

Mission Of The Church

How To Best Carry It Out On The Mission Field

Editor's Note: At the First Annual Asian Bible Lectureship, Oct. 27-31, 1985, in Hualien, Taiwan, I was asked to speak on the above subject. At that time I was not "An Authority" on mission work, and neither am I some 18 years later. I have, however, been interested in mission work since my obedience to the gospel in 1953. Before the above lectureship in Taiwan, I was very much involved in mission work in India for a number of years, and in a number of mission efforts here in the U.S.

Since the above lectureship I have spent a little more than three years in Taiwan, or in other areas in that part of the world. For most of two years I was involved in mission work in Ukraine and in the Philippines. I still have much to learn about mission work, but my experience during the above time has helped me to understand some things, which I believe can prove profitable to brethren in the mission field, and especially in foreign countries. Some things are learned from first-hand experience, which are virtually impossible to learn otherwise.

At my age (78), and having had stays in the hospital in three different countries, and the last one I almost didn't make it, I doubt that I will be going to foreign places from now on. If possible, I do want to be some encouragement to others who are in a position to go. If I had my time to go over, I feel sure that I would spend more time on the mission field.

At the present there is such a pressing need for brethren to go to other countries in order that people may have the opportunity to hear the Gospel, God's saving power. Some good can be done in other countries from efforts put forth here at home, but nothing can take the place of brethren actually going to another country, learning the language, and working with the people over an extended period. What a great need there is for brethren who have the spirit of Isaiah, who, when he heard the voice of the Lord, saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" responded by saying, "Here am I; send me" (Isa. 6:8). The Christian has no greater opportunity and responsibility than that of taking the Gospel to those who have not heard it. Yet, our potential in the area of mission work is not by any means being fully utilized.

The number of foreign missionaries is now hundreds less than in the 1950s. Why has this happened? Is it not due to a lack of emphasis upon this most important work? Evidence of this is seen in our lectureships. Many of our lectureships have few or no lessons designed to encourage us to do our very best in carrying out the Great Commission.

The following material is for the most part an article I wrote in December 1985. A few changes have been made and some things added. My almost five years of mission work in foreign countries since that time has further convinced me that the observations made were well founded. I began my remarks in Hualien, Taiwan, with the following words:

It is a joy for me to be here in Hualien, Taiwan for The First Annual Asian Bible Lectureship. For the invitation to have a part in this gospel effort I am most grateful. It is encouraging to me that you believe I may add something to the work here, and if such I can do, I am happy to assist such a worthy effort. The work in Taiwan is encouraging.

We are here because of the Mission Of The Church, that being the primary reason for this lecture-

ship. The subject that has been assigned me, The Mission Of The Church — How To Best Carry It Out On The Mission Field, involves two parts, both of which are of paramount importance. It is from the standpoint of these two parts that we shall deal with the subject. Let us consider first:

THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

One might think that all members of the church know what its mission is, and they should. However, such is not the case. Some have obviously never come to understand the true mission of the church, and some who once knew now seem to be losing sight of the same. The changes concerning the church and its mission, which have taken place over the past forty years have been very pronounced, and not encouraging in the least. We are following the course of the denominational religion, where the emphasis upon physical and secular desires outweighs those of a spiritual nature. There is an effort to make “playing people” rather than “praying people,” and the effort is succeeding too much! Our Lord no more approves of this amongst us than he does among the denominational people. Denominationalism has absolutely no approval from God, and therefore, certainly no approval for its many unscriptural teachings and practices. How then, in the name of common sense, can we justify the growing affinity for such amongst our own people?

Those who have tried to raise support for mission work, and especially foreign work, know all too well that the church in general has lost sight of the mission of the church. When brethren will borrow money to pave their parking lots and float bond issues to built multi-million dollar Family Life Centers (play houses), provide fun, food, and entertainment for members in general, and then give only their “crumbs” for mission work, their thinking is made clear. They are not thinking in terms of saving the lost. One does not have to ask brethren where their interest is. It is shown by their actions.

THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH — THE SAVING OF THE LOST

Christ is the **Savior** of man, not the church. The church is made up of those who have been saved by the Gospel, God’s saving power (Rom. 1:16). The church does not make laws or change laws. This is not the work of the church. The church does, have an integral part in the saving of the lost. The church is “the pillar and ground of the truth” (I Tim. 3:15), that is, it is to uphold the saving truth, and take it to those who have not heard it. Though Christ is the **Savior**, the church has an all-important part to play in His mission.

The mission of the church, in a nutshell, is seen in the statement, “For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Lk. 19:10). This great truth is reinforced by the Great Commission in that the gospel is to be taught to “all nations” (Matt. 28:18-20), and “every creature” in “all the world” (Mk. 16:15-16).

Saving the lost involves the forgiveness of their sins and this can only be achieved through Christ. The angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, informing him that Mary would give birth to the Savior. “And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS; for he shall save his people from their sins” (Matt. 1:20-21). Under the New Covenant, which Jesus would inaugurate, people’s “sins” and their “iniquities” would be remembered no more (Heb. 8:12; 10:17).

Forgiveness of sins involves sins of the past, present and future. When those Jews who were guilty of the crucifixion of Jesus recognized their sins they asked, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” They were told by Peter to “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins...” (Acts 2:37-38). This was with reference to their sins of the past. The same was true with regard to Saul when instructed by Ananias: “And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Ac. 22:16). But the Christian will commit sins as he journeys the path of life. He cannot live above all sin (I Jno. 1:8). These sins of the present and of the future, as long as one lives, can be forgiven. This forgiveness is provided through a

continuing condition as described in I John 1:7: "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."

