

How to Engage in Mission

Timothy Project

Student Manual

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LESSON

1

WHAT IS IT TO ENGAGE IN MISSION?

Theme text: “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matthew 28.19-20a).

I**MAKE DISCIPLES**

In a nutshell, to engage in mission is to make disciples. Jesus left a single imperative with his church, that of “making disciples.” If the church’s primary task is to make disciples, we ask, “What does that mean?” To answer this question we can cite the author’s book, *The Primacy of the Church*: “Disciples are made, as people are put into a living relationship with God, through obedience to His will” (STBNB Editions, 2002, p. 148). The outworking of this imperative involves teaching and baptism. In everything we follow the example of Jesus. Jesus was baptized in obedience to the Father, an action that was approved by the Father. Jesus’ later ministry was characterized by his teachings and miracles, with emphasis on his teachings.

Respond: According to the text above, what does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus?

II**REPRODUCING DISCIPLES**

Paul tells us that church elders (leaders) should be able to teach. Jesus commanded Peter to feed his little lambs and sheep. That is, teaching on the part of the leaders, and learning by the flock, is a constant activity of the church. Without teaching, the church loses the ability to fulfil the command of Jesus to make disciples or to reproduce. The gift of teaching is found in each local church, according to the distribution of the gifts of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 12.7; 1 Cor. 12.1). However, it is up to disciples to reproduce disciples, because it is disciples who reproduce new disciples or followers of Jesus. This activity should be a natural consequence of being a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Respond: Whose responsibility is it to reproduce disciples?

III**JESUS' COMMAND 'To Go'**

Mission naturally involves the command 'to go' in the name of Jesus, beginning with the locality where we live and work, progressively working outwards to the ends of the earth (Acts 1.8). In this manual, we will be focusing on models of biblical mission, be it home mission or mission to other countries, local church based mission, or mission through a missionary organization, acting on behalf of local churches.

Mission was born in the heart of God when he sent his beloved Son into our world. God took the initiative again when the Holy Spirit said to the church in Antioch: "Separate for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them" (Acts 13. 2). Mission was born in the heart of God, but the principle missionary agency is the local church. Missionary organizations such as the International Mission Board (USA), the Brazilian Baptist World Mission Board, or BMS World Mission (UK), among others equally good, exist to facilitate the cooperation and missionary effectiveness of local churches.

Once on the mission field, God directs the activity of those who were sent, as happened on the second missionary journey of Paul and Silas. Dr. Lucas, one of Paul’s companions, testified that the Spirit prevented the apostles from preaching the gospel in Asia and Bithynia, but opened a door of opportunity for them to enter Macedonia (Acts 16.6-10). The pre-disposition and willingness of the apostles to engage in mission became central to this enterprise, according to Luke’s testimony:

“After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them” (16.10).

And the apostles continued in obedience to the commission of Jesus to his church: “As the Father has sent me, I am sending you” (John 20.21).

The testimony of the apostles, the first to be sent, is that God, the Holy Spirit, accompanies us and directs us every day and every step of the way. We do not walk alone. This is demonstrated in Paul’s vision that led him and his companions to abandon their own plans to enter Bithynia and Asia and to attend the appeal that came from Macedonia. Jesus’ order is accompanied by a promise: “And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Mat 28.20). With this promise, the mission of Jesus and his church can never fail.

Based on the above text, what are the requirements to fulfil the command of Jesus ‘to go’?

IV THE THREE AUTHORITIES

1. To engage in mission is to be under authority. By this we mean a triple authority: firstly, we are under the **authority of the country** where we are working. During our 33 years of missionary service in Brazil we were under the authority of that country. As the apostle Paul exhorts us in his letter to the Romans:

“Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God” (13.1).

2. We are also under the **authority of the church** according to the guidance of the apostle Paul: “... Be careful, then, how you live – not as unwise but as wise. Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ subjecting yourselves one to another in the fear of Christ” (Eph 5.15, 21). All of us, including church leaders and missionaries, are subject to church authority, whether local or regional.

3. However, we are subject to the **authority of Christ** before all: For Christ is the head of the Church, and the rulers of the earth are ordained by him. The command of Jesus ‘to go’ is given with his authority. Mission is not an option for the believer or for the church. We are not only under this divine authority, but we are also clothed with this authority, to proclaim Christ to all people by all means (1 Cor 9.22).

To do:

Talk to the other members of your study group about the three above-mentioned authorities. What should be our relationship with the civil authorities? To what extent should we obey them in the fulfillment of Jesus’ command ‘to go’?