

SIMPLE WAYS PASTORS CAN MOBILIZE THEIR CHURCHES FOR MISSIONS

Ray Mensah

“As goes the pulpit, so goes the church.” This popular saying resonates with me very much. Dr. Michael Youssef also puts it this way, “As goes the pulpit, so goes the pew. As goes the pew, so goes the nation.” The huge responsibility of the precious men and women who stand behind the pulpits week after week to preach and teach cannot be over-emphasized. Their influence is great and can be used for good or bad or something in-between.

The scriptures make it clear that church leaders are “to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:12-13). Our good friend, Dr. Yaw Perbi, observed at the recent GEMAFEST Conference that the Clergy which forms about “1% of the church” must surely equip the remaining 99% to do the work of ministry and fulfill the Great Commission. In this regard, the church must be equipped by the leaders to engage the marketplace and make disciples as a matter of urgency.

Though I am serving currently as the Director of a mission agency and involved heavily in mission mobilization, by the Grace of God, I have had the privilege of pastoring churches in Ghana, Botswana, and Namibia over the years and can attest to the fact that Pastors are game Changers when it comes to the direction a church takes and the passion of its members.

Research by the Barna Group revealed that 51% of Church goers surveyed did not know about the Great Commission^[i]. Who is to be blamed for such a blunder. Your guess is as good as mine.

In essence, I would say discipleship is mobilization. I believe strongly that if church members are truly disciplined, missions become second nature.

Discipleship is thus a key to seeing a whole church activated and mobilized for missions. A disciplined believer becomes a disciple-maker who makes other disciples who also make other disciples (2 Timothy 2:2). Church leaders are to be catalyst for discipleship in the church. It should not be seen as a short, convert class that integrates people into the church system but rather be a life-long teaching and modelling of Christ-like life. The effectiveness of making disciples is seen in the obedience of the disciple-maker to the character and ministry of Jesus. If disciple makers themselves are not involved in missions, they cannot influence others to get involved – thus the content and structure of the discipleship program is very important in mobilizing the church for missions.

Prof David Kpobi, a leading Ghanaian Missiologist based at the Trinity Theological Seminary, noted recently that “...God is the owner and source of mission. The concept of *Missio Dei* seeks to emphasize this and to give God his place as the initiator of mission.”^[ii] He further posited that the church is not the sender but God is. The Church is basically the Body that is sent. Every member of the Church is thus sent with no exception. Sent by God to make disciples. ^[iii] This is the reality I pray we begin to see in the Church in Africa and that is the basis of this article.

In this article, I humbly seek to suggest very simple and practical ways a local church pastor can fully engage all his church members to be actively involved in the Great Commission. Having them personally involved in world evangelization in one way or the other. This is possible. With God, all things are possible. There are a few great examples of this happening and it is our heartfelt and fervent prayer that we will see this occur on a very large scale across Ghana, Africa and beyond.

Preaching: Consistent Preaching & Teaching on the Great Commission

Many times Pastors invite me to their churches once a year to speak on evangelism/missions. They, however, do not always see the effect and impact they expected to see from their members as a result of that one-time preaching. I have been saying to many of them over and over again that it won't work out if they preach on all other things they consider important throughout the year and leave this most important commission to a Guest Preacher they invite over once a year. The pulpit is responsible if a church is not mission-minded. I thus encourage pastors to teach on Missions, Evangelism, Discipleship, Disciple-making, and all aspects of the Great Commission several times a year.

