

## **MISSIONARIES**

By  
Dr. O. Wilburn Swaim, Th.D.

[docswaim@hotmail.com](mailto:docswaim@hotmail.com)  
[www.exhortationplace.com](http://www.exhortationplace.com)

Declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them (Acts 15:12b).

As I lack any artistic talent, no one would ever ask me to draw a picture for public display. Likewise, to serve the Lord, one needs a spiritual talent, called a "Gift." It is simply the Holy Spirit's enabling of a believer for some ministry. Missionary is one such gift. (You'll not find a gift entitled "Missionary," listed in scripture. It is the name we have chosen in this modern era. The gift, however, does exist.)

What then is the work of a missionary? In Acts 13:2, the Holy Spirit says, "...For the work whereunto I have called them." We learn the identity of that work, in 14:21-28.

First, it is Evangelism, soul winning...getting folks saved (v. 21). Missionaries are neither sent forth to teach agriculture, or to reform the native society. They are sent to call sinners to Christ for salvation. Evangelists do the same, but they are not missionaries. It is the sole work of an Evangelist; but, only a part of the missionary's total ministry. It is the first ministry of a Missionary.

Secondly, in verse 22, they are to provide the tools for the spiritual growth and strengthening of the converts. It is the "Teaching" of Mt. 28:20a. Whether done through Sunday school, Bible school, or any other principled ministry, it must be a major portion of the overall work. We are not instructed specifically how to do it. The command is specific, but the method is flexible. Neither choirs, Sunday schools, Thursday night visitation, nor the time, or number of times, we are to meet on Sunday--not even Sunday morning services--are specifically spelled out. We have much freedom in organization to do what works. But within that freedom, our ministries must be principled by the Word of God.

Thirdly, is church planting. Verse 23 records how they organized the converts into a local church, as the ordaining of elders (pastors) would be the final step. Missions is evangelism leading to the establishing of a local church. Nothing else is true Biblical Missions! Rescue Missions, Bible camps, radio broadcasts, etc., are good ministries, and worthy of support. But they are not, by definition, missions. The churches should be the ones who conduct, and pay for, such ministries. The local church is God's only program for our day. All Christian service is Biblically done, when under the authority of, and for the building up of, a local church.

Lastly, the Apostles reported back to the sending church (vs. 26-28), and took some time to recuperate, and prepare for the next ministry excursion.

This is the true exercise of the spiritual gift of Missionary.

For your future consideration: Ephesians 4:11 lists the gifts (the gifted people) God gives to the local church.

Which gift is that which is exercised by the missionary?

Which one(s) of them may be received by a woman?

Which gift (gifted person), counted so necessary in our churches, is missing from the list?

Missions done fully God's way will have God's full blessings!