The gospel of Christ, through its mighty provisions, makes this possible. Where the gospel does not go the forgiveness of sins does not go. This invaluable forgiveness was made possible at great cost, the sacrificial death of Christ. The Hebrew writer said: "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man" (Heb. 2:9). When Jesus died on the cross, he shed his blood by which the church was purchased (Ac. 20:28). Our Lord looks to His church to get this great message out to the people of the world, **A Great Mission Indeed!**

THE CHURCH'S MISSION ACCOMPLISHED THROUGH ITS WORK

The work of the church, by which its mission is to be accomplished, involves three general categories: **evangelism**, **edification**, and **benevolence**. The God-approved work of the church has not and will not change, notwithstanding the fact that men in their "wisdom" have now included just about anything they desire in the work of the church. As brethren, we need to examine our practices on a regular basis, lest we, as some have already, adopt some of these unauthorized practices.

EVANGELISM. This involves taking the "good news" of the gospel of Christ to the lost. That "good news" pertains to the salvation of the soul of man. Though we some times think of evangelism as just taking the gospel to the lost who haven't heard it, it involves more than just a "one shot" approach. If evangelism is just limited to how to become a Christian, and not what is involved in living the Christian life, the results will not be very great. I've known of cases where people were taught the need to obey the Lord by being baptized for the remission of sins, but were not taught about Christian responsibilities. It didn't work. Conversion involves facing the truth.

EDIFICATION. This involves the building up of those who have learned enough to know that conversion includes: 1) Faith in God (Heb. 11:6). 2) True repentance (Ac. 17:30). 3) Confession of faith in Christ (Rom. 10:10), and 4) baptism for remission of sins (Acts 2:38). When these important steps are taken, the living of the Christian life begins. This continues as long as one lives. If edification does not take place in the life of the converts, they will never reach a state of maturity, but rather die a spiritual death which makes them unfit for the heavenly home, the eternal prize for the faithful.

There is great emphasis upon edification in the New Testament. It is unlikely that this important work of the church can ever be over emphasized. This is true because the church must be strong to carry out its mission. Paul, in his parting words to the Ephesian elders, said, "And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and give you an inheritance among all them that are sanctified" (Ac. 20:32). The evangelistic thrust of the Great Commission in Matthew 28:20, includes "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you...." This **edification** is indeed a part of the **evangelism** which is commanded.

Since **edification** is accomplished through God's word it is easy to see why converts need to be taught to do as Peter commanded. "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby" (I Pet. 2:2). Peter's admonition is much more than just to new converts. All of us should have that desire for the word as long as we live, just as children have a desire for literal milk.

BENEVOLENCE. This is another integral part of the work of the church, although it is not given the same emphasis as is evangelism and edification. **Benevolence** is under consideration when James said, "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world" (Jas. 1:27). Benevolence, as commanded by Paul, includes those outside the church. "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Gal. 6:10). Paul ordered the Corinthians, as he did the churches of Galatia, to make a collection for the saints (I Cor. 16:1-2). But,

as we shall note later, we must not try to “buy people” with material things.

Let us always keep before us the fact that non-working churches will never accomplish their God-given mission. There are no devices which can nullify the exhortation of Paul to the Corinthians when he said, “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord” (I Cor. 15:58).

THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH THE GREATEST OF ALL MISSIONS

No country, organization, or body of people has ever had a mission comparable to that of the church! The church’s mission is not to make people “feel good about themselves,” but rather to bring them to a profound respect for God as their Creator, lawgiver, and Savior. The mission of the church is not to save lives, but souls. It is not to provide bread for the world, but “that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give...” (John 6:27).

We are responsible for doing all that we can do in carrying out this mission. This demands a faith which works by love; a zeal that is according to knowledge; a courage which will stand fast in, and contend for the faith, and a dedication which always seeks first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.

Isn’t it indeed a great honor and a highly exalted privilege to be a part of our Lord’s church, which has such a noble mission? Surely it is!

HOW TO BEST CARRY OUT THE CHURCH’S MISSION ON THE MISSION FIELD

To learn the mission of the church is indeed important, and there is room for much improvement in this area, but that is not enough. We must learn **HOW** to carry out the mission. To learn the true mission of the church is a relatively easy matter, if one will simply devote a little time to a study of the New Testament as it relates to the subject. However, the **HOW** of carrying out the mission is somewhat more difficult. This is true because many variable conditions are involved and some things can be learned only by experience. Though means and methods must always be in accordance with scriptural authority, circumstances are subject to variation. We shall set forth some suggestions, or ideas, for consideration but these are by no means exhaustive. But we believe the following “do’s” and “don’ts” may prove worthwhile on many fields of labor. As stated earlier, I surely do not claim to be “an authority” on mission work, but I have learned some things, which I would not have known had it not been for the time I have spent on mission fields.

SOME SUGGESTED “DON’TS”

There is plenty of evidence, that some things do not usually work on the mission field. Experience is a great teacher. When it has been shown that some things do not work, the thinking missionary will not be trying those things. The following things are a few examples of things that didn’t work.

1. DON’T TRY TO AMERICANIZE, BUT RATHER CHRISTIANIZE, THE PEOPLE.

Customs are different in other countries. If they do not involve matters of faith, don’t try to change them. Our customs in our own country are relatively new when compared with those of many others, even in the area where Christianity had its beginning. Some of our customs seem strange to people in other countries, and some of our American ways are not worth emulating, even if we could propagate them. Our way of life is far different, and not always better.

I knew a preacher from India who came to the U.S. for four years of schooling at one of “our schools.” When he returned to his home country of India he wanted to live like the Americans. To

make it worse, the elders in charge actually contributed to this desire. The end result was that this man's own people did not relate well to him. After his failure as a preacher of the gospel, he quit the church and joined up with the Church of South India, a denominational group. The bottom line was that this preacher contributed nothing to the cause of Christ, and much money was wasted that could have been put to a good use. Some times it is better to "Do as the Romans do," if the Romans are not doing wrong.

