



ESSENTIALS OF  
WORLD MISSIONS

by

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*Transcription*

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# Lesson 1 ■ God's Missionary Heart

## WELCOME

Welcome to the summary lectures of the World Mission of the Church course. This course was originally taught at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. This summary course is a three-hour summary of that course and is being taped specifically for [biblicaltraining.org](http://biblicaltraining.org).

The course, actually, is laid out into three broad sections: the first section, a biblical-theological section, where we explore the biblical and theological basis for missions. Secondly, there is an historical section, where we examine and reflect on certain key features historically of the development of missions and the fulfillment of the Great Commission, particularly in the modern period. And then the third and final section is a section which reflects on anthropology and missiological principles, which can help us be more effective in fulfilling the Great Commission in the particular context that we face today.

## MISSION AND MISSIONS

So, we will begin with an examination on the biblical-theological category of missions, but first, I want to talk a little more broadly about just the very word "mission" and "missions" and what is meant by these terms, because we make a distinction between the word "mission" in the singular and the word "missions" in the plural, and sometimes this is not sufficiently made clear in churches, and, therefore, it is important at the outset to be clear about the words we use.

The word "mission" actually refers to the mission of God to redeem and save the world. The word "mission" is often referred to as the *missio Dei*, that is, God's mission, God's plan through all ages, to redeem and save the world through His own initiative.

Sometimes we confuse this with the word "missions," plural, which represents the various tasks which the church is called to in order to fulfill the Great Commission and be obedient to our Lord Jesus Christ. If we only have missions without mission, then, of course, the church itself becomes the place where the mission of the church is rooted.

But instead, we know, in fact, that missions is rooted in God's activity, God's initiative, God's impulse to save the world. It's His heart, and we are the reflection of that heart.

Also, missions represents a wide variety of initiatives that the church may take, all of which somehow fit into the larger mission of God.

## **THREE ASPECTS OF THE MISSION OF GOD**

So normally we think about the mission of God as encompassing three aspects.

### **Divine Initiative**

The first aspect would be the divine initiative in preparing the soil, in preparing the hearts of people before we ever arrive with the gospel message. That's the divine initiative; that's the preparation of the gospel that the Holy Spirit works in the lives of peoples.

### **Historical Transmission of the Gospel**

The second part is what we would normally call missions, that is the historical transmission of the gospel in a particular context. So this is where the missionary arrives on the field, preaches the gospel, plants churches, or churches are involved in any number of cross-cultural activities – that's the historical transmission of the gospel in particular places, in particular times, in particular contexts.

### **Indigenous Assimilation**

But then, thirdly, there's the work of God in the indigenous assimilation of that message. Even though the Gospel is preached in a foreign country or among foreign peoples and the church is planted by missionaries, at some point this message must be assimilated into the lives and experience of the people to whom we are going. So this is all part of God's work and the work of the church in bringing the gospel to the ends of the earth is merely a part of the larger mission of God.

## **GOD'S MISSIONARY HEART**

So, we're looking at the unfolding of God's missionary heart. We're demonstrating, biblically speaking, in this first section how missions is rooted in the very heart and nature of God. The way the course is set up, if you listen to the extended tapes is a rather extensive exposition of various passages of Scripture. We will not do all those in the summary lectures, but we do want to point out that missions is not something that

begins with the Great Commission of our Lord Jesus Christ. Missions begins with the very heart of God. God has a missionary heart.

## Old Testament

The mission of God lies behind the whole of the Old Testament as well as the New Testament and the particular task which we call missions today. So one of the earlier texts we will look at in the course is the text in Genesis 12, because in that text we find the tremendous revelation of Yahweh to Abraham where he reveals to Abraham a covenantal promise, which is marked by God's initiative. In that covenant, which is Genesis 12:1-3, God makes three promises to Abraham which are repeated on several occasions to Abraham and again through Isaac and through Jacob.

He promises Abraham that He will bless him personally. That is to say, there is a numerical blessing. Abraham is one person. His wife Sarah is childless, yet God is going to multiply his descendants and make them as numerous as the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore. These are some of the metaphors that are used to describe this personal, numerical blessing made to Abraham.

But secondly, it is not only a personal blessing made to Abraham, it also comes as a national blessing with specific geographic implications. He promises Abraham that he will take possession of the gates of their enemies, that he will become a mighty nation, his descendants will take possession of the land, which we now call the Promised Land, the land promised to Abraham.

So there's a numerical blessing to Abraham, there's a national blessing to the people of Israel, and then, thirdly, there is this marvelous spiritual blessing to "all nations on the earth." That text, Genesis 12, which says, "and in your seed all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."

So this is a passage which is extremely important and is repeated to Abraham at several important junctures. For example, in Genesis 22:17-18 he says these words: "I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore." That is the numerical blessing. Secondly he tells him, continuing in verse 17, "Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies." That's the second part of the blessing, a national blessing. And then thirdly, verse 18, "and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed because you have obeyed me." So these three parts of the covenant, the numerical, the national, and the spiritual ("to all nations") are repeated in almost the exact same words to Isaac in Genesis 26:3-5, to Jacob in Genesis 28:13-14, and numerous times and in various ways throughout the Pentateuch.

It's actually quite interesting that when Moses stands before the people in the opening chapter of Deuteronomy, that great passage, which occurs some 400 years after the original promise to Abraham, you nevertheless have this wonderful experience where Moses says to the people in verses 10-11, when he looks out over the nation of Israel that's gathered there, poised to enter the Promised, he says in verse 10: "The Lord has increased your numbers today, so that you are as many as the stars in the sky."

So Moses acknowledges even before they enter the Promised Land that the first part of the Abrahamic promise has been fulfilled within Egypt itself. But God's plan was never that the Israelites would simply be numerous and multiply exceedingly as slaves in Egypt. The 430 years of Egyptian slavery was soon to be passed by the next stage, which actually calls them to take possession of the land. And so there is a long process, throughout the book of Joshua especially, where we find the Israelites taking possession of the land and fulfilling almost completely, but certainly significantly, the geographic portion of this, that they will take possession of the land that God promised to Abraham.

The problem, of course, is this third part of the blessing, the spiritual blessing to all nations. That becomes very, very difficult for them to sometimes gain possession of, because they are so busy worrying about maintaining their possession of the land. They eventually get exiled, and, therefore, it becomes extremely difficult for them to even think about the larger, global implications of their calling as the people of God.

I do want to point out also that in the larger lectures we not only demonstrate how this promise is found in the Law, the Pentateuch, but also how it's found in the Prophets and the Writings. We have tremendous promises found in Scripture. For example, in Psalm 2, where we have the nations of the world to whom has been given this great promise that God wants to bless them, and instead we meet in Psalm 2 the nations raging and plotting against the LORD – that is Yahweh – and against His anointed one – that is the Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ. And in that wonderful passage in Psalm 2, you have the Father promising the Son, not just that He would save Israel, but instead, a much broader agenda which is part of the mission of God. "I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession" – so this great promise that God will, in fact, bless the nations. This is done throughout the Old Testament in a number of ways.

This also appears not only in the strand of the Law and the Writings, but also in the Prophets themselves where you have a number of examples where you have the leadership of Israel recognized this tremendous hope that God was bringing them to and would carry them to through His abundant promises. For example, take the passage in Isaiah 49:6ff. This passage, which is quoted in the New Testament, is a tremendous insight into the great vision of God for the people of God. This, like Psalm

2, is a conversation between the LORD and the Suffering Servant, the Messiah, who we, of course, now know is our Lord Jesus Christ. And this is what the LORD says to Jesus Christ. He says to Him, prophetically, "It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth."

Now, this is an extremely important passage because here are the Israelites facing exile, facing the loss of even the second part of the Abrahamic covenant, and yet, the vision of Isaiah is not just that they would be restored to their land – that would be the greatest prayer of any Israelite. "Oh, come back from exile. Be restored to the land." But instead, the vision is always much, much greater. He says, "It is too small a thing if your prayer is only that I save the tribes of Israel and bring you back from exile." He says, "The real vision is that I will make you a light for the Gentiles that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth." What a great vision!

## **New Testament**

And this, of course, is picked up on very readily by the New Testament. The Apostle Paul, for example, when he talks about the missionary journey to the Gentiles, he quotes this passage and he says specifically, "This is what the Lord said commanding us" – that is commanding the church – "to take the message to all peoples on earth." So the Apostle Paul understands that this Messianic promise, which is fulfilled in Christ's coming, is brought in application to the world through a very strong message and emphasis on the role of the church of Jesus Christ in the world. In the larger lectures we explain more carefully how this process happens.

If you read Acts 13 we find that this is exactly the point that Paul makes. Paul says in reference to his turning to the Gentiles, in Acts 13:46, "We had to speak the Word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles. For this is what the Lord has commanded us." Now, he says "us" there; he doesn't say "what He commanded Christ" but "what He commanded us" – that is, the church – "I will make you" – which we normally think of as a reference to Christ, the Messiah, but it's actually here in the Greek, it is singular in the text, which would make it refer to Christ, "I will make you" that is Christ, "a light to the Gentiles." But Paul has said this is commanded to the Church.

So, "I will make you a light to the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth." So this is a promise made about Christ, but it is brought to the world through the instrumentality of the obedient church who obeys the Great Commission and brings this great message out into all the earth.

So, in summary, the Old Testament has strong emphasis on God's heart for the nations, not just Israel, but all nations, found in the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings. This, of course, is explored in greater detail in the expanded lectures that are available through [biblicaltraining.org](http://biblicaltraining.org).

## **Lesson 2 ■ The Great Commission**

At this point, we want to turn ourselves to the most important New Testament passages related to missions. These refer to the passages which we call the Great Commission text. Let me clarify, first of all, what is meant by the expression, “The Great Commission,” because we often here “The Great Commission” as a reference to the text in Matthew 28:18-20. Actually, the term “The Great Commission” refers to a whole range of texts, which culminate all four Gospels and is the beginning of the book of Acts.

So we don’t actually speak of the Great Commission in the singular when we refer to a particular text, such as the text in Matthew. We use the word “Great Commission” (singular) to refer to the concept of a great commission which is revealed collectively in the force of all the passages, not just the Matthean passage. What we want to do is point out that there are actually four Great Commission passages found in the gospel accounts.

The first is found in Matthew 28:16-20, the second in Mark 16:15-16, the third is found in Luke 24:47-48 (and that accompanying text in Acts 1:4-9), and finally in that great and wonderful text in John 20:21. The Great Commission passages are then examined in great detail in the extended portion of the lectures. We do a very careful exegesis of each of the four Great Commissions and seek to make clear exposition of those passages.

I also make a number of points in general about the Great Commissions as a whole. I’ll just summarize that lecture by saying that we try to point out that the four Great Commissions that we find in the New Testament are not commissions that are given at one location and reported by each of the four Gospels. These all represent, actually, a wide variety of settings in different geographic locations, and different times during the last forty days of Christ’s presence on earth between His resurrection and His ascension. This makes them extremely important, because Christ is repeating Himself on several occasions that He is calling us to bring the gospel to the ends of the earth.

So, what we’ll do now is turn to each of these and make a few points to summarize the major observations about each of the four Great Commission passages.

