



## Editor's Note

W e at ESN take our stewardship of the Lord's resources seriously, so I'll use this note to address a matter that applies to some of our readers, those who receive ESN by postal mail. We recognize the substantial savings made possible by the many who receive the bimonthly digital copy, but we also understand that some folks just don't have (or haven't had) computers or internet access, so need to receive ESN by mail.

However, judging from the envelopes that are returned to us, and the occasional reader who requests a change to digital subscription,

that number is diminishing. However, we're not sure if the change is significant enough to warrant discontinuing sending out issues by "snail mail." That's where you can help us. If you need to receive ESN by postal mail, please let us know so we can make a wise stewardship decision. And if you can now receive the issues by computer, please let us know. Finally, please do not view this as a hint for donations. The Lord has provided and we praise Him for that. But we don't want to continue a service that has outlived its usefulness! Thank you.



## Biblical Principles

### Elders and Missions, Step 3: Is the Mission Mandate Morphing?

by Jim Fleming

Elders, in Step 1, I challenged you to put missions back on the Elders' radar, and in Step 2, to be sending out missionaries the Bible way. The Lord's Mission Mandate is 2000 years old. Things change in 20 years; how much more in the 2000 years since the Mission Mandate was given? So, has the Mission Mandate morphed too? Isn't there a more modern mandate for mission? Good questions, because the Mission Mandate is morphing in modern missions. We need to discuss whether this is for the good.

There is a popular notion in church-growth circles that basically holds that the world is changing and the church needs to change with it. Yes, the church is changing. Some positive changes include forms and style that attract the 21st century family, updated Bible versions, music, and programs that vibrantly present Gospel-life to all age groups in the assembly. But negative change happens when the Gospel is diluted and the doctrines of Scripture are morphed to fit the relativity of modern thought.

Listen to the mission statement given by Paul to all assembly elders: "O Timothy, guard the deposit entrusted to you. Avoid the irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called 'knowledge,' for by professing it some have swerved from the faith. Grace be with you" (1 Tim. 6:20-21). *Swerved from the faith!*—that is a serious accusation! What were they swerving from in the first century and what might we be swerving from in the 21st century regarding evangelical missions? I will just deal with one aspect of missions that is morphing.

The Mission Mandate which is morphing

modern missions has arguably been influenced more by the on-going Lausanne Movement than anything else in the past two generations. The International Congress on World Evangelization was held in Lausanne, Switzerland in July, 1974. The gathering was convened by a committee headed by Rev. Billy Graham and drew more than 2,300 evangelical leaders from 150 countries. Much good resulted as the Christian church was motivated to reignite world evangelization with the theme, "Let the Earth Hear His Voice." Simultaneously John Stott made a statement that has had generational impact on modern evangelical missions: "Social work is mission."

That redefinition—or added definition—initiated a morphing of the fundamental definition of missions, and its practical outworking has morphed to the point that you can find mission groups claiming that saving the ecology is missions. Would you agree? Is that what our assemblies should be commending our young people to go out and do in the name of the gospel? An additional note of interest is that in the Lausanne Covenant,<sup>1</sup> article 5, "Christian Social Responsibility," precedes article 6, "The Church and Evangelism."

#### The Original Mission Mandate

Wasn't Jesus socially responsible? Definitely! He healed the sick (Matt. 4:24), He cast out demons (8:31), He made the lame to walk (11:5), and He fed the hungry (15:32-29), just to name a few. But those acts of kindness were not His mission in and of themselves. John brilliantly relates the works of the Lord Jesus to His mission: "Now Jesus did many other

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# Leadership Principles

## Thoughts on Replacing Elders by Jack Spender

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**W**e've all heard the old saying, "Time flies," but some things in life really make that truth come alive—for example, the retiring or home-going of faithful church elders. Remember those "little kids" who were always running around the church and now suddenly are getting married and having babies? Could we be watching future elders in the making? Perhaps there's a realization that the leadership team in the assembly is shrinking, and we haven't given much thought to replacements! Where will we find men who quietly desire the "good work" of leading in the church (1 Tim. 3:1)?

Let's begin on an encouraging note. Think about God's wise plan for leadership in the NT church. What a blessing to see (and promote) the truth of plural eldership; the safety in a multitude of counselors (Prov. 11:14); the broader scope of available spiritual gifts; and the feeding of the flock from a wide range of godly experience and perspectives. Add to that the fact that most denominational churches import new leaders from outside, but the assembly looks for replacement leaders within the local work, who know the people and have been involved all along. And finally, when a man moves away or gets promoted to glory, there's no crisis caused by a sudden vacuum; the other elders carry on and usually add to their number in a quiet and orderly fashion. God's design is always best!

### **God's Work; Man's Responsibility**

Of course, part of that design is human responsibility. When Paul tells Titus to "appoint elders in every church" (Tit. 1:5), we understand that to be God's will regarding church leadership throughout the age. And his lists of elder qualities speak of our responsibility to use discernment. Yes, God will provide men, and the Holy Spirit will give them the desire to serve and to qualify, but the church must watch, pray, and then give public recognition to what the Lord is doing. Error comes when we intrude into God's domain of "calling," and when we fail to do our part, like not recognizing the hand of God at work among us.

