

Getting the Word Out  
March 8, 2015

I have several points to make this morning. So let's get right to them.

### 1. Missions is defined as taking the Good News of Jesus to the world.

This fulfills Jesus' command in Matthew 28.

**Matthew 28:18-20 (NIV)** Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing 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. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

In 1814, Baptists in America came together in order to fulfill that command. They started working together to send out missionaries. They first sent missionaries to China, Africa, and South America. So the heritage of our church is 201 years of Baptist Churches working together in support of missions. Most churches are not large enough to send out even one missionary on their own. But together churches can send many missionaries.

This morning I want to highlight one particular method of supporting missionaries. I believe it is the best one. But it is not the only method. In the book of Acts we see a different method of missions support.

#### **Acts 13:1-4 (NIV)**

In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen... and Saul. While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."

So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.

The two of them, sent on their way by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia and sailed from there to Cyprus.

So Paul and Barnabas head out as the first missionaries, to take the good news to new areas and start churches. They went with the blessings, prayers, and possibly some financial support, from the church in Antioch. It does not say that they gave money for the work, but it seems likely that they did. But it was not necessary. It is likely that Saul had been providing his own income while in Antioch. By trade Saul, or Paul, was not a preacher. By trade he made tents for a living. It is likely that he was doing that in Antioch before this call by the Lord to be a missionary, an evangelist. (Acts 18:3)

Some of the time during the next decade or so of planting new churches Paul provided his own income. At other times he lived off of donations from the various churches he started. In both ways God provided for his needs .

There was one down side to this method of missions support. When Paul was making tents, he was not sharing the good news. He could not do both at the same time.

Today, some missionaries still rely on a secular job as their vocation in order to do the work God has called them to do.

A second way of funding missions is for the missionaries to seek funding first so that when they get to the missions field they do not have to work for a living. I was first introduced to this when I was in college. I had driven from my home in New Carrollton to College Park, to a Christian bookstore. A young woman stopped me out front. She explained that she was a missionary and was trying to raise financial support so she could go back to the missions field and continue the work. She asked me if I would consider donating to her support for the next year as she went overseas to do missions work.

I had never heard of this approach to missions before. But I later found out that many missions organizations operate in this way. The missionaries go to family members, friends, churches, and others to get pledges of money. Once the worker has the required financing, he or she can then go to the mission field and work for as long as their financing provides for their needs.

It used to be that our missionaries had to do some of this, in cooperation with their missions agency. For many years our missionaries and our missionary sending agencies were constantly advertising to the churches for money. Churches were being besieged all the time by different missionaries and organizations. In addition, our Southern Baptist administrators and seminaries also had to seek money from the churches in order to do their job. These appeals for funds had to be repeated regularly to provide enough support to keep the work going.

All of this petitioning of the churches was a huge use of time and effort and cut down on what was being accomplished in actual missions work. Our zeal for missions was being hurt by the method we were using of supporting missions. As the number of churches and missionaries grew, a better method of missions support was needed.

That new method was invented 90 years ago. It was named The Cooperative Program. **[The Cooperative Program method of missions support has served Southern Baptists well since 1925.](#)**

In this method, churches would automatically give a percentage of their receipts to the work of state, national, and international missions efforts. This freed the churches from constantly being asked for donations. It also freed our missionaries from spending time asking for money, allowing them more time to share the good news. Let me briefly explain the beauty of this method of missions support.

Let us say that you put \$100 in the offering plate today. It is not in a special offering envelope. It is just your regular giving, not designated for any specific purpose. We call it Undesignated Giving. **(\$100 of undesignated giving)**

**\$86.50 of that goes to support the work of our church.** That includes the building upkeep and utilities, the pastor's salary, the Bibles and study materials we use, and the other program materials like music, Vacation Bible School, and local benevolence and missions efforts.

Another 3%, of your \$100 (\$3.00) goes to help poor, retired ministers and children, but not in our local area. **(\$3.00 - children and poor, retired ministers)**

**Altogether, these add up to 89.5% of our \$100, or \$89.50.**

The last \$10.50 of your \$100 will be sent for the **Cooperative Program** to the **Baptist Convention of Maryland and Delaware, (Mid-Atlantic Baptist Network)**. Other Southern Baptist churches in Maryland and Delaware are also sending a portion of their undesignated giving to this state convention. How much each gives is up to that church. The recommendation is 10% of undesignated giving. Some give a higher percentage, and some a lower percentage. Last week I heard of one church in our state who has been giving 20% for many years.

Some denominations tell each church how much they have to give to missions. Southern Baptists don't operate that way. Since each church is self-governing and fully independent, each church decides how much they will give.

Just as our church keeps most of what you give, and sends the rest up the line, so our state Baptist conventions do the same. On average, states retain 64 percent of the gifts they receive from the churches and forward the remaining to the Executive Committee of the SBC for distribution.

**Our state convention keeps 58.5 % (\$6.14) and forwards 41.5% (4.36) on to the Southern Baptist Convention.** A more specific breakdown is as follows:

**\$ 4.36 to SBC, divided as follows:**

**\$ 2.20 International Mission Board 50.41%**

**\$ 1.00 North American Mission Board 22.79%**

**\$ .96 Seminaries 22.16%**

**\$ .07 Christian Ethics and Religious Liberty Ministry 1.65%**

**\$ .13 Annual Convention and Facilitating Ministries 2.99%**

Last year our church, through the Cooperative Program and three special offerings gave \$24,052.00. That is less than half of what it costs to support one missionary for one year. So our church, by itself, cannot support even one missionary's total financial needs. But by pooling our missions money with that of more than 46,000 other Southern Baptist Churches we can support, in full or in part, nearly 10,000 missionary personnel worldwide.

Most Christians are not called out by God to be missionaries. Nor are most Christians called out by God to be pastors, chaplains, or other kinds of ministerial workers. But the church is called by God to support the work that these people are doing.

**2. It is the church's responsibility to support vocational Christian workers.**

**1 Corinthians 9:13-14 (NIV)** Don't you know that those who work in the temple get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in what is offered on the altar? In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel (good news) should receive their living from the gospel (good news).

The Southern Baptist Convention exists to do together what we cannot do alone. That is why the Cooperative Program and the special missions offerings are integral parts of who we are as Emmanuel Baptist Church.

And here is the third point.

**3. Our maturity in Christ is dependent on partnering with our missionaries.**

**Ephesians 4:11-13 (NIV)** It was he (Jesus) who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

God planted the church movement using men and women that He had equipped for special service. Today, we do not have apostles or prophets. But the work of the evangelist is still going strong. The evangelist went from town to town sharing the good news and planting churches. This was the work of Paul and Barnabas. This was the work of Timothy and Titus, of Luke and Silas.

Today we still have evangelists. We call them missionaries. They are doing vocational Christian work outside of the local church. They are a part of us. We are a part of them. Supporting their ministry is part of what God will use to make us mature followers of Jesus Christ.

We are part of what they are doing out there. Praying for them and financially supporting them connects us with their work and matures us in Christ. Without that missions focus, we will not grow to Christian maturity. We must maintain this connection to our missionaries. We do this through our special offerings, our weekly bulletin prayer requests. Some of you get emailed prayer requests from our mission agencies. Missions is a part of God's will for us.

Today our missions challenge is greater than ever. There are more lost people on the planet than ever before. We need more missionaries to reach them with the good news. At the same time, missions giving has not kept pace. And we have more personnel ready to serve as missionaries than we have money to support them. So our methods of funding missionaries will change in the years ahead. While new methods are needed to supplement what we are doing, the Cooperative Program and our special missions offerings will still be our main method of missions support.

One of those special missions offerings is the **Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions**. The current emphasis at the North American Mission Board is to start as many churches as we can in areas of our country with the fewest churches.

These areas include northwest and northeast regions of the United States, and the 32 largest cities across North America.

Baltimore is one of those cities. The ***Send Baltimore*** goal is to plant a Southern Baptist Church in each Baltimore neighborhood over the next decade. Right now there are a dozen or so families ready to come to the Baltimore area and start a church, but not enough funding for them to do so. Baltimore region churches are being encouraged to help with this effort. I encourage you to pray for these efforts for our area, but also to give to the work being done across North America. Give prayerfully. Give thoughtfully. Give sacrificially. This is the same work that our church was begun from. Others saw the need for more churches in Anne Arundel County and planted Emmanuel Baptist Church 36 years ago. We owe our existence as a church, in part, to the fact that others gave to missions. We continue this legacy as we participate in the Cooperative Program and special missions offerings.

So **Pray, consider God's command, and give to the missions efforts of Southern Baptists through your local church.**

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SBC Facts:

- The Southern Baptist Convention has 46,000-plus churches.
- About 20 percent of all SBC churches have 100 - 250 people attending worship on any given Sunday.
- Nearly 70 percent of all SBC churches have 100 or fewer in attendance each week.