

1. Why Should I Care About Missions?

There is so much to think about every day. Our minds are filled to the brink with information, and life is buzzing with news, ideas, events and problems. There is so much always going on everywhere. But there is also so much going on in your little world. Just think of all you have to do today. Or, think of what you did yesterday.

Life is impressively busy. There is so much to see, so many chores to get to, so much work, so much study, so much entertainment available. Why should I even bother thinking about missions? Aren't they happening in remote lands, most of which I don't even know the name of? Don't we send missionaries to take care of this in our places? Shouldn't I be focusing on the here and now, especially considering how much I have on my plate? And especially at my age! Aren't missions

something that only fully grown-up men and women should be considering?

Perhaps you have thought about missions but your thought is down the road, when you finish college or have your own family. Why should I even care about this?

A common issue when we think about missions is its place in church life. Many people wrongly consider that missions are the main goal of the Christian life. They may tend to think that the only Christians who are really serving God are the ones leaving everything behind to go abroad into the mission field. On the other hand, many believers set missions aside as something secondary in church life. So, which is it? Are missions the main goal of the church, or one among many?

Well, in fact, missions are a means to a greater goal. Let's illustrate this. Consider sports. Football, for example. Why do players run laps, pump iron, do push-ups, practice throwing, punting, or receiving? Why so many drills? Why all those hours spent perfecting movements and formations? The drills are not the goal. All of that is done to be better prepared for the main goal of scoring.

Think about the game itself. Is gaining yards the ultimate goal of football? No. The goal is

to get the ball to the end zone. You may very well gain hundreds of yards during a match and yet repeatedly fail to score. The goal is to score. And the athletes practice a lot to be able to achieve this in several ways. Mission work is one way we get to the endzone. What is there at the end? The glory of God.

John Piper famously wrote that 'Missions is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is. Missions exist because worship doesn't.' Piper is making the point that even though missions have the immensely beneficial result of saving people from eternal punishment, ultimately, this is not the greater goal. God's glory is: His name being glorified in the salvation of sinners. And every single Christian, from the little children all the way to the elderly, should have God's glory in mind.

So, when we talk about missions, in reality we are talking about a way to make God's glory known more broadly, His name worshiped more intensely, His love received more deeply, His image in men restored in more places.

Consider, for example, Psalm 96. Notice the universal aspect of worship. Take note of the many mentions of the nations, the whole earth, etc.:

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*Oh sing to the Lord a new song;
sing to the Lord, all the earth!
Sing to the Lord, bless his name;
tell of his salvation from day to day.
Declare his glory among the nations,
his marvelous works among all the
peoples!
For great is the Lord, and greatly to be
praised;
he is to be feared above all gods.
For all the gods of the peoples are worthless
idols,
but the Lord made the heavens.
Splendor and majesty are before him;
strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.
Ascribe to the Lord, O families of the
peoples,
ascribe to the Lord glory and strength!
Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name;
bring an offering, and come into his
courts!
Worship the Lord in the splendor of holiness;
tremble before him, all the earth!
Say among the nations, 'The Lord reigns!
Yes, the world is established; it shall never
be moved;
he will judge the peoples with equity.'*

*Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth
rejoice;*

let the sea roar, and all that fills it;

let the field exult, and everything in it!

*Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for
joy*

before the Lord, for he comes,

for he comes to judge the earth.

He will judge the world in righteousness,

and the peoples in his faithfulness.

Do you see it? This is a Psalm talking about the name of Yahweh, the covenant God of Israel, being celebrated throughout the earth. His name is not to be praised only in the Promised Land. No. The psalmist's heart desire is for God's name to be feared and loved by families everywhere on the globe. He yearns for the nations to abandon their false gods. He longs to see the name of the one true God being worshiped everywhere.

How will this happen? Through missions. Piper again: 'Therefore, worship is the goal and the fuel of missions: Missions exists because worship doesn't. Missions is our way of saying: the joy of knowing Christ is not a private, or tribal, or national or ethnic privilege. It is for all. And that's why we go. Because we have

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tasted the joy of worshiping Jesus, and we want all the families of the earth included.'

We are living in a stage of human history in which people from every tongue, nation and tribe are being called to believe in Christ. This is only a temporary stage, however. When Christ returns, the age of missions will end. Worship, however, will remain forever.

So, to make a long story short: you should care about missions, because you should care about God's name being spread as far as the sun shines. You should care because you want to see people praising Christ from the Himalayan mountains to the remote islands of the Pacific, from the suburbs of California to the neighborhoods of Chicago. From the small villages of the Peruvian mountains to the river communities of the Ganges. From the tiny islands in the north of Scotland to the tiny islands in Oceania.

We are very quick to promote the name of those we love. We spend many hours online or in personal conversations defending the fame of the artists, athletes, or other people that we consider to be great. Thinking about missions is a way to do the same about someone who cares for you in a way that no one else ever

will: the Savior who lived and died for you. Thinking about missions is not only for the missionaries or the boards who send them. It should be something close to the heart of every Christian because we have God's glory in mind. Are you beginning to see why mission is important?

Main Point

Missions are important ultimately because they are about God's glory.

Questions for Reflection

- What activities take up most of your time?
- In which ways are you glorifying God in your daily schedule?