It's heartwarming for older elders to see younger men coming along who

can take up the work to which they have devoted their lives, and it's a great discouragement when it seems the assembly may close for lack of men to lead. Reasons are complex, and God is the Judge, but generally speaking, important biblical principles have been neglected or ignored. One of those is the failure to train and equip young people. Think about how much of the NT is devoted to training the next generation, as seen in the Lord's work with His disciples, or the instructions to Timothy and Titus in the epistles! We have no excuse to just "let nature take its course."

With that in mind, let's briefly mention some of the things that might be done to prepare for healthy leadership transition. Don't think of these as "rules" but as suggestions to consider and perhaps discuss.

### **Preparations for Passing the Baton**

**Start early.** Discuss the need and pray together about it. Let the saints know that it's on your hearts as leaders. They will respect you for it. Often it takes years for a congregation to recognize the growing involvement of younger men and, as we know, "time flies"!

**Discuss a workable plan.** Be teachable. There are many examples of leadership transition in the Bible; some good and some not, but helpful principles can be found since the Lord saw fit to include these records in His Word. Books by godly writers who understand the church often contain helpful suggestions. One value of Christian conferences is the opportunity for interaction with others who have already learned lessons and experienced blessing on such subjects. Why reinvent the wheel?

**Cultivate a love-based team.** If you haven't been taking seriously the charge in Acts 20:28, "Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock," this is a good time to begin. Devoting a few minutes at the start of an elders' meeting to check for special needs or burdens within the team and pray for one another need not take up a lot of time, and can pay big dividends.

### **Maintain a reasonable workload.**

Have the present elders learned the lessons from Exodus 18 and Acts 6 about safeguarding priorities by delegating

lesser needs to others such as deacons, small group leaders, gifted saints, young people being trained, etc.? It's a good thing to invite a younger man to sit in on the elders' meeting, but be sure to set a time limit (e.g., a few months or to the end of the year), and be clear that you are not "making elders" but only following the biblical injunction that the older train the younger. Remember that younger men in the assembly are watching how the elders work. Are elders' meetings stressful, running late, and too busy fighting small fires to care for one another or spend time in the Word and prayer? Who would desire to join such a group?

**Stick to biblical terminology.** Young people and those new to the assembly can be confused by unbiblical "Brethrenisms," so it's important to be accurate in our communications. When new elders are acknowledged publicly, we are recognizing (1 Thes. 5:12 NKJV) the Holy Spirit's work to make elders (Acts 20:28). We are not "voting them in," or giving them authority to serve. Remember that "elder" and "overseer" describe a spiritually mature man; "pastor" is a spiritual gift which can be received at salvation. The assembly has multiple pastors (gifted believers), but no one called "The Pastor." In the entire NT, only One is called Pastor or Shepherd; see 1 Pet. 2:25 and John 10:16.

**Practice timely transitions.** Are elders who can no longer serve due to age or health issues, or who face serious personal or family limitations humbly willing to "pass the baton" or are they grasping to retain the title? Are those who can no longer do the work honored for past years of service, and when appropriate, consulted about difficult issues being faced by the current elders?

In summary, this subject is just another way in which we can show our faith by our works (James 2:18). Long journeys and important decisions usually begin with a first step. We take that step convinced that the Lord will bless any honest effort as we acknowledge Him and lean not on our own understanding (Prov. 3:5). Yes, time does fly, and we can't slow it down, but we can redeem it (Eph.

*(Continued on next page)*

5:16). There's a sense of peace when we say, "The Lord will provide," and when we know that we have done what we could do, what He has asked us to do!



## **Missions** (cont'd from page 1)

signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:30-31). That is the

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core mission of Jesus Christ: that they may believe that Jesus is the Christ... that they may have life in His name. The Gospel is the core of missions.

As Christ is about to ascend to heaven, He focuses His mission statement even more. "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, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you." (Matt. 28:19-20). The mission of the gospel adds discipleship and church ordinance to believing. Christ had already prophesied what the post-Pentecost mission of His disciples would be: "I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18). Building the church of Jesus Christ is His central mandate.

Paul was inspired to explain the Holy Spirit's part through His gifting of the disciples. "And He gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God..." (Eph. 4:12-13). From day one of the initiation of the church at Pentecost, new believers were baptized, and they started meeting as the body of

Christ to fulfill their mission. And what did they do? "And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer" (Acts 2:42). Christ started building His church with His disciples and He has not stopped that central mission 2,000 years later.

### **The Modern Mission Mandate has not changed**

Fast-forward to 2022. A young couple is being interviewed by the elders at your assembly. They are sincerely enthusiastic about a ministry opportunity overseas to which they would like to be commended. The ministry they are eager to join teaches sustenance farming to very poor communities in Central Africa. It is an evangelical, non-profit mission organization. Answers to your questions reveal that the ministry participates with local churches all through the region, but the ministry workers are not directly involved with any one church, or denomination, nor are workers required to attend a local church and utilize their spiritual gifts in the church context. Rather, they will be working alongside the nationals, showing them the love of Christ by teaching them how they can grow sustainable crops and raise animals in order to not only survive, but thrive and be able to serve their communities through their improved level of living.

