

MISSIONARY MADNESS

FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF A MISSIONARY PASTOR



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Recommendations:

“It is imperative that we as Baptists remain faithful to the Great commission given by our Lord. Without true biblical doctrine, this cannot be accomplished. This book will be a tremendous tool and guide for true Baptist churches to support missionaries who are truly Baptist in doctrine and diligent in their labors.”

Pastor Mac G Woody Shiloh Baptist Church

“In this missionary “exposé,” Bro. Potter gives a clear perspective, from both personal experience and Biblical principle, on the importance of the integrity and accountability of the missionary. Once again, the Word of God is proved to be our only reliable Guide. The missionary questionnaire at the end of the book is very helpful for ascertaining who and what a missionary really is! Thank you, Bro. Potter, for this worthy project!”

Pastor Mike Custer Bible Baptist Church Grand Forks, ND

“A much needed thesis on the darker-side of misology. Keep this booklet handy - and reference it often to help spare God’s mission dollars from poor investments.”

Pastor Erich P. McCandless, DMin Empire Baptist Temple - Sioux Falls, SD

“A terrible book! It’s unthinkable what the author’s research has disclosed. I highly discourage anyone but the most committed Baptist from reading this book - for the truth herein will demand action.”

The Door-Step Evangel

Missionary Madness By Les Potter, Ph. D

I had come here initially as an interim pastor to help this group of believers find a pastor. They were a small independent Baptist congregation, being baptistic at least in polity with some Biblical grounding. From the time my family and I came here, I began teaching what a New Testament church is, including its offices in preparation to find a pastor. I had no intention or desire to stay here as the pastor. But I knew the Lord had a purpose for me to be here and help them for that time. As time went on, the core of the people began having a greater appetite for what Scripture teaches on these things. Somewhere along the line, the Lord gave us and this small group of people a mutual love for one another. The Lord made me willing to stay and the people asked me to stay. So we continued on the same course. This led eventually to our founding as a New Testament church. With the help of our sending church, we became established under the Headship of Jesus Christ. In the time in between, I was teaching what a Biblical missionary is. They had a heart for missionaries, but a number of those they supported were not Scripturally sent, nor Scriptural in their doctrine. Some were downright dishonest. Teaching Biblical missiology made a huge impact on this church body. This gave us the ability to clean up

our mission program that the Lord might bless us, which He did greatly. Therefore, I had begun to contact each mission work to find out more about them. The story following took place during that time.

The caller I.D. read “unavailable” when my cell phone rang. The voice on the line was that of a missionary in the Middle East whom I have tried to contact for months. I had never met the man myself. The people here supported him from before I came here. This particular missionary is a foreign national that had impressed and affected our people greatly. He had tremendous stories of suffering and deliverance in the cause of Christ. He lives in constant danger and told stories of having to hide in sewers from the authorities while smuggling Bibles. Here is a man that has truly given himself to the Lord’s work. Having been a missionary myself for many years in another part of the Middle East, I was naturally interested in his work. However, I also had some doctrinal questions in regard to him. He was associated with a mission board, and it seemed to be of a more dubious nature the more I looked into it. I wanted to speak to the missionary directly, and contacted his board in regard to his whereabouts. They told me he had been in the states for a few days now and I left a message for him to call.

So, now as he is speaking to me, he explained that he had been unable to respond in the last few

months due to a tragic situation. He was in a meeting with two of his men when a gunman burst in and machine-gunned them. One was killed, the other wounded, but our missionary was miraculously unscathed. The life this man leads is truly amazing. It is almost as if it were from a Christian adventure novel. He normally cannot discuss anything on the phone because he never knows when the authorities in his country are listening. He said he could share details of his work today because he is calling from nearby Lebanon, which is much safer. I said “Oh, so you are in the country of Lebanon right now?” He answered “yes.” He reaffirmed my inquiry again as I inwardly gathered that his mission board must be mistaken about his whereabouts. In light of the long distance call, I got right to the things I wanted to discuss with him. I inquired as to his doctrinal standing and he gave indication of standing exactly where we do on all points. He assured me that his board did also. The important thing for me was to know of his sending church and pastor. He told me his pastor, whom I knew to be a well respected man in Florida. That is great I said. I wished him well as we ended our conversation.

Checking facts

I still had some questions in regard to that mission board, however. Our missionary told me it was

the ministry of a local church. When I spoke to the director of that board he confirmed this but named a different church. So I called the pastor there and found the board is NOT a ministry of that church. Nor was it a ministry of any church. Some of his members, however, were somewhat involved with that board. I was assured, of course, that the board is “strongly local church” in doctrine. Naturally, all such para-church mission boards claim to be so. This is because they depend on money from local churches to operate. (It always puzzles me how a “ministry” claiming to be strongly “local church” is not embarrassed by its contradiction of not being under one). Despite their rhetoric, however, and regardless of how many pastors that may serve on its board of directors, para-church organizations operate on their own authority. That authority is not the one which the Lord founded, but one of their own making. In light of this (and other questions I had in connection to this board), I was puzzled in its association with the missionary’s pastor in Florida. That pastor is of reputation to be truly Baptist in doctrine and it all seemed odd to me. So I decided to give him a call. (Bear in mind, this is all within a couple of hours since I spoke to our missionary in Lebanon). The secretary answered, saying that the pastor was not in. I left a message with her stating the name of this missionary. “Oh, I just saw [the missionary] this morning as

he met with our pastor” she said. I paused a moment and asked “Did you actually physically see him?” Yes, she said, “he was here in the office.” OK, I said, I really need to speak with the pastor because this missionary just called me from Lebanon. “Oh, I see. Ok, I will leave a message for Pastor to call as soon as he comes in.” I thanked her and hung up.

