

The Role of the Missionary in the Local Church

Even though we have many ideas of what missions is, our thoughts should be based on what the Bible says. The following article is adapted from a sermon preached by friend and missionary, Randy Stirewalt, from Acts 14:21-26.

Paul preached the Gospel (v. 21). Wherever he went, lives were changed. This passage teaches that Paul centered his Gospel ministry on the local church (v. 23). We must remember that before being missionaries, we are preachers. More specifically, we are preachers of the Gospel, and the local church should be at the center of our ministries.

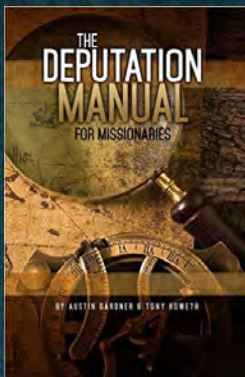
Paul also taught many (v. 21-22). Paul and those with him set up a teaching ministry immediately. Paul and Barnabas worked to disciple the believers, teaching them so they would know how to grow in the grace of Christ. We may win people to the Lord but we must also disciple them and teach them to continue the pattern as they win and disciple others.

Paul not only taught the believers, but **he also confirmed and encouraged them** (v. 22). He exhorted them to continue in the faith. Paul didn't stay to be the pastor, and no missionary should, either. Just as Paul encouraged the pastors and leaders to do the work, we must teach the pastors and leaders in our ministries. Then we must allow them to teach the people they win and train them to be leaders as well. We, like Paul should develop and maintain a ministry of encouragement. We should give the majority of our time to encourage and exhort the pastors, talk with them, and pray for them.

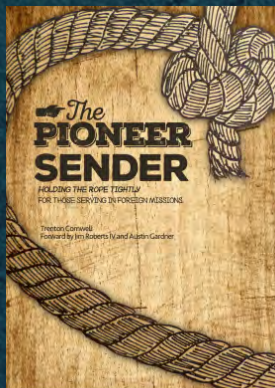
Paul worked to establish local leadership within the local church (v. 23). Paul was not a missionary pastor. In reality, he never pastored at all. He preached and disciplined but he did not pastor. He ordained elders, which means the leadership was established by vote in the local church.



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Missionaries should preach, disciple, train leadership, and then allow the church to vote on their pastor and ordain local leadership. People from that country should be the pastors and leaders of that country's churches.

Once the local leadership was established, **Paul took his hands off** (v.23). Paul gave the local believers to the Lord and commended them to Him. The hardest thing for a missionary to do is to take his hands off of things. Missionaries are tempted to think the people cannot do the ministry, that they are not ready, or that they don't have the ability, but the people can and must do the ministry.

A missionary need not, and should not, pastor a church. When Paul saw problems in the churches, he mentioned it but left it to the local authority of that church.

Missionary Spotlight

Every Saturday in South Africa thousands of Xhosa people line up in the cemeteries. They are bussed in from surrounding townships and walk in droves to a large tent where they worship the family member they are about to bury. Funerals cycle like this week-in and week-out and now define what Saturday IS in South Africa.

At the conclusion of the funeral ceremony, the oldest male of the Xhosa family will then purchase a bull or a goat. Then, for the next three days, the family will sacrifice the animal and worship the ancestor with food and a home-brewed beer. They will eat, drink, and be merry; all the while looking for the day where they too will be worshipped as their ancestors are.

This IS their life! This IS their HOPE for ETERNITY!

Will you ask God to help you do YOUR part in reaching South Africa? Will you hold tightly to the rope as an anchor for those carrying the Gospel to South Africa? Will you commit to pray for the Underwood family as we raise our support and earnestly strive to reach the Xhosa people before it is ETERNALLY TOO LATE!

– Stephen Underwood, South Africa