### **MATTHEW**

#### **Authority**

The first is found in Matthew 28:18-20. First of all, there should be a strong notice made of the authority which Jesus brings to this text. Jesus does not call the church with a lack

of authority. He says, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples." This is clearly a call for the church to go out with a sense of authority to bring salvation to all peoples.

One of the most fascinating things that we explore in the full lectures is the choice of the word "church" to describe the gathered people of God as a result of the obedience to the Great Commission. What we find is that the word "church" refers to a worldwide meeting, a public meeting, that God is gathering people together into this church of Jesus Christ, and that's a very powerful image, that God is essentially issuing a call to come to a great banquet and He's inviting the entire world to attend.

## The Imperative

The other really big point in this passage which is important is the importance of the imperative in the passage. There's actually only one imperative found in the entire Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20. Most people assume that the single imperative in this passage is the word "Go." "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to observe everything that I have commanded you. And lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

But in fact, the word "go" is not in the imperative. The single imperative in the entire passage is the phrase "make disciples." So it becomes an extremely important point in this passage, because it summarizes the important role of discipleship. And that point is expanded with some depth in the larger lectures.

## All People Groups

A third point that we make is not only does Jesus speak with authority and give us that authority, not only do we have this imperative, "make disciples," which reinforces church-planting and discipleship and not just conversion, but also we have the emphasis on "all nations." The phrase in Greek is *panta ta ethne*.

Jesus does not use a geographic term but a people term. We actually explore a whole range of Greek words. We have five major Greek words that we examine that Jesus could have used if he intended a geographic understanding of the church's growth around the world, but he does not say to us to go into all the countries of the world, but to go to all the nations of the world. That is to say that we must penetrate every ethnic group, every people group with the gospel.

The phrase in the Greek is *panta ta ethne* — "all nations." You can hear the English word "ethnic" in the Greek word *ethne*, because this is the reference that we find with the

Greek word *ethne*. It is a people / ethnic orientation, not a geographic location or political orientation.

So often when we think about missions it's about going to places with the gospel, bringing the gospel to a place like India or China, but actually, it's about the peoples of India; it's about the peoples of China, and even though India is only one country, one geographic country, it's actually filled with thousands of people groups, most of whom have not heard the gospel and do not have a witnessing church.

So even though the number of countries in the world is only around roughly two hundred, we have over 24,000 ethnic groups in the world, each of whom deserves and to whom we are called to bring the gospel and a church into those people groups.

And so this is the richness of Matthew's gospel which we are just now summarizing in very, very quick fashion, but it is very, very important to recognize the full scope of this.

## **MARK**

### **Importance of Gospel Proclamation to All Creation**

Going to Mark's Gospel we have another remarkable emphasis, because in Mark's Gospel we have rather than the expression "make disciples" as being the imperative, in Mark's gospel it is "proclaim the Gospel," and rather than the focus being "make disciples of all nations," it is the phrase "to all creation." So, even though the words sound similar in English – in Matthew, "make disciples of all nations" and in Mark, "proclaim the gospel to all creation" – it's actually a very, very different kind of language and focus.

Mark is pointing out the importance of Gospel proclamation, the importance of the preaching of the Word. He gives a great urgency to the preaching to all creation, and given the fact of the remarkable, explosive nature of world population, it's important that we recognize the tremendous challenge that is upon us to bring the gospel to the ends of the earth and to every single person within the created order who deserves to hear the gospel.

### **Importance of the Church**

Mark also emphasizes, as did Matthew, the importance of incorporation into the church. Matthew does not simply say, "Go and spread this good news and let people hear it," and they remain disembodied believers. But no, he says, "Make disciples of all nations." Bring the nations to the feet of Jesus. That is to say, bring before every nation the people

of God in churches that live out and embody the fullness of redeemed society before the eyes of a watching world.

Likewise Mark cannot even possibly contemplate belonging to Christ in a way that is untethered from membership in the visible church of our Lord Jesus Christ. Mark will not separate individual faith from one's incorporation into the Body. This is where we find that explicit reference to baptism in Mark's Gospel. "Whoever believes and is baptized shall be saved."

Mark is not trying to create any added work to the simple act of faith in Christ which saves us, and we are of course aware of the blessed thief on the cross who without any other action but simply his pure faith in Jesus is saved. That's the gospel. That's the gospel that Paul preaches. That's the gospel that Mark affirms. This is not Mark's point. He is not talking about soteriology. Mark is talking about ecclesiology. He's talking about the nature of faith as it's expressed in the life of the church.

So Mark says, "Whoever believes and is baptized shall be saved." That is to say, whoever believes is baptized, that is, brought into the full-orbed experience of the people of God, that we express our faith in community, we express our faith corporately, not just individually. So this is another great gift of Mark's Gospel.

Mark also demonstrates in bold relief the great chasm between those who believe and those who do not believe, in terms that are quite remarkable.

## **LUKE**

### **The Content of the Gospel**

Moving quickly to Luke's Gospel, you find that Luke also follows through on this emphasis upon "all nations." These are the exact words that we find that Matthew used, where he emphasizes that the gospel is for "all peoples on the earth." What is unique about Luke's Gospel is that he is the only one who gives us a specific reference to the actual content of the gospel message. Luke does not just simply say, "Go out and preach the gospel," or "make disciples," without telling us what the gospel is.

Luke specifically says, "Repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in His name to all nations." So we have the emphasis on repentance and the forgiveness of sins, the work of Christ on the cross. This is the very, very powerful emphasis found in Luke's Gospel.

## Continuity between the Old and New Covenants

Luke also demonstrates secondly the continuity between the Old Testament revelation and the new covenant. Luke's Gospel points out that the Great Commission emerges as a fulfillment of the Prophets. "This is what is written"—in other words, in the Law, in the Prophets, in the Writings, this is being fulfilled, that the gospel will be preached.

So you cannot think that the gospel is somehow or another disembodied from the Old Testament revelation or that modern-day missions in obedience to the Great Commission is untethered from the promises made to Abraham. Luke is the one that shows us Christ explaining to the two on the road to Emmaus how Moses and all the Prophets were giving witness to Himself.

So, these are a number of the emphases in Luke's Gospel, and I explore, actually, several others in the expanded version of this particular course.

## JOHN

The fourth and final gospel account is found in the Gospel of John. Many people have wrongfully asserted that the Great Commission passages are features of the synoptic gospels—that is, Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Several observe that John's Gospel does not contain a "Great Commission." Nothing could be further from the truth. This is a gross misrepresentation and an under-reading of the theology and how it unfolds in John's Gospel.

John's Gospel, like we find the in rest of John's Gospel, so often uses different vocabulary and language, and, therefore, it's easy to miss John's "Great Commission," but it's found very clearly in John 20:21 in those words of our Lord: "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."

## Continuity between Christ and the Church

We explore in the extended lectures that this passage brings out the continuity between Christ and the church. Christ is the sent one, and now he is sending us out into the world. This is where you really have to appreciate the theology of John's Gospel. Unlike the synoptics, where the number one way that Christ is referred to either by himself or by the Gospel writers about Christ is the expression "Son of Man." This is not a feature that is dominant in John's Gospel.

Instead, the singular most important way and the most numerous way that Christ refers to himself or is referred to by the Gospel writer in John's Gospel, is as the "sent one."

Over forty times, in fact, forty-two times Jesus says of Himself, or it's said of Him, that He is the "sent one." You, of course, remember the passage in John 3:16, "that God so loved the world that he sent his only begotten Son." Later in that same passage, Jesus said, "I was not sent into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world," and so forth.

So all of these passages are very critical to how John understands the mission of Christ, as one that was sent into the world. So it is no mistake that the last occurrence of this, the forty-second occurrence, is the occurrence found in this passage, where Jesus says to his gathered disciples as he breathes on them, "As the Father has sent me, even so send I you."

## **Sending Role of the Church**

This is a tremendous, tremendous emphasis on the sending role of the church and the importance of being in continuity with Christ, who was sent and who now sends us out into the world. You recall that great text from Romans 10 where Paul says, "How then shall they call on the one they have not believed in? How can they believe in the one of whom they've not heard? How can they hear without someone preaching to them? How can they preach unless they are sent?" [Romans 10:14-15]

So the sending role of the church is critical to the Great Commission. If the church does not send out into the world, there can be no preachers who give witness to the good news of the gospel. If there are no preachers to give witness to the good news of the gospel, then there's no one who can hear the good news of the gospel. If there's no one who hears, then there's no one who can believe in their heart, and if there's no one who can believe in their heart, they cannot call upon Christ and be saved.

So Paul draws these wonderful golden links between the one who calls is the one who believes; the one who believes is the one who has heard; the one who has heard and the one who has been in the presence of a preacher or a witness to the gospel; and that person is only there through the instrumentality of a sending church. So, you may not have been called to be a missionary who has been sent cross-culturally to work among some peoples in a distant part of the world, but you are part of the sending church. Every Christian is either a sent Christian or should be a part of sending Christians; that is, be a part of the mobilization of Christians into the world.

So this is a tremendous help as we see this emphasis in John's Gospel and the implications of that for the role in missions that we all have.

## **Lesson 3 ■ Theological Questions**

The next portion of the biblical section leaves a strict exposition of particular passages and deals, actually, more theologically with some more important questions that people have in reference to the Great Commission and the obedience of the church in the world.

### **OBJECTIONS TO THE GOSPEL**

Today, we cannot ignore the objections that many people have against the global mission of the church. Jesus Christ has commanded us to go into all the world. Jesus Christ has promised us that he will be with us as we bring this message to the ends of the earth. But we also saw that even in Psalm 2, even though Abraham was promised that the nations would be blessed by this great message of redemption, we find that the nations actually rage, and they scheme, and they plot against the Lord and against his anointed one. So this has not changed in the history of the world, despite the fact that we are bearers of good news, the church often fails to appreciate that good news and to respond to it accordingly.

#### **Pluralism**

So, have you ever heard any of the following statements spoken? Someone who says something like, “My god is a loving god. How could he send anyone to hell?” Or, “Aren’t all religions basically the same?” Or someone who says, “If everyone tries to do good or as best as they can, I’m sure it’ll work out okay in the end.” Or, “What about the poor native in the rain forest who has never heard the gospel – will they go to hell because of a geographic accident?” Or people who say, as the Hindus often do, “Just as many rivers run to the same ocean, so many religions lead to the same god.” Or the Japanese statement, which says, “All of the paths to the summit of the mountain differ; from the top, one sees the same moon.”

These are all statements that reveal that our society today and our world today is not prepared to accept, without some explanation, the message of a unique Savior who uniquely is poised to save the world, and the real reality of the lost. And so in the fuller course we examine in very great detail the question, “Are the lost really lost?” I explore all the areas where evangelicals have been in agreement, and then some areas where evangelicals continue to have some debate.

But there is no question that evangelical thought completely precludes the challenge of pluralism, which is the belief that many different religions can lead independently to

God, and that Christianity is just one of many religions leading to God. In the larger, extended lectures, I exposit particularly the writings of Dr. John Hick, who argues that we should not be focused on Christ, but on God in kind of a general way, and that all religions can lead us to God. But upon evaluation there are major weaknesses to John Hick's position, and the extended lectures go into great detail in pointing out a number of problems with the pluralist position, and I actually lay out four major objections that Christians have to the pluralistic position. We will not accept that position as a biblical one.

