



The Moving Christian

J.C. and Betty Choate

Thirteen lessons designed to prepare those Christians who move to new locations to be ready to accept the problems, responsibilities, and opportunities they may encounter at home and abroad.

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Dedication

This study is dedicated to the many Christians who, through the decades, have made the choice to move to a city or a country — for whatever reasons — and have been instrumental in strengthening the Lord’s church there or have invested heart and soul into establishing a new congregation where there was none.

It is because of such dedicated Christians that thousands of churches exist today and hundreds of thousands of souls have been snatched from the grip of satan.

I pray that the studies in this book will inspire even more Christians to make “evangelism” the number one priority in their life, and that even more of God’s soldiers will go out into all the world, working with Him, unto the end.....

Introduction

Having been engaged in mission work for a number of years, both in the States and in foreign lands, and having seen so many Christians who were not prepared to cope with the challenges with which they were confronted, it dawned on me that if we were ever to better the situation, the place to do it would be at home in the local congregations, via training in the classrooms.

I would, therefore, like to encourage each congregation to begin a new study through which each member of the church would eventually pass. The purpose of this class would be to teach and train Christians to be faithful to the Lord, regardless of where in the world they might eventually live. I have talked to numerous Christians in many parts of the world who never dreamed they would end up in that particular location, and yet there they were. Some were prepared for it and some were not, spiritually speaking. A class such as I am proposing might be the means not only of saving many individual Christians, but also it should help them in their efforts to bring others to Christ.

You have no doubt seen a flow of people coming and going within the local congregation. What happens, especially to those who leave? Where do they go? Do they remain faithful? Or do they eventually fall by the wayside, as so many others have done?

Why do people become lost to God and His church? *Could it be that they were not grounded well enough in the faith, or that they were not trained well enough to meet the challenges which came to them?* It is true that we can't force people to remain faithful, or to work for the furtherance of God's cause, but perhaps we can do more to *equip them with knowledge and to inspire* them with a desire to share Christianity with others.

If we can prepare more members of the church to go out into the world to serve the Lord faithfully, just think what this will mean to the cause of Christ! Think of the changes it can bring to individuals, personally, to those with whom they associate, and to the world. Somehow, we must be more effective than we have been in the past, in order to reduce the great percentage of Christians who are being lost when they move outside their home territory, whether they be young people growing to adulthood or families that are already mature. At least, we can try to do a better job, and then it is the responsibility of individual Christians to take that training and use it as good stewards.

After all, didn't Jesus tell us to *“Go into all the world and preach the Gospel”*? Isn't the “going” and “teaching” what our life should be about?

May God bless us all as we work to this end.

J. C. Choate

Instructions:

1. The teacher should be vitally interested in the material, believing in the need for it, and capable of getting the message across to the class.
2. The students may be any group of Christians of almost any age, since the reason for the class is to prepare members of the church in general to be aggressive leaders in the Lord's work. This will be useful training whether they remain at home or move to some distant location, either now or later.
3. Along with the material, hands-on training needs to be offered in regularly scheduled work sessions. The men need to be given opportunities to read the Scripture, lead in prayer, direct singing, practice waiting on the Lord's Supper, etc. They should also be taught how to survey an area for contacts, how to conduct home Bible studies, and how to baptize people.
4. The ladies of the class should be given training in doing surveys, leading in "coffee-time" home Bible studies with friends and neighbor ladies, as well as teaching children's and ladies' classes during the regularly scheduled meetings, and being hospitable neighbors.
5. Students can be asked to report on various points related to individual topics in the study.
6. Members of the class should be encouraged to participate as much as possible by answering the questions asked, by asking questions for information, and by discussing additional points that may come to mind, enlarging the comprehension of the subject under consideration. The idea is to so prepare the class that if each member were to move to a new location in the future he/she would know what to do on arriving and would either be able to help the Christians already there or to begin a new work for the Lord. Productive involvement will go far to protect Christians from falling away when they are no longer in their familiar surroundings.
7. The material needs to be taught in all teenage and adult classes in the congregation, and should be presented in a refresher course from time to time.
8. We, as Christians, are left in the world for a purpose: to evangelize. If we are ever successful in taking the Gospel to the world it will be because we have prepared Christians to be faithful, to be leaders, and to take personal initiative, with each one becoming a worker to reach others.
9. Each Christian should be taught and trained in the mind-set of being a missionary, wherever he is in the world.
10. One important part of the class should be discussions of various local projects which will help further the cause of Christ. A second important part of the class would be the implementation of the best of these projects, with the goal of involving every Christian in community outreach for souls. Practice at home, with the backing of the strength of the local congregation, is the best preparation for standing alone in new territory.
11. All students should be praying for the class, and with the class, for its success.

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Chapter One

Why Christians Move



People have always been known to move about. The early days of the church were no exception. God used this trait in planning the date for the beginning of His Church. Jews from all over the world had gathered in the city of Jerusalem for the religious festival of Pentecost (Acts 2). On that day the Gospel was preached to them, and three thousand obeyed the Lord. Many of these converts

returned to their respective homes in different countries to plant the cause of Christ among their own people. Thus, the message of God was introduced among many peoples of many nations from the very beginning.

At first the church spread of its own initiative, inasmuch as the Lord had commanded the Apostles to take the Gospel into all the world (Mark 16:15,16). But evidently the rapid growth aroused opposition, and the record says, **“At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles”** (Acts 8:1). Continuing, we read, **“Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word”** (Acts 8:4).

It is interesting to observe that the persecution did not destroy the zeal of the Christians of that day, but rather it served as the means for spreading Christianity over a wider area. Perhaps had there been no such opposition, the majority would have been content to remain in the Jerusalem area, possibly feeling very little concern about taking the message to others.

Christ had given instructions to the Apostles, **“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth”** (Acts 1:8). Therefore, after the Gospel had been preached in Jerusalem, and in the regions of Judaea, the record says that Philip went down to Samaria to preach Christ unto them (Acts 8:5). Later, after many had believed and had been baptized, Peter and John came down and laid their hands on some of them to impart the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit, to aid the church before the New Testament

had been written for its guidance, **“So when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans”** (Acts 8:25).

Next, we read of Philip preaching Jesus to the Ethiopian eunuch. After his conversion, the eunuch went on his way rejoicing (Acts 8:26-39). This was probably the beginning of Christianity in Ethiopia and throughout Africa. But what happened to Philip? We read, **“But Philip was found at Azotus, and passing through, he preached in all the cities till he came to Caesarea”** (Acts 8:40). Christians were on the move, spreading the Lord’s message of salvation.

In Acts 9 we read of the conversion of Saul, later to be known as Paul, **“Immediately he preached the Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God”** (Acts 9:20). From that point, there was only one thing on Paul’s mind: to preach Christ and Him crucified to the masses. Reading further in Acts, we are told of Paul’s three missionary journeys, preaching through Asia and in Europe. Finally he went bound to Rome, but still preaching Christ even though he was a prisoner. He was able to say eventually that the Gospel had been preached to every creature under heaven (Colossians 1:23). To a great extent, this was true because of the many efforts he had personally made to evangelize the world.

Paul, however, was not the only one who had a part in taking the truth to others. In Acts 10 we read of Peter preaching the Gospel to Cornelius and his household, with the result that the first Gentiles were converted to Christ. Secular history also tells us of the travels of the other Apostles into different parts of the world. It is believed that Thomas reached the southern tip of India where he preached and made converts before being martyred. The “Mar Thoma” church in India today is an apostate form of the original church, as established by Thomas.

Persecution over the years likewise resulted in many other Christians being uprooted and scattered over the globe. A study of **Tradition and History of the Early Churches of Christ in Central Europe** by Hans Grimm, and **Traces of the Kingdom** by Keith Sisman provide interesting and inspiring accounts of the faithfulness of Christians in the face of death. Truly, as the Lord promised, even the gates of Hades would not prevail against His church.

Looking at the world today, there is widespread persecution of believers in Christ. Figures of martyrs in 2019 range from more than 4,000 to a possible 18,000, and the number has multiplied both in deaths and in the hundreds of thousands fleeing from their homeland because of the threat of death. Islamic extremism is the greatest culprit, killing Coptic Christians in Egypt, believers in Iraq that date from the early days of Christianity, and many in Somalia, Nigeria, Syria, and Iran.

For the most part, though, American Christians can move about freely, both here in the US and to other countries, without fear of dying for their faith.

That challenge may come as evil increases, and we need to be solidly grounded in our commitment to God and in our knowledge of the Scriptures, to be prepared for whatever the future holds.

But for now, without going into further details in these matters, and without discussing the travels of Christians through the years, let us consider our current situation. Needless to say, we are living in a period of time in which people in general are on the move. Statistics report that between 10% and 25% of the American population moves every year and, of these, approximately 30% between the ages of 20-29 move to a new country! Christians are likewise included in these percentages. Wherever you might go in foreign countries in the world today you would probably not only find some Americans, but some American Christians. This means that the nucleus of the Lord's family is already scattered among the population. Logistically, we are there. If we follow the example of early Christians, the church should be springing up everywhere, through the faithfulness of these "Moving Christians".

The question naturally arises, "Why so much travel and moving about?" This is what we want to consider at this time.

❖ **Christians move because of looking for work.** In years past, here in the States thousands have moved to urban areas of the north to find jobs, while others have gone to the western part of the country. In visiting the Lord's church in these areas, often there is the feeling of a transplanted southern congregation because the majority were born and learned their religion in the South.

❖ **Others move because of the job they already have.** These are usually select types of work, offering better pay, and this is especially true with foreign work. I have known some who obtained jobs in other countries doing construction work, teaching school, working with oil companies, or serving as specialists in their fields.

❖ **U. S. Government workers** are constantly being moved from one post to another. These are often lifetime employees who adjust easily to their moves.

❖ **U. S. Armed Service people** are always being stationed in new places at home and abroad. They are usually sent in groups. Sometimes they have a preference, but usually it is just a matter of carrying out orders. Christians are often instrumental in starting congregations on bases. Much of the interest in foreign mission work has grown out of the efforts of military people who were exposed to the great spiritual needs around them.

❖ **Some have been transferred by their companies.** This happens all over the United States, and frequently people are sent to foreign countries to make their homes.

❖ **Students go away to attend colleges or universities.** Most of these limit their studies to the States but a few find their way to similar institutions in other countries. Most modern-day parents are familiar with their children going away to further their education. Sometimes they return to their hometowns to live, but often they do not.

❖ **Frequently Christians move because of marriage.** The husband comes from another city, or another state, so the wife agrees to move. On the other hand, it often turns out just the opposite with the husband moving to the wife's hometown — or they may decide on a compromise, somewhere between.

❖ **Others move because of health reasons.** How many Christians have settled in those states where the climate is milder and drier, for their physical welfare? This happens often with older people when they reach retirement age.

❖ **A Christian family may move intentionally into a difficult field to help the local church to become stronger.**

❖ In times past, we have seen **groups of families move** to parts of the States and Canada **to begin the work as developed congregations.** In these cases, scouting trips were made beforehand to locate jobs for as many of the group as possible. Often vocational and full-time preachers developed from these efforts, and strong marriages resulted among the single people who formed part of the nucleus. These “exodus movements” are a very good and effective way to spread the Gospel. They should be an on-going method of evangelism, not a fad that fades after the new wears off.

❖ **Some missionaries move** to other parts of the U.S. or to foreign countries **to either help with a work that is already begun** or to begin a new work. Sometimes single people have entered into this type of work, but in most cases it is the family that goes. Ideally, several families may go together to work in one area or at least in close enough proximity to be of support to each other.

❖ **Campaign travels of one or two weeks' duration have become another form of mission work,** probably the more popular method at this particular time. While some valuable teaching is done and some eyes are opened to spiritual needs, especially where a mature church already exists and only needs further teaching and encouragement, this may not be the most effective use of mission dollars of the Lord's people.

❖ **Then there are tourists who roam the world.** This kind of moving about is often limited to a few weeks or a few months. But eyes can be opened and dreams developed, based on travel experiences. In time, these may result in a major move for the express purpose of establishing the church in a new area or working with a congregation already in existence.

We can be thankful, of course, that comparatively few Christians in the world today are being forced to flee their homes because of persecution. While

we may rejoice in this fact, it may also be one of the main reasons why the cause of Christ is not spreading more rapidly than it is. If so, this would be one of the great paradoxes of our time.

Why would persecution and a scattering of Christians result in the multiplication of converts? I am convinced it would be because faith would be challenged with the threat of death. *If I so deeply believe in something that I will die for it rather than give it up, it will also mean so much to me that I would want more than anything else to share that knowledge and salvation with others.* Without any threat, many American Christians are so shallow in their spiritual lives that they would fall into the category of the Laodiceans who were neither hot nor cold (Revelation 3). What was their prophesied end? That they would be lost eternally. There is the danger today that many unchallenged Christians will drift into hell!

How can we secure our souls without the driving force of persecution, which none of us would want to endure? By looking back to the treasure placed in our hands! Consider this astounding truth: Since before the creation, God was working to reach the day when Christ could be born so that salvation could be made possible for humanity. Before His ascension, Jesus turned to His apostles and said, **“All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen”** (Matthew 28:18-20).

