

Session 8-- Evangelism and Missions, Education, Stewardship

Evangelism and Missions

It is the duty and privilege of every follower of Christ and of every church of the Lord Jesus Christ to endeavor to make disciples of all nations. The new birth of man's spirit by God's Holy Spirit means the birth of love for others. Missionary effort on the part of all rests thus upon a spiritual necessity of the regenerate life, and is expressly and repeatedly commanded in the teachings of Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ has commanded the preaching of the gospel to all nations. It is the duty of every child of God to seek constantly to win the lost to Christ by verbal witness undergirded by a Christian lifestyle, and by other methods in harmony with the gospel of Christ.

Point 1: One of the church's primary duties is to evangelize their local area, their state, their country, and their world.

Point 2: Our evangelism should be fueled by our love for others, which comes when we are saved.

Point 3: Christ commanded us to witness to all nations.

Before He ascended to heaven, Jesus very clearly stated twice His desire for the disciples to share His message with others:

Matthew 28:19-20

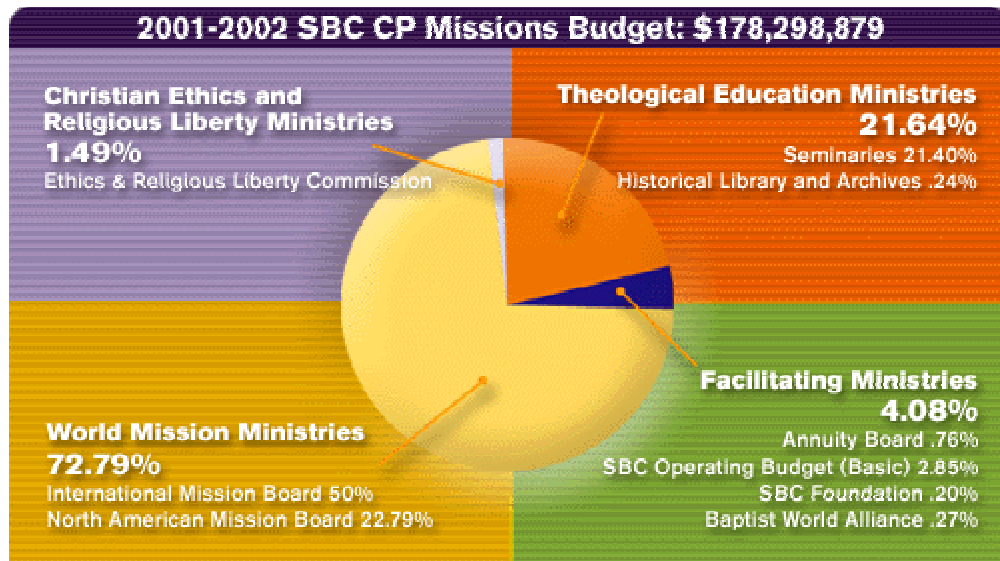
19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,
20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Acts 1:8

8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

What is the Cooperative Program?

The Cooperative Program is a system of missions support that depends on local churches contributions for its work. Each local church decides how much money from its budget that it will contribute to the Cooperative Program. Most churches give at least 10 percent. Individuals and groups may also contribute to the Cooperative Program directly. Each year at the national convention, messengers decide how best to allocate monies donated to the Cooperative Program.



Cooperative Program monies go to fund a number of organizations that coordinate our mission efforts. The following is from the SBC web site and describes the agencies:

- Through the International Mission Board (www.imb.org) you partner with other Southern Baptists to support 4,946 missionaries in 153 different countries. Because of your gifts and prayers, 451,000 new believers were baptized in 2000.
- Your partners at the North American Mission Board (www.namb.net) were able to send out 5,081 missionaries last year and help start over 1,700 new churches. Approximately 415,000 people were baptized last year because you were a partner in the harvest.
- Your six seminaries (Southern, Southeastern, Midwestern, Southwestern, Golden Gate, and New Orleans) educate in excess of 13,399 pastors, missionaries, and future church leaders each year.
- The Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission (www.erc.com) partners with you, giving a better awareness and understanding of the compelling moral and ethical issues facing society today and enables you to respond in an informed and timely manner to these issues.
- Other national partners include the Annuity Board, the Southern Baptist Foundation, and the Baptist World Alliance.
- LifeWay Christian Resources (www.lifeway.com) and the Woman's Missionary Union (www.wmu.org) are also Partners in the Harvest, but they receive no CP Missions support.

Point 4: Your life is a witness.

