

DVD Study Guide
"Missio Dei": Seeing the United States and Canada as Mission
Fields

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About the Contributors:

Fletcher L. Tink has served as missionary, pastor, and educator both in North and South America, and currently teaches urban and compassionate ministries at Nazarene Theological Seminary, Kansas City. He heads up the Bresee Institute for Metro-Ministries.

Althea C. Taylor is the Coordinator for Nazarene Compassionate Ministries USA/Canada, Kansas City, which facilitates the operation of compassionate ministry centers throughout the United States and Canada. Her ministry experiences include serving as Youth Pastor and Administrative Pastor for Bronx Bethany Church of the Nazarene, where she also held the position of Executive Director for Bronx Bethany Community Corporation, a not-for-profit subsidiary of the church dedicated to community outreach and serving the underserved within the community.

Oliver R. Phillips trained and pastored in the Caribbean and the inner cities of Baltimore and Washington, and has directed Nazarene Compassionate Ministries USA/Canada. He now serves as Director of Mission Strategy USA/Canada for the Church of the Nazarene, Kansas City. He is the author and editor of several articles and books, most notably, *E Pluribus Unum: Challenges and Opportunities in Multicultural Ministry*.

Questions about the curriculum and its usage can be sent via email to <sgrube@nazarene.org>.

DVD Study Guide

"Missio Dei": Seeing the United States and Canada as Mission Fields

Instruction: Watch the 33-minute DVD with your group, then spend the remaining time studying the discussion materials. We suggest devoting 60 to 90 minutes for each session.

SESSION ONE: Making the Case: Why Should Canada and the United States Be Declared Mission Fields?

Prepared by Fletcher L. Tink

INTRODUCTION

Our DVD is called "Missio Dei." This is a Latin phrase that means "The Mission of God." The missionary movement did not begin only recently, as the initiative of traditionally Christian countries to reach and convert non-Christian ones. In fact, those of us in western, "Christian" nations are the converts of earlier Christians from the East! Christians have always taken their cue from God, and God has been calling people to take part in the redemption of creation since the beginning of the human story. Even in the Garden, God's command to Adam and Eve to "be fruitful and increase in number" (Genesis 1:28) carries the assumption that their children would be taught to love and honor God.

God's desire to save humankind transcends national boundaries and cultural divisions. Sin sullies everything, but God made a covenant with humanity through the promises to the Children of Israel. This covenant is a dramatic gesture of God's love for all people, expressed through the life and death of

Jesus for the redemption of the whole world. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is proof positive that the curse of Adam has been lifted, and we can enjoy a restored relationship with God, both here and in the world to come.

Therefore, "Missio Dei" cuts across time and place. There is no need for us to create a new missionary enterprise, but rather simply to recognize the breadth and length of God's enterprise and "go with the flow" of the Spirit wherever and to whomever He calls us to go.

A new place of mission is one that many of us have overlooked until quite recently: We are becoming increasingly aware that this Divine "flow" requires us to "love our neighbors as ourselves" (Matthew 19:19) right here in the United States and Canada. There are certainly many, many great churches in both Canada and the United States, and statistics suggest that the majority of people in both nations are believers. All the same, we must take a hard look at ourselves and ask, "How deeply has the gospel impacted our lives? Are we truly the Christian neighbors we believe ourselves to be?"

The "Missio Dei" DVD seeks to challenge us to open our eyes, to "change our mission field mentality," and to see the needs within our own backyards in at least four distinct ways. These four ways include ministry to: 1) the poor and marginalized; 2) the multicultural world around us; 3) the urban areas from which the local church has withdrawn; and 4) the postmodern generation of young people searching for spiritual meaning.

Some hard statistics about the United States and Canada will help us to see why.

In the United States:

- One-fourth of the world's prison inmates are in U.S. jails.

- One in 32 adults is under some form of correctional supervision.
- 60 billion dollars is spent on prisons and detention centers, an average of \$200 per person each year.
- There are 30,000 organized gangs with 800,000 gang members.
- One-fifth of all pregnancies are terminated in abortion, a record no better than the world's average.
- In 2006, hate crimes grew by 8%.
- People are being murdered at the rate of 5.6 per 100,000, a figure higher than that of most European nations.
- Tax cheating amounts to about 350 billion dollars a year, enough to wipe out the annual deficit, or to provide much needed human services.
- White-collar crime such as embezzlement accounts for another 300 billion dollars of lost revenue.
- Almost two-thirds of 12th-graders admit to having engaged in sexual intercourse.
- Less than one-quarter of households are made up of traditional families, that is, parents and children.
- The United States has one of the highest divorce rates in the world, where 46% of all marriages are terminated.
- More than half of all married couples co-habited prior to marriage. 11 million couples are currently living in co-habiting arrangements; more than one million of these are same-sex couples.
- In 2005, 800,000 people engaged in the selling of illegal drugs and 112 million reported having tried such drugs at least once in their lifetime.
- Gambling, once considered taboo, is now one of the great growth industries. Casinos regularly engage in "bus

ministry," sending transportation to senior citizen housing facilities, providing "entertainment" while inducing some to gamble away their life savings.

- Every 39 minutes, a pornographic video is being created in the United States.
- Though the United States has only 5% of the world's population, it generates 14% of all pornographic revenue and creates 89% of the world's pornographic web pages.
- The highest incidence of pornographic web searches is not found in inner-city ghettos but in mid-sized cities and suburbs--places such as Elmhurst, Illinois, Tampa, Florida, Stockton, California, and Oklahoma City.

Canada, also, is increasingly concentrated in urban centers--cities such as Montreal, Toronto, Calgary, and Vancouver. In fact, the spirit of secularism seems to be affecting Canadian culture even more profoundly than the United States.

These statistics are sobering. We must admit to the changing character of the United States and Canada. Yet, if the gospel transforms lives, it can also transform societies. The message of "Missio Dei" is that we don't do "mission solitaire"; God has already preceded us and invites us to work as co-laborers, starting first at home and then on to the whole world (see Acts 1:8).

SELF-ASSESSMENT

As a study group, try out this Self-Assessment.

1. When I hear about my country being thought of as a mission field, I feel:

- a. sad.
- b. angry.
- c. confused.
- d. challenged.

2. When I hear about my country being thought of as a mission field, I want to:

- a. run off to a more comfortable and compatible place.
- b. become a political activist.
- c. roll up my sleeves and become a "home missionary."
- d. forget it all. I've got enough to do as is.

3. When I read data like this, I remind myself that:

- a. God calls certain people to respond to the need.
- b. I am not prepared to deal with these issues.
- c. the foreign mission field is much more attractive to me.
- d. I feel a sense of need to respond to the challenge.

4. When I think about my local church, I find it:

- a. already treating our neighborhood as a mission field.
- b. quite detached from these issues.
- c. wanting to do more, but not knowing how.
- d. motivated to help in foreign missions but quite unmotivated locally.

5. For me to get engaged in a missionary role in my own country, I would need:

- a. a specific call from God.
- b. to be more engaged in the community to understand its needs.
- c. to study more about how I could help.
- d. to start immediately somewhere with someone.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Given the above realities, in what ways can Canada and the United States still be called "Christian" nations? How has Christianity changed our societies?

2. In what ways have has our society become less Christian in our time? Why have Christians been unable to transform society more thoroughly, given the freedoms and resources that are available to us?

3. How do we convincingly share with non-Christians the superiority of the Christian way of life when many in our own nations suffer from the excesses of indulgence, moral disease, and spiritual alienation?

4. What do you hope will be the outcome of these sessions of study for your church, your community, and for yourself?

DISCUSSION OF SCRIPTURE: What Does the Bible Say?

Read 2 Timothy 3:1-5; 1 John 4:15-21.

1. Paul critiques his culture severely, pointing out the sins of the times. What are the sins of our society?

2. How do we balance Paul's censure of sin and sinfulness with John's calling to love others as Christ loved us?

3. Why is it important for us to take a hard look at ourselves and see what we are doing wrong? How will this help us to better fulfill God's calling for our lives?

CONCLUSION

What kind of a world would we be living in if all Christians lived life "abundantly"--that is, with integrity and rectitude, fairness and justice, truthfulness and joy, creatively and carefully for both neighbor and the natural environment?

The biblical words that best describe what that world ought to be are "the kingdom of God" (heaven) and *shalom*. God desires that we live out and celebrate the Kingdom here on earth as an expression of *shalom*, that rich Hebrew word that describes a character that is energized by God and lived out in vibrant harmony with God, our fellow human beings, and nature.

The "Missio Dei" DVD is divided into six segments and is presented in this Guide for group study and interaction. We encourage Nazarenes to travel together on a Covenantal Journey with the materials. We invite you to take on Jesus' eyes and engage in God's mission, with special attention to the four target needs mentioned earlier--ministry to: 1) the poor and marginalized; 2) the multicultural world around us; 3) the urban areas from which the local church has withdrawn; and 4) the postmodern generation of young people searching for spiritual meaning.

We've provided a covenantal commitment and prayer for those who plan to participate throughout the six sessions. Individually, ponder this covenant and prayerfully sign it. Share your thoughts with others who are doing the same and arrange with your church leadership time to journey together.

COVENANT

Recognizing the need to see my world as it is and not as I wish it to be:

I will covenant to listen to what God is telling me about the reality of my nation, my city, my neighborhood, and myself. I want to see the world as Christ sees it, to care for it, witness to it, and weep over it, as Jesus did in His own beloved City of David--Jerusalem. I will seek to set aside my biases, stereotypes, political persuasions, patriotisms, and fears in order to see through the eyes of Christ. I will ask God to help me to see my nation and my neighborhood as He sees it, looking not only at the problems, but also at the possibilities, especially where the witness of God could make a transformative difference in the lives of individuals and the community as a whole.