In those words we are told *why* we are left in this world. We are here, not to focus on a secular life and its achievements, but *we are here to complete the one great work of God: to teach the message of salvation to the masses on every continent!* That should be our motivation for educating ourselves about the world, for embedding God’s word in our hearts, and for any decision we might make about where to spend our years.

Conclusion:

There are, no doubt, many reasons why Christians move. The move may be voluntary or it may be against the individual’s wishes. Still, moves are made. Our main purpose in this lesson has been to present some of the reasons why Christians move and to show the need for this series of studies, so that all of us will be motivated to do the great work God has entrusted to our hands. As we continue, we will learn how and why problems develop. We will consider preparations that can be made to avoid them, as well as solutions when they arise.

Questions:

1. Tell the story of the Jews gathering in Jerusalem for Pentecost.
2. How did this make it possible for the church to spread from the beginning?
3. Why did the church first spread of its own initiative?
4. What happened to the church when it began to be persecuted?
5. State the Lord's plan for evangelizing the world.
6. List some examples to show how the cause of Christ was spreading.
7. Tell briefly of Paul's conversion and what it meant to world evangelism.
8. What was the final result of the Christians moving about in the first century?
9. Are people on the move today? To what extent?
10. Why is there so much traveling?
11. Give some reasons why Christians may move to other areas, even other countries.
12. Do you know of Christians today having to flee their homes because of persecution?
13. How could persecution serve as a tool to motivate Christians?
14. Do most Christians move voluntarily or against their wishes?
15. Why are Christians left in the world? What is our work?
16. What can all of this mean to the cause of Christ?

Discussion:

1. Have you ever had to move? Have you ever moved for the cause of Christ?
2. If you were moving, how would you learn about the status of the church in your proposed new location?
3. If you had the opportunity to go to the site beforehand, what would you look for in your visit to the assembly of the church?
4. If you learned that the Lord's church did not already exist in the new area, how would this affect your intention to move?
 - A. What impact do you think the absence of other Christians would have on your own strength?
 - B. How do you think you would deal with the absence of organized classes for your children?



Chapter Two

What Happens When Christians Move?

As observed in our last lesson, it is a fact that Christians are on the move. What is the result? In the first place, much depends on why they are moving. But regardless of their purpose in changing locations, there are many problems.

❖ **Many of those who move do so because of money.** They do not care where they have to go, where they

are sent, or the conditions, just as long as they are making money, and especially, *more* money. These are the kinds of people who usually leave their religion at home. I have seen people like this move to a new city to work, but inasmuch as it was a new location, they never became involved in religion or worship. I have also seen people like this in foreign fields. While they could have been worth a lot to the church, they had no time for anything but their jobs. They were often miserable, but they were making money (1 Timothy 6:10).

❖ **In other cases those who have moved may be under the pressure of looking for work and they may feel they are not in a position just now to think about God and worship.** These are the people who always intend to do better tomorrow. The only trouble is, often tomorrow never comes. Once a job is found, they reason that, first of all, they must get back on their feet. Such people may become completely lost to the church (Luke 14:16-24).

❖ **Students who go off to college, especially to State schools, are more than likely thrown in with a crowd that has no time for religion,** even if they still believe in God. They are pressured to go along with the crowd. If they hold back, they may be laughed at, scorned, ridiculed, and mocked until they come around. There are the weekend parties and trips, and of course, there are always studies to think about.

Many studies, in any school or college, are built on the “foundation” of the theory of evolution. This belief is no longer couched in terms of “theory”, but it is presented as the unquestioned basis of knowledge in the fields of science, biology, physics, history, and any other areas of study in which it

can be inserted. Because many Christian parents, and teachers in our Bible classes, have failed to avail themselves of the mountains of materials and evidences that can be theirs to refute the anti-God lies, their children are often ill-equipped. Their faith begins to be undermined while still at home, in elementary or high school, and then when they face the hard-line college courses, the majority — statistics say, 70 % — are destroyed spiritually.

Getting away from religion, and losing faith during those critical early years of independence, such young people may never again find the time or the place for God in their lives (Matthew 6:24).

◆ **Business people who spend a lot of time on the road may sink into the rut of not taking the trouble to locate a congregation for worship.** They have their business contacts to make, and some of this may be done on weekends. While at home, because of family, friends, etc., they may be faithful to attend worship, but once they leave town, worship may never cross their minds (James 4:13,14).

◆ **Tourists and vacationers are often too busy having a good time to be bothered with trying to locate a place of worship in a strange city,** and this is especially true when they find themselves in foreign countries. Even groups of Christians who tour the “Holy Land” do not always meet with the local church. They may worship at their hotel, if they worship at all. Their busy sight-seeing schedule will not allow them to take the time to find the local church and, thus, they miss the blessing of being with Christians in that foreign setting (Luke 9:23).

I realize that not all Christians who move fall into these categories — and in our next lesson we are going to consider the other side — but many do, and whatever number that may be, it is too many. If Christians are lost through their change of location or through their travels across the country and the world, there must have been something missing, lacking, or wrong even before their move. Therefore, let us analyze the situation at hand:

◆ **Perhaps some of these people were not taught carefully enough or did not make a full commitment to God at the time of their conversion.** Truly converted people will usually remain faithful to the Lord whether they are at home with their loved ones or away from them and among strangers. Sometimes it appears as though an individual is committed to God, inasmuch as he attends the assemblies at home, but the real test comes when he moves into a new community or into another part of the world. Will he be faithful even then?

◆ **The program or organization of the local congregation may have so paralyzed these people that when they go elsewhere they are helpless.** That is, they may have been the kind of Christians who attended the worship services on a regular basis, but that is all. They just sat there, hardly

absorbing any instruction, not taking a public part, not having any training in spiritual work or involvement in the activities of the church. Therefore, on going elsewhere, if they are in a similar situation with a similar congregation, all seems well. But if they find themselves in another part of the States, or in a foreign country where there is only a struggling congregation or where there is no congregation, they fall by the wayside. Why? Because they are frightened, or perhaps indifferent. They don't know what to do. They have not been trained to deal with such a situation, and, therefore they feel helpless. I have seen members of the church like this, and it is pitiable. Instead of going out from their home congregation as strong, wide-awake, and zealous Christians who can handle any problem, they limp out as helpless cripples who are worthless to the cause of Christ and to themselves, spiritually. They become a liability to the Lord's cause, instead of an asset. And most are eventually lost.

Sadly, congregations all over the States are turning out members like this. How is this happening, and why? Because they have accepted the traditional method of hiring a minister, youth minister, involvement minister, director of music, etc., etc., and turning all the work over to him/them. Those men do whatever preaching and teaching is done, because they have been *hired* to do that. The members come on Sunday, hear the sermons, give some of their money to help support the church, and go home to other things. **They are lifetime spiritual babies.** Sadly, evangelistic outreach in the community is often not the first priority of the church.

In contrast to this scenario, *the church as a whole needs to be put to work.*

◆ All of the **male members** need to be encouraged to **preach and teach God's word**. There should be **training programs** to prepare them to **lead in prayer, wait upon the Lord's Supper, lead singing, teach God's word, and do personal work, etc.** This would make all the difference in their spiritual development.

◆ To specifically deal with the problem of Christians moving, **each congregation needs not only to have a working membership, but to have a class especially designated to prepare its members for the time when they may move.** They can be instructed as to what to do should they find themselves in another city where the church is weak, or what to do in case there is no congregation in their new location, or if they are sent to a foreign country. They can also be instructed how to begin, how to locate other Christians, how to conduct worship services, how to baptize, etc. If they are given the kind of training they really need, they will face their move with faith and confidence instead of fear and ignorance.

◆ Above all, the local congregation needs to **so teach and ground its members in doctrinal matters** and **in the practice of faith** that they will not only be faithful to the Lord regardless of where they go, but they also will be able to teach God's word in its purity and simplicity in all matters pertaining to salvation. As Peter said, **“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear”** (1 Peter 3:15).

I don't know why it is, but it seems that many of those who move from place to place, or who travel, turn out to be the weakest Christians in the Lord's church. But this is not the way it should be. Of all people who should be strong, loyal, and dedicated to the Lord, it should be those who travel, those who cannot draw from the strength of friends, loved ones, and the church. They have wonderful opportunities to teach others about Christ and to show what Christianity is all about. Some of those who do move and who do travel are like this, but we need more of them.

Questions:

1. Discuss why Christians move.
2. What are some of the results?
3. List some of the problems related to moving.
4. What happens so often when people are moving primarily because of money?
5. Is it ever good to postpone worship until things get better and there is less pressure?
6. Tell what happens to many students who attend the state schools and universities.
7. How do so many business people handle the question of worship when they are away from home?
8. Are tourists known to plan their travels so they can attend worship each Lord's day? What often happens?
9. Wherein does the problem lie with most of these people?
10. What will faithful Christians do, regardless of where they are?
11. In what ways do a lot of the congregations paralyze their members?
12. Explain the role the majority of preachers play in the various congregations.
13. How can the church prepare its members so they will be ready to move?
14. In what things do the members need to be grounded?

15. What can be accomplished by a strong Christian when he moves into a new area?

Discussion:

1. Do you feel that you could move into another area and establish the church?
2. What has been the result of the local young people attending state schools or universities? Do “Student Centers” help?
3. In what ways is the local congregation preparing its members so that, regardless of where they go, they will be faithful? What other measures can be taken?



Chapter Three

The Blessings of Moving

Moving doesn't have to be a headache, provided of course, those who are moving are truly Christians and they desire to be an asset to the Lord's cause wherever they may go. Let us think about some of the blessings and opportunities that can come from moving.

1. Moving gives you an opportunity to test your faith.

As long as you are with a large number of Christians you may find it easy to be faithful. You have their encouragement, their fellowship, and their backing. But when you move to another city, even if a well-established congregation is there, still the changes present a challenge to you. **Will you get involved or will you not?** What role will you fill? Will you and the family become quickly integrated, or will you feel yourselves to be "outsiders"?

But when you move into a town or city where the church is very small you are really tested. **Will you just ignore the struggling group or will you get busy and go to work to help build a strong congregation?**

The greatest test of all is to find yourself in a place where the church does not even exist. **Will you reason that there is nothing you can do? Will you forget that you are a Christian or will you put forth an effort to begin the church there?**

These situations will try your faith. They will also *strengthen your commitment*, provided you are strong enough initially to be faithful to the Lord. Peter wrote, **"In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith — the salvation of your souls"** (1 Peter 1:6-9).

2. Moving may bring new opportunities to use your talents.

As a man, at home, in a large congregation, you may not have many opportunities to preach, teach, direct the singing, lead in prayer, wait on the Lord's Supper, or participate greatly in the decision-making leadership of the church. You may even feel a little shy and backward about presuming to take a public part, especially when there are others around to participate in these things, others who have much more experience.

I would ask a question for serious consideration: In a congregation of 400 or 500 or a thousand people, how many men will be called on to lead a public prayer in a year? How many will learn far more through their preparations to teach a class than they would just sitting as listeners in a class? How many are given this opportunity? Is there a list of *all the men*, with the plan to incorporate each one in the leadership activities of the congregation?

In such congregations, women may or may not have a ladies' class, but if they do, is there a schedule for them to take turns in teaching? We grow in knowledge and teaching ability when we are allowed to try.

Women usually will have opportunity to be involved as teachers in the children's classes, and there may be other organized opportunities for work, such as preparation of food for the sick. But often in large congregations, women, too, find little potential to develop in a leadership capacity among the other women. The reason? There are more women with well-developed talents than there are positions to be filled. Those who are not well trained or greatly talented become lifetime followers, never developing to their potential.

But, when you move into another area, and especially if the church is small or non-existent there, you will find plenty of opportunities to use your talents. You will not only be able to use those you already have, but you will be called on to develop new talents to the point that you will soon feel like a different person. You may even find yourself in the extreme situation where practically everything is put on you. I know that I have seen the time when I had no choice but to lead the singing, word the prayers, wait on the Lord's Supper, and do the preaching. My wife taught the children's and ladies' class. Read Matthew 25:14-30 and 1 Peter 4:11.

3. Moving to a new area may provide an opportunity to help a small struggling congregation.

Just your arrival can mean so much to that small congregation, regardless of where it is. When you move to a larger congregation where there is a continual in-and-outflow, they may not pay much attention to you. But be assured, when you move into a place where the church is small, you will have complete and immediate attention from your first visit. After you have been

there awhile and someone else moves into the community, you will better understand how they felt when you arrived. Your presence, though, as you help out in whatever ways you can, giving your financial assistance to the work as well as your talents, can mean so much. It may even be the means of helping the local church to grow and develop past the point of being small and struggling. And, when you look back over such an experience, you will realize how much you and your family have grown spiritually through the process. What a blessing to be a part of all of this!

4. Moving to a new area may provide you with the opportunity to begin a new work.

There are still many places where the church does not exist in the United States, not to mention the rest of the world. It could be that you will end up in such a place. If so, don't be discouraged. Neither should you just sit at home each Sunday feeling sorry that there is no congregation to worship with. Rather, be happy that you have come to such a place. This is your opportunity. *You* can begin the church!

