

SECTION II:

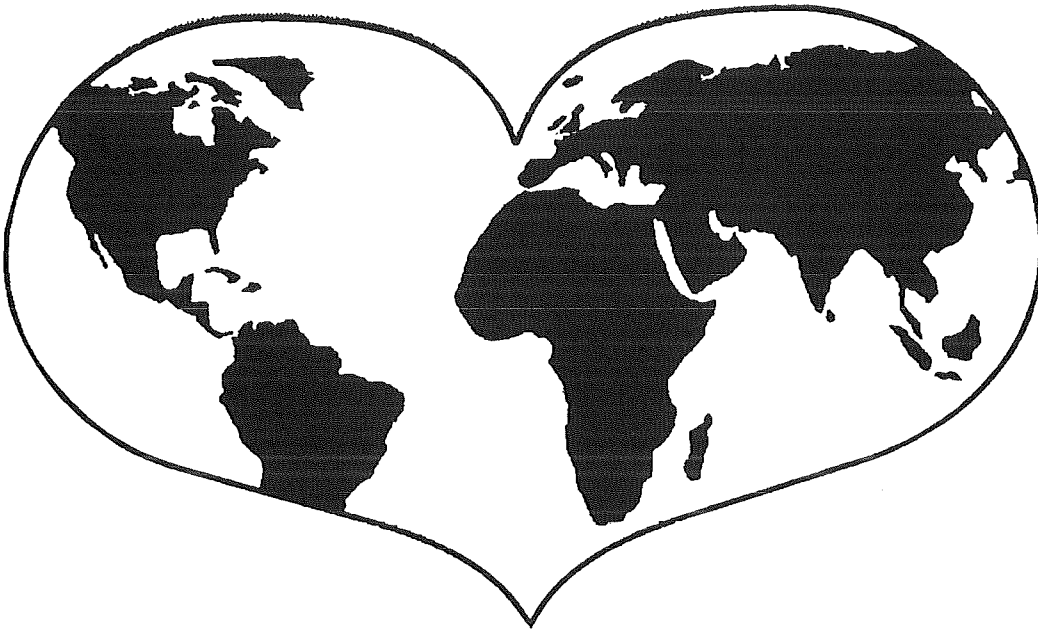
BUILDING A FOUNDATION FOR MISSIONS

OUR CALL

OUR BIBLICAL BASIS

OUR HERITAGE

OUR EXAMPLES





Chapter 3

OUR CALL

Is World Missions Really That Important?

World missions is not an isolated subject we should study, it is an attitude and an exciting (although challenging) way of looking at our entire world!

Just as being a Christian should influence every aspect of our lives, so also should God's heart for the lost totally change our outlook and priorities.

For many Christians in North America today, missions is merely a dreaded obligation or at best, a necessary responsibility. For hundreds of years, the church has always "supported the missionaries", and so the tradition continues...yet often without God's heart and passion, or without the purpose of winning lost souls to Christ.

When many Westerners think of a missionary, strange images may come to mind. You may immediately picture some young adventurer—clad in khaki safari clothes—trudging through the jungles with a machete. Perhaps you even imagine him meeting a group of dark-skinned natives dancing around mud huts and a raging fire—all to the beat of tribal drums and "booga-wooga" music.

Or maybe your only view of a missionary is of some strange old couple (in outdated clothing) presenting a typically dull presentation for your Sunday evening ser-

vice. Completing this picture is the never-ending blurry slides and (of course) uninspiring stories of terrible food and awful living conditions among those "poor heathen souls."

But what is missions really all about, and what is the purpose of world missions today?

Consider first the word "MISSION". The very term brings to mind definitions such as "goal, vision, and purpose." As Christians, what is our goal and vision, and the purpose for our lives? According to the Word of God, **our mission should be to glorify God in our own lives, and throughout the entire earth!** We need to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and to obey His words to "**go into all the world...**"

We need to ask ourselves if we *really* believe the Bible is true, and that it is the inspired Word of God. Do we *really* believe people must be "saved" or "born-again?" And do we *really* understand the reality of heaven...and of hell? If we do, then this belief should totally and radically impact our entire lives!

Just stop and think for a moment about how different our lives would be if we were born in another culture among heathen people, in a land isolated from God and filled with extreme poverty, sickness and disease.

What would it be like if you were born in an area where praying to an idol of stone or giving homage to your dead ancestors was your only hope, and constant fear of evil spirits consumed your life? Wouldn't you want someone to share the Gospel with you?

In North America we are so blessed, yet "where much is given, much more is required" (Luke 12:48).

Some people think, *Why should we go overseas when we have so many needs right here in our own country?*

Yes, we have needs, but did you know that in America we have over one million full-time Christian workers (one full-time Christian leader for every 230 people), while among the "unreached" peoples, there is only one missionary for every 500,000 people!¹ Ninety-six percent of all Christian finances worldwide are spent in America—on only six percent of the earth's population. That means only four percent of all Christian finances goes to the rest of the world!²

Eighty-five percent of all Bibles today are printed in English—for only the nine percent of the world who read English. Eighty percent of the world's population have **never even owned a Bible** and Americans have an average of 4 in every household.³ We hear the Gospel again and again, while nearly 2.7 billion people are still waiting for their first chance to hear!⁴

Even among missionaries, did you know that only fifteen percent of all missionary finances are used for work among these unreached people? Studies show that nearly eighty percent of all North American missionaries are involved primarily in social work—not even in proclaiming the Gospel, winning lost souls, or establishing churches.⁵ Just what was it that Jesus called us to do?

One missionary, Dr. Oswald Smith, responded with these now-famous words, "Why should anyone hear the Gospel twice before everyone has heard it once?"⁶

Others argue, *Why should you go overseas and try to change someone else's culture?*

Changing other cultures is NOT the purpose of world missions! As Christians, we bring the cross-cultural, life-changing message of Jesus Christ and His forgiveness for man's sins. We do not go to bring our western or American culture, but to present the Gospel in a way that is culturally sensitive to whatever people we may meet.

They continue to say, *But why should you go to those remote foreign tribes? Wouldn't they be better off just left as they are?*

My answer to that question is a loud "NO! NO! NO!" The heathen are never better off as they are, yet we are often blinded to this fact by a Hollywood version of what my husband and I call the "tropical native paradise." So often, the media pictures these remote tribes living in peaceful bliss and harmony...but this is only an illusion!

By God's grace, I have had the opportunity to minister throughout North America, Latin America, the Caribbean, Eastern and Western Europe, Asia, and Africa—from remote villages to crowded inner cities. Throughout these travels, I have **never** seen this image of a tropical paradise! At times, the land and beaches *are* beautiful and people *may* be warm and friendly...yet, lives without Christ are filled with misery.

I can remember walking through a squatters' village in the Philippines and seeing streams of human waste flowing openly down the street. I watched a group of Filipino children toss a bucket of garbage into an already dirty river, jump in the middle of it, and start throwing the garbage on each other. These poor children were just playing, oblivious to the filth and potential for disease. Although it was tropical, it was so far from God's Garden of Eden.

In Costa Rica, I watched people crawl on their bare knees as a penance for their sins. In Guatemala I saw many devoted people sacrifice large sums of money just to carry a religious icon...yet in their faces there was no joy, and no assurance of their salvation.

In a remote city called Mubende in Uganda, East Africa, my husband and I ministered to a tribe of people who actually worshiped a large tree. These Africans were

aware of their sins, and even the need for blood sacrifice...yet their religion gave them no hope. They blindly offered animal sacrifices to this tree, and at times, even the human sacrifice of their young children.

Other areas I have seen have been bound by fear, or controlled by witchcraft. Still others are filled with tribal hatred and warfare.

Each day I see mankind's need for God even more. I am writing this chapter from a remote city in Tanzania, East Africa. Just this morning, my husband and I heard some terrible news. A group of radical Muslims bombed the crusade grounds where we were scheduled to sing and preach and show the *JESUS* film. In the process, they also bombed a school killing eight innocent, precious children and wounding eighty others—all in protest of Christianity. I can't understand how anyone could do such a thing. How my heart aches for these people who are so far from God's plan!

In some places such as Rwanda, Bosnia, Ethiopia, and Iraq, government systems have planned for the elimination or starvation of entire people groups. In other areas, twisted religious beliefs (such as the Hindu rev-

erence for the cow and the rat in India) have actually caused self-inflicted food shortages and hunger.⁷

Poverty...sickness...disease...war...and hunger... these are all symptoms of a world without Christ. Even when a country is developed and prosperous, individuals without Christ are still separated from God by sin and destined to spend eternity in hell...unless they are washed in the precious blood of Jesus!

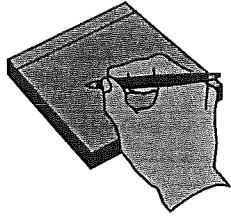
The good news is that Jesus Christ came to destroy the barrier of sin! He gave His life on the cross so that all people could enjoy God's eternal life in heaven.

John 3:16 sums up the entire message of the Bible with words that we all know by heart:

"For God so loved the WORLD that He gave His only begotten Son that WHOEVER believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

This is the Gospel, and our mission as Christians is to share it with others! We must share the blessings God has given to us! We must share our time, our talents, our finances, and most of all, our faith!





NOTES: