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MINISTRIES OF THE CHURCH:

Outreach

Mobilizing church members:

Mobilizing church members to speak to unbelievers about Christ can be a difficult task, yet it is the task of the evangelist and pastor-teacher (cf. Eph. 4:11-13; see the article titled, "Pastor's Equipping Ministry"). They have been called by God to equip the saints for service. It is not sufficient to simply tell the members of the church that it is their responsibility to evangelize, but it is the evangelist's and/or pastor-teacher's job to train them to do this.

Training church members:



Often people do not speak to others about Christ due to fear. Therefore it is the job of the evangelist and pastor-teacher to help them overcome their fears. One way this can be accomplished is through training (discipling) believers in methods of evangelism. Teaching them methods which can be easily utilized to speak to people about Christ will give confidence. This can be accomplished by holding evangelism classes where church members are introduced to a method or methods of evangelism. This should include such things as a discussion of the basic elements of the gospel, necessary Bible verses one needs to know to accurately and fully share the gospel, how to answer people's questions about the gospel, and apologetical arguments related to the gospel. (See the article in the appendix titled, "Mobilizing Members for Evangelism") Teaching them how to write their testimony about how they came to Christ in a concise manner that they can share with others is also very useful. These things, along with role-playing in the training sessions, will be very beneficial. As a part of the training, the trainer should invite people from the class to go along with him when he goes to speak to people about Christ. This will help them see how to apply the things they are being taught. Through such opportunities, people's fears of sharing their faith in Christ can be removed and replaced with confidence. Then, encouraging the class members to pray and look for opportunities, to use what they are learning will not only help them apply their new knowledge, but will also create excitement as they report back about opportunities they had to share Christ. Such testimonies will then motivate other people to think and pray about

whom they will attempt to share the gospel with and who will trust in Christ as their Savior.

Though evangelism can be the focus of a church's worship services, this should not be the norm. When the church gathers, the believers need to be taught, encouraged, and refreshed. Then after the service when they scatter, as they are going along their way, they should be involved in making disciples (Mat. 28:19). If the church service is continually used for the purpose of evangelism, then the members will continue to hear the same basic message over and over week after week. This will cause them to be stunted in their spiritual growth as they are not hearing the whole of the Word of God. It may also cause them to depend upon the church and its pastor to do the work of evangelism by means of the church services; in their minds removing their personal responsibility. All they have to do is invite people to church so they can hear the message there, which may be the extent of their evangelistic efforts. This should not be the case. The Apostle Paul told his readers in 2 Corinthians 5:20: "Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God." This is the task of every believer. Each believer is an ambassador for Christ. As an ambassador, it is his duty to take and deliver the message of the One who sent him, that being Christ. What is the message he is to take? It is, "that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them" for "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (vss. 19, 21). As believers scatter, they are to take this message to the world (Mat. 28:18; Acts 1:8); to those people who will never visit a church. This is God's plan; God's desire.

Reaching the father of the home for Christ:

When evangelizing, it seems advantageous when possible to try to reach the father of the household first in contrast to his wife and/or children. In the Scriptures when a man believed, it was normal for his entire family to convert by following his example (cf. Acts 10:44-48; 16:31-34). This was not always the case when the mother of the home believed. Generally the husband will not follow her lead, and the children may not as well, depending on their ages. Having said this, it is important to share the gospel with whomever will listen. It is the believer's job to sow seed with the hope that it will produce fruit (Mat. 13:1-9, 18-23). Many times women are much more open to the things of God, and the sower needs to sow the Word where the soil is prepared. Yet the sower should not forget the husband, for it is far better if both of them come to Christ together.

Reaching children for Christ:

Reaching out to children, even young children, with the gospel is important but often neglected in some churches. One reason for this is that some think children are not able to believe and accept Christ until they are older, maybe 13 or 14 years old. It is then, these people believe, that a person can make a rational decision to accept Christ and be baptized. Such thinking is incorrect and unbiblical. Please notice Jesus' response to the following incident which involved children: "And they were bringing children to Him so that He might touch them; but the disciples rebuked them. But when Jesus saw this, He was indignant and said to them, 'Permit the

children to come to Me; do not hinder them; for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it *at all*.' And He took them in His arms and *began* blessing them, laying His hands on them" (Mark 10:13-16). It is interesting that the very thing Jesus said a person needs to possess to enter the kingdom of God is the very thing children possess -- faith and trust. Children are very trusting and believe adults readily. It is as they grow and experience life that they come to understand that they cannot and should not trust and believe every person and everything they hear. They become more desensitized and indoctrinated by the world with age. Actually, it is when children are young that they are the most receptive to the gospel as they are yet untouched by the world; that is if they have not experienced something terrible to the contrary. It is then that they are willing to listen to, understand and accept the simple message of the cross. Children as young as three years old have accepted Christ as their Savior. This is possible because the message of the cross is simple and uncomplicated to them. All a child needs to understand is that he is a sinner, that Christ died for his sins and rose again, that salvation is through faith, and that hell awaits the one who does not ask Jesus to be his Savior. Though this message is simple, it becomes much more difficult to accept as a person matures and begins to be influenced more and more by the world. It is then that one cannot see as clearly the simple truth of the gospel as he could have when he was younger. "Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it *at all*," Jesus said. "And He took them in His arms and *began* blessing them, laying His hands on them" (Mark 10:15-16). The church should do the same.

Attitude toward unbelievers in the church:

What should be the attitude of believers toward unbelievers who attend their church services? Should they desire unbelievers to attend, or should they not want them to come because of the negative influence they might have upon the church and lives of the believers? Some might argue that the church should open its arms to unbelievers for the purpose of reaching them for Christ. Others might disagree, fearing that unbelievers could bring worldly practices and attitudes into the church, disrupting things and leading believers astray. They might especially fear today's youth culture with their godless music, colored hair, body piercings, sensual clothing, and drug and alcohol use. What then is a biblical view regarding this issue?

Those who are concerned about the negative effect that unbelievers can have in a church have legitimate concerns. No pastor or elder wants to see members of his flock led astray. Jesus Himself addressed this issue in a more general context in Luke 17:1, when He plainly stated a hard truth: "He said to His disciples, 'It is inevitable that stumbling blocks come, but woe to him through whom they come!'" When unbelievers come into the church, there may at times be casualties. The pastor needs to keep in mind that the members of his church will interact with unbelievers in the world on a regular basis. It is when they are alone that they will probably have a greater chance of being negatively influenced rather than when they are in the church building surrounded by their brothers and sisters in Christ. Knowing that this can happen, some church leaders may even go so far as to warn their flock not to associate with unbelievers outside of the church building so they do not become tainted by the world. Though this warning is an attempt to keep the people he is responsible for safe (cf. Acts 20:28; Heb. 13:17), this is an unbiblical viewpoint. It is true that believers are not to be tainted by the world (Jam. 4:4), but it is not true that

they should not interact with the people of the world. Paul made this clear in 1 Corinthians 5 when he stated: “I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people; I *did* not at all *mean* with the immoral people of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters, for then you would have to go out of the world. But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he is an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler — not even to eat with such a one. For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within *the church*?” (vss. 9-12). So on the contrary, believers are to associate with unbelievers. But what if an unbeliever were to lead a believer astray? Jesus spoke about this as well in the verses following Luke 17:1, which was referenced previously. Jesus said: “It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea, than that he would cause one of these little ones to stumble. Be on your guard! If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times a day, and returns to you seven times, saying, ‘I repent,’ forgive him” (vss. 2-4). In this passage, Jesus teaches that the unbeliever will be judged by God for his wickedness. Jesus also states that the believer needs to be on guard for his brother, to rebuke him when he sins; and if he repents, to forgive him. It is true that stumbling blocks will come, even within the church. The church members therefore need to be watchful, guarding one another to help prevent them from being led astray and falling into sin.

There are many other lessons which can be gleaned from the Scriptures which indicate that we are to have involvement with the people of the world, not pushing them away because they are not Christians. One of them comes from the life of Jesus Himself. Jesus, during His time on earth, was known as the friend of tax gatherers and sinners (Mat. 9:10-11; 11:19; Luke 15:1); and because of this He was called a glutton (Gk.: phagos, a person who habitually eats) and a drunkard (Gk.: oinopotes, a person who habitually drinks) (Mat. 11:19; Luke 7:34). It was because of Jesus' concern for the lost, the poor, the lame, the blind, etc. (Luke 4:18; 7:22), that He spent so much time with them. Who were those who questioned Jesus' association with these people? It was the scribes and Pharisees (Mat. 9:10-11; Luke 15:1-2), the religious leaders of that time. They were the ones who condemned Jesus for reaching out to the lost. How did Jesus respond to their criticism? The gospel of Mark records the following: “As He passed by, He saw Levi the *son* of Alphaeus sitting in the tax booth, and He said to him, ‘Follow Me!’ And he got up and followed Him. And it happened that He was reclining *at the table* in his house, and many tax collectors and sinners were dining with Jesus and His disciples; for there were many of them, and they were following Him. When the scribes of the Pharisees saw that He was eating with the sinners and tax collectors, they said to His disciples, ‘Why is He eating and drinking with tax collectors and sinners?’ And hearing *this*, Jesus said to them, ‘*It is* not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick; I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners” (Mark 2:14-17). Because this was the concern of Jesus, this should also be the concern of the church and its members as well. What if as a result of such ministry the people of the church are called gluttons and drunkards like Jesus? Then so be it! For Jesus told His disciples: “If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before *it hated* you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A slave is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also. But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, be-

cause they do not know the One who sent Me” (John 15:18-21). Also keep in mind the words of the Apostle Paul to the Philippians: “For to you it has been granted for Christ’s sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, experiencing the same conflict which you saw in me, and now hear *to be in me*” (Php. 1:29-30). Sadly to say, this persecution may very well come from the “scribes and Pharisees” within your own church, affiliated churches and/or church organizations (cf. Acts 20:29-30).

Some other lessons or principles which can be learned from the New Testament in regards to this issue are: 1) Jesus gave Himself for the lost (Titus 2:14; 1 Pet. 2:24); 2) it is the responsibility of believers to preach the gospel to the lost (Rom. 10:12-15; 1 Cor. 1:17; 2 Cor. 5:18-21); 3) believers are to love the lost, including their enemies (Mat. 5:43-48); 4) believers are to do good to all men, even unbelievers (Gal. 6:10); 5) believers are to make the most of their time here on earth (Eph. 5:15-16); and 6) believers are to make the most of every opportunity to reach the lost for Christ (Col. 4:5). Though Christians are not to act like unbelievers (Eph. 4:17-19), believers should expect unbelievers to act like unbelievers. It is not the church's job to judge them (1 Cor. 5:9-12). It is however the responsibility of the church and each believer to take the Word of God to them (2 Cor. 5:20-21) for it changes hearts (Heb. 4:12). As believers are obedient in doing this, the Holy Spirit will convict the hearts of unbelievers of their sin, Christ’s righteousness and coming judgment. That is His responsibility (John 16:8-11).

Should the church open its doors to the lost? Absolutely! They should be invited into the church so that the church can be salt and light to them (Mat. 5:13-16), reaching them with the gospel of Christ. This however does not mean that unbelievers are to be asked to or should be involved in the ministries of the church in any way, or even to give financially to the church; for the church is not to be bound together with unbelievers in the work of God (2 Cor. 6:14-15). By inviting them to the services and events of the church to hear the Word of God preached (cf. 1 Cor. 14:24-25) and to see Christ lived out in the lives of believers (cf. John 13:35; Gal. 5:22-23), this offers a great opportunity to present Christ to them.

See the article in the appendix titled, "Mobilizing Members for Evangelism," which gives further information about the elements of evangelism.

Church Planting:

When believers of a church reach out to the lost world around them, this results in a growing church. As the church grows and becomes stronger and larger, church leaders need to analyze their church, considering when and where they will begin planting a new church.

In some countries the megachurch movement (churches with thousands of members) is flourishing. The question is: "Are megachurches a good model for the local church?" Should it be the goal of a church to become as large as it can? Can such a multitude of people and their resources be used more effectively in a number of smaller churches spread throughout a region to reach that area for Christ? This of course is debated; but in the author's opinion, smaller churches spread out over a region are far better, being more personal, more accessible, and more practical.

This then would emphasize the need for church planting to be a part of the local church's ministry. This is the New Testament model.

When Jesus gave His disciples what is traditionally called "The Great Commission," He told them: "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Mat. 28:18-20). As one reads the book of Acts, he sees this commission carried out. As people went, they made disciples; and as a result, new churches were started (cf. Acts 8:4-8,14-16,25,26-40; 9:32-35; 11:19-26; 13-19). Therefore it should be the natural tendency of a church to reproduce itself and start new churches. This should be a stated goal of a church from its conception. As the church grows, this objective as well as the other objectives of the church, need to be affirmed on a regular basis before its members in order to keep the church united in its purpose (cf. Php. 2:1-2). It would then be the responsibility of the elders to consider when and where it would be feasible and practical to start another church.

One issue which church leaders need to consider in such an endeavor is its resources. Is there a sufficient number of people and money available to start a new church without significantly impairing the current ministry of the mother church? This is important to contemplate because a church plant will take away a considerable amount of resources from the mother church. This will happen when both money and equipped, gifted people from the mother church are allocated to the church plant. When this takes place, the mother church must have people ready and qualified to fulfill the responsibilities of those who leave to help the new church. Therefore, the mother church needs to be willing and able to give up some of its resources so that the church plant can be equipped to succeed.

Though the above-mentioned issues need to be taken into account, the mother church needs to count the cost, plan, prepare, and then step out by faith. On the one hand, there may never be an opportune time to start a new church, for there will always be obstacles. On the other hand, when God is involved and the church has made the necessary preparations, great things can happen. The church which does not have a biblical vision will never even consider such a venture. But, the church that understands the Great Commission will be praying for, thinking about, and looking for an opportune time to start a new church. Such vision is necessary and needs to originate from the church leaders.

Cross-cultural missions:

Another aspect of church outreach is the sending out of cross-cultural missionaries and supporting world missions. Jesus told His disciples just before ascending into heaven, "but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). Evangelization and church planting done by believers will fulfill the first part of this commission, being witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea. But being the witness of Christ in Samaria and to the remotest part of the earth falls under the category of cross-cultural world missions. Samaria, though located just north of Judea, was then considered another country and culture. Therefore from this verse, the responsibility of the local church to be involved in this endeavor is evident.

Sending out cross-cultural missionaries:

Acts 13 records the commissioning and sending out of the first cross-cultural missionaries by a church. When the church was scattered earlier due to persecution as Acts 8 records, the gospel also spread to other cultures (Acts 8:1-5). Many of these believers therefore went about from place to place as missionaries in various cross-cultural settings. What makes Acts 13 different is the fact that this is the first record where the Holy Spirit specifically tells an established church to set aside someone for the explicit work of cross-cultural missions. This was new at this point in the church's history. Luke records: "Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was *there*, prophets and teachers: Barnabas, and Simeon who was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.' Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away" (vss. 1-3).