2. DON'T GET INVOLVED IN POLITICS.

The "Great Commission" authorizes men to be preachers, not politicians. Involvement in politics may greatly hinder one's work, or even result in one's expulsion from a country. Around 1970 there was considerable publicity in brotherhood circles about a native preacher in Warsaw, Poland, who had been jailed, supposedly for preaching the gospel. But another native preacher in Warsaw, who was not jailed, told me that the preacher had become involved in politics, which resulted in his being jailed.

Teaching people to be Christians will help bring about changes in a country, even though it may be a slow process. Politics in a country may be rotten, and we have some of this in our own country, but our work as a missionary is that of preaching and teaching the gospel of Christ. Christianity was born in a very corrupt pagan society, but it made great progress in spite of that condition.

3. DON'T ENCOURAGE ATTRACTION OF PEOPLE BY POSSIBLE MATERIAL GAIN.

It is not only in the U.S. that people are money hungry and materially minded. To a degree, people are so inclined most every place. As Americans we have more materially than any sizable country in the world. This hasn't worked for good in the area of morality. Materialism is a great enemy of Christianity. A case in point was the church at Laodicea. They were "rich, and increased with goods, and have [had] need of nothing..." (Rev. 3:17).

More than a century ago denominational people went into India to evangelize. They began to dole out rice to a hungry people. The converts by this method came to be known as "rice Christians." Those of us who have worked in India have seen the lingering effects of this practice. The American missionary in India is still often seen as a source of material gain, and this serves as a great hindrance to the preaching of the gospel.

I personally saw the results of one of our own brethren from the U.S., as he promised a variety of material things to get followers. On one occasion a couple of brethren and I were planning to preach in a certain place. When we arrived the people did not welcome us, and would not listen to us. They were waiting for Anderson, they said. They said they were going to be baptized, but when asked for what reason, they said Anderson would tell them when he came. This preacher was promising the people a number of material things if they would obey.

On another occasion in India, an Indian from Australia was translating English into Tamil as the late brother Carl Johnson was preaching but there was an Indian brother present who spoke good English. He informed us that "B. John" was promising the people a number of things if they would be baptized. This type of thing does great hurt to evangelism. "B. John" was removed as translator.

A few years ago there was a case in Kiev, Ukraine, of the attractiveness of material gain. At that time there was what was called the "Night School." These students met about three evenings each week for classes. They were paid something for attending the school. One lady influenced three or four dozen people to "Get baptized and attend the school." The bottom line was material reward in the form of money.

If I were asked to state the one thing, which in my opinion, serves as the greatest hindrance in foreign mission work I would suggest that the unwise use of our money is it. Of course, money is necessary to carry on mission work, but it can be used irresponsibly. It is easy to understand why our brethren would be so free with money in a poor country, where most of our mission work is done. Here at home ten or twenty dollars mean so little! But to some people that would represent a month's income. When

we fling our money around so carelessly we are viewed as a good source for material gain, and people have enough savvy that they take advantage of the situation. In my preaching in India I would let it be known that we had nothing to give them other than the gospel of Christ. A few would obey, but there were no mass conversions.

One preacher that I knew went about passing out Rupees to the people in India at random. He may have thought he was doing something positive, but experience has shown that such only encourages people to think of us as being very rich, and a source for material gain. This hurts rather than helps.

4. DON'T USE BENEVOLENCE AS A PRIMARY DRAWING POWER.

We pointed out earlier that **benevolence** is an authorized work of the church. But it should not be used as a primary drawing power. The Father draws men by his word (Jno. 6:44-45). People who are drawn by material things are not responding for the right purpose. Our Lord used some rather stern language with reference to those who had followed him for the physical benefit rather than the spiritual. The people had followed Jesus to the other side of the sea, when He said to them: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled." He encouraged them to "Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that which endureth unto everlasting life..." (Jno. 6:26-27). The idea that people cannot be taught with "a hungry stomach" is not well founded. People are being taught all manner of things the world over where hunger is a way of life. Many people in India never have enough to eat.

This is not to say that **benevolence** should never be practiced at all, but great care needs to be taken that it does not serve as a hindrance rather than a help. Once when I was at Mt. Zion in India, the brethren from a congregation in Birmingham, Alabama had gathered up forty-four hundred pounds of used clothing, much of it in very good condition. When the word got out that the clothing would be distributed, the yard of the Johnson's residence would be teeming with people very early in the morning. While some may have been grateful for what they received, a great many went away disgruntled because they could not find exactly what they wanted. The result of this effort was not an increase of the goodwill among the people. I cautioned people through the newsletter, of which I was editor, to be very careful in their benevolent efforts.

Peter said to the lame man at the temple, "Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee" (Ac. 3:6). We cannot give healing by a miracle but we can give spiritual healing through the precious gospel of Christ. Our acts of benevolence should never be intended to buy people, but rather as a duty of Christians to help those who are worthy of such help. People who could work but who will not work are not deserving of our benevolence.

5. DON'T SUCCUMB TO IMMORALITY.

The preacher must guard against sin in his personal life. The allurements of the world is found the world over (I Jno. 2:15-17). Preachers, like everyone else, are not immune to temptations. Sexual desires know no geographical boundaries or nationality lines, as well as other immoral practices.

Within the past few years two cases of sexual immorality have occurred with two preachers that I have known for years. One of them is especially well known. In both cases these preachers have taken up with women on the mission field, and I understand that divorces have occurred in both cases. There may be other cases about which I have no knowledge, but I do know of another sexual problem.

Just imagine how much hurt this has caused within the Lord's church. Not only have there been breakups of families, but only the Lord knows the extent of the evil influence within the church. This kind of thing hurts mission work in general by causing some to have less confidence in mission work.

6. DON'T FORGET THE PRIMARY PURPOSE OF BEING ON THE MISSION FIELD.

Those on the mission field who are not there for the purpose of saving the lost and/or edifying those who have obeyed the gospel, should go home. Even then, such a person would not find a rightful place

within the church at home, since everyone is to be concerned about saving the lost.

Our daughter, Susan Adams, along with her husband, Alan Adams, spent ten years in Taiwan, a mission field. Susan said more than once, "I remember the reason we are here when I get homesick." There are many things which can distract the missionary from his purpose of reaching the lost. His objectives must not be thwarted. It is possible for a person to be on the mission field and take it rather easy, without giving a fair amount of his time to his work. The missionary should take Paul's admonition to the Corinthians seriously as should all Christians. "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (I Cor. 15:58).

SOME SUGGESTED "DO'S"

We have suggested several things which, in our opinion, missionaries shouldn't do, in order to make their work effective. On the other side, there are things which should be done to achieve success. Both these areas are of great importance. And we will suggest a few of the latter.

1. DO SET FORTH THE CHURCH AS A DISTINCTIVE, GOD-ORDAINED INSTITUTION.

Most of the places where our brethren have gone as missionaries, the denominational people were already there, and in some cases had been for many years. If the people are not satisfied with denominationalism, why would they be interested in what we have to offer unless it is distinctively different, and upheld by God's word? The church is to serve as the "pillar and ground of the truth" (I Tim. 3:15), and let it be so presented. The church is a manifestation of God's wisdom, in accordance with His "eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Eph. 3:10-11). It is not just an alternate religion; it is the only one which has God's approval, the only one made up of the saved.

It is nothing less than a shame that some of our brethren on the mission field, or who make trips to mission areas, have developed an affinity for the religions of men, as though such religions had God's approval the same as does the church which Christ purchased with his own blood (Ac. 20:28).

The faithful and devoted missionary has the great opportunity to point out to eternity-bound people that which they have never heard about. Though these people may have a Bible, few will ever come to a knowledge of the truth without someone to help them. The denominations are not going to tell people about the one true church which Christ built. If they did, they would be destroying themselves.

2. DO BE A LIVING EXAMPLE OF TRUE CHRISTIANITY BEFORE OTHERS.

A failure to "practice what we preach" can be seen by people in every place. I knew of a Methodist preacher in Mississippi years ago, who would after preaching on Sunday morning, shoot dice with some of the men who became members of the church. His explanation to the young men was, "Don't do as I do, do as I say." Few people would buy that in any language. For the most part, honesty, uprightness and dependability are appreciated in every place, and will do much toward getting a hearing from those we endeavor to teach. Christ says we are to be the "salt of the earth" and the "light of the world." This should characterize all of us, including preachers.

3. DO CULTIVATE A SINCERE LOVE FOR FOREIGN PEOPLE.

Their ways may not be like ours and it may be somewhat difficult to adjust, but adjust we must. Otherwise, our dislike for the people will show through. We must bear in mind that we are the "foreigners" when in a country other than ours, and it may take extra effort on our part to convince them of our sincere love for them. I knew a preacher who worked with the Cherokee Indians for many years. And, though they were not "foreign" people, it was clear that he did not have a great love for them. Consequently, his accomplishment with them was very limited. We should never forget that we show our love for others by our actions, not just by words. God loved the world enough that he sent his "only

begotten Son” to die on the cross. It is good to remember that the soul of a “foreigner” is just as precious in God’s sight as is the soul of an American.

One very beneficial thing that I have learned as a result of spending time with people in other countries, is that once we get to know the people, especially fellow Christians, they to such a great degree cease to be “foreigners.” They are people with many of the same needs and problems that we have. This has helped me to realize more fully that God’s word is for people of all countries the world over.

4. DO WORK TOWARD THE ESTABLISHMENT OF INDIGENOUS CHURCHES.

The ideal is to establish self-supporting, self-governing (in accordance with Bible authority), self-propagating congregations. Works which are totally dependent on U.S. financial support will not survive when that support stops. Once the support is started, it is often difficult to “wean” the recipients. It tends to work that way with mission efforts within our own country.

Most native religions in other countries are not supported by outside sources. If they can support their own religion, they could support Christianity as their religion. The failure to teach congregations the goal of self-support is a big mistake. This New Testament principle has much to do with success over a period of time in foreign fields. If a work is to gain stability it is necessary to produce “faithful men who shall be able to teach others also” (2 Tim. 2:2).

I have personally seen lack of emphasis on the need to be self-supporting by foreign congregations. This may stem in part from the fact that we have so much more than people in most places where we do mission work. But regardless of how much money we have, it is not for the good of foreign works to fail to teach them to support themselves.

5. DO GUARD AGAINST ERROR FROM WITHIN AND FROM WITHOUT.

The mission field can become “lonely,” due to a lack of association with people from our country. This may encourage ties with false teachers who are also Americans. This can be very dangerous! I corresponded with a former gospel preacher who went to India during the early part of the past century as a missionary. He became closely associated with people from the Seventh Day Adventist religion. I did not know of his relationship with his supporters, but he renounced the faith and joined that false religion, and spent many years preaching a false doctrine. He was destroying the faith which he once preached.

A more recent example is that of Pat McGee. From information that I have received, he has denied the faith, married a Muslim and converted to that religion. This shows how a once powerful supporter of the truth can become an enemy “of the cross of Christ” (Phil. 3:18).

In some instances brethren on the mission field are at liberty to teach whatever doctrine they please without having anyone to call their hand. This can happen due to a lack of knowledge and supervision on the part of supporters. Around 1969 I became acquainted with a young man, Johnny Stovall, who at that time was preaching for the church in Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, a mission area. He was not at all grounded in the faith. In fact, he was joining with denominational preachers in supporting a Billy Graham film. After leaving Sault Ste. Marie, Johnny decided to do mission work.

Elders of a congregation in Michigan, though they were advised of the error of Johnny, said they would send him to Indonesia “just to see how he did.” Ponder such oversight, or perhaps the lack of it. Well, Johnny Stovall didn’t do good on the mission field. The elders were not guiltless in this act.

False teachers from within the brotherhood usually find their way to mission efforts all over the world. Error here today may well be in churches on the other side of the world tomorrow. A good example of that is seen in what was in the beginning “The Crossroads Movement,” and later “The Boston Movement,” and then “The International Church of Christ.” The latest news is encouraging, in that this movement of error has about come to its end. But I personally knew of its influence in Malaysia and in Singapore. The error of this movement influenced a great many people, both in the U.S. and in other countries as well.

6. DO KEEP CLOSE TIE'S WITH THE SUPPORTERS OF MISSION EFFORTS.

The lack of communication may result in the loss of interest or even support. Don't wait for supporters to communicate. They may be remiss in this important matter. Take the time to prepare interesting, factual and informative reports about the work. This will encourage sponsors and supporters of mission efforts, and may encourage them to do even more mission work. Just to send out a very brief report every two or three months, saying "I'm still here," is not sufficient! Those who support mission works are entitled to know in detail what they are supporting. Supporters should demand this.

7. DO BE REALISTIC IN REPORTS ON MISSION EFFORTS.

Since my first trip to India, in 1970, I have been firmly convinced that those who have enough interest in mission work to support it financially should receive realistic reports. Some times reports are somewhat "flowered-up" and give an untrue picture. This is unfair to supporters and unethical on the part of those who make such reports. All mission efforts with which I have been familiar have both positive and negative sides. People should be made aware of this. All mission efforts face some problems, and true success involves the overcoming of those problems. To keep them hidden will not solve them. Dealing with them forthrightly may do so.

On one occasion I made a report on a mission work in which I was involved. I pointed out both positive and negative things about the work. I was being realistic. However, I received some very sharp criticism for my realistic report. It was my belief then, and still is, that if I reported only the positive things and intentionally left out the negative, I would be unfair to my supporters, and more importantly to our Lord Jesus Christ.

When people are led to believe that everything on the mission field is "rosy" and that there are no problems, they may become very disappointed when they learn that things are not exactly as they have been pictured to be.

8. DO CONSIDER THE NEEDS OF YOUR OWN FAMILY ON THE MISSION FIELD.

The husband and wife team should continually cultivate their love for one another. It would be well to study Paul's instruction in Ephesians 5:22-33, regularly. This would help to fortify the couple against the special strains on the mission field. When there are children involved, consider their needs. Give them some time. They will likely have fewer friends than they would at home in their own country. If the missionary family is not stable, it's success will be affected.

9. DO CONTINUE TO AND LEARN FROM GOD'S WORD AND EXPERIENCE.

If people continue to learn from God's word and from experience on the mission field, their work should be more successful. To fail in these areas is to be less successful. There are many things which can interfere with these important activities. The above also applies to preachers in general.

10. DO LOOK FOR A HEAVENLY REWARD – NOT THE PRAISE OF MEN.

Most missionaries on a foreign field make considerable sacrifices, which most members of the church would not be willing to make. But this commendable work is not always recognized by brethren back home. Therefore, if missionaries look to this as a reward they may be in for bitter disappointment. Theirs is a higher reward, which is from above. It is to this that one should look.

Though there are sacrifices to be made by missionaries, such as: being separated from their loved ones and close friends, and often the lack of some of the conveniences to which we have become so used to having. There are things to be gained. It has been a good experience to me to come to know people of other countries, and to see how people every place need the gospel of Christ just like we do. To learn more about human nature helps us to be better servants of our Lord. Being in most other countries should help us to have a greater appreciation for those things which we so often take for

granted in our own country.

With regard to the rewards for missionaries, the following poem by that well-known author, "Selected," is indeed worth considering:

WHERE SHALL I WORK?

"Father, where shall I work today?"
And, my love flowed warm and free.
Then He pointed out a humble spot and said,
"Tend that for me."

I answered quickly, "Oh, no, not that!
Why, no one would ever see.
No matter how well my work was done:
Not that little place for me!"

The word He spoke, it was not stern;
He answered me tenderly;
"Ah, little one, search thine heart;
Art thou working for them or Me?
Nazareth was a little place,
And so was Galilee."

CONCLUSION

The mission of the church, the greatest of all missions, is to reach the lost, even in "every nation" in "all the world." That most of you are aware of this is evidenced by the fact that you are here in Taiwan, some ten thousand miles from your own country and loved ones, and some of the conveniences you have known for a lifetime.

It is my hope that the suggestions I have made may in some way contribute to your success in this noble effort.

- - - *Walter W. Pigg*

Editor's Note: It was after the lectureship mentioned above that my wife, Naomi, and I returned to Taiwan where we would spend a little more than three years in that work. We have some good memories of Taiwan. We came to know and appreciate a number of brothers and sisters whom we would never have known had we not spent that time in that country.

We continue to love and appreciate a number of brethren in Taiwan, and the progress they have made over the years in the Lord's work. May the Lord bless them in the time yet to come.

MISCELLANEA

Missing Your BOT? Some times names are lost or misplaced on our mailing list. If you know of anyone who has stopped receiving *Banner of Truth*, have them let us know.

Our Heartfelt Sympathy. With about 3600 individuals on our mailing list, it is quite often that we receive a “return” with the following note — “Deceased.” Our heart goes out to those who lose friends and loved ones, who were readers of *Banner of Truth*.

Changing Address. We sincerely appreciate those who let us know their address is changing. It helps to save on mailing expense, and a single issue of BOT is not missed.

Do You Receive A Bundle? We mail about 140 bundles of BOT each issue. If more copies are needed we would like to know. If you receive more than needed, we would appreciate knowing in order that we could decrease the number. If you don’t receive a bundle but would like to do so, just let us know and we will add you to our list.

Use of BOT Material. Quite often we are asked if it is permissible to reproduce material carried in *Banner of Truth*. We want people to make use of the material, if used in the context in which it was published. We do appreciate credit being given to the source of the material.