I covenant to ask God to help me not to desire transformation for personal convenience, but rather for the good of others regardless of the inconvenience that it might cause me.

I covenant with others to prayerfully reflect on "Missio Dei," to study related Scriptures, to meet with others, and to work through this Study Guide, always remaining open to whatever the Holy Spirit tells me.

Signed: _____

Witnessed by: _____

Dated: _____

ACTION STEPS

1. Prior to each session, view and review if possible some portion of the DVD, "Missio Dei."
2. Begin the journey through the Study Guide, sharing your responses and commitment with others in the Covenantal group.
3. Invite others to participate in the sessions.
4. Observe those situations around you that confirm or challenge the information presented here. Document your information for discussion in later sessions.

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SESSION TWO: Examining the Data: So What?

Prepared by Fletcher L. Tink

INTRODUCTION

The United States and Canada have long been viewed both by their citizens and those in other countries as "Christian" nations. This perception is due in part to the following reasons:

First, the histories of both countries, their symbols, and their founding documents tell us that a belief in God played a role in their nations' formation. Newt Gingrich, for example, has written in his Washington tour book, *Rediscovering God in America: Reflections on the Role of Faith in Our Nation's History*:

To see how important religion was to our nation's founders--and to generations of their successors--take a stroll around Washington, DC." He urges: "The next time a friend or colleague says that religious expression has no place in the public square and that discussion of God has no place in our children's history and government classes, you will only need to tell them about what you experienced on this

simple walk to remind them of God's role in America's history--and America's future.

John McCain, U.S. presidential candidate, when asked what should be the qualifications of the president of the United States, replied similarly: "Will this person carry on in the Judeo-Christian principled tradition that has made this nation the greatest experiment in the history of mankind?"

In Canada, too, there are many historical Christian allusions. Both the coat of arms and the national motto cite Psalm 72:8. The Canadian Bill of Rights begins with, "The Parliament of Canada, affirming that the Canadian Nation is founded upon principles that acknowledge the supremacy of God . . ." The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms heralds the message: "Whereas Canada is founded upon principles that recognize the supremacy of God and the rule of the law"

The evidence is clear that the origins of both nations testify to Judeo-Christian influence.

Second, a majority of Americans and Canadians identify themselves as Christian. Current polls in the United States indicate that three out of every four citizens claim to be followers of Christ. Half the population declares itself to be Protestant. Seventy percent of Canadians consider themselves Christians; more than half of these are affiliated with the Roman Catholic Church. However, in both countries, there has been a notable decline over the past decade of declared Christians, a loss of about one percent per year.

Despite the decline, the rate of Christian participation in the United States and Canada remains about three times higher than in the historic Christian nations of Western Europe---Great Britain, France, and Germany.

The **third** reason that many consider the United States and Canada to be Christian is that these two nations have been at

the forefront of the missionary-sending enterprise, seeking to bring Jesus Christ to the other nations of the world. Nearly half of the current 140,000 Protestant missionaries serving worldwide come from the United States and Canada. Given international turmoil, the decline of the value of the U.S. dollar, and the rise of missionary participation from the developing nations of the world, there has been a steady increase in the number of missionaries from places other than the United States and Canada. Many of these are coming to the United States and Canada to minister to their own ethnic subcultures.

Why Should the United States and Canada Be Considered Mission Fields?

A Bleak Picture

Even as other countries are taking on the Great Commission, the United States and Canada are looking less and less like Christian nations. Two recent commentators on culture give us bleak pictures of the current state of our society.

John Powell, a noted TV critic, surveyed the 10 most important cultural trends that he saw in 2007. His observations are most distressing. The most notable trend he sees is that corruption, violence, and character failures in the sports world are rampant. An occupation that was once an escape from the ordinary grind of daily life is now as depressing as the rising costs at the gas station and grocery store.

The unresolved ending in the concluding episode of a popular TV series, "The Sopranos," symbolizes to Powell that many see no hope or resolution to the dreariness and ugliness of life. The TMZ (celebrity gossip) and YouTube (amateur videos on the internet) fads are dissolving the barriers between public

and private space, so that every star's misdeed--and yours and mine--are photographed and uploaded for public consumption, to feed gossip and scandal. Even the evening news seems no longer to be news; increasingly, it is a series of opinions, informed or not, strung together to resemble news.

Worse still, Powell sees a rising tide of respectability and public approval given to intellectual onslaughts on religious faith, especially Christianity, something that Powell calls "atheist-chic."

Jane Jacobs, famed Canadian writer on urban themes, recently wrote a book entitled *Dark Age Ahead* in which she describes the crumbling of the five "pillars" of Western society. Families, the cradle of culture, are disappearing. Along with the proliferation of non-traditional family settings, another sort of family is rising up--"coercive families"--prisons, detention centers, psychiatric wards, military units, and nursing homes. Education no longer educates people to live competently, productively, and peacefully. Instead, it merely offers "credentialing" to get a well-paying job. Tax policy favors the wealthy; it discourages initiative from the poor and leaves many people completely marginalized. Science itself, a byproduct of the Christian mandate to "be fruitful and increase in number" (Genesis 1:28) and Adam's naming of the species (2:19), has too often locked itself into answering irrelevant questions rather than the more significant ones about the quality of life for all. Finally, Jacobs sees that the American Medical Association, the American Bar Association, and dozens of similar associations are more interested in protecting and lobbying for their own interests and power than in scrutinizing their members' misdeeds.

It all adds up to a dismal read of our cultural trends. Although keen observers of culture in decline, Powell and Jacobs

are unable to address how things might be changed. In many ways, our countries mirror the cultural dysfunctions of other, non-Christian nations. The marks of a non-Christian culture include those evils listed above: corruption, emptiness, family breakdown, lawlessness, irresponsibility, insensitivity to those in need, other gods, and no gods.

How should Christians from the United States and Canada respond to this? All too often, we have been encouraged to send our money and resources out to foreign fields rather than to dig deeply into the distressed soil of our own communities. As a result, the United States and Canadian churches have often embraced a self-interested and pampered Christianity designed to make us feel comfortable with our riches rather than transforming us into active participants in the saving of the whole world.

The Road Ahead

It has been said that Christianity is always only a generation away from extinction. Each generation must be evangelized anew, both at home and abroad. Every generation, therefore, is a mission field.

The good news is that, as Christians, we believe that spiritual sickness can be honestly admitted and cultural transformation based on heart transformation can truly take place. We need only look to the past to see the truth of this.

John Wesley lived in England during the 18th century at a time of social and spiritual confusion. The Church of England was sanctioned and sponsored by the government, but many of its members had no personal relationship with God. Wesley, who had sought to be a missionary in the American colonies, found himself a bigger mission field back home. The reforms that John

Wesley enacted in his homeland helped pave the way for major social and political change in the public arena.

Phineas Bresee, one of the founders of the Church of the Nazarene, believed that the Church was called to "Christianize Christianity." He preached that believers were called to proclaim the whole gospel to the whole world, addressing the whole person. He started with his own ministry neighborhood. He described this gospel as the "way of holiness"--taking on the character of God himself and seeking to live redemptively on all fronts. He and his church in Los Angeles developed ministries to the poor, the immigrant, the urbanite, the sick, and the imprisoned. This was an "emergent" church that never forgot its calling to be Christ to everyone, regardless of their station in life.

As recently as the conclusion of the Second World War, an extraordinary burst of missionary zeal was put forth by Canada and the United States to win the world for Jesus Christ. Many good and competent organizations were formed that sent tens of thousands of missionaries to Africa, Asia, and Latin America. This missionary enterprise has been so successful that many of these recipient nations have received the "good news" and are growing by leaps and bounds.

What we see now in these foreign fields is a Christianity expressing itself with a level of enthusiasm and commitment that has outpaced the vigor of the church in the United States and Canada. Many of these nations, such as Brazil and South Korea, now send missionaries worldwide to spread the gospel, especially to nations where U.S. and Canadian citizens are not welcome. They even come to the United States and Canada to evangelize.

Who Is in Our Mission Field?

What we have, then, is both crisis and opportunity for missions within the United States and Canada. The "Missio Dei" DVD that you have watched focuses on four groups of people who are particularly receptive to the gospel. These groups are: 1) the poor and marginalized; 2) the multicultural world around us; 3) the urban areas from which the local church has withdrawn; and 4) the postmodern generation of young people searching for spiritual meaning.

Recent Gallup polls have indicated that about 30-35% of the adult population of the United States, around 100 million, testifies to a "born-again" experience. This tally leaves 200 million people who need to be presented afresh with the claims of Christ, a number greater than all mission fields in the world, excepting China, India, and Indonesia.

George Barna, in assessing the 12 most notable religious trends of Christianity in the United States (2006), makes the following surprising observations:

- Only 15% of those who regularly attend a Christian church rank their relationship with God as a top priority in their lives.
- The notion of personal holiness is being ignored. Only 21% of Christian adults consider themselves to be holy. Only one in three Christians believes that God expects people to be holy; many have no idea what biblical holiness is.
- Many young people, even those who belonged to a church youth group in their teens, disengage from organized religion while in their 20s.
- Only one in six Christians believes that spiritual maturity is meant to be developed in the context of a local church or community of faith.

These observations tell us that the mission field is not found just among non-Christians, but also includes those in our own churches and biological families.

Let's take a look at some of these people in our own backyard.

The Poor and Marginalized:

Being poor has many definitions. Generally, we think of the homeless as the poorest of the poor because they are the most visible, especially in the downtown areas of the cities. Frequently, they are found around the rescue missions that so many churches support.

In its broadest definition, being poor is a term related to the culture and economical conditions of the context that defines it. For Canadian and U.S. citizens, it is defined primarily in financial terms by incomes considered insufficient for families to provide for basic necessities.

However, there is also the "culture of poverty," a controversial term that suggests that there are values and life orientations perpetuated through generations and based on day-to-day survival techniques that are quite different from those of the middle class. The stigma of the term is that it can be used to stereotype people and avoid attention to their needs. It is inappropriate to demand of people imprisoned in the "culture of poverty" that they become good middle-class citizens before they can fully participate in our nice middle-class churches.

We should also include the marginalized in this discussion. Although the poor represent some of those marginalized from society, the term can be applied to more than just the poor. It can also include convicts, the sick, the mentally ill, the disabled, the undocumented, the elderly, and any others who may have little or no voice in determining their own needs and

destinies. When the king in Jesus' parable in Matthew 25 says, "Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me" (v. 45), he is addressing the entire class of the marginalized.

- 36.5 million U.S. citizens are categorized as "living in poverty," more than 12% of the population. In Canada, the figure is around 8%.
- Almost one in four Blacks and one in five Hispanics live in poverty.
- 17% of children under age 18 are growing up in impoverished homes.
- 16% of those living in major cities are classified as poor.
- Three quarters of a million people are homeless in the United States, or one in every 400 people. 40% of these represent family units.
- 28% of single mothers live under the poverty line.
- 47 million people do not have health insurance.
- More than one in three Hispanics is uninsured.

The gospel has always found its greatest response among the poor. They gathered around Christ during His ministry on earth. His message of hope had uncommon appeal for those who were desperate. He addressed them with respect and offered them dignity. Scripture repeatedly encourages the community of believers to extend the spirit of hospitality to those who suffer the most.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What do you believe are the reasons why people are poor? Why are people "marginalized?"

2. Do you think their values are different from your own? In what way?

The Multicultural World Around Us:

The United States and Canada receive thousands of new immigrants every year. These immigrants and their children represent at least 50 million people. This is a population more than that of all but 25 nations of the world. Many of these internationals maintain contact with their homelands. What a great opportunity for us to have a worldwide witness!

People come to the United States and Canada from every country of the world for every possible reason. Most come for better opportunities and increased freedoms. Some have come out of desperation, needing perhaps to escape danger back home. A few have come for malicious reasons. Whatever the reasons, they arrive in our communities and present us with both obligation and opportunity to present the gospel in ways that will draw them to Jesus.

Here are some statistics:

- More Jews live in the United States (6 million) than in Israel.
- More people of African descent (39 million) live in the United States than in any country in sub-Saharan Africa except for Nigeria, the Congo, and South Africa.
- Nearly as many Samoans (135,000) live in the United States as in Samoa (180,000).
- More Hispanics live in the United States than in any country except Mexico, Spain, or Colombia.
- More Hispanics (43 million) live in the United States than the total population of Canada (30 million).

- One in every five children in the United States is of Hispanic origin.
- More than one million people in the United States are of Arab descent. Most of these are Lebanese.
- More than one-half million Cubans reside in Miami, making it the fourth largest Cuban city in the world.
- Outside of Moscow and Armenia's capital, Yerevan, Los Angeles has the largest concentration of Armenians in the world.
- In the 1990s, the Asian population in the United States grew by 107%, Hispanics by 53%, and Native Americans by 38%, while the majority population grew by only 6%.
- The percentage of foreign-born people in Canada is higher than in the United States. Canada, among all larger nations of the world, has the highest rate of immigration (excluding the refugee flow of border nations in Africa and the Middle East).
- The largest immigration groups moving to Canada are people from China, India, the Philippines, and Pakistan. Asians account for almost half of all immigrants arriving currently in Canada.

The Bible reminds us to extend hospitality to the alien and stranger, because both the Jews and the early Christian communities knew intimately the shame and isolation of being alien.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Where would you go to find out more about the immigrants and other ethnic groups in your community?

2. How does your church respond to people of other cultures who attend your services?

The Postmodern Generation:

One group that deserves special consideration are those often described as the "postmodern" or "Mosaic" generation. These are young people now in their 20s who seem to bring both a different attitude and mindset to the Church. One negative view of this generation describes these youth in these terms: without idealism, reluctant to commit themselves, irreverent of anything sacred, disrespectful of all authority, apathetic, skeptical, and bored. An alternate view suggests that they question everything, find truth relative, believe that relationships mean more than institutions, value the power of storytelling, and express emotional experience.

The gospel is expansive enough to embrace postmoderns. It invites the questioning spirit--where there is honest seeking. It focuses on relationships, community, openness, and transparency over institutional priorities. The gospel is the greatest story ever told.

Furthermore, at the heart of the Wesleyan-Holiness message is the life transformed and the "witness of the Spirit" which allows for emotional expressiveness. What the gospel does not embrace is truth as "relative." Instead, truth must be validated in the experience of young people in order to change their perception that it is merely composed of cold, academic postulates unsubstantiated in the actions of those who claim to have it.

These postmoderns can be reached by the gospel. A few examples may be found in the Lambs ministry in New York City or the Trinity story in Annandale, Virginia. What better laboratory

for these young people to learn in than the hands-on experiential ministry to the city! Postmoderns may indeed be the generation that reaches out most effectively to the culturally-diverse people of the city.

On the DVD are several exciting models of ministry with spokespersons who articulate clearly the challenge and the mission. They don't just read the statistics. They address the longings and needs of those to whom they are called to serve, and they do so with creativity, delight, and in community.

There is no "cookie cutter" approach to ministry. These leaders look at the harvest around them and tailor the "non-essentials" to the communities they are called to serve. They minimize barriers to the gospel and maximize the spirit of hospitality for those who seek a better way.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. The latter part of the DVD focused on ministry to the postmoderns. What would it take to have an effective ministry among this group of people?

SELF-ASSESSMENT

As a study group, try out this Self-Assessment.

1. When I hear about the challenges that are out there to minister in my community, I:
 - a. want to learn more.
 - b. feel overwhelmed and intimidated.
 - c. am not sure where I fit in.
 - d. am ready to join the team!

2. I feel that my gifting and my passions are best used ministering to the:

- a. poor.
- b. immigrants.
- c. postmodern generation.
- d. none of these.

3. My church is probably best prepared to minister to:

- a. the poor.
- b. the immigrants.
- c. the postmodern generation.
- d. none of these.

4. What inhibits me most from ministering to my community is my:

- a. fear.
- b. lack of time.
- c. priorities.
- d. understanding.

5. What inhibits my church from effectively ministering to the community is:

- a. our priorities.
- b. our lack of vision.
- c. our budget.
- d. nothing; we are ministering effectively to our community.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What would it take to motivate you to engage in some form of ministry to your community?

2. Which of the speakers on the DVD inspired you or motivated you most? Why?

3. What would you see as a direction for ministry within your church in your own local "mission field"?

DISCUSSION OF SCRIPTURE: What Does the Bible Say?

Read Isaiah 11:1-6; Jeremiah 22:3.

1. What does the passage in Isaiah tell us about God's concern for the poor and needy?

2. What does the passage in Jeremiah tell us about God's concern for the immigrant?

3. Does our local church reflect God's concern for the poor, the needy, and the immigrant? What can we do to make this a reality for our church?

CONCLUSION

Several years ago, a European visitor volunteered at one of Mother Teresa's ministry facilities in Calcutta. When he returned to his home country, he was frustrated that the spiritual adventure he had experienced in serving among the poorest of the poor seemed so distant and far away. He wrote the famous nun asking her what might be the next step to recapture that experience at home. Six months later, he received a postcard with only four words scribbled on it: FIND YOUR OWN CALCUTTA!

The "Missio Dei" has introduced us to a wide variety of ministries. By watching and celebrating what God is doing in

Chicago, New York, Fort Worth, Annandale, Los Angeles, and Winnipeg, we open our eyes to what God wants us to do in our own neighborhoods. These should be seen not as models for us to mimic, but as colonies of the Kingdom, informing and prodding us to think about mission in our own context, so that we can create our own Kingdom colony.

We encourage Nazarenes to travel together on a Covenantal Journey aided by these materials. Each session touches on one or more of the themes on the DVD. We invite you to take on Jesus' eyes and engage in God's mission.

Individually, ponder this covenant and, if led, prayerfully sign it. Share your thoughts with others who are doing the same and arrange with your church leadership time to journey together.

COVENANT

I covenant to pray for the various ministries that have been introduced to us in this DVD, that God may protect them from discouragement and futility, from attacks from outside and within. I covenant to pray that they may retain their integrity, their creativity, their effectiveness, and their joy.

I covenant to look around my own neighborhood--especially my church--to see, acknowledge, and support those who are engaged in reaching out to the community. I will pray for these and show tangible evidences of support and encouragement.

I further covenant to find some "Calcutta" in my realm of influence, or to find the place where God is calling me to serve.

I covenant to not compare my calling to that of someone else, recognizing that God has placed me where I can most effectively witness to His love, even if that place is uncomfortable for me. In the discomfort, I can find the solace and comfort of knowing that I am doing His bidding.

I covenant to reach out and show care in some way I have never tried before, perhaps at some risk to my reputation or security.

I covenant to leave the consequences of my obedient service with God and not to seek to manipulate or manage the life of another.

I covenant to share my ministry journey with others who perhaps will team with me in further pursuit of mission.

Signed: _____

Witnessed by: _____

Dated: _____

ACTION STEPS

1. Pray for the ministries that you have seen on the DVD. Identify two or three people who need your prayers at this time.
2. Pray for a people group in your immediate vicinity, perhaps motivated by the images you have seen on the DVD.

3. Share your questions, ideas, and passions triggered by the DVD, Scripture passage, or Study Guide with at least one other person whom you trust to bear your mission burden with you.

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DVD Study Guide

"Missio Dei": Seeing the United States and Canada as Mission Fields

Instruction: Watch the 33-minute DVD with your group, then spend the remaining time studying the discussion materials. We suggest devoting 60 to 90 minutes for each session.

SESSION THREE: The Church in the City

Prepared by Fletcher L. Tink

INTRODUCTION

The year 2008 is a very special year in the demographic history of the world. This year, more than half of the world's population of 6.6 billion people live in cities of more than 20,000.

The world is becoming increasingly urban. The greatest growth is occurring in the Two-Thirds World, those regions not identified as the Developed World (the United States, Canada, Europe, and Japan). Canada ranks as the 40th most-urbanized country in the world, with 80% of its citizens living in urbanized areas. The United States is 45th in ranking, at 77%. Countries as diverse as Belgium (97%), Iceland (93%), Australia (91%), Venezuela (87%), and Brazil (82%) are even more urbanized.

Although historically, missionaries have most often been sent to small towns and rural compounds, the startling reality is that the mission field has moved into the cities. Mission movements have proliferated in the urban settings in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. In the city, people are often more open

to change, especially when faced with hardship and desperate circumstances.

At the same time, denominations like the Church of the Nazarene have found it difficult to sustain ministries in the inner city. Early in its history, the denomination was very much committed to ministry in the urban context, especially on the two coasts. The "mother church" in Los Angeles expressed its mission in its organizational minutes of October 30, 1895: "The field of labor to which we feel called is in the neglected quarters of the cities and wherever else may be found waste places and souls seeking pardon and cleansing from sin." Its pastor, Phineas F. Bresee, co-founder of the denomination and the denomination's first general superintendent, said, "Our church is preeminently a missionary church. It knows no difference between home and foreign fields--in these days all fields are near."

By the 1960s, with the subsequent movement of many Nazarenes to the suburbs and the increasing cost of maintaining downtown property in declining communities, many of our Nazarene churches had pulled out of the urban cores.

In recent years, there has been a rededication on the part of some to minister in the cities. A wide variety of church ministries exist today: the Lambs in Manhattan, Golden Gate Community ministries in San Francisco, Neighborhood Christian Centers in Memphis, Mission Possible in Vancouver, B.C., and Reaching Our City in Oklahoma City. Indeed, 180 different compassionate ministry centers throughout the United States and Canada are registered with the denomination and are centered primarily in urban areas.

All the same, many of us today are uncomfortable in the cities. We must acknowledge that there is validity in the reasons people leave cities: cities are known for poverty and

violence, deteriorating neighborhoods and traffic jams, bad schools and higher costs, strange people and dirty streets. Perhaps our understanding of sanctification, as we seek to avoid evil, has encouraged us to step around cities rather than engage them. Moreover, Christians yearn for the kingdom of God, that heavenly Jerusalem where peace rules and danger is forever banished. We wonder, "Did God make the country and the devil make the city?"

One urban mission strategist, Ray Bakke, responds, "Human history may begin in a garden, but . . . it ends up in a city"--the New Jerusalem. With that in mind, perhaps we need to accommodate ourselves to the hustle and bustle and perpetual motion of the city. After all, if Satan seems to reside more comfortably in the city, is it not our responsibility to attack him in his jugular?

While our cities grow outwardly, upwardly, and in density, many of our churches have been unable to effectively address the changing demographics of the downtown areas of the city. The high price of land, the cost of property maintenance, the parking issues, the incoming population of those with little knowledge of or allegiance to evangelical churches--these issues have meant that the resources of urban churches have diminished while the challenges have grown. Few pastors are skilled to deal with the complexities of ministry to the city.

One pastor compares his church of 100 to what had existed a generation earlier. He said that his Sunday morning attendance represented a crowd that attended sporadically. His primary ministry, therefore, is closer to 200 people. In addition, because those who have stayed in the city have required twice as much pastoral care than those who have left, his pastoral commitment is actually four times that of the previous

generation--all that for the same statistical results and far less income.

At the same time, many young people have become "anti-institutional"; they reject the idea that denominations are the principle means of delivering the gospel. Many of them desire some religious input in their lives without making a commitment to the local church. At another level, one recent newspaper article describes the "ghetto-ization" of evangelicalism, where many wealthier evangelicals have bailed out of local church attendance to affiliate in clusters or Bible study groups tailored for their societal needs. This same article laments that, whereas churches used to be the last bastion of social mixing, now they are socially-niched, with the poor, middle, and upper classes living and worshiping in separate congregations.

The urban church also faces the difficulties of increasingly hostile religious attitudes: the ubiquitous secular world view, increased interest in Eastern religious and cultic groups, and the general erosion of confidence in church leaders.

These are all causes for discouragement. Yet, there is also good news: the inner cities are being rejuvenated, often by immigrants, the poor, and upscale entrepreneurs. These people seem ready to hear the gospel. For transient and overlooked people, the gospel can be a focal point in their unstable world. For entrepreneurs, there is a sense that "significance" is more important than "success."

Our speakers on the DVD have given a variety of descriptions of the realities of the city, the Church's response, and the people who are receptive to the gospel. Although the church has largely moved out of the cities, each of these speakers has found a significant and creative ministry there.

Here are some of the words of advice these ministers give us.

- Don't just tolerate each other; grace each other.
- Mix up things that don't normally mix.
- State what we are for, rather than what we are against.
- Take your culture seriously.
- Create ministry that is inviting.
- Demonstrate the love of God.
- Become neighbors again.
- Ask the big questions.
- Learn from each other.
- Work for justice.
- Have your church give away its life.
- See your church not from the pulpit, but from the front door.
- Open up your hearts.
- Have a heart in the city and a heart for the city.
- Speak the language of love.
- Change the community one by one.

In all, the guiding motivation is to reach people for Jesus Christ--"so that by all possible means [we] might save some" (1 Corinthians 9:22).

SELF-ASSESSMENT

As a study group, try out this Self-Assessment.

1. My first reaction towards large cities is that they can are:
 - a. exciting.
 - b. dangerous.

- c. challenging.
- d. overwhelming.

2. If someone suggested that I join them on a work and witness trip to the inner city, I would respond this way:

- a. Let's go!
- b. Maybe next time.
- c. Are you crazy?
- d. Is it safe?

3. If my pastor proposed that our church partner with another church in different social setting within the city, i.e. a suburban church with an urban one, or an urban church with a suburban one, I would:

- a. think twice because those folks are a lot different from us.
- b. tell the pastor we should build up our own congregation before interfering in other people's cultures.
- c. jump at the chance because people need our help.
- d. jump at the chance because we need to have a meaningful outreach.
- e. jump at the chance because together we can help each other.
- f. hesitate because we don't need outsiders to tell us what to do.

4. One pastor in the DVD talked about "mixing things up" that usually don't get mixed up. My reaction to that perspective is:

- a. that it sounds confusing and uncomfortable.
- b. that it sounds exciting and fresh.
- c. that people should only go to churches where they feel comfortable.
- d. that it sounds like the way I think heaven is going to be.

5. When I think of ministry to postmoderns, I:
- a. don't know how to go about it.
 - b. believe they're not really interested in the gospel.
 - c. believe they're just like anybody else.
 - d. would love to learn how to reach them.
 - e. am living with one and don't know what to do.
 - h. don't think our church is equipped to deal with them.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In our striving to be a "holiness" people, do our cities represent a threat to our own spiritual survival, and therefore, should they be avoided? Or, should we be engaged in ministry in our cities because "holiness" can be fully lived out wherever we are witnessing to God's love?
2. What is the attitude of the ministers on the DVD towards the city? Is there any phrase or challenge that particularly caught your attention?
3. What are some of the practical ways in which these ministers on the DVD show their love for their neighbors?
4. Is everybody called to minister in the city? How can one know if he or she is called to minister in the city?
5. The latter part of the DVD focuses on ministry to postmoderns. What would it take to have an effective ministry among this group of people?

DISCUSSION OF SCRIPTURE: What Does the Bible Say?

Read Acts 17.

1. Why did Paul, the greatest missionary of all time, center his ministry in cities?
2. In Acts 17, what do you see as Paul's strategy and evangelism technique for reaching people of the city? Is there just one?
3. In Athens, Paul built conceptual bridges to the intellectuals around him. Why did he do this? What were the reactions? Was he successful or not?
4. In what ways were the people that Paul encountered in this passage similar to postmoderns today?
5. Who is a Paul in my life that I can follow and learn from in engaging the city?

CONCLUSION

Not everyone is called to minister in the city. Yet everyone *is* called to love their neighbor, be it in cities, small towns, or the countryside. After the destruction of the city of Jerusalem and the exile of the Jewish people to Babylon, Nehemiah challenged the exiles to assign a "tithe" or 10% of the people to return to Jerusalem in order to rebuild the city walls and the Temple (Nehemiah 11:1). The people came home to a desolate landscape, stood fast against the dangers, and rebuilt the walls in seven months. Together with the priest Ezra, they celebrated the dedication of the Temple. More than 2,500 years later, we, too, may need to be similarly engaged in a redemptive ministry to the city.

Nehemiah was simply a layperson moved by the stories of the condition of his homeland. At great personal risk and showing extraordinary faith and dependency on God, Nehemiah utilized his professional skills and gifts and helped transform a city. Along the way, there were many obstacles--bureaucracy, threats, disbelief, weariness, and limited resources. However, he had a calling, a passion, a prayer life, cooperative friends, and a strategy that made a difference. He mobilized disheartened, disobedient, and skeptical people into an army of workers and worshipers.

The cities of Sodom and Gomorrah (see Genesis 18) were condemned for several reasons: first, because the people were arrogant; second, because they had everything they needed and still refused to help the poor and needy; third, because they did things that God hated (Ezekiel 16:49-50). Yet, Ezekiel told the people of Jerusalem that Sodom had never done what Jerusalem had done (v. 48)! Given that judgment, one wonders what divine condemnation of our modern cities would look like.

An interceding Abraham and a tiny group of righteous people would have saved Sodom from destruction (Genesis 18:32), yet not even 10 were found. Jeremiah, referring to Jerusalem, presents an even more dramatic offer from God: "If you can find but one person who deals honestly and seeks the truth, I will forgive this city" (Jeremiah 5:1b).

One city that was saved was Nineveh, arch-enemy of Israel. God had compassion on that city of more than 120,000 people, unable to distinguish right from wrong (Jonah 4:11). A reluctant missionary and a warning from God provoked mass repentance, resulting in the reprieve and salvation of the people of Nineveh.

How will you bring healing and salvation to the city? Remember, God loves cities and city-dwellers because of the love

He has for all people. There just happens to be more of them in the city!

COVENANT

I covenant to think positively about the city, realizing that negative attitudes can be an escape from responsibility. When I think negative thoughts or see shocking images, I will stop and pray for the salvation of the city and for those whose lives are so profoundly influenced by it.

I covenant to pray for the "peace and prosperity" of those who live in the city (Jeremiah 29:7).

I covenant to learn more about its needs, to celebrate its blessings, and to weep over its hurts.

I covenant to seek ways to bless ministries in the city: through words of encouragement, acts of kindness, and gifts of abundance.

I further covenant to invite friends to come with me and find new ministry opportunities in the city in which we can participate.

Finally, when I see others serving God in the city, I covenant that I will look on them as allies, not as antagonists or competitors. Like Aaron and Hur, who held up Moses' arms until the battle was won (Exodus 17:12), I will lift up their arms until the gospel prevails.

Signed: _____

Witnessed by: _____

Dated: _____

ACTION STEPS

1. Venture into the city with some friends or members of your study group and walk through a difficult community, praying as you proceed for those around you. Choose a four-block radius. Take notes of what you see and share it with your study group.
2. On your walk, find someone willing to chat. Ask this person what they think of the city and how you, as a Christian, could make a difference.
3. Contact a Compassionate Ministry Center (like a food kitchen or a shelter) and visit it, perhaps volunteering some services for a day.
4. Pray for the cities of the world, for your city, or for one located near you. Ask God whether He wants you to intercede for the city and what He would have you do.

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SESSION FOUR: Reaching Your Community at Their Point of Need

Prepared by Althea C. Taylor

INTRODUCTION

Compassion is an essential element of Christlikeness. Christ took to heart the wants, hurts, and fears of humanity. It is this very example set by Christ that we are asked to imitate. Signs of the Kingdom were evidence that Christ had ushered in the kingdom of God (Matthew 9:35). As Christ establishes the Kingdom, the Church is His strategy for transforming the world one community at a time. As the Church, we are called to be Christ to the community we live in. We are called to listen and respond to the wants, hurts, and fears of our communities and reach out to the people at their point of need. The Church engaged in compassionate ministries allows us to be the hands and feet of Jesus to a needy community.

A compassionate ministry responds to the need expressed by those we seek to help. When we look in Scripture at Jesus' example, we find that Jesus was moved with compassion to respond according to the need presented to Him (Matthew 20:30-34). Jesus did not determine the solution without first assessing the need; He asked of those in need, "What is it that you desire?" This

approach to ministry acknowledges the importance of the persons and communities we seek to serve. When we respond to others from their expressed point of need, we show that we care about the things they care about. We share in their experiences and minister with rather than to them. Christ dwelt among the people, and we are called to do the same as ambassadors of Christ.

DISCUSSION OF SCRIPTURE: What Does the Bible Say?

Read Matthew 9:35-37; 20:30-34.

1. What did Jesus see when He looked out at the crowds who came to see Him (Matthew 9:35-27)?
2. What do we see when we look around our own communities? How can we see people as Jesus sees them?
3. Why did Jesus ask the two blind men what they wanted from Him (Matthew 20:30-34)?
4. Why does it matter what people want if we are trying to help them as best we can? Shouldn't they simply be grateful we're helping them?
5. Do you think it is as much for our benefit that we listen to the needs of those we want to minister to as it is for their benefit? Why?

What is required if we are to reach our communities at their point of need? Sam Vassel says there is a three-way test for a church to gauge their readiness for reaching the community at its point of need. First, the Church is called to be a force,

not a fort. "The mentality of our faith community is not of monasticism. We are not enclosed from the world. We come to gather strength to go into the world. We are not here for self preservation" (Sam Vassel, "The Great Church Series: 'R' Reaching Our Community at the Point of Their Need." Sermon preached February 27, 2005, Bronx Bethany Church of the Nazarene). Matthew 16:18 depicts an active church engaged in battle that even "the gates of Hades will not overcome." The Church is commanded to engage not withdraw from society. We must ask, "Are we willing to set aside our own desires in order to be a force for God?"

Second, the Church must be concerned with servanthood; we must not be surprised if our own agendas about how God's work should proceed go unfilled. In Mark 10:45, Jesus says He "did not come to be served, but to serve." The dynamics of servanthood are shaped by those who are being served. Christ came as One amongst us in service to His heavenly Father so that He could serve humanity. In effective servanthood, the agenda of the servant is determined by the ones who are being served. We must ask, "What does our community really need, and how can we provide it?"

Finally, the third test is to ask the question, "What will happen to the lost if we do nothing?" Martin Luther King, Jr. in his sermon on the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37), says the good Samaritan--unlike the priest and the Levite--considered what would happen to the injured man if he were to leave him lying by the road. King says, "The good neighbor looks beyond the external accidents and discerns those inner qualities that make all men human and, therefore, brothers" (*Strength to Love*, 1963).

A compassionate ministry follows the apostle Paul's instructions in Philipians 2:3-7:

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

SELF-ASSESSMENT

As a study group, try out this Self-Assessment.

1. When I see someone begging for money at an intersection, I feel:
 - a. angry that he or she is not working.
 - b. like rolling up my car window and ignoring him or her.
 - c. I should tell him or her I don't have any money.
 - d. sad that he or she has to resort to begging.

2. When a family walks into the church asking for assistance, I initially react by:
 - a. thinking they are lying.
 - b. offering a prayer for God to help them.
 - c. wondering how they got themselves into this mess.
 - d. giving them something to get rid of them.
 - e. inviting them to attend our church service.
 - f. listening to their story before making a response.

3. When a family in the church has a need, I feel that I should:
 - a. find out what their real needs are.
 - b. encourage the church to take a love offering.

- c. suggest that they go to a special "care" fund in the church to ask for assistance.
- d. volunteer to help in a non-monetary way, like offering babysitting, transportation, or referrals.
- e. give some of my own personal funds.
- f. tell the pastor.

4. I feel that issues of poverty are best solved:

- a. on a personal basis.
- b. through the activity and support of the church.
- c. through private organizations.
- d. through government intervention.

5. I believe that poverty is primarily the result of:

- a. spiritual failure.
- b. social failure.
- c. personal failure.
- d. bad luck.

DISCUSSION OF SCRIPTURE: What Does the Bible Say?

Read James 2:1-20.

1. According to James, to whom should mercy be shown? How does this relate to our community?

2. Does our church regard all people equally whatever their economic status in life?

3. Have I ever been "poor" or "marginalized"? How did the church respond to me in my time of need?

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. How would a poor person feel in our local church if they were to attend?
2. Does our church have an outreach to the poor? What is it? Is it adequate, or can we expand it to reach more people?
3. If not, what can we do to reach the poor in our community?

Practical Steps to Engage Our Church in Compassionate Ministries

Prayer

Saturate your church and your community in prayer. "Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit," says the LORD Almighty" (Zechariah 4:6).

A common mistake made by zealous ministry workers is to jump into ministry before being grounded in prayer. We are reminded in Scripture that our own efforts are not what will yield results. Rather, it is the Lord who will bless the efforts of ministry and build His kingdom. Remember to saturate yourself, your church, and your community in prayer. Pray for God's will to be done. Pray for the ability to discern the Lord's will and to be courageous in the face of adversity, so that you may accomplish what He has set before you. Pray without ceasing. Develop a plan of prayer for the church to keep the will of God ever before them.

Determine the Needs of Our Community

It is also important for churches wishing to develop outreaches for their community to develop ministries based on what the community desires. Desires and needs are not always the same; however, one way to demonstrate to a community that you

really care about them is let them prioritize their own needs. There will be plenty of time in the future for you to develop ministries that will meet the needs you have identified.

Begin to engage your community by asking questions. Community members will openly share their needs if they believe you really care. Conduct a survey with a short questionnaire. There are a number of ways to do this: Hold a community neighborhood meeting, conduct the survey via telephone, or ask questions of residents at local community gathering points (the supermarket, a shopping mall, the Laundromat, etc.).

Share the Gospel

Don't be afraid to tell people the Good News. Another common mistake of outreach programs is to address needs purely from a relief perspective. The Church is not just another social service organization. We are the keepers of the Good News and the message we offer is life transforming. In Luke 4:18-19, Jesus quotes the prophet Isaiah:

The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

The liberating Spirit given to Jesus is the same Holy Spirit given to the Church on the day of Pentecost. To engage only in relief efforts is to give only half the story. Remember, the Church is God's strategy for transforming the world and establishing the kingdom of God here on earth.

