
**“The Sovereignty of God in Missions”
(Matthew 28:18-20)
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Introduction:

In my opinion, one of the greatest movements in missions in the last 30 years has been short-term missions (STMs). How did this happen?

- The advances and affordability in transportation.
- The spread of the global economy.
- The openness of countries for travel and visitors.
- The labours of pioneer missionaries.
- The fall of the Soviet Union. The openness of China to visitors. Other than North Korea, missions is possible practically everywhere.

What have been its benefits?

--before you had to rely on communications by letter or word of mouth that came very infrequently. Or the missionary would return home for some emergency, usually because of his health or to raise more funds, and then you would hear of his stories and he would become sort of a celebrity, because at that time, mainly the 1800s, the missionary was part missionary, part explorer, part cultural anthropologist. And so when a pioneer missionary like David Livingstone came back from Africa, he was front-page news in England. But in any case, now, you can have a personal taste of missions.

--you can begin to understand the life and challenges of a missionary

--you understand the challenges of cross cultural living

--it raises your commitment to living a Great Commission life style.

--some very significant things can be done through God through a STM. Encouragement to Ms. Real physical needs being met – homes being built. A boost to the ministry of the LTMs. A huge benefit to our spiritual lives. And so on.

What have been its negatives?

--it can become a vacation, a cultural sight-seeing tour. Or as some have called it—a vacation with a purpose, and very little more than that.

--you may become deceived to think that those 8 days, those 2 weeks in another country is missions. No, that’s not missions. It’s hardly more than a lick of a triple scoop ice cream cone. Think about it. We didn’t learn the language and we didn’t immerse ourselves in the culture. We definitely didn’t do discipleship. Discipleship can’t be done in two weeks, not even for Jesus. And if we didn’t do discipleship then we might need to ask ourselves if we in fact even did missions. In Matthew 28 Jesus gives the missionary charge, “Go” and do what? Make disciples. Baptizing. Teaching them to obey. For example, I love the fact that Don timed the baptism of new believers at God’s Joy church for when the YN teams arrived. It’s a moment I will never forget. But it was the Mclsacs and the God’s Joy church that laid all the foundation and actually led them to Christ. And after we’re gone, it’s still the Mclsacs and God’s Joy church that disciple them to maturity,

day in and day out. In two weeks, communities aren't changed, bibles aren't translated, and genuine trust in relationships isn't built. We can have some measure of meaningful trust and relationships with the nationals because of Don, Rolando, and others who are there for the long-term.

--you may become deceived to think that you've done your duty in missions. Been there, done that. Let's move on. As an example, let me ask you these questions, especially for you who've already been to missions and if you're a member of our church, that's most of you.

1. Has your prayer life changed because of STMs? I mean are you praying for the country you visited, the people you met, and the missionaries who serve there?
2. Have you changed anything about your materialistic lifestyle to reflect and identify with the poor in this world? i.e. the cars we drive, the clothes we wear, etc.
3. Has your financial contribution to missions increased because you went on a STM?

If none of these things happened, perhaps the trip was in vain, perhaps it was for naught. Now, it might seem like I am painting a anti-STM picture here, but I'm not. I am all for STM. It was just a few years ago that EM was doing the grand total of 1 STM per year. Now we are doing 8 and we have several people every year who are going on extended STMs (and by extended I mean 1-12 months). I have personally witnessed the transformation of many of our members because of STMs. People who had grown cold in their love for Jesus and others have been revived. So I am all for STMs. Perhaps our philosophy is a bit different in that our church's methodology for STMs is this: Long-term STMs, that is repeatedly visiting and re-visiting the same locations, the same people, with our STM teams.

Where am I going with this message. I think you know. Whether you went to STMs ten-twenty years ago or you went just this summer or even if you never went, God wants every believer to live out a Great Commission life-style.

If our church has bred the myth that those who go on STMs are more spiritually mature than those who don't forgive me. That was not my intent. Because no where in scripture would it say that. You may have never gone on a STM, but you pray and you give and weep over the lost, people you have never personally met. I know people like that. They show up at our Saturday morning prayer meetings. So you don't need to go on a STM. It doesn't hurt to go of course, but you don't have to go. Health, finances, family and work may keep you from going. That's okay. Now if you're afraid to go, or you refuse to go, that's a different story.

So where do we go from here? Again, increase the commitment to missions. Linda and I were having a visitation with one of our newer members this summer and the person had stated, perhaps in passing, "Young Nak is really into missions". And I took that as a complement, as a badge of honor, but we've only begun. There is so much more to do. And every one of us can do more.

Very practically here are some things you can do.

1. Become aware. Every single one of us now has access to a vast quantity of information on every subject. Think of the email subscriptions you receive on a regular basis. I was thinking of the ones I get. I get subscriptions from RedFlagDeals.ca, steepandcheap.com, amazon.ca, some fishing tackle site. But I also get these subscriptions. Google news subscriptions on Cambodia and Kyrgyzstan. Prayer letters from about a dozen missionaries. Daily prayer requests from Kyrgyzstan. Do I read all of them? No. Probably 15%. But that's more than I've ever read and responded to. You too can increase your awareness through those and other means.

2. Channel that information into sweet and fervent intercession. Pray personally. Pray in small groups. Pray on Saturday.
3. Read biographies of missionaries. If you want to learn about jacking up your spiritual life and need some real heroes, read the biographies of the Judsons, the Careys, the Livingstones, the Elliotts, the Richardsons, the Studds, the Patons, the Brainerds, and so on. If you want a place to begin, stop by my office and I will give you a short list.
Here's what reading the stories of missionaries has done for me.

1. It has never ceased to amaze me what God can do through one man or woman completely devoted to him. Let me give you an example. Adonirum Judson was one of the first pioneer missionaries from American. He went off to Myanmar in the 1800s. And during his 40 or so years there, knowing that every missionary that comes after him would need this, he produced the Mynamar-English dictionary and grammar, and complete translation of the whole bible into Myanmar, and a bunch of other books and evangelistic tracts. And this was while he lost two wives, several children, and was imprisoned for several years for being accused of being a spy.
2. It gives me a measure of what it means to be a disciple of Christ. Please don't just look to your left and right for models of discipleship. We have to look behind us into the pages of history as well. That's what Hebrews chapter 11 on the great characters of faith was all about.
3. It shakes me out of my comfort zones in that what I've come to see as my rights I now view as privileges that I receive purely by the grace of God. There are more, but I'll stop there.

4. Seriously consider going as a career missionary soon. This is where the whole sovereignty of God part comes in and so I want us to look at Matthew 28:18-10 as our text.

¹⁸ Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ 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, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

The whole passage smells of the sovereignty of God.

--all authority

--therefore Go. The commission to be involved in missions is grounded in the Sovereignty of Jesus. That's what the 'therefore' means.

--teach them to obey I have commanded you – who else but the sovereign of the universe can issue such a request?

--sure I am with you always to the very end of the age. It is the Sovereign God of the Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit that will never leave us nor forsake us, that will protect us and guide us, and empower us for this great endeavor.

Okay, now to bring this closer to home. Don't we trust that God will lead us while we are here in Toronto going about our lives? We believe that He will get us jobs and spouses and guard our health and safety. We all believe that right? But why do we think that God would not do that there in the mission field? God will bring about sovereignly appointed suffering wherever we are, and we remain grateful and abiding him in the midst of it. God will bring about our death not one second too early or too late, whether here or there.

What is there to fear when all authority belongs to Jesus? What is there to fear, if the Sovereign Lord is with you? Nothing. There is nothing to fear. Friends, it is the sovereignty of God that allows his children to be radically obedient to His call to missions. It's not your love for adventure.

Or your burden for broken people. Or your special skill set. No, it is God's sovereignty. And if God is sovereign, then he is sovereign over our lives. And when someone is sovereign over our lives, there is only one thing we must do. Obey.