Now, sustainable farming, well-digging, education, medical work and almost any other humanitarian ministry are nothing new to faith missions. That was the basis of the colonial-era mission station, such as the one my parents served on in KwaZulu, Natal from 1951-1957, before starting urban missions in the city of Durban. Typically, the mission station had a clinic near the front gate, maybe even a small hospital. Then there was a school to teach the children (and parents) how to read, so that they could read the Bible, followed by the big church building, missionary houses, and other maintenance buildings.

So what has morphed? *Something* has! Methodologies are not what has changed very much. It's the modern "missionary"

who has changed. Like Jesus, for the first 200 years of modern faith missions, the missionaries did a tremendous amount of

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social work, but with the express goal of being able to present the gospel and start local churches. The missionary pilot flew planes in the day and preached at night. The medical missionary attended patients and held gospel meetings in the wards, as well as planting new assemblies on the weekends. Trades were taught and wells were dug, but that was not the focus of missions, only the means to the end. The Mandate of Missions is to "make disciples of all nations ...teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you."

Elders, let's keep sending out our best workers and trained professionals to have an impact in the darkest corners of the world, where their skills are what gives them license to enter, but without letting the mandate of the Gospel morph. Let's teach biblical mission principles. Let's keep the gospel as the force of modern missions. Let's invest our funds and our best people in going where the church is small or non-existent, to use their talents and skills to reach people, never losing sight of the gospel mandate—bringing sinners into the body of Christ and forming them into local gatherings of believers.

I would encourage elders of assemblies to focus on facilities aimed at promoting assembly work globally; CMML<sup>2</sup> (USA) and MSC<sup>3</sup> (Canada) as mission agencies; MOP<sup>4</sup> (Missionary Orientation Program), a one-week training held each June by CMML & MSC; *MIS-SIONS Magazine*<sup>4</sup> and the many mission-oriented Zoom prayer meetings available through CMML.



Contact information for these organizations.

1 Lausanne Covenant, <https://www.lausanne.org>

2 Christian Missions in Many Lands (CMML), <https://www.cmml.us>

3 Missionary Service Committee (MSC), <https://www.msccanada.org>

4 Missionary Orientation Program (MOP), <https://www.cmml.us/mop>

5 *MISSIONS Magazine*, free subscription from CMML



## Wives' Corner

### Help from the Sanctuary *by Marti Miller*

“May He send you help from the sanctuary.” —Psalm 20:2

**H**elp! At times we call out for someone who is near to step in to listen, lend a hand or even to rescue. Recently, I have looked more closely at what it means to help and it led me to God's purpose and design for the woman. In Genesis we read, “And the LORD God said, ‘It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him’ (Gen. 2:18). This verse clearly states that God made woman to be a helper, yet it seems many women want to be more than a helper. To be a helper seems menial, boring, and sometimes demeaning, unless of course we are the one to “save the day”!

Strong defines the word *helper* (Hebrew: *ezer*) as “one who helps.” That's fairly basic and easy to understand. When I look at the usage of this word it almost always is used in

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relation to the Lord being the helper. Here is one example of many verses: “Our soul waits for the LORD; He is our help and our shield” (Psa. 33:20). Verse after verse points to the Lord who runs to help, whose very name gives help (Deut. 33:26, Psa. 124:8). Could it be that the Lord has designed us to be like Him, coming along side another to encourage and support?

Then there is the word *comparable*, meaning, “in front, before, in the presence, in sight of and before your face.” Imagine your hands in a prayer position, fingers pressed together and level, as it were face to face. One is not above the other while the other is lower, they are comparable. There is oneness. As a wife, I have the privilege of being like the Lord in a helping position while at the same time equal in value to my husband whom the Lord put in the position of authority in the home. Don't lose sight of the importance of this place. The Lord Jesus takes the place of being subject to the Father, seeking to do His will, while still maintaining His full oneness with the Father. We as women, in a small way, can represent

that unity in our marriages.

We need to remind ourselves of the precious position the Lord has given us. Why do I emphasize this? When I try to be a help in my own strength, according to my way, I will almost always be frustrated in the process or outcome or both! If I am to be a helper like the Lord, I need to look to Him and work with Him. In my own strength, I will grow weary and frustrated but as I am yoked to the Lord, the work is completed, done well and there is rest in the shared burden (Matt. 11:28-30).

Also, when I recognize I was created to be a helper, my sphere of helping is enlarged, first in the home, then in my local church family, and into my community.

There is so much work to be done as a helper, and in the strength of the Lord there is always blessing. I encourage you today to be a helper both spiritually and physically—wives to your husbands, mothers to your children, singles to your families. As Hebrews 10:24 says, “And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works.” 

## THE SMALL PRINT

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Specific Bible versions used are indicated at the first quotation in each article.

Note: All words referring to God have the initial letter capitalized. While the original languages of the Bible do not use capitalization, this is the convention in some translations but not in others. So at times there may be inconsistencies in usage in ESN articles.