

## Missions Position Paper

The gospel is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes and the church is God's appointed means of reaching the lost world. The proper guidance and instruction for the church to stay on course comes from a careful study of the Word of God for in it we discover the mission of God. This paper is an attempt to lay down a Scriptural footing for why we do what we do, with special emphasis on how we do it.

### I. God's Mission

The mission of God is what drives and directs the mission of His church. As the mission of God is grasped with greater clarity and wonder, the church will be better positioned to fulfill its role in this world and bring glory to God.

*According to the Scriptures, the mission of God is the fulfillment of His promises to bless every tribe and language and people and nation in His Son, Jesus Christ to the praise of His glorious grace (Gen 12:3; Rev 5:9; 7:9–10; Lk 1:32, 33; Eph 1:6, 12, 14).*

#### *The Promises of God*

The Old Testament describes a Messiah who will carry out the mission of God. His identity and his work are described in the following ways:

- An offspring of the woman who will bruise the head of Satan (Gen 3:15)
- A descendent of Abraham who will bring blessing to all the families of the earth (Gen 12:1-3)
- A King in the line of David who will reign eternally (2 Sam 7:11–16)
- A Suffering Servant who will bear the sins of mankind (Isa 53:6)

#### *The Son of God*

The New Testament presents Jesus Christ as the anticipated Messiah of the Old Testament. Jesus fulfilled this role through His life, death, and resurrection resulting in the following:

- Victory over Satan (Col 2:14, 15)
- Blessing to the nations (Gal 3:14)
- Commencement of His eternal kingship (Eph 1:19–21)
- Forgiveness of sin (Col 2:13)

#### *The Glory of God*

The mission of God certainly involves bringing the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ to the ends of the earth (Matt 28:18-20; Acts 1:8), but the chief end in the mission of God is to bring glory and honor to Himself (Ps 67). The primary means by which God will glorify Himself is by saving people “from every tribe and tongue and people and nation” (Rev 5:9).

## II. The Church's Mission

At the end of Christ's earthly ministry, He sent the church to continue the mission of God (John 20:21). The content of the church's mission is stated by Jesus in the Great Commission.

*Matthew 28:18 And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."*

Although there may seem to be multiple commands in Matthew 28:19, 20, there is only one: "make disciples." There are three participles: "Go...baptizing...teaching..." which characterize the disciple-making process.

### *Go*

The first participle, "Go," modifies the command "make disciples" in an important way. The sense in the original Greek language is not so much a command but an action that is assumed. So it basically means, "As you are going, therefore, make disciples of all nations..." Since the participle relates to the command, it carries some of its force. Thus the Lord was giving them direction: "make disciples," and it required them to be going to "all nations."

This clarification is needed to straighten out the misunderstanding that "missions" primarily involves going places to do ministry. The church must be making disciples as a part of its normal activity. This includes everything from the international ministries of the church to the everyday activities of the church member. If they are disciples of Christ, then they will be mindful of Christ's commission to make disciples wherever the Lord directs their path.

### *Baptizing and Teaching*

The two other participles that participate with the main verb are "baptizing" (v. 19) and "teaching" (v. 20). These supply additional information about how to make disciples. They are essential marks of true discipleship. *Baptizing* the disciples of Christ identifies them with Him and demonstrates their repentance and submission to His authority. *Teaching* the disciples of Christ instructs them in the commands that they are to observe in order to live a transformed life. This "baptizing" and "teaching" is exactly how Jesus made disciples.

### *Make Disciples*

The command to "make disciples," carries the essence of the Great Commission. The word translated "make disciples" means to bring them into a pupil-teacher relationship. They receive His authoritative instruction and accept what He says as true because He says it. They submit to His requirements, which they believe to be right because He makes them. To make someone into a learner and follower of Jesus Christ involves a life transformation where Christ is Teacher and Lord.

The Great Commission involves more than just evangelism, which is the proclamation of the Gospel to unbelievers. To be faithful to Christ's commission, evangelism must be followed up with what is necessary to help new converts be faithfully obedient to Christ in their everyday lives. Disciples must be made and matured, converted and completed, produced and perfected through the ministry of the Spirit and the Scriptures. If we are to be disciples of Christ, we will be both evangelists and disciplers.

As the message of salvation in Jesus Christ was proclaimed to the ends of the earth, God blessed local churches from Jerusalem, to Judea, to Samaria, and beyond by multiplying disciples. The divinely-appointed and Spirit-empowered means for disciple-making is the local church, and this is still the case today because of Christ's promise, "And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matt 28:20).

### **III. Our Mission**

As each local church embraces and participates in the mission of God, they will soon find that they play but a part in all that God is doing. This is implied from Christ's words, "Go and make disciples of all nations...baptizing...teaching...to the end of the age" (Matt 28:19, 20). Therefore, the *universal* church has been commissioned as His ambassadors to all nations until His work of salvation is done. Meanwhile, every *local* church fulfills their particular role of making disciples where the Lord has sovereignly placed them.

The Missions Committee at Valley Bible Church meets to prayerfully evaluate ways to faithfully advise the elders in the missionary endeavors of our church. There are three key spheres of missions that concern every member of our local church in some way.

*Because the New Testament teaches that the church is God's means of bringing glory to Himself through reaching the lost, we understand "missions" to be the work of **planting** churches where there are none in order to make Christ known, **partnering** with existing churches to help strengthen their ability to make disciples, and **participating** in the ministries of the sending church to minister the Gospel in its community.*

#### *Church-Planting*

##### Process

Church-planting is the process of selecting, strengthening, sending, and supporting biblically qualified and adequately competent members of our church to go to a people that do not have an established church that is capable of fulfilling the Great Commission. Because there is a variety of ways our church can be involved in church-planting, the process will look different for each case. In any case, we would be providing the church leaders who will begin or carry on the work of ministry.

### Purpose

The goal for church-planting would be for the new, indigenous church to become a healthy, independent, disciple-making church. This new, indigenous church should be able to make disciples who proclaim the message of Jesus Christ to the world. For this goal to be reached, it would require the new church-plant to become sound in their understanding, teaching, and practicing of the Scriptures in their culture. A healthy church is a reproducing church.

### Prerequisites

Our church may engage in this process if the member, or team of members, being considered for church-planting is qualified according to 1 Timothy 3:1–7 and Titus 1:5–9. In addition, the following factors are considered:

- Demonstrable commitment to VBC
- Proven skills and abilities for the desired role
- Similar beliefs, strategies, philosophy of ministry to VBC
- Plan to generate sufficient financial support
- Plan for implementing Gospel-ministry with those in need
- Circumstances of life (health, family, etc)

### Priorities

Because we are just one local church, we have certain priorities or preferences that guide our decisions. For instance:

- We desire to support people from our church with whom we have had long involvement in order to evaluate, train, and better assist them
- We desire for the individual or team we send to be able to come up with their own support on the field to better integrate themselves in that community
- We desire to plant churches where the need for the Gospel is highest
- We desire to plant churches where we have the greatest opportunity to meet their needs
- We desire that those we send have a healthy team dynamic
- We desire to partner with other local churches in this work but are willing to consider involvement with missions organizations that have a similar philosophy of ministry to ours

### Proofs

The Book of Acts contains several examples of churches being planted from Jerusalem to Judea to Samaria to the ends of the earth (1:8; 8:1; 9:31; 16:5). It was the Spirit-empowered process of making disciples of Jesus Christ—the good news was proclaimed, many believed, churches were established, and elders were appointed (14:21–23). One particular example is that of Titus in Crete (Ti 1:5). Paul left Titus on the island of Crete to put into order what remained from their first visit by appointing and establishing elders for the church. Also, it was the Apostle Paul’s particular ambition to preach the Gospel where Christ had not yet been named, lest he build on someone else’s foundation (Rom 15:20).

## *Church-Partnering*

In our efforts to participate in missions, we understand that most of the opportunities for advancing the local church may already involve an existing local church. In these cases, we view ourselves as “church-partnering,” which is really just another essential phase of church-planting among the nations.

### Process

In the context of missions, church-partnering is the process of identifying, serving with, and growing in our relationship with other established local churches with whom our elders believe we can further advance the Gospel. Unlike church-planting, where no sound churches exist, the church we are looking to partner with will likely already be able to fulfill the Great Commission in their cultural context. Depending on the situation, when helping them with their ministry, we would most likely be submitting to their leadership rather than providing their leadership, as in church-planting.

### Purpose

Our goal in partnering with other churches is to strengthen their ability to more effectively carry out the Great Commission locally and globally. Our purpose is not to conform them to the cultural norms to which we are accustomed, but to build them up, encourage them, equip them, and participate with them in reaching the lost through a biblical approach to ministry. Healthy church-partnerships help open several doors for the Word of Christ to be declared on either end of the relationship.

### Prerequisites

If our church is interested in partnering with another like-minded church, there will be many different opportunities in which our church members can get involved. Based on the nature of the task (ie. Bible translation, pastoral training, visitation, teaching, childcare, evangelistic opportunities, construction, service projects, fund raising, food preparation, etc) and on the length of the trip, the prerequisites may vary. Typically, the more permanent in length and pastoral in nature the trip, the greater the need is for the individual or team to be held to the qualifications of a deacon or an elder (see 1 Tim 3:1–13; Titus 1:5–9).

For our more frequent short-term trips, the one participating in such a ministry should be, at a bare minimum:

- A professing believer in Jesus Christ
- An active member of Valley Bible Church
- An asset rather than a risk to the team
- Recommended by a ministry leader
- Accompanied by a parent if under 18

We believe that an ideal church partnership must meet at least the following criteria:

- Commitment to the Scriptures as sole authority for faith and practice
- Common doctrinal statement and philosophy of ministry

- Need for a stronger Bible-based, Gospel-driven ministry
- Opportunity for either church to serve the other with their gifts and resources
- Ability for members to be optimally involved in the ministries of either church

### Priorities

It is our desire to work alongside the leaders of the partnering church. We want to aid them in the most biblical approach to ministry to be faithful to God, because at the end of the day, it is their leaders who will have to give an account to God for how they kept watch over the souls of their members.

The nature of the work and the maintenance of the relationship with the partnering church are responsibilities given to a recognized ministry leader in our church. They serve under our elders. They work to create and provide opportunities for involvement to our members. And they focus on nurturing the partnership.

We believe it is a high priority for every Valley Bible Church member to get involved in our church's missions ministries for his or her sake, the sake of our church, and the sake of the church with which we're partnering. Using one's time, resources, and gifts to visit and serve other churches on short, mid, and long-term missions is a great way to get involved in the mission of God.

If there are any reasons that keep a member back from actually visiting a church we are planting or partnering with (age, health, ministry responsibilities, family issues, passport, etc), then there are three essential ways to be just as involved in missions from home:

- *Prayer Support*—Missions in its beginning and end is a works of God, so prayer is imperative for any success. As a church, we would encourage members to gather in prayer for our missionaries and missions efforts throughout the year. This could involve receiving emails to know how to pray for the different missions ministries through our church.
- *Financial Support*—If the Lord has blessed you with financial or material resources, then you can play a strategic role in supporting missions. This could include hosting missionaries/team members visiting from a partnering church. Throughout the year, we have several opportunities for you to get involved in raising funds for missions (ie. snack bar at softball fields, yard sales, car washes, and much more).
- *Training Support*—You may be in a position to help train, encourage, and further prepare those involved in missions work so they will be more equipped and effective on the field. As each member uses their gifts for the edification of the body, the potential for more people to be involved in missions significantly increases.

### Proofs

It is no surprise that the Book of Acts is also crocheted with a vast network of relationships and partnerships in Gospel ministry. Paul experienced great joy from the partnership he had with the Philippian believers because of their partnership in the Gospel from the beginning of his ministry

there (Phil 1:3–5). The New Testament letters are filled with plans to travel and meet together, with encouragement to be faithful to Christ, with admonition in areas of discipline, with instruction in sound doctrine, and with exhortation to live in a manner worthy of the Gospel.

### *Church-Participating*

The most natural way that we can be faithful to “make disciples,” and so participate in the mission of God, is in reaching out to our own community. As a local church, we have abundant opportunities to proclaim the Gospel and to make disciples through the ministries of our church.

#### Process

Church-participating is that sphere of missions where every believer faithfully participates in the church’s mission to reach their community with the Gospel. It is an outlook on life that has as its highest priority and normal agenda making disciples of those around them. It is a lifestyle of evangelism and discipleship where the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the focus.

#### Purpose

The goal in church-participating is for every believer to faithfully involve themselves in the mission of God in and through their local church. After all, this is why we stress involvement in the ministries of our church—more effective outreach.

Local outreach may be just as important, if not more important, than global outreach for a few reasons:

- If our church struggles to be faithful to the Great Commission locally, how are we going to minister effectively in other places? The degrees of difficulty rapidly increase once the attempt is made to minister the Gospel in a culturally, geographically, and linguistically diverse area.
- As disciples are being made and multiplied at our church, they will bring with them more connections and opportunities and resources to be able to reach more people near and far.
- There are a great number of people who are unable to leave home and participate in foreign missions work, but they can be just as useful in the mission of God if they commit to pray, support, disciple, and evangelize locally.
- As our church makes and matures disciples of Jesus Christ, we gain greater insight from our experiences and efforts that will aid us in church-planting and church-partnering elsewhere.