First, you start with yourself and your family, if you have one. With a little effort you should be able to locate a place where you can conduct worship services. If nothing else, you can always begin in your home. With the passing of time, as you meet people and *make opportunities* to bring up spiritual matters to them, you will find some who will be willing to study the Bible privately with you. As the relationships develop, you can encourage these new friends to join you in the worship assemblies in your home. The first thing you know, you'll have a nice little congregation worshipping there. What a blessing for you and your family, for the people you have contacted, and for the city and the whole area! Remember, Paul preached that a little leaven leavens the whole lump (1 Corinthians 5:6). Use your influence for good and it will pay off (Matthew 5:16).

5. You will have the opportunity to work for the Lord.

Maybe you have been one of those who felt that there was just not anything for you to do, or you might have been waiting for someone to tell you *what* to do. When you get out to some of the places we have been talking about, you should be able to see plenty of opportunity to work. As a matter of fact, in many cases, if anything is done *you* will have to do it! But you'll see the needs and the opportunities all around you and consequently you will get busy and go to work. Paul said, "**Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord**" (1 Corinthians 15:58).

6. What an opportunity and blessing you'll find in purposely moving into another city in the States to help a congregation or to begin the Lord's church there.

As a matter of fact, we need more and more brethren who will do this very thing. If enough would dedicate themselves to this end, it wouldn't be long before there would be a congregation existing in every city and community in the United States. You don't have to wait for someone to ask you to do this, but just decide to do it and then go through with it. You don't necessarily have to be a preacher or even a great leader. You just need to be a Christian who has a desire to help further the cause of Christ. If you want to be challenged as never before, if you want to find out what it really means to be a Christian, if you want to experience happiness like you have never known before, then **go out and do this work**. Will you give yourself to Him? Remember, Christ challenged Simon to launch out into the deep, and when he did he found the fish he had been searching for all night (Luke 5:1-11). Remember, too, how Jesus said to the disciples, "**Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men**" (Matthew 4:19).

7. You will be blessed beyond measure if you join a group of brethren to go somewhere to begin the church.

In this case, you won't be alone. Rather, you'll have others to encourage you and to work with you. You'll find a great deal of satisfaction in knowing the role you are playing in planting the church in a place where it would not exist otherwise. People who are engaged in this kind of work are more than happy with it. Why shouldn't they be? There is no more important way to spend one's life than this.

8. Let me encourage you to go to a foreign land to preach the Gospel to those who have never heard it.

Don't be afraid of this kind of commitment. There are people just like you, and no country is too far away. The transportation system of our day makes every place "just around the corner". The fact is, you are badly needed. There are whole countries where there is no Gospel preacher, and where there are millions and millions of people without God and without hope. Who will go? My family and I have now given many years of our lives to foreign work and we feel that these have been the most wonderful and fruitful years of our lives. There is nothing like it in all of this world. There is no greater joy than doing what you know is right, spiritually. Jesus said **GO** (Mark 16:15). Will you go? You'll be a blessing to so many if you will and you'll be blessed yourself in countless ways you never imagined. Try it and see.

9. As students on university campuses, you'll find many opportunities to teach others and to do good.

Paul said he was not ashamed of the Gospel (Romans 1:16). Peter tells us that we should not be ashamed of the fact that we are Christians (1 Peter 4:16). Neither should *you* be ashamed of the Gospel or the fact that you are a

Christian. Rather, you should be proud of who you are. You should also strive to teach others, and one of the best ways of doing this is just living the faithful Christian life before those around you. Don't be led into worldly and immoral living. Don't use bad language. Refuse to participate in drinking and drug parties. Worldly thinking and worldly living cannot characterize the life of a Christian who wants to be an influence for God.

Instead, Christians should be courageous about speaking up for a pure life, about making opportunities to study with those who become your acquaintances and friends.

If, on campus, there is a student center operated by the church, become deeply involved and then seek to involve your friends. If you'll stand up for what you believe and be serious about it, you can gain the respect of your fellow students and teachers. Try it and see. You'll be amazed at the good you can do, and at how much you will learn and grow in the process.

10. When you go on vacation, travel as a salesman, or take a foreign trip, be sure to take Christ with you.

Take along some tracts with you, and maybe some Bibles or study books that you can give to others. Take names and addresses of promising contacts, and try to keep contact with them. Plan your travels so you know where you will be on Sunday. Write ahead so the congregation expects you. If there is no congregation where you plan to be on the Lord's day, take along some unleavened bread and fruit of the vine so you can worship on your own.

In the process of your trip you will also have opportunities to talk to others. ***Why not turn the conversation so you can talk to them about Christ and the church?*** By doing what you can, you can never tell the good that will come from it. If nothing comes out of it at all, at least you were giving them the opportunity to learn of the truth.

These are just some of the blessings and opportunities that come from moving to other places at home and abroad. There are many more. But don't go into another area and just sit there with folded hands. Don't go and dream of what it is like back home. Don't feel sorry for yourself; get up and go to work for the Lord. Make the most of the situation. Try to bring something good out of it. If you will approach the move like this, you'll be amazed at the difference your attitude and your work can make.

Questions

1. Must moving be a headache?
2. Make a list of the blessings and opportunities that can come to a Christian through moving.

3. Discuss the difference in worshipping with a large congregation and a small one.
4. What can really test your faith when it comes to moving into a new area?
5. How will you have the opportunity to develop your talents in the mission field?
6. What can your presence mean to a small struggling congregation?
7. Mention the steps that should be taken if you should find yourself in a city or community where the church does not exist.
8. Read 1 Corinthians 15:58 and discuss the opportunity to work for the Lord.
9. List some of the blessings that can come from beginning the Lord's church in a new place.
10. What are some of the blessings that come from working with others?
11. Is it possible today for the average Christian to go to a foreign land to work and to help with the cause of Christ?
12. Talk about the unique opportunities that students have for teaching God's will.
13. What are some of the things that a tourist can do to help with world evangelism?

Discussion

1. Make your own list of blessings and opportunities that can come to the Christian as a result of moving to another area.
2. Do you know personally of someone who has moved into a difficult area where the church did not exist and what the results have been?



Chapter Four

Moving in the States

Since so much moving goes on in the States we want to devote a lesson to it. First, there are the moves that are planned and determined on the basis for the need of work. Second, there are the moves that take place in the name of religion. Both can have a great bearing on the Lord's work.

1. Moving because of a job or in order to find work.

According to the statistics available, there has been a great migration of people during the past few years. The majority of those moving have left the rural areas or small towns and have gone into the heavily populated centers. During the past several years many people have gone to places like Detroit, Chicago, Cleveland, Philadelphia, Los Angeles, and other industrial areas to find jobs. Many of these have been members of the church, and because of these movements numerous congregations have sprung up in cities where the church did not exist before. But for a long time these congregations consisted mainly of those who had moved in. Gradually, the local people have become involved and that has stabilized the Lord's church in such places.

Along with this great movement, two regrettable things have taken place. To begin with, many of those who moved did not remain faithful to the Lord. I am told right now that in most large cities in the United States you would find thousands of members of the church who do not go anywhere to worship. What a tragedy! Just think of the good that could be done if all of these people would be faithful. In the next place, the church has been weakened in those areas where so many have moved away. In many rural communities, in particular, the church has almost been wiped out. The problem here lies in the fact that numerous young people have completed their education and have moved elsewhere to find work. That leaves only the older people behind to carry on, along with what children are left, but the older generation is gradually dying out. Then what?

Moving is not bad for Christianity. As a matter of fact, more of it is needed, provided those who move are strong enough to carry on for Christ regardless of where they find themselves (Acts 5:42). I think as we look at the present situation and realize that so many of those who have gone elsewhere for work, and who have not continued with their worship, etc., it is telling us something. It is telling us primarily that their parents and the congregations from which they came did not give them the training and guidance they needed. What other conclusion could we reach?

We will touch on this more in a later lesson, but let me say just briefly that **parents and congregations alike should let this be a warning to them and thus strive to so teach, train, and prepare their young people especially, so that their faith will be strong enough to stand any challenge that may come before them.** I personally believe that if the church is going to survive in this country, we must get back to thoroughly teaching the young people, and even older members of the church, so there can never be any question as to their knowledge of the Scriptures. I still believe that Solomon knew what he was talking about when he said, **“Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it”** (Proverbs 22:6). As to the members, they need to be taught, trained, and grounded in the faith so they will be able to withstand the wiles of the devil. Paul said, **“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil”** (Ephesians 6:10,11).

Whereas parents and elders have a definite responsibility in preparing these people to go out into the world, that does not mean that the individuals themselves do not have any responsibility. They do, and they must be made to realize this. Here are some other things for you to consider:

❖ **You should search your heart as to why you are a Christian.** Could it be that you were influenced to go through the act of becoming a Christian but that you are not really converted? Are you a Christian only because of the pressures that family, friends, etc., placed on you? Before you go anywhere you need to find out where you stand.

❖ **Why are you moving to another part of the country?** Are you going solely for a job, for money, for material things? Is there no place in it for the Lord? Can you not be a Christian too? You had better give these questions some serious thought before you leave. There may be children also to consider, and if so, this makes it even more important that you do the right thing, for the right reasons.

❖ **Where are you going?** Is there a congregation of the Lord’s church there? Will you be able to attend? Are any members of the church there that you already know? If it is some place where the church is small, or where it does not exist, you need to make up your mind as to your spiritual role when you move there.

✦ **When will you be going?** Will you have time to get some information on the place, the situation, etc? Search the files of the publication, **Churches of Christ in the United States**, for names of congregations and contact information. If you don't have access to the book, Google "churches of Christ in _____". Maybe you can go for advice to the preacher and the elders where you presently worship, as well as in the congregation you think you might choose for fellowship.

✦ **How long will you be there?** Regardless of the length of time you are there, be sure to locate the church as soon as you arrive. Worship with it every Lord's day and do what you can to help with the work. Make your time count for the Lord — don't waste it.

✦ **What will you do while you are there?** Make up your mind even before going that you will serve the Lord while you are there. If you will do this it can be a great blessing to you.

✦ **Realize that you are needed.** You will need the church and the church will need you.

These are some things for an individual [and the family] to think about if one finds it necessary to move because of work or in order to obtain work. I realize that there are so many other situations we could discuss, but I'll have to leave that to those of you who are making a study of this material to bring up other things and to talk about them according to the need.

2. Moving for religious purposes.

If we consider located preachers, missionaries, and dedicated Christian families who are moving about over the country, this takes in quite a number of people. Again, I feel this is good, provided it is for the right motives. I realize that some move about just for the sake of moving, or perhaps they can't get along with anyone, or maybe they are looking for more money, but this group would surely be in the minority.

We'll begin with the located preacher. I know that he may move every two to five years, and personally I have no objection to this. If both the preacher and the congregation want him to stay long-term, he probably will, but neither the preacher nor the congregation can be happy if both are interested in a change. These things have to work themselves out as they go along. I will say that I question the wisdom of a preacher staying for decades with a congregation. With the passing of years, some in the congregation may become so focused on him that they would divide the church rather than see anyone else in the pulpit. "Preacher worship" is never good. Also, with time, he becomes more entrenched, he gains power, and he learns how to manipulate it. He may or may not take advantage of his length of stay, but suffice it to say, usually it is not for the best in the long run.

Thank the Lord we do have some preachers who are willing to go to work among smaller congregations or to go to those places where the church does not exist and thus begin the work. We also have some Christian families who are doing this. That is, the head of the house is not a preacher, as such, but they want to go and do what they can. The husband takes some kind of secular job and in his/their “spare time” they focus on spiritual work with the church. This is simply wonderful.

Even here in the States we have hundreds and hundreds of cities, towns, and communities where the church does not yet exist. We ought to be ashamed of ourselves to have to admit this. Here we have been for years, refusing to do more foreign work than we have on the excuse that we have not evangelized our own country yet, but what are we doing about it? What kind of organized program is there in most congregations to plant the church in some place that it doesn't exist? Seldom is this in the plans. Tragically, most new congregations result from an angry split, not from the desire to spread the Gospel.

My brethren, there is a lot to be done here in the States, but I suggest that we get up and do something about it. **First of all**, we should study the situation, discover the larger cities that are without the church of the Lord, then get busy and choose where we will send preachers to spread the Gospel. You say you don't have “preachers” to send? How many have a pulpit minister, an associate minister, an involvement minister, a youth minister, etc? It would be more in keeping with the New Testament pattern if **the members were working**, and would be willing to support two or three of those “ministers” to move somewhere and plant the church! Who will be willing to try that?

In the second place, brethren should take a look at their own respective States and see where the church does not exist — which counties are without a single Christian — and make plans to go in to begin the work.

Third, every congregation should take a look at its immediate area and consider the cities and communities where the church does not exist and then develop an organized program to begin the work in these places. Oh, there is so much that could be done if we would but do it! Even in larger cities, we should be planting congregations in the suburbs where the church does not exist, making it easier for the whole community to be evangelized. One giant congregation in an area is not the best answer, because people “get lost” in huge groups and don't develop spiritually as they should; and because you will never get unconverted people to drive great distances to “try out” a church to which they feel no allegiance. We need to begin to think about **taking** the Gospel to the people as Jesus did — not sitting and waiting for them to come to us. They will die lost, instead.

Brethren, we are moving, but are we taking full advantage of it? How I pray that we will do more in the future about this problem, and that we will move, but that we will move **for the Lord**.

QUESTIONS

1. Mention the two kinds of moving that is done in the States.
2. What has happened to so many of the Christians who have moved into the large industrial centers?
3. In what way were the congregations finally stabilized?
4. With so many of the young people moving away from the rural areas, what has happened to scores of congregations there?
5. Is moving bad for Christianity?
6. Why have not more of those moving remained faithful to the Lord?
7. What must parents and congregations do with their young people?
8. Will a child that has been trained properly depart from it?
9. List some things that should be considered before one moves.
10. Who are some of those who move for religious purposes?
11. How long should a preacher remain with a congregation?
12. Why is it not good for them to remain too long?
13. Explain why so many preachers are interested in the larger congregations.
14. Shouldn't we be more interested in helping the smaller, weaker congregations? If not, why not?
15. What has preaching been turned into?
16. What kind of preachers are needed today?
17. Why are there still so many places in America where the church does not exist?
18. How can we remedy this?

DISCUSSION

1. How is the church going in your area?
2. What is it doing to help in other places?
3. Discuss what can be done to encourage the spread of the cause of Christ.
4. Why are so many Christians unfaithful when they go elsewhere?
5. What is the general feeling toward preachers now? Why?



Chapter Five

Moving to a Foreign Country

To a lot of American Christians, the idea of moving to a foreign country is frightening. Perhaps this is true to a great extent because so many of us are so isolated. We are not thrown into daily contact with those of other countries like so many people are. Then there is the language to think about, different customs, strange food, and the idea of being so far from home. Yet, in spite of this, for one reason or another, more and more are finding their way to different countries around the world, and this is good.

Apart from missionaries, those who usually go are business people, school teachers, construction workers, Armed Service people, students, and tourists. Mind you, however, there are not many of any of these who go. This is not because they are not needed, or that the opportunity is not there, but rather it is simply because they have not chosen to go.

Again, apart from the missionaries, what about those who do find themselves going into another part of the world? They usually fall into two categories: those who are faithful to the Lord and those who are not. This is no great revelation inasmuch as these two classes are to be found everywhere. The reason I pointed this out, though, is to emphasize that usually those who go overseas are more pronounced in the position they take and there is very little middle ground. They are either *very* faithful or they do not even bother with religion at all. I suppose that is better in the long run since the Lord hates lukewarmness (Revelation 3:15,16) and a lukewarm Christian in a foreign land can do untold damage to the local work.

Another thing I have observed about American Christians living in foreign countries is that unless there is a missionary on hand with a local congregation for them to fit into, they are almost helpless. If they are left on their own in a city where the church does not exist, they hardly know what to do. Often times they are afraid to try to get involved for fear their boss will not like

it. I have known some to even begin attending Community Church services or denominational meetings, arguing that it is better to go there than not to go anywhere. It seems never to have dawned on these people that they could always conduct worship services in their own home and perhaps get a work started in this way.

American Christians who falter by the way when they move to another city in their own country suggest a failure somewhere back down the line, and the same is true in this case. I feel that a lot of members of the church who go out to other parts of the world are simply not ready yet for that, at least spiritually. While they could perform a great work, they so often are complete failures, and if anything, do more to harm the work, than to help it.

The wonderful thing about it is the fact that a certain percentage of American Christians who go into foreign lands to work go with the idea of being faithful to the Lord and thus to help with the cause of Christ in every way possible. These are the ones who attend the services of the church on a regular basis. They are ready to teach and to do whatever they can to help. They try to be understanding. They are interested in the local people and are patient in dealing with them. I have seen Christians like this drive many miles to be able to worship with the church and to encourage the work. I have known of others who started conducting worship services in their own home. I have known of those who extended their time because of their love for the work. Others have completed their work, returned home to be discharged of their duties, and then found their way back to the work they had helped establish. These are the kind of people the church needs in foreign fields.

There are presently very few members of the church in foreign countries in comparison to what there should be. There are many opportunities to work, and to make good money in numerous jobs and posts around the world. The U. S. Government has embassies in many nations and it takes a large number of American personnel to keep these going. There are American schools in many of these countries crying out for teachers all the time. Construction work is going on everywhere, and there are many nations involved, not to mention oil and gas concerns, and hundreds and thousands of other jobs made possible through business, etc. Why aren't more American Christians willing to fill these openings? Here are opportunities for Christians to work all over the world at no expense to the church, and yet they could be worth so much to the Lord's cause. Brethren, I am wondering if a lot of us are as converted and dedicated to the Lord as we should be.

Of course we are all aware of our missionaries around the globe. These are the ones who have in most cases been sent out by the church to preach and teach God's word. Some of these are not necessarily preachers, but neverthe-

less have a desire to participate, and being able to help out in various ways, have gone. But in spite of the number of workers to be found in the field, we have only a handful in relation to the many that are needed. We presently are not even able to have enough volunteers to take care of the needed replacements, not to mention all of the many countries that are still without workers. My brethren, the situation is critical, and with the growing population, it is becoming more critical all the time.

Let me at this time make some suggestions:

1. Don't be afraid of a foreign country. Rather, look forward to the opportunity of going. It can be a rich experience and can make you appreciate what you have, who you are, etc.

2. Be a faithful Christian. Whatever you do, be true to the Lord. If there is any place in the world where you are needed at this time, it is in a foreign land, so let them see through you what it means to be a Christian.

3. Take part in the Lord's work. With so few workers, it means that the church needs all the help it can get. Perhaps you can preach, teach a class, help with Bible correspondence work, etc. As a woman, you may be able to help with the children's classes, assist with the Bible correspondence work, and in other ways. If you are available there will be plenty for you to do.

4. Don't go to Americanize but neither go to criticize your country. Do all the good you can and you'll enjoy your time there. As a matter of fact, it will be gone before you know it.

Now concerning world evangelism, it seems that if we are ever going to get the job done, we have to, first of all, get a worker into every country in the world. After that we must begin to think about placing workers in all of the major cities of those countries. But to do the job we have to have more and more who are willing to go and then we have to hit quick and hard, establish a work, train the local people to carry on, and get out. If we would get on with this it shouldn't take forever to get the job done. May God help us to do it and to do it now.

QUESTIONS

1. Why do so many American Christians fear the idea of moving to a foreign country?
2. Who are the ones who usually go overseas?
3. How do American Christians usually turn out when they go to another country?

4. What happens so often unless there is a missionary on hand to lead the way?
5. Who are the American Christians in foreign lands that usually turn out so well?
6. Mention some of the things they have done to show their faithfulness.
7. Are there enough American Christians in foreign fields? Why not?
8. List some of the opportunities for going.
9. Are all of our missionaries preachers of the Gospel?
10. What are some things that one should think about if he is contemplating foreign work?

DISCUSSION

1. Do you know of any local members of the church who have gone to a foreign country to do secular work?
2. How many preachers of the area have gone into foreign mission work?
3. Have you ever thought about going?

Chapter Six

Preparing for the Move



Just as soon as you find out that you are going to move to a new location, you should begin to make some definite preparation for it. Of course, in a sense all of your Christian life should have been a means of preparing you for this time.

The church should have already grounded you in the truth so that you will be strong enough to survive, regardless of where you go. It is too late to think about the past now and what should have been done. You are now faced with the future and with a move that can make you or destroy you. Much will depend on what you do at this time to take this all-important step. Let us therefore consider some things that might be done:

1. You should prepare yourself psychologically for this move.

If you are going to move, you are going to move, and therefore you must mentally accept this. It may be hard to have to leave relatives, friends, loved ones, and the community, but that doesn't mean that you have turned your back on them. You must realize that if they had to move they would be leaving you. But look on the bright side. Look forward to the move as a new beginning in a number of ways.

2. You should get things straightened out at home so you will be ready to leave at the appointed time.

Be sure to clear up all of your debts. If you do leave any debt behind make sure you have a clear understanding as to how the remainder will be paid and when. If you have a house or property, either sell it or have someone take care of it for you while you are gone. Whatever you are going to pack to send to your new home, do that in advance. Try to see all of your relatives and friends before you leave. And whatever you do, be sure to leave with the blessings of the local church.

3. Try to find out all you can about your new home before going there.

Don't wait till you get there to try to find out something about it. If you are moving to another place in the States try to find out as much about the city as you can. Read about it. How many people live there? What kind of people live there? What about schools, hospitals, housing, etc.? Then what about the church? Is the church there? If so, what is the size of it? Are there several congregations there? Maybe the local preacher can tell you something about it. Perhaps there are members in the congregation where you worship that have been there and know something about it. You could ask them for information. All of these things will be very beneficial in helping you get an idea of what it will be like, then when you arrive you will feel that you are familiar with the place and you will be able to more easily adjust to the new locality.

If you are moving to a foreign country, it is even more important that you try to get all of the information on it that you can. To begin with, you can go online to read endless information about it, and even have access to their local newspapers. If you are going to work with the government, teach in a school, work on a construction job, or go as a student, no doubt you will be furnished with materials about the country, the people, the living conditions, etc. If you are going as a missionary, if there are workers already there they can answer your questions. If you are going to a place to begin the work, you will just have to gather your own information from different sources. But whoever you are, and regardless of your reason for going, don't walk into all of this blind. Learn all you can about the country itself, the capital, and especially the city or area to which you are going. Learn about the people, their language, their dress, their food, their religion, and their customs. Inquire about schools, hospitals, etc. The more you learn, the better prepared you will be to go in and accept what ever you find. You will not have the culture shock that you would have otherwise. You will find it easier to adjust. All of this is to your advantage.

4. Sell your family on the idea of going.

Not only should you be prepared for your new home, but you should try to prepare your family for this. Unless your family can be happy with the idea, and adjust to it, it will be a miserable experience. Of course, if you are going because of work, or the need of work, the family will just have to be convinced that this is for their good. If you are going to help with the Lord's work, the family must be shown all that it will mean to the cause of Christ. Real dedication will mean a lot just here.

5. Pray about this matter.

If you'll pray again and again that the Lord will bless you in this move and make it possible for you to be used in His work while you are there, this can be very helpful within itself. Prayer shows dependence on God, and you will definitely need to look to Him for help and guidance during the days ahead.

6. If you are going to a foreign country you will need to check about visas, etc.

Visas, or permits to live in a particular country, may or may not be easily obtained. Therefore, first of all, you must look into this as soon as possible. Along with this you will want to be sure that all of the members of the family are in good health and that you take the necessary injections for different diseases to satisfy the wishes of the country to which you are going and those countries you will pass through.

7. Find out if you can bring anything along that might be of help to the work.

This would especially be true of those going to a foreign land. If you will check, you may find that it would be helpful to the local work if you could bring some Bibles, Christian books, song books, cottage meeting filmstrips, tapes, DVDs and USBs prepared by World Bible School, World Video Bible School, World English Institute, Apologetics Press, and others. If you couldn't bring them personally you could have them shipped along with your things. You might also discover that you would need to shop for a number of things for your own personal use that could not be easily bought in the country where you are going.

8. Go with a love for the church, the local people, and with the determination to have a good relationship with those with whom you will be worshipping and working.

This is very important and something that you should not forget. But if you will go with love in your hearts, and the desire to do only good, surely you will be a wonderful addition to the work, whether you are there with secular work or to devote all of your time to the Lord's cause.

9. If the church is already there, learn something about it before your arrival.

It could be that it is anti, liberal, or that it is denominational in spite of the fact that it wears the Lord's name. Therefore, be on guard as to what you get yourself into. You naturally will want to worship and work with a faithful congregation of the Lord's church.

10. Think of the various ways you may be able to help with the Lord's work when you arrive.

Go with the thought of helping with the work, and with the idea of getting involved. If it is a small congregation, you can be a means of bringing new life to it. If the church does not exist there, it can be the beginning of the church in that city or community. Just think of all that you can do and all the blessings that can come from it. Rejoice that you can be used for the cause of Christ in this way.

I am sure that we can see from the foregoing that there is much to think about when it comes to moving, provided those who are moving are interested in making the most of it and being of the utmost help in the Lord's cause while there. No doubt there are many other things that you will want to add to this list, and especially depending on the individual or individuals moving and their own peculiar situations. But discuss these things and try to prepare yourselves and others for the day that such a move might become a reality.

QUESTIONS

1. How should the average Christian be prepared to move to another location?
2. Explain how one could psychologically prepare himself for a move.
3. Discuss the various things one will need to straighten out at home before going elsewhere.
4. What should you try to find out about your new home?
5. How will this help you?
6. In what ways could this information be obtained?
7. How would one go about gathering information on a foreign location?
8. What kind of information will be helpful?
9. To what extent should the family be sold on it?
10. Discuss the importance of prayer just here.
11. What are some of the things that you might want to take with you?
12. Define visa, and explain the importance of it.
13. What are some other things that you will have to do to go to a foreign destination?
14. How should you go?
15. Would it be possible to learn something about the church before arrival, provided it is already there?
16. Against what should you be on guard?
17. Think of various ways you could be of help on arrival.

DISCUSSION

1. Can you think of some other ways that a Christian might prepare for his move?
2. Discuss the damage that is done when no preparation is made.
3. How can the church at home help those who are willing to go?

Chapter Seven

Locating Other Christians



You probably won't have too much difficulty in locating the local Christians if you move into a city or community where the church already exists. However, if you move into an area where the church does not exist, the first thing you should do is try to determine if other Christians are

there. Just because there is no known congregation there, or that you do not know of any Christians being there, does not necessarily mean there are not any. It may be there are some and they could even be meeting in their home for worship, but regardless of the situation, you will want to find out.

How would you begin to learn if there are Christians already in the city or community where you are going? First, let us consider some steps that you might take here in the States. I would suggest you obtain a church directory called **Churches of Christ in the United States**, put out by 21st Century Christian, and look through its pages to see if they have listed any information on the church already existing there. If none are listed, check about the closest congregations in neighboring cities and contact them, questioning whether they know of any Christians living there.

21st Century also has a directory of churches of Christ in other nations of the world.

Next, I would encourage you to send a statement to be printed in the various Gospel papers, saying that you are moving to such-and-such a place and you are interested in obtaining any available information concerning any Christians meeting in the area. With these papers having a wide circulation, if any members are there, and they take one of these papers, they will write you about it. If any Christians over the country know of any members of the church living there they will write you about them. Finally, one of the best ways of locating any Christians would be to place an ad in the local newspaper to suggest that any members of the church who read the ad should contact you

since you are interested in beginning worship services. Surely, any in the area will contact you immediately.

As you might imagine, there are any number of reasons why you should contact any Christian in the area:

1. You need the fellowship of each other. You can encourage and help one another, especially if there are others who have not made any effort to begin a work. This can be the means of saving such people who would otherwise be lost to the cause of Christ.

2. You can work together to build the cause of Christ there. The more members, the better. That means with each additional one, the work will be a little stronger, plans can be made, and more can be done.

3. You will have more funds available through which to work to do good.

4. You will make a greater impression on the community where there are more of you to meet for worship and to work together.

But what are you going to do if you find that, as far as you know, no other Christians live in the area? Don't let this discourage you, and don't give up. Just be that much more determined to see that the Lord's church is established there. You and your family are Christians, so that is a beginning, and you can go on from there. If you will do what you can, the Lord will bless your efforts.

If your new home is in a foreign country, let us think about some steps you can take to locate any Christians who might be there. I would suggest that you begin by checking with foreign church directories that are available. **Churches of Christ Around the World** is compiled by Mac Lynn and published by *Gospel Advocate*. If you will contact **World Bible School**, in Austin, Texas, **World English Institute**, or **World Video Bible School** via the Internet, they will be able to help.

Next, you should correspond with the missionaries either in that country, provided there are any, or missionaries in neighboring countries to see what kind of information they can provide for you. Some brethren even prefer to pay a brief visit to their future home to see what everything is like, to get better acquainted with the city, the housing situation, the religious climate, etc. If anyone has any contacts at all, try to locate them while there.

I would also suggest that you advertise your plans through the Gospel papers. Some of the readers might know of American Christians living in the area connected with government work, school work, or perhaps some other field of labor, and they could write you about them. Then even before going you might begin to correspond. They could prove to be very fine people, or on the other hand, they might not be interested. At least you would know the score.

On arriving, I would also suggest that you go to the local English newspapers and place an ad concerning your presence and that you are interested in locating any Christians in the area for the purpose of worshipping together. Give the address of your meeting place and other pertinent information. If any Christians are there, or if any local people are interested in meeting with you from the beginning, they will surely contact you.

As soon as possible get some calling cards printed so you can pass them out to all of the people you meet. There is nothing like advertising your presence, your work, etc., to get things moving. Then have some tracts printed, get a Bible correspondence program under way, and you will find that all of these efforts will soon begin to bear fruit.

Be on the lookout for any local people who may be trying to be nothing but Christians. I have known of various instances where the missionary stumbled onto a local restoration movement! In some cases, if they have not completely returned to pure New Testament Christianity, they are close to it. You may find a group of people like this. However, be careful and don't be swept into something false which will only end in hurting you and the work.

Again, there are many reasons why you will want to locate any Christians that may be living there:

1. You will need the fellowship of one another to encourage and help each other.

2. You will find that, with some other American Christians around, you will feel a little closer to home and you will not experience the degree of homesickness you might otherwise have.

3. A few more Christians being around will not hurt the work, but will strengthen it in a number of ways. Especially will it make a greater impression on the local people.

But what are you going to do if you do not find any American Christians around? Actually, you did not come to work with American Christians, but to work among the local people to establish the cause of Christ among them. Now that does not mean that you should not welcome any who might be there, and work with them as far as possible but, again, the main reason for being there is to reach the lost souls of the local people. The American Christians will leave eventually but the locals will be there permanently, so if you are to build a permanent congregation, it must be among them.

Don't be discouraged if you find that some American Christians are not interested in worshipping with you and the local people. Some are, but some aren't interested at all. Often times they do not appreciate why you have come, or the need for teaching first principles, the necessity of having a translator,

or preaching in another language, etc., so they may not be very dependable. If this happens, don't let it discourage you. It is sad but, again, you must remember why you have come.

And so, when you move to another place in the US or overseas, first try to locate any local Christians who might be there. Especially if you are going to work on a secular job, whether you are in the States or in a foreign country, you will need all of the fellowship, help, and encouragement you can get. But as I have said over and over, remember that you are a Christian, and the responsibility is upon you to do what you can for the Lord, whether other Christians are there or not. If you will be faithful and do what you can, it can be the beginning of the Lord's church in that place. Isn't that wonderful? And you will learn what it really means to be a Christian and a worker for the Lord.

QUESTIONS

1. On moving into an area where the church does not exist, what should be your first concern?
2. What steps should be taken to determine if Christians are there?
3. How could a statement in the Gospel papers help?
4. In what way would an ad in a local paper be helpful?
5. List some of the reasons why you would want to contact any Christians who might be living there.
6. Likewise, list the steps that should be taken to locate any Christians who might be living in a foreign city that is under consideration.
7. How could the missionaries of the area be of help?
8. What should be done on your arrival in that city?
9. For what should one look among the local people?
10. Give some reasons for locating the Christians in a foreign field that is being opened up.
11. What is to be done if no Christians are located?
12. Are all Christians always interested in being located? Discuss.

DISCUSSION

1. If you were moving to another area, how would you go about locating any Christians who might be there?
2. In what ways could they help or hinder?
3. How can the church at home help in such matters?

Chapter Eight

Beginning Worship in Your Home



As we all know, the church had its beginning in the city of Jerusalem in about A.D. 33 when three thousand were obedient to the gospel (Acts 2). Over the next decades the church spread rapidly and the Gospel was taken to every creature under heaven (Colossians 1:23). As we read through the book of Acts and the different epistles written by Paul, Peter, and others we know that there were many congregations. But where did these congregations meet? Did they all have their respective meeting houses? These are some good questions for us to consider, especially in our day when we are so dependent on material buildings in which to conduct worship, etc.

We know that the Jews had their synagogues or worship places (Matthew 9:15). The temple was available for them to meet in for worship. We read, **“Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and His disciples came up to show Him the buildings of the temple”** (Matthew 24:1). Also, we read of heathen temples. For example, in Ephesus the people got very upset over the preaching of Paul because it was in opposition to their practices. The record says, **“Moreover you see and hear that not only at Ephesus, but throughout almost all Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away many people, saying that they are not gods which are made with hands. So not only is this trade of ours in danger of falling into disrepute, but also the temple of the great goddess Diana may be despised and her magnificence destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worship”** (Acts 19:26,27).

But what about the early Christians? Where did they meet for worship? It may come as a shock to you but the scriptures nowhere say that the church had meeting houses in which to worship or even that the church met in a hall or anything that would resemble our modern day practice. James seems to imply a meeting house when he said, **“My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with partiality. For if there should come into your**

assembly a man with gold rings, in fine apparel, and there should also come in a poor man in filthy clothes, and you pay attention to the one wearing the fine clothes and say to him, You sit here in a good place, and say to the poor man, you stand there, or, sit here at my footstool, have you not shown partiality among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts?” (James 2:1-4).

We do know, though, that the church met for worship since the Hebrew writer exhorted the Christians of that time not to forsake the assembling of themselves together (Hebrews 10:25). The only thing that we can be certain of is the fact that many congregations evidently met in the homes of various Christians. For instance, we read of breaking of bread from house to house (Acts 2:46), and Paul speaks of the church that met in the home of Priscilla and Aquila. He says, **“Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, who risked their own necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. Likewise greet the church that is in their house. Greet my beloved Epaenetus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia to Christ”** (Romans 16:3-5). We also read in 1 Corinthians 16:19 of the church that met in this house. Paul writes of the church that was in the house of Nymphas (Colossians 4:15). In all probability most of the congregations worshipped in the homes of the members over the country. With the poverty that existed, the limited type of transportation available, and with the persecution that was often prevalent, the ideal meeting place was in the home. It was only with the eventual falling away of the church, and the rise of Catholicism, that meeting houses and even cathedrals came into prominence. Denominations, growing out of Catholicism, brought this concept with them, and I am afraid that we, as the Lord’s people, have not done much better since we have also accepted the idea of the meeting house, and with most of the Lord’s work — and the weekly contribution money — centering around it.

I do not personally believe it is wrong to have a meeting house, provided it is not over-done, it serves a real need, and it is used accordingly. I will say, though, that I am convinced that the majority of the Lord’s people have done wrong since most meeting houses have been built to the extreme. Many of them are too large, with too many luxuries, having cost too much, while being used too little with the wrong emphasis being placed upon them. The majority of the members of the church have become so spoiled to a meeting house that it would hardly be possible for them to worship without one. But with a church building, the impression is left that this is the major work of Christianity and if there are those who want the Gospel, they could *come* to hear it. This is wrong and we need to get away from these false ideas. The command to Christians is to “go”, not wait for people to “come” to the building.

The denominational world has had enough influence on the rest of the world to sell the people on the need for traditional meeting houses. However,

even if there are to be meeting houses, they should be constructed by the local people, according to what they can afford, and according to their needs. Many times this may be nothing more than a small bamboo building or a mud house. But to go in and build a fine meeting house for the local people is a mistake and those who do so will live to see it. In such a case we are not helping the locals, but hindering them. Neither are we building for them, but for ourselves.

Many times when I worshiped with a small group in the States, and in different foreign countries, we met in the home of one of the members or in a rented hall. Was there anything wrong with this? Not a thing that I know of. Now if a little group that starts out like this can grow to the point of constructing a meeting house, then more power to it.

I have observed in Asia, especially, that even among the denominational groups, where they have large buildings in a central location, the poorer people cannot afford to go to such places even by bus, and therefore they resort to meeting in some home or meeting one week in the home of one member and the next week in the home of another member, etc. I think in the larger cities, especially, we are going to have to rely chiefly on the church meeting in the homes of the members, and thereby have many such small congregations in each city. To try to handle it like we would here in America would be a tragic mistake.

So let me suggest that if you go into some area in the States where the church does not exist you might want to rent a hall in which to conduct the worship services, but don't be afraid to meet in your own home at least to begin with. Now, if you are going to a foreign country to start the Lord's church, you might prefer to rent a hall or a regular house for the purpose of using it in which to conduct worship. But again, don't be afraid to use your own home. I am sure there are some disadvantages to it, but I also feel that there are some advantages as well. My family and I have worked in several countries and we always had the church to meet in our home. We personally wanted to be right in the middle of everything, and we were. It also saved extra rent and cut down on problems in general. But even if you start off meeting in your own home, once you have converted a few, and you can persuade one or more of them to allow the church to meet in their homes, you can make the switchover. The goal is to eliminate the focus on the foreigner, as much as possible.

If you are going to some foreign country to work on a secular job, and the church is not there, let me encourage you to begin to conduct worship services in your home. Perhaps in time, after some local people have been converted, you can shift the meeting place to their homes or to a location of their choosing. If a missionary comes later, perhaps he will have some ideas as to what is best to do. Until this happens, begin to conduct worship services in your own home.

If you are limited on time, and have a full-time job, this will make it easier for you. You can advertise in the local papers, listing the times of the services in local hotels, etc., and thus invite those interested to come and worship with you. If you will do this you may be surprised at the results you will get.

Don't be afraid to get involved in the Lord's work even if you are connected with the Government, or regardless of your employer, for if you are a Christian you have a right to worship and even to invite the local people to come. If your work is of such a nature that you are unable to do so, perhaps you are working for the wrong employer and you should seek a change.

You and your family might object by saying that you are not a missionary family — but you are a Christian family, aren't you? Who said that the missionary was the only one who could enter a country and begin the Lord's work? I have known of good Christian families who went to large foreign cities and, without any outside help or encouragement, started by conducting worship services in their own home and the church continues on in spite of the fact they are no longer there. Not only so, but it was the joy of their life to be able to have such a part in the Lord's work. I say again, if you are a Christian you will delight to do it.

Announce your time of worship. Have everything in readiness — song books, Bibles, the Lord's Supper, etc. Also have chairs arranged and your family prepared to come in and be seated at the worship hour. If no one but you is there, go ahead with the worship. If some of your friends come in, and some of the local people, then so much the better. To begin with, you (and perhaps if you have sons that have become Christians, they can assist you) will have to take the lead in the various acts of worship. Just as soon as some are ready to obey the Lord, baptize them and begin immediately to work them into the worship services by having them lead in prayer, wait on the Lord's Supper, etc. The Lord will bless you if you will try. Above all, He will be with you (Matthew 28:20).

QUESTIONS

1. Give a brief statement concerning the beginning of the church and its growth.
2. Name some places where the church existed in the first century.
3. Where did the many congregations meet for worship?
4. Did they have their own meeting houses?
5. In what did the Jews meet for worship?
6. What was the temple?
7. Did the heathen have their temples? Give an example.
8. Do the Scriptures anywhere speak of the church having a meeting house, as we know it today?
9. Is a meeting house implied? Where?
10. Did the early church assemble? Give Scriptural support.
11. Of what can be certain when it comes to the meeting places of the first century Christians?
12. Why, in all probability, did most congregations meet in the homes of its members?
13. From where did the idea for modern day meeting houses come?
14. Is it wrong to have a meeting house?
15. What is wrong with most meeting houses?
16. Can the people of poorer countries afford large expensive church buildings?
17. Who have built most of the large meeting houses in these countries?
18. What kind of meeting houses should be built?
19. Where do most of the people assemble for worship?
20. Is there anything wrong in meeting in the home?
21. Give the advantages and disadvantages of home worship.

DISCUSSION

1. Do you feel that the church has placed too much emphasis on the meeting house?
2. In what ways have meeting houses helped and hindered the Lord's work?
3. What are the conditions in which it would be advisable for the church to meet in the home?



Developing a Program of Work

Naturally, if you go to a place where the church already exists, it will have its own program of work in operation. In this case, you will want to try to fit into that program so that you may be as helpful as possible to the work. **If you go to a city or**

community where the church does not exist, it will be up to you to inaugurate a program of work according to the needs of that area.

First, you'll want to begin to conduct worship services. This will pose no great problem for you if you are a missionary or one who has had some church leadership experience. On the other hand, if you are in some other line of work, and you have not had this type of training, it may prove to be very difficult for you, but don't give up. You can handle it all right if you will just make the necessary effort.

The best thing to do is to prepare for this before you go. Let's give some thought to that right now by considering the following:

1. You may have to direct the singing. It would be wise to begin now by getting in some practice. If you don't know the notes it means you will have to sing from memory. Start out with the old songs. Practice and keep practicing. Practice also with your family helping you. You don't have to be a polished song leader to do this. Just do your best and everything will be fine.

2. You may have to lead the prayers. Perhaps you have done this before and perhaps you haven't. Surely you have prayed with your family. After all, prayer is simply talking to the Father in heaven. Offer thanks to the Lord for the material and spiritual blessings He has given. Ask for His help and guidance. Pray for others. Pray for the forgiveness of sins. The prayer doesn't have to be too long but neither should it be too short. Do not use vain repetitions. End it in the name of Jesus Christ. Be sure to word it loudly enough so that everyone can hear and those listening can say "Amen", or "let it be so".

3. You may have to teach the Bible class and do the preaching.

Since you are just beginning you probably won't have to be concerned about a large crowd and thus dividing into several classes. Nevertheless, there will still be the need for teaching and preaching. On the teaching, choose one of the books of the New Testament and begin a study of it, verse by verse. Or you might have some Bible study booklets with you that you would want to use. Remember, the lessons need to be kept very simple. You will probably be dealing with people who know very little about the Bible, and especially pure New Testament Christianity. Ask questions and try to get the class to participate as much as possible. Your wife might want to have a ladies' class, or if not, she may have a class for the children. She needs, likewise, to go prepared to teach such classes. As to the preaching, choose subjects that would deal with first principles. Be firm, scriptural, and sincere in your presentation and you will be successful with it. It is not necessary to close the sermon with an "invitation" such as is the American tradition.

4. You may have to wait on the Lord's Supper, so have the bread and the cup ready. [Recipe for the bread: 1 cup of plain flour, 1/4 cup of oil, 1/4 cup of water, salt; bake in an oven or a skillet until done.]

Before partaking of the Supper, perhaps it would be well to sing a song to emphasize the importance of it, or to explain briefly what the Lord's Supper is, who is to partake of it, the purpose of it, etc. However, do not insist on closed communion. In conjunction with your remarks read an appropriate scriptural text like Matthew 26:26-28 or 1 Corinthians 11:23-29, then offer thanks for the bread and quietly and reverently pass it around. Next offer thanks for the cup and do likewise with it.

5. You may have to pass around the collection plate. Before you do so, read some verses of scriptures like 1 Corinthians 16:2 or 2 Corinthians 9:6,7, concerning giving. Explain what the contribution is, those who are to give, the purpose of it, the use of the money, etc. You should have a word of prayer to express thanksgiving for the material blessings the Lord has given and for the opportunity to give a portion to be used in His work. Then pass the collection plate around.

Finally, in closing, you might want to have a song, but this isn't necessary. Close with a prayer, and the worship service has been completed.

If other Christians are there, you can always ask them to help with the various items of worship. If no other men are present, you will have to perform all duties until some of the local people obey the Gospel and can then be worked into the services.

Besides the worship service you will need to *develop a program of work* in order to actually plant the church among the locals. In all probability, with

your secular job, you will have only the average work load, and with your off hours, weekends, and holidays, you should be able to devote time to the Lord's cause. Realize the opportunity is yours, and that the Lord is counting on you. If you fail to do what you can, who will do it? So it is assumed that you are the Christian you should be and that you will proceed accordingly. If so there are many possibilities for you. Let us consider some of them:

1. You can see the local papers about advertising a Bible correspondence course. This is the best way to make contacts from the very beginning. Besides taking the lessons that are available, they may want to attend the services of the church, and perhaps later it may be possible for you to visit with them for further study.

2. If you don't already have a Bible correspondence course available, you will need to have the lessons printed locally. You'll want to be ready to send them out as the requests for them come in.

3. Perhaps the other members of the family can help with the grading, but this should be done as quickly as possible so that new lessons can be mailed, along with the one the contact has just completed. Unnecessary delay hinders this type of work. You should have some type of certificate ready to mail out as the students complete the course. You might also want to provide additional courses to give the students further study materials.

4. You should get some gospel tracts printed and ready for distribution. Make these available during all of your meetings. Send some of them to your students and make them available by bundle to those who might desire to hand them out. The idea is to sow the area with the word of God.

5. If you have a Bible society or Bible book store in your area make arrangements to get a good supply of Bibles to be used during all meetings, and if there are those who request a Bible you may want to give them a copy. Perhaps a copy of the New Testament could be mailed to each of your students. Many do not have access to a Bible, so studying without one will be difficult for them.

6. Take every opportunity you have to preach and teach God's word. There may be local denominational groups in the area, or home study groups, that would like for you to come speak to them. Do so, but do not compromise the truth or leave the idea that you are fellowshiping them. Be kind, but preach clearly and unashamedly the truth of God.

7. Encourage Gospel preachers in the area or in neighboring countries to come to conduct meetings. Besides the fellowship and encouragement they can bring to you, they can help by calling new ideas to your attention, and they can possibly convert some of the local people while they are

with you. Just knowing that you have other brethren who teach and practice what you do will help make a great impression for good on those with whom you are working.

8. Try to build a good Christian library. For this, you will have to rely on brethren back home to send such books to you, so you will have to convince them of the need, showing them that where you are such books are not available as they are in the States. Then encourage the local people to read these materials, along with their Bibles.

These are just a few things that might be considered when you begin to think about developing a program of work for your area. You may not be able to do as much as others, depending on the time you can put into it, but you are encouraged to do what you can. If you will, the Lord will bless and reward your efforts. May God bless you as you so do.

QUESTIONS

1. What should be the first thing done when one moves into a new area?
2. When should one prepare to conduct the different phases of worship?
3. What kind of songs should be used?
4. Discuss the kind of prayers that should be said.
5. In whose name should one pray?
6. Talk about the kind of class that ought to be conducted.
7. Describe the type of sermons that will be needed.
8. How should the Lord's Supper be handled?
9. What about taking up the collection?
10. In what way should the service be closed?
11. Explain how other Christians might be of help.
12. List some steps that can be taken whereby you can reach and teach the Gospel to others.
13. How can the local newspapers be of help?
14. Mention some ways that a Bible correspondence course can be used.
15. In what ways can the other members of the family help.
16. Can Gospel tracts be used? How?
17. Why give away Bibles and New Testaments?
18. Give some reasons why Gospel preachers of the area should be invited to come for meetings.

DISCUSSION

1. What would you call a good program of work for a mission field?
2. How can the church help prepare its members for the mission field?
3. How can the local congregation help with a work that is so far removed?

Chapter Ten



Planting the Church Among the Local People

Regardless of where you might go in the States, I would like to encourage you to begin the Lord's church in the community in which you settle, if the church is not already there.

I would especially encourage you to plant the church among the local people if you move into a foreign country where it does not exist. I know it would be easy for you to live there for two to four years and just to worship in your own home, alone, during this time without getting involved with the local people, but to do so would be a tragic mistake. I know, also, that you might argue that you are not a missionary but, as I have stressed before, you are a Christian, and as a Christian you have the obligation to share the Gospel with those who do not have it.

You should realize that if you confine your worship and work to fellow American Christians who may be there, and to your own family, that means when the American Christians leave, the church will leave. However, if you will establish the church among the local people it will live on after your departure, and the work that has been begun could be the means of eventually evangelizing that whole country! If you can just realize the potential, you will see the wisdom of it.

It is true that the work might die out after your departure, but even if it does, you can conscientiously say that you did what you could. However, it may not die out. If you can do a good job of teaching God's word while you are there, no telling what will be the outcome. Then, too, there is always the possibility that some other Christian family will come to continue the work when you leave, or a Gospel preacher and his family might come to carry on the work. There are many possibilities.

Just because you want to begin the work among the local people, try not to leave the impression that you are not interested in the American Christians

in the area. Sometimes even missionaries make this mistake. They reason that they did not come to work with Americans and they end up hardly having anything to do with them, and even making enemies of them. I do not see that we are gaining much if we are deliberately driving some away while we are trying to lead others to Christ. Rather, I feel that we should solicit the help of the American Christians that are present and try to get them involved in the work. This is the ideal situation.

At the same time, it does mean that if you are going to plant the church among the local contacts, you have to concentrate on them to a great extent and direct a lot of your efforts toward them. How can you do this? As mentioned in the last lesson, you can encourage them to come to the meetings, offer them a Bible correspondence course, distribute tracts, Bibles, and New Testaments among them, and take all the opportunities that may come your way to teach God's word to them.

What kind of teaching should be done? In the first place, you should be thoroughly scriptural, always. Your distinctive plea would be pure New Testament Christianity. You should be kind in your preaching but, at the same time, be clear and firm. There should never be any doubt as to what you are teaching and where you stand on a particular subject. The lessons, to begin with, should be on first principles, such as the Gospel of Christ, the church of the Bible, New Testament worship, and Christian evidences. Such lessons should be presented in both public and private situations. Don't worry about the results. If you teach God's word, in spite of denominationalism, etc., it will get results. There will always be some who will be attracted to the truth.

Now, what will you do when you have some coming to you to request baptism into Christ? After making certain that they understand the truth, take their confession (Acts 2:38; Romans 10:10), and then take them down into a tub or body of water that is sufficient for their immersion. Prior to the immersion make this statement: "By the authority of Jesus Christ, and for the remission of your sins, I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen." Then bury them in the water. After raising them up, and after both of you have dressed, it would be good to have the new male convert to lead a prayer, or you can say a prayer yourself.

After you have baptized one or more into Christ — and hopefully there will be both men and women obeying as time goes by — take the men aside and give them some special instruction on how to scripturally pray, wait on the Lord's Supper, etc. Then you can begin to work them into the worship services. Also begin to have business meetings with them. Encourage them to make suggestions as to what should be done. Get them involved in preaching, teaching, etc. as early as possible. As soon as you have an honest, reliable man, and

one that the others can respect, encourage him to begin to serve as treasurer of the church, of course with the backing of the other members. The idea is to shift the responsibility to the local people as soon as possible. More than likely they will let you carry the load as long as you will, but you need to encourage them to take it so that, by the time you are ready to leave, they will have had enough experience that they can carry on alone.

Now while you should be pushing the work as hard as you can, you need to be on guard, lest you make some horrible mistakes. Let us notice some pitfalls you should avoid if possible:

1. Don't make the mistake of hiring several of the local members to work for the church. Once you do this, you are in deep water. While it may seem, on the surface, to be a means of increasing the work, in the long run you will find that it will in all probability destroy what you have done. Once money enters the picture, competition begins, and that means envy, jealousy, greed, etc. It will also draw the wrong kind of people. They will come, supposedly wanting to learn and obey the truth, when in reality they are hoping to get something materially.

