



ESSENTIALS OF
WORLD MISSIONS
by
Dr. Timothy Tennent

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Table of Contents

Lesson 1 ■ God’s Missionary Heart	3
Lesson 2 ■ The Great Commission	6
Lesson 3 ■ Theological Questions.....	9
Lesson 4 ■ History of the Church’s Expansion into the World	12
Lesson 5 ■ Full Circle of Missions Strategy	15
Lesson 6 ■ Modern Missiological Techniques.....	18
Lesson 7 ■ Six Tasks for the Local Church.....	21
Lesson 8 ■ Trends in Missions Today	24
Lesson 9 ■ Top Ten Myths about Missions	27
Lesson 10 ■ Top Ten Things the Church Should Know about Missions	32

Lesson 1 ■ God's Missionary Heart

SECTION OVERVIEW

Dr. Tennent begins this summary course on World Missions with a definition of the terms “mission” and “missions,” and gives us an understanding of the mission of God, that missions begins with God and his missionary heart.

WELCOME

“MISSION” AND “MISSIONS”

Missio Dei

Missions is rooted in the heart of God.

THREE ASPECTS OF THE MISSION OF GOD

Divine Initiative

Historical Transmission

Indigenous Assimilation

GOD'S MISSIONARY HEART

Old Testament

Genesis 12

Genesis 22

Psalm 2

Isaiah 49

New Testament

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Why does it matter that we make a distinction between “mission” and “missions?” How will it change our missions practices if missions begins with the mission of God?
2. Dr. Tennent gives three aspects to the mission of God. Why is important to see all three aspects at work in the process of missions? Which aspect is usually the focus of most missions work? What are some ways to make sure that all three aspects are included in our practice of missions?
3. How does it change your thinking to see that God has a missionary heart even back in the time of Abraham and before? Most often we associate missions with the New Testament and the Great Commission. How would you share with a friend about God’s love for the nations in the Old Testament?
4. How is the church a part of the spiritual blessing that was promised to Abraham in Genesis 12? How should our view on missions change knowing that God has promised to bless all nations or people groups?
5. Genesis 12:1-3 is such an important passage for missions and for the story of redemption, it would be good to commit it to memory.

RECOMMENDED READING FOR THE COURSE

Invitation to World Missions: A Trinitarian Missiology for the 21st Century, by Timothy Tennent, Kregel Publications, 2009.

Lesson 2 ■ The Great Commission

LESSON OVERVIEW

We now walk through the Great Commission in each of the Four Gospels, highlighting their unifying themes and the distinct message that each Gospel writer highlights.

MATTHEW

Authority

The Imperative – “Make Disciples”

All People Groups – *panta ta ethne*

MARK

Importance of Gospel Proclamation to All Creation

Importance of the Church

LUKE

Content of the Gospel

Continuity between the Old and New Covenants

JOHN

Continuity between Christ and the Church

Sending Role of the Church

REFLECTIONS QUESTIONS

1. What are the common themes in all four accounts of the Great Commission? What are some of the distinctions? Why do you think we have such variation in the four passages?
2. What changes about the practice of missions if we think about reaching “peoples” rather than “places?” Is there still a place in mission for reaching particular geographical locations? What are the implications for reaching “limited access” or “closed” countries with the gospel?
3. How does Mark’s focus on “all creation” change how we look at reaching people? Does the work of mission end when all people groups have been reached? Are there any “Great Commission” activities that should continue?
4. Luke emphasizes the content of the gospel. What can happen if we don’t present the one, true gospel, or present only a part of the gospel message? What are some effective methods for sharing the gospel with those who have never heard?
5. Dr. Tennent says that we are all either sent Christians or senders. Are you in one of those categories? If not, think and pray about some ways that you could get involved in either going and sending others. If so, what are some ways that you encourage other believers to get involved in Great Commission activities?

Lesson 3 ■ Theological Questions

LESSON OVERVIEW

In this last lesson in the Biblical-Theological section of the course, Dr. Tennent answers several theological questions related to the Great Commission and the obedience of the church in the world. He address objections that people have to the uniqueness of Christ and the exclusive nature of the Gospel message. He also defines for us what actually qualifies as “missions.”

OBJECTIONS TO THE GOSPEL

Pluralism

Inclusivism

Response: Engaged Exclusivism

CLARIFYING WHAT MISSIONS IS

People and People Groups – Access to the Gospel

The Spread of the Gospel in Acts

What missions is and isn't.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. How would you respond to someone that says all roads lead to God, it's sincerity that really matters? How would you explain to them about the uniqueness of Jesus Christ and what he has done?
2. Why is it necessary to have explicit faith in Jesus Christ? What are some examples from the Bible where this is required? How would you respond to someone that said it's okay for them to believe in Jesus, but not everyone has to do the same?

