

Missionary Task Plan

This document serves as an ongoing guide to help develop a plan for making disciples. This is in keeping with the company's stated vision, core values, and documented list of key terms and concepts listed at the bottom of this document. Please familiarize yourself with these before you use this tool.

Name: Ancil Ragoonath

Projected Period of Plans: Six Months July -December 2020

Current Date: July 30th, 2020

ABIDE

Summarize what God is revealing as His vision for you and your target people or location. Use the following questions to guide your response:

- What is your Sabbath plan?
- What is your prayer and fasting strategy?
- What partners will be praying and fasting for your target group/location?
- What is God's vision for your target people or location?
- How is God's Word directing your strategy?

- A. **My Sabbath Plan:** Monday is my full sabbath day of rest. I try to be up early and exercise by walking on the beach for one or two hours to keep physically healthy. During this time, on the beach, I spend most of it with the Lord because I know that His Grace is renewed every morning in my life. I then meet with my Timothy team for a team devotion, prayer, daily and weekly planning.
- B. **Prayer and Fasting:** Praying is a major part of my time in the morning. I usually reserve fasting for times of big decisions, transition or trials. I am in daily contact with my family and close friends, so they have regular updates of my prayer needs.
- C. **Partners:** My family, friends, church family, national partners and national churches have been faithfully praying for the work among the Antemoro people for the past five years and continue to do so today.
- D. **Vision for People:** My vision from the Lord is to have streams of generations of Antemoro believers fulfilling the great commission from repenting and believing to church formation. To have the most biblical acute people on the planet. To train nationals to be ready for all the challenges that would come and continue to fight the good fight.
- E. **The Word:** God's Word is woven in my heart in every aspect of the vision He has entrusted to me. The Antemoro are inundated with cultural church tradition with little or no biblical knowledge. It is my commitment to insure they begin and end with the Word.

Peer Feedback:

Action Steps: September to December: Seeking God's face to provide a vision for the ministry for next year. Ten days of 24 hours fasting for the coming holiday season. A leadership prayer retreat before my trip into the US. A restful time visiting friends and family during the holidays. Fasting, praying, reading and seeking God's continuing vision for next year.

ENTRY

Summarize your entry strategy with your target people or location. Use the following questions to guide your response.

- What steps will you take as you enter?
- What are the key segments and who/where are you will be targeting?
- How and with whom will you be vision casting?

- Where are you located in relation to the core demographic?
 - How/When/will you accomplish entry?
- A. **Entry:** My entry to the field was five years ago. During that time, I was living, learning and ministering in the culture, as a result, my strategy has evolved to be biblical, cultural, indigenous and highly effective in reaching the lost and making disciples. It also has an ever changing and adapting to the rapidly changing world view of the younger generation.
- B. **Segments:** My target is all the Antemoro people of every age, gender and economical background. The Antemoro people live to the North, West and South of the Indian Ocean on the southeastern coast of Madagascar.
- C. **Casting Vision:** Vision casting will be with the current Timothy team and all the leaders now in Advance Theological Training in two location. They will then cast it to their churches and believers. We strive to maintain a constant stream of biblically accurate information to the churches.
- D. **My Location:** I am in Manakara which in in the center of my target group and the economic hub for my people. It is walking distance from the Indian Ocean.
- E. **Entry Strategy:** Entry into the people group has been done and second-generation churches are beginning to emerge. However, entry into strategic locations to form new churches will continue with myself, Tiffany and the Timothy team. These locations will be targeted to fill gaps in the overall strategy in reaching all the people.

Peer Feedback:

Action Steps: September to December: Vision casting to nationals to seek and discover new areas that are current gaps in our outreach. We hope to have two new location by late November.

EVANGELISM

Summarize your evangelism strategy with your target people or location. Use the following questions to guide your response.

- What is your evangelism strategy?
- What bridges and gospel presentations will you use?
- How do you see these bridges and gospel presentations reproducing?
- What time of day will you be proclaiming the gospel?
- How will you evaluate your evangelism tool to make sure it is biblical, contextual, and reproducible?
- What is your “yellow light strategy?”
- What are the barriers to the gospel among the target people or location?

TERM-Bible Verse Songs (BVS-Songs created with bible verses only teaching on a specific doctrine)

- A. **Evangelism:** We currently use four evangelism strategies: 1. The Jesus Film is used for broad seed sowing. 2. The Jesus Film Tablet is used by the local leaders to go into houses in new areas to do evangelism on a family household level. 3. Evangelism bible verses songs (BVS) along with the two kingdoms is used in schools and teaching groups in new locations. 4. Evangelism is taught in the churches along with the BVS along with regular challenges to share their faith especially with their families.
- B. **Bridges:** We use original **created songs with the Bible verses** in local melodies as the main bridge. These songs are effective and easily reproduced. The songs contain the verse of the gospel, we launch into the gospel using the verses in the songs. We currently have five evangelism songs. Another bridge is the showing of the Jesus film in remote locations. At the end of the **Jesus Film** we stop the movie just after the second man on the cross ask Jesus to remember him when he goes to His kingdom. The gospel is presented via the contrasting view of Jesus by the two men. They are then challenged to choose.
- C. **Reproduction:** Our gospel presentations are simple and easy to reproduce. They learn the song and share the gospel from the verses. They can use the simple, culturally relevant and biblical relevant version of the two kingdoms.

- D. **Evaluation:** The gospel is the power of God unto salvation. A few of the verses from our evangelism songs. **Song 1.** John 3:16; **Song 2.** Eph 2:8-10 **Song 3.** Mark 1:15; 1 Cor. 15:1-4; Gal 1:8. Almost all the verse for salvation are in indigenous songs. They are very effective in reaching the lost. Our evangelism tools are very biblical, contextual and simple to reproduce whether or not the believer is able read. **Times:** The time varies based on the day and the distance of the location. The Jesus film is done in late evening into the night.
- E. **Yellow Light:** After completing evangelism in a location we to return for follow up until we see if we can identify individual that are faithful, have a sincere desire to know further truth. After several weeks we introduce the topic of baptism. A positive response to baptism is a bright yellow light and key to moving toward church formation among the target group.
- F. **Barriers:** The main barrier is the post-colonial world view of Christ. They have all the biblical terminology along with many of the indigenous church culture but with limited or no biblical definitions. They need the Bible and the Bible alone.

Peer Feedback:

Action Steps: September to December. Finish the Virtual Missionary section and pilot it with the nationals. Example, they go to the website, read the instructions, follow the guidelines, complete the task and give a report. They will then log the event for accountability, review, evaluation and possible areas of opportunities for improvement. We are working to begin a new church from a current yellow light.

DISCIPLESHIP

Summarize your discipleship strategy with your target people or location using the following questions to guide your response:

- Who is the focus of your discipleship strategy?
- What methods will you use in discipleship (short term & long term)?
- When and how often will you be discipling?
- Why have you chosen this discipleship approach?
- What obstacles or barriers will you need to address in relation to baptism?
- How will you appropriately emphasize knowledge of God's word, life and heart transformation, and obedience as part of your discipleship plan?
- What is your plan for this to reproduce?
- How will you use the three thirds process in your training?

