

Chapter 9

Creating a World Missions Strategy in Your Church

LESSON OBJECTIVE

Please understand that:

- Setting up a world missions strategy demands much creativity
- The goal is *not short-term* mission-awareness but *long-term mission-involvement*
- To be successful in the long run, all age-groups of the church need to be involved
- There will not be solid missionary-sending without solid church leadership
- A designated budget and a responsible person 'running missions' is a must
- Prayer, teaching, preaching, giving, short-term outreach and conferences are all needed

LESSON OUTLINE

In this lesson we look at:

The Church – The People - The Church – The Activities

LESSON CONTENTS

This chapter gives some thoughts, not only from the author's creativity, but also from that of many other people. It also needs your own ideas, translated into projects that will bring more mission awareness into your church.

We do not only aim at *short-term mission awareness*, but also at *long-term involvement*: screening, selecting and training of missionary candidates, to be sent from your church to minister cross-culturally.

When we bring missionary awareness to the local church, we must engage all segments of church-life: young, old, rich, poor, people of differing social, educational and professional backgrounds and of different levels of spiritual maturity.

The Church – The People

Jesus gave the great commission to His disciples, i.e. the Church. Often, the Church left foreign missions in the hands of mission-agencies. But it is better if efforts of Church, agencies and training schools become re-integrated, to ensure 'production' of good missionaries. How do we engage the different segments of the Church?

The Leadership

The church's leadership is responsible for the church's functioning. We have no choice as to what part of the great commission to take part in; Jesus spoke about Jerusalem AND Judea AND Samaria AND the ends of the earth.²⁰⁹ We cannot change the *and* into an *or*. Every church should be active in all four regions.

Therefore, if a pastor is not enthusiastic for evangelism *and* world missions, the church has a problem. And if he cannot be made *enthusiastic*, even the best efforts of mission-committed members will die and leave them discouraged. But if the pastor is the only one with a missions vision, *he* has to start from scratch: with prayer!

Youth & Children

World missions is not just adult business, so, invite missionaries also to youth groups and children's meetings! Their program must be different, though. Concentrate on adventurous stories, and simultaneously teach them about discipleship. Such meetings are excellent opportunities to share how you received God's calling and guidance into the ministry, as an

209 Acts 1:8

example for *their* lives. It will challenge youngsters to seek the Lord themselves and ask Him about His plan for their lives.

When a missionary has visited them, it is easier for children to pray regularly for him. Maybe they would even like to participate in fund-raising for a project, or to correspond with his children. Missionaries can keep their young friends motivated by sending them photographs, showing them 'their' fund-raising and prayers accomplished.

One church organizes an annual 'Ghana-market'. People bake cakes, produce paintings, youth lead games and competitions, children play music or sell toys, doctors check blood pressure, etc. It is a joyous, hilarious 2-hour event after a Sunday morning service. The members pay a little for snacks, services, games and music. The money goes to a children's ministry in Ghana, and the amount of money they collect at such occasions is amazing.

When children get discouraged in sharing their faith with friends, missionaries can explain that they sometimes face the same problem. It will motivate the children to pray for workers who do this all the time, even in a difficult language, and to people of a different religion.

Alternatively, find a foreign missionary in your own area and invite him to share with the children. Especially when they hear an accent, or see missionaries struggling with *their* mother tongue and culture, they will better appreciate the struggles that missionaries face daily, especially the first-termers among them.

Elderly People

We miss out by ignoring the powerful task force that older brothers and sisters form. Unfortunately, they often think they have nothing to contribute to world missions. Let me suggest otherwise:

Read Psalm 103:1-5 to them and encourage them to '*not forget all his benefits*' (vs. 2). David lists areas where he remembers these: forgiveness, healing, redemption, etc. Older people remember more 'benefits' than young people do, because of their longer life experience. Many of these came because of their prayers. Then, ask

them, 'What benefits could *other people* have because of *your future prayers*?' Why not direct your prayers towards missionaries?

Invite a missionary to speak at such meetings. They can be on furlough, or serve in your area. Ask them what to pray for and to be informed by their prayer- and ministry newsletters.

Decide to correspond with that missionary. Maybe he is lonely and longs for a letter or an email message. As long as you can write, you can use your experience and wisdom to encourage missionaries. Only be careful when they work in closed countries. Using wrong words can endanger their ministry, so find out what you can write before you do.

Maybe you can copy missionary newsletters, give them to interested people, tell about their ministry and ask your friends to support them. This often yields surprising results, which may give your missionary just a little more sustenance and encourage them to carry on with things that otherwise might not have been possible.