## **Inclusivism**

The second major challenge we look at in the extended course is the challenge of inclusivism. Inclusivism is not the same as pluralism, and we should be very careful to distinguish between the two. Pluralism believes flat-out that there are just simply multiple ways to God. That is to say, a Hindu or a Buddhist or a Muslim may just as surely find salvation and eternal life as a Christian. They would maybe insist that you be a faithful Muslim or a faithful Buddhist or a faithful Christian, but they don't believe there is any significant difference between the capacities of the various religions in the world to lead one successfully to God. Inclusivism is a different position altogether.

Inclusivism insists that salvation is only through Christ and his death on the cross. At that point, they are radically different from the pluralists, because they believe in the absolute, unqualified uniqueness of Jesus Christ as the only hope for salvation. Without his death on the cross, without his resurrection, then no one could be saved.

But inclusivism is yet a very marked difference from the exclusivist position, or the evangelical position, because the inclusivists go on to say that even though salvation is only found in Christ, that the work of Christ can achieve its effect apart from one's conscious knowledge of Christ or their personal faith response to Christ. This has often been called "anonymous Christianity." You are a Christian – Christ has saved you and died for you, you're going to heaven – you just don't know it. You may be a Buddhist or a Muslim. You don't realize that Christ has saved you.

This position we exposit in the extended lectures, the writings of the Catholic theologian Karl Rahner, who is probably the most well-known expositor of the inclusivist position, just as John Hick is the most well-known expositor of the pluralist position. But once again, we go through very carefully looking at this position, we try to give it an extremely fair hearing, we listen carefully to their own sources of what they say their position holds, and yet we find that there are six major problems with the inclusivist position, and it cannot be accepted.

To separate, for example, to say that Christ's work on the cross is ontologically necessary, but not epistemologically necessary. That is, to say that it's essential that it happened but it's not essential that you know that it happened or that you come to consciousness that it happened, is absolutely in violence to the clear teaching of the New Testament, which calls us to call people to explicit faith in Jesus Christ.

On the day of Pentecost, Peter preached the gospel and the Bible tells us that the Holy Spirit convicted them of their sins and they cried out to God, and they cried out to the apostles of God who had brought the message, and said, "What must we do?" Peter does not say, "Oh, nothing really, you're already Christians, you just don't know it. Come from implicit to explicit faith." No! He says to them, "Repent, and believe the gospel." Through repentance and faith, and only through repentance and faith, can you be saved.

When Paul preaches to the Philippian jailer, he does not say to him when he falls on his knees and says, "How can I be saved?" Paul does not say, "You're already saved!" Paul calls him to explicit faith in the gospel. So, the gospel is filled with examples and clear calls to call us to conscious faith in Jesus Christ.

## Engaged Exclusivism

So instead of the pluralist and inclusivist position, I affirm what is called the "engaged exclusivist" position. Now, you'll have to listen to full lectures to understand the fullness of what I mean by this, but I am actually contrasting my position as "engaged exclusivist" with kind of the general "exclusivist" position, because I believe there are some ways, particularly in the contemporary discussion, the term "exclusivism" has given an inadequate view of general revelation and God's preparation work prior to the gospel being preached.

And I've already showed you even in these quick summary lectures the importance of the *Missio Dei*, the mission of God, and our insistence that the gospel work begins before the missionary arrives. Before the person witnesses to you, God has been doing his work, and I don't think that can be easily ignored, and, therefore, I think in some of the expressions of exclusivism, they don't give proper space to general revelation and the preparatory work of God through the Holy Spirit in the lives of future believers.

Also, I believe that some versions of exclusivism have been far too defensive rather than offensive regarding the claims of Christ, and, therefore, I call my position "engaged exclusivism," which seeks to be faithful to biblical Christianity and also seeks to be faithful to the historic Christianity that's been proclaimed by the Apostles and those who have been faithful to preach it to the ends of the earth.

So, we have this section on the Great Commissions that has led us to, I think, an application of that to the nature of the lost and whether or not we believe the lost are really lost. I believe in summary that, in fact, the lost are indeed lost, and desperately need the gospel.

## **CLARIFYING WHAT MISSIONS IS**

The third and final part of this first major section has to do with clarifying with more certainty what missions is and what missions isn't, and biblically speaking, why do I make this insistence about missions being a cross-cultural activity and how do we distinguish missions from other kinds of things that the church often calls "missions?"

Now, in the extended version, we go back and we examine the difference between a country and a nation again. We make it very, very clear that a country and a nation are two different things, and, therefore, we want to clarify the fact that the gospel is about penetrating every people group with the gospel.

One of the problems today is that this analysis of the world is not properly understood by people, and, therefore, they tend to think that a lost person in Tulsa, Oklahoma, or a lost person in Chicago, Illinois, is not really different from a lost person in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, or in Pyongyang, North Korea.

But this is actually not true, because even though from an individual standpoint these people are in a similar situation, from a strategic planning point, missiologically, we have to recognize the dramatic difference between someone who has access to the gospel and someone who does not have access to the gospel. And so missions makes a strong distinction between the evangelistic work of the church, whereby Christians witness from an existing church to people within their own cultural group (this is your normal witnessing activity of the church), and cross-cultural witness, which is missions, whereby a Christian worker crosses a cultural, linguistic, or social barrier with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Those who have access to the gospel are in a witnessing sphere; those who do not have access to the gospel need a missionary activity in order to give them access to the gospel. So, we go into a lot of detail to try to exposit and defend this important distinction.

Let me just bring you one example, biblically, why I think this is very, very important. In Acts 1 we have that great text of Jesus, where he says, that the gospel is to be borne witness to by his church in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the earth. Now, this is very important, because this is a progressive idea where Jesus lays

out a kind of a simple blueprint that the church is to bring the gospel from Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the uttermost parts, or to the ends, of the earth.

Now if we interpret that as essentially a geographic expansion, it seems to be inconsistent with the great “people-group” emphasis, which has been so clearly laid out by our Lord in the Great Commission and in other ways that our Lord has explicated this, and certainly as we’ve seen in the Old Testament.

So if you look very carefully in the book of Acts, you’ll see as the book develops that it is roughly arranged according to this same framework of Jerusalem - ministry of the gospel in Jerusalem - Judea and Samaria, as the gospel spreads into Judea and Samaria, and finally as it goes into Rome and to Spain, to the ends of the earth.

Now, it’s essential to recognize that this progression is not primarily a geographic one, but it is an ethnic one. The reason we know this is from the great breakthrough - what many missiologists believe is the most significant missiological breakthrough in the book of Acts, and I certainly think it is in the top ten most important events in the life of the early church.

That’s what we find in Acts 11. In that passage (Acts 11:19), the disciples are being scattered and persecuted, and we’re told in verse 19 that they tell the message only to Jews. Now, they have geographically gone to Judea and Samaria, but they have not ethnically gone to new groups. They are simply sharing the gospel with their own people who happen to live in a different place geographically. That’s our natural tendency, and we all would do the same thing. But the gospel would call them to go beyond that.

So the great breakthrough occurs in verse 20 when some men from Cyprus and Cyrene breach the Jewish wall and they begin to address the gospel to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. This is extremely important and significant, because this is the first intentional cross-cultural step of the gospel among an unreached group with a different ethnic background than those who were there.

So, I highly encourage this emphasis, and that we think carefully about what missions is and what missions isn’t. Someone who preaches the gospel from the pulpit every Sunday to a group of gathered Christians is not a missionary activity. It’s a very important activity – it’s indeed one of the most important activities in the life of the church, and maybe the most important, but it is certainly not missions. It is a proclamation of the gospel, maybe helping to disciple, to train, or even to evangelize, but it is certainly not missions.

But when we see the church being planted cross-culturally, we begin to see that the gospel is being brought to new people groups, and that is the missionary task. I think this is important, because churches should ask the hard questions. They should ask

themselves, “Why do we give money and call it missions if it’s actually evangelistic activity? Is it actually crossing cultural, linguistic, social barriers for the gospel?” It would be helpful to actually look carefully at your budgets and see what percentage is actually going to missionary activity, because if we only focus on evangelistic activity, we will never fulfill the Great Commission.

Because even if every Christian in the world became an evangelist, and they witnessed to everybody they knew, and everyone they knew became Christians, and they themselves became evangelists, even after you had tremendous movement to Christ all over the world, there would still be over a billion people who had never even heard the name of Jesus. Why? Because they had no friends or neighbors to evangelize to them, to speak the word of God to them.

So, however vibrant the church’s life may become in various parts of the world where the church is planted, however vivacious the people’s witness may be, however mature the church’s growth, the world will not be reached, the Great Commission will not be fulfilled, until people cross cultural barriers and bring the gospel to those who have not heard it.

So, in the extended lectures we explore this in great detail, and this represents the conclusion of the first part of the course, which is the biblical section of the course, which explores some biblical and theological issues related to the world mission of the church.

## **Lesson 4 ■ History of the Church's Expansion into the World**

Welcome to the second part of these summary lectures which summarizes the World Missions of the Church course through [biblicaltraining.org](http://biblicaltraining.org). This part of the course is an historical section of the course, which seeks to explore the history of the church's expansion into the world. We focus primarily on the modern period and want to explore what is it that makes the modern missionary period unfold in the way that it does.

Missions is associated very much with William Carey – the modern period is – and we often will hear William Carey referred to as the Father of the modern missionary movement. So the purpose of this period of the course is to explore the rise of historic missionary activity in the modern period and beginning with William Carey.

### **THE MODERN PERIOD**

What we actually do is divide the modern period into four eras, or periods. The first we call "Beachhead Missions," which goes from 1792 to 1910, and we will explore in a moment what that means. The second era is called "Frontier Missions," and this goes from 1865 to 1974. The third era of missions is called "Unreached Peoples Missions," and goes from 1934 to (I am predicting) 2004, and then the final, fourth era of missions is called the "Indigenous-Initiated Missions" and begins in 1989 and continues on into some distant period of the future.

Now, first you'll notice a couple of things. We're giving each of these eras a particular title – "Beachhead Missions," "Frontier Missions," "Unreached Peoples Missions," "Indigenous-Initiated Missions" – each of these four designations has these titles to give you the general summary of what each of these periods means, and I will briefly expound those in a moment.

The second thing you should notice is that the time frames I gave you do not run end-to-end. For example, the first period is 1792-1910. The second period does not pick up in 1911 and go on down, but it actually begins back earlier in 1865. This is important because what we see is that the first era of missions – as with each of the succeeding eras – continues for some time even as new paradigms of missions arise. And so generally speaking, as is true today, you have new initiatives in missions that are really changing the face of how missions is done, but it's happening alongside of the way

missions has been done the last 50 or 60 years. These epochs or periods do not run in nice, neat succession, but actually run in a period where there is often great overlap between the periods. So that's actually intentionally done to try to be accurate to the historical development of these periods.

## **First Era of Missions: Beachhead Missions (1792–1910)**

The first period is called "Beachhead Missions." Why do we call it "Beachhead missions?" It's called "Beachhead Missions" because this is a term borrowed from the military, which describes how people took possession of a new territory, such as invading a country and so forth. They have what they call "establishing a beachhead."

