

God's Missionary Kingdom

Session Six

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Empowering us to be World Christians

Objectives

We will:

- Examine through conversation our personal world missionary views, strategies and hopes.
- Study the Scriptures to understand better and to obey God's missionary commission in our daily lives.
- Develop and share with others a personal strategy as world missionaries.

Session Primer

A missionary on leave was invited to visit a congregation. After the worship service, he and his wife gave a presentation to the adult and youth Bible classes. They shared the challenges of reaching thousands of groups of people cut off from the Gospel by race, religion, culture, language or geography. They reminded their listeners of the remaining 3, 000 languages still needing a Bible translation.

During the discussion session at the end of the class, one young woman spoke up and said, "I never know there were so many people in the world who had never heard of Christ. I just assumed that there are Christian churches in every country where people can hear the Gospel. What should we do back home here to help? Or rather, what do you think someone like me should do?"

1. If you were the missionary, soon to return to a non-western country for missionary work, how would you respond?
2. Do you think that people today feel the sense of urgency exhibited by the woman's question?

Impressions

Read each of the statements below. Place a (+) next to a statement that describes you right now; a (-) next to a statement that does not describe you; and a check mark next to a statement that you see as a personal goal as you strive to enhance your role in God's missionary kingdom.

- _____ 1. I see myself as a missionary.
- _____ 2. I feel a sense of urgency when I consider the work of missions.
- _____ 3. I cheerfully give of my income to support mission work.
- _____ 4. I can think of at least one genuine sacrifice I have made in my life for the sake ofmissions.
- _____ 5. I can see where it is necessary for me to change my lifestyle for the sake of theLord's mission.
- _____ 6. I see my home and friendships as missionary arenas.
- _____ 7. I have prayed for a missionary within the last week.

Share your impressions with members of your group, especially the items you checked.

Exploring the Scriptures

1. Read Deuteronomy 6:1-9. Missions happen in your home. Missionaries are nurtured and equipped in your home. How are you doing at putting the following principles from this text to work in your own home?

- a. Nurturing a love for God above everything else (verse 6).
- b. Talking about matter of faith at home (verse 7).
- c. Having visible signs in your home that you are followers of Christ (verses 8-9).

How do you carry on mission work in your home? How do those in your home carry on mission work outside the home?

2. Review the great declaration of loyalty made by Joshua in Joshua 24:14-15. For Joshua and his family to serve the Lord effectively, they had to make a commitment to give up all other gods and serve the Lord wholeheartedly. If you were to do the same, that is, if you were to make a covenant before God to serve Him first and foremost, what "gods" would you need to give up? In other words, as you consider your personal work as a missionary, what dilutes your attention and clouds your allegiance to Christ?

3. Read Ephesians 6:4. Consider this:

If there were no Sunday school, confirmation and other congregational ministries of education, how would a child come to know the Lord and desire to serve Him? If you have a child in your home, how does the value of missions get transmitted to your child? Is missions a vital part of the "training and instruction" in your home? Is missions, in your opinion, a vital part of your congregation's "training and instruction"?

INSIGHT: As do all Christian values, missions calls for sacrifice and commitment and is taught best in the home by those who see their homes as arenas for nurturing missionaries.

4. Turn now to two chapters from the history of the early church's mission work: Acts. chapters 16-17. As a group, search these chapters for guidance and directives for the work of missions today. Individuals or small groups in your class may wish to take one of the items (a-e) below and report back to the total group.

- a. In Acts 16-17, what message is preached along the way by Paul and the other missionaries? What, specifically, do they preach? Write on large paper or chalkboard the message of the early church. See 17:3 for one example. Catalogue as many as you can.

b. In Acts 16-17, how are the missionaries strengthened for their task? Note 16:13 and 16 for an example. List as many sources of strength as you can find in these two chapters.

c. In Acts 16-17, what "price" was paid by the missionaries? In other words, what do they endure for the sake of the Lord's mission? Look at 16:22 for an example. List other "crosses" carried by the first missionaries.

d. In Acts 16-17, several people receive the ministry of missionaries. List all who are reached by the missionaries in these chapters.

e. In Acts 16-17, the Gospel is presented, and the people respond in a variety of ways. Two such responses are recorded in 17:32. List other responses, both positive and negative, to the Gospel.

INSIGHT: Missionaries face challenges and need the support of prayer and fellowship.

5. Finally, look at Philippians 4:10-20.

a. What feelings do you see underpinning these words of Paul to the Philippians? What does he feel? _____

b. Where is contentment to be found for those who face hardship in God's missionary kingdom (verses 12-13)? _____

c. Look at verse 15. Why does the congregation of Philippi stand out in Paul's mind?

d. How important do you think it is that congregations support and pray for particular missionaries? What are the benefits of such a direct, personal sponsorship? _____

Reflection and Action

Review the following 16 insights gleaned from all six sessions. Circle the three that speak the strongest and most challenging word to you about your personal role in missions:

Session One:

1. From the beginning of time, blessing all the world was God's intention.
2. God's people are set apart to represent Him to the world and to accomplish His missionary purpose.
3. God's people are tempted to think their mission is to themselves rather than to the whole world.
4. God's heart is for the whole world and for each individual in it.

Session Two:

5. Exclusive, uncompromising trust in the Lord is required of all who would be called His people.
6. The Scriptures present faith in Jesus Christ as the one and only way of salvation.
7. Undergirding the church's missionary work is a deep sacrificial commitment to the entire world, no matter what our cultural differences.

Session Three:

8. Compassion moves the hearts of God's people to carry on ministries of justice and mercy.

Session Four:

9. The Holy Spirit uses His Word, the Scriptures, not only to teach us the way of salvation but also to equip us to accomplish His missionary goals.
10. The workers in God's missionary kingdom are blessed with an identity and a fellowship that make them effective in mission.
11. God graces the church with the gifts it needs to accomplish His missionary goals.

Session Five:

12. Throughout the Old and New Testaments, it is God's intention that His missionary kingdom extend to all nations. God never intends His people to claim an exclusive right to His grace.
13. Christ died for all. The Gospel itself, therefore, shapes the scope of our missions.
14. The work of missionaries is the work of Christians within congregations and of those sent to other places.

Session Six:

15. As all great Christian values do, missions calls for sacrifice and commitment, and is taught best in the home by those who see their homes as arenas for nurturing missionaries.
16. Missionaries face challenges and need the support of prayer and fellowship.

As the course comes to a close, spend a few moments considering your personal missionary strategy for the immediate future. Jot down some responses for each of these questions:

1. From your existing web of relationships, who most needs to hear the Word of God from you right now? What will you say to this person? When will you say it?

2. In what specific way will you speak and act compassionately for justice and for mercy, with special concern for the physical and emotional needs of others?

3. Who will support you in your work? On whom will you lean to be more effective? What resources will you use to remain strong in your work?

4. In what real, measurable way will you practice being a world or global Christian?

5. What will you suggest to your congregation to enhance your parish's self-concept as a global church?

6. What will you say or do in your home to enhance and nurture a missionary zeal?

7. What change in your lifestyle or habits will you initiate to sharpen your effectiveness as one who supports others in mission?

8. What opportunity will you take to make a genuine sacrifice for the sake of the Lord's mission?

Share your responses with at least one member of your group. Speak words of encouragement. Close by praying for one another. Then move out into the world as a vital participant in God's missionary kingdom!