Duped

My blood began to boil as I realized the missionary had lied to me. Perhaps the rest of those fantastic stories are also untrue. I have known missionaries who were the hero of their own fabricated action series. I therefore always reserve that possibility. I recalled years of frustration as a missionary myself, in seeing lying, crooked but talented missionaries fraudulently leach from churches. My years of repeatedly seeing these things came to seethe in my indignation. Fellow missionaries that discover these things usually dare not say anything lest they appear to be unspiritual gossipers or envious. Pastors that discover dishonest missionaries tend to keep it to themselves lest they appear vindictive or slanderous. They also must avoid discouragement in the support of missions. Meanwhile, these charlatans continue to exploit our burden and our obedience to the Lord’s command with impunity.

That phone call was on a Friday. Monday morn-

ing, I received a call from the pastor in Florida. We briefly exchanged pleasantries before I told him I had two concerns. I began with my first concern, which was in regard to the nature of this mission board which I was told he approved of. It turns out he knew nothing of the board and that the missionary was not sent from his church at all, though he had graduated from their college. The missionary had indeed met with this pastor the previous Friday in a cordial visit. That led to my second concern. The missionary told me very clearly and deliberately that he was calling me from the country of Lebanon. The pastor was surprised, but after a pause said “well, if [the missionary] is not dealing square with you, you should just drop him.”

That doesn't solve the issue

After that conversation I was troubled further. Some churches seem to quickly take on missionaries and simply drop them just as easily. What is this thing we call “Missions” anyway? Do we not yoke together with them in working the Lord’s fields abroad? Why then do churches pick them up like the lost world does a blind “car-date”? They know very little about them beyond their presentation. They determine that they “like them” based on a superficial screening (if any at all). But if they ever decide they don’t like them, they drop them at the

curb and pick up another. Although all of my pastor friends seem to recognize the problem, most find it difficult to point to the elephant in the living room. The most we do is swat at flies and continue on as if there were no other way. To say anything negative is misconstrued to mean you are against missions and therefore against God. The situation is perfect for talented personalities to capture us with spectacular presentations and tear-jerking testimonies. “Now there is a real one,” we say.

My own experiences

As a missionary myself, now serving as a missionary pastor, I have been in and around various sides - and each end - of the elephant. In 1994, the Lord clearly called us to the seemingly impossible field of Israel. In 1995 we began deputation and departed for the field in August of 1998. For 10 years we poured our lives into that ministry until it became impossible for us to continue. During our last 6 years there, we burned the candle on both ends. When visa restrictions required us to temporarily step out of the country, we worked to build mission teams and support for our Bible institute there. (We had nearly secured permanent residency before we conceded God was moving us for reasons we did not understand at that time). The Lord had given us a unique and unheard of opportunity that allowed

us to operate openly as Baptists in a closed field. We often dryly joked that the hardest part of missions in Israel is not the Jews but the Baptists.

Naturally, we have visited many churches, colleges and mission conferences throughout the years. During that time, I have come to know many missionaries. We knew many mission boards, mission directors and mission methodologies. I have seen many facets of the good, the bad and the ugly in the realm of modern missions. Some of the greatest and godliest men I have known were missionaries. Also some of the most scurrilous knaves I have known were missionaries. The latter were nearly always polished, experienced and personable (all of which are good characteristics). They were often also talented and greatly admired. The former were usually hard working, doctrinally sound men, staying afloat on what little support they can maintain. From my experience, it is most likely that if you knew there was a Judas in a group of 12 missionaries, he would be the last one you would choose.

Let's talk about the elephant

Without negating the godly, hard-working missionaries I have known, I am going to address some unpleasant things in missions of which we all would rather not focus. To put it bluntly, there are crooks involved in missions that ought to be in jail. I have

witnessed men who, through talented means, could bring people to tears in their presentation and draw great sums of money for projects that were completely bogus. I have known of celebrity missionaries who built great reputations among independent Baptist people for their spectacular “work.” In some cases, if that “work” were in the business world, it would be called a “scandal” and the missionary would be on trial for fraud. But these “missionary works” have a self-insulating environment that prevents exposure, arrest and prosecution. If pastors would simply examine mission works by research instead of their charm appeal, they would never allow some of these in the door. It is too late to consider checking their sending church and character once you have seen your people moved to tears and giving sacrificially to missions. I have known of pastors who were devastated to later catch these in financial, sexual or ethical indiscretions. Their response is usually to keep it hushed, “lest it destroy the cause of missions.” Why didn’t they simply check the man’s sending church before bringing him in?

There are mission operations raising huge sums to support national pastors in foreign fields that brazenly lie about planting churches. It is almost the perfect crime