And so in the early period of missions, this is how missions was done. You would try to go to a new country and establish a missionary base in that new country, much the same way as an invading force would seek to invade by putting a small group of special forces, perhaps, onto a certain location to get your foothold so that you can bring equipment and troops and the larger occupation forces.

In the same vein, this has been applied to the church's expansion in the world. The church would find a country – in the case of William Carey it was India – where there were very, very few Christians, where there was not sufficient preaching of the gospel there, so Carey goes to a part of India that has virtually no Christians. He established a small work there and it gradually expands into the larger work that he's done. And this is repeated by many people throughout that early period, and we call this "Beachhead Missions."

The key themes of beachhead missions is that it emphasizes planting the church in a new country, so it's much more of a country, geographic focus than a people-group focus. Very rarely do you hear them talking about people-groups, more about countries. Even to this day, when someone meets a missionary, they very rarely ask them the question, "To what people, to whom, are you ministering?" But usually, "Where are you a missionary?" That is the question that is often asked us.

People say, "I am a missionary in India." "I am a missionary in China." "I am a missionary in Nigeria." So this is a really a hangover from the first era of missions, where the emphasis was on bringing the gospel to a new country.

This period, as with the expression "Beachhead Missions," typically emphasized work along the coastlines. Particularly in Asia and Africa, you have a great emphasis on establishing a church on the coast, because going into interior parts of countries was extremely dangerous, primarily because of the malaria that was carried by mosquitoes. It was much safer to live on the coast and many Western colonial powers had begun to develop trade relationships, which gave them treaty ports which allowed them to dock

ships in certain port cities and it gave ex-patriots the possibility of living there near those port cities. So there was some safety and logistical wisdom in living on the coast, because of the threat of malaria and other uncertainties of the early period.

Thirdly, this period emphasizes long-term resident missionaries. These are missionaries who go there and never come back. William Carey went to India and he never returned, and he is buried in India.

I give several examples of these pioneers of beachhead missions in the full course, and I explore in some detail the work of William Carey. We do an extended exposition of William Carey's famous 87-page tract entitled, "An Enquiry into Obligations of Christians to use Means to Reach the Heathen." It's one of the most remarkable documents in the history of missionary enterprise. It's in five sections and I explore each of those five sections and talk about the tremendous contributions that William Carey has made, and why he's called the father of modern missions.

Perhaps the most amazing thing about William Carey is that he was, despite his notable achievements, a man of great humility. I have stood at his grave, which is found just north of Calcutta in Serampore, and on his grave he does not mention that he is the father of the modern missionary movement. He doesn't mention that he founded the first Christian college in all of Asia. He doesn't mention the dozens and dozens of languages that he learned and put the New Testament or the entire Bible in, and on and on and on. It simply says these words, "A wretched, poor, and helpless worm am I. On Thy kind arms I fall." Oh, the great humility of this great saint William Carey.

In the extended lectures I also go into great detail to exposit the life of Adoniram Judson, one of the first American missionaries to go into a foreign field. He is often called the father of American missions and we explain why that's true in the course.

## **Second Era of Missions: Frontier Missions (1865–1974)**

The second era of missions is known as "Frontier Missions" and it begins in 1865. This is a different emphasis because here you begin to find an emphasis not just on the coastlands, but on the frontiers or on the interior parts of the country. You have a great rise of faith missions, where people raise their own support rather than relying upon supporting churches or missions agencies.

You have a whole other brand of missionary that emerges in this stage, new missionaries that were not ordained in the traditional sense; they were often less educated than the previous generation of missionaries; they were often recruited directly from college campuses and were students, and were not connected with in the traditional ways. A much greater emphasis on the autonomy in the field, where you have field-based directors, and a much more serious engagement with thinking about

better strategies to contextualize the gospels. All of this is expanded on and expounded upon in more detail in the full course.

The best example I would like to give to illustrate the second era of missions is the life and work of Hudson Taylor. Hudson Taylor goes into the interior part of China. He's not content to be on the outside borders, the coastlands of China. He founds a new mission organization called the China Inland Mission, which relies upon faith missions, where they raise their own support, and he begins to raise up students to join him in this effort. And I emphasize in these part of the lectures the work of Hudson Taylor.

### **Third Era of Missions: Unreached Peoples Missions (1934–2004)**

The third era of missions is called "Unreached Peoples Missions." This era actually focuses on the remaining unreached people groups that do not currently have access to the gospel. This is really illustrated by the work of William Cameron Townsend, the founder of the Wycliffe Bible Translators. He profoundly understood that missions was much more than just going to places, but actually identifying the individual peoples that needed to hear the gospel, that were behind cultural, social, and often in the case of Wycliffe, behind linguistic barriers.

One of the most remarkable experiences that William Cameron Townsend had was when he had a conversation with an Indian to whom he was seeking to sell a Spanish Bible. In the midst of this conversation he asked the Indian if he wanted the Spanish Bible and the Indian asked him in broken trade Spanish if he had a Bible in his own language, which was the Cakchiquel language.

Townsend said, No, he only had a Spanish Bible, to which the Indian responded, "Well, if your God is so great, why doesn't he speak my language?" And this became the question which burned into the heart of William Cameron Townsend, and led him to found the Wycliffe Bible Translators, which has helped us to understand the true diversity – linguistically, socially, and culturally – of the world.

So, this third era of missions emphasizes unreached people groups. It emphasizes that missions is about peoples, not places. And it emphasizes a much wider range of strategies and partnerships with national churches and so forth that become a critical part of missions today.

### **Fourth Era of Missions: Indigenous-Initiated Missions (1989–Today)**

I believe that we are also experiencing a dramatic development of something new about missions, that deserves to be called a fourth era of missions. I actually have this missions era starting in 1989 with the Global Consultation on World Evangelization in Singapore, and also the Lausanne Conference in Manila in July of 1989. I think '89 is a

good starting point for this emphasis on indigenous-initiated missions. Both those conferences highlighted the work of the non-Western church and their role in bringing the gospel to the ends of the Earth.

One of the distinctives of this era is who is bringing the gospel. In the first three eras—in the era of beachhead missions, as well as frontier missions, as well as unreached peoples missions—you still have an emphasis on Western missionaries bringing the gospel to the non-Western world.

In the first era it's Western missionaries bringing the gospel to new countries in the non-Western world. In the second era you have Western missionaries bringing the gospel to the interior parts of countries in the non-Western world. In the third era of missions you have Western peoples bringing the gospel to all the unreached people groups that are located in the non-Western world.

So, there's a huge problem there. We simply cannot ignore the fact that today we are seeing an explosion of not only the places we're going to or the peoples we're going to—that growth—but also, more importantly, the people themselves who are going. These are peoples who belong to the non-Western church and this deserves a special focus, and I call this the Indigenous-initiated Mission, and the reason I have 2004 as the end of Unreached Peoples Missions is because I'm looking forward to the wonderful conference in Lausanne in 2004—the third Lausanne Conference held in Thailand—which I believe will be a great emphasis on the non-Western church.

So here you have in this era of missions a strong emphasis on church planting movements, this being initiated by the non-Western church. I explore in the extended lectures some of the work of Korea, working around the world there are over twelve thousand missionaries now coming from Korea. You have missionaries from Brazil who are working with Muslims from the Middle East. You have Russian Christians who are now penetrating the former Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, with the gospel. It is a tremendous global effort.

Myself, I work in a ministry that trains south Indians to bring the gospel to unreached peoples in north India. There is a tremendous effort of indigenous-initiated missions, and I work with an organization that trains and equips Indians to bring the gospel cross-culturally to other people groups in India. And that becomes a tremendous blessing.

## **SUMMARY**

And I believe this quick summary of modern missions history will help you to see the development of the modern period, some of the great emphases that have accompanied

each of the periods, and how we can understand and interpret what's happening today in missions and be a part of it through our church's life and actions. We have to be able to appreciate the great new merging paradigms of missions which are present today.

Just to briefly summarize the reason I give the dates that I give in the various eras and periods: I count the first era as starting in 1792 because that's when William Carey published his "Enquiry," and that lasts all the way through to 1910, which I count important because of the World Missionary conference which was held in Edinburgh.

The second period starts with Hudson Taylor's founding of the China Inland Mission in 1865 and concludes with the great question that Indian asked William Cameron Townsend in 1934. I have the other period—1974 is the Lausanne Conference—2004 is the Lausanne III conference. I mentioned 1989 refers to the ICOWE and Lausanne II which emphasized the non-Western church. So those explain some of the dates that I give in the extended lectures and why I believe those dates represent some of the turning points in missions today.

But I hope that each person who hears these tapes will appreciate that we are living in the most exciting period of missions today, fulfilling one of those great hopes that was stated at Lausanne years ago, the first missionary conference that really brought together vast numbers of non-Western Christians; where they made that great declaration that the whole Christ should be brought by the whole church into the whole world. And this is what we're seeing today in missions.

## **Lesson 5 ■ Full Circle of Missions Strategy**

Welcome once again to the summary lectures for the course, “World Mission of the Church.” The full course was given at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, and we have here a short three-hour summary of that course to help you understand the major themes of the course, and to—if necessary—you can stop and move to that full lecture to get the full bit of material.

This last part of the summary course we’re looking at some of the practical applications of missions and some of the strategies that we use. Once again I want to root this in the biblical material and then to demonstrate how some of these principals work their way out in the practical ministry of the church, trying to do missions effectively in the current context that we’re in.

### **MISSIONS STRATEGY**

This first lecture I call the Full Circle of Missions Strategy. And this is based on several passages of Scripture, and I’ll just look at one of them. We already alluded to this passage earlier in our biblical section. I want to come back to it and look more closely at how the early church understood the progress of the Great Commission.

I think it’s absolutely essential to see that it is incredibly strategic that the early church focused on church planting as the most effective way to spread the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. It wasn’t just a kind of passive witnessing. It was a much more intentional, strategic planting of communities of believers that were knit together into a fellowship that we call the church of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This is not meant to be just a mystical kind of terminology, that we belong to the invisible church or something. This is actually a very practical manifestation of the life of Christ through real people in living contexts. I think ultimately this is what is meant by Christ telling us to disciple the nations. He doesn’t actually say, “disciple individuals within the nations,” but “disciple the nations.”

The whole point is that the entire culture, the entire context, in which the church is placed becomes transformed by the presence of believers in those communities. The Christian faith cannot appropriately, therefore, be practiced in isolation from other

believers, but is always something done in community and expressed corporately in the life of the world.

That has huge missiological implications, because in many cases it's much easier to witness or even see people come to Christ than to actually plant churches, especially in sensitive areas where maybe we'll only have radio broadcast into a sensitive area, or other kinds of challenges. We sometimes wonder if it's even possible to plant a church. But we have to be reminded that church planting is at the heart of the Great Commission.

We saw this with the emphasis in Matthew on making disciples, with Mark on believing and being baptized, and so forth, throughout the early church and even in Jesus' own words. We saw this even in John's Gospel, which looks at the church sending out missionaries through that great word of Christ, "As the Father has sent me, even so send I you."

So we come to Acts 11, we actually see a pattern of church planting strategy, which is extremely important, all through Acts 11. The first point is the one we picked up on last time where I mentioned how significant it was that these people from Cyprus and Cyrene had communicated the gospel cross-culturally.