TERMS for this section:

1. **4M's** (The four Malagasy words for **Reading, Singing, Praying and Studying begins** with the letters "M." Hence at the acronym "4M's")
 2. **5-1-1** is a life coaching strategy I am piloting in the coming months among the establish Antemoro churches. **5 days** of work for bread, **1 day** of rest for the soul and spirit and **1 day** for building the Kingdom of God.
 3. **DPAP-** Diarim-Pianakavihana Ara-Panahy (a family journey of spiritual experiences using the 4M in their houses) The Antemoro people because of economic hardship live for today and seldom think of the past or the future. **DPAP** is a life coaching tool for them to document their spiritual life in their homes using the 4M's and sharing and celebrating during Sunday service.
 4. **The Vault** Is a web site that is in Malagasy that would provide the critical path beginning with repent and believe, through short- and long-term discipleship, then to church formation, and finally training in Theology and Apologetics.
- A. **Discipleship Focus:** First, anyone who confess to have repented and believed we target for discipleship. Second, we introduce the 4M method in short term discipleship. Third, we see a commitment to baptism as a major yellow light to church formation. Forth, after baptism, we shift focus observing over time those who are faithful, who are seeking first the kingdom of God, with an observable growing passion for the things God and their neighbor. From this pool of individual, we choose our leaders training.

- B. **Short and Long Term:** The four words in Malagasy are (Mamaky-To Read), (Mihira-to Sing), (Mivavavka-To Pray) and (Mianatra-To Learn). Long- and short-term discipleship is done using the 4M method. We have songs covering all short-term discipleship and most of the long-term discipleship. This approach places the promises in God's Word at the forefront of discipleship. Five reasons for this approach to discipleship: **First, people** who READ, SING, PRAY and STUDY His Word will reap the promises that God gives in His Word. **Second**, it is easy to reproduce in any generation of the church. **Third**, it reduces the stress of preserving doctrinal purity as the movement goes far beyond the reach of the church planters, in second, and third generation churches. **Forth**, it gives the believers who cannot read an equal opportunity to grow to maturity with God's Word in their hearts. **Fifth**, it places the missionary as the secondary source of information rather than the first. The Word goes first.
- C. **Leaders:** The ones who we are thriving to become level 2-5 leaders. In addition to the 4M's, we introduce them to Theological Education by Extension. It is a three-year program spanning all major doctrines of the bible. We currently have 16 individuals in the program with an additional 10 coming in the next few weeks in two new locations.
- D. **Discipleship Approach:** This approach is Scripture-centric and will carry the promises God give concerning His Word. The 4M's is God's Word, nothing else. Most of the time the Word is in their hearts before the lesson is introduced. Life, heart and obedience is difficult in any culture. However, having the Word already in their hearts and having already been reading, singing and praying is very beneficial when they begin studying. Obedience is more direct knowing they are following the very Word of God and not the missionary words about God. Also, The Holy Spirit convicts and teach obedience on the truth they Read, Sing, Pray and Study for His Word.
- E. **Baptism:** Baptism in the beginning was a major hurdle, but over time and faithfulness to the people they are now more quickly receptive. Baptism is a key yellow light among the Antemoro people. Time on the field and in the lives of the people leads to the people trusting you and following God conviction on baptism. Trusting the missionary will be here for a long time after baptism removes any hesitation.
- F. **Emphasis on The Word:** During the COVID confinement period my focus has shifted is to begin shaping the web site (**The Vault**) for the long-term future of the ministry. imazava.com (Currently under construction.) It will be a place that will contain all the ministry information and strategy with an easy to navigate approach. If I cannot be present for any reason, they will have place to study any biblical topic at any level. It will contain information in audio form for those who cannot read well.
- G. **The Three Thirds:** Also, I am piloting the 5-1-1 lifestyle program as part of the life coaching. 5 days of work to provide for themselves and their families, 1 day of rest from all work and 1 day for the work of the kingdom. The three thirds process is woven into every fabric of the 4M's and will be in the 5-1-1 lifestyle. The three thirds provide reflection and repetition which is vital for long term retention and reproduction.

Peer Feedback:

Action Steps: Beginning in September through December we will be teaching TEE every other week, while the off week we will be training in proper exegesis and message preparation along with vision casting in all areas of the M Task. September, we begin two new locations for TEE with ten new students. One of the new meetings will be focused on training women. We will be launching the Virtual Missionary and teaching the leaders how to navigate beginning in September. This will get them accustom using the site to teach themselves in the future. The goal will be to guide the ministry to competent independence during the times when the missionary is not physically present.

HEALTHY CHURCH PLANTING

Summarize your healthy church planting strategy with your target people or location using the following questions to guide your response:

- Who needs to begin meeting as a church? What are your plans to get them there?
- Where are they meeting?
- When do they meet?
- Why are they meeting in the way that they do?

- Are the churches biblical, culturally contextualized, and reproducing? (See definition of Church in the IMB Key Terms and Concepts document.)
 - How is your plan to help them multiply?
 - What mechanisms do you have in place to help facilitate a healthy expression of the church?
 - Where do you see these new churches reaching out in the coming years?
 - What will you use to evaluate Church health?
- A. **Churches:** We currently have six churches. There are several yellow light locations meeting that are on the path to becoming church. Covid has delayed the progress of our yellow light locations but we know God will be faithful.
- B. **Church Locations:** The churches are in the north, west and south of the people group. The two churches to the north are working on an additional three other yellow light locations to form new churches. These would be partial third generation churches. Also, we have three other location that was quickly becoming church but was haunted because of COVID. They will become church soon with leaders who are already in leadership training. These churches are all spread over the Antemoro region.
- C. **When is Meetings:** The churches meet on Sunday mornings. The yellow light meets on different days.
- D. **Why are They Meeting the Way They Do:** They meet at the most convenient time until they become church. Once they become church they switch to Sunday. This is normal in the culture.
- E. **Biblical, Contextual and Reproducing:** They are Biblical, contextualized and reproducing some faster than others. The plan is in the works to speed up confidence in more believers that would result in increase reproductions. Malagasy believers, singing Malagasy melodies, with verses from the Malagasy bible, praying the Malagasy verses and studying from the Malagasy bible is a good approach to reproduce, reproducing believers and churches.
- F. **Multiplication:** Multiplication is innate in the approach to have each believer competent in handling God's Word. In the culture, confidence is the trigger that leads to sharing. People are timid to share because of a fear of being inadequate and embarrassed. The 4M's, 5-1-1, Journaling and 3 Thirds will grow confidence in the majority rather than a minority few who are more naturally intelligent. Repetition (faithfulness) leads to confidence, the three thirds will aid greatly. The 4M's, 5-1-1 and the DPAP will build a biblically based health expression of church beginning in the believers' home and the Sunday celebration. I foresee many churches among the people in the next 5 years. The goal is all should hear the gospel and have an opportunity to receive Jesus and be discipled.
- G. **Healthy Church Expression Mechanisms:** Beginning with the church circle along with the church song from Acts 2. This teaches them what is the church, what they have to do to become church and what needs to be maintained to remain a viable effective church.
- H. **Where will they be reaching out in the future:** There are gaps in regions that we have identified and will focus on getting here in the future. These gaps need to be filled to cover the entire people group. They will be divided between Myself, Tiffany, the Timothy team and the national churches.
- I. **Evaluating healthy Church:** Evaluation is a return to the church circle, this time with a graft to determine what percentage of them is spent doing what. This will refocus on the weak areas while further strengthening the strong.

Peer Feedback:

Action Steps: September to December we have the goal of beginning to change a yellow light to a Church among Mondy's family.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Summarize your leadership development strategy with your target people or location using the following questions to guide your response:

- Who is responsible for leading the believers in churches that have been planted?

- Who is the focus of your leadership development?
 - Does your plan emphasize biblical knowledge, heart and life change, and obedience?
 - How will you be developing leaders to have a biblical overview of the Old Testament and the New Testament?
 - How are you identifying leaders who can train leaders?
- A. **Church Leaders:** Our leaders are selected through a threefold biblical process.
- B. **Leadership Focus: One,** they must be observed to be individuals who are seeking first the kingdom of God. (They see the missionary as a path to building their own kingdom using Gods') **Second,** they must be found faithful to the work of the ministry. (Chasing after talent is an easy path to success but it is usually paved with a road of people who lack diligence and excellence) **Third,** growing passion for the things for God and their neighbor. (Godliness is making what is most important to God as the most important to the leader. The most important thing to God is people and it must be to the emerging leaders). First generation of leadership training is my responsibility. First generation leaders are responsible second and third generation emerging leaders.
- C. **Knowledge, Hearts, Life and Obedience Leaders:** Leaders are held at a higher accountability because they teach the people. **Here are four criteria First,** leaders are not called leaders in the ministry, they are called big servants (Mpanopo Lihebe) this is because post colonialism leadership is elitist in nature. **Second,** they must adhere strictly to the three guidelines when they were chosen. **Third,** a growing desire for knowing the Word must be evident along with a growing work ethic and passion for people. **Forth, they** must exhibit a desire to do things with excellence.
- D. **Biblical Overview of the Old Testament and the New Testament:** TEE training every Saturday includes the steps of exegesis as follows. **What is exegesis?** "Exegesis is the **Science and Art** of biblical interpretation." It begins with the main ideas of the Bible overall: **What is the main idea from heaven?** "God loves us! **What is the main idea of the OT?** Jesus will come! **What is the main idea of the four gospels** "Jesus is here! **What is the main idea of Act through Jude?** Jesus left to return! **What is the main idea of Revelation?** Jesus Returns! These are the major breakdowns of the Bible they repeat this every time they begin discovering the meaning of a portion of scripture. Then we move to the **book/s** being studied: What is the main idea of the book? This is where **introductions information** (Who what when where why etc) to the books is taught? Then they move to the main idea of the **chapter** in the book/s, then **passage** in the book, cross references are added to finish the scientific part. **The artistic part** is preparing a lesson that would be but in the scientific section to weave a beautiful and intriguing lesson to the listener.
- E. **Identifying leaders:** Leaders are selected from a lag measure approach. We observe those who are faithful, who seek the kingdom of God, who have a growing desire for God and His Word and a developing love for the believer and people in general. People who exhibit the nature of the beatitudes are the best pool to choose leaders.
- F. **Leaders Who can Train Leaders:** All leaders can train other leaders if they are faithful, diligent and maturing in in the faith. Training leaders is process oriented. Being faithful to the process and the countless repetition need to develop it is innate they will be able to train leaders. There are intangible but not overpowering.

Peer Feedback:

Action Steps: September to December: The two new TEE and Exegetical Training will be done current leaders emulating the manner in which they were disciplined. One of the TEE will be a womens only to begin laying the foundation for the future development of women int he ministry. They are a powerful force to the Kingdom but have been neglected. ill be a womens only to begin laying the foundation for the future development of women int he ministry. They are a powerful force to the Kingdom but have been neglected.

EXIT

Summarize your exit strategy with your target people or location using the following questions to guide your response:

- What is your End-Vision?
- What is your leadership development plan/curriculum?
- How will you encourage and provide accountability to those developing leaders?
- What mechanisms will you put in place to help ensure a healthy expression of the church?
- How is the local church dealing with opposition and other forms of persecution?
- What are the local churches' plans for reaching peoples and locations beyond them?
- When will you leave?
- What needs to be in place before you leave?
- How will you maintain contact with them?

My Plan:

- A. **My end vision:** My end is to have an indigenous progression of believers and churches who are and will continue to build the Kingdom of God for many generations.
- B. **Leadership Development:** The 4M, 5-1-1, 3 Thirds, DPAP and the Vault (imazava.com) provides a consistent continuum to their theology, life, ministry coaching, and practical experience.
Accountability: They are held accountable to the same guideline from the inception of the ministry. Faithful people, seeking first the Kingdom of God with a growing passion for God and people.
- C. **Healthy Church:** The health expression of church is a church that knows and follows the commands of Christ and fulfills the role of the church as outlined in Acts chapter two.
- D. **Persecution:** Our churches have seen many forms of opposition from within and outside. They have been taught that all things work together for good, but not all things are good. They have been taught from the onset that opposition is always present when building God's kingdom. They have been through so many and witness the hand and plan of God throughout they grow stronger during these times.
- E. **Reaching the Lost:** Reaching the lost is a natural offshoot of the way the national believers and churches are trained and guided. The ministry is constantly being reviewed and adjusted as information technology changes and the culture changes. The core message and goals remain the same, but the ever shifting of the culture due to the increased availability of international information to the masses impacts the culture, the believers, the churches and the way ministry is conducted. Maintaining a clear, Biblical, culturally relevant gospel in a rapidly shifting world view is key for long term reproducibility. The ministry must be prepared for the challenges imposed by the past, be effective today and be prepared for the future. God's Kingdom must survive for several generation if the people are to be defined as reached.
- F. **Leaving:** My plans are to remain on the island until the ministry has all it needs to survive, thrive and reproduce for coming generations. I predict a minimum of five years.
- G. **Before Departure:** 20 first generation, 15 second generation, 10 third generation and 2 fourth generation churches. A minimum of 200 nationals trained in advance TEE. An indigenous BVS for every conceivable topic the Bible teaches. A BVS songbook. The Vault completed and is updated by trained nationals. A children storybook with local art. A short indigenous bible movie program to teach the doctrines along with the songs. The 4M's and 5-1-1 and three thirds are innate in the churches.
- H. **Maintaining Contact:** Regular contact will be maintained via the various media available and annually visit to lend guidance if needed.

Peer Feedback:

Action Steps: The Virtual Missionary (imazava.com) The 4M's DPAP, 3 Thirds TEE and the 5-1-1 will continue to guide the nationals in building the kingdom long after my departure. All the education strategies, experiences knowledge and wisdom from God will be available to leaders and laypersons for many future generations.

INTERNATIONAL MISSION BOARD – VISION/MISSION/CORE VALUES/KEY TERMS AND CONCEPTS

VISION

Our vision is a multitude from every language, people, tribe and nation knowing and worshipping our Lord Jesus Christ.

MISSION

IMB partners with churches to empower limitless missionary teams who are evangelizing, discipling, planting, and multiplying healthy churches, and training leaders among unreached peoples and places for the glory of God.

SSA MISSION STATEMENT

We are incarnational catalysts who join the Father to empower limitless partners to evangelize, disciple, plant and multiply healthy churches, and train leaders among SSA unreached peoples and places for the glory of God.

CORE VALUES

1. We commit to obedience to the Lordship of Jesus Christ and to God's inerrant Word.
2. We commit to living a life of personal holiness in imitation of Jesus Christ and bringing glory to God the Father in everything we do, by the power of the Holy Spirit.
3. We believe Jesus Christ is God's only provision for salvation and all people without personal faith in Him are lost and will spend eternity in hell.
4. We seek to provide all people an opportunity to hear, understand and respond to the Gospel in their own cultural context.
5. We evangelize through proclamation, discipling, equipping and ministry that results in indigenous reproducing Baptist churches.
6. We serve churches to facilitate their involvement in the Great Commission and the sending of missionaries to bring all peoples to faith in Jesus Christ.
7. We partner with Baptists and other Christians around the world in accordance with IMB guidelines.
8. We understand and fulfill God's mission through God's Word, prayer and the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

KEY TERMS AND CONCEPTS
International Mission Board – June 20, 2016

The IMB partners with churches to empower limitless missionary teams who are making disciples and multiplying churches among unreached peoples and places for the glory of God. This strategic aim includes and implies key terms and concepts that are not explicitly defined in the *Baptist Faith and Message*, the statement of belief with which we align our practice. Therefore, the purpose of this document is to provide biblically faithful, denominationally loyal definitions for terms and concepts that profoundly affect who we are, where we go, what we do, and how we train. We want a biblical understanding of these terms and concepts to be clearly articulated and consistently understood across the IMB so that we can wisely apply God’s Word in all of our work together. Doubtless more terms and concepts will need to be defined in the days to come, but this document contains definitions of the following: *gospel, evangelism, conversion, disciple, disciple making, calling, missionary, missionary team, unreached peoples and places, and church.*

Gospel

The gospel is the good news that the only true God,¹ the just² and gracious³ Creator of the universe,⁴ has looked upon hopelessly sinful men and women⁵ and has sent His Son,⁶ God in the flesh,⁷ to bear His wrath against sin through His substitutionary death on the cross⁸ and to show His power over sin and death through His resurrection from the grave⁹ so that everyone who turns from their sin¹⁰ and themselves¹¹ and trusts in Jesus alone as Savior¹² and Lord¹³ will be reconciled to God¹⁴ forever.¹⁵

- The gospel is good news about God. It presupposes everything the Bible teaches about the only true God, and it is therefore unintelligible apart from biblical testimony to the character and activity of God. In particular, the gospel is rooted in the holiness of God and His righteous hatred against sin, and the love of God and His undeserved grace and mercy toward sinners. Biblically faithful gospel presentations are God-centered, with His nature and His actions at the heart of the message.

¹ Deuteronomy 4:35, 39; 6:4; 2 Samuel 7:22; Isaiah 44:6; John 17:3; 1 Timothy 1:17; 2:5.

² Genesis 18:25; Proverbs 17:15.

³ Titus 2:11; Ephesians 2:8.

⁴ Genesis 1:1; Isaiah 43:15.

⁵ Romans 3:12, 23; Ephesians 2:1-3.

⁶ Luke 1:31-35; John 1:14; 3:16.

⁷ John 1:1-14; Hebrews 1:3.

⁸ Romans 3:21-26; 1 John 2:2.

⁹ 1 Corinthians 15:3-4; Revelation 1:17-18.

¹⁰ Mark 1:15; Acts 2:38.

¹¹ Luke 9:23-24; Galatians 2:20.

¹² Acts 2:36; John 3:16.

¹³ Romans 10:9-10; Philippians 2:9-11.

¹⁴ Romans 5:1, 9-11; Colossians 1:19-23.

¹⁵ Romans 6:23; Revelation 20:11-21:8.

- The problem the gospel addresses is humanity's sinful rebellion against God and subsequent guilt and shame before God. Because God is holy and just, human rebellion rightly provokes His wrath and necessarily deserves eternal condemnation. While it is true that the gospel ministers to the consequences of sin in human life, biblically faithful gospel presentations identify the guilty rebellion of human sin as the root of our problem. Further, the gospel reveals the infinite severity of our problem, for an everlasting hell awaits every sinner who dies in this state of guilty rebellion against God.
- The gospel centers around Jesus Christ. It is the good news that in Jesus, God the Son took on full humanity and became one of us while remaining fully God. It is the good news that in Jesus, the kingly rule of God has physically broken into human history. It is the good news that Jesus lived a life of perfect, sinless obedience – the life we have not lived – and then died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins and to bear the wrath we deserve for our rebellion against God. Both in His life and in His death, Jesus traded places with us and served as our substitute. Further, the gospel is the good news that Jesus triumphed over sin and death in His glorious resurrection. It is the good news that He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father, and that even now He intercedes for His people. The gospel is the good news that Jesus will come again in glory, and that His kingdom will have no end. In order to be faithful to Scripture, then, gospel presentations are explicit about the identity of Jesus as the Christ, the Messiah, and Son of God, and about His sinless life, atoning death, and victorious resurrection as the only hope of salvation for sinners.
- The gospel is a call to repentance and faith. It is not just news; it is also a royal summons for traitors against God to lay down their rebellion and return to Him through faith in Jesus. The gospel clearly declares that there is no other way for sinners to be saved, and it categorically denies that sinners can earn their salvation by anything they do themselves. Consequently, in order to be faithful to Scripture, gospel presentations challenge hearers to repent and believe the good news of Jesus, confessing Him as Lord.
- God grants amazing treasures to those who embrace the gospel. Their sins are forgiven, and they stand before God not only completely justified in His sight, but also clothed in the very righteousness of Christ. They have been reconciled to God. They have been adopted by God and they are alive in Christ, having been born again by the Holy Spirit. They now possess the Holy Spirit as a down payment and foretaste of their inheritance in Christ. They are a part of the body of Christ, the church. They are kept by the power of God in salvation until they see Him face to face. They will one day be free from sin as they live with God forever in infinite joy and glory. These treasures, and not earthly health or prosperity, are the true gifts of the gospel, and gospel presentations must be clear about this if they are to be faithful to Scripture.

Evangelism

Evangelism is the proclamation of the gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit¹⁶ with the aim of persuading people to repent and believe in Christ.¹⁷

- Evangelism always means *proclamation*, and it always involves communicating the message of the gospel using language the lost can understand.
- Evangelism is proclamation of the *gospel*. In order to be biblical evangelism, the full message of the holiness and love of God, the sinfulness of every human being, the atoning sacrifice and victorious resurrection of Jesus for our sins, and the necessity of repentance and faith, must be presented.
- Evangelism is proclamation of the gospel *in the power of the Holy Spirit*. We present the gospel message, but only the Holy Spirit can turn a person's heart and mind toward Christ.
- Evangelism has the aim of *persuading people to repent and believe in Christ*. Evangelism is more than mere presentation of the gospel; it is persuasion with the gospel. Evangelism necessarily includes a call for the hearer to repent of sin and believe in Christ.

Conversion

Conversion is the divinely enabled personal response of individuals to the gospel¹⁸ in which they turn from their sin and themselves (repent)¹⁹ and trust in Jesus as Savior and Lord (believe).²⁰

- Conversion is a *divinely enabled* response to the gospel. It is not something that fallen sinners can accomplish on their own. According to Scripture, unregenerate people are slaves to sin.²¹ They are unable to understand the things of God,²² unable to obey God or please God,²³ and justly under His wrath.²⁴ They are blinded to the gospel so that they cannot see it.²⁵ They are not seeking God, but rather running away from Him.²⁶ They are dead in their sin.²⁷ Apart from the gracious initiative of God, no one can be saved. Therefore, God-dependent prayer is an essential component of evangelism.

¹⁶ Acts 1:8; 8:4; 20:24; Romans 10:9-17.

¹⁷ Acts 16:31; 2 Corinthians 5:11.

¹⁸ Acts 2:38; 16:31.

¹⁹ Isaiah 45:22; Matthew 4:17; Luke 9:23-24; Acts 3:19; 1 Thessalonians 1:9.

²⁰ Mark 1:14-15; John 1:12; Romans 10:9.

²¹ Romans 6:15-21

²² 1 Corinthians 2:14

²³ Romans 3:10-12; 8:7

²⁴ Romans 1:18-32; Ephesians 2:1-3

²⁵ 2 Corinthians 4:4

²⁶ Romans 3:10-20

- Conversion is a divinely enabled *response of repentance and faith*. The gracious work of God in conversion in no way minimizes or eliminates the necessity and responsibility of sinners to respond to the gospel call. Repentance involves turning away from sin and self. It marks a radical break from a life of rebellion against God.²⁸ Faith involves not only believing that what the Bible teaches about Jesus is true, but also trusting in Him alone for salvation while entrusting one's life to Him.²⁹ Repentance and faith are not separate or disconnected actions, but rather two sides of the same response: turning away from a life of rebellion against God in repentance, and in the same act turning toward God through faith in Christ. Neither is complete or adequate without the other.
- Conversion is a divinely enabled response *to the gospel*. Two particular implications of this reality are significant. First, the gospel must be proclaimed for anyone to be converted. No one can be saved apart from receiving, understanding, and believing the gospel.³⁰ This makes the task of evangelism critically urgent.³¹ Second, the content of the message matters. It is absolutely essential that missionaries get the message right, especially in light of distortions of the gospel that are popular around the world. Any gospel message that denies or dilutes the full deity and humanity of Jesus, identifies the human problem as anything else or anything less than our sinful rebellion against God, does not major on the substitutionary death of Jesus and the reality of His bodily resurrection, or does not teach that we are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, is an unbiblical gospel which does not lead to biblical conversion.³²
- Conversion is *radical*. The Bible uses extreme language to describe it. Someone who has been converted has died to everything they used to be and received new life in Christ.³³ They have, in fact, been crucified with Christ.³⁴ They have been created all over again.³⁵ They have been born again.³⁶ Conversion to Christ is neither casual nor superficial.
- Conversion is *noticeable*. While no believer attains perfection in this life, a converted person is a changed person. This is particularly evident in a Christian's belief in the gospel,³⁷ love for God's people,³⁸ and growth in holiness.³⁹

²⁸ Mark 1:15; Luke 5:32, 13:3, 24:47; Acts 2:38, 3:19, 11:18, 17:30, 20:21; 2 Corinthians 7:10; 2 Peter 3:9

²⁹ Mark 1:15; John 1:12, 3:16-18, 11:25-27, 20:31; Acts 4:12, 16:31; Romans 1:16, 3:21-28, 4:1-8, 10:9-17; Galatians 2:16; Ephesians 1:13-14; 1 John 5:1, 11-13

³⁰ John 3:18, 14:6; Acts 4:12; Romans 10:9-17; 1 John 5:11-13

³¹ 2 Corinthians 5:20-21, 6:1-22

³² Galatians 1:6-9

³³ Romans 6:1-11; Colossians 3:3-4

³⁴ Galatians 2:20

³⁵ 2 Corinthians 5:17

³⁶ John 3:1-8

37 Psalm 119; John 3:16-18; Galatians 1:6-9; 1 John 2:21-24; 4:1-6; 5:1-13

38 1 John 3:14-15; 4:20-21

39 1 John 2:4-5; 3:9-10

- Conversion is *permanent*. God never lets go of or loses anyone who has been truly converted.⁴⁰ While it is true that some may profess faith for a time and then fall away, their very departure from the faith indicates that they were never truly converted.⁴¹ While God alone knows the condition of a person's heart, it is neither biblical nor safe to assume that anyone who has denied the faith, whose life shows no evidence of regeneration, or who has voluntarily abandoned the fellowship of the body of Christ, has been converted, whatever they may have said or done in the past.

Disciple

Disciples are followers of Jesus.⁴² They have turned from their sin and trusted in Jesus as their Savior.⁴³ They have died to themselves and surrendered their lives to Him as Lord.⁴⁴ Christ now lives in them, transforming everything about them from the inside out, resulting in six primary marks of a disciple. The first of these marks (a transformed heart) occurs at the point in time when a disciple places initial faith in Jesus. The rest of these marks are found in increasing measure as a disciple grows through faith in Jesus as a member of His body, the church.⁴⁵

- *Transformed Heart: Disciples are spiritually regenerate—they have been forgiven of their sin and they are now indwelt by God's Spirit.*⁴⁶ By supernatural grace through saving faith in Christ, disciples have been acquitted before God the Judge and adopted by God the Father.⁴⁷ Such gracious regeneration has triggered a glorious transformation in every disciple of Jesus.⁴⁸ Having been brought from death to life, disciples are new creations who now live as servants of the King and heirs of His kingdom.⁴⁹ Empowered by the Holy Spirit, they grow in holiness as God gradually transforms them into the image of Christ from one degree of glory to another.⁵⁰ Disciples hold fast to the sure hope of full and final future glorification with Christ.⁵¹
- *Transformed Mind: Disciples are biblically grounded—they believe what Jesus says.*⁵² Disciples of Jesus trust the truth of Jesus and view the world around them through the lens of God's Word.⁵³ As disciples abide in Jesus, reading, hearing, studying, understanding, memorizing, and meditating on God's Word, He molds their minds to

⁴⁰ John 6:37-40; 10:27-30; Romans 8:31-39; Philippians 1:6; 1 Peter 1:3-5

⁴¹ 1 John 2:19

⁴² Matthew 4:18-22.

⁴³ Mark 1:15; Romans 10:9.

⁴⁴ Luke 9:23-24; Galatians 2:20.

⁴⁵ 1 Corinthians 12:27; Ephesians 2:19-22; 4:4, 15-16; Colossians 1:18.

⁴⁶ Ezekiel 36:25-27; John 3:1-8.

⁴⁷ Romans 5:1-11; Galatians 4:4-7.

⁴⁸ Titus 3:3-8.

⁴⁹ 2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 2:1-10; Romans 8:16-17.

⁵⁰ 2 Corinthians 3:17-18.

⁵¹ Romans 8:18-39; Ephesians 1:11-14; 1 Peter 1:3-5; 1 John 3:1-3; 5:13.

⁵² John 15:7-11.

⁵³ John 8:31-32; 2 Corinthians 10:5.

become like His.⁵⁴ They are continually being renewed in knowledge after the image of their Creator.⁵⁵

- *Transformed Affections: Disciples are deeply satisfied—they desire what Jesus desires.*⁵⁶ Their pursuit of peace, joy, and life has led them to Jesus, who has not only saved them from their sin, but also satisfied their souls.⁵⁷ Disciples, therefore, grow to participate in spiritual disciplines not out of a sense of duty, but out of a sense of delight: enjoying the exaltation of God in worship, craving communion with God in prayer, hungering for God’s Word more than daily food, confessing sins with grateful contrition, and loving God’s glory more than their own lives.⁵⁸ Such love for God continually pushes out love for the things of this world.⁵⁹ Disciples daily crucify the desires of the flesh as they bear the fruit of the Spirit and long for the return of the Son.⁶⁰
- *Transformed Will: Disciples are humbly obedient—they do what Jesus commands.*⁶¹ Disciples of Jesus do not merely hear the Word and so deceive themselves; they do what it says.⁶² Disciples see imperatives in the Scriptures as invitations from the Savior to experience the joy of active submission to Him.⁶³ The more they walk according to God’s Word, the more Jesus conforms their ways to His will.⁶⁴
- *Transformed Relationships: Disciples are sacrificially loving—they serve as Jesus serves.*⁶⁵ Having been reconciled to God through Christ, disciples continually work toward reconciliation with others in Christ: forgiving one another freely and serving one another selflessly.⁶⁶ Disciples of Jesus join together as members of local churches where they love one another by laying down their lives for each other.⁶⁷ Such sacrificial compassion extends beyond the local church as disciples care for their families, the global church, the lost, and the poor.⁶⁸
- *Transformed Purpose: Disciples are missionally engaged—they make disciples who make disciples of all nations.*⁶⁹ Compelled by God’s grace, disciples are captivated by the Great

⁵⁴ Romans 12:2; 1 Corinthians 2:16.

⁵⁵ Colossians 3:1-10.

⁵⁶ John 4:13-14.

⁵⁷ Matthew 13:44; John 6:35; 10:10; Romans 5:1; Philippians 4:4.

⁵⁸ Job 23:12; Psalm 42; 63:1-8; Matthew 4:4; 6:5-15; 22:37.

⁵⁹ 1 John 2:15-17.

⁶⁰ Galatians 5:16-24; 1 Thessalonians 1:10.

⁶¹ John 14:15-21; 15:14-17; Matthew 28:19.

⁶² James 1:22-25.

⁶³ Matthew 11:28-30.

⁶⁴ Romans 12:1-2.

⁶⁵ Mark 10:43-45; John 13:35.

⁶⁶ Matthew 6:12-15; Romans 12:3-21; Ephesians 2:14-16.

⁶⁷ 1 Corinthians 12:12-27; 1 John 3:16-18.

⁶⁸ Ephesians 5:22-6:4; Romans 9:1-5; 2 Corinthians 9:6-15; James 2:14-17.

⁶⁹ Matthew 28:18-20.

Commission.⁷⁰ Jesus has not only transformed their way of life; He has revolutionized their reason for living.⁷¹ Disciples live—and die—to share the gospel of Christ, to reproduce the life of Christ, to teach the Word of Christ, and to serve the world for Christ by praying for, giving to, and going to people around them and peoples around the world for the sake of God's fame.⁷²

Disciple Making

Disciple making is the Christ-commanded, Spirit-empowered duty of every disciple of Jesus to evangelize unbelievers, baptize believers, teach them the Word of Christ, and train them to obey Christ as members of His church who make disciples on mission to all nations.⁷³

Calling

The **call to salvation**: First and foremost, calling is the gracious act of God by which He draws people to become disciples of Jesus and members of His church.⁷⁴ The call to salvation comes through the proclamation of God's Word in the power of God's Spirit.⁷⁵ Accompanying the call to salvation in Christ is a call to freedom,⁷⁶ holiness,⁷⁷ and suffering⁷⁸ in Christ. The call to salvation forms the unshakeable foundation of a disciple's primary identity now and forever.⁷⁹

The **call to mission**: The call to salvation includes a call to mission, for every person who responds to God's call as a disciple of Jesus receives Christ's command to make disciples of Jesus.⁸⁰ Disciple making is thus the God-given, Christ-enabled, Spirit-empowered duty of every disciple whatever his or her station, location, or vocation. In this way, every disciple plays an integral part in the eternal purpose of God to glorify His name through disciples made in every nation.⁸¹

The **call to station**: Christ calls disciples to specific stations in and through which they exalt Him on mission. One such station is the family, where Christians are called to be faithful sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, husbands and wives, and mothers and fathers for the spread of God's gospel and the display of God's glory.⁸² Scripture also speaks of a divine call to singleness

⁷⁰ Luke 24:45-53; Acts 1:8.

⁷¹ Acts 20:22-24.

⁷² Psalm 67; 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20; Revelation 7:9-10.

⁷³ Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8.

⁷⁴ Isaiah 41:9-10; 43:1-2; Matthew 4:19; 9:13; Mark 2:14; Acts 2:39; Romans 8:28-30; 1 Corinthians 1:2, 26-27; Galatians 1:15; Ephesians 1:18; 4:1-16; 1 Thessalonians 4:7; 2 Thessalonians 1:1, 11-12; 2 Timothy 1:9; 2 Peter 1:3-11; Jude 1-2.

⁷⁵ Acts 13:48-52; 16:14-15; Romans 10:17; 2 Thessalonians 2:14.

⁷⁶ Galatians 5:13.

⁷⁷ Romans 8:28-30; 1 Corinthians 1:2; Ephesians 4:1-16; 1 Thessalonians 4:7.

⁷⁸ Acts 9:16; Phil. 1:29-30; 3:8-11; 1 Pet. 2:20-21.

⁷⁹ Phil. 3:14; 1 Pet. 2:9.

⁸⁰ Mat. 28:18-20; Acts 1:8.

⁸¹ Ps. 67; Rev. 5:9-10.

⁸² Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Psalm 127; Proverbs 22:6, 15; Ephesians 5:22-33; 6:1-4; Colossians 3:18-21; 1 Timothy 5:8.

for the sake of mission, either for a period or for the entirety of one's life in this world.⁸³ Other calls to specific stations include Christ's call to meaningful membership in His church⁸⁴ and responsible citizenship in their community.⁸⁵

The **call to service**: Finally, calling is the gracious act of God by which He directs disciples to make disciples in a certain way, at a certain time, among a certain people, in a certain location, or through a certain vocation.⁸⁶ Calls to service may be fluid, operating at varying levels and open to varying assignments from God. What must be constant in a disciple's life, however, is faithfulness to God's call, no matter the cost, until God calls the disciple to different service.⁸⁷ Calls to service are discerned and affirmed not just individually, but as a member of the church on mission in the world through Spirit-led, Word-driven, prayer-focused examination of a disciple's desires, gifts, abilities, and opportunities.⁸⁸

God's calls to salvation, mission, station, and service bring strength and comfort for disciples to persevere in the middle of trial and trouble, doubt and discouragement, pressure and persecution.⁸⁹

IMB Missionary

An IMB missionary is a disciple of Jesus set apart by the Holy Spirit, sent out from the church, and affirmed by the IMB to cross geographic, cultural, and/or linguistic barriers as part of a missionary team focused on making disciples and multiplying churches among unreached peoples and places.

- *"A disciple of Jesus set apart by the Holy Spirit, sent out from the church"* – At the most basic level, a missionary is a "sent one" who goes out from the church in the power of the Spirit as a representative of Christ.⁹⁰
- *"And affirmed by the IMB"* – IMB establishes strategies and processes for mobilizing, assessing, affirming, training, supporting, and leading missionaries who serve as representatives of the IMB.
- *"To cross geographic, cultural, and/or linguistic barriers"* – A missionary crosses one or more of these barriers for the spread of the gospel.⁹¹

⁸³ Matthew 19:12; 1 Corinthians 7:17-35.

⁸⁴ 1 Corinthians 12:12-31; Ephesians 4:1-16.

⁸⁵ Romans 13:1-7; 1 Peter 2:13-17.

⁸⁶ Mark 2:14; Acts 9:15-16; 13:2; 16:6-10; 20:22-24; Romans 1:1; 1 Corinthians 1:1; 7:17; Galatians 1:15-16; 1 Timothy 2:7.

⁸⁷ Acts 18:9-11; 20:22-24.

⁸⁸ Acts 11:22-26; 13:1-3; 15:2-4, 22-35.

⁸⁹ Acts 9:15-16; 18:9-11; 20:22-24.

⁹⁰ See the original apostles plus Paul in Mark 3:14; Luke 9:1-2; Mt. 10; Acts 9:15; 1 Cor. 1:1. See also Barnabas in Acts 13:1-4; 14:4, 14; Andronicus and Junias in Rom. 16:7; James in Gal. 1:19; and Epaphroditus in Phil. 2:25.

⁹¹ Acts 13:4ff.; 22:21.

- *“As part of a missionary team”* – IMB missionaries serve on teams in which different people have different roles and responsibilities in the missionary task. See “Missionary Team” below.
- *“To make disciples and multiply churches”* – The work of the missionary team involves evangelism, discipleship, church planting, and/or leadership training all aimed at seeing disciples made and churches multiplied.⁹²
- *“Among unreached peoples and places”* – Missionary teams plant churches and/or facilitate church planting among unreached peoples and places,⁹³ entrust leaders of the church with responsibility for mission (i.e., equip them to shepherd the church and send out missionaries),⁹⁴ and then move on to plant the church among other unreached peoples and places.⁹⁵ See “Unreached Peoples and Places” below.

Missionary Team

In the New Testament, disciples on mission most often serve on teams in which different people have different roles and responsibilities.⁹⁶ Beyond this biblical precedent, Scripture points to strong personal, practical, and pastoral reasons for disciples on mission not to serve in isolation from others.⁹⁷ Even evangelistic reasons exist for disciples to exalt Christ in the context of Christian community.⁹⁸ Consequently, we believe it best for IMB missionaries to serve on teams in which different people have different roles and responsibilities in the missionary task. A missionary team is an identifiable group of disciples who meet together regularly, care for each other selflessly, and partner with one another intentionally to make disciples and multiply churches among particular unreached peoples and/or places. Teams may be comprised of IMB missionaries, national believers, and/or other Great Commission partners. IMB provides multiple pathways through which missionaries may serve on one of these teams, each of which carries unique qualifications, involves various types of training, necessitates appropriate measures of accountability, and includes different levels of financial and/or other support from IMB.

⁹² Mk. 3:14; Lk. 9:1-2; 24:27; Acts 8:4-8; 13:13-52; 14:1-23; Romans 15:17-23; 1 Cor. 9:16; Gal. 1:15-16.

⁹³ Rom. 15:20-21; 1 Cor. 3:6-11; 4:15; 2 Cor. 10:13-16. See churches begun in Philippi (Acts 16:40), Thessalonica (Acts 17:4), Berea (Acts 17:12), Athens (Acts 17:34), Corinth (Acts 18:8-11), and Ephesus (Acts 19:10; 20:17).

⁹⁴ Acts 14:21-23; 20:32; 1 Thess. 1:4-10.

⁹⁵ Acts 13:6, 13; 16:40; 18:1, 18, 23; 19:21; Romans 15:20-24.

⁹⁶ Luke 10:1; Acts 13:4ff.; 15:36-41; 16:1-5; 18:1-4; 19:29; 20:1-6; 1 Corinthians 1:1-3; 2 Corinthians 1:1-2; Philippians 1:1-2; Colossians 1:1-2; 1 Thessalonians 1:1-2; Thessalonians 1:1-2; Philippians 1-3, 23-24.

⁹⁷ Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12:12-31; Hebrews 10:24-25.

⁹⁸ John 13:35; 17:20-23; Acts 2:42-47.

Unreached Peoples and Places

Unreached peoples and places are those among whom Christ is largely unknown and the church is relatively insufficient to make Christ known in its broader population without outside help.

In contemporary terminology, unreached peoples refer to ethnolinguistic groups in which the number of evangelical Christians is less than 2%. Though this definition is helpful in some ways, it is problematic in others, in particular because:

- *It arbitrarily identifies a 2% threshold as the determinant between “reached” and “unreached.”* Missiologists have examined sociological data to determine the threshold at which a population segment can sufficiently spread its ideas to its broader population without outside assistance. However, sociologists (and consequently missiologists) have disagreed on what percentage of people constitutes that threshold. This reality, in addition to the absence of biblical prescription regarding such a threshold, renders attempts to identify a particular percentage of people as “unreached” or “reached” problematic, particularly if that percentage becomes the sole determinant in mission strategy. We believe it is valuable to identify the percentage of evangelicals among a particular people group or in a particular place, but we also couple that percentage with research regarding a number of other factors in order to accurately identify the state of the church and the access to the gospel among that people or in that place. Based upon all of this information, we then organize which missionaries we deploy where and what those missionaries do when they get there, letting the state of the church determine our strategy for mission.
- *It unnecessarily limits the “unreached” label to a particular people group.* Research regarding people groups is necessary in light of Christ’s command to make disciples of all nations (of all the *ethne*), Christ’s promise that the gospel will be proclaimed as a testimony to all nations (to all the *ethne*) before the end comes, and the Bible’s guarantee that individuals from every tribe, language, people, and nation will one day be ransomed by God and represented in heaven.⁹⁹ It is beneficial, then, to identify ethnolinguistic groups in the world and to track the spread of the gospel among them with the goal of reaching all of them. Furthermore, such research must inform mission strategy. However, we do not ignore the reality that when the New Testament records the spread of the gospel through the early church, biblical authors strongly focus on places, not only peoples. In Luke’s account of Paul’s missionary journeys, he primarily records the spread of the gospel from city to city and region to region, not people group to people group.¹⁰⁰ Moreover, in Paul’s clear explanation of his passion to proclaim the gospel where Christ has not been named, he speaks in terms of distinct places, not of distinct people groups.¹⁰¹ This does not mean that biblical accounts neglect the mention (and even importance) of ethnic and cultural distinctions among Christian converts,¹⁰² but the earliest missionaries seem focused not just on spreading the gospel to unreached peoples, but also (and often even moreso) to unreached places.