3. Exclusivism can sound intolerant and unloving in today's culture. How would you explain to someone that it is exactly the opposite?
4. Why is it important to distinguish between evangelism and missions? Do you know how much your church gives to the work of missions? What are some steps you or your church can take to make sure your giving is going to both evangelistic and missions efforts?

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

LESSON OVERVIEW

In this second part of the course, Dr. Tennent explores the history of the church's expansion into the world. He focuses primarily on the modern period and looks at what makes the modern missionary period unfold in the way that it does.

MODERN PERIOD OF MISSIONS

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

Planting the Church in a New Country

Work along the Coastlines

Long-term, Resident Missionaries

William Carey

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

Interior Parts of the Country

Faith Missions

New Brand of Missionary

Hudson Taylor

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

Unreached People Groups

Missions is about peoples, not places

Wider range of strategies and partnerships with national churches

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

Non-western Missionaries

Church Planting Movements

SUMMARY

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. How can the life and work of William Carey be a model for those who are doing cross-cultural work today? Are there any remaining “beachheads” to be won for the gospel?
2. Hudson Taylor, who founded China Inland Mission (now OMF International), once said, “God’s work done in God’s way will never lack God’s supplies.” Do you believe this is true? How do we determine what God’s work is? What do you think is “God’s way” of doing missions?
3. How does a focus on people groups rather than places change the way missions is done? How can we help others stay focused on reaching peoples rather than places?
4. What is the appropriate role for Western churches in partnership with national leaders? What are you or your church doing to work with indigenous churches in the Global South (Asia, Africa, and Latin America)?

Lesson 5 ■ Full Circle of Missions Strategy

LESSON OVERVIEW

We begin the practical section of the course with a look at the full circle of missions strategy, which is based in several passages of Scripture. Dr. Tennent uses Acts 11 as an example of this four-step process.

STEP 1: CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION OF THE GOSPEL

STEP 2: PLANT A CHURCH.

STEP 3: DISCIPLE THE BELIEVERS.

STEP 4: SEND OUT LABORERS.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Do you believe that church planting is the most effective way to spread the gospel? How does planting a church help to fulfill the Great Commission? What are some of the challenges that church planters face?
2. How is witnessing different from church planting? If church planting is essential to fulfilling the Great Commission, how can you or your church get involved in planting new churches? If you are already involved in planting churches, how can you make sure this remains a priority of your church?
3. Why is it important that new believers be incorporated into a local body of Christ? What does your church do to make sure that new believers become actively involved in the life of the church and are discipled?

4. Pray about specific areas that God might be calling you to get involved in planting a church. Where are the needs in your city, state, region? Where are there opportunities to plant churches cross-culturally?

Lesson 6 ■ Modern Missiological Techniques

LESSON OVERVIEW

At this point in the lessons Dr. Tennent turns to examining some modern missiological techniques, the kinds of things that churches are using and understanding to be better equipped to serve missionaries. He also lists five different categories of missionaries.

SUPPORTING MISSIONARY WORK

Mission Boards

Questions New Churches Are Asking

Relating to Indigenous Churches

Procedure for Receiving Support

CATEGORIES OF MISSIONARIES

Long Term: Pioneer and Regular Missions

Non-Resident Missionary

Asynchronous Resident Missionary

Tentmakers

Short-Term Missionaries

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Does your church have standards for what missionaries you will support? What are some of the requirements? Why is it important to distinguish between regular missions and pioneer missions?

2. What do you think is the best way to support missionaries on the field? How does the growth of indigenous-initiated missions affect how we support missionaries? Should we support national leaders as well as ones that we send out from our own churches? How do we do accountability and follow-up for those not sent out from our churches?
3. College campuses are becoming great mission fields for doing non-resident missionary work. Have you considered how you or your church might reach out to the international students at a nearby school? What are some open doors for sharing the gospel with them? Pray for opportunities to share the gospel with other people groups right in your area.
4. What is the proper place for short-term missions in the church? What should be the ultimate goal of short-term missions? Take time to read through Dr. Tennent's six dangerous questions about short-term missions and reflect on each one (a link to the questions is on the lecture page.)

Lesson 7 ■ Six Tasks for the Local Church

LESSON OVERVIEW

In this lesson, Dr. Tennent recommends six tasks that every local church should consider in order to be more effective in their overseas missions work.

