useful to the work.

Single missionaries who are satisfied as they are should not feel that they must get married. People should not bother them about it. They should use their singleness as an advantage for their work.

A single man missionary who wants to get married should not get worried. He should trust in the Lord, pray, and keep doing his work. He needs a wife who loves missionary work. If he gets interested in any lady, he should first find out if she has been called by God to be a missionary. If she has not, he should look for somebody else. A missionary who gets too worried about getting married may rush into a wrong decision. He should wait patiently for God to bring the right lady at the right time.

Likewise, a single lady missionary must wait for God's choice. If she marries a man who is not called to missions, that will be the end of her missionary service.

A single missionary needs to live by faith. Many people think it is not possible to live a pure life if you are single. This is the devil's lie. Many

people have lived pure lives without being married, and you can do it too as you trust God to help you.

Story

A certain mission wanted to send some missionaries to a place where the people had never heard the gospel before. The place was very remote, and the mission felt it would be too hard for ladies to go there. They said they needed some single men missionaries to go there.

One young man who was a student felt God calling him to go as a missionary to that place. He knew only single men would be sent so he made sure he did not get interested in any lady while he was in school. He knew that doing the will of God and taking the gospel to everyone was more important than getting married. After his graduation, he went to that mission field. He was there for ten years and saw a lot of progress in the gospel and in civilization in that area.

After the ten years, the mission decided the place was no longer dangerous for ladies to go as missionaries. So the young man decided to marry. He chose one of the single ladies working in the same mission as himself, and they continued working together in the mission for forty more years before they finally retired.

Discussion Questions

1. How did the young man in the story show a good attitude as a missionary toward marriage?
2. How important is it to God that a Christian should get married and have children?
3. Is it true that a Christian is not really a responsible adult until he or she gets married? Why do you say so?
4. What advice would you give to a single missionary who is very anxious to get married?
5. What are the advantages and disadvantages of a single missionary?

36. The married missionary

This is what Paul wrote to the Corinthians: "To the married I give charge, not I but the Lord, that the wife should not separate from her husband (but if she does, let her remain single or else be reconciled to her husband) and that the husband should not divorce his wife" (1 Cor 7:10-11). It is God's will that a married couple should stay together whenever possible. This is

important for a missionary. What should he or she do if the partner does not want to be a missionary?

Some men decide to be missionaries without discussing it with their wives. A man may feel it is the duty of the wife to follow him whatever he is doing, so there is no need of consulting her. This has led to failure for many missionaries. When the wife does not want to be a missionary, she will not co-operate in the work. She will often fall sick. She will not encourage her husband when the work is difficult. Instead she will be trying to get him to give up the work. This can make things so hard for him that in the end he will have to leave being a missionary.

The Bible says that the husband and wife are “heirs together of the grace of life” so the husband should be considerate of his wife so that their prayers will not be hindered (1 Pet 3:7). No man should decide to be a missionary without discussing it first with his wife. If the wife herself knows that God is calling her to be a missionary, she will be a real partner in the work. So a man should pray that the Lord will call his wife to be a missionary too. Maybe when they discuss it, the wife will not be willing. Rather than forcing her, the man should wait and start to pray. If God has really called him, God will also call his wife. He should wait until the wife is ready before they go out for the work.

Life on the mission field can be hard for women. Maybe they have to carry the water from a far place. There may be no medical care when she is pregnant and has to give birth. A woman can bear a lot if she knows her husband loves her. There are ways a husband can show his wife that he loves her in little things every day, as well as in some big things. A husband should be faithful to her, and he should tell her the truth about what is going on. When the husband and wife tell each other the truth and do not hide things from each other, they get along together better. The Bible says that if there is trouble in the home, your prayers will be hindered. As missionaries, you need all the power from your prayers, so don't do anything that will weaken them. Pray for each other so that you both will be good missionaries. When you have to make decisions about your work, discuss it together. A missionary's home should show the converts how a good Christian home should be.

When a missionary's wife knows that she is a missionary too, she will work hard to evangelize the women and children. Some married women who were missionaries when their husbands died have stayed on the mission field to carry on the work. They were doing their work for the Lord, not just for their husbands.

A woman who wants to be a missionary when her husband is not ready must also pray for him to get the call so they can go out together. If she

leaves her husband and children to go as a missionary, this is a bad example to the converts and may result in a lot of temptation for the whole family.