That is really, really important because if you interpret the Acts 1:8 passage, which says that we are his witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the Earth—if its only a geographic expansion of the church then there would be nothing significantly different between the people who went down and spoke to Jews only and those who actually went and spoke to Greeks also. But actually the structure of Acts makes it extremely significant that this group—from Cyprus and Cyrene—went beyond the Jewish audience and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news of the Lord Jesus.

## **Step 1: Cross-cultural Communication of the Gospel**

So step one in the full circle of missions strategy is the cross-cultural communication of the Christian gospel. Now, once the gospel is communicated, whether it be through Bible study, through preaching, through theological education by extension; whether it be through radio, or any medium imaginable; that is not the end of the process. The gospel preaching is to lead to church planting.

## **Step 2: Plant a Church**

And you can see that in this passage, in verse 21, a great number of people turn to the Lord, and they began to be gathered together into communities known as the church. In fact several times in this passage we are told that they are called the church, they are

gathered together, meeting together, they are praying for each other, they were disciplined. We find that this was critical to the whole process.

So you have, number one, preaching cross-culturally. That is, extending the boundaries of the body of Christ beyond the ethnic group you're in. Two, planting a church – not just willy-nilly groups of believers, but actually incorporating them into a body.

### **Step 3: Disciple the Believers**

Thirdly, they are disciplined. In verse 26 Paul and Barnabas met with them for an entire year and disciplined a great number of people. We often think that Paul's missionary journeys were somehow this massive blitzkrieg across the Mediterranean, but Paul actually spent a lot of time—a year here, two years there—a lot of difficult and painstaking time spent teaching, training, appointing elders, following up, discipling. Paul was not just interested in evangelism, even evangelism cross-culturally, a purely, even true, missionary activity. Paul was interested in establishing churches, and that has to be connected to discipleship and obedience to the great Commission.

### **Step 4: Send Out Laborers**

So in Acts 11:26, they're disciplined, and then finally, if you get down to Acts 13:1, we meet this church. It's now a mature church. We find there that there are prophets and teachers there. That means they're properly disciplined. And we're told that while they're worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit spoke to them prophetically, and called them to set apart Barnabas and Saul "for the work which I've called them," and this, of course, becomes the first missionary journey where new laborers are sent out.

So I call this the Full Circle of Missions Strategy. Some men from Cyprus and Cyrene crossed cultural boundaries and preached the gospel to a new people group—that's step one. Step two, a church is planted. Step three, that church is disciplined and matured and raised in the faith. Step four, they themselves, in obedience to John 20:21, they send out laborers into the harvest.

So this is the full circle of what should happen in the normal growth and life of the church. This is normative Christianity—Acts 11. This is what should happen in the life of the gathered church. We should be growing in our faith and matured and ultimately send out laborers to the ends of the earth.

I know churches that are less than three years old that have already planted other churches. I also know churches that are over two hundred years old and have never planted another church and have never sent out a single missionary. So you have to wonder if that church that is in that situation can at all be called normative. Because if the church were to follow the example of that church then of course in one generation

the church would die out. We have to understand the importance of the propagation of the gospel to the next generation, but also extending that gospel to new people groups beyond the structures that we currently have.

## **Lesson 6 ■ Modern Missiological Techniques**

Now, at this point in the lectures we want to turn to examining some modern missiological techniques, the kinds of things that churches are using and understanding to be better equipped to serve missionaries. When William Carey went to India, the way it worked was a mission board back, in his case, England, or later with Adoniram Judson in America, sent and supported this missionary who was preaching and teaching and working in some capacity in another part of the world. We call that “mission to the world,” a mission agency sends somebody out into the world.

But gradually what happened was, once these people began to come to Christ, then they began to be gathered together into churches, just as we saw in Acts Chapters 11, 12, and the opening verse of 13.

Now the moment that new believers began to be gathered into a church, they began to ask questions. Do we govern ourselves in the same way as the church that planted us? Is that essential to the gospel? What are the things that are essential to ecclesiology? What kinds of things may be peculiar to the particular cultural context we’re in? So, many churches when they planted a church overseas, they planted a church exactly like the mother church, even back in the US. The church in Scotland planted churches that were like them in the foreign fields. Baptist churches planted Baptist churches, and so forth.

Other organizations tended to allow the indigenous church to spring up, and they formed their own structures, their own ideas on governance issues, and maybe had some slight differences in theology, but it was different. So eventually the mission boards, whether they followed either of these patterns—whether they tried to become just like the mother church or started their own churches—the mission boards realized soon they were no longer dealing just with unbelievers out in the missions fields, but now newly emerged churches that were out in the field.

So this is a big challenge, because now you’re relating not only to how do we evangelize and reach out and preach the gospel to unbelievers, but once they come to faith, how do we then relate to the new Christian churches that are rising up all over the world? And we have seen the emergence of not hundreds, but thousands of new denominations of Christian believers around the world that have sprung up that are not connected at all with Western denominations. So this becomes a new dynamic in the mission field.

And finally, once these individuals on the field come to Christ and once they’ve joined together the church, they began to, themselves, send out missionaries. And this becomes another factor, because now mission boards in the West that have traditionally sent

missionaries out, are now having to relate to indigenous missions sending boards that are already located in Korea, in India, in various parts of the non-Western world, that are sending out missionaries.

So, the way we send out missionaries is changing, how we do that is dramatically different today, the way we relate to the world situation in light of the fourth era of missions that is upon us. So today you find a wide variety of cooperative efforts. You have the traditional denominational boards, you have the para-church or faith missions. You have local churches that send directly into the field and bypass the mission boards, which I don't recommend but it's certainly done. And you have individuals who go out into missions.

So in the full course I go through a more extended explanation of how people can find the right agency or church, and the normal procedure that people go through when they go from saying they want to be a missionary to the time they actually go out into the field. That's a process. Most mission boards, though there are a lot of varieties, generally follow a very similar procedure. And so it's very easy to lay out and track the basic process from the time a young person or anybody comes down to their pastor, the altar of their church at the conclusion of a service and says I want to be a foreign missionary to the time their plane touches down on a foreign mission field, that process follows through certain stages, and in the full lectures, I outline eight stages of this process that are followed generally by boards everywhere, and you can listen to that in the full lecture notes.

## **CATEGORIES OF MISSIONARIES**

### **Long Term: Pioneer and Regular Missions**

Once missionaries arrive onto the field we actually have a number of missionaries in various capacities on the field, and we want to briefly highlight those for your benefit. Again, when William Carey went to the field, the only real category that existed was long-term, regular missionary. That is, someone who was there long-term, working in the mission field.

Today, with the rise of national churches and the non-Western church growing, we have to begin to distinguish between long-term regular missionary and long-term pioneer missionary. When William Carey went to India, he would be called a pioneer missionary; that is, he was going to a place or among a people that did not have sufficient access to the Christian gospel.

Now, this is really the critical, defining point in determining whether something is a truly missionary activity or not. Because missions takes place where either there are no Christians or there's not sufficient access to the gospel, because there aren't enough churches or enough Christians, or the church is not yet viable. Maybe there is a church there, but it is through bad theology or poor practice or just through sheer lack of numbers, the church is not yet viable to effectively be consistently counted on to be able to deliver the message of the gospel to those who need it.

So, we have to distinguish between those who have access to the gospel and those who do not. So because today many people who are missionaries are working cross-culturally, but are working in areas where the church has already been planted, and where the church in some places is thriving quite nicely, we have to distinguish between regular missions and pioneer missions.

So you have long-term regular who are working cross-culturally, so it's a missionary activity, but they're working in a context where the recipient church is doing quite well and is viable and it is able to disciple its own numbers and it is able to reach out, but you're there in a supportive role of some kind. That's important work; there are many examples why a missionary is needed to help that situation, but it is, after all, a long-term regular missionary, not a long-term pioneer missionary, because we need to give proper attention, and be able to isolate how many of our missionaries in our missionary force are actually doing pioneer work.

Pioneer work means you are going to a place where there are either not enough Christians to provide access to the gospel, or the church is there but it's not viable. The two key terms—access and viability. If either of those occurs, then it is considered a pioneer missionary position. So you have long-term regular missionaries, you have long-term pioneer missionaries, and any church worth its salt should understand the difference between those categories.

## **Non-Resident Missionary**

A third category is what we call the non-resident missionary. Now this is a different person, because the first two are actually physically resident among a people with whom, or to whom, they are seeking to bring the gospel. A non-resident missionary, on the other hand, is somebody who is not currently present among the people, where they are primarily located.

So, for example, if you were to be a missionary to Chinese students who were living in the US, and you have a burden for Chinese people, you're working for the Chinese, but you're not actually in China, you're in America, you can still be a missionary. You're called a non-resident missionary. You're working with that people group outside of the

normal context of their missionary work. This is a non-resident missionary. (Or outside the regular context of where that people group is located, I should say).

So, many times, because of political problems, or other problems, it is not advisable to actually be present along with those people, or maybe not even possible. That doesn't relinquish us from a responsibility for working with those people, so we call them non-resident missionaries. They work with that people group outside of the primary location of that group, and I have several examples of that in the extended lectures.

## **Asynchronous Resident Missionary**

The fourth category is the asynchronous resident missionary. This is someone who is resident, but because of visa restrictions, mainly, or other reasons, they're not able to stay in that location for an extended period of time. They go back to the same ministry over and over again over long periods of time. They build up a long-term ministry. They are resident there for certain periods, perhaps every year, but they are having to come back to another base, or even back home, because usually of visa restrictions—there are many countries that only allow three-month or six-month visas, and they do not allow missionaries to stay there in an extended, long-term capacity.

## **Tentmakers**

The fifth category is the term "tentmakers," which refers to people who are involved in secular professions, who work in cross-cultural contexts for the explicit purpose of gospel proclamation. Tentmakers refer to people who may be working in such diverse fields as teaching, medical work; it could be in computer technology. There is no end to professions that people have taken and used for the sake of Christian witness.

If you're out there and you have a particular skill that God has given you, or maybe you have a business background or some other background, you should not see that as any wasted time for full-time ministry, because today there are many open doors for secular professions that are otherwise closed to traditional church planting, preaching-type witnessing people. And therefore we need to find a way to help people see the value of this and go onto the field as tentmakers. And once they're there they begin to build relationships with unbelievers and begin to witness to them, and eventually people come to the Lord and you network with them with the national church, so they can have a place to grow and to flourish.

## **Short-Term Missionaries**

The sixth and final category of the modern missionary force is what we call short-term missionaries. Short-term missionary is actually defined as any missionary that is

working in a field for less than three years. That may seem like a long-term for most of us who think about short terms as being about two weeks or three weeks, and certainly the majority of short-term missionaries are working for less than three to four weeks, but it is true that from the point of view of our categorization, that we generally don't call someone a long-term missionary until after their first term, and a term is generally three years. So because of that, we will call this whole category short-term missionaries who are only going, maybe, to China for a year or to India for two weeks or to Costa Rica for a month, and so forth.

Now the short-term missionary force is extremely important and very, very vital. And I deeply encourage and am supportive of the short-term missionary movement. In the extended lectures I actually explore a number of questions that I have about short-term missions. This is not at all to be critical of the short-term missionary movement. It's a wonderful movement and I'm excited about the ways that God has used it.