1. EQUIP AND EDUCATE PEOPLE ABOUT MISSIONS.

2. DEVELOP A COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGY REGARDING MISSIONS.

3. ESTABLISH A MISSIONS BUDGET POLICY.

4. CARE FOR YOUR MISSIONARIES.

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

6. COMMIT TO PRAY FOR YOUR MISSIONARIES.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. How does your church currently educate the congregation about missions? Are people in your church equipped and then sent out? What are some practical things

you can do to inform and equip the members of your church on the missionary task in general and what your church is doing specifically?

2. What is the missions strategy of your church? How are the missionary efforts of your church funded? Do you have long-term missionaries that were supported by your church before the current leadership? Have there been transition issues with them? If you are unsure about any of these questions, take some time to research how your church leadership would answer each one.
3. Does your church have a missions budget policy? What percentages are allotted to each type of missionary? Is it weighted more toward one type than another? Does any funds allocated toward missions actually go toward non-missionary efforts according to Dr. Tennent's definition? Do you have a proper balance between local evangelism and global missions?
4. Spend some time in prayer for the missionaries that you or your church supports. Write an e-mail or letter of encouragement to one of them.

Lesson 8 ■ Trends in Missions Today

LESSON OVERVIEW

Dr. Tennent explores several trends, both positive and negative, in modern-day missions, along with a quick look at the importance of understanding world religions.

A DEEPER APPRECIATION FOR THE CHALLENGES WE FACE

GROWTH IN PARTNERSHIPS

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

THE GROWTH OF TECHNOLOGY

A DECLINE OF MORAL COURAGE ABOUT THE MESSAGE

MODERN MISSIONS AND WORLD RELIGIONS

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. How many different missionaries does your church support? What are the benefits of partial and full support? What are the downsides of each method?
2. How have you seen technology being used in missions? What are the benefits of using technology? Are there any things that should concern us about the use of technology?

3. How is the gospel central to everything we do in missions? What are the implications of a “weak” or false gospel being proclaimed? What happens to the church in these situations?
4. Dr. Tennent stresses the importance of knowing about and being able to respond to the objections that other world religions have against the gospel and Christianity. Take some time to listen through the summary lectures that Dr. Tennent did for each of the world’s major religions.

Lesson 9 ■ Top Ten Myths about Missions

LESSON OVERVIEW

Dr. Tennent dispels the top ten myths about missions, so that we can be better equipped to think appropriately about the great missionary cause.

MYTH 1: UNREACHED MEANS GOSPEL-RESISTANT.

MYTH 2: EVANGELISM ALWAYS LEADS TO CHURCH PLANTING.

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

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

MYTH 5: MISSIONARIES HAVE DESTROYED CULTURES.

MYTH 6: THERE ARE NO JOB OPPORTUNITIES IN MISSIONS.

MYTH 7: MISSIONS IS ONLY FOR THE SUPER SPIRITUAL.

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

MYTH 9: MISSIONARY COMMITMENT IS MAINLY ABOUT GIVING MONEY.

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

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Which of the ten myths did you change your mind about after listening to this lesson? Which of them were you already aware that they were myths? What are some ways to help dispel these myths for others?
2. What does your church do to help educate people about missions? What are some things that you can do as an individual to help others who might want to learn more about missions?
3. The idea that missionaries have destroyed cultures comes up quite a bit in popular culture. What is being implied by people who make this argument? What's the best way to refute this argument? What are some other examples where missionaries have helped cultures?

4. What are some other things we can do to help the cause of missions besides giving our money? What should be the ultimate goal of our short-term missions programs? Are there things that your church is doing that might need to be readdressed given these ten myths?

Lesson 10 ■ Top Ten Things the Church Should Know about Missions

LESSON OVERVIEW

Finally, we conclude the practical section and the course with a discussion of the top ten things the church should know about missions.

1. THE RISE OF THE NON-WESTERN CHURCH

2. THE URBAN CONTEXT OF MISSIONS

3. ACCESS AND VIABILITY CRITERIA

4. THE ROLE OF SHORT-TERM MISSIONS

5. THE IMPORTANCE OF STRATEGY

6. EVANGELISTIC AND MISSIONARY MANDATES

7. CHURCH PLANTING

8. GROWTH OF PENTECOSTAL CHRISTIANITY

9. THE WAY MISSIONARIES ARE SENT OUT

10. OUR MISSION KIDS HAVE GROWN UP

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. How will the growth of the non-Western church affect how your church does missions? Do you currently work with any indigenous church?
2. If the work of missions is increasing happening in the cities of the world, how will this change your current missions strategy?
3. When sending out missionaries or sending funds, do the criteria of access and viability come into play? How can you begin to incorporate them into your missions budgeting?
4. What is the current role for short-term missions in your church? Do you have a long-term strategy for your short-term missions?
5. Is your church currently involved in church planting? What can you do to increase your involvement in this area?