2. Don't begin a give away program. If there are cases where there is an emergency, and the local church is able to help, then by all means help the victims of problems or disaster. But don't just start giving things away to everyone who comes by to ask for something. If you do, the first thing you know you will be surrounded by beggars or only those who are out to get what they can.

3. Don't send the first one to America or anywhere else to get a Christian education. This may sound cruel, but when you start it there will be no end to it. The sad part is that you will lose all of the money you invest in their trips and education, for in all probability they will never return to their home country. Even if they do return, they will no doubt give you only trouble, and others will be jealous of their financial advantage. Be wise and don't get involved in this kind of thing.

4. Don't try to build the local church a meeting house. Rather, it is *their* country, *their* people, *their* work, and therefore it should be *their* meeting house. For it to be this, they'll have to build their own. When they get far enough along that they feel a need for one they will build it. If you build, it will not be theirs, and they will not feel responsible for it.

In closing, let me say that if you build the church among the local people, and one that can live on after you are gone, you will have done a great service to that city, that area, and to that country. Moreover, it will be something that you can be proud of, and it will make you want to do more and more for the Lord.

QUESTIONS

1. What obligation does one have as a Christian?
2. Explain what happens when one chooses to work only among American Christians living in a foreign field.
3. Discuss the outcome when the church is planted among the local people.
4. List some of the possibilities of what might happen to a foreign work.
5. Should the American Christians there be ignored?
6. What is the ideal solution in dealing with American Christians that may be there?
7. How can the local people be reached?
8. What kind of preaching and teaching should be done?
9. Will there be any results?
10. Explain how one should go about baptizing a convert.
11. What should be done with the individual after baptism?
12. How soon should the local members take over the responsibility of the work?
13. Mention some pitfalls that should be avoided.
14. What is the outcome of hiring local members to preach?
15. Toward whom should a benevolent program be directed?
16. Give some reasons as to why foreigners should not be brought to America for their Christian education.
17. Why shouldn't Americans build meeting houses for their foreign brethren?
18. What kind of work should be built among the local people?

DISCUSSION

1. In your estimation, why are we not building more self-supporting works around the world?
2. Would you be in favor of hiring all of the American Christians who want to preach, giving them good salaries, etc., but sending them out without any training? Why should we do so in other parts of the world with foreigners?
3. Where do you feel the foreigner should be trained? Why?

Chapter Eleven

Encouraging a Preacher to Come



able for such work. Also, quite a number of congregations are willing to send their preachers to conduct “mission” meetings if they are invited to do so.

There are several reasons for having preachers to come in to conduct meetings. Although you may be able to carry on with the Sunday services, it is wise to have visiting preachers from time to time. Apart from their lessons, they can be a source of encouragement to you and your family and any other members who might be there. They can put new life into the effort, help to advertise the work locally, and perhaps assist you in taking advantage of opportunities you could not otherwise have. Finally, having preachers come in from various parts will acquaint others with the work you are trying to do, and this may make it possible for you to receive additional help.

It may be that because of your limited time and the demands of your secular work, you feel compelled to try to locate a preacher who can move and give full-time to evangelizing your area. I have often thought that — based on my salary and what I know I could give in weekly contributions — if I were in a city where we were in need of a preacher, if we had only three or four more families who could give accordingly, we could support our own preacher without having to ask for outside help! It has always seemed ridiculous to me that a congregation of fifty or sixty people would have to call on others to supply the support for their preacher. Of course, you may be in a situation where it is just you and your family, and even if there are a few other members, they may not be able to give much. Therefore, it may be necessary for you to call not only for a preacher but for some church to furnish the support for that preacher. Being

in the States, you should not have too much difficulty in finding both.

The preachers who come to conduct meetings for you may be able to help. One of them might even be so impressed with the possibilities that he himself would be challenged to return to accept the work. You can also write the Gospel papers to explain the situation, the need, etc. There may be congregations you know that you could personally write for help. Many congregations throughout the States are interested in doing “mission work” at home, and this might be their very opportunity.

Even though you are successful in getting someone to come to work full time with you, don't feel that there is no longer anything for you to do. Don't quit your outreach and your personal teaching. Continue to do all you can to assist with the work. The preacher will appreciate it and, by working together, you can do so much more.

Now let us shift our line of thinking from the States to a foreign situation. I know personally that even though my family and I have worked for several years in foreign lands, we always tried to encourage as many preachers as possible to come our way to conduct meetings, etc. If there was another preacher living in the country, we invited him to come. If there were preachers in neighboring countries, we invited them to come. If we knew of preachers going through the area, either on their way home or to the mission field, we always tried to contact them about the possibility of dropping by for some meetings, depending on how long they could stay. Or if some preacher could come from the States to conduct a meeting, along with doing meetings in other cities in our country, this was great. We certainly didn't feel that we were the only ones who could preach God's word to the people with whom we were working. Rather, we felt the various preachers could help us and perhaps we could help them. As a result, we had brethren visiting with us quite often, and you can't imagine what a wonderful blessing we received from each one.

What are the blessings? In the first place, we needed the fellowship and opportunities to discuss the work with our American brethren. We not only tried to fill them in on what we were doing, but we tried also to learn as much as we could about their work. We would exchange ideas, talk about what we might do to reach more, etc. Then, of course, with each highly advertized meeting we always made new local contacts and usually converted a few. It was more than great to be able to hear someone else preach God's word for a change. When you are in the mission field, you don't have many opportunities to hear others preach, but when you do have such an occasion it is certainly a refreshing experience. We wanted our visiting brethren to know something about the country we were in, the city where we were working, and the work itself. We felt that wherever they might go, no doubt they would tell others

about it, and surely this extra publicity would not hurt at all. To the contrary, it would create interest others and perhaps they would come to help, sooner or later. This is how we felt about it then, and we still feel the same today.

Now my advice to you, especially if you will be working at some type of secular job, is to begin the work as already pointed out in other lessons, and then try to encourage others to come to assist you in meetings, and finally for someone to come to work full time with you. Being in a foreign country, this may not be easy to do, but you can pray and try.

But what will you do if you are unable to find anyone who will come? Actually, there is just one thing you can do and that is to continue with the work that you have begun, as long as you are there.

I would say that, in all probability, if you will write missionary brethren in the general area, tell them of your situation and of your need, one or more of them may be able to come to the rescue and at least conduct some meetings for you. On the other hand, not wishing to discourage you, but we must face the facts of the case; it may be difficult to find someone who will be interested in raising support funds and moving full-time. Of course, a lot depends on who you know in the way of congregations and Gospel preachers, but the congregations are few that are willing to send, which means the preachers are in the minority who are willing to go. The demand is already so great that many countries have no Gospel preacher, and many missionaries are unable even to find a replacement. But the point is, regardless of the negatives, if you will pray and work on this, someone may hear and answer your plea.

My suggestion would be that if you can get one or more Gospel preachers to come to conduct meetings for you, tell them of your need and encourage them to see what they can do to help you. You can also keep the Gospel papers informed of where you are, the opportunities, the needs, etc. You can write those congregations you know, as well as Gospel preachers who you may know, and solicit their help. Through God's help, it may be that you will contact just the right one who can come at the right time.

A little warning though: in spite of the fact that you may be in great need of help and that you are very anxious for someone to come to work full-time, nevertheless, don't dare encourage anyone to come without fully checking on him and his family. I have found that not all preachers are suitable for the mission field. Some are emotionally unstable, some are so focused on themselves that they alienate Christians and divide churches, some are not biblically sound, and some are not capable of adjusting to a foreign world. That analysis may sound strange, especially talking about preachers, but it is true nevertheless. So encourage a preacher to come, but invite the one who will help the work, not destroy it.

As you can see, all this will take great effort and perseverance. Those who think that going to a foreign land is a holiday just haven't been and, therefore, they do not know the facts of the case. But work won't hurt you, and in the end you will be rewarded many-fold.

QUESTIONS

1. Are local preachers usually available for "mission" meetings, especially if called upon?
2. List some good reasons why it would be wise for brethren to come to conduct meetings, etc., even here in the States.
3. Should it take so many brethren to be able to support a preacher, provided they are giving as they should?
4. What are some things that could be done to encourage a preacher to come to work with the local congregation?
5. Does it mean that the local man will have nothing else to do, provided he can find some one to come to work full-time with the church? Explain.
6. How can visiting preachers be of help in a foreign field?
7. Should the local man feel that he is the only one who can preach to the people there?
8. Explain how such a visit would be helpful to the visiting preacher.
9. What might he be able to do, on leaving, that would be beneficial to this particular work?
10. What can be done if no one comes to help?
11. Mention some other steps the local man could do to call attention to the work and perhaps motivate someone to come.
12. Should just any preacher be urged to come? Why not?
13. Can foreign work be passed off as just a holiday for those who go?

DISCUSSION

1. Discuss the importance of a preacher in either local or foreign work.
2. Why are not more willing to go?
3. What can be done to encourage more to go?

Chapter Twelve

What Can Be Done?



When we turn through the pages of the Bible we come across individual after individual who excelled and went far beyond the call of duty to help change the course of history. We can think of men like Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Samuel, David, Solomon, John the Baptist, Paul, and many others.

Let us think in particular about the apostle Paul. He was just a man, but what was this one man able to do? After his conversion he lost no time in beginning to preach Christ. Later he said, **“For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified”** (1 Corinthians 2:2). Again, he said, **“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me”** (Galatians 2:20). So he not only preached Christ, but he practiced what he preached. His preaching took him through Asia and even into Europe. He made three missionary journeys, during which he experienced many problems, difficulties, and hardships. At times he had to work with his own hands to feed himself but, in spite of all of this, he never lost sight of his mission. He preached the Gospel to the Jew and to the Gentile, to the rich and the poor, to the King and to the servant. Besides his preaching, he wrote many letters to congregations that he had established and to individuals with whom he had worked. There was no man in the days of the early church that stands out like Paul and there was no man who did more to help spread the cause of Christ.

But why was he able to do all of these things? Please consider these reasons:

1. Because he was genuinely converted to the Lord.

Paul never quite got over the fact that he had been a persecutor of the Lord’s church, prior to his conversion. Because of this, he thought of himself as being the chief of sinners, but he was so thankful that the Lord would save

even him. Listen to his own words: **“And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life”** (1 Timothy 1:12-16). How does this apply to us today? It is the assurance that, no matter what ungodly lives we lived before we became Christians, God can use “this re-molded clay” in His work of evangelizing the world!

2. Because Paul greatly loved the Lord and he loved the church and all mankind.

Paul said, **“If anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed. O Lord, come!”** (1 Corinthians 16:22). Again, he said, **“For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you, with many tears, not that you should be grieved, but that you might know the love which I have so abundantly for you”** (2 Corinthians 2:4).

3. Because he had a great zeal for the Lord and was therefore dedicated to spreading His cause.

The record speaks for itself: **“From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church. And when they had come to him, he said to them: You know, from the first day that I came to Asia, in what manner I always lived among you, serving the Lord with all humility, with many tears and trials which happened to me by the plotting of the Jews; how I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house, testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me. But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the Gospel of the grace of God. And indeed, now I know that you all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, will see my face no more”** (Acts 20:17-27).

4. Because he was faithful to the Lord.

Once more we will allow Paul to speak for himself: **“For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing”** (2 Timothy 4:6-8).

This was Paul, and what a great example and inspiration he should be to each one of us as we strive to likewise serve the Lord. Then there was Stephen who was willing to lay down his life for Christ, being the first Christian martyr (Acts 7). What about Peter and John, who, in spite of the persecution placed upon them, “... **they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ**” (Acts 5:41,42). We could mention others, but surely we can see what those individuals did and, therefore, their examples should serve as a means of giving us faith, courage, and determination to do what we can for the Lord.

May I suggest to you that *you can do what you want to do*. This is true at home or wherever you may go in the world. Neither does it matter about your work or a lot of other things. If you want to serve the Lord, you can. There may be problems and difficulties, but God will help you find a way to overcome them. Just remember who you are, Who you serve, and what you are trying to do. For instance:

1. You have the truth.

There is nothing any more powerful than the truth. The Hebrew writer says, “**For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart**” (Hebrews 4:12). Then Paul declared, “**For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, The just shall live by faith**” (Romans 1:16,17). Also he wrote, “**For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God**” (1 Corinthians 1:18). So don't be ashamed of it. Just preach it, and the results will follow.

2. Christ will be with you.

He promised this, when he said, “**Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age**” (Matthew 28:19,20). Do you believe that? If you do, how can you fail in doing His work, because the Lord is with you?

3. All things are possible with God.

Christ said, concerning some statements He had made to the disciples, “**But Jesus looked at them and said to them, With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible**” (Matthew 19:26). I fear that many times we forget the One we are serving. We may not be able to do many things alone and our-

selves, but we are serving the One who can do *all* things. Therefore we need to believe Him and show it in our actions.

4. Yield yourself to the Lord.

That is, allow the Lord to work through you to accomplish His purposes. Do not limit Him or hold Him back. Paul exhorts, **“And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace. What then, shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not! Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one’s slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?”** (Romans 6:13-16).