But I do think that many churches need to have a smarter, more effective short-term missions program. I recently published an article on this in *Contact* magazine, which goes out to alumni of Gordon-Conwell around the world. But it is an important point of reflection, and I reflect on these six points in the larger lectures, and I call these, "The Six Dangerous Questions about Short-term Missions," and I encourage all churches to listen to these questions and to reflect on them carefully in the context of their short-term missions program.

## **Lesson 7 ■ Six Tasks for the Local Church**

Now that actually brings us to the next section of this last portion of the course, and this next section has to do with the local church. If you had listened to the extended lectures you'd have heard six difficult questions that we need to ask our mission boards or our church missions committees, and so forth, in order to be more effective in using our short-term workers for long-term benefit that does not create dependency or even undermine the gospel.

### **1. EQUIP AND EDUCATE PEOPLE ABOUT MISSIONS.**

Well, in the same way, there are a number of things that we need to do in order to equip and educate people in the church about missions. I go through a number of these in the extended lectures, but certainly we need to educate our people about the rise of non-Western missions, the importance of church-planting—all of these things are really, really important. The role of discipleship—some churches believe that discipleship is not as important as evangelism, but discipleship is actually the seed for future evangelism, so you have to always keep in mind the importance of training and equipping new believers. So we have to educate our people on the new context of missions today.

### **2. DEVELOP A COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGY REGARDING MISSIONS.**

I challenge churches, secondly, to develop a comprehensive strategy regarding missions. We have to look at our mission budgets very carefully, and evaluate and prioritize our mission commitments. Many times we find ourselves doing harm even while doing good. That is to say, we'll do good things—there's nothing wrong on the face of things that we're doing—but in the long run it may create problems for the national church. So we have to learn to really think carefully about our missionary commitments, what are the priorities, what are we doing, every church has to have some policy that guides their missionary spending, otherwise your church mission budgets will become very unruly and lacking coherence and vision.

We have to ask questions about the kind of support structures that we will embrace. Many churches will support any young person who grows up in that church and is

called to missions. Because they're born in the church, they should be supported. That's called a home-grown missionary. Others will give their money through faith-based agencies, or will only support people in their denomination who work, or others who will give money so that nationals can be freed up from secular occupations so they can do the work of ministry. So those are all different kinds of support structures which we need to embrace and think about if we're going to have an effective missions program in our churches.

## How missions will be funded

Another issue is when you work with a budget you have to be able to set aside, how is the mission of our church going to be funded? Are we funding missions through what is often called a "unified budget," where we budget for our missionaries the same way as we budget for our electricity or our insurance payments, or whatever else is a part of our church budget, like the pastor's salary or whatever? If you put it in as a part of the ordinary budget it has certain advantages because it means all of your fundraising is done in a unified way and you raise equally for sending missionaries to Zimbabwe as you are in paying for the gas bill.

Some churches find that that is not as strategic as it could be in terms of raising funds, because there are people who would never give money—at least not joyfully—for the gas bill, or the electric bill, or any other kinds of the normal day-to-day expenses that a church as an institution has to fulfill. But they will give generously to missionary activity and things of this larger outreach of the church.

Well, churches can take advantage of that reality and can develop a missions pledge that is separate from the regular budget and call people to give themselves to that kind of endeavor as a special thing. They could have their missionaries come back for a missions conference once a year; they can present their missionaries who tell their stories and explain to them why they are doing what they're doing, thank them for their support, and then people can pledge towards those missionaries, and many churches very effectively use that process.

Others have tried to find a middle way. They don't want missions to get lost into the regular, general budget bag, so that it's not lifted up as an important part of our mission, which is more important than some other facets of the church's life. On the other hand, they don't want to put it all into special offerings, because that way you never know year-to-year whether you can continue supporting your missionaries or not.

So what some churches have done is to link their regular missions from their regular budget with their missionary budget. So what they say is—this is just an example—

they'll say, "Whatever our regular budget is, we will spend 20% of that on missions." So, as the regular budget grows, if they increase the pastor's salary, if they increase the amount of money required for the Sunday school curriculum, if they increase the amount of money required for the light or heating bills, in turn they have to also increase their missionary budget, the two are linked. So if the church grows and there are more issues and needs in the larger church building structure—staff issues, whatever—that's tied to a commitment of a certain percentage of that to the Lord's work around the world. That is actually very effective.

The biggest problem with this approach is that churches are tempted—oh, they're so much tempted—to resolve this linkage by simply re-defining more and more things as missions. I've seen churches where every single thing except the pastor's salary is called missions. And so the whole youth budget becomes missions, the whole choir budget becomes missions, and this is a terrible misuse of this concept. So, every church has to work this out and decide what they believe is best. And you have to realize it's not that one plan is necessarily better than others, it's just a matter of which fits best for your particular context.

### **How to handle previous commitments that don't match the new vision**

Another problem that some churches face is what to do when they have a vision for missions and what their church should be doing, they look down at their budget and the commitments they've already made in past years, and, oh, they get so discouraged, because they say: Here we are, we've inherited a situation where we're primarily supporting things with our missions budget which are not really missions.

Or secondly, it is missions, it is cross-cultural, it is crossing cultural, linguistic, social barriers, but the places or the people with whom we're working are already vibrant Christians, they have plenty of access to the gospel, and there is not a problem with either access or church viability. Well, then you have a situation where you are not happy with the priorities as they should be in a missions budget.

So what I encourage churches in this situation—and there are many, many churches that find themselves in this precise situation, I can tell you without fear of contradiction that this is experienced by many, many evangelical churches that I have consulted with over the years—but I would say first of all that you should change your policies quite slowly, or at least implement it slowly. It's good to cast a vision for the ideal context of missions, but also be aware that you've made commitments and your missions budget did not arise out of a vacuum. So, you can begin to set targets for when certain policies will come into effect and be changed. This makes the process much more feasible and more peaceful and less stressful.

I think it's also important to keep faith with those on the field. If you're supporting a missionary who's working in a part of the world or among a people who perhaps would really not need a missionary—if this person was coming to the committee today, they would be turned down, and yet a past generation, a past board had accepted them and they're faithfully serving the Lord in this particular context, I think you should keep faith with them, and as much as possible, even if it doesn't fit into your current policy, say we do not want to neglect those who have served faithfully in the presence of the Lord.

### **3. ESTABLISH A MISSIONS BUDGET POLICY.**

A third idea I've found to be helpful for churches is to gradually begin to establish, step-by-step, a policy which clearly transfers non-missionary spending to other parts of the budget that are not connected to missions. You can call it, our Servant Ministry budget, or our Evangelistic budget, or any number of things, or Servant Teams, or some other term—you can find no end of terminology you can use to make it clear that these are important ministries, but we're not going to call them missions if they're not involved in cross-cultural communication of the gospel, preferably in places where the gospel church is not viable, or there is not sufficient access to the gospel. So, that takes time. It takes time. You have to go through this process slowly.

### **4. CARE FOR YOUR MISSIONARIES.**

A fourth suggestion is that you really need to give not only finances to the mission field, but also care. Churches need to assume more carefully the whole idea of the pastoral care of their missionaries. Many missionaries are working in isolated places. If they're working in a place where the church is viable, then of course you can fully expect that they'll be nurtured and cared for by that particular community. But what about the thousands of missionaries who are out working alone? They have children in boarding school. They have to come back home on furlough and be cast back into the American culture every three or four years. There are so many challenges they're facing and they need help, they need encouragement, they need strengthening, and as a church we need to do this.

I think it's helpful if each member of the missions committee will take the responsibility to follow and track after one of the missionaries. Or, if it's a church with a lot of missionaries, one or two. And that way you can begin to track your missionaries, read

their prayer letters, and report in a timely fashion to the broader church issues that can be prayed for in supporting this missionary and they will not feel like a lone ranger.

I know of a number of missionaries who come back from the mission field to a church where they grew up or had a whole life of early ministry before they went out and they come back and no one knows who they are. Churches have changed. They don't even remember that they're on the mission field, and they ask them, what have you been doing the last three years? And it's very discouraging for the missionary to realize that the local church has not been praying for him or her, that the church has not been engaged at all in their missionary enterprise.

Now, as an aside, in our Overseas Missions Practicum course, we teach students how to write prayer letters and how to write about your ministries in a way that people will read it, because just pages and pages of information on blank pieces of paper become very, very difficult for people to read today. So, you need to find creative ways to connect with your missionary, and to strengthen them and support them in the work that they're doing.

## **5. ACHIEVE THE RIGHT BALANCE BETWEEN LOCAL ACTIVITY AND GLOBAL MISSIONS.**

I also encourage churches, fifthly, to achieve the right balance between local missions or local activity, and global missions. I think it's important for churches that before they send a youth group into missions that they will insist, for example, that they be involved in some local service project as a prerequisite to missions. Why would we think that someone who boards a plane and flies down to Belize will suddenly be transformed into a servant of the gospel if they have not been able to serve among the people of whom they have been placed right here in their home? So it's important to test the waters and make sure that we have sufficiently servant-hearted people who will therefore represent the gospel well.

It's also really important to have long-term commitments to long-term workers. Another real scary trend I've seen is that many churches have claimed that their mission budget is growing, and I guess there's a certain point that you might say that it is. But where it's growing is that it's growing by virtue of the short-term missionary. And the actual commitment to long-term missionaries is in decline. This is a gross violation of the spirit of the whole short-term missions program, which is meant to provoke and to initiate and to stimulate the long-term missionary enterprise.

## **6. COMMIT TO PRAY FOR YOUR MISSIONARIES.**

Finally we need to be committed to pray for our missionaries. I mentioned this in passing, I guess, with the need to care for our missionaries, but I think this is obviously probably one of the most important and yet neglected aspects of missionary service is developing good prayer partners that will agree to pray for missions and work with them in that way.

## **Lesson 8 ■ Trends in Missions Today**

At this point we want to talk about the trends in missions today. In the larger notes I profile modern missionaries today—what they look like, and how missionaries are sent today. But I want to also point out some of the trends that we’re seeing in missions today.

### **A DEEPER APPRECIATION FOR THE CHALLENGES WE FACE**

I’ve already emphasized the important role of unreached people groups and of the indigenous witness missionary that is going out from the non-Western church. But I think today we see a much deeper appreciation for the challenges that we’re facing not only linguistically, but culturally in communicating the gospel. We have seen great growth in the ability and in the willingness of the church to reflect on the nature of the task, the challenge of the task, and how we might be more effective in doing this for the sake of the gospel.

### **GROWTH IN PARTNERSHIPS**

We’re seeing another trend which I think is wonderful, and that’s the growth in partnerships between national churches and the home church. This whole conception of “mission to mission”—mission boards working with mission agencies in the non-Western world—is to me a wonderful development. No longer is missions just someone from the West traveling to the East—we’re now seeing a much more cooperative kind of missionary endeavor which I think is essential to biblical Christianity.