When they are on the mission field, a married woman missionary may feel frustrated sometimes because she wants to do the work but she has to stay home and take care of her children. I know one lady who had this problem. She asked God to send people to her house that she could witness to and teach the Word of God to. God answered her prayer, and she was able to do a lot even at home.

Story

A married couple went as missionaries to Sokoto State, Nigeria, many years ago. The place where they were staying was not developed then at all. The wife stayed at home to teach the converts in the town where they were living, while the husband spent a lot of time trekking around the nearby villages preaching and teaching the converts.

After they had been in that place for almost four years, the man got sick and died. They did not have any children. But the wife knew that God had called her too to be a missionary in that place. She took some time of leave, and then went back to that place to continue the missionary work. Because she was educated and had helped her husband make all the plans for the work, she knew what to do. The other missionaries in her mission encouraged her and helped her. She stayed there until she was an old woman and finally she retired.

Discussion Questions

1. What are some of the ways a wife who does not want to be a missionary can make the work harder for her husband on the mission field?
2. Why do some men not take their wives into consideration when they decide to be missionaries. Is this good?
3. What are some ways a missionary can show his wife that he loves her while they are on the mission field?
4. What kind of ministry can a missionary wife have?

37. Women in missions

In the last 200 years, more women have gone out as missionaries than men, especially from the western countries. In Africa, women also go out as missionaries. Some of them are wives married to missionary husbands. Some of them are widows or single ladies.

In some cultures, women are not encouraged to go into Christian ministry. Some people think that women are not intelligent enough to be missionaries. But in our countries today we look around and see that women are commissioners, bank presidents, business women, professors and lawyers. These women had the opportunity to go to school. They were trained and they found out they could do any of these things. This is true also of missionary work. Women need to be challenged and trained as missionaries just like men. They can be very good missionaries. In fact, sometimes they are more useful than men.

Sometimes the parents of girls don't encourage their girls to go to school. They see the life of women just to be cooking and having children, which needs no outside education. But let us look at Romans 12:4-8. In this passage, Paul mentions different gifts that Christians can have. In each case, he says that if somebody has a gift, the person should use it properly for God's glory. Can God give spiritual gifts to women? Prophecy is a spiritual gift, and some women in the Bible had this gift (Acts 21:8-9). There were women deacons (Rom 16:1) and fellow-labourers with Paul (Phil 4:3; Rom 16:3,12). Since God does give spiritual gifts to women, he expects them to use these gifts in serving him. If we do not encourage girls and women to get training for ministry, we are helping them to hide their light and disobey God.

Sometimes girls and women have been taught to believe that they cannot take leadership or do important work. This makes them feel shy to do the work a missionary needs to do. The parents or the husbands of such ladies need to teach them that they are made in God's image. God wants them to have faith and be great for him and in his kingdom. They should be encouraged and praised when they start trying to do God's work.

There are many important things women can do on the mission field. Married women have a big influence in maintaining a loving Christian home. This makes the husband happy so that he is not worried about his home. He can face the work God has given him to do without distractions. It also is a witness to the people. They see a happy Christian home and know that this home is happy because the people are following Jesus Christ. This helps them to want to become Christians. After they are converted, they watch the missionary's family to know how they should act in their own families. By her example, the missionary wife becomes a teacher. It is very important for a missionary wife to have good teaching on how to have a happy Christian home.

Women missionaries have a lot of opportunity also in winning and teaching other girls and women. Sometimes a man missionary is not allowed to teach or preach to the women. If he tries to do it, he is suspected.

But a woman missionary is free to teach them. She should know how to lead people to accept Christ, how to disciple them and how to teach them to read. She should know how to organize a women's fellowship among the new women converts. She should know how to teach children's Sunday School.

Most men missionaries find it difficult to start women's fellowship and children's Sunday school without the help of a woman missionary.

Women missionaries can also teach the local women about health, nutrition and hygiene. Women are the people who have the most influence in these areas. For example, the missionary can teach others how to use soy beans to make good soup. This will give the people a healthier diet. She can teach the mothers to knit sweaters for their babies to keep them warm in the cold season.

Some women missionaries have special training that is very useful on the mission field. Some are nurses, midwives and doctors. Besides helping everybody, they are very useful helping Muslim women who are kept at home. Nobody else can reach these women, but a Christian lady nurse or doctor will be invited to help them. Other women missionaries have Bible training and can teach in Bible schools. Some are primary school teachers and can help to educate their own children and the children of the villagers. Every ability a woman has can be used to serve God.