The Church members have to understand the biblical basis for mission (also known as the theology of missions). “Mission is not something the Bible merely speaks about—mission is what the Bible is about”^[iv] says the Traveling Team. They add that “It is the context that provides the backbone for God's story and our story. Since creation, God has been interested in redeeming all peoples to Himself”^[v]. Nina Gunter once said, “If you take missions out of the Bible, you won't have anything left but the covers.” That is an interesting observation but it is very true. Missions is not just in the New Testament, with Great Commission Scriptures like Matthew 28:18-20 which says ‘Go therefore and make disciples of all nations...’ Missions is truly what the Bible is about. Arthur Glasser who was a Fuller Seminary Professor also posited

“only if the church understands the full biblical revelation of God concerning the mission of God's people, stimulated by confronting Scripture with today's questions, will they be responsibly challenged to offer to God the devotion of heart, strength, time, and resources essential to its completion. This means listening to the Old Testament witness as well as to the New Testament...”^[vi]

Mobilizing Christians has been a herculean task because Christians have not understood the biblical basis of missions and have not grasped the simple truth that the Bible is a missionary book. It is therefore the role of the pastor to teach his congregation until they grasp that understanding.

Sometime in 2019, I was invited to speak and teach on missions at a large church in Accra. It was supposed to be on a Wednesday and Thursday. As in most cases, I expected a very low turnout. Evangelism and missions are not topics that excite the average church member today as such they will not attend such meetings or training. However, when I got to the church, I realized there were about 500+ people present. I found out that night that the Lord had convicted the Senior Pastor of how he had drifted from the mandate of the church and how he was to teach the Church about the Great Commission consistently. He did that and later on felt he needed someone who had more experience and knowledge in missions to come to teach the church also. That is why I was invited. That night, my conviction that the pulpit is responsible for the general lack of interest in missions that we see across Ghana, Africa, and beyond was confirmed. The people will eventually believe and understand what the pastor emphasizes over and over again.

• Prayer

“Just a word of warning. Passionate prayers not only change the world; they have a way of transforming the people who pray... God's goal is to recruit every one of us for his search and rescue team.” said Debbie Meroff. Certainly, one of the fastest ways for a pastor to get his church involved in world missions is to get them praying for mission-related issues and for the nations. Dick Eastman observed that “in no other way can the believer become as fully involved with God's work, especially the work of world evangelism, as in intercessory prayer.”

My good friend Pastor Derek Amoo-Sakyi loves quoting his mentor who believed that the essence of “prayer is not to pray for the work. Prayer is the work”. Prayer is the work! Very profound and thought provoking statement. Prayer is the best strategy for world evangelization. Matthew 9:35-38 says it all. “...The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore, pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.” Churches that pray for missions are advancing the Great Commission more than they realize. A. B. Simpson, the founder of The Christian and Missionary Alliance noted that “Prayer is the mighty engine that is to move the missionary work.” And Wesley Duel also believed that “we can reach our world, if we will. The greatest lack today is not people or funds. The greatest need is prayer.”

Ghanaians love to pray. Africans love to pray. Prayer is thus one of the first and one of the greatest contribution we can make towards world evangelization.

The story is told of a British medical missionary couple who served in Kumasi, Ghana, and started mission prayer meetings at the Living Waters Assemblies of God Church. They dubbed it “The hour that changes the World”. They would ask the participants to pray for unreached people groups, missionaries, nations, lost people, and also the news as it related to missions etc. They prayed for just one hour on Tuesday nights. All the people who were part of that prayer meeting are all today in missions or fulltime ministry and that includes Rev Ben Owusu-Sekyere who co-founded a missions organization called the King’s Village and Pastor Derek Amoo-Sakyi who is the Prayer Director of GEMA and also pastor of the Good Shepherd Assemblies of God Church.

I thus encourage you dear pastor to start today. GEMA, as part of its VISION 2040, hopes to see 30,000 churches in Ghana start mission prayer meetings. There are resources available to help you on this journey. (Please check the Appendix).

- **All Departments of the Church must align—Every single member**

Once a church becomes missional, every department in the church must align with the Great Commission's vision. The men, women, youth, children, music, protocol, and all other departments must be in sync with the heart of the Father. It takes a pastor to get this to become reality.

- **Training: Missions Mobilization and Training Courses**

Several good mission mobilization courses can help you activate and equip your church for missions. These courses will also help equip your members for

- **Market Place missions**
- **Lifestyle- Help them make Evangelism and Disciple-making a daily Lifestyle**
- **Welcoming** – equip them to reach out to the nationals of the various countries who are in your city and country.
- **Giving** – challenge the to radically give their

resources for the cause of the Great Commission

See the appendix for information on some of these available courses.