The Holy Spirit told the church leaders, while they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, to set aside for Himself Barnabas and Saul for this work. The church then commissioned them with fasting and the laying on of hands and prayer. They then sent them out on the first of Paul's three recorded missionary journeys. From there Paul and Barnabas went from place to place preaching the gospel (cf. Acts 13:4-5,14ff; 14:1). As a result of their efforts, churches were started in different cultures, and elders were appointed in each church to lead them (Acts 14:21-23). After their journey ended, they returned to their church in Antioch and reported all that God had done (Acts 14:26-28). This is the missionary's task and life in brief (see the article in the appendix titled, "The Missionary Process," for more information).

It is interesting to see how the first missionaries were chosen. The Holy Spirit selected them and told the church leaders at Antioch to set them apart. It is also interesting to note that the men whom the Holy Spirit had set apart were the best this church had to offer -- men who were mature, trained and experienced in the ministry and in the things of God (Acts 4:36-37; 9:18-30; 11:19-30; 12:24-25; Php. 3:1-6). They were not new believers nor inexperienced. They were tested and had been found worthy. They were the kind of men who most churches would not want to lose. Yet these were the very men whom God had prepared for this work. Therefore a church should not selfishly hold on to such people whom God has called, but should with gladness send them forth into the harvest fields (cf. Luke 10:2).

In contrast to Paul and Barnabas is John Mark, whom Paul and Barnabas took with them on a trip to Jerusalem (Acts 12:25), and then later on their first missionary journey (Acts 13:5). It was on the second trip that John Mark deserted them (Acts 13:13). Though the underlying reason for his desertion is not recorded, the result was that he did not go on to fulfill the work he had committed to do (Acts 15:38). His turning back was enough to later cause serious problems within his missionary team, for on a future journey Paul did not even want to take him along because of his previous performance (Acts 15:37-38). Barnabas, John Mark's cousin (Col. 4:10), ended up taking John Mark with him when Paul and Barnabas parted ways over this (Acts 15:39-40).

It can be noted that John Mark had been faithful on his first trip to Jerusalem, and that men such as Paul and Barnabas chose him to work alongside of them on their second trip. Yet even after all that, John Mark was still unfaithful to his task. He fell short of the goal. This can happen to anyone on the mission field. There will be disappointments. Missionaries may let their churches and missionary teams down at times. This is the reason why it is important that people who desire to go to the mission field, but lack ministry experience and a high level of maturity, be placed on teams where they can gain what they lack from more experienced missionaries, just as John Mark and Timothy did (Acts 16:1-3; 17:14-15; 18:5; 19:22; 20:4; 1 Cor. 4:17; 16:10; 1 Tim. 1:2; 4:12). It is important to note that later on John Mark did prove himself worthy (Mark; Col. 4:10; 2 Tim. 4:11; 1 Pet. 5:13), but this was probably due to the result of gaining some needed maturity and experience (cf. Acts 15:39). Therefore, churches need to do their best to ensure that those whom they send are prepared because the mission field is a difficult place to serve the Lord.

When should a church send out cross-cultural missionaries?

When should a church become involved in missions? Should it wait until it has reached its Jerusalem and Judea first? Or should it work at reaching its Jerusalem and Judea while simultaneously trying to reach Samaria and the remotest parts of the earth? Acts 1:8 says, "but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, **and** in all Judea **and** Samaria, **and** even to the remotest part of the earth" (emphasis added). The word "and" indicates that the process of being witnesses to these four areas is not sequential; after having completely reached Jerusalem one then moves on to reach Judea, and so on. The idea presented here is the same as that given in Matthew 28:19. There Jesus said: "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations;" the emphasis being on the making of the disciples (the imperative), not on the going. Therefore, as one goes -- or in other words, wherever one finds himself -- he is to make disciples. If a person is in his Jerusalem, there he is to make disciples. If he is in his Judea, then there he is to make disciples, and so on. A church needs to have the same view. Wherever its members are located at any point in time or wherever they are sent by the church, such as to another culture, there they are to make disciples. One other thought to consider is that when Paul and Barnabas were sent out by the church in Antioch, one can be assured that the church in Antioch had not yet reached everyone in their Jerusalem and Judea. This is an ongoing, endless process. This is why a church needs to see the big picture and simultaneously have workers laboring in their Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the remotest part of the world.

