

God's Missionary Agency—The Local Church

Turn in your Bibles – Acts 13

In the church, things are often looked at in a subdivided way as side dishes, with the main dish being, Sunday Morning Service.

Side dishes:

Sunday School, Children, Youth, Work Days, Wednesday Night Services, Soul Winning

Most churches offer and have different side dishes.

Most churches look at Missions as a side dish. However, this side dish is farmed out (sub-contracted) to a Missionary Agency. We just remove that side dish all together.

The church normally does not give the same time, intensity, finances, and effort to this side dish as to other side dishes. Think – given to the youth ministries, children's ministries, nursery

I give to you, that Missions is the platter that all dishes sit on. Is VBS a part of missions, is soul winning, is S. S., is building construction? We must change our thinking.

The Mission was given to the church. It is commanded. It is our orders. The Great Commission – winning souls, baptism, instruction, and to do it everywhere. It is the work of the church not the work of a few individuals.

I want to give us the BIG picture. We usually don't make good decisions if we don't see all of the picture. We cannot fully understand unless we see the BIG picture.

In Acts 13, we find the Antioch Church. The best example, the best model of a local church in the N.T.

The Jerusalem church fades into the background and the Antioch church becomes the center of attention because it sponsored the extension of the church into Asia and Europe.

I have entitled today's message: "God's Missionary Agency—the Local Church"

Acts 13:1

Let us stand for the reading of God's Holy Word.

Acts 13:1-3

Let us pray.

You may be seated.

This passage is described here as the Apostle Paul's first missionary journey. Not just Paul but Barnabas and it was really the Antioch churches first missionary journey and the Apostle Paul and Brother Barnabas got called out to go.

God's Missionary Agency is the Local Church

The Local Church is God's organization for today's work – Do you believe that?

YES – Jesus said, "I will build my church." It is the vehicle that God created to get His program/plan done in the world, to reach the world for Christ. Do you believe that?

The Local Church is responsible for God's work in the world today.

Then why have we given our responsibility away to missions agencies? Why have we sub contracted with an outside group to take care of our responsibilities?

Granted, a missionary agency can help us with travel, logistics, etc.

The church has also delegated its responsibility of producing missionaries to mission sending agencies. Where do they find missionaries? Often, they go to college campuses and recruit and then train them. They are ready to go and where does these finances come from?

This model has left the burden of obtaining financial and prayer support to the individual missionary. The missionary begins his gypsy life crisscrossing the country trying to get strangers to support.

- You go, you find and you finance your own way, and we will pray for you and give you token financial help.

American church people have money. Our standard of living is very high; more vehicles than we need, more clothes than we need; we are living in super abundance, so much so that the storage industry has mushroomed.

Churches have buildings, big and beautiful, expensive buildings; most sit empty all week long. They have buildings but no missionaries, no pastors on the field, no college students preparing for full time Christian work.

The building is a tool. I am glad that we did not sacrifice missions on the **altar** of a building project.

Most local churches are empty handed when it comes to the future generation of God's preachers, missionaries, and workers. That is sad.

- If they are not coming out of our churches, then where do they come from?
- Churches are losing people and not producing people; salvation, baptism, bringing them to maturity so that they can be an active part of the local church. It is then out of the crop of people, that God calls. He puts into the

heart a burning desire, an inner compulsion. We recognize that call and we send them out.

When a church fails to win souls, train, equip people, engage believers in ministry, the pool from which to harvest future leaders becomes virtually nonexistent. The shelf is empty.

That's why the church must then look outside its own people to find faithful missionary candidates whom they can support.

In order for us to be God's (church) missionary agency, we have to get our heads screwed on straight. We must know what we are doing and why we exist.

Most churches today are just trying to survive. Most churches today that are surviving have no idea where they are going or what they are supposed to do.

The Antioch church was a stable church, a ministering church, an established church that reached out beyond itself. They had at least 5 capable men, **Acts 13:1**.

- Five men were faithful in the leadership ministry of that church. We must have faithful leadership.
- God only called 2 of the 5 to go out. What were the rest to do? The rest were to take care of the home front. Someone must keep the home fires burning. The sending church holds the rope as the selected few/called out and sent out few, go out to do the work in the world, (venture over the cliff).

The extension ministry of a church is only as strong as the home base, the core.

So, it was in the midst of that faithful ministry in the Antioch church, that Barnabas and Paul were separated out for missionary service, vs. 2.

God will call people out of the local congregation.

Paul and Barnabas were the first actual sent out ones of the church.

The first organized missionary movement was in the Antioch church.

It was in the Antioch church that Paul matured as a leader. He was brought there by Barnabas (Acts 11:25-26).

Paul and Barnabas engaged in a teaching ministry for nearly a year, until they were called on to take relief money to the believers in Judea who were experiencing great famine (Acts 11:29-30) – they were trusted men.

Acts 12: 25 – Fulfilled / Finished.

Paul and Barnabas had proved themselves. They were no fly by night fellas.

- Paul and Barnabas were men who had labored, taught, and won souls to Christ.
- Everyone knew them. They were loved, trusted and respected.

Do we know our missionaries? – Most churches do not know their missionaries because the missionary did not come from within. So the church and the missionary have no personal relationship at all. People usually invest in what they know.

In many churches today there is minimal involvement of the church with the missionary and little accountability of the missionary to the local church.

Our goal should be that any person sent out by our church would first be involved in the ministry of our church.

- We can see his heart, his spiritual gifts, his family, and his character is tested. The people will have a personal relationship with them. Our children will know their children. Most churches do not know the beliefs, practices or lifestyles of their missionaries.

Before we send someone out from the church, they need to be proven in the local church ministry prior to being sent.

Those people, who have been involved in the church, will have a good grasp of both the church's philosophy of ministry and pattern for ministry.

They are like-minded in doctrine and philosophy and practice.

THINK about THIS: We all too often send untried and untested men that have not pastored, or been deacons:

- They never have been highly involved in a church. We send out people to do the work of the church and they have never done the work of the church.

Look at what Paul went through as a missionary, (II Cor. 11:23-28), beaten, imprisoned, stoned, shipwrecked, deep, in peril, hungry, cold, naked. John Mark was not called – he just went along for the ride and guess who came home?

Acts 13:3

Thus in its purest form, the N.T. local church sent forth missionary representatives from the midst of its own congregation.

There are no missionary boards, agencies or organizations; no references in the Bible. Nor do we find single individuals sending forth missionaries apart from the commission of the church.

The Great Commission was given to the Apostles who were to become the foundation of the church. It was therefore, given to the church, not to individuals.

The laying on of hands did not impart any special power nor qualification to the missionaries but expressed its fellowship with Paul and Barnabas and recognized them as its delegates.

Look at Method of Missions

Acts 14:21-23

How did God do it? – evangelize the lost, taught the believers, and planted churches.

Most new missionaries are not doing that. They are specialized. We are top heavy with specialization. We need to be top heavy with soul winning, teaching and church planting.

★The Bible not only **commands** missions, but it also sets forth the **method** for missions. You and I can see quite plainly what was done.

We must be involved with this pattern of ministry.

It was the Antioch church that produced new churches.

Phillipi, Colossee, Corinth, Thessalonica; Ephesus; Crete, but all we hear is the Apostle Paul, the Apostle Paul. Granted, the Apostle Paul was the greatest missionary ever, but it was not just Paul's work, it was Antioch's work and Antioch sent out the Apostle Paul.

Acts 14:26-28

When the missionary comes home – he comes home, to his sending church, not to travel all over the U.S. to raise funds for his work.

God's missionary agency is the local church.

Let us stand for closing invitation.

Every eye closed

Believers – do we understand our personal responsibility as the Missions Agency of God? That our ministry work (service) is a part of God's missions plan?

Our work with those that are saved is to teach, train, and disciple them to maturity.

So that they become an active part of this local church and some of them God will call out.

How are we as a part of this church helping in the mission work of the church?

I challenge you to read the book of Acts and write down all the principles you find regarding missions and implement them. It will cause a missions revival.

Do we understand the BIG picture?

Gospel