

Transforming US Churches through Effective Foreign Missions

Global Missions Conference

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It has been my experience that churches that are involved in missions grow, and growing churches do missions; missions helps the churches grow and that growth brings about more mission work.

Missionaries measure maturity of new churches partly by their outreach.

I am disturbed by churches that think or act as though creature comforts are more important than spreading the gospel.

Foreign missions can help transform US churches in at least four ways:

1. It fulfills the Great Commission

- Matthew 28:18-20
- Acts 1:8
- 2 Timothy 2:2
- God will bless us when we do his will
- Missions is not easy; it requires preparation and training, funding, time, sacrifice, persevering through setbacks
- "We must beware of "one factor" analysis...But the evidence is rather convincing that when a church catches a glimpse of how through evangelism it can be a part of God's world-wide work, something happens to its faith, its work, and its peace." (Philip Slate in *Guidelines for World Evangelism*, edited by George Gurganus, pp. 23-24)

2. It gives churches an outward focus

- Bad things happen when a church turns inward. There is not enough to think about or do, so brothers turn on one another
- Example of an inner city church that helps its young people look outward by going on mission trips
- Many middle-class American Christians have been profoundly changed by getting involved in something outside themselves (Christian education, summer camp, missions)
- Missions is a solution to church "depression"—get busy, think of others, do something—missions is a cause worth devoting oneself to because it is the Lord's cause

3. It brings the church in contact with missionaries and others who present different perspectives

- It is easy to weave a tight cocoon around one's own interests and problems
- Yet, there is a world out there—a world of suffering, poverty, war, corruption, and hopelessness.
- No single culture has got it completely right—we can learn from other cultures—some of those cultures will help us to better understand the New Testament

4. It provides opportunities for ministry

- Pray for the missionaries and their fields
- Hold up the missionaries' hands—missionary care
- Short-term missions
- Development projects
- Interchange between mission sponsors and mission fields: seminars, campaigns

Missions Unites!

How to get there:

1. Pray

- Invoke the power of the creator and sustainer of life
- This should not be the last action, but the first
- Follows the model of Jesus
- Jesus asked us to earnestly pray (John 4)

2. Desire

- To do God's will—God seeks after us and wants us to seek others
- To be like Jesus—Jesus came to seek and save the lost
- To reach others—Share the compassionate love of Jesus and give hope

3. Equip

- Training for leaders and church—read missions literature, attend seminars and workshops
- clear philosophy that is biblically grounded—think through what kind of missions you want to do and work toward that goal
- Clear policies and goals—time spent on this will yield dividends later

4. Involve

- Start doing missions, even if you start small
- Involve all ministries and people
- Budget for global missions
- Promote missions

Start today!