

# Module 8

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## How to Mobilize Your Church

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The Church is very close to the heart of God. It was bought by the blood of Christ (Acts 20:28) and is His instrument for redeeming all nations. It is so critical for any missions mobilizer to be committed to the Church and to hold it in high esteem. Part of being committed to the Church means that you do not allow your heart for the nations to come before it. If your church does not share the same convictions about the nations that you hold, don't separate from it, mobilize it.

Paul Borthwick, author and speaker, explains a few reasons why the local church is primary in the Great Commission:

1. *The Local Church is Primary in World Missions Because Jesus Said it is.* The promise of Jesus to Peter (Mt. 16:18) states that He will build His church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it. The image is one of a forceful organization of believers representing one Kingdom on the march against another. When the gates of that second kingdom - hell - are attacked, they will fall. Who is supposed to be on this attack? Jesus says it's His Church. For each of us, this manifests itself in the local assembly of believers. The church fails in its task when it loses the mentality of advancement. The missions-minded person who sees this happening in his or her local church should get involved and try to influence church thinking. Without our involvement, the local church will plunge deeper into a fortress-mentality, the missions-minded will become more cynical about the local church, and we all will move further from Jesus' promise that His Church will defeat the gates of hell.
2. *The Local Church is Primary Because the Body of Christ is There.* Peer groups and campus fellowships can be wonderful stimuli towards discipleship and missions but they do not present the whole cross-section of the body of Christ. The fuller representation of the body of Christ we call the local church also puts us in the presence of older believers whose accumulated wisdom will be our training ground for realistic ministry - in this culture or another.
3. *The Local Church is Primary Because It Affords Us Training and Care.* Do you have the patience needed to persevere for years in a Muslim culture without seeing anyone become a Christian? No one really knows, but ministry to the junior highers at the local church can certainly help develop patience. And will you desire to lead people in another culture to Christ, disciple them, and encourage them to be "World Christians"? If

you plan to do this, you should take every opportunity to test your skills, methods and relational abilities right in your own church.

When the groundwork has been laid and the importance of the church is seen in right perspective, the misconceptions about the church and missions are also laid bare. Bill Stearns in his workbook, *A Sunday for the World*, explains that most churches have a perspective that Jesus, in Acts 1:8, told His disciples that they would be His witnesses first in Jerusalem, then Judea, then Samaria, then the uttermost parts of the earth. People tend to interpret this as the stages of missions involvement. This is a common error and can be detrimental to the growth of one's missions vision. Stearns says:

1. Sometimes we think that any attention paid to the uttermost parts of the earth has to wait until we've first perfected our Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria. Although it's true that the...strengthening of the local church is foundational to ministry, its not true that we can't concern ourselves with other cultures until our own is full redeemed. Jesus told us to be witnesses simultaneously in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the earth.
2. Another malfunction of our single-vision mission is neglect of [the local church]. A fellowship might concentrate on blessing an unreached people but neglect strengthening its base.

As a mission mobilizer, you must be aware that though it is true that you may have more zeal than others in your church this does not give you the right to be arrogant and prideful. Your attitude needs to be one of willingness to serve the Body. Be teachable and make sure you get an adequate amount of information so that you do not appear to make blind accusations of your church. Stearns explains the potential ramifications of a wrong attitude or approach to church mobilization:

Often mission activist groups feel a clear sense of purpose and direction, but they are frustrated by lack of prayer power, financial power and manpower. In frustration, these folds begin to point fingers at the lack of vision of the pastor, the elders or the rest of the congregation for their obvious selfishness.

Once you feel like your heart is in the right place on the issue, you are ready to get started. First, find one or two people in your church that share your vision for missions. It will be helpful (but not necessary) to have their support as you attempt to mobilize the church.

Most churches have somewhere in their overall purpose statement something about their vision for outreach. Do a little research and find out what that vision is and how it is actively being carried out.

Other things to find out:

What percentage of funds is given to missions?

How many missionaries are supported?

How often is contact made with these missionaries?

How often is the congregation presented with facts about their own missionaries?  
Is there a prayer meeting in place?  
Is there any emphasis on praying for the world?  
What sources are used for information about the world?

If there is no Missions Committee in place, your elder board or pastor will be an asset in your researching. As you learn, be thinking of some creative ways to implement missions. Also, pray through the various existing ministries and ask God to show you how they can be used to fuel His global purpose. Here are a few ideas:

- Put up a bulletin board in a high-traffic area of the church and update it weekly or monthly with a new unreached people group and its specific prayer requests.
- Begin a prayer meeting that meets regularly and is dedicated solely to praying for the nations.
- If there already is a prayer meeting, supply the leaders with information on the unreached and ask them to give time each week to those prayer needs.
- Ask the pastor if once every six months there could be a concert of prayer for the nations.
- Invite individuals in the congregation to “adopt” one of their own missionaries, write them regularly and report to the rest of the church on their needs and prayer requests.
- If your church does not support missionaries, find a mission agency and ask if you can adopt some of their missionaries. (Some mission agencies are geared around linking churches with unreached people groups in such an “adoption” relationship.)
- Get the children’s ministries involved by having them make cards to send to missionaries or by taking a coin collection to send to foreign missions.
- Show a missions video in the youth group and spend time praying for missionaries to be raised up.
- Take a Saturday and have the congregation go on a vision trip to a part of the community that is predominantly international and host a get-to-know-you-picnic or service outreach for internationals.
- Invite an international to come and give a testimony in Sunday School about his/her culture and beliefs.
- Organize a summer mission trip for the adults and for the youth using a mission agency.
- Host a fundraiser where everyone can be involved and give the proceeds to overseas missions.
- Host or find a “Perspectives on the World Christian Movement Course”( [www.uscwm.org](http://www.uscwm.org)) and be sure to encourage the pastor and other key leadership to participate.
- Start a Bible study and either go through a book of the Bible highlighting God’s heart for the nations, or go through one of the mission’s books listed in Appendix D.
- Have time in the Sunday service to highlight current world news and how that relates to God’s heart for the world. Spend time in prayer for those issues.

-Put up a table where free missions resources can always be displayed and available for the congregation (videos, books, magazines, articles, agency brochures, prayer profiles).

-Subscribe your church to several missions' magazines (Appendix D) and place them on the resource table.

-Invite members to volunteer in the international department of a nearby college helping students learn English.

-Develop a missions curriculum that people interested in going overseas can go through to become more equipped and prepared.

Once you feel comfortable in your education about the church's policies and well equipped with ideas, it is time to make an appointment to speak with the church leadership. If there is a missions committee, they would be your first preference, followed by the elder board. During this time, share your vision for the nations as well as your vision and specific ideas for the church. Ask for their prayerful advice about where to start and then be prepared to be appointed to the assignment. This will hopefully be the first of many meetings with them. Stay close to your leadership and build a good relationship with them.

#### *In Closing...*

Mobilizing your church will be a process, but since it is God's agent to reach the world, it is well worth the effort. And as you are faithful, prayerful and persevering, individuals may be raised up to the same vision. If your church is slow to implement new ideas or is unwilling to allow you to participate in their missions development, be ready to offer yourself in another area. The last thing your church needs is someone who is willing only to build a certain agenda and not the whole body. You will validate your message and earn your right to be heard through humility and servant hood.