When women missionaries start a church, they find it easier to get the local men to take leadership than men missionaries do. A woman missionary can stay behind the scenes, discipling the local men who do the public leading of the work.

Women can go to places where men would be suspected. They are not seen as threatening by local leaders or so easily suspected of being dupes or deceivers. Sometimes, a place too dangerous for men could be entered safely by women.

God is certainly calling many women to be missionaries today. They must be encouraged and trained so that they can obey the Lord.

Story

This is a true story of a Nigerian woman.

This woman who was a staff nurse lost her husband when she was still young. Her relatives took her children and she continued working. Since she had lost her husband, she started to think about death. Because of her fear of death, she started going to church, and from there she heard the gospel and accepted Christ as her Saviour. Then God called her to be a missionary.

At first she went to work in a mission hospital. Then she heard about some villages in a certain tribe where there was no school, no clinic, and just a few new converts. They needed somebody to teach them. There were no men ready to go, and the mission she was working with was ready to send her as a missionary. She went with another young lady and they settled in the village.

Because of her medical skill, many people came to know her because they came for treatment. She told them about the Lord as she gave them help. She also taught the believers in the church meetings, and started a school for the children. Today the whole village knows her as the person who helped them to come out of darkness.

Discussion Questions

1. What training did this woman have which helped her to become a useful missionary?
2. Why do you think the villagers accepted her as their teacher even though she was a woman?
3. Do you think this woman should have gotten married again instead of going off as a missionary? Why or why not?

38. Missionaries and their children

Every married couple wants to have children. But there are some special problems for parents who are missionaries.

When the wife gets pregnant, there may not be good medical care for her or a good place for her to deliver. The couple will have to pray about this. Maybe God will lead them to send her to the town around the time of the delivery in case there is any problem. Or maybe God will give them the assurance that she will be all right.

Once the children are born, there may not be a good place to get medical treatment for them when they are sick. Every missionary should learn how to use some simple medicines like medicine for malaria fever and diarrhoea. He or she should know how to make the sugar and salt drink for diarrhoea in children. Missionaries should know and practise health rules like using a latrine, washing hands, using a mosquito net, and breast feeding babies. But missionaries should also know how to pray in time of trouble or sickness and they should expect God to help them.

Sometimes even when all possible has been done, the missionaries' child may die. This is an opportunity for the missionaries to teach the people

where they are stationed. Probably their children die too. How should a Christian act when his child gets sick or dies? They will watch the missionary family to see what they do.

Another problem missionaries have is about educating their children. In many places where missionaries work, there is no good school, or maybe no school at all. Parents need to pray about what God wants them to do. Should they send their children to some relatives where they can go to school? Should they try to teach them at home? Should they send them to a boarding school? Should they let them grow up without schooling? God cares about missionaries' children and he has a plan for them. Missionaries can find out God's plan as they pray for God's help in taking care of the children.

Some missionaries' and pastors' children grow up to have bad characters. Is it because of their parents' work? No, because many of these children grow up to be good. If a child of missionaries sees his parents preaching one thing and living a different thing at home, he will not respect their teaching. If he feels his father or mother do not love him, because they are too busy with their work to pay attention to him, he may become bitter in heart. Even when the parents are good and show love to their child, some children choose to turn away from God. Missionaries, like all parents, have to pray a lot for their children.

Sometimes missionaries' children learn bad habits from the children around them who are not Christians or who have a different culture. Parents must teach their children well and help them understand why the things the children around them do are not good. A parent should always discipline children in love for the good of the child, not in anger because of annoyance. Sometimes the people of the area criticise the way the missionary disciplines his children because what he does is against their own culture. A missionary family needs a lot of faith so they can pray and get wisdom from God in these situations.

Many missionaries' children grow up and become missionaries themselves. This gives their parents a lot of joy, because they know they were able to pass on to their children the love for God and his work.

Story

A missionary believed that if his small children did something wrong, he should punish them so that they would know not to do it in future. He saw in the Bible that it says we should not keep back from using the rod to train our children. His children were more well-behaved than the children of the villagers where he was working.

After some time, he discovered that the villagers thought he was a very wicked man because he spanked his small child. According to their culture, children should not be disciplined until they are almost grown up. This was making it hard for them to accept the missionary as a good man in their midst.