The Cost of BOT? From the beginning we have sent it to those who wish to receive it with no charge. We intend to keep it this way. We do appreciate those who make contributions to the work, since this is the means by which it is made possible.

Children’s Corner —Some Things We Learn From Our Bible

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

God’s Love: Daddies and Mommies do things for their children because they love them. They provide food for their children so they will grow big and strong. They buy clothing for their children. They take care of their children and keep them from harm. **God**, our Father in heaven, loves us, His children, very much. He loves **SO** much that He gave His only begotten Son to die on the cross for us, to save us from our sins.

“Children, obey your parents in the Lord; for this is right” (Eph. 6:1).

“Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it” (Proverb 21:14).

Parent’s Responsibility: Sometimes children do not want to obey their parents. Do you know what it means to obey? It means to do what Mommy and Daddy tell you to do. Parents teach their children so that they may learn how to get along with others. If Daddies and Mommies do not make their children behave and don’t punish them when they do wrong; they are not doing what the Bible teaches them to do. It is a lot easier for parents to let their children do wrong than it is to take the time to teach them to do right. Your parents want you to go to heaven and are willing to work very hard to help you to go.

“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (II Timothy 2:15).

Bible Study: Do you know why you see Daddy and Mommy reading their Bibles when they could

be doing something else? God tells us to study our Bible. Do you know why we study the Bible? We study so that we can know what God tells us to do. We study so that we can teach others. God tells us, *“If ye love me keep my commandments”* (John 14:15). A person has to study to be able to keep God’s commandments.

“Pray without ceasing” (I Thessalonians 5:17).

Prayer: Another thing we learn from studying our Bibles is to pray. Do you know what it means to pray? It means talking to God. Did you know we can pray to God anytime and anyplace?

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord” (Colossians 3:16).

Singing: Do you like to sing? Isn’t it nice when we go to worship and we hear everyone around us singing? The singing is really beautiful; but did you know that every time we sing we are teaching? It is very important that we learn and pay attention to the words we are singing. We have to make sure the songs we sing are scriptural. This means that anything we learn from singing our songs during worship is something that God teaches us in the Bible.

We learn many things from reading and studying our Bible. This is one more lesson to show how very important our Bible, the **Sword of the Spirit**, is in our lives.

Editor’s Note: The above is the second lesson we have carried which is especially designed for children. We would like to hear from our readers as to what you think about these articles. The benefit of such material is dependent upon the use that parents make of it to teach their children. We have never seen a time in which there was greater need for children to be taught about God and what it means to live a Christian life, so that the heavenly home which Christ has made possible for those who serve Him may be enjoyed when life is over on earth. Do let us hear from you! - - -

Editor

The “Politics” of Christianity

Steven E. Yeatts

Editor’s Note: The following discussion transpired before the last presidential election. It is just as timely now as when written. Before another year another presidential election will be held and for other high offices as well. There are no perfect politicians or political parties. That is not to say that some are not better than others. When politicians have as a major plank in the platform, the support of such immorality as is now being done by one of the major parties, it shows just how low our country has become with regard to morality. Those who stand up for the practice of homosexuality, abortion, and the burdening of those who work for a living to support those who are able to work but will not, are not for the well-being of our country, or of God’s people. We have never before seen such a strong effort to completely secularize our country. Those who uphold such gross immorality as is becoming more extensive day by day, are contributing to that effort.

Some Christians become more than just a bit testy when gospel preachers refer to what some Chris-

tians consider merely “politics.” For those who are so inclined, they have separated moral responsibility that should be their predominant disposition as a Christian from their “politics.” I find it disheartening and in some cases (for those who have been warned) downright unconscionable that those who claim Christ will openly align themselves with political candidates who support homosexuality, abortion, and other immoral views contrary to Bible doctrine.

A Christian is in a unique position being in the world, but is commanded not to love the world or live like the world (Col. 3:1-5; I John 2:15-17; 2 Cor. 6:17). The writer James said that to be a friend of the world is to be the enemy of God (Jas. 4:4). In light of this calling and command, can it be acceptable in the sight of God for a Christian to disassociate himself from his religion and cast a vote for a candidate who is openly supportive of the ideology that is destructive to the essence of the religion to which we adhere?

Sadly, I am convinced that no matter the amount of warning and the scriptural pleas that accompany such warning, there will be members of the body of Christ who will go to their local polling place [on Nov. 7, 2000], and will cast a vote for some of the aforementioned candidates who will use their office to promote their godlessness.

The right to vote is a Constitutional one (19th Amendment) declared by our founding fathers. The framers of the founding discourses upon which this country rests (The Declaration of Independence and The Constitution) had a basic respect for God and His omnipotence and they recognized God as the Creator and the giver of life. In fact, the Continental Congress spent thousands of dollars to insure that thousands of Bibles were distributed around the colonies at that time. How far this country has fallen in regard to the very core of what this country was founded upon; *“That all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”*

God ordained civil government (Rom. 13:1-7). We as Christian citizens are amenable to the laws of the land and should conduct ourselves in an orderly and godly fashion (I Pet. 2:13-17). We are expected to pay taxes and pray for the leaders of the land (Matt. 22:17-21; I Tim. 2:1-3). It is not enforced upon any citizen that one **has** to vote. It is a right and a privilege. Certainly that right and privilege as a citizen of this country is superseded by our heavenly citizenship. Therefore, research should be done on each candidate to evaluate their moral stances as compared to the law of Christ (Phil. 1:20; Heb. 11:16). There are very few members of the body of Christ (sound and faithful ones), who are up for public office on any level. However, that does not mean that men and women of high integrity and moral fortitude cannot be found to make decisions that will help steer this country back toward God.

Often times, an argument used to justify one’s vote is that if we evaluate each candidate too closely, we cannot vote for anyone. If it were so that no viable, at least basically moral candidate exists in a particular election, perhaps “no vote” would be best. We should not reduce this issue to a matter of voting for the *“lesser of two evils”* What seems to motivate some Christians is their family history of voting for a particular party, or their perceived economic advantages in voting for a particular party. Such reasoning is faulty and shallow for one who claims to be the saved of God.