⁹⁹ Matthew 28:19; 24:14; Revelation 5:9-10.

¹⁰⁰ Acts 1:8; 8:1; 9:31; 11:19-21; 13-21.

¹⁰¹ Romans 15:18-24.

¹⁰² Acts 8:27; 10:1-2; 11:19-21; 16:48; 17:18.

It is both biblical and helpful, then, to recognize the unreached in terms of both peoples and places, for both realities bear uniquely upon mission strategy.

- *Recognizing the unreached in terms of particular people groups has a unique bearing on disciple making.* Ethnolinguistic barriers often hinder the spread of the gospel across people groups. Such barriers are necessary for missionaries to consider in evangelism and discipleship as they contextualize the gospel for their listeners. Missionaries must often learn a language in order to share the gospel, and they should always consider the ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and religious distinctions of their listeners when communicating the gospel to them and applying the gospel to their lives.
- *Recognizing the unreached in terms of places has a unique bearing on church planting.* As previously noted, New Testament mission patterns put clear priority on planting churches in unreached places. As churches are planted in particular places, these churches are uniquely designed by God to include different people groups. The New Testament does not prioritize planting homogeneous churches comprised of single people groups. Across the New Testament, the gospel beckons (even requires) Christians to bridge ethnic barriers in the church.¹⁰³ Therefore, we reject the notion that in places where multiple people groups exist, we should purposefully plant churches exclusively and perpetually comprised of one people group. Instead, we believe that in places where multiple people groups exist, we should plant churches that intentionally bridge ethnic barriers by evangelizing distinct people groups and incorporating them into the church. To be sure, language differences must be considered in church planting, for the ability to communicate with one another is critical to carrying out the core functions of the church. Further, even among people groups who may speak the same language, getting to multiple people groups in the same church can be a process which demands much patience and wisdom in disciple making. But it remains the end toward which we are working until the day when all the peoples gather as one people to give glory to God through Christ.¹⁰⁴

Our mission strategy, then, focuses on both unreached peoples and places. We deploy missionary teams to unreached places where Christ is largely unknown and the church is relatively insufficient to make Christ known in its broader population without outside help. We also deploy missionary teams to reached places with a significant population of unreached peoples. In addition, we deploy missionary teams to reached places with significant potential for reaching unreached peoples and places. Regardless of place, we proclaim the gospel to all people with an intentional focus on reaching different peoples and, to the extent to which it is linguistically possible, gathering them into churches together. In this way, we are resolutely focused on playing our part in seeing disciples made and churches multiplied in every place and among every people group in the world.

¹⁰³ Acts 14:21-23; 5:1-35; 1 Corinthians 8-10; Galatians 3:23-29; Ephesians 2:11-22.

¹⁰⁴ Philippians 2:9-11; Revelation 5:9-14; 7:9-12.

Church

NOTE: The "Baptist Faith and Message" explicitly defines church, and the first paragraph below is a direct quotation from it. The subsequent paragraphs and bullet points describe the implications of this definition for our work.

A New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ is an autonomous local congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel; observing the two ordinances of Christ, governed by His laws, exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word, and seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth. Each congregation operates under the Lordship of Christ through democratic processes. In such a congregation each member is responsible and accountable to Christ as Lord.¹⁰⁵

We believe that every local church is autonomous under the Lordship of Jesus Christ and the authority of His inerrant word. This is as true overseas as it is in the United States. Some churches to which we relate overseas may make decisions in doctrine and practice which we would not choose. Nevertheless, we are accountable to God and to Southern Baptists for the foundation that we lay when we plant churches, for the teaching that we give when we train church leaders, and for the criteria that we use when we count churches. In our church planting and teaching ministries, we will seek to lay a foundation of beliefs and practices that are consistent with the Baptist Faith and Message, although local churches overseas may express those beliefs and practices in different ways according to the needs of their cultural settings. Flowing from the definition of a church given above and from the Scriptures from which this definition is derived, we will observe the following guidelines in church planting, leadership training and statistical reporting.

- 1. A church is intentional about being a church. Members think of themselves as a church. They are committed to one another and to God (associated by covenant) in pursuing all that Scripture requires of a church.*
- 2. A church has an identifiable membership of baptized believers in Jesus Christ.*
- 3. A church practices the baptism of believers only by immersing them in water.*
- 4. A church observes the Lord's Supper on a regular basis.*
- 5. Under the authority of the local church and its leadership, members may be assigned to carry out the ordinances.*
- 6. A church submits to the inerrant word of God as the ultimate authority for all that it believes and does.*

¹⁰⁵ Matthew 16:15-19; 18:15-20; Acts 2:41-42,47; 5:11-14; 6:3-6; 13:1-3; 14:23,27; 15:1-30; 16:5; 20:28; Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 3:16; 5:4-5; 7:17; 9:13-14; 12; Ephesians 1:22-23; 2:19-22; 3:8-11,21; 5:22-32; Philippians 1:1; Colossians 1:18; 1 Timothy 2:9-14; 3:1-15; 4:14; Hebrews 11:39-40; 1 Peter 5:1-4; Revelation 2-3; 21:2-3.

7. A church meets regularly for worship, prayer, the study of God's word, and fellowship. Members of the church minister to one another's needs, hold each other accountable, and exercise church discipline as needed. Members encourage one another and build each other up in holiness, maturity in Christ, and love.

8. A church embraces its responsibility to fulfill the Great Commission, both locally and globally, from the beginning of its existence as a church.

9. A church is autonomous and self-governing under the Lordship of Jesus Christ and the authority of His Word.

10. A church has identifiable leaders, who are scrutinized and set apart according to the qualifications set forth in Scripture. A church recognizes two Biblical offices of church leadership: pastors/elders/overseers and deacons. While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor/elder/overseer is limited to men as qualified by Scripture.

Based upon these guidelines, we identify twelve characteristics of healthy churches: biblical evangelism, biblical discipleship, biblical membership, biblical leadership, biblical teaching and preaching, biblical ordinances, biblical worship, biblical prayer, biblical fellowship, biblical accountability and discipline, biblical giving, and biblical mission.

As we make disciples among unreached peoples and places and these disciples gather together in groups, we work intentionally to bring these groups to the point where they identify as a church (an autonomous local congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel; observing the two ordinances of Christ, governed by His laws, exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word, and seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth). As disciples thus identify themselves as a church, we intentionally work with them toward becoming healthy churches with all of the characteristics above through patient teaching, training, prayer, and guidance. Our goal in the missionary task is healthy church formation.¹⁰⁶

Finally, as IMB missionaries plant churches around the world, we prioritize meaningful personal membership in local churches. IMB missionaries are sent out as members from local churches in North America, and IMB missionaries serve as members of local churches on the field. Knowing that we need the church even as we plant the church, IMB missionaries actively participate on the field as members of local churches which align as much as theologically, ecclesologically, and missiologically possible with the churches we are planting. Such local church participation may be in a church we are planting or have planted. IMB missionaries work to model healthy church membership in our lives as we plant healthy churches among the nations.

¹⁰⁶ Acts 14:21-23; Titus.