Essentially, the stronger and healthier the sending church becomes, the greater the opportunities for advancing the mission of God elsewhere becomes.

#### Prerequisites

The Scriptures teach that once an individual is born again they become a new creature and are filled with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the One who fills, gives spiritual gifts, illuminates, guides, teaches, empowers, sanctifies, convicts, and produces growth in Christlikeness. So the only objective condition for a life of faithful service to God is faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and

Savior; salvation, as well as sanctification, is a work of the Spirit of God. Subjectively, every believer is called to be filled with the Spirit so they can be sanctified and serve others effectively. As one's life is yielded to the authority of Jesus Christ, the church and its efforts to reach the lost with the Gospel will be prized above all things.

### Priorities

Because the redeeming love of God in Christ is impartial and excludes no one, no matter their economic situation, their ethnicity, or their lifestyle choices, we would like for anyone in our community to feel welcome at our church. We also believe that whatever relationships, gifts, activities, jobs, and interests God has given us should not be used for our own ends, but to the end that the lost are found in Jesus Christ. Remember, it is the Lord Jesus Christ who promised to build His church (Matt 16:18) and He is presently advancing the mission of God through His church by the work of His Spirit. Because this is true, the leaders at Valley Bible would encourage every member to get involved in the different ministries of the church and see what doors the Lord might open to save the lost.

### Proofs

Christ chose ordinary Jewish disciples who were not noble, wise, nor powerful according to this world. He called them to follow after Him (cf. 1 Cor 1:26). He taught and trained them. He empowered them with the promised Holy Spirit. And He then sent them out as His witnesses from Jerusalem to Judea to Samaria to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). In a similar fashion, we must take the Good News of Jesus Christ to those we have natural relationships with and let the Lord lead us into opportunities for the Gospel by His sovereign hand.



*Table of Our Mission as a Church*

	<b>Church-Planting</b>	<b>Church-Partnering</b>	<b>Church-Participating</b>
<b>Process</b>	Selecting, strengthening, sending, and supporting members of our church to go to a people who do not have an established church capable of fulfilling the Great Commission	Identifying, serving with, and growing in our relationship with other established churches we believe we can further advance the Gospel with	Establishing ministries and training all church members with the aim of reaching the community with the Gospel of Jesus Christ through evangelism and discipleship
<b>Purpose</b>	For the new, indigenous church to become a healthy, independent, disciple-making church	To strengthen their ability to more effectively carry out the Great Commission locally and globally	For every believer to involve themselves in the mission of God in and through their local church so there will be more opportunities for the Gospel
<b>Prerequisites</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Commitment to VBC</li> <li>-Proven skills and abilities for the role</li> <li>-Similar beliefs, strategies, and philosophy of ministry</li> <li>-Financial support plan</li> <li>-Gospel implementation plan</li> <li>-Life circumstances</li> </ul>	Pastoral/permanent role: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Elder/deacon qualified</li> <li>-Elder approved</li> </ul> Short-term trips: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Faith in Jesus Christ</li> <li>-Active VBC member</li> <li>-Asset to the team</li> <li>-Ministry leader recommendation</li> <li>-Parental guidance under 18</li> </ul>	Faith in Jesus Christ and the indwelling Holy Spirit; leading a Spirit-filled life of service to God
<b>Priorities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-To support members we know</li> <li>-To have church-planters come up with support on the field</li> <li>-To plant where there is the greatest need</li> <li>-To plant where there is the greatest opportunity</li> <li>-To have a healthy team dynamic</li> <li>-To partner with like-minded local churches and missions agencies (if needed)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Work alongside of leaders of partnering church</li> <li>-Entrust care of team to a ministry leader</li> <li>-Get every member involved in some way</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Impartiality</li> <li>-Individual faithfulness with God-given resources</li> <li>-Get every member involved in every way possible</li> </ul>
<b>Proofs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Acts 1:8; 8:1; 9:31; 14:21–23; 16:5</li> <li>-Titus 1:5</li> <li>-Romans 15:20</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Philippians 1:3–5</li> <li>-Book of Acts</li> <li>-NT Epistles</li> </ul>	The disciples of Christ

**Conclusion:**

The mission of the church is the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to all peoples in the power of the Holy Spirit beginning with our local communities and extending to the ends of the earth to the praise of our Heavenly Father. According to the Scriptures, Christ suffered, died, and rose again the third day so that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all nations (Lk 24:46, 47). The resurrected Lord told His disciples, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you” (Jn 20:21). Go therefore and make disciples of all nations!