

The Missions Philosophy of Bible Baptist Church of Nashua, NH

I. Summary Statement

The expectations of Bible Baptist Church of Nashua for its current and potential missionaries are as follows:

1. If a missionary uses a mission board or “clearing house,” that agency *must* be a ministry of a local church. Para-church mission boards and clearinghouses, by nature, take a position that could potentially oppose the missionary’s sending church, and we will not support their efforts.
2. If a missionary that we *currently* support is with a mission board, that missionary *must* disclose the dollar amount of our support that is taken by the mission board each month. This report can be given once per year.
3. A missionary candidate will be considered first *through his sending church*. We will not invite missionaries to present their ministry unless the sending church is of like faith and practice with ours. (*We require the doctrinal position of the sending church in writing, a letter of recommendation from the pastor of the sending church, and the contact information of the sending church. Any additional information on the sending church would also be much appreciated.*)
4. Although we are not responsible for your ministry, we are accountable for our Faith Promise finances. Therefore, we must be regularly informed about the progress and direction of your ministry. We require a missionary to report to us a minimum of once every three months, unless it is understood ahead of time how that would be impossible in his field of service (*we prefer with today’s technology an update monthly via email, blog, website, telephone, etc.*). If a missionary fails to inform us minimally, his support will be held until the church decides whether to continue to support him or not.
5. A missionary must view himself and his ministry as under the authority of his sending church. Changes in his ministry must be with the agreement and support of his sending church. Obviously, if your sending pastor informs us that his church no longer supports your ministry, our church will agree with your church.
6. The missionary also must inform us immediately if he decides to change his sending church, or if he decides to move to a new field. If a missionary that we support chooses to change his sending church he must have a Biblical reason for leaving his church, and his new church must meet the criteria given in the third point above, or the missionary will no longer be supported by our church.

II. The Missions Philosophy of Bible Baptist Church of Nashua

All the expectations named in Section I above are based on the ideas discussed in what follows in this document. From the start, BBCN does not believe that it should in any way usurp authority over the sending church. We view ourselves as a supporting church and, therefore, of no authority. When we support a missionary, we have simply decided to support the evangelistic effort of his local church through his ministry.

The Great Commission mandates that churches be active in world evangelism. For this reason, we want to put into words what we believe the Bible teaches about New Testament (NT) missions. We also realize that by defining our philosophy, we open ourselves up to criticism from some for defining the philosophy too broadly or too narrowly. We are writing purely as a local church with a view to help our assembly understand NT missions, and make clear choices about our future in missionary support. By no means do we claim to be absolutely correct, but we do feel that we have a responsibility to open our Bibles when determining our direction for missions support.

A. What is A Missionary?

The Bible does not refer to a missionary at any time and, in fact, the word “missionary” is never used in the Bible. However, the modern day missionary fits the biblical term “evangelist” perfectly. In fact, “Philip the Evangelist” (Acts 21:8), we submit, was what we call today a *missionary*.

Note the resemblances of “Philip the evangelist” with what we have termed modern day “missionaries.” *First*, he was a member of a local church in Jerusalem (Acts 6:5). *Second*, he left Jerusalem and “preached the gospel in many villages...” (Acts 8:5). *Third*, he returned to Jerusalem (Acts 8:25). *Fourth*, he went out again - to the Ethiopian in the wilderness (Acts 8:26), to Azotus (Acts 8:40), “...and passing through he preached in all the cities...” (Acts 8:40).

Certainly the missionary will work towards starting a particular church (but only *after* converts have been made), and may eventually have charge of that church, but ***his current purpose is to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ*** (To Evangelize)!

B. What Is the Purpose of Local Church Missions?

This purpose begins and ends with the local church. While the local church missionary seeks the Lord’s mind as to a field of service, he should get direction from his sending church as to an approach to church planting. Some local

churches will focus on planting as many NT churches as possible. Others will work to establish one strong church to act as a base for the training of the nationals that God separates from among the congregation, and then sending them out to plant churches. The approach taken is not the point here, as the pastor and missionary should determine their direction without influence from supporting churches. The supporting churches only need to decide whether or not they support the sending church and the missionary.

Evangelizing and (if converts are made) *establishing churches* are the primary works of the local church missionary. Training nationals then is a secondary work, a necessary and important part of the primary work of evangelizing and establishing other NT churches. Bible institutes, colleges, seminaries, hospitals, orphanages, radio ministries, etc., ought to be extensions of the local church like everything else, and ought never become the primary focus of a missionary.

C. What Role Does the Local Church Have in the Missionary's Ministry?

The work of an evangelist, while delegated to the local church, is fully carried out by the missionary. Ephesians 4, which names the evangelist as one of God's gifts to the local church, makes the local church the central organization for the work of the missionary's/evangelist's ministry. We also note that the local church was at the center for ministry of the Apostle Paul, perhaps the best known "church-planter/missionary" of all the NT missionary-evangelists. Philip the Evangelist was one of the original seven deacons, recognized by the church at Jerusalem for his wisdom and Spirit-filled Christian life. He was commissioned by the Jerusalem church and worked under their authority; and Paul, a member of the church at Antioch, certainly did as well. In fact, the Bible tells us in Acts 15:35-40, that when Paul and Barnabas parted company, Paul was recommended by his assembly. What we see in all of this is that God's blessing was on those who worked through their church. Those that were bound to the body of Christ were bound for God's blessing. Missionaries must work under the authority of their local church.