Jesus established more than just a benchmark of morals for us to follow. He set the precedent for matters of morality (Heb. 4:15). It is conceded that when we vote, we are voting for fallible men or women who will make mistakes. The essence of a candidate’s or already-elected official’s character and integrity is not measured by whether or not they have made mistakes (all do from time to time), but is instead measured by what they have done after making such mistakes. Did they truly repent and change their ways? Or have they continued to prevaricate and poison the morality of their locale, state, or country? One need to look no farther than King David as an example of a fallible man who was a leader, but a man of integrity who acknowledged his sin and continued on as a leader and served God

faithfully (2 Sam. 12:13).

Some Christians whose employment involves being a member of a union justify their vote for a particular candidate as per the union's instructions regarding future financial considerations and protection. If such "pro-union" candidate also holds to immoral views of pro-homosexuality and abortion on demand, can a Christian honestly separate the moral issues from the financial ones and rationalize such a vote? Jesus spoke to the things that His followers would need, and He said, **"seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you"** (Matt. 6:33). The things that are needed (food, drink, clothing, etc.), will be provided for those who give the kingdom proper priority. Have some Christians displaced their faith in their Father and His Son and trusted in the union to deliver them in their time of need? God forbid! We need to be reminded that Christianity involves self-sacrifice and that this world is truly not our home (Matt. 16:24-26; Luke 12:15-21). We need to store up heavenly treasure by trusting the one who truly provides for us, God the Father (Matt. 6:19-21; 25-34).

Others will refer to their vote as a private matter that is nobody's business. Certainly the matter of voting is a private matter. When one goes into the voting booth the only parties truly involved are not the modern day political parties, but are the voter and God. We must stand before God one day and give an account for our lives (2 Cor. 5:10). Included in our lives is our influence. Christians who think they can cast a ballot for a candidate, whose lack of morality is the antithesis of scriptural basics, whose associations and lack of morality fight against the very thing that we should pray for, in regard to leaders of the land, **"that we might lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty,"** are part of the problem, and not part of the solution, as it pertains to the good fight of faith we are to fight for the cause of Christ (I Tim. 2:2; 6:12). Is it sensible to vote for a candidate who makes known his or her immoral views, then upon their election, pray that we can lead a godly life with such degenerate leadership? Such reasoning is fallacious indeed.

There are members of the body of Christ who will disassociate their religion from their politics and operate as if the act of voting earns them an exemption from the review of Jesus Christ. If we are students of God's word, His word will shape us as we strive to follow in the footsteps of Christ. If following Christ is our primary focus, we will apply at least the basic morality litmus tests to the candidates for whom we vote.

No earthly leader deters in any way the control of God our Creator over the affairs of this life. God uses the choices of men and women (leaders of the land or not) to work His providence and His will. It is a comforting truth to know that *"The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: turneth it whithersoever he will"* (Prov. 21:1). When considering the consequences of immoral leadership, Christians should be scripturally motivated to choose those candidates that best suit our desire for peace, morality, and our commission to teach and represent Jesus Christ as King of Kings and Lord of lords (I Tim. 6:15). May God bless this country as we elect our representatives.

- - - 1909 Stelling St., Murfreesboro, TN 37130

OH NO! THE PLAINS OF ONO

Brock Hartwigsen

Unlike Nehemiah of old, today numerous brethren have heeded the messengers of Sanballat and Geshem and have gone to the plain of Ono. Nehemiah was leading God's people as they were building a wall around Jerusalem to protect God's people and God's temple, which had already been built in Jerusalem. The enemies of God's people did not want to see Jerusalem fortified and God's people protected, so they set out to stop them. First, they mocked and made fun of the Jews (Neh. 2:19; 4:1-3). Then, they threatened them (Neh. 4:11-12). When that failed, they offered false friendship and help with the intent of doing mischief. "Come, let us meet together in some one of the villages in the plain of Ono" (Neh. 6:2).

Nehemiah knew their intent. "But they thought to do me mischief. And I sent messengers unto them, saying, I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down; why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you?" (Neh. 6:3).

During the early days of the restoration of Christ's church in North America, the enemies of God's people (the denominationalist) mocked and made fun of the early restorers. When the movement started multiplying and growing, they changed their methods and started verbally attacking the church. When the Jews were threatened, Nehemiah had them all carry their swords, spears and bows with them (Neh. 4:13). The church also picked up her sword, the word of God (Heb. 4:12) and met the enemies of the gospel in debate after debate and soundly defeated them time and time again.

Like the enemies in Nehemiah's day, the church's enemies changed their tactics and invited us to send our brightest and most intelligent young people to their schools so that they could earn higher degrees, Masters and Doctorates. They told us that men in our midst with such noble degrees would bring respectability, stability and wisdom to the restoration movement. Many heard, agreed and left building the walls and joined them "in the plain of Ono." That is, on their campuses, in their schools. They were wine and dined with false doctrine. There many were educated (?), and molded not into strong wall builders, but wall destroyers. Not all who went were compromised. Some who went learned about the enemy and came back stronger, but many didn't.

Brethren, the enemies of the Lord's church have once again extended the false hand of friendship to us. "Send us your sons and daughters and we will educate them for you." We listened, we sent and we are now paying the price. They extended their false hand of friendship to us. "Let us give your schools accreditation. Let us examine your curriculum. Let us guide you in improving your colleges. Let us grant you human recognition for your colleges." We listened, we conformed and we are now paying the price.

Nehemiah did not compromise with the enemies of God's people, but some Israelites did. In Nehemiah 6:10-14, we read about Shemaiah, an Israelite, who warned Nehemiah. He claimed that God told him to tell Nehemiah that he was going to get killed. He told Nehemiah that he should flee to the temple. Nehemiah perceived that God had not sent Shemaiah, but that he had been hired by the enemies of God's people to kill him.