Discussion Questions

1. What do you think the missionary in the story should do?
2. Should a missionary society do anything to help the missionaries take care of their children? If so, what?
3. A certain pastor was always unhappy because he was poorly paid. He told his children that none of them should be pastors. Why do you think he did this? Was it a good thing to do?

39. Missionaries and their co-workers

Besides their husbands and wives, missionaries have other people to work with. These may be their supervisor, other missionaries working in the same area, and the supervisors and pastors of churches nearby. There are also the people in the mission headquarters.

Whenever people work together who are not the same age, are not of the same sex or tribe, or do not have the same qualifications and the same ability, there is danger of jealousy. You must do all you can not to be proud and not to make the others think that you consider yourself to be better than they are. Jesus said all men would know that we are his disciples if we love one another. Paul said we should be "eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph 4:3).

If your fellow-workers have been there for a long time, and you are new but you are making more friends and becoming more popular, or if you are getting more converts, or your farm yields better than theirs, there is a big danger of jealousy. This happens too if you are promoted over older ones. What should you do? When you get to a new place, do not say much at first. Study the others carefully to know who they are and to appreciate what they have done already. Sometimes the reason you are successful is just because you are reaping the harvest of the seed they have been sowing. Make sure you give them full credit for their faithful work.

It is important for you to act humbly and respectfully to those who were there before you, and even to newer ones than you. If you are getting more financially than others, be sure to share with them. Visit them and make

your plans together. Pray for them. Confess your faults to them and ask them to advise you and pray for you. Don't talk or act in a way that reminds them that you are more educated. If you have something to say, say it respectfully. Don't just keep it in your heart. If they reject your suggestion, leave it until another time. Pray over it and God will make sure the right thing is done. Love is the most important. If we love people, we can find a way to get along. Sometimes we need to separate and work in different places, but this should be done in love too.

When you have trouble getting along with the leaders of your mission, remember that they have many responsibilities and burdens. Some of them are afraid of younger ones who are more educated or enthusiastic. You must pray for them.

Sometimes, however, the reason you do not get along is because you are proud. You don't want to give elders respect, although the Bible says we should (1 Pet 5:5). Elders have been through a lot of experiences in life. Their experiences have made them have some opinions which are different from yours. Be patient with them. They have wisdom. Tell them the truth about what you think, but in the right way. Use prayer to persuade them more than argument.

Story

A missionary was sent to an area where there were already some churches of his denomination. However, he was not to be working under the man who supervised the pastors, but under the mission headquarters.

The supervisor of the pastors knew that the missionary was coming, but he wanted him to help with the work the supervisor was more interested in. When the missionary arrived, the pastors' supervisor did not welcome him well. He did some things which made it difficult for the missionary to move out to his station. After the missionary finally got to the station, the supervisor refused to co-operate and help him so that he could do his missionary work.

Discussion Questions

1. Why might the supervisor in the story be acting like this?
2. What should the new missionary do?
3. What should a missionary do if he finds out that one of his co-workers is committing some serious sins?

40. Using literature, cassettes, radio and films

There are many things a missionary can use to help his work spread farther. In this chapter we are going to mention a few of them.

Tracts, books and Bibles are very useful if the people can read. Books can go into houses where no missionary is allowed. Books are never too tired to preach. We have already mentioned that sometimes missionaries do evangelism by selling Christian books in the market. One of the problems a missionary faces is how to get money to buy the first set of books. A missionary should pray that God will send him money for this. Sometimes a mission society can help by providing some books to sell. If you are provided with money to do this, be sure you are faithful in bringing back the money so that you can get more books again. Sometimes you can buy samples of the books and tell people what the prices are. Then they can give you money to go and buy for them.

If you sell books or give out tracts, you should always read them yourself first. This is to find out if they are suitable for your people. Will they understand it? Is it talking about things they meet in their lives? Also, they may have questions about what they read. You must be ready for this so that you can help them.

Sometimes you cannot find any books or tracts on a topic that you know people in your area need to read about. You can write your own tract in a language the people understand. It is even better if you find a convert who has the gift of writing from God. Discuss with him or her the kind of tract you think is needed and encourage the person to write the tract. Then ask someone who is well qualified to read it to make sure it is well done and will help people. If he makes suggestions, try to correct the work and make it better. Take it to your mission headquarters and ask if they are interested in printing it or finding someone to print it. If God wants to use it, he will help you to get it printed.