- **Short Term missions**

Short-term mission trips are also one of the effective ways of getting your church members activated for missions. Many of the mission agencies in Ghana do embark on short term missions. Do check the Directory for a possible partner in this regard.

- **Long Term Workers**

Long Term workers can emerge from those who go on short-term missions and also through the prayer meetings, the training and in many other ways. The church should develop its capacity to be able to send missionaries. Many times they can partner with a mission agency to do that where needed. Apart from praying, the church can support individuals or teams with financial and other logistics.

- **The Missions Month and International Missions Day Celebrations**

Though we advocate for a missional lifestyle where every day is a missional and disciple-making day, I believe it is still good to have a month each year devoted to missions.

The International Missions Day Celebrations (whatever you choose to call it) is a Sunday during your mission month where for example church members dress in clothes of other cultures, cook various ethnic dishes, and there is a missionary as guest speaker. There are mission exhibitions and testimonies or videos shared. That is one of the strategies World Thrust encourages and that is one of the ways to get the whole church excited about missions.

The above simple ways are not exhaustive but are to help you to get started. It starts from having the understanding as stated at the beginning of the article that the whole church has been sent by God as such, we can do nothing but to align with His eternal purposes and then begin to take the steps of activating all our church members for that cause – the greatest cause on earth.

Appendix

Prayer resources

- **Operation World** – <https://www.operation-world.org>
Download the Operation World app on Google Play store or the apple Store. You can also buy the book “Operation World” book from a Christian store near you or order it online.
- **Joshua Project** (Unreached of the Day) - <https://joshuaproject.net>
Download the Joshua Project app on Google Play store or the apple Store. You can also download the prayer card at <https://joshuaproject.net/pray/cards>.
- **Prayercast** – www.prayercast.com
Download the prayercast videos for free from the above site and use it during your church services and at other prayer meetings.
- **International Mission Board** - <https://www.peoplegroups.org/>
- **Ethnologue** - <https://www.ethnologue.com/>

There are also many other prayer resources available that you can find online or in your community.

Mobilization resources

- **The Kairos Course**
Contact: Daniel Hyde Appiah
- **The Perspectives Course**
Contact: Daniel Hyde Appiah
- **World Thrust Seminars**
Contact: Ray Mensah
- **Global Mission Mobilization Initiative (GMMI), Great Commission Seminars**
Contact: Abraham Narh
- **Discipling Market Place Leaders**
Contact: Derek Amoo-Sakyi

You can reach all of these contact persons through the GEMA office – gemaghana@gmail.com or +233-24 639 1921

References:

- [i] Barna. (March 27, 2018) “51% of Churchgoers Don’t Know of the Great Commission”. Retrieved from: <https://www.barna.com/research/half-churchgoers-not-heard-great-commission/>
- [ii] Kpobi, D, (2020), “The Churches, Mission Agencies And Theological Institutions: A Triangular Partnership To Reach Ghana And Beyond For Christ”. Paper delivered at GEMAFEST 2020
- [iii] *ibid*
- [iv] The Traveling Team. n.d .Biblical Foundation: The Bible as a missions story. Accessed from <http://www.thetravelingteam.org/articles/the-bible-as-a-missions-story>
- [v] The Traveling Team. n.d .Biblical Foundation: The Bible as a missions story. Accessed from <http://www.thetravelingteam.org/articles/the-bible-as-a-missions-story>.
- [vi] Glasser, A., & Engen, C. (2003). *Announcing the Kingdom: The story of God’s mission in the Bible*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

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serves as the President of the Ghana Evangelical Missions Association (GEMA). A prolific writer, he is the editor of the Ghana Missions Handbook and is passionately involved in missions mobilization at various Universities and Churches and believes the Lord of the Harvest will surely raise a new breed of missional

Christians and missionaries in Ghana and across Africa and beyond. He is married to Cynthia and they have been blessed with two children.