If possible, read missionary biographies and mission magazines. It broadens your horizon and gives you interesting things to tell your prayer group.

Doing some of the above is enough to qualify you as a sender yourself, did you know? Read 1 Samuel 30:24 and consider that although you may be too old *to go out* as a missionary, you can '*stay with the supplies*'. You will then share with the 'real' missionaries. Why would older people be of no value to world missions?

The Missions Executive

Whether his or her title is missions pastor, -coordinator, -executive or anything else that describes this person's ministry clearly, it is important to have one of the most mission-enthusiastic people in church to drive the process.

If your church can budget for a salary, even for a part-time function, appoint someone whose vision is to get foreign missions in your church up and running. If no salary is possible, you may find a volunteer; but this choice should not compromise the quality of

work. Rather start such a ministry late and well, than too early with a less-committed person. Design a job-description with him/her, possibly with advice from a missionary agency.

Task and equipment of such a person may include:

- Information: What books and mission magazines can be found? Conferences to be attended? Short-term trips to be made?
- Logistics: Office space, library? Computer, internet, telephone?
- Administrative skills: the person should be a networker, able to type, organize, coordinate, do some book-keeping and be able to work with others
- Publication: allow for communication to church members, maybe a page in the church magazine or on the church website?
- Authority: appoint him or her as voting church council member and have him/her report regularly.

More could be said about this important part of implementing a missions strategy in your church. However, more depends on how the Lord leads you *and* the executive, according to His plan. Pray for revelation of that plan.

The Church – The Activities

Prayer!

Prayer starts with the knowledge that *without Him we can do nothing*.²¹⁰ By prayer, the executive realizes that, if his or her church becomes involved in carrying out the great commission, it has to be God's work alone. Someone said 'when man works, man works, but when man prays, God works'. It will be the Lord's glory alone when the church's mission-involvement has become reality.

²¹⁰ John 15:5b

Sometimes a church looks like Ezekiel's valley of dry bones.²¹¹ God asked him 'can these dead bones live?' In other words: 'Do you have faith for the impossible?' At Ezekiel's neutral answer, God tells him to prophesy: 'Ezekiel, believe it or not, but I want you to speak it into existence.' And it happened. Many feel alone in their desire to see their church participate in missions, and identify with Ezekiel. May he encourage them!

The lone prayer-warrior has to pray for more people to join in the prayers for world missions. Prayers of a righteous man are powerful and effective,²¹² but apparently prayers of two or more are *more* powerful.²¹³ *One* may chase a thousand [spiritual enemies], *two* can deal with ten thousand.²¹⁴ A prayer group can pave the way towards world missions involvement.

When my wife and I joined the church from which we were sent out later, it was not at all mission-minded, except for some members, but not the leadership. We met for prayer once a month, for years. The meetings were heavy, and we felt we made no progress. When we gave up after 4 years we felt defeated. However, soon after one of our couples was sent out to Italy, where they served for 16 years – fully supported by this church. Gradually more people went out, singles, couples, short- and long-termers. Vision for missions developed among the leadership, and for years over half the church's budget was spent on missions. Even if you feel defeated, prayer yields fruit!

Teaching & Preaching

Regularly teach the biblical missions mandate – you find ideas in chapter 1. Establish one Sunday a month for world missions, so you can sow mission-consciousness into your members. Do it not on your own; also invite missionaries to speak. Thus you broaden your congregation's horizon and edify their faith. Then, for the rest of the

211 Ez. 37

212 James 5:16b

213 Matt. 18:19,20

214 Deut. 32:30

month pray for that missionary in the other services. These few minutes each week will prove invaluable.

Choose mission themes for Bible studies, e.g. the book of Acts as the church's missions guide for today. This helps in learning to read the Bible with missionary eyes. Consider Noah as preacher, Abraham who went to another country, Joseph as missionary to Egypt, Jonah as an unwilling missionary, Nehemiah as missionary researcher, etc.

A story tells about a group of hunters, standing at an open spot in the forest, discussing their disagreements on the chase. They argued until suddenly a rabbit ran past. Then, at once they fired their rifles. They realized that instead of arguing, they should hunt. What does this story teach the Church?

It says, that when offering the pulpit to a missionary, it should not be asked to what other denomination (s)he belongs – as argument to refuse him. Neither should they be rejected because of nationality, race, color, tribe, or gender: 'We do not want women preaching in our church!'

