HOW TO DEVELOP
A COMPELLING
MISSIONS MOVEMENT
IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

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“A local church that has lost its burden for souls is lost itself.” Those words by the great evangelist Reinhard Bonneke echo in my heart. Inspiring stories of missionaries and visionary leaders, past and present, who chose to do the unordinary to achieve the extraordinary compel us to take God-ordained risks for unparalleled reaping of souls. If souls are not being saved, we have forgotten why Jesus died on the cross.

In recent communication, J. Hudson Taylor IV finished a note with, “May the Lord's sufficient and effectual strength and grace be your daily testimony.” His very life illustrates that our Lord gives us daily strength and grace when our focus is on souls, to fulfill the Great Commission.

I read “The China Inland Mission” years ago, by his great-grandfather, the legendary missionary J. Hudson Taylor. Taylor spent fifty-one years in China. The society he began was responsible for bringing over 800 missionaries to China, launching 125 schools and resulting in 18,000 Christian conversions. They established more than 300 work stations with more than 500 local helpers in all eighteen provinces.

For four generations, the Taylor family has continuously spearheaded missionary leadership throughout China. What started as a small work with fewer than two dozen people during a national civil war has become the largest Christian community in the world. Today, 120 million Christians in China now outnumber the Communist Party!

More than four thousand years ago, one of the greatest missionary stories of all time changed the course of human history. From this God-ordained, real-life account come successful steps necessary for any pastor to develop a compelling missions program in the local church.

In Genesis 24, we read five times “Good-Speed” or “success.” It means that God’s hand is upon His servants, helping them achieve what He wants them to achieve. In the familiar story, Abraham has a son of promise, Isaac. As Abraham was approaching the end of his earthly journey, his sole desire was to obtain a bride for his son, Isaac. God has a similar desire today, to get a bride for His Son, Jesus Christ. Who is the “bride of Christ”? The Church.

Abraham sent his most trusted servant, Eleazar, on a mission to get the bride for Abraham’s son. Eleazar does not disappoint him, but returns with the beautiful Rebecca. Abraham typifies God the Father. Isaac typifies God the Son. Eleazar typifies God the Holy Spirit. What is the mission of God the Holy Spirit? To seek a bride. The Holy Spirit is working today, calling out a bride for the Lord Jesus Christ. God prospered Eleazar and helped him succeed, to complete the mission of his master.
Likewise, God will grant us success as we build missions-minded churches for the fulfillment of the Great Commission in our lifetime.

**We Need To Establish Our Cause In The Local Church (Gen. 24:1-4)**

Pastor Alexey Ledyaev, the Founder of New Generation Churches and Billion Soul Cochair/Eastern Europe from Riga, Latvia, has pioneered more than 700 churches throughout Eastern Europe, Russia and in the United States. He has stated, “If we go after our impossible, we will reach our maximum; if we go after our maximum then we will reach our average; if we go after our average, then will get nothing!” As spiritual leaders, we must have a compelling cause to motivate us and to activate our congregations. This cause will drive us and bring focus to our lives. Eleazar had a God-given cause. Each step he took moved the whole earth into alignment with God’s plan for His world.

Is fulfilling the Great Commission the compelling cause of our life and our congregation? We attract what we are, not what we want. If we become wrapped up in ourselves, we create a very small package! If we become wrapped up in the Great Commission, we draw great, visionary people into our lives. The late Dr. Bill Bright, founder of Campus Crusade for Christ, used to say, “Small dreams never inspire the hearts of great men.”

We can be a wandering generality instead of a definite specific. The overarching purpose for the local church in particular and the global church in general is for God’s servants to get a bride ready for God’s Son. This Bible-based purpose must not be misconstrued or misunderstood into a purpose reserved only for missionaries or church planters. Every Christian and every minister has been commissioned to get a bride ready for Christ! This is our measuring rod. We have to ask ourselves, how much do we do, or does our church do, that has to do with fulfilling the Great Commission?

*Beware of vague goals.* If you do not know where you are going, then what does it matter if you arrive in time? If you do not have a definite cause, then you are like ship without a rudder and a compass on a dark night. Our goal must be specific enough to write down.

*Beware of unworthy goals.* People can be rich and famous and still not be successful. Pastors can have large churches and ministers have huge ministries and still not be successful. What is success? Well, failure could be defined simply as succeeding at the wrong things. When a person tries to achieve success without God at the core, that person can fail miserably or succeed even more miserably. Failure is often succeeding at the wrong things.

*Be sure to have a God-given goal.* Does the thing that moves you, move God? Does it create enough motivation for you to say, “This one thing I do”? Does the cause of your life demand your very best? Is there anything in your life that requires every ounce of you for it to be successful? Can you honestly ask God to bless your path and give you success for your cause? Can you honestly get on your knees and ask God to help you accomplish your goal for His glory?

I challenge you to go after your *impossible* and strive to double the size of your missions program, which includes:

- **Sowing**—A growth rate of 11 percent will transform your missions giving in seven years. For example, from $25,000 to $50,000 or $50,000 to $100,000.
• Saving—Take your average attendance over the last two years and set a goal to see that number of new first-time converts come to Christ and be baptized in water in the next two years. It is reasonable to expect every member or attendee to win at least one person to Christ in the next two years.

• Sending—Every missions-minded church moves from production to reproduction, from giving to going and from winning to sending. Set visionary goals for:
  o 10 percent of your average attendance to be sent into fulltime ministry.
  o 5 percent of those going into fulltime ministry to plant churches in the United States or among the unreached in specific world regions.

Dr. D. James Kennedy, the late founder of Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church, used to lead his people weekly in personal soul-winning. Some leaders criticized his methods, saying they were outdated. His classic response was, “I will keep doing my outdated methods of personal soul-winning with success rather than incorporate your ways of doing nothing, until you get it right!”

We Need To Examine Our Conditions In The Local Church (Gen. 24:5)

To get where he was going, Eleazar had to know where he was. It is obvious that Eleazar studied the situation and knew the necessary steps to accomplish his mission. He knew that God was calling him to a land where he had never been, to meet a woman that he had never met. Then, he had to convince her to leave mother and father, to return with him to Isaac.

We must take an honest inventory of our lives and ministries. If you called me for directions to our Billion Soul World Headquarters, I would first ask, “Where are you now?” If you said, “I am at the corner of ‘walk and don’t walk’,” I would say, “That is not good enough, get specific.” We must diagnose our problems. We need to know what stands between us and accomplishing our role in fulfilling the Great Commission. What are the roadblocks? Just because we have obstacles does not mean that God is not with us.

The door of opportunity swings on the hinges of opposition. We need to stop complaining about our problems and start cracking the code to help get a bride ready for Christ. Here is a straightforward, five-step planning grid to help you develop an aggressive missions program in the next seven years:

Gather the facts—Research
  • Do your homework. Analyze where you and your church are. Ask lots of questions of key leaders, even if you fear the answers!

Organize a plan—Reflect
  • Develop one-, three-, five- and seven-year schedules, building sequential steps from beginning to end. Add a 30 percent buffer. It always takes longer than we expect!

Act on the plan—Respond
  • Once you have your plan, take action! Do not wait until every question is answered and funding is completed. Get started!

Look back—Review
  • Life is lived forward and learned backward. As you move forward with your scheduled plan, review your results each quarter, fine-tuning the methods that work and eliminating those that don’t.

Set new goals—Recommit
• Like climbing a mountain, we have to keep recommitting ourselves to the summit. Unexpected turns and unforeseen challenges always come, but we determine to make it to the top.

Eleazar looked at the problems, then developed a plan. He was going to find the right girl, get an invitation to her home, share God’s promises with her and pop the marriage question. Next, his plan was to ask her parents’ permission to take her back to Isaac.

Think of three things: If you get to where you are going, where will you be? If you accomplish your goals, what will you have? Are the things you are living for worth Jesus dying for?

We Need To Encourage Our Confidence In The Local Church (Genesis 24:5-12)

While we are building a compelling missions program, we need to be encouraged on our path of success. When our professional life outpaces our personal life, we bring stress to ourselves and those around us. Here are at least four means of encouragement:

First, we need to incorporate the people factor. When we spend time with the right people in the right place, we will become the right person. Make a list of your closest friends. This reflects where you will be in five years. If you do not like where your friends are taking you, get some new friends!

Get to know other pastors, especially those who have world-class missions programs that touch the nations. When you spend time in the presence of greatness, you will become dissatisfied with average. You will never change the vision of your church until you have changed the vision for your own life.

Second, we need to involve the promise factor (v. 5ff). Abraham said, “God will . . . send His angel ahead of you.” There are more promises in the Bible than we have problems. Read a Great Commission promise every week.

Third, we need to investigate the profit factor. We need to know the benefits of becoming a Great Commission church. Real motivation comes from proper motives. Once you see what the profit is, you determine the “why” of what you do. God will then show you the “how” to do it. The big question is: Is my whole life built around bringing a bride to Jesus?

Fourth, we need to be inspired through the prayer factor (v. 12). We need to pray that God will turn obstacles into opportunities. If you are not praying about your cause, then you either do not think your cause is God-given or you are overly confident.

We Need To Enforce Our Character In The Local Church (Gen. 24: 21, 31, 56)

There is a difference between “being a character” and having character! Eleazar disciplined his life through his decisions (v.21), desires (v.31) and direction (v. 56). He looked at Rebecca and asked himself if she were the one. He did not make a rash decision. He fasted and prayed for God’s help. At the end of the story, he said, “Hinder me not, as God has granted me success.”

