

The Role of the Local Church in Missionary Preparation

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One of the greatest contributions the local church can make to worldwide evangelization is growing missionaries. By modeling, teaching, training, motivating, counseling, encouraging, informing and challenging people the church can move them right up to the launching pad from which they are propelled into the orbit of a cross-cultural ministry. That is what it means to be a real "sending church"!

1. Missionize the Home

Attitudes are implanted in the home. If the parents have a concern for the lost and are praying the Lord of the harvest to send out reapers, it will have an effect on the other family members. There should be open interaction about the value of serving God. Children should know that they may be the answers to their parents' prayers.

2. Make Disciples and Disciple-makers

The local church should teach how to make disciples. Missions is making disciples. Thousands of different activities may be related to it, but making disciples is the primary objective. Disciple-making is the criterion of biblically based missions. Missionary appointees must learn in their churches what this is all about, to do some discipling and see people grow under their ministry.

3. Teach the Bible and Missions

The Bible and missions must be taught in the church. Don't take for granted that young people know that the lost are lost or that they understand what missions is all about. We may have a generation arising that knows not missions.

4. Provide Cross-cultural Experience

Provide cross-cultural evangelism experience. The Lord has brought into North America samples of almost every culture on earth; in greater numbers, concentrations and accessibility than ever before in history. If we in the local church will make an effort to befriend and evangelize these people of other cultures, it will model our concern and provide cross-cultural experience for our members. At the same time it makes possible a unique and important ministry. Through this kind of experience, young people can assess their gifts and find out what God may want to do with them.

5. Develop Interpersonal Relationship Skills

One of the greatest problems many missionaries have on the field is dealing with other missionaries. The local group of believers can become very much involved in preparing people for this kind of challenge.

6. Provide Vocational Guidance

Take the initiative in vocational guidance. In your church, who influences young people with reference to their life work, vocation, and commitment? Television personalities? A guidance officer at high school? Peers? Or is God influencing them through concerned, informed spiritual leaders?

7. Pray for New Missionaries

"Pray the Lord of the harvest, that He would send forth laborers into His harvest." It's very important for the local church to ask God to send out reapers. First, it involves the whole church as part of a missionary team. Second, everyone in the church who is praying that God will send out people is thus making himself a potential part of the answer. Praying for reapers opens me

up, makes me vulnerable and available. Third, by praying this way the church recognizes that the whole matter of selecting and sending workers is in the hands of the sovereign God. He will move them to go, and He may move us to help them go or to join them in going. (If we "pray them out" we may also be responsible to "pay them out," becoming part of their support team.)

Conclusion

The local church, the home church, the sending church, is the key to missions. We can't delegate to schools and to mission boards that which is the function and responsibility and privilege of the sending church.

Source: David Mays, *Stuff you need to know about Doing Missions in Your Church* a CD of missions resources for local churches, produced by ACMC March 2004. Link: www.davidmays.org