I ask: why not? Over half of the missionary task force is female and women preach at their fields. Why only on the field and not at home? In Romans 16:7 Paul greets his relatives Andronicus and Junia, probably a couple, who had been his fellow-prisoners. They were '*outstanding among the apostles*'. Some prejudiced translators, thinking women cannot be apostles, translated Junia as Junias, the masculine form.²¹⁵

We also hear about Priscilla, Euodia, Syntyche, Phoebe, Tryphena and Tryphosa as Paul's co-workers.²¹⁶ It is unlikely that the term 'co-workers' applies to people who had to keep silent publicly, let alone who became fellow-prisoners because of it. Let's not prevent God-chosen women from exercising their God-given ministries!

215 Hawthorne, Martin, & Reid (eds.), 1993:186, 589, 683

216 Ibid. p. 603

Short-term Outreaches

Few activities enlighten church members of any age more about missions, than short-term missionary outreaches do. Exposure to cultures with other languages, food, climates and strange habits teaches lessons that would not be learned otherwise. Many missionaries heard the Lord speak during their first short-term outreach. Let me tell my own experience:

Once my youth leader asked me to join him and his family on a Bible-smuggling trip. I was delighted and readily agreed. We often had brother Andrew speak, telling how he crossed borders of communist countries with Bibles, sharing that we have to obey God more than godless authorities. So, that first night in Serbia, when we unloaded Bibles into a brother's van, the Lord said in an almost audible voice: 'Steef, this is your first time in Eastern Europe, but it will not be the last'. 22 Years later I made my 64th and last trip to that area.

Others however, return from short-term outreaches and know for sure that they are not called as missionaries. Yet they now understand missionary life much better: knowledge of the hardships will motivate them to pray, and the mission field's needs will stimulate them to give. Short-term outreach always does something: you either become aware of your vocation, or you become a sender.

Mission Conferences

Set a time apart annually for a world missions conference. The time slot must be chosen carefully, considering school-holidays, harvest seasons in rural areas, public and Christian holidays, etc. The conference should ideally happen each year around the same time, so it becomes an event to be counted with. Choices need to be made about what the program should contain, depending on time duration.

All segments of the church should participate. No group is to be left out: let elderly people, children, youth and adults all have their own part in the program. Important things to take into account, are:

- Invite mission-experienced speakers. Most church members are not interested in theory. They rather hear stories from the field. Find missionary speakers for every evening, who inform the congregation about different aspects of missionary life, and about different mission fields
- Invite sending agencies to set up stalls, displays, book tables etc. in an exhibition room where people can receive information about ministries, and talk with their representatives. Give people time to visit the exhibition. Encourage them to visit the stalls and announce books for sale
- Show that missions is not exclusively serious business, but that it can be fun too. Ask some agencies to organize games that illustrate missionary life
- Include drama that illustrates realities of cross-cultural communication problems. This helps people to understand the difficulties missionaries face
- Let some people show up in national dress of certain mission fields, ethnic groups or cultural identities, and include musical expressions of indigenous worship, live, or with taped music
- Set up stalls during the breaks, that offer snacks, produced in the cooking styles of the mission fields
- It can be nice during the main program, to contact a missionary on the field. It is encouraging for them, and stimulates members to renew their prayer commitment for those on the field
- During the program: stick to the time slots you have allocated to each item. Programs should not run late.

RESEARCH

Have a look at the videos below. Let Jason Mandryk teach you!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U84eXa6xBA8>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S8KBHqjId5k>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pmLdbgGyx10>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0sIqvQmT5IU>

MISCELLANEOUS

Recommended books: See Bibliography

Assignments

- If your church runs a world missions program, describe how it works in about 250 words
- If you have found ideas in this chapter that you think will be helpful to implement in your church, discuss them with your pastor and write a short report about this conversation
- If your church uses other methods or techniques to implement a world missions strategy, describe them in a short essay

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Why should we involve all segments of the church in the implementation of a world missions program?
2. Mention as many different departments of the church as you can think of
3. To whom has the great commission been given first of all?
4. Explain the strategy you have to use to get your whole church missions-involved
5. Do churches have a choice about where to direct their evangelistic outreach? Base your answer on Acts 1:8
6. Give 4 good reasons why children and youth must be incorporated in increasing mission-awareness
7. Mention several ways in which elderly people can participate in world missions
8. What would you answer if you were asked to become your church's missions executive, without pay?
9. Do you agree with the author about women in ministry, as explained in this chapter? Why, or why not?
10. What good can an annual mission conference do for church members who do not know much about missions?