Jesus' commission to the local church is to make disciples of all nations. This commission was given to the local church, and therefore to the particular members of that church. As God moves and works within a church, He will give varying gifts and callings to the members. Local churches need faithful stewards of all types and abilities. To some within a church, God will give a very special calling to spread the evangelistic influence of that church to "the regions beyond." Acts 13:1-3 describes the Scriptural account of how God did this initially with Paul and Barnabas.

In every example, one common denominator can be gleaned...*their local church is at the center of that process.* The local church commissions and the local church sends the missionary; therefore, the local church stands in the place that God has given it, authorizing the ministry of, and giving authority to, the missionary.

D. What About Authority and Accountability?

The Bible also gives evidence that other like-minded churches participated in Paul's ministry. One notable example of this was the church at Philippi, of whom Paul said, "...*Ye sent once and again unto my necessity.*" Certainly, when God calls a faithful steward out of a strong, local, NT church, other assemblies of like-faith should be excited to support such an endeavor. When these churches join together with the sending church to help the missionary, *they are supporting the sending church*, and the missionary as an extension of that church. And so, as this missionary/evangelist heads over land and sea to the place that God, through his church, has sent him, what has given this missionary authority to do the work of the ministry in this place? Have all of his supporting churches given him the authority to do the work? Of course not! They play a "supporting" role, not an authorizing role. They have declared their approval of his ministry through their support for his ministry. The impossibility of forty to fifty churches holding authority over one ministry should be obvious enough. So, who gives the missionary authority? The answer is plain enough to the believer: ultimate authority comes from God who sent him. For example, Jesus said, "*Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the LORD,*" Matthew 23:39. As another example, Paul testified that his conversion involved a change of authority. He persecuted the Lord's churches in his former days by the authority of the chief priests who sent him, and now he preaches the gospel to the Gentiles by the authority of God who sent him (Acts 26:10-16). But wait: how did God send him? Through his church. Acts 13:2, 3 says,

As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they [church at Antioch] had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they [church at Antioch] sent them away.

The local church missionary is sent by, and is thus authorized by, *the Holy Ghost through his local church*. His church then is his earthly authority. We must remember that Christ is the head of the church, not the individual. God-ordained authority does not contradict God-created individuality. The flow of power still moves from God, through His Word to the individual, and then from the individual

to the various God-ordained institutions. When a missionary chooses to be sent out by a church, he has given *that* church authority in his life and ministry. The missionary has also been authorized by that church to work on the church's behalf. If a missionary freelances, he is acting outside of that God-ordained authority structure.

While the pastor and congregation of the sending church could not possibly know and understand everything about the missionary's ministry, God still holds the pastor and congregation accountable for every missionary this church authorizes. The missionary must respect this fact and be accountable to his sending church. The missionary should regularly seek his pastor's counsel, and should always be assured of the congregation's approval before forging ahead in the work. In other words, that missionary should always act as a true extension of his church.

Some missionaries mistakenly view themselves as *independent* of their sending church and seemingly make major shifts in philosophy or direction independent of their sending church's counsel, direction, or approval. We do not believe this to be biblical. Certainly, a missionary will be "shepherd" to those he works with on the mission field, perhaps the only shepherd they will ever know. If, however, a missionary feels that God wants him to be independent of his pastor and his church, then he should do what his pastor does. Even a pastor of a local church gets his authority for his ministry from his local church. The Bible is clear that God established His church, and gave the pastor as a gift to that church. The church is the support for the pastor's authority and ministry. If a church gives the pastor moral support and plenty of "Amen!", but no physical support, the pastor has a lack of actual support. He can feast on the "Amen!", but his family will not enjoy the meal. The Apostle Paul was very emphatic that "*the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel*" (I Corinthians 9:14). Most of I Corinthians 9 is written to show the church at Corinth that, humanly speaking, they gave authority to the pastor by providing for his needs. A missionary who desires *independence* should do what his pastor does. He should drop all of his support, he should get his authority solely from the local church he is shepherding, and he should answer to God for them.

A missionary may find himself in a quandary over this statement. After all, the people may be poor, the cost of living may be high, and the missionary may say, "I did not come here to work like the natives. How could I maintain my standard of living?" Ministry always involves faith. Missionaries have said that they would not want to be solely supported by one church. What if that church "went under?" Meanwhile, pastors of local churches exercise their faith by receiving all their support from one church. In that church they take a stand, and trust God to add to

that church and supply the need. Missionaries exercise their faith by traveling around the country, standing on their convictions, and trusting God to add meetings and supply the need. Their faith also includes trusting the Pastoral leadership God has given them, knowing that God's way is perfect. God is honored by the faith of all his people. If a missionary believes that God has called him to pastor this new church, independent of his sending church's authority, then that missionary must also believe that the God who called him will supply all his need according to His riches (which are still greater than the people's poverty or the nation's cost of living).

E. The Mission Board: Can A Missionary Serve Two Masters?

When a mission board has authority, the missionary has two masters. While those two masters may agree most of the time, we know that some of the time, the missionary will be required to make a choice, and he cannot serve both. Certainly, many missionaries live by their principles and will always follow their local church, but some will not.

The issue at stake here is whether a mission board should ever *be put in a position* where it can legitimately oppose the authority of the local church; and if it can be put in this position, when can it oppose the sending church, and when should the missionary disregard those who are *spiritually* responsible for his ministry in order to obey those who are *physically* and *financially* responsible? In other words, when is the missionary allowed to serve mammon instead of God? "Never" would be an appropriate answer. A local church missionary cannot afford to put a mission board in a position where it could oppose the pastor and congregation that God gave him.