Cassettes and CDs can also be very useful. You can get messages in almost any language, even languages that have never been written, from Gospel Recordings in Jos. They just charge for the blank cassette or CD. You can also make your own cassettes of Bible readings and sermons if you have a cassette player that can do this. When you visit someone who has a player, leave the cassette with him for a few days. Then come back and discuss what he heard with him.

Radio can also help your work. There are gospel programmes in many languages. Find out if there is any gospel broadcast in a language that the people in your area understand. Then help them to listen to it. You can

listen to it yourself, and then discuss it with other people. Tell them beforehand that you are going to discuss it with them so they will be sure to listen. Some of your converts might like to give their testimonies on the radio. You can write to the people making the programmes to tell them you are interested in helping. People who make the programmes are usually looking for more things to broadcast.

Many missionaries like to use films. This is because you can usually get many people to come to see a film. One of the problems of films is that most of the people don't want to hear your preaching, they just want to see the film. As soon as the film is over, they leave. This means you have just provided free entertainment for them with no impact for the gospel. All the big crowd that came did not gain anything. Most people don't repent just by seeing a film. They need someone to talk to them personally. Sometimes missionaries show only part of the film. Then they preach before showing the last part. This helps people to stay for the preaching. You should also use a film that actually preaches its own message. Somebody should translate the film for the people while it is being shown, or explain it in their language if they cannot understand the words. Films are difficult and expensive to use because they need a lot of equipment. Because of this, films can only be used for special occasions.

A short film (less than 1 hour) is often better than a long film. If the film is too long, people will get tired before you have a chance to preach. The story of a long film may be hard for the people to understand.

Sometimes you can get filmstrips, the kind that don't move. They are cheaper and easier to use and can be carried long distances without a vehicle. You have time to explain everything while the picture is on the screen. They can be very good for evangelism.

Videos are also useful if you have the equipment to use them. In cities, a Christian video can be loaned to people who have video players for them to watch at home, or you can show a video to a group like a film. The Jesus film is on video in many languages.

Story

A missionary got five strong converts and he wanted to teach them to go out for preaching. He made some cassettes of Bible teaching and gave one to each convert. He told them to take them to people in different villages and to tell the people they would come back next week to discuss the message on the tape. The converts did this, and had discussions in five villages. After this, they each took a different message back to the villages and had more discussions. Through this, people in the five villages came to hear the gospel and understand it.

Discussion Questions

1. What does a missionary have to do to make sure that showing a film will really help him to get more converts?
2. What do you think are some ways a missionary could get money to buy books to sell in his area?
3. What are the advantages and disadvantages of using audio cassettes and CDs in missionary work?

41. Ideas for successful missionary work

There are some things that missionaries have discovered can help their work. We want to talk about a few of them in this chapter.

One of the things missionaries have discovered is that sometimes new converts are not ready to mix with different tribes in the same church. We know that Christians are all one in Christ and there should be no tribalism in the church. But when you are winning new people to Christ, some of them may not want to repent because they cannot stay with another tribe in the same church. We need to do something to get them started in Christianity before they are strong enough to stay with other tribes.

An example of this happened in Niger State. A missionary won some Kambari people to Christ. Then he also won some Dukawa people. When the Kambaris saw Dukawa in the church, they all left. The Dukawa usually dominate them, so they are afraid to stay with them in the church. What should the missionary do? He should concentrate on winning only one group at a time, or have separate churches for them. Later he can help them to co-operate and do some things together, as they grow stronger in Christ.

There are many people who are living far from their home areas, usually in cities. They don't like to go to the churches in that place because the people there speak a different language or have different customs than their own. If you go to that town and start a church especially for them, they will love to come. Some of them who did not go to church when they were at home will come to church in the city so that they can see their fellow tribesmen. This will be an opportunity to win them to Christ.

Sometimes missionaries discover that a whole group of people is very interested in the gospel. Maybe they are even begging for evangelists to be sent to them. Sometimes when people migrate to a new area to get farmland they are ready to hear the gospel because it will be easier to change their religion now that they have moved. Sometimes something happens in their own religion which makes them want to leave it. Sometimes there is some kind of crisis which makes the people ready for a change. Missionaries

must watch for such things. When we see a group of people who are very interested, we say they are "ripe to be harvested." We should try hard to take the gospel to them because after some time, they will no longer be ripe. Other things will harden their hearts against the gospel. So we need to do the work quickly while we have the opportunity. If a large number of people in a group become Christians, they can help each other and there is not much persecution. We should try to help this to happen.