“Go out today and preach... and if you must... use words.”
St. Francis of Assisi

“I like your Christ, I do not like your Christians. Your Christians are so unlike your Christ.”
Mahatma Gandhi

The name “Christian” was given to the followers of Christ at Antioch. It was first used as derisively, but we use it today nonetheless. The very fact that we are named for Christ compels us to act like Him. Simply put, we are to live our lives as Christ lived His.

We often hear the phrase “What Would Jesus Do?” and it is a good standard by which to measure our actions. But before we can know what Jesus would do, we need to know what he did do. We can only gain that knowledge through Scripture.

Point 5: When we use non-traditional methods to witness, they must be in harmony with the word of God.

Acts 17:23

23 For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you.

1 Corinthians 9:19-23

19 Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible.

20 To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law.

21 To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God’s law but am under Christ’s law), so as to win those not having the law.

22 To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some.

23 I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.

Many people today use Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians 9 to justify any method of preaching the Word of God. We are not to witness to others using means that are outside of the will of God. In the case of salvation, the end definitely does not justify the means.

Education

Christianity is the faith of enlightenment and intelligence. In Jesus Christ abide all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. All sound learning is, therefore, a part of our Christian heritage. The new birth opens all human faculties and creates a thirst for knowledge. Moreover, the cause of education in the Kingdom of Christ is co-ordinate with the causes of missions and general benevolence, and should receive along with these the liberal support of the churches. An adequate system of Christian education is necessary to a complete spiritual program for Christ's people.

In Christian education there should be a proper balance between academic freedom and academic responsibility. Freedom in any orderly relationship of human life is always limited and never absolute. The freedom of a teacher in a Christian school, college, or seminary is limited by the pre-eminence of Jesus Christ, by the authoritative nature of the Scriptures, and by the distinct purpose for which the school exists.

Point 1: Churches must be committed to educating their members about the Christian faith.

Point 2: Christian education must be guided by the facts of Scripture and Christ.

In two national surveys conducted by Barna Research, one among adults and one among teenagers, people were asked if they believe that there are moral absolutes that are unchanging or that moral truth is relative to the circumstances. By a 3-to-1 margin (64% vs. 22%) adults said truth is always relative to the person and their situation. The perspective was even more lopsided among teenagers, 83% of whom said moral truth depends on the circumstances, and only 6% of whom said moral truth is absolute. (www.barna.org)

The surveys also asked people to indicate the basis on which they make their moral and ethical decisions. Six different approaches were listed by at least 5% of the teenagers interviewed, and eight approaches were listed by at least 5% of adults. In spite of the variety communicated, there was a clear pattern within both groups. By far the most common basis for moral decision-making was doing whatever feels right or comfortable in a situation. Nearly four out of ten teens (38%) and three out of ten adults (31%) described that as their primary consideration.

Matthew 7:26

26 But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand.

27 The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.”

Without a firm knowledge of the Bible, it is too easy to make our decisions based on our feelings, or “what seems right” at the time. There are moral absolutes in this world, and they can be found in the Bible. Many moral absolutes are illustrated in Scripture, along with the consequences of rebelling against God’s law.

Stewardship

God is the source of all blessings, temporal and spiritual; all that we have and are we owe to Him. Christians have a spiritual debtorship to the whole world, a holy trusteeship in the gospel, and a binding stewardship in their possessions. They are therefore under obligation to serve Him with their time, talents, and material possessions; and should recognize all these as entrusted to them to use for the glory of God and for helping others. According to the Scriptures, Christians should contribute of their means cheerfully, regularly, systematically, proportionately, and liberally for the advancement of the Redeemer’s cause on earth.

Point 1: All good things that we have come from God.

Acts 17:24-25

24 “The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands.

25 And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else.

Point 2: We are obligated to serve God with our time, talents, and material possessions.

Romans 12:1

1 Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.

2 Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

19 Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own;

20 you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.

Tithing is not only a monetary gift—God expects us to give of everything that we have. We cannot come to God and turn over to Him only our wallet—He wants our time, our talents—everything.

Point 3: Christians should give cheerfully, regularly, systematically, proportionately, and liberally for the advancement of God's work.

Cheerfully

2 Corinthians 9:7

7 Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

Regularly

1 Corinthians 16:2

2 On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made.

Systematically

Jews in the Old Testament were required to bring a tithe (Hebrew, “one-tenth”) of their crops—this is where we get the concept of “tithing”:

Leviticus 27:30

30 “A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the LORD; it is holy to the LORD.”

Proportionately

Matthew 10:8b

8b “Freely you have received, freely give.”

Luke 6:38

38 Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”

Liberally

Matthew 5:42

42 Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.

Luke 12:33

33 Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys.