

Module 5

How to Implement Missions into Your Ministry

The problem with missions is that most of our culture is exposed to it once or twice a year at best. The annual church missions conference held on Wednesday night is our only dosage! If we're lucky, we might get a Sunday night update from the youth about their trip to New Mexico that summer. I don't want to be overly cynical, but I don't think I'm too far off from the truth of the situation. And the result is inevitable – a church full of people who are uneducated and therefore uninterested. The saddest thing a mobilizer hears is, “why haven't I ever heard this before?”. Even more sad is the fact that it is one of the most often heard phrases for a mobilizer. Missions has become a super-spiritual aspiration for the Christian elite and is therefore far removed from normal Christian living.

So what is the goal of mobilization? Most of us are familiar with the ultimate goal: reaching every tongue, tribe, and nation. But how do we get there from here? As mobilizers, what is it that we want students to do? Cross an ocean? Reach out to internationals? Pray for the world? These are all great things, however, we do not want to mobilize students to a single activity. If we do, they go back to life as usual once the activity is completed. Instead, we should mobilize them to a change of perspective. What they previously thought of as super-spiritual, elite and once-a-year we want them daily to take personal responsibility for, so that no matter where they are or what they are doing they are World Christians. When the missions conference is over, they are still actively pursuing a World Christian lifestyle. This transition occurs over a period of time, and below is an outline of that process. The crucial thing to remember when mobilizing is that as applicable and relevant as you make your heart for the world is to the same degree that they will apply their heart for the world. As normal as you make it is as normal as they will think it is. The process of making World Christianity “normal” goes something like this:

Motivation. Millions of Christian students pass casually through four of the most important years of their life. Many are involved in college ministries and yet they lack vision for the nations. Everything in our culture says, “Look out for number one!” The only stimulants for the average person are financial gain, success or fear of failure. Very few students have been introduced to the fact that three billion souls are without Christ. Even fewer students realize that their lives can be used to impact the eternal destiny of these people. Imagine if students did know that! What a major alteration in motivation! So how does it happen? Motivation is often the student's initial exposure to missions and there are number of ways that can take place. It can be through a speaker at a campus meeting or conference, through a discipler or friends, a video or book. Whatever it takes, the student needs to be exposed to God's heart for the world because motivation is always the first step of mobilization.

Information. The second step is information. Without it, motivation becomes just another good talk from another great speaker. If all we give the students is motivation, we run the risk of creating "zeal without knowledge"(Prov. 19:2). In our previous scenario the annual missions conference and the trip New Mexico were the motivation. But they were not followed up with information. I myself am a product of a good speaker that left me with no tools. For a short time I was passionate about what I'd learned, but quickly, my enthusiasm waned. If only he had given me a small amount of follow up, I would have been saved from years of struggle! This same problem is not exclusive to me; it is widespread. Unless we follow students up with information, they will not be equipped to grow on their own. Your goal in the information stage is to bring the student to a place where they are able to develop and cultivate their own World Christian vision. There is a vast amount of information available, but what students will need to know is how to access resources like mission agencies, prayer resources, Bible studies, magazines and books. They will need to know terms like "welcomer," "goer" or "mobilizer," etc. Teach them about world religions and about historical mission movements. Let the student see you utilizing these tools on a consistent basis. This will provide for them a sturdy foundation on which their motivation can grow and equip them with the confidence to move out on their own.

Attention. Even after information is given, we still may see very few World Christians raised up. There are plenty of case studies where students have motivation and information and still do nothing. Why is this? Everything around them is pulling for their passion, time and interest. They desperately need personal attention. Even though I know that Jesus Christ is Lord and have submitted myself to Him; I know how to study the Bible, pray and evangelize, that doesn't negate my need for regular accountability. I have all the tools to grow as a Christian, but my tendency, if left alone, is to become lethargic about my Christian walk. It is the same for anyone seeking to live a World Christian lifestyle. Your goal in giving attention is to guide and prompt the student into continued growth. This happens through steady contact and consistent challenge. Keep world vision in front of the student using some of the suggestions on the list below. This attention will provide support for their growing motivation.

Motivation, information, and attention are critical for anyone desiring to implement missions into their ministry. If you will be committed to the process of raising up World Christians you will see students capable of continuing what you have started.

Here is a list of creative ideas to make world vision an integral part of your large or small group ministry. If you were to do one of the following you would have motivated, if you were to choose several others and do them for a few weeks you would have informed, but when these are consistently put into practice you are giving the needed attention for healthy World Christians to grow.

Large Group Meetings

1. Start your weekly meeting with a country update.

2. Read a missions book or biography and do an overview at the large group meeting. Maybe even have copies for people to buy if interested.
3. Show a 3-5 minute missions video in your large group meeting to create excitement.
4. Have missionaries that are home on furlough give a testimony to the group.
5. Have students who have been on short-term trips give their testimony of how it changed their lives.
6. Bring in missions focused speakers to challenge the students to get personally involved.
7. Have an international night where a student of another religion shares for 5-8 minutes about their beliefs.
8. Have a place at the meeting for students to give loose change that can be donated to a designated mission or missionary.
9. Give regular updates of what God is doing around the world as you read the paper and watch the news and brainstorm how this will affect the gospel in that region.
10. Keep a world map in a very visible spot in the meeting room.
11. Start your large group meeting with prayer for another country.
12. Devote an entire meeting to prayer for the world. Divide the meeting up into small groups and give each one a different country or people group to pray for.
13. Host a weekly prayer time at 10:40 for anyone interested in praying for the world.
14. Host an international dinner at someone's house and invite internationals from a specific country to cook their culture's food.

Small Group Bible Studies

1. Have a Bible study focused specifically on looking up passages that use the words nation, world, peoples or earth in them.
2. Memorize key missions passages as a group.
3. Pick a New Testament Epistle and read through it in one sitting and make observations about what it says regarding God's heart for the world.
4. Find a short missions article and spend the first 15 minutes of Bible study reading and discussing it.
5. Create a monthly prayer calendar that focuses on praying for various countries.
6. Have someone in the small group research a country and spend the first 10 minutes of your time praying for it as a group.
7. Meet internationals on campus and start a prayer list, praying for them by name.
8. Hold one meeting focused solely on how to pray for the world and why it is important.
9. Have your Bible study take personal interest in a specific country or people group and give financially to a missionary who is currently ministering to them.
10. Develop accountability among group members that will keep them consistent in the growth of their world vision.
11. Subscribe your entire small group to free missions magazines.
12. As a group, skip a meal during the day to pray for the hungry in the world.
13. Have your Bible study take an international student out on a Friday night, get to know them and show them around.