**CHBC Missions Core Seminar**

CHBC’s Vision for Missions

April 3, 2022

Good morning all and welcome to the LAST missions core seminar class of the year.

We’ve talked about theology of missions…history of missions…some practical ways to think about reaching the nations even from here. Last week Caleb talked about the sending process at CHBC for missionaries. We’ve covered a lot of ground. Today we’ll talk about this local church’s vision for missions.

But the starting point is really **God’s** vision for missions

So before we say anything about the plan for missions at CHBC, let’s reconsider what we know about God’s vision for missions. It is not a vision for our own glory or success. Rather, we began this class so many weeks ago with an initial statement about the **biblical vision** of missions.

As the puritan Thomas Watson has said “We glorify God when we are God-admirers.” It begins with God and our love for Him, and our desire to see Him exalted among all nations.

The writer Tom Wells puts it especially well in his book “A vision for Missions.” He writes:

*Men must know God. That is the one thing they must do. And this can mean nothing less than that God is eminently worthy to be known in all the length and breadth and height and depth of His Character. The Christian is a God-explorer. The Christian vision is the vision of God.*

*The missionary vision is the vision of God also. It is not something different from the Christian vision. It is the same vision being shared rather than merely enjoyed. It is the same vision being shared with men who have no natural taste for it, in the hope that God will create that taste so that they too will become “God-admirers.” Sharing the vision of God – that is the work of missions.*

1. **First, what is God’s vision for missions?**

Before we even begin to think about our vision for missions at CHBC let’s center our considerations on the goal that God has authoritatively given to the church. This may sound familiar…if it does you may have attended the first few classes. The vision that God has given is not a small one. God’s vision for missions is **global in proportion and eternal in its extent**.

Consider God’s words through Isaiah in Isaiah 49:6,

*“It is too light a thing that you should be my servant*

*to raise up the tribes of Jacob*

*and to bring back the preserved of Israel;*

*I will make you as a* ***light for the nations****,*

*that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.”*

Where does God plan for His gospel to extend? To the end of the earth! And what is His means for doing so? By using other believers, and as we see in your next point, churches, to make His name known.

We know from the book of Ephesians and elsewhere that God intends that this global vision is to be accomplished.

Ephesians 3: 10–11 tell it to us plainly.

*. . . so that* ***through the church*** *the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord . . .*

And in the book of Revelation, we see many descriptions of the culmination of God’s vision for missions. What is the point of missions? What is the end we’re working towards? Let’s read Revelation 7:9-10:

*After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!”*

A great multitude – one so large no one can count them…from all tribes and peoples and languages worshiping God.

From a consideration of these passages throughout the Scriptures, a few basic principles become clear. God is committed to his own glory. God desires that his church would be central in the work of the Gospel everywhere. God intends that the message of salvation should be preached to all people groups across all cultural and linguistic divides.

It’s principles like these that have shaped our church’s vision for our engagement in cross-cultural evangelism for decades now. So what is CHBC’s vision for missions? While we would say that our vision is rooted in God’s word, in forming a vision or strategy for missions we also take into account **prudential factors** such as our church’s history, our location, our senior pastor and other elders’ gifts, and both the needs and opportunities around the world.

So for the rest of the class, we’re going to flesh this out with respect to our specific local church. And we should have plenty of time for questions throughout.

First, and the topic we’ll spend the most time on this morning – our vision for missions includes:

1. **Encouraging our workers on the field and partnering with them in a manner worthy of God.**

Where would we go to scripture to consider how to support our workers?

Let’s look at two passages, and then we’ll talk about four implications for how we support our missionaries.

First turn to Philippians 4:14-16

*14 Yet it was kind of you to share my trouble. 15 And you Philippians yourselves know that in the beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving, except you only. 16 Even in Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once and again.*

Ask: How does the Philippian church care for Paul?

* They share in his troubles.
* They partner with him in the gospel;
* They sent help for his needs not only once – but again and again.

And what does Paul say is the result of this help and partnership provide to him by the Philippians?

Let’s keep reading, starting with verse 17:

*17 Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit. 18 I have received full payment, and more. I am well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God. 19 And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. 20 To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.*

So Paul encourages their support – basically saying: I appreciate the gifts…but even more, I’m grateful for the fruit that increases to your credit.

Ask: How does he describe these gifts?

Answer: A fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God;

What does that mean?

Allusions to OT sacrifices…to business…God sees their sacrificial giving and He is pleased.

Where else would we go to find biblical instruction on how to support missionaries?

Let’s turn to Third John. We’ll look at verses 5 through 8:

*5 Beloved, it is a faithful thing you do in all your efforts for these brothers, strangers as they are, 6 who* ***testified to your love before the church****. You will do well to* ***send them on their journey in a manner worthy of God****. 7 For they have* ***gone out for the sake of the name****, accepting nothing from the Gentiles. 8 Therefore we ought to support people like these, that* ***we may be fellow workers for the truth****.*

Here John commends Gaius, to whom the epistle is addressed, for how he supports itinerant Christian workers/ministers.

He affirms that he ought to send them on in a manner “worthy of God”.

Ask: why?

* Because they carry the gospel! They’re not laboring for themselves but for the Lord
* Non-christians won’t be paying their salaries.
  + And even if willing, workers don’t want to be accused of selling some product to the population
* But also for their benefit – that he may also be fellow workers for the truth. What an honor and a privilege to serve in this way.

So one application for us – sitting in this room, as church members and NOT missionaries (not yet anyway) is that we have a role to play in this work.

Scripture makes clear that its **churches** who partner with individuals to spread the gospel to all nations. It’s not done in a vacuum. And it’s not something we export to those who are “internationally minded”. Caleb taught us about calling last week. Well, we are all CALLED to this work – Christ instructed us to do so.

Ok, so now that we’re informed by scripture on this: how does CHBC “enter into a partnership” or “send help” to workers as Paul and John talk about?

First, we, perhaps counterintuitively,

1. **Support fewer missionaries more fully, and know them well.**

When Mark first came to CHBC, the church supported dozens of workers. Now we support about two dozen. We don’t have an extensive rolodex of workers all over the world.

Why is that? Two reasons:

First, CHBC has limited resources. God has blessed this congregation with a fairly large budget. But even with that, we can only support so many. And saints, just to encourage you – I was explaining to a weekender a few weeks ago our outreach budget – it’s this part of the budget where we support line items like local evangelism, supporting other healthy churches, and missions.

That outreach portion represents about a third of our budget. Praise God we just give that much away. And of that amount, half – or 15% -- goes specifically to international missions.

Explain: elders voted to ensure our budget was missions minded…kept moving up…

But the second reason we have a limited number of workers is simply because to partner and help and support workers, we need to know them well.

And that goes into our next point – we want to support our workers not just financially but spiritually as well.

1. **Support our workers spiritually, not just financially.**

How do we do this?

Well, we try to put into practice Acts 15:36

*36 And after some days Paul said to Barnabas, “Let us return and visit the brothers in every city where we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are.”*

We want to do this first literally, by trying to visit our workers every year. We try to send some combination of staff + elders to visit and encourage and to check on them… to “see how they are”.

For example:

Last Fall, me and Feather went to Turkey; NIQ; Dubai to visit our workers – many of whom we hadn’t seen in years given covid restrictions/precautions.

Jamie Dunlop, a pastor here, and Steve Boyer, one of our lay elders, are headed to Ankara and Tashkent this June to visit the Johnsons and the Stams.

They know them well and are eager to go and see how they are…and encourage them.

Mark and I will also be going to Istanbul later this year on the short-term childcare trip. We hope to also visit with Hope Henry and Lauren Barton while we’re there.

And I’m planning on going on another trip this fall to visit the Spandler-Davidsons and the Tylers in Bangkok, and then the Stams in Singapore.

But how else to we check in on our workers – to gauge how they’re doing spiritually?

A few things that you may or may not be aware of:

* **Monthly zoom calls with all workers** 
  + Started during COVID as a regular check-in, workers hadn’t met each other before. Super encouraging for them and they wanted to keep it up
* **Annual questionnaires** sent to workers before we consider the next year’s budget; two reasons:
  + Update the elders generally on their ministry…even practically to just get a new pic!
  + Also to make us aware of any additional financial needs they may have for the upcoming year
* **Sabbaticals here** 
  + Praise God for our missions house
  + We have this open for all our supported workers; they get priority;
  + Encourage them to spend the bulk of their time in the States here – and typically our workers want to spend their time here, to refresh themselves spiritually, seek counsel, and sit under the teaching here – praise God for that desire.
  + Occasionally used by other workers we know as well (former interns, etc.)
  + When they are here, we invite them to share with the congregation and at an elders meeting
* We also care for them spiritually by **praying** for them
  + Sunday morning during the pastoral prayer
  + Sunday evenings
  + Monthly missionary prayer night – usually the last Saturday night of the month

In all these ways, we try to exhibit a gracious, open-handedness with our workers.

And we also try to underscore a sense of humility. This is the Lord’s work. We are but one local church. God can and does work mightily in and through us – praise God for that – but we are limited in what we can do, aren’t we? So we should consider this work humbly before the Lord, recognizing our goal is not to “change the world” but to be faithful with the stewardship He has been kind enough to entrust us with.

And because of that, we concentrate our support in a handful of regions – point C.

1. **Support concentrated work in a handful of regions.**

Historically, most of our work has been concentrated in Central Asia. Why is that?

A few more biblically-informed reasons, and a few just practical ones:

1. First, there’s great need, with the lowest percentage of Christians.
   1. The Joshua Project estimates that of the ten countries in this region, about 96% of the population is unreached – that is, those who don’t have any indigenous gospel proclamation. These are those people groups who are unlikely to hear the gospel from someone who speaks their own dialect, or is from their same cultural background. 96 percent!
   2. That figure coupled with the remote-ness of much of the region, it’s lack of development, mean that Central Asia is one of, if not the least, reached region of the world, with almost 400 people groups who are left unreached in that region alone.
   3. So there’s a real gospel need – to take the good news of Christ to all peoples and tribes and tongues.
2. That’s where many of our longstanding relationships have been
   1. MED and Zane Pratt in Central Asia;
3. That’s also where there’s lots of health w/r/t our main sending agency
   1. The CA region in the IMB is generally really solid and like-minded.
   2. They prize faithfulness over speed and urgency, and seek slow, steady work for the Lord.
   3. They also typically allow our workers the freedom to pursue the work they desire to do (and that we encourage them to do)
   4. And importantly, they’re 100% funded by the IMB
   5. Praise God for that partnership

Caleb last week talked about the sending process, briefly, at CHBC. What does this mean for you if you’d like to go as a missionary? Well it means that if you are interested in going, we’re likely going to at least encourage you to consider, pray about, going to support some of the existing work we have.

One of our consistent prayer requests from workers is that the Lord would send more normal, healthy church members to them to partner with them. Maybe that’s you! Would you pray about that?

So that’s CA…but we have workers other places too.

Important addition: In God’s providence, our initial laser-focus on Central Asia has grown to include local partners in India (Harshit), Sweden (Johnny) and East Asia. We never had designs to support a church plant in Bangkok or Singapore. But God providentially hindered access to China, and providentially opened a door to SE Asia. So praise God for that Gospel work going out!

This also underscores CHBC’s main focus here is not on location, per se. But it’s on the person. Their character, their devotion to the Lord, their ability and flexibility to move to another country. And our trust in them.

So we won’t stop supporting the Collinses when they’re no longer in Shanghai – no, our partnership is with THEM. And yes, their work in Shanghai. But we will gladly, joyfully work with them to find another place to serve, because we have such a deep, long-lasting relationship with them. We trust their ministry. And godly men and women who want to serve abroad and plant healthy churches are men and women we want to support.

1. **Meaningful short-term trips that are helpful to people on the field.**

Dan Claybaugh led y’all well through our vision for short term trips. I think in a way, we’re trying to recover a vision for short term trips that may have been diluted by unhelpful pseudo-Christian tourism for youth groups.

Have any here participated in one? What was good or bad?

One way we try to correct that is by asking our workers what would be helpful.

* 1. Looking for field-driven requests

This is a question we ask of our workers regularly…And even when they do suggest a team coming out to visit, we try and ask again and again if they’re sure we’ll be a help (true for elders visiting too). Because hosting folks is a lot of work. Especially when there are security sensitivities they have to think through. For a missionary in central Asia, taking around a group of 6-12 people from America can draw a lot of attention. SO we want to be careful in how we serve them.