Because of the church's commission to reach surrounding nations and the remotest part of the earth, it is the responsibility of the local church to look for ways in which it can be involved in this endeavor. This can be done by sending out cross-cultural missionaries from their church, by financially supporting cross-cultural missionaries from other churches, and/or by financially supporting cross-cultural mission organizations. This is the church's commission -- to give of its people and financial resources for the sake of the gospel (cf. Php. 4:15-16). This is an endeavor which the church is privileged to be a part of. Churches need to make sure that they are not only looking inward for the purpose of fulfilling their own needs, but are also looking outward to meet the needs of others. Those churches which have an under-

standing of their responsibility and work at carrying out this commission the best they can, will be blessed by having all of their needs met in Christ (cf. Php. 4:14-19). Therefore, such churches which are involved in proclaiming the gospel are blessed to be fellow partakers of the gospel (cf. 1 Cor. 9:23).

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:



Mobilizing church membership:

1. Does your church offer its members periodic training in how to reach the lost for Christ? If so, when was the last time that your church offered this training? When is the next time that it will be offered?

2. As a result of your church's evangelism training, do your members have a method to share the gospel which is:
 - Easy to use
 - Comprehensive
 - Fruitful

3. What is the main goal of your church services and sermons? Are they for evangelism or for the edification of the believers present? If they are meant for evangelism, will this be changed? Why or why not?

4. Does your church reach out to the man of the house and not just to the wife and older children? Do you see how reaching the husband can be advantageous to the family? Does your church need to make any changes in regard to this?

5. Does your church attempt to reach young children with the gospel (ages 3 and up)? If not, will you change this? What can your church do to reach them with the gospel?

6. Does your church warmly welcome unbelievers into its services? Does it openly welcome unbelieving teenagers who may have colored hair, body piercings, who smoke, drink, etc.? If not, please defend your view with Scripture, using Mark 2:15-17 as one of your texts.

7. What are some ways in which your church reaches out to the lost on a regular basis (e.g., events, ministries, children's groups, teen groups, etc.)?
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8. Is there anyone in your church who is exceptionally gifted at sharing his faith and reaching the lost for Christ? Please write his name below. How are you using this person to train others? If you are not using him in this manner, then how can you begin to do this?

Church planting:

1. Do your church leaders have the goal of starting another church at some time in the future? If so, do your members share this conviction? If not, what can your leaders do to instill that same conviction in them?

2. If your church has the goal of starting a new church one day:
 - Has it already created a plan on how to do this?
 - How will it determine when it is the right time to begin this process?

 - How will it determine where to start the new church?

- How will it finance this venture?

- Who will lead this church plant and which families from the church will help him?

Church plant leader: _____

Other families/individuals:

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3. Is there another church or two which your church could work together with to start a new church? List the churches below that you could contact to discuss such a project:

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Missions:

1. Is your church involved in cross-cultural missions?

- Has your church sent a missionary to another country?
- Does your church support a missionary in another country?
- Are there any other ways in which your church is involved in cross-cultural missions?

2. Do your church leaders see the need to be involved in reaching the lost in other countries? If not, please explain why they do not see this need.

SPECIFIC QUESTIONS FOR CROSS-CULTURAL MISSIONARIES AND CHURCH PLANTERS:

1. When will you begin training new believers in evangelism? Remember, they are the most evangelistic shortly after salvation.

2. At what point in the development of your church should you begin presenting the idea of planting another church and of sending out missionaries?

3. Follow-up and discipleship of new believers are two very important aspects after salvation, yet at times they are neglected. Why are they so important to the new believer and your church?

4. What things can your church do to promote evangelism, church planting and missions?
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