

Key Questions: What is the missionary's goal? What are they aiming to do?

The Missionary Task Defined

- **A Missionary Defined**
 - **Definition:** A disciple of Jesus set apart by the Holy Spirit, and sent out by the church to cross geographic, cultural, and/or linguistic barriers to make disciples and multiply churches among unreached peoples and places.¹
 - While all Christians are called to be “on mission”, we often use the word “missionary” to refer to those whose station, vocation, nation, and location are tailored by God to reach peoples who have never heard the gospel.
- **The Missionary Task: Planting Healthy Churches**
 - God has commanded his people to spread the Gospel by making disciples.
 - God has commanded his disciples to grow in knowledge of and obedience to him.
 - To be obedient, disciples must learn the Word, use their gifts, love and serve others, and share the gospel.
 - The best vehicle for this healthy discipleship and multiplication is a healthy local church.
 - The aim of the missionary, therefore, is to work toward establishing **healthy churches**, not merely making converts.
 - Matthew 28 – Command is to “make disciples”, not converts. Conversion is the start of the journey, discipleship is the journey, heaven is the destination.
 - Healthy churches are the home and the hub of the missionary enterprise wherein disciples use their gifts to contribute to the spread of the gospel.
- **The Command to Plant Churches?**
 - “Nowhere in the Bible is the church commanded to plant churches”.²
 - The command is to make disciples. So why the emphasis on church planting?

¹ Adapted from *IMB Foundations*, pg. 67

² JD Payne, *Apostolic Church Planting*, pg. 17

- “[Church planting] is evangelism that results in new disciples, who then gather together and self-identify as the local expression of the universal body of Christ.”³
- Churches are the assumed pattern in which discipleship occurs in the New Testament.

What is a Church?

- **Definition of a Church:** A church is a group of baptized believers in Jesus Christ who are committed to each other to be the body of Christ to one another and who meet together regularly to carry out the functions of a biblical church.⁴
- Church in the New Testament: ἐκκλησία, means “assembly”.
 - Only appears twice in the Gospels: Matthew 16:18 (Christ’s promise to build his church) & Matthew 18:17 (Christ’s command to “tell the church” in disciplining unrepentant sin.
 - Appears regularly in the New Testament, even to describe secular assemblies (Acts 19:32, 39, 41).⁵
 - The word church is sometimes used to refer to all the redeemed in Christ (the “eschatological church”; see Colossians 1:18). Frequently, it’s used to refer to local expressions of that future reality, namely assemblies worshipping God in particular places at particular times.
- **Key Passages:**
 - **Acts 2:42-47** // What happened after Peter preached the Gospel to the Jews in Jerusalem? What do you see resulted from their gospel transformation?
 - **Colossians 3:16** // To whom are we supposed to teach and admonish?
 - **1 Corinthians 11:18** // Where is the ordinance of the Lord’s supper practiced?
 - **1 Corinthians 4:17-18** // What do we learn about the “church” in this text?
 - **1 Corinthians 16:19** // How is Paul using the word “church” here?
 - **1 Corinthians 11:28** // In what context has God given gifts to be used?
 - **Acts 14:19-23** // What pattern do we see in Paul’s ministry regarding leadership?
 - **Hebrews 3:12 & 10:24** // What is the value of assembling?
 - **Titus 1:5** // What do you think it means that Titus was to put things “in order”?
 - **1 Corinthians 12:27-28** // In what context are the gifts used, and for what?
 - **Romans 12:9-21** // In what context are the commands given to be obeyed?

³ IBID, pg. 18

⁴ *IMB Foundations*, pg. 90

⁵ Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, “Church,” *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 458

- **12 Traits of a Healthy Church⁶**

- **Biblical Evangelism.** People come into the church because they have heard the message of the gospel and have responded in repentance and faith. They then continue to share the gospel with the lost in a lifestyle of evangelism (Acts 8:4).
- **Biblical Discipleship.** Members of the church intentionally invest in on another's lives to grow in maturity in Christ.
- **Biblical Membership.** The members consist of only those who give credible evidence of repentance from sin and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and who have been baptized as believers.
- **Biblical Leadership.** The Bible recognizes two types of leaders in the church: pastors and deacons. The consistent pattern of the new testament is also to have a plurality of pastors in a congregation, when possible.
- **Biblical Preaching and Teaching.** Teaching and applying the Scriptures expositively is central to the weekly gatherings of believers. Faithful teaching should saturate the life of a healthy church, and the Scriptures should be held as the Supreme authority.
- **Biblical Ordinances (Baptism and the Lord's Supper).** Churches should administer baptism by immersion to all believers upon repentance and faith, and they should also celebrate the Lord's Supper in remembrance of Christ until his return.
- **Biblical Worship.** A healthy church offers to God worship that is acceptable to him according to his Word, with reverence, awe, and joy. Worship includes the public reading of Scripture, the testimonies of God's people, prayer, and singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs.
- **Biblical Fellowship.** Members of the church love each other, encourage one another, and build each other up. They also care of one another, serve one another, and bear each other's burdens. They stir one another up to love and good works.
- **Biblical Prayer.** Members of the church should pray privately and corporately.
- **Biblical Accountability and Discipline.** Members should hold one another accountable for their obedience to the Word of God, and leaders of the church watch over the flock that has been entrusted to them. When necessary, the church also exercises church discipline.
- **Biblical Giving.** Members of the church should give cheerfully, sacrificially, and regularly to the support of the ministry and the proclamation of the Gospel in and through a local church.
- **Biblical Mission.** The church should manifest a passion for the lost, both locally and globally, and mobilize members to support and participate in the advance of the gospel.

⁶ Adapted from *IMB Foundations*, pgs. 61-64

The Missionary's Goal

- Missionaries are sent to make disciples, and discipleship happens in the context of a local church.
- The goal of the missionary, therefore, is to contribute toward establishing healthy churches that then self-multiply among a people.
- **Where Churches Don't Exist:**
 - Entry -> Evangelism -> Discipleship -> Church Formation -> Leadership Development -> Exit
- **Where Churches Do Exist:**
 - Evangelism -> Discipleship -> Church Involvement/Revitalization -> Leadership Equipping and Resourcing -> Exit
- Some missionaries may use their gifts to contribute in many ways to these pathways. For example:
 - Seminary training for new believers among a previously unreached people group.
 - Bible translation for a people group who has no Scripture in their language.
 - Worship music training to teach indigenous believers how to write and share music among their own people.
 - Support for other missionaries, such as administration.
 - ...and more!
- The main emphasis should not be how *fast* this process occurs, but how *faithful* we can be to see healthy churches planted. In some cases, it may take just a few years. In other cases, it may take a lifetime. We must avoid the pull toward missional pragmatism at the expense of healthy disciple-making.

Lesson Summary

- Missionaries are sent to make disciples among the nations.
- Healthy disciples are grown and developed in the context of a local church.
- Missionaries, therefore, have the ultimate goal of seeing healthy churches planted among unreached peoples and places.
- Missionaries can help contribute to the health of a new church through Scriptural teaching and modeling, but ultimately the goal is to see indigenous peoples leading healthy churches.

...I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Matthew 16:18