5. Remain pure and holy.

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be transformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God” (Romans 12:1,2).

6. Love God and the souls of men.

Jesus has said, **“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself”** (Matthew 22:37-39).

7. Go to work for the Lord.

Paul exhorted his Corinthian brethren, **“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord”** (1 Corinthians 15:58). Finally, let us notice one other statement by Paul, and one that you should take to heart. He said, **“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me”** (Philippians 4:13).

8. Be prayerful always.

Paul tells us, **“Pray without ceasing”** (1 Thessalonians 5:17). John assures us, **“Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us”** (1 John 5:14).

So with God’s love, care, blessings, guidance, and providence, you should be able to do whatever you set out to do, provided it is according to the Lord’s will. You can, therefore, preach and teach God’s word, convert souls to Christ, and establish the Lord’s church. You can help change a community, a city, a nation, a continent, and even the world, if you will do what you can. You can not only be a blessing to mankind, but to yourself, to your family, to the church, and to God, if you are willing. The Lord has given you the opportunity — it is up to you to do something about it.

QUESTIONS

1. List some Bible characters who helped to change the course of history.
2. Discuss Paul and his work in particular.
3. Mention some reasons why he was able to do all that he did.
4. Read 1 Timothy 1:12-16 and discuss it.
5. Who did Paul love?
6. What kind of zeal did Paul have? Read Acts 20:17-27.
7. To what extent was he faithful to the Lord?
8. What did he get out of all this?
9. In what ways should he be an example for us?
10. List some other Christians and point out their dedication to the Lord.
11. What can Christians of today do?
12. Who has the truth? How powerful is it?
13. What does it mean for Christ to be with us?
14. What is possible with God?
15. To whom should we yield ourselves? Why?
16. Why remain pure and holy?
17. Who is the Christian to love? Why?
18. Can we accomplish anything for the Lord, apart from work?
19. How important is prayer in all of this?
20. Explain how Christians today can change the world.

DISCUSSION

1. What are you doing as a Christian? What are you planning to do?
2. What is the local church doing at home and abroad to change the world?
3. Do we have enough faith? Are we doing all we can for the Lord? Do we really believe and practice Christianity?

CONSIDER THIS SHOCKING FACT:

FROM **BEFORE THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD** THE PLAN WAS MADE FOR OUR LORD TO BE THE SACRIFICE FOR THE SINS OF HUMANITY. FROM THE CREATION TO THE DAY OF PENTECOST, THE ULTIMATE WORKING OF THAT PLAN WAS BEING COMPLETED BY GOD, OUR LORD, AND HIS SPIRIT.

THEN **THE TREASURE OF THE SAVING GOSPEL WAS LAID IN THE HANDS OF CHRISTIANS! ALL THAT GOD WAS DOING FROM THE BEGINNING HAS BEEN ENTRUSTED TO US!** IF WE DON'T TAKE THE MESSAGE OF SALVATION TO THE WORLD, LOST SOULS WILL NOT KNOW HOW TO COME TO GOD AND BE FORGIVEN!

WILL WE WAD THAT MESSAGE UP IN LAZY HANDS AND SQUELCH GOD'S ULTIMATE OUTREACH TO HUMANITY?

OR WILL WE BE THE VOICE THAT CARRIES THAT PRECIOUS NEWS TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH???

Chapter Thirteen

Why Not Move?



If you are already planning to move, I would like to be the first to congratulate you in doing so. If you have not planned to do so, I would like to encourage you to consider it. Even if you have a good job, love where you are living, have a fine congregation with which to worship, I still would like to encourage you to go. I am not desirous of getting you into any trouble and I certainly wouldn't want to harm the church where you are, but if the con-

gregation is of any size no doubt you can do more for the Lord if you move to some place where the church hardly exists or does not exist.

I know it isn't easy to move, and we don't like to think about having to go, but sometimes we must do things because it is the best. I believe that a growing church is the result of moving Christians, and it will not destroy the church if its members move around some, provided they are faithful to the Lord and they are busy trying to spread the cause of Christ.

Our big problem today is that of trying to get members of the church to move to those areas of the world where the church does not exist. How will the people there ever be able to hear the Gospel and obey it unless someone takes it to them? It might be well for us to take a little time to look at the results when we fail to go, even though that was possible for us:

1. We are disobeying Jesus because He has commanded us to go and preach the Gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15,16). Can the wilfully disobedient go to heaven? Not if I understand my Bible.

2. We are limiting God. The Lord has chosen to work through His people to make known to the world His manifold wisdom (Ephesians 3:10). What if we as the Lord's people refuse to go and teach God's will to the masses? *That means that God cannot go!* With this fact in mind, our attitude about "going" becomes very serious.

3. The world will be denied the opportunity to hear the Gospel. Does that mean that if man is kept ignorant of God's message, he will be saved

because of his ignorance? Not according to Paul, for he says that the Lord will come to take vengeance on *those who know not God and obey not the Gospel of Christ* (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9). So if we *can* go and teach them, but we prefer to remain in our “comfort zone”, and they are lost, we will be at least part of the cause of their being lost.

4. The church is unable to grow and to spread. Many people can't understand why the church is not growing and spreading any more than it is. There is no mystery to it. The church will grow depending on what the members do. If we are content to sit in the pews and then go home and do nothing to teach friends and neighbors and family members and the rest of the world, there will not only be no growth, but the church itself will gradually die (Ephesians 5:14). If the members are lovingly aggressive in proclaiming the Gospel, you will see a growing church.

5. We think primarily about ourselves and we become satisfied with what we are doing — or not doing (James 4:6). How true this is in so many congregations.

6. Emphasis begins to be placed on material things of this world (James 5:1-3). Can't you see this in the church today? There is so much emphasis placed on luxurious meeting houses, beautiful preachers' homes, well-paid preachers and a multitude of co-workers etc, that very little of the church budget is used for reaching out to the lost or for supporting foreign mission work. I often wonder who in the church is sacrificing. Do you know of anyone who is? All that I know that we are sacrificing are the souls of men.

7. Problems begin to arise (1 Timothy 5:13). I personally believe the reason we have had so many problems in the last decades with anti-ism, the Holy Spirit question, and liberalism is simply because we have not been busy doing what the Lord commanded us to do. Therefore, an idle church becomes the devil's workshop. Brethren, we are going to be *doing something* and we are going to be *teaching something*. If we are not doing what the Lord asked us to do, we are going to do something else. Furthermore, if we are not going to busy ourselves with preaching the whold counsel of God, we are going to find other things to preach. A gentle message of “good morals and values” and “Bible history” dominates many pulpits today, in the compromising effort not to “offend” anyone with definitive doctrine that conflicts with denominational teachings. The result? Many “Christians” do not know even the basic truths of the Gospel. Moving to a new place, they can easily fellowship a “community church” and not even realize that they have left the Lord's one and only church!

And so, we are reaping some of the fruits of our disobedience preach the whole Gospel and to carry out the great commission. Brethren, churches that

are busy at work for the Lord and carrying the true message to others are not going to have the time or the money for a lot of the complacent and compromising things that too many congregations are engaging in today.

8. It results in a preacher shortage (1 Corinthians 9:16). Didn't someone say that we are faced today with a preacher shortage? Why? Simply because we are not spreading the Gospel as we should. As a result, there is no challenge of spiritual urgency for the young men of our day. If preachers are primarily competing for the big pulpits in the country and to work with the churches that offer the best salary, why shouldn't the young men listen to advisers among family and friends and turn their attention to other professions where they can make far better money? When Christians focus first on their commitment to the Lord, young people among us will be inspired to devote their lives to being evangelists in outreach. Then there will be no problem with a shortage of preachers.

9. Members refuse to give as they should (2 Corinthians 9:6,7). So many members of the church see no need of giving more of their money when the church is doing no more work than it is doing. Many would give more if the congregations where they worship would get involved in mission work, or perhaps just get more involved in outreach programs at home. A lot of our "so called leaders" don't really want to be bothered with coordinated involved programs of work among the members and in the community, or overseas.

So you can see that when we fail to take the Gospel to others, there are consequences. When are we ever going to learn this? How long is it going to take us to awaken to this fact? Unless we do, not only will the world be lost, but we will be lost because we failed to obey our Lord and we betrayed the eternal treasure He entrusted to us.

We are living in a time in which most Christians are not faced with the problem of persecution. Neither are times so hard that we are constantly having to roam about searching for work and the necessities of life. This means that if we are going to take the Gospel to others on a large scale it will have to be on a voluntary basis, because that is what we really want to do. It seems that this would be an ideal situation because it allows us to look around and see those areas where we are needed, to make plans to go and then, in freedom, to go and do the work that needs to be done. And yet, as already stressed, it seems that we are more content just to sit where we are, living a "good Christian life" and doing nothing for the Lord. What a tragedy! What a terrible mistake!

Brethren, we need to be converted. We need to be told again why Jesus came into this world. We need to realize the enormity of the trust committed to us: ***His entire work of the ages!!!*** We need to be taught the value of the

soul and what our duties and responsibilities are toward our fellow man. We need to experience the joy of teaching and converting a soul. We need to learn what it means to take the Gospel to those who have never heard it before and to establish the church among them. We need to get the emphasis back on the spiritual things that are truly important.

Just look at the mess the world is in. There are many griping, complaining, and condemning it. Many secular people think they know the solution to its problems, but what this old world needs more than anything else is the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ. If we are not pleased with the world in which we live, then the question is, what are we doing to change it for the better?

Let me say once more that here in the States there are still many large cities where the Gospel is not being preached and where the church does not exist. Why? There are hundreds and thousands of smaller cities and communities where no work is being done. Why? I suggest that it is to our own shame that we in the Lord's church have not been focussing on getting a Gospel preacher — or at least a Christian family — into every one of them, trying to get the work going.

Why don't you prayerfully make up your mind that you are going to choose such a place and, on your very own, go there to preach and teach God's word and plant His cause? Wouldn't that be wonderful? It would give you a new lease on life, and you would have something to really live for and to work for. It would change you and your family. You would find the kind of happiness in it that you never knew existed. ***I challenge you to do it.*** Oh yes, you can, if you want to and I pray you will. If you will do this, and if thousands of other Christians would do the same over the country, think what it could mean to the church and to our country and to the ones who would benefit eternally from it. It would be just tremendous!

I also want to emphasize once more that around the world there are still dozens of countries, even large countries, where there are no true New Testament Christians. How long must they wait before the Gospel is ever preached to them? Isn't it a shame that there is even one country today where the Gospel has not been preached in modern times? There are many cities with a half million or a million people where the church does not exist. How terrible! ***Why don't you decide that you are going to do something about it?*** Why not prayerfully decide that you will go to one of these places and begin preaching the Gospel to them? Many of you could go simply as a missionary, or through some kind of secular work. There are many opportunities if you will just open your eyes to them. If enough members of the church would decide to do this, it wouldn't be long until we could have the world evangelized. The Lord is still saying, "Go." Will you? I pray you will.

Why not move? Why not move somewhere? Go to a neighbor and teach him God's word. Go to the little community down the road and begin to conduct some weekly meetings in a home or in a school building, and begin the church there. Move to some nearby city and start the work. Move to a city of another state to help evangelize that area. Move to another country to share the good news of salvation with the people there. Whatever you do, **go somewhere** and do it as soon as possible.

What if you were without the Gospel and had to wait until someone got concerned enough to bring it to you? If they moved no faster than most American Christians are moving, you might end up lost for eternity. Think about that.

I now leave these thoughts with you for further study, meditation, and prayer. My prayer is that you may be brought to realize your responsibility and that you will be Christian enough to discharge it. With enough such Christians, the world yet can be evangelized, even in our own time.

QUESTIONS

1. Why should one move?
2. Is it easy to move?
3. What makes a growing church?
4. Will it destroy the church for its members to move around?
5. What is our big problem today?
6. Explain what happens when we fail to go as Jesus commanded.
7. Can we be saved if we disobey the Lord?
8. How do we limit God when we fail to go?
9. Will the Lord save an individual, based on ignorance?
10. Why does the church not spread any more rapidly?
11. When do we become satisfied with what we are doing?
12. Why is so much emphasis being placed on the material things of this world?
13. What is behind the problems of anti-ism, liberalism, etc?
14. Explain why we have a preacher shortage.
15. Why do the members of the church not give more than they do?
16. On what basis are we expected to take the Gospel to others?
17. What are some things that we need if we are going to do what Jesus said?

18. What does the world need more than anything else?
19. Mention some of the conditions that we find in the States.
20. What is the situation in other parts of the world?
21. Point out what the Lord is still saying.
22. Discuss what would happen if all the Lord's people would arise and go forth with the Gospel as the Lord commanded?

DISCUSSION

1. Have you ever considered moving?
2. Would it hurt the church if more moved?
3. What is the local congregation doing to preach the Gospel in the immediate areas where the church does not exist?
4. Do you feel that the local church is suffering the consequences for not doing more toward world evangelism?
5. Can we evangelize the world today? What would it mean to the world?

J.C. (1932-2008) AND BETTY CHOATE

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