A missionary should also watch for the friends and relatives of those who have been converted. They might have known more about the gospel and its effects than other people because of what they have seen in their friends and relatives. We should pray especially for them and seek to win them to Christ.

Story

In many towns in northern Nigeria, most of the Christians are from the south or from middle belt tribes. Sometimes almost all the churches have their services in English or Yoruba. This discourages Hausa people from taking an interest in Christianity. They think if they become Christians they will have to join the southerners' community. They will have to start acting like southerners. That becomes another hindrance for them to ever think of becoming Christians.

Discussion Questions

1. What could a church full of southerners do to try to evangelize the Hausa without making them follow the culture of the southerners?
2. If a mission discovers that a certain group of people are ripe to be harvested, should they remove some missionaries from areas that are not responding well to the gospel to send them to the ripe areas? Why or why not?
3. What can we do about the danger that starting new Christians in churches made up of only their own tribe will teach them to be more tribalistic?
4. What importance does this chapter have for starting churches in cities?

42. The missionary and development work

Besides preaching the gospel, many missions also do development work like starting schools and dispensaries, agricultural projects, well drilling etc.

Sometimes people in other religions claim that missionaries are using these things to bribe the villagers into becoming Christians. Why are we really doing these things?

1. Jesus Christ loves these people. He does not like to see them suffer. We have the love of Christ in us too, and it hurts us to see people suffer. We want to show the people God's love by being the ones through whom God can send them help.

2. We hope that when people see our love, they will want to find out more about the God who makes us loving. This should make them more interested in hearing the gospel that we preach.

3. Doing development projects gives us a way of getting close to the people and making friends with them. By this we can understand them better, and be able to preach the gospel to them more easily. It gives us a good reason to spend time in their community and get to know them.

4. Development should help the Christian converts rise out of poverty and ignorance so that they will be able to support their church and the work of the gospel properly.

We know that Jesus himself had a healing ministry. The Bible tells us that he healed everyone who came to him for help. He did it because he had compassion for people. When they were hungry, he also fed them.

But the people wanted more and more miracles. They wanted to make Jesus King so that he could make bread for them every day. Jesus rejected this. He did not just come to help people physically. He was more interested in them finding the "food that does not perish." When they were more interested in the physical things, he spoke hard words that made them leave him (John 6). This shows us that we must always be more interested in helping people find God than in just meeting their physical needs. If we discover that our "converts" want to go back when they do not get all the physical things they want from us, we know that we are not really doing our work properly.

Some missionaries give things like used clothes to the converts. Some have found out that when there were no more used clothes, the people all went to another mission who still had clothes to give. When there were no more clothes, they left Christianity. Sometimes it is better to give nothing but the Word of God so that we can know the real reason why people are coming to repent.

Other missionaries give the used clothes to everybody, not more to the converts than to others. They do this to show that they are giving the clothes out of love for all the people, not as a "reward" for repenting. This has a problem too, because usually there are not enough clothes to go around to everybody, causing quarrels.

There are some simple development projects missionaries can do in the village without much expense. Here are some examples:

- they can help start a co-operative farming group
- they can help the people dig latrines and wells
- they can teach the mothers to make sugar-salt drink if their children get diarrhoea
- they can help the villagers to organize and contribute to buy a grain grinding machine.
- they can teach the people to use soy beans for better nutrition
- they can inform some people in the town who want to buy the type of things the people in their village produce to help them get a market.

I'm sure you can think of many more ideas.

Story

A missionary belonged to a mission that was making wells for villages that had no good water supply. The mission came and dug a well in the village where he was working. The agreement between the village and the mission was that the villagers were supposed to make the cement for the top. The missionary sent to the chief that he should send some people to do the work. When the people from the chief did not come, the missionary seized the pump handle for the well and did not allow any of the villagers to draw water from the new well. This caused a problem between the villagers and the mission.

Discussion Questions

1. What might have been the mission's reason for making the well in the story? Was their purpose fulfilled? Why do you think the missionary took the action he did? How was this probably interpreted by the village?

2. Sometimes if a mission concentrates more on bringing the gospel than on bringing modern civilization, the people later complain that the mission cheated them. What do you think of this?
3. What can we say to people who accuse Christians of bribing people to become Christians with development projects?