* 1. Looking for ways to encourage CP workers.

But we also want to be clear to the volunteers: this means giving up your vacation time…not getting a ton of cultural experiences…in many cases, not ever even speaking to a local…this is about serving in the way that’s most helpful to the workers.

You’ll see that in our childcare trip coming up this July – but we’ve made very clear that this is actually not a vacation to Istanbul. The conference is actually intentionally away from the heart of the city, to help the missionaries coming not have many distractions from their training.

We’re also there to specifically help sustain, encourage, and serve our workers.

***Question: What are other ways we could encourage our workers?***

A few more points on CHBC’s vision for missions.

1. **To keep the local church central in our missionary engagement:**

We looked at this closely in class four and briefly at the beginning of this class – the role of the local church in missions.

1. Importance of having a clear view of healthy church life for all our members.
   1. How can we expect to plant churches abroad if we don’t encourage healthy, biblical practices in our church here?
   2. Building a culture of discipleship, practicing spiritual disciplines, meeting together regularly, building community with one another, etc.
2. Every church member called to be involved in global evangelism…the work of the church.

What do we mean by that?

* 1. We teach that like worship, or evangelism…global missions is the work of the church, so it’s the work of EVERY Christian in the church.
  2. Helping CHBC members think through their place in missions intentionally

1. In doing this, our goal is to send people from CHBC that carry the culture of a healthy church with them

a. Helping to have groups that model church life in the culture they are sent to.

b. Allows the local church to really connect with a specific region.

D. Training people here at CHBC before they are sent out.

a. The church does the sending and we can perhaps best do the training.

b. We’ve talked about how we do that in other classes: but the missions core seminar is part of that, as is the missions reading group, serving workers when they’re home, visiting them abroad, etc.

But we don’t want to just focus on our own church and our own workers – we want to…

1. **Foster both indigenous and “international” churches that can serve as their own hubs for missions.**
2. Supporting church planting and pastoral training done by like-minded, CHBC-trained pastors in other countries.
   1. Key examples:
      1. Work in Lucknow, India, including CHBC-sent family we’re currently supporting.
      2. Johnny Lithell in Sweden
      3. Oliveiras in Lisbon.

Each of these examples have roles in pastoral training, seminary, Christian publishing, in their countries and in their language.

1. Planting and supporting international, English-speaking churches in strategic locations overseas.   
   * 1. Provide examples
   1. Why do we think this is strategic? English-speaking churches 🡪 Battleships of the gospel
      1. Evangelizing diverse local population, including some long-term locals.
      2. Modeling a healthy church for local believers.
      3. Serving as a hub for training local pastors in the region.
      4. Serving as a base for reaching nearby unreached people-groups. (Example of Duhok church incubating local-language church plant.)
2. **A vision of Missions that naturally flows from a broad Biblical worldview**
3. Focusing on preaching the Word, not on Missions itself.
   1. Preaching the Word, not missions.

Fortunately, a lot of the Bible talks about missions…so we don’t have to work at finding some particular element;

* 1. A big view of God will eventually result in a passion to make him known.
  2. A good grasp of the gospel and salvation history is a great preparation for missions.

1. Focus on general Christian growth and well-rounded maturity.
   1. Best training for missions is training to be Godly and fruitful here.
   2. One on one discipling is a fruitful training ground.
2. Focus on encouraging fruitfulness here in DC for every CHBC member.
   1. Building evangelistic skills is good regardless.
   2. Building the ability to disciple is good regardless.
   3. Learning to reach out across cultures is good regardless.

**Conclusion**:

So this is all done with an aim of bringing glory to God. We do that by obeying the great commission:

*18 And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in[*[*b*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=matthew+28&version=ESV#fen-ESV-24211b)*] the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”*

And we aim to do that in a way that serves our workers in a manner worthy of God, a la third John. Any questions?

With the minutes remaining – I’d love to open it up to questions or comments not only from today’s class, but from the entire series. What did you learn? What was most helpful or eye-opening? What will you take away from the class and start implementing?