Assess Resources and Form Partnerships

When we are considering how to reach out to our communities, we must assess what ministries and services already

exist. Discover what resources are already being provided by your church and the wider community. These resources include food pantries, clothing distribution points, shelters, job building services, child care, senior care, and so on.

Look for partnerships. Reinventing the wheel is not necessary. Build coalitions with other ministries and services in your community that will enable more needs to be met. If a food pantry is already meeting the needs of your community, there's no need for your church to start one. There are plenty of other ways your church can reach out to the community. Or, partner with another organization so that more needs can be met. Partnering with an organization that shares your vision for reaching the needs of the community allows for more aid to be given to those who need it.

Start Small

Don't overload your participants. Organize the ministry to start small and build as the potential for growth increases. Overextending your ministry is a costly mistake, as volunteers may burn out and undistributed resources will go to waste. Clearly communicate to the participants what the capacity of the ministry will be. This will help them to set realistic expectations and minimize levels of frustration. As needs are met and the news spreads, new participants will join the team, and the ministry--financially and otherwise--will increase naturally.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

We have explored the concept of Fort vs. Force, Servant vs. Master, and Us vs. Them. Let's take the F.S.T. test: Force. Servanthood. Them. "For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus

Christ as Lord and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake"
(2 Corinthians 4:5).

1. Is our church a Fort or a Force? Are we willing to set aside our own desires in order to be a force for God?
2. Does our community inform and shape how we serve or do we approach ministry as if we are the only ones who can determine the Master's plan? What does our community really need, and how can we provide it?
3. Is it about Them or Us? What will happen to the lost if we do nothing?

CONCLUSION

The ideas listed in this section are not meant to be all inclusive. This section provides a basic rationale for compassionate ministry as well as outlining the early planning stages for organizing your church for involvement in compassionate ministries. Compassionate ministries are essential to the witness of the Church. The Church is called to emulate Jesus Christ. Jesus was moved with compassion; the Church is called to respond to the world with the same compassion.

COVENANT

I covenant to saturate myself, my church, and my community in prayer. I will seek God's will for my active involvement in compassionate ministries in my community.

I covenant to look for ways my church can develop ministries to our community. I will ask questions in my community, and I will listen to what the people say. I will pray about their needs and ask for God to show me which ministry will best serve the community I live in.

I covenant to find some practical ways to respond to the needs of our community, and get involved: for example, I will participate in a house clean-up, offer transportation, or bring a bag of groceries to a needy family.

I covenant to find ways to tell people the Good News about Jesus Christ. I will remember that even though relief ministries are an important part of reaching out to the lost, the most important thing they need to hear is the Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ.

I covenant to look for ways to participate in the ministries and services already existing in my community. I will pray for those who are involved in these ministries, and I will support their efforts by encouraging them in any way I can--emotionally, financially, and spiritually.

Finally, I covenant to share the load of ministry in my church. I will contribute in any way I am able to the work of my church in the community. I will not allow others to bear the load alone.

Signed: _____

Witnessed by: _____

Dated: _____

ACTION STEPS

1. Pray for your community. Study Scriptural passages that talk about the poor, perhaps using a concordance to track the words "poor" and "poverty." Discuss your findings with a friend or your Sunday School class.
2. Find out what your church is doing to give compassionately to needs within your own country; for instance, through Nazarene Compassionate Ministries.
3. Discover the needs of the people in your community. Consider a community meeting or a community survey.
4. Assess the resources your church has to meet the needs of your community. Talk with the pastor about your church's ministry to the poor and marginalized. Is there a compassionate needs budget? How is it used?
5. If your church does not yet have such a ministry, investigate other ministries in your community and find one to partner with to meet one of the needs of the community.
6. If your church already has a compassionate ministry project, volunteer time and skills to help it meet its mission.
7. If your church is ready to begin a compassionate ministries program, identify like-minded people in your church and begin planning how your church can meet one of the unmet needs in your community. First, list all the ways in which the various

ministries on the DVD serve their communities. Discuss what your church can do. List other ideas for compassionate ministries that you might have. Then, look at the five areas presented above: **Prayer, Determine the Needs of the Community, Share the Gospel, Assess Resources and Form Partnerships, and Start Small.** Read these again carefully and develop a plan to begin a compassionate ministry outreach in your community.

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SESSION FIVE: Preparing Your Church for Multicultural Ministry

Prepared by Oliver R. Phillips

INTRODUCTION

A congregation choosing to reach new cultures finds itself in something similar to a "diversity gymnastics class." It is natural to feel awkward and uncomfortable when trying out something new. It comes with the territory. Balancing and turning exercises are meant to help us perfect our movements. Even when we feel that progress has been made, we get out in front of the audience only to discover that we have more to learn, and that it might be a lifelong journey.

This study session will help your congregation prepare for a multicultural ministry. It will help equip your congregation with some of the foundational building blocks as well as identifying ways to avoid the difficulties that may be encountered along the way.

Fable for Discussion*

In a small suburban community, a giraffe had a new home built to his family's specifications. It was a wonderful house for giraffes, with soaring ceilings and tall doorways. High

windows ensured maximum light and good views while protecting the family's privacy. Narrow hallways saved valuable space without compromising convenience. So well done was the house that it won the National Giraffe Home of the Year Award. The homeowners were understandably proud.

One day the giraffe, working in his state-of-the-art wood shop in the basement, happened to look out the window. Coming down the street was an elephant. "I know him," he thought. "We worked together on a PTA committee. He's an excellent woodworker too. I think I'll ask him in to see my new shop. Maybe we can even work on some projects." So, the giraffe reached his head out the window and invited the elephant in.

The elephant was delighted; he had liked working with the giraffe and looked forward to knowing him better. Besides, he knew about the wood shop and wanted to see it. So, he walked up to the basement door and waited for it to open.

"Come in, come in," the giraffe said. Immediately they encountered a problem. While the elephant could get his head in the door, he could go no farther.

"It's a good thing we made this door expandable to accommodate my wood shop equipment," the giraffe said. "Give me a minute while I take care of our problem." He removed some bolts and panels to let the elephant in.

The two acquaintances were happily exchanging woodworking stories when the giraffe's wife leaned her head down the basement stairs and called her husband: "Telephone, dear; it's your boss."

"I'd better take that upstairs in the den," the giraffe told the elephant. "Please make yourself at home; this may take a while."

The elephant looked around, saw a half-finished project on the lathe table in the far corner, and decided to explore it

further. As he moved through the doorway that led to the area of the shop, however, he heard an ominous scrunch. He backed out, scratching his head. "Maybe I'll join the giraffe upstairs," he thought. However, as he started up the stairs, he heard them to begin to crack. He jumped off and fell back against the wall. It too began to crumble. As he sat there disheveled and dismayed, the giraffe came down the stairs.

"What on earth is happening here?" the giraffe asked in amazement.

"I was trying to make myself at home," the elephant said.

The giraffe looked around. "Okay, I see the problem. The doorway is too narrow. We'll have to make you smaller. There's an aerobics studio near here. If you'd take some classes there, we could get you down to size."

"Maybe," the elephant said, looking unconvinced.

"And the stairs are too weak to carry your weight," the giraffe continued. "If you took a ballet class at night, I'm sure we could get you light on your feet. I really hope you'll do it. I like having you here."

"Perhaps," the elephant said. "But to tell you the truth, I'm not sure a house designed for a giraffe will ever really work for an elephant, not unless there are some major changes."

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Let's assume that Elephant is the target group and Giraffe is your present congregation.

1. Is Giraffe and Elephant's relationship worth pursuing? If so, what kinds of problems will they need to resolve in order to find enjoyment in that relationship?

2. Giraffe invited Elephant on a whim. Could Giraffe have been better prepared for Elephant? What can Giraffe do to make Elephant feel more welcome next time?

3. Were Elephant's expectations realistic? How might Elephant have made the situation better?

4. Why did Giraffe focus only on changing Elephant? Should Giraffe have thought about changing himself?

5. Should Elephant consider Giraffe's suggestions on how he could change himself? How much change is enough? Too much?

MULTICULTURALISM

What is multiculturalism? I have used Caleb Rosado's definition: "Multiculturalism is a system of beliefs and behaviors that recognizes and respects the presence of all diverse groups in an organization or society, acknowledges and values their socio-cultural differences, and encourages and enables their continued contribution within an inclusive cultural context which empowers all within the organization or society."

Perhaps, however, we can learn more by looking at what a multicultural congregation is and what it is not.

What Is Not a Multicultural Congregation

- A congregation in which a single group represents 80% or more of the participants is not a multicultural congregation.

- A congregation whose collective identity is best described by the character, customs, and mores of only one ethnic group is not a multicultural congregation.
- A congregation whose worship service lacks representation from the whole congregation is not a multicultural congregation.
- A congregation whose programs reflect only the talents and gifts of the dominant group is not a multicultural congregation.
- A congregation in which the decision-making structures are overwhelmingly in the hands of one ethnic group rather than including representatives of all of its active participants is not a multicultural congregation.

What Is a Multicultural Congregation

- A congregation in which no group is 80% or larger of the composite membership or attendance is a multicultural congregation.
- A congregation whose policies, mission, and vision incorporate the culture of all groups in the congregation, as well as the culture of the target population, is a multicultural congregation.
- A congregation that incorporates diversity in its worship (including liturgy and music), leadership, and evangelism strategies is a multicultural congregation.
- A congregation whose programs include the recognition and appreciation of significant holidays and events of all groups in the church is a multicultural congregation.
- A congregation whose annual budget reflects the needs of all groups in the church is a multicultural congregation.

- A congregation where the preaching and interpretation of the Bible is tolerant of the hermeneutical principals of all groups in the church is a multicultural congregation.
- A congregation whose décor, signage, bulletin boards, symbols, and so on reflect the diversity of its congregation is a multicultural congregation.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. How do you feel about changing the music style to accommodate various cultures within your congregation or community?
2. How open are you to cultural experiences, like ethnic foods or entertainment?
3. What are your feelings about Black History Month and Cinco de Mayo?
4. What are the "sacred cows" that you would not be prepared to surrender for the sake of diversity?
5. What can be changed in your church to attract other cultures? How would you feel if your church began inviting people of other ethnic groups to worship there?

This study guide is not intended to be a litmus test by which congregations are relegated to politically correct multiculturalism or not. Rather, it is meant to be an affirmation of a missional accomplishment for some, and a standard toward which others can aspire. It must be noted that many if not most of our congregations will remain mono-cultural

or ethnic-specific. We must remember that all forms of worship are legitimate. None is the subordinate of another, nor is any the supreme expression of true worship.

I would suggest that any congregation embarking on a path to multiculturalism should begin with a "theology of embrace." In other words, we must open our eyes to other ethnic groups and cultures and learn what our differences are. By understanding why we do things differently, we often find we are not so different from each other as we think. People everywhere have the same basic needs--we all need food, water, and shelter, we all experience joy and sorrow, pain and anger, hate and love. When we take the time to really learn about another ethnic group or culture, we find we have more in common than we could have imagined. When we do, we will begin to open our arms to each other, and accept each other for who we are. We are all, after all, made in the image of God.

Finally, in congregations that may be described as monocultural or ethnic-specific, there should never be the perception of exclusivity. The Word mandates that we embrace the "alien" in our midst (see Leviticus 19:34). This cannot take place in the abstract; it is the joyful privilege of every monocultural congregation to create an atmosphere where all who chose to worship with them are welcome!

Multicultural congregations require time, energy, and focus that could be used elsewhere. Nevertheless, neither the ease nor difficulty of the task, nor its simplicity nor complexity is the issue on which to focus. We are called as Christians to live, work, serve, and be together, forging community that can occur only with God's help (Curtiss Paul DeYoung, et al, *United By Faith* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2003]).

Designing a multicultural church takes hard work and dedication to the vision by leaders and laity alike. However,

multicultural congregations can be rich and satisfying places to be. The rewards of being in a multicultural congregation far outweigh the inconvenience we might experience.

Focus Areas, Goals, and Objectives for Transition to a Multicultural Church

In considering opening your church to the many ethnic groups and cultures living in your neighborhood, here are some goals to aim for. Read through the following objectives carefully and prayerfully. They may seem overwhelming at first, but those who are serious about becoming multicultural will soon realize that these are natural goals to aim for. By incorporating these, you will create an environment of learning, growth, and acceptance for the congregation. This will keep frustrations and misunderstandings to a minimum as you move toward a more diverse congregation.

Accountability and Responsibility

Goal 1: Pastors and staff will create an environment that fosters diversity and acceptance of all cultural, racial, and ethnic groups.

Goal 2: All members will be responsible for understanding and promoting diversity.

Education and Training

Goal 3: Everyone in the church will be provided appropriate training in diversity.

Goal 4: Church members will participate in community outreach programs to reach and prepare the culturally diverse for church membership.

Path of Christian Ministry

Goal 5: The pastor will ensure that every church member, regardless of ethnicity, has access to training and mentoring for Christian ministry in a multicultural environment.

Leadership Policy

Goal 6: The church will review and update church policies to ensure that a culture of diversity is being practiced in every aspect of church life.

Goal 7: The issues of diversity will be reviewed when planning and conducting conferences and other special meetings within the church.

Community

Goal 8: Enhanced community relationships and media advertising may be used to increase a positive perception of the church's commitment to diversity.

Goal 9: Church members will actively participate in local events, youth activities, youth mentoring programs, and other outreach programs among all ethnic groups in the community to establish and enhance community relationships and partnerships.

Outreach and Discipleship

Goal 10: The church will establish a five-year marketing and communication plan that addresses the church's openness to racially, culturally, and ethnically diverse people.

Goal 11: The church members involved in outreach and discipleship programs will reflect the diversity of the groups in the community.

Goal 12: The church will establish a highly-visible outreach and service presence in minority and ethnic communities.

Measurement

Goal 13: The church will develop, deploy, and periodically review an effective system to measure and communicate progress on the goals of diversity.

Funding

Goal 14: The church will provide funding in support of the programs and efforts of diversity throughout the church. (Guidelines adapted by Joseph Henriques from the Air National Guard's Objectives for Managing Diversity).

Culturally Appropriate Language

Another way we can prepare to become a multicultural congregation is to learn the appropriate designations for the various ethnic and cultural groups we will encounter. It is important to let every group choose its own names, and for everyone to use the preferred names.

African American: People of African descent living in the United States. See Black.

Asian American: People of Asian descent living in the United States, including, but not limited to, people of Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, Cambodian, Filipino, and Nepalese heritage.

Black: An inclusive term for people of African descent, including, but not limited to, people from North and South America, the Caribbean, and Africa.

Cultural Diversity: A term recognizing the contribution of all cultures within a society as opposed to cultural homogeneity or cultural sameness.

Ethnicity: Identity with or membership in a particular racial, national, religious, or cultural group, and observance of that group's customs, beliefs, and language.

Hispanic: A term grouping all people of Spanish-speaking descent. This is the preferred inclusive term in some regions, especially in the Southwest United States.

Middle Easterners: An inclusive term referring to people from a region in western Asia and northeast Africa that includes, but is not limited to, the nations of the Arabian Peninsula, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and Turkey.

Minority: A racial, religious, ethnic, or political group smaller than and differing from the majority or controlling group in a community, nation, continent, or region.

Multicultural/Multiethnic: The view that various cultural or ethnic groups in a society merit equal recognition and affirmation.

Nation's People: Indigenous people who inhabited the Americas and Caribbean prior to the European conquest.

CONCLUSION

Becoming multicultural does not mean giving up our culture. Becoming multicultural means that:

- We become aware of our culture and how it shapes and forms how we think and how we see the world, ourselves, and each other; and
- We open ourselves to receive the gifts of other groups so that we can also see and know the patterns and values of their culture. In this way, we can learn to appreciate and respect the greater depth and breadth they bring to our lives.

SELF-ASSESSMENT

As a study group, try out this Self-Assessment.

1. When I see someone who is different culturally from me, I feel:
 - a. curious.
 - b. threatened.
 - c. compassionate.
 - d. hostile.

2. On those occasions when I have felt like a "stranger"--that is, different, strange, an outsider--I've felt:
 - a. awkward.
 - b. scared.
 - c. rejected.
 - d. manipulated.
 - e. loved.
 - f. embraced.

3. When I look around and see the racial and ethnic segregation of our churches in multicultural situations, I feel like:
 - a. this is the way it was meant to be.

- b. each culture feels more at home in its own world.
- c. this is not the way it should be.
- d. every situation should be looked at individually.

4. James Heyward's "The Purple Church" on the DVD, with its mixing together things and people that don't normally mix, seems to me to be:

- a. diluting the power of the gospel.
- b. unworkable in our context.
- c. an exciting model.
- d. something to find out more about before making any conclusions about it.

5. After watching this DVD, I feel that I should:

- a. move my donations from foreign missions to the mission in my neighborhood.
- b. leave my church and go looking for an inner city church.
- c. help my church reach out to internationals and immigrants in our community.
- d. seek to find some "stranger" to whom I can be truly hospitable.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Take time individually to list at least five of your fears in reaching across race, culture, or class.
2. Share your fears within your group.
3. Reflect on what it would take to release your fear or embrace it and move on in spite of it.

4. Discuss the fears we hold collectively as a congregation.
5. How can these fears be lifted up and named within our congregation? Can they be regularly included in the prayers of the church?
6. What biblical passages can we find to speak to those fears?
7. How can our group support each other as we face our fears?
8. What will it take for us to move beyond our comfort zone as a congregation?

DISCUSSION OF SCRIPTURE: What Does the Bible Say?

Read Leviticus 19:34; Acts 15:1-21.

1. How are we to treat immigrants ("aliens," Leviticus 19:34) living in our communities? Why does God want us to treat people of other cultures as if they were our own people?
2. Acts 15 contains an account of a church council in Jerusalem. The council met to discuss the requirements for Gentiles to become Christians. What did Paul and Barnabas urge the council to do in regard to allowing Gentiles to join the Christian community?
3. What did the Gentile Christians have in common with the Jewish Christians? Why is this important to remember when we consider joining in worship with Christians from other cultures?

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Do we recognize and respect the cultural values of other people? How can we encourage each other to do this in our congregation?
2. How can we acknowledge and value people of other cultures and ethnic groups? How can we apply a "theology of embrace" to our contact with these groups?
3. What are the barriers that keep us from reaching out to those who are different?
4. How can we encourage and enable people from other cultures to worship with us?
5. How can we empower new members who are ethnically different?

COVENANT

I covenant to saturate myself, my church, and my community in prayer. I will seek God's will for my active involvement in multicultural ministry in my church.

I covenant to look for ways to interact with people of other cultures and ethnic groups in my community. I will learn about their customs and history, I will try their food and listen to their music, I will seek the good in them and find common ground to base a relationship upon. I will express my desire to get to know them with a smile, a kind gesture, a favorable comment, or an invitation.

I covenant to love and pray for people of other cultures and ethnic groups. I will pray for God to bring people into my

life so that I might learn from them, and they might learn from me. I will share Jesus with them, and, if they are Christians too, I will allow them to share Jesus with me.

I covenant to look for ways my church can develop sensitivity to other cultures and people groups. I will invite people from other ethnic and cultural groups to my church. I will welcome visitors of other groups and make them welcome.

I will covenant to discuss with others how we can collectively reach out to those immigrants already participating in our congregation in ways that give them meaningful say in the worship of the church.

Finally, I covenant to share the load of ministry in my church. I will contribute in any way I am able to making our church a multicultural environment. I will not allow others to bear the load alone.

Signed: _____

Witnessed by: _____

Dated: _____

ACTION STEPS

1. Talk with people you know who can help serve as guides for you into your neighborhood. How can they help you prepare?

2. Learn ways to become engaged with people of other racial and cultural backgrounds. List those within your sphere of influence

who come from other cultures and countries. You may also wish to include those who are hearing- or sight-impaired as they often deal with the world in cross-cultural ways. Pray for them on a regular basis.

3. Learn what you can about their histories and world experiences. Allow them the time to share intimately with you their story. Use a mediator or translator if necessary.

4. Take a friend and walk from your church to a neighborhood store. What kinds of stores are available in your community? Visit at least one (preferably one you haven't been to before) that represents a different culture or ethnic group.

5. Learn about the demographic realities of your community. Check with the Nazarene Research Center** to get the data about your local neighborhood. What "unreached" groups of people are there? Why are they unreached? What are their needs that the church could be addressing?

6. Attend a meeting at a school in your neighborhood or a local neighborhood association meeting. Listen to the concerns being raised. Introduce yourself to a few people.

7. Acquaint yourself with other nonprofit groups in the neighboring community, including youth service organizations.

8. Attend a neighborhood picnic in a park, a block party, or any event happening within the neighborhood. Who are the neighborhood leaders? Introduce yourself to people, participate, and have fun!

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* Adapted from:

<http://www.trainingreference.co.uk/skills/team_development/diversity.htm>. Copyright 2002 Trans4mation.

** To get started, go online to:

<<http://www.nazarene.org/ministries/administration/researchcenter/display.aspx>>.

DVD Study Guide

"Missio Dei": Seeing the United States and Canada as Mission Fields

Instruction: Watch the 33-minute DVD with your group, then spend the remaining time studying the discussion materials. We suggest devoting 60 to 90 minutes for each session.

SESSION SIX: Commissioned to Serve

Prepared by Fletcher L. Tink

INTRODUCTION

We've reached the final session of our six-week study of the United States and Canada as mission fields. How are we going to respond to this challenge?

George Barna sees 12 trends for the year 2018. Each of these trends offer considerable hope for ministry relevance in any denomination that practices its theology, reaches out to all people, and offers discipleship not just as a church activity but also as practice for our 24/7 workaday world. The Church of the Nazarene is well-positioned to accept that challenge.

Let's examine some of these trends:

- Diminishing Christian Orientation: "Spiritual interest will remain strong, thus creating an appetite for other religions as well as non-church Christian venues that are more relational, experiential, informal, authentic, applicable, and process-oriented. This could catalyze a 're-Reformation,' forcing us to major on the majors, doctrinally and in practice."

- Simplification and Focus of Mission: "The organic/simple church impetus will encourage congregations to discern the one thing they're good at that fills needs in their community."
- Discipleship and Outreach through Service: "Mission trips, work projects, and using gifts and talents outside the walls of the church will be the growing, if not primary place, for spiritual formation."
- Growing Ethnic Diversity: "A growing diversity in America will mean more diverse worship styles and belief systems and a dilution of the American version of Christianity."
- Family Ministry Emphasis: "There is a felt need to pursue family unity and intergenerational worship and spiritual formation."

SELF-ASSESSMENT

As a study group, try out this Self-Assessment.

1. Over these past six sessions, I have come to feel that my country and my community:
 - a. are a legitimate mission field.
 - b. have pockets of "Calcuttas" that could be seen as mission fields.
 - c. if seen as a mission field would dilute the focus on foreign countries.
 - d. if seen as a mission field is embarrassing.
2. I truly believe that designating the United States and Canada as mission fields will:
 - a. put an emphasis on the United States and Canada where it has been lacking.

- b. not change anything.
 - c. result in evangelistic growth in the United States and Canada.
 - d. mobilize new resources for ministry here.
3. Over the past six sessions, I feel that:
- a. my eyes have been opened to new possibilities for the church.
 - b. my eyes have been opened to deeper personal commitment on my end.
 - c. my eyes have seen a lot of things, but nothing really new.
 - d. my eyes have been cleared of some biases, hostilities, and prejudices that I have been carrying.
4. Having walked this journey of six sessions, I feel that:
- a. I've learned a lot.
 - b. I'm overwhelmed and really don't know how to respond.
 - c. these people on the DVD are doing a great job!
 - d. I need to make some serious commitments about my role in these ministries.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: What Does the Bible Say?

"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.'" - Matthew 28:18-20

1. How is our church going to respond to the challenge we've learned about these past six weeks as we've watched the DVD, "Missio Dei," and discussed these study sessions? What do we want to do now?

CONCLUSION

Remember our first session? The biblical words that best describe what our world ought to be are "the kingdom of God" (heaven) and *shalom*. God desires that we live out and celebrate the Kingdom here on earth as an expression of *shalom*, that rich Hebrew word that describes a character that is energized by God and lived out in vibrant harmony with God, our fellow human beings, and nature.

On the DVD, you have seen and heard many spokespersons representing many cultures, contexts, and ways of doing ministry. Behind them are untold numbers of participants in the work who have found mission in the United States and Canada to be a glorious challenge. Partnerships, programs, passion, and prayer constitute the formal ingredients that are transforming communities and congregations. The lives that are being changed run the gamut of culture, condition, and color.

How are you going to respond? In what ways can you help?

COMMISSIONING

In each session you have read and perhaps revised each covenant for your own context. Maybe you have felt led to sign them. It is hoped that you have followed up with your covenantal commitments and taken some of the action steps.

In watching the DVD, studying the Scripture, and interacting with like-minded study group friends, you have found a clearer sense of your role and calling in this initiative to your neighbors, your cities, and your nation. God has given you an extraordinary window of opportunity to impact this generation and our "Jerusalem" in ways not unlike those of our missionaries

and national workers elsewhere. The missionary enterprise to the United States and Canada is not in competition with foreign missions, but rather is an outgrowth and expansion of it. Having "tooled" elsewhere, we bring our tool kit back home.

If you've read all the challenges and are ready to go forward in a new venture for the Kingdom, perhaps a ceremony of commission is in order. It may be that your pastor has been a facilitator and fellow learner in these sessions and is prepared, with you, to offer a commissioning opportunity.

Here are some suggestions for such a ceremony:

- Each person should find a relevant Scripture that has spoken to his or her heart. Share it with the group.
- Each person should share one area of ministry that motivates him or her, that perks the imagination, and utilizes the gifts this person has. It need not be dramatic or comprehensive, just a seed planted that might germinate.
- Let the group listen to the ideas of each person and help anticipate practical problems and solutions. After discussion, each person should write down his or her personal calling. Then, have one member of the group take notes on a ministry the whole group desires to initiate collectively. Process the idea through the pastor. What does he or she think?
- Find a "holy place": an altar or another location where God has met with people in your congregation. As intimately as possible, engage in a time of prayer, concluding with a pastoral blessing. Here is one commission statement you may want to use:

"Our Father and our God: You who spoke to Samuel and called him as a child to serve the children of Israel . . . You who gave a vision to Isaiah of his own uncleanness and calling . . . You who commissioned Your only Son by the waters of the Jordan, we echo their united response of 'Here am I, send me.'

"You, on this occasion, do not ask us to travel many miles to fulfill Your will in our lives. Yet, You do ask us to go on a journey cross-culturally to those of other origins and cross-culturally into the land of those who suffer. You ask us to cross our boundaries of comfort and security and to engage those who challenge us intellectually, who overwhelm us with their complexities, who stir us with their needs. We pray that you will help us offer a salvation that removes the heart of stone and replaces it with a heart of flesh; a salvation that offers the waters of cleansing for polluted lives and meaning to parched ones; a salvation that takes fractured lives and unites the broken pieces; a salvation that takes diseased lives and brings them to full health and wholeness.

"Open us up to our own insensitivities, impurities, lack of responsibility, brokenness, and sickness so that in serving others, we ourselves find wholeness for ourselves in You.

"We pray that you ignite our imaginations, stir up our resources, stimulate our commitment to community, and strengthen our efforts. May you bring to us those whom you have already designated to help fulfill Your mission through our lives.

"And may we have fun, favor, and fruit in all that we do in Your name."

Signed: _____

Witnessed by: _____

Dated: _____

ACTION STEPS

1. Focus on one activity for which there is both consensus and commitment in your group to reach the U.S. and Canadian mission fields.
2. Talk it up with fellow Christians.
3. Find out how others are doing similar things and what they have learned.
4. Decide whether you want to strengthen something that exists, partner with other organizations, or create something new.
5. Assess the broadest list of resources, including the resources of the people whom you want to serve or reach.
6. Spend time with and listen intently to those whom you are called to serve. Adjust your vision as a result of their perspectives.
7. Draw up a timeline of tasks and assign them to volunteers.
8. Bathe each step with prayer.

9. Go out into your world, courageously, creatively, and compassionately on "Missio Dei," the Mission of God!

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