Today we also have traitors in our midst, who are working for the enemy. They warn us that the church is dying, that she will cease to exist. They tell us that we must abandon our work on the wall and listen to them. We need to change our views, our hermeneutics, modernize or worship services, we need to mature, grow up, and become a church of the 21st century.

Instead of becoming a church molded and patterned by men who have been trained in the camps of God's enemies; instead of being a church molded and patterned by men who are well read in the wisdom of God's enemies, let us continue to be the church molded and patterned by Christ and the apostles. Let us not desire to be a 21st century church. No, let us desire to be 1st century church in the 21st century.

Let us not go to the fields of Ono. Let us not accept guidance by those who have gone to the fields of Ono and been compromised. Oh, no! Let us go to God's word and let us be guided by God's word only. Let us keep on building the wall.

- - 12521 Holly Sp. Newhill Rd., Apex N.C. 27502

Fourth Annual (2004)
Banner of Truth
Lectures
Murray, KY , at the
Curris Center, June 14-17

Theme: God's Inspired Word — A Discussion of Various Bible Texts

**Twenty-eight lessons on timely Bible Texts will be
delivered by 20 or 22 Speakers**

Lectures hosted by the Dexter and Hickory Grove congregations

Why not make plans to attend, and plan other activities, as much as possible, so that they will not interfere? We've never seen a time when God's word was needed more than now!

READERS' RESPONSE

“Dear brother, I'm preaching in many places in INDIA, which is the second largest populated country in the world. Our congregation strength is around 30. But we are totally dedicated to our Lord in following the sound doctrine of our Lord Jesus Christ, revealed in the New Testament, in our daily life and in our Preaching and Worship. I've seen some details of your magazine, Banner of Truth, and studied some of the articles and I really am amazed to see how strictly your articles abide with the Truth of the Word, and it encouraged me a lot to send this mail to you. Some of your articles are wonderful and topics are scriptural. I am really thankful to God for your hard work in the Gospel. Churches of Christ in India are growing. We are really in need of trained preachers, and of good Bible literature, lessons related to sound doctrine. Good Bible lessons like from your articles in the magazine, needed sermons and explanations like you are covering in your lectures and good library materials, etc. which makes the church strong and sound in the Vineyard of the Lord. So I beg you and the church please remember us and our need for spiritual food. Please kindly send us your monthly magazines and your Annual lecture books if any and if possible some video or audio tapes and any other related literature. They all will definitely benefit me and many young and old preachers, and all the members.... We will translate your articles into our mother language Telegu, so that many can benefit from this work **-Sagnty Lazarus.**” – **India.** *(We shall add you to our mailing list for Banner of Truth, and may be able to send some other material. It is good to hear from brethren in India .For several years I was involved in the work in Tamil Nadu. – Editor).*

“Thank you very much for one of the best papers in the brotherhood. My brother is an elder in Montgomery, AL, and I talked to him Tuesday (9/9) and they have heard (rumor??) that Max Lucado's church (that is the way I feel, it definitely is not the Lord's) has taken down 'Church of Christ' and they are using instruments on Sunday Night. Do you have any information on using women as deaf interpreters?....Thanks and God bless you and the church. – **Ancel Norris.**” *(Based on several sources,*

what you heard about taking down “Church of Christ” is true. If they are not now using instrumental music, their plans are to do so. I would not be surprised in the least at anything Max Lucado does, and those who follow him are in the same boat with him. Women as deaf interpreters would be the same as women interpreters for a mixed, hearing audience. Teaching is done whether it be by voice or sign language. Some of our brethren contend that they see nothing wrong with women interpreters for mixed audiences, but I’ve not seen their justification for the position. Some say” the end justifies the means.”- Ed.)

“I read your Banner of Truth on the internet. But I don’t always have time. We really like it, it is not liberal like a lot of things are now days. I read where you were going to write in your paper about Lads to Leaders. I really want to read this. We do Lads to Leaders and go to Nashville. But we don’t know what is wrong with it. We don’t believe in the hand clapping after baptizing also. And we have teenagers and we take them to youth rallies, but we check out the speakers also. So if you have written on this already can you e-mail it to me – **Bruce Bradford.**” – **AR.** *(For some time now I’ve been planning a discussion of Lads to Leaders. I’m waiting on some more up-to-date information. As soon as I get the information I’m waiting for, I will write something – Editor).*

“Bro. Pigg, I am just finishing your two articles on ‘Morals in America.’ I am unable to say enough about them, or, how badly this message is needed.... Big question: How much of this material can I (may I) reproduce and give to class members? Again, this is powerful truth. I am approximately your age and can identify with all that you have said about the moral deterioration of our great country – **Hank Tankersley.**” *(You are at liberty to reproduce as much of the material as you like. We appreciate it when the material we carry is put into the hands of others, who may profit from it – Editor).*

“The elders don’t want me to hand out Banner of Truth any more. They say you are too negative. I love your work and don’t mind rocking the boat....” *(Name withheld by editor. I would appreciate it very much if those elders would be kind enough to point out to me just what qualifies as “too negative.” Were the writers of the New Testament “too negative”? If all the negative was removed from the New Testament, and only the positive left, it would be a much smaller book. People who make this criticism seldom, if ever, show respect for Galatians 6:1, and point the specifics of the error committed. – Ed.).*

“I enjoy reading. Please add me to your mailing list. I look forward to receiving every month the Banner of Truth. Thank You – **Vernell Bursey.**” **CA.**

“Thanks for the Banner of Truth – **Fairview church of Christ.**” *(Thank you for your support which helps keep our work going – Editor).*

Editor’s Note: The Hickory Grove congregation is the sponsor of *Banner of Truth*. I preach for the Dexter congregation which is only a couple of miles from Hickory Grove. People from both Dexter and Hickory Grove help by getting BOT ready to mail.

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