### **SHIFT FROM PARTIALLY SUPPORTING SEVERAL MISSIONARIES TO FULLY SUPPORTING A FEW MISSIONARIES**

Another trend which has been quite remarkable in its scope in the recent years has been the shift from supporting a lot of missionaries with a little money, to supporting a few missionaries with most, if not all, of their full support. We have seen a dramatic growth in the number of churches which say, we want to be involved with our missionaries

more intimately. We want to have a relationship with our missionaries. We can't have a relationship with 50-60 people that we support \$50 a month, or \$100 a month. That's not supporting a missionary. That is causing tremendous difficulties for that missionary, who has to come back on their furlough and visit a thousand different churches in order to say thank you for each of their checks for \$100. We can't do that.

We have to actually think more strategically about how the church can be more effective in helping support our missionaries, and one of these has been to commit themselves to a much larger percentage of support, which may indeed mean supporting less missionaries, but supporting them more as extended staff people who are working for the church beyond the walls of the church. And it's a very effective trend and it's been used by a number of churches in recent years of various sizes.

There are some smaller churches especially that have not been happy with this trend, and have said, "Listen, the Great Commission has been funded and fueled largely by young people from small, rural churches. It would be a terrible shame if the larger church were to take over the missions-sending enterprise and leave out the smaller churches just because they weren't able to fully support a single missionary."

So, what has happened, rather than compromising the basic advantage of a few churches supporting one missionary or one church supporting one missionary and keeping that missionary focused on one area, so that when they come back on furlough, their children can stay in one place, not be constantly living out of a suitcase as they travel to churches from East coast to West coast.

In order to prevent this kind of thing, some small churches have been joining together in consortiums, where six or eight churches may come together—smaller churches—and agree to support a certain number of missionaries, and this is done as a part of a commitment they have one to another, and to the missionary. And so these are all churches that are maybe in one relatively small area.

That way, when the missionary comes back home, he or she can do deputation and fundraising and so forth in a way that is separate from the larger work of what's been happening in the past where missionaries had to travel all over the country to report to their churches. They can stay in one area.

## **THE GROWTH OF TECHNOLOGY**

Another big trend has been the growth of technology. This very medium that we're using now, where I'm able to share with you some of the thoughts from a class that I taught in this summary course shows you the great power of technology. Technology is very much a growing factor in missions. It's influencing many, many aspects of

missions, not only how we communicate with missionary candidates, how we communicate with Christians in diverse places on the mission field where we cannot have a missionary present there all the time—there are many other ways that technology is being used effectively to help bridge the distance between peoples and to provide good follow-up and accountability.

## **A DECLINE OF MORAL COURAGE ABOUT THE MESSAGE**

We're also seeing a decline of moral courage about the biblical message, which has led to a crisis in world-wide missions today. The world is not prepared to accept the challenge of a crucified Christ who calls us to repent and believe. So, because of that lack of moral courage to stand up for the gospel, we have a growing situation where governments can be very hostile to the Christian message, not just in foreign lands but right where we are. Those are some trends which I think are significant for us as the missionary community to know about and talk about and be aware of in the coming days.

## **MODERN MISSIONS AND WORLD RELIGIONS**

The next lecture has to do with modern missions and world religions. World religions is a fact of our time. We live in a world that is largely a religious world. It is always amazing to me how someone can go through a seminary and learn more about how to respond to a German Protestant liberal, who they'll probably never in their life actually meet, than to respond to the billions of Hindus, Muslims, and Buddhists who are living in various parts of the world, who have objections to the Christian gospel, and who need—desperately need—the Christian gospel.

We need to develop a good reply to those who ask us for the reason for the hope that's within us who come from the Buddhist, Hindu, and Muslim communities. We must develop a good, strategic response to all this.

In the full, extended course, we actually go through each of the major world religions. We look at Islam; we look at Hinduism; we look at Buddhism; and we look at two Chinese and Japanese religions, especially Confucianism, Daoism, and Shintoism.

Now these religions are the living context for most of the people living in the 10/40 Window who do not have access—appropriate access—to the Christian gospel. Therefore, we must be able to respond to these different religions. So I give a basic

survey of each of the religions—what’s the essence of what they teach, it’s a very, very brief survey—and then, what are the key stumbling blocks which this person encounters in coming to faith in Christ? When we talk about each of those stumbling blocks, we identify one major stumbling block—one or two—for each of the world religions.

So, that is an important aspect of this course and I believe that every Christian should be aware of the importance of world religions and the necessity of Christians to develop a biblical response to world religions.

## **Lesson 9 ■ Top Ten Myths about Missions**

Another part of our educational task in working with local churches is to realize that many people have myths about the missionary enterprise. I call this lecture, “Dispelling the Top Ten Myths about Missions.” We have many, many faulty ideas about missions that must be separated from our thinking so that we can be better equipped to think appropriately about the great missionary cause.

### **MYTH 1: UNREACHED MEANS GOSPEL-RESISTANT.**

One of the first of our top ten myths about missions is the assumption that “unreached” means “gospel-resistant.” That is to say, people typically make the assumption that because a people group in the world is unreached, and there are insufficient Christians there, or the church is not yet viable, people don’t have access to the gospel, that kind of missionary situation—that that must, therefore, mean that those people groups are resistant to the gospel message. This is actually a myth. It may indeed be true for a number of peoples in the world that are in that situation, but it is not an accurate statement to say that this means that.

Many people in the world today who are unreached are unreached, not because they have been offered the gospel and were then resistant to it, but simply because they have never been offered the good news of Jesus Christ. They need to hear the Christian gospel.

So, we have places that are actually ready, eager, excited about hearing the gospel, but they have never had a witness—a person—go there. Again, back to John’s Great Commission, “As the Father has sent me, even so send I you.” “How can they hear,” Paul says, “without a preacher?” How can they hear without a preacher? And so, because someone is not a Christian, it may not be because they’re resistant to countless exposures to the gospel like we’re used to in the West. It may be they’ve actually never heard the Christian message.

Now, as a missionary in India, I’m quite well aware of this context. I have seen so many groups over the years that responded favorably to the gospel, but they’d never been given opportunity before. Their attitude was, why hasn’t anyone told us this before? This is good news! And, therefore, we need to realize that unreached does not mean gospel-resistant.

## **MYTH 2: EVANGELISM ALWAYS LEADS TO CHURCH PLANTING.**

Secondly, the second myth is the myth that evangelism always leads to church planting. This is a huge myth. People somehow believe that if we just evangelize—if we just get the word out through radio broadcasts, through the internet, through whatever means—that we will somehow be able to win the world for Christ.

Well, first of all, I don't believe that's actually the case. I believe that ultimately it takes churches to ultimately spawn other churches. I believe it's also false to make this assumption, because it assumes that somehow the world can be reached through some kind of disembodied contact, that we don't have to actually get our hands dirty and go live and move somewhere, we can just send them an e-mail. No, this is not what is required by our Lord in the Great Commission.

The evangelism that we do must be geared toward the world. We must always be thinking about the global context and how we can plant churches into that context. Evangelism should lead to church-planting, and it doesn't always do that, and so we have to be clear about that myth. A church-planting movement is the critical way to determine whether or not we are on the right track.

## **MYTH 3: MISSIONS MEANS GOING TO LIVE IN JUNGLES SOMEWHERE.**

A third myth is that missions means going to live in a jungle somewhere. Now, I am a great believer in and great admirer of the great sacrifice that has been made by missionaries over the years and in the last century especially to bring the gospel to the remotest islands, the remotest tropical forests, and other remote places around the world. It is very inspiring.

But we have to also be aware of the fact that missions is changing today, and we have a tremendous growth in the number of people in the world that are actually living in urban areas. So the mission field today is much more likely to not be a remote jungle area—though we have missionaries who work in those areas—but actually more likely to be in a large urban setting.

The greatest need today are missionaries committed to the city. We need missionaries committed to bringing the gospel into the urban context. For God so loved the cities . . . that's a message we have to understand. The Bible says, "For God so loved the world," [and] that involves not just a geographic kind of statement about the planet

Earth, but about the peoples of the world. “For God so loved the . . .” peoples of the world, “that He gave his only Son.” So if God loves the peoples of the world, we have to ask ourselves, where are these unreached peoples who need to hear the gospel? These peoples are peoples who are primarily living in urban areas.

Most of our missions strategy that’s been done in the last hundred years has been developing effective strategies for reaching people in rural areas. There are a number of things about preaching and teaching and church planting in rural areas which simply will not work—or will not work effectively—in the urban areas.

So we’re trying to actually press a round stick into a square hole. We’re trying to find a way to do something which it was not designed to do. Most missions strategies of the 19th century were designed to bring rural people to Christ. Today, our biggest context is how to bring urban peoples to Christ. And bringing an urban dweller to Christ requires different kinds of approaches, and we need to focus on that and to realize this is a myth, that missions is only taking place in remote areas.

## **MYTH 4: THE REMAINING WORK OF MISSIONS CAN BE DONE BY NATIONAL CHRISTIANS.**

A fourth myth is the statement that the remaining work of missions can be done by national Christians. This has been widely propagated by a number of well-known Christian leaders, and I won’t mention their names on this summary course, but certainly they are well-known national figures in missions that have advocated that what really needs to be done is to send our money, our checks, and let the national workers do it.

Now obviously, I believe it’s very important to recognize the role of the national believer. So much of what I’ve said in even the summary course has sought to emphasize the importance of the national, indigenous believer. But, we have to always come back to this question of access and viability. If we are talking about a people among whom there are no Christians, or there is no viable church, then we simply are irresponsible if we say, “Oh, we’ll let the nationals do it,” because there are no nationals who can do it. They don’t have any nationals that—somebody has to cross a cultural boundary.

Now, the assumption that a near-cultural witness is more effective than a far cultural witness—so, for example if you were working with a people group in Nigeria, for example, the Hausa in northern Nigeria, and you wanted to bring the gospel to this Hausa people group. You may think, okay, lets find a place in Nigeria where there are vibrant Christians, like among the Yoruba, or the Tiv, or the Maguzawa, or the Ibo, or

other groups where there may be some Christians—let's take some of these nearby Christians and let them witness to the Hausa.

Well, many times, all over the world, the near-culture witness is viewed with more suspicion and has more of a history of problems than with the Christian from far away. So, we cannot make this assumption that the remaining work of missions can be done by the national Christians. We have too many places where there are either, a) no Christians who can bring that national witness, or b) where there's massive mistrust and cultural problems with a near-culture group, even if that cultural group has a viable church.

So, we have to do this. I am very, very opposed to the idea of the American church interpreting their understanding of missions as simply sitting back and writing checks. Letting somebody else's sons and daughters die on the missions field while we sit back and write checks, that is a disgusting insult to the number of missionaries from the Western world who have given their lives for the gospel, and we need to recognize that this Great Commission cannot be fulfilled without great cost and sacrifice.

## **MYTH 5: MISSIONARIES HAVE DESTROYED CULTURES.**

The fifth of the top ten myths about missions that we need to dispel is that missionaries have destroyed cultures. This is something that has been propagated widely in the modern period, that somehow or another assumes that missionaries have gone out, have been a destructive force, and have in many ways been critical of the national, indigenous cultures that are there.

Now, let me be clear: missionaries did speak out against evil practices that were being propagated by various cultures, and I would hope that even the most liberal, anti-missionary-minded person could appreciate the good service that William Carey, for example, paid to the Indian sub-continent when he spoke out against sati.

Sati is the practice in ancient India that still occurs to this day, unfortunately, though it's illegal—it still occurs to this day, and it's the practice of a woman joining her husband on the funeral pyre when he is cremated. The practice in ancient India was when a man died, in order to show your loyalty and your love and devotion to your husband who's departed, the wife, who may be very young and perfectly healthy, would join her husband and be cremated along with her husband. This despicable practice, which forced young woman to often die on the funeral pyre in an agonizing death was challenged by William Carey. Now if that's what's meant by destroying cultures, we plead guilty and proudly so.

We are not at all opposed to the prophetic role of the church in speaking out against any cultural practice—whether it be in our culture or any other culture—where the practice is dehumanizing against the image of God in a particular individual’s life, who God has called us to encourage and support, and has dignity by virtue of who he is before God. But that’s a long way from saying that missionaries have destroyed cultures.

What we actually find is missionaries have empowered cultures. They have reduced languages which were only used by a few elite people and have given them to the common people, created vernacular languages. They have reduced the Bible to writing and thereby empowered the whole educational process of literacy and healthcare in countries and among nations all over the world.

In south India, for example, the word for “school” in the Malayalam language—one of the words for school that’s the most historic word—is a word which means “the building attached to the church.” The whole point was that people conceived of schooling or education as something that the missionaries were doing. They were there teaching, training, empowering people, and there are thousands upon tens of thousands of people around the world today who have received their education from missionary schools.

There are hundreds of thousands of people that are alive today because of missionary hospitals, missionary doctors, missionary nurses, and so many others in so many fields who give themselves selflessly to the Christian gospel and to promoting the presence of Christ incarnationally in the lives of others.

## **MYTH 6: THERE ARE NO JOB OPPORTUNITIES IN MISSIONS.**

The sixth top myth which we would seek to dispel, is the fact that there are no job opportunities in missions. This is patently false. Missionary work is probably the most diverse group of people in the world, doing every conceivable professional task, as well as all of the traditional Christian ministry tasks, from preaching, to counseling, church-planting, and so forth. There are many, many job opportunities.

Every year at Gordon-Conwell, we have a missions fair where we bring together all the major missions organizations to our campus, and they reach out to our students, and many students sign up and they go out as missionaries, even career missionaries, to various fields through these missions agencies. There are organizations that are particularly designed to help you find jobs in whatever area of interest that you have in missions. The most important one is the organization InterCristo. InterCristo can be found on the internet very easily, and they are a job placement organization, and we

have never had any problem finding great job opportunities for our missionary student graduates.

## **MYTH 7: MISSIONS IS ONLY FOR THE SUPER SPIRITUAL.**

The seventh of the ten myths that we seek to dispel is the idea that missions is only for the super spiritual. It is true that the missionary community represents some very inspiring Christians with a great dedication. I would say some of the most dedicated, inspiring Christians I've ever met were missionaries, people who give themselves to cross-cultural service. But that's not to say that missionaries are somehow super-human people.

Missionaries are quite ordinary people with a quite ordinary task that they're involved in around the world, and many times these tasks don't seem to be that glamorous or that exciting, but upon reflection, they are actually changing the world and doing some remarkable, inspiring things.

Missionaries have problems like everybody else. Missionaries go through difficulties like everybody else. Missionaries get discouraged like everybody else. Missionaries wonder at times whether they really are truly called by God or not, just like anybody else in ministry.

So these are the realities of the missionary community. This is a great community; it's a wonderful community; it's a fun community; it's a community that has a wonderful outlook on the world; but they're not super-spiritual. They are godly men and women who are doing their best to follow God in sometimes difficult situations. But to put them in some special category would be to glamorize them in a way that is not appropriate.

## **MYTH 8: SHORT-TERM MISSION PROJECTS ARE SUFFICIENT TO FULFILL THE GREAT COMMISSION.**

The eighth of our top ten myths to dispel is the idea that short-term missions projects are sufficient to fulfill the Great Commission. I've already alluded to this earlier in these summary lectures that I have concerns that our short-term missions be smarter and be seen within the proper context of what missionary work actually is and how short-term missions fits in the long-term goals. I mentioned that I have the six dangerous questions that one asks about short-term missions.

So, I believe that short-term missions is a part of a larger strategy of missionary activity. But I do not believe that short-term missions could ever possibly fulfill the Great Commission. There is no replacement for the difficult, challenging, and sometimes arduous task of language learning and cultural adaptation. And that cannot be done in two weeks, it cannot be done in four weeks, it cannot be done in one year. That takes time, it takes moving away from short-term missionary thinking to long-term missionary commitment, and I believe that the greatest gift of short-term missions, the greatest contribution of short-term missions is, in fact, the great gift of producing long-term workers.

This is really the most effective aspect of short-term missions, that today most long-term workers have been stimulated to that commitment because of their short-term missionary activity which they've been involved with in previous years, and that's very inspiring.

## **MYTH 9: MISSIONARY COMMITMENT IS MAINLY ABOUT GIVING MONEY.**

Number nine is somewhat of a recapitulation of the point I made earlier about someone who says, "I've given to missions, so I've done my part." This just again dispels the notion that missionary commitment is mainly about giving money.

Now, once again, I look at churches' missions' budgets and I see that many missions budgets of churches are in two different camps. There are those who actually support living, breathing missionaries that came out of their church, that are part of their lives in the community, and there are those who simply provide funds for missions around the world that are doing things that they may not even ever know any of these people personally.

We have to see that the financial support, though while it's important, should be seen as a part of the larger commitment to send workers. Jesus says, "The harvest is ripe, the laborers are few, therefore, pray the Lord would send out laborers into his harvest." He does not say, "The harvest is ripe, the laborers are few, therefore, pray to the Lord of the harvest that he may get you to send your checks to the ends of the earth." No. He wants us to send laborers. So we have to keep that people-focus on the missionary enterprise.

## **MYTH 10: HEARING THE GOSPEL IS THE SAME AS BEING REACHED BY THE GOSPEL.**

The tenth and final popular myth about missions is that somehow hearing the gospel is the same as being reached by the gospel. This is a big myth. Because someone can hear the gospel does not mean that they have been reached by the gospel. Some people advocate that if we can just get enough radio transmitters out there, we can actually cover the globe with the gospel message.

But because the gospel message is available on radio, or even if someone tunes in and hears it, does not mean they have sufficiently understood the gospel message and the implications of the gospel message.

So I deeply, deeply encourage churches to work with missionaries to develop the strategies to help them understand whether or not the people to whom they're working, or with whom they're working, will actually sufficiently understand the implications of the gospel message that's being preached to them. And we have to do a lot better job of making sure, not just that our lips are moving, but that their ears and hearts and lives are comprehending.

# Lesson 10 ■ Top Ten Things Churches Should Know

In this final lecture, I want to just briefly summarize, as we bring this to a close, the summary lectures. The course ends by my summarizing what I believe are the top ten things the local church should know about missions in the 21st century. This is largely a recapitulation of many themes that we've covered throughout the course, so I want to just cover these very, very quickly just to give you a flavor of that and hopefully it'll help you in your own thinking as you reflect on this course.

## 1. THE RISE OF THE NON-WESTERN CHURCH

Number one. Every church should be aware of the dramatic rise of the non-Western church. The number of Christians that are now coming forth from the non-Western world—if you happen to read Philip Jenkin's book, *The Next Christendom*, you'll see the statistical analysis, and the tremendous number of non-Western Christians that are rising up today, and this is a huge factor in our missionary thinking.

## 2. THE URBAN CONTEXT OF MISSIONS

Number two is the urban context of missions. I've already shared about this, but the number of people who now live in cities outnumbers the people who live in rural areas, and we have to re-tool our thinking regarding urban missions.

## 3. ACCESS AND VIABILITY CRITERIA

The third of the top ten things a church should know about missions in the 21st century is the call for churches and mission boards to apply the access and viability criteria in order to be effective in establishing their financial priorities, and before they commit money and resource and personnel to the mission field, they should ask, "Does this person in this mission field have access to the gospel?" "Is the church in this field viable?" If there is not sufficient access or the church is not viable, then it is a good priority perhaps to send a missionary. But we need to be more careful about not sending missionaries to where the church is already viable and where there already is sufficient access to the gospel.

## **4. THE ROLE OF SHORT-TERM MISSIONS**

The fourth is the role of short term missions, and I talk a lot about the importance of having a smart, short-term missions program that resonates with several things I've said throughout the course.

## **5. THE IMPORTANCE OF STRATEGY**

Fifth, I bring out the importance of strategy and really understanding the non-Christian peoples with whom we're working.

## **6. EVANGELISTIC AND MISSIONARY MANDATES**

Number six, I really demonstrate the importance of distinguishing between the evangelistic mandate and the missionary mandate. We have to see that difference and how important it is to remind ourselves of the difference between the cross-cultural task and the mono-cultural task. Both are essential tasks, but both are different tasks.

## **7. CHURCH PLANTING**

The seventh of the ten is that the goal of missions and the goal of the Great Commission is church planting. This is a theme that runs all through the course, the importance of church planting, that today the global evangelistic thrust is moving much faster than the church planting thrust. That means more people are coming to Christ than have sufficient time to be incorporated into the local churches.

This creates a real problem. Cults come in, there begin to be problems with the maturity, and the heresies come in, all kinds of difficulties, because we're not focusing on incorporating our new believers into churches that can then multiply and be disciplined.

## **8. GROWTH OF PENTECOSTAL CHRISTIANITY**

Number eight of the top ten is the growth—the dramatic growth—of Pentecostal Christianity. This is a very dramatic thing that is changing the face of missions, and we should now recognize that it's difficult to go almost anywhere today without seeing the

impact of Pentecostalism on the worldwide Christian church, including the missionary force and including the indigenous Christians that are coming forth, and so forth. So, churches need to be aware of this and be comfortable with working with the great army of Pentecostal-oriented believers around the world today.

## **9. THE WAY MISSIONARIES ARE SENT OUT**

Nine is the importance of recognized that how missionaries are sent out today is changing dramatically. We have missionaries being sent out in a wide variety of ways. We looked at tentmaking, we looked at the importance of the local churches role in sending, and so forth. We looked at the rise of indigenous missions. So all of these are factors in how missionaries are sent out today, some as professional tentmakers, some as full-time church planters, some in various kinds of other activities, gospel-related.

## **10. OUR MISSION KIDS HAVE GROWN UP**

Finally, number ten is the importance of recognizing that our mission kids have grown up. That is to say that the Christians that have come upon the mission field are now—many of them—maturing Christians with churches that are themselves setting out various missionary goals, church planting goals, and we have to increasingly begin to work cooperatively—more cooperatively—with the national churches and with the missions boards that are being set up by the national churches, so we can effectively work together for the sake of the Christian gospel.

I want to close with this great assurance we have from our Lord Jesus Christ. Because our Lord Jesus Christ said in Matthew 24:14, that before the end of time, this would happen. He said, “This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end shall come.” This is the great promise we have, and we can look back and see that our Lord Jesus Christ has set this vision for the church in keeping with the Abrahamic promises, in keeping with the whole heart of God in the *Missio Dei*: Christ gave us the Great Commission, Christ sent us out into the world.