Abraham did not send his servant on the mission without giving him the gifts necessary to complete the mission. God does not call us to bring a bride to Jesus Christ without the needed gifts or skills to accomplish it.
At times, we need to call our congregation to fast and pray simply for the fulfillment of the Great Commission. If we spent half as much time praying for the lost as we do praying for the sick we would win far more souls and more bodies would be healed. *When we are interested in winning souls, God is interested in our success!*

The inspirational story of Sir Edmund Hillary climbing to the top of Mount Everest, the tallest mountain in the world, captivated me when I was twenty-seven years old. In 1952, Hillary was part of a team that was defeated while trying to climb Everest. Journalists said it was humanly impossible to climb to the top of the world’s highest mountain. In response, Hillary plastered a large picture of Everest to a wall. He said, to paraphrase, “Look how tall Mount Everest is. But, Mount Everest stopped growing a long time ago. Edmund Hillary has not yet stopped growing. A year from today, I will climb to the top of Mount Everest and hoist the British flag where no one has ever stood before.”

On May 29, 1953, Hillary climbed Everest and hoisted the British flag on “the roof of the world.” His story inspired me to do all I could to fulfill the Great Commission, and I prayed earnestly for Sir Edmund Hillary to come to Christ. On August 31, 2007, I was privileged to meet Sir Edmund in his home in Auckland, New Zealand, the last person outside of his family to interview him before his death in January, 2008. Before I left, we shared the Gospel and prayed together.

In that special meeting, I asked him, “How can one stay focused in life when there are so many opportunities?” He thought a moment then answered in a slow, aged voice:

“If we only do what others have already done, we will feel what others have already felt. But if we dare to do something that no one has ever done, we will have a satisfaction that no one has ever had. When choosing our life’s project, if there is no fear involved, we will become bored and will not even finish what we began. After we have decided what we are going to do, we must not procrastinate but do it right now!”

As Christians, our “Mount Everest” is the Great Commission. No Christian generation has ever come close to reaching this summit. Yet, this can be the generation that climbs to the top of our highest goal and places the cross of Christ to declare His glorious gospel to all nations. When we do what no previous generation has done, we will have a satisfaction that no other generation has had!

The renowned theologian Carl F. Henry said, “The Gospel is only good news if it gets there in time!” This statement deserves a prominent place in your church to remind your congregation of the urgency to do all we can with the resources we have been given. It is one of the most compelling statements ever written regarding the fulfillment of the Great Commission.

**We Need To Enlist Our Comrades In The Local Church (Gen. 24:49)**

Eleazar knew his mission was not a one-man show. Prosperous people learn to have a healthy dependence upon one another. Are you a cooperative person? Have you learned to delegate?

Every snowflake is unique. One snowflake cannot do much, but when enough snowflakes get together, they can stop traffic. Billions of them can stop an entire city! Think of what we could do if we worked together! At the Billon Soul Network, we have many powerful resources to help
you fulfill the Great Commission (www.Billion.tv). When God calls us to a task that is bigger than ourselves, He brings around us those people who can help accomplish the task together.

Keep before your congregation the sowing, saving and sending goals established for the Church. Consider every six months having a time of reflection and recommitment to the missions program. Many churches set their missions pledges both in January and July, or in fall and spring each year. When someone leads another person to Christ give a soul-winning gift, or allow him or her to testify during the main worship service. Celebrate what heaven celebrates!

Create a “Sending Sunday” when you challenge young and old to answer the call into fulltime ministry. Give your people the opportunity to answer God’s call on their lives. Imagine 10 percent of your local church going into fulltime ministry each year for ten years! Developing a compelling missions program is more than just raising money. It is raising pastors, preachers and planters who will go where the Gospel has never been.

One of the most compelling missions programs in the world is at the World Harvest Centre in Suva, Fiji. Pastor Suliasi Kurulo, founding pastor and Billion Soul Cochair/Oceania & Unreached People in the Billion Soul Network, envisioned from the beginning a global missions-sending church. In the last eleven years, they have sent missionaries who have planted more than 1,200 churches in more than 100 nations. Let us pray that the Lord raises up 10,000 such churches! Could you imagine a world in which just 10,000 churches planted 1,000 churches each in the next ten years! Let us pray that your church becomes one.

In March, 2009, I spoke with Richard DeVos, founder of the Amway Corporation, about the fulfillment of the Great Commission. I asked for his thoughts regarding the current economic challenges. He said in essence, “When we began the Amway Corporation fifty years ago, it was in a most difficult economic climate. We may not like the season we are in, but it is the only season we have. We cannot choose the season but we can choose how we will use the season we have. As Christians, we are called to do all we can, with the resources we have, to finish the Great Commission.”

How do we develop a compelling missions program? We will be successful when we establish our cause, examine our conditions, encourage our confidence, enforce our character and enlist our comrades!