43. Missionary work in the city

In Nigeria there seem to be a lot more people in the rural areas than in the cities, who do not live close to any church. People in the cities see churches every day. Most cities have regular evangelistic crusades. Sometimes we think we don't need missionaries in the city because of this. The rural areas need missionaries more.

We must not forget, however, that there are a lot of people in cities who only see churches and crusades from the outside. The church has nothing to do with their lives. They live their whole lives in the city without getting close enough to the Christians to really know or care what the gospel is about. Some of these people are:

- communities of people that belong to other religions
- the beggars, the very poor, the mad and crazy people
- The criminals and prostitutes
- people who do certain types of jobs that keep them busy or too tired on Sundays, such as taxi drivers, police, disco-hotel operators, wheelbarrow boys, mechanics etc.
- young people and students running away from the restrictions that were on them when they lived at home
- very rich people
- people from distant tribes
- diplomats and businessmen from other countries
- people passing through the town, like travellers, truck drivers, bus drivers, business men

These kinds of people are not likely to get involved in the ordinary kind of church. They need people to look for them purposely and take the message to them. Sometimes this means we have to provide special projects to help them so they will come to us and we can get to know them. For example, we could start a hostel for the young people, a club for the businessmen, a feeding program for the beggars, a language class for the foreigners, a rehabilitation programme for the prostitutes, etc.

These projects have several purposes. First, we want to get to know these people. Second, we want to use our friendship with them as a bridge for us

to bring them the gospel. Third, we want to show love and kindness to them because God loves them. And finally, as some of them come to know Christ, we want to form them into a group of believers, a church in the city, so they can move out and witness and bring in more people like themselves.

Some people want to do their missionary work in the city because they think they will not suffer so much. They will have water, electricity and access to transportation and markets. However, there is a lot of suffering if we want to reach the unreached in the cities. We can face danger from criminals and wicked people. Their needs may be so great that we end up using everything we have. We may have to live in the uncomfortable parts of the city to be near the people we reach. And we may face strong demonic powers that hold the city in their grasp. However, we have the promise that the Lord will be with us even in these kinds of dangers. We cannot neglect the unreached groups of people in the cities.

Story

A certain man felt that the Lord was calling him to start a ministry in a certain city. When he told his friends about it, at first they were surprised because there are already over 300 churches in that town. It seemed that all the people in the city must have been evangelized already.

Then the man started to do his research about this city. He discovered that all the churches were on one side of the town. The old part of the city did not have any churches. He also discovered that most of the church members were from other places, not from that city originally. Then he knew that, although the city had a lot of churches, the people in the old part of town were not getting the gospel. He was tempted to start his ministry in the new part of town. He knew that he could get members faster there, and they would support him. But he decided to move into the old part of the town in order to make friends there and find out why the gospel had not reached that side. From there he was able to make his plan to reach that part of the city.

Discussion Questions

1. The city in the story is like many cities in Africa. What makes it seem that the cities are reached? Why can't we really say that the cities are reached with the gospel?
2. Do you think the qualifications for a missionary to the city are different from the qualifications for a missionary to a rural area? In what way?
3. Think of a city you know. What groups of unreached people live there?

4. What is the difference between being a city pastor and being a missionary to a city?

44. The stages in missionary work

Missionaries find that their work changes as time goes by. When a missionary first comes to a new place, his or her first job is learning the language and culture. This is the stage of being a learner.

After the missionary establishes some communication and makes some friends, evangelism starts. At this point, the missionary mainly does the work of an evangelist.

But when some people are converted and formed into a church, the missionary now has to become a pastor. The converts have to be disciplined, trained and built up in their new faith. The missionaries cannot do all the evangelism themselves because they are busy preparing sermons and lessons and holding discipleship classes. They train the converts to do evangelism.

The last stage of missionary work is when the first converts take over the work of pastoring and discipling the new converts. Then the missionary becomes a trainer and teacher, preparing some of the local people for leadership roles, and to become missionaries themselves to new places.

Sometimes the same missionary stays in a place and goes through all these stages from start to finish. This is good because the missionary knows the people, language and culture very well. He or she can go deeply into what they need for discipling and training. On the other hand, some missionaries are not good at all the stages. A missionary who is an excellent evangelist might not be good as a trainer. In this case, it might be better for there to be a team of missionaries staying in the place. Some are gifted in evangelism, and some in teaching. Or, the missionary who did the evangelism might be transferred to another new place while a missionary who can disciple the young church is brought in to help the believers to mature.

Every missionary must be prepared to do all the missionary tasks: learning, evangelism, discipling and training. But usually he or she is better in one or two of these areas. As a missionary, you should try to find out what are your own gifts. A mission society should also try to know what gifts each of its missionaries has. Then missionaries can be posted on the basis of whether a place needs the gifts they have at that particular time in their development.

Many of the foreign missionaries working in Nigeria today belong to missions that started work many years ago. They went through the learning and evangelism stages. Now most of them are in teaching and training. They do not pastor, but they train pastors. Many of them have also trained trainers. Most of the training institutions and seminaries are now staffed mainly by Nigerians.

When a mission has reached the end of the four stages in a place, should they withdraw the missionaries, allow the trained indigenes to carry on the work, and deploy to new places? Many mission scholars believe that this is the best thing to do. If a missionary is old and has stayed in a place for a long time, we may allow him to finish his lifetime in that place. But we will probably not deploy a new young missionary to replace him or her. The new missionaries should go on to fields that have not yet been reached.

Sometimes the indigenes do not like this policy of the mission. The missionaries are supplied to them as teachers, health workers and in other capacities free of charge. If the missionaries go to new fields, the indigenes of the old field will now have to finance their schools, hospitals and programmes by themselves. Missionaries should plan for this before they leave to help make it easier for the indigenes of the old place to make the change. However, the missionaries know they are not there mainly to run schools and hospitals. They must push on to new areas to preach the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Story

At one time, a certain mission had over 60 foreign missionaries serving in Nigeria. Now they have about twelve. Although the missionaries are much fewer, the denomination they started has about 400 churches. The denomination has its own leaders, seminary and Bible college teachers, evangelists and pastors.

Some people in the mission felt it was time for the mission to stop sending missionaries to Nigeria and send them instead to a country without the gospel. But the Nigerian denomination did not agree. They said they needed the financial and personnel help that the mission was sending to them because the denomination was poor. They said it was the fault of the missionaries that the denomination was poor because they did not teach the church members to tithe and give offerings properly. Therefore, the missionaries should stay and help support the denomination. The denomination leaders were afraid that they could not continue the standard of the programmes of the denomination without the help of the missionaries.

Discussion Questions

1. What advice could you give both to the mission and to the denomination in the story above?
2. What do you think is the reason that the foreign missionaries and the Nigerian missionaries seem to be doing different kinds of work in Nigeria today?
3. Most missionary training going on in Nigeria today concentrates on training missionaries in evangelism and discipling. What kinds of training might have to be added in years to come and why?
4. How could a missionary society help prepare the indigens of a place where the church is well-established for the redeployment of the missionaries to another field?

OTHER GOOD MISSIONS BOOKS

Here are some good books about missions you should also read. Some of them are available from the Nigeria Evangelical Missionary Institute, Box 5878, Jos, or from Mission Resource Centre, U.I.P.O. Box 9890, Ibadan, Nigeria.

Cross Cultural Christianity, by Atchenemou Hlama Clement, Raymond Hassan, Moyo Ozodo and Dr. Bill Kornfield. Nigeria Evangelical Missionary Institute.

Going to the Nations: an Introduction to Cross Cultural Missions, by L. K. Fuller. Nigeria Evangelical Missionary Institute.

A Daily Guide for Language and Culture Learning, by Allison Howell. Nigeria Evangelical Missionary Institute.

The Final Harvest, edited by Niyi Gbade. Nigeria Evangelical Missions Association.

Towards the Evangelization of Nigeria by AD 2000 and Beyond, edited by Reuben Ezemadu. Nigeria Evangelical Missions Association and Nigeria AD 2000 Movement.

You Could Be a Missionary, by Segun Adekoya. Nigeria Evangelical Missionary Institute.

A Missionary Handbook on African Traditional Religions, by Lois Fuller. Nigeria Evangelical Missionary Institute.

Adventures for God: Stories of Missionary Pioneers. Edited by Lois Fuller. Nigeria Evangelical Missionary Institute.

The Cross and the Gods (tribes of Taraba and Adamawa States)

Conquered by the Sword (tribes of Borno and Yobe States)

Rescue the Trophy (tribes of Benue State)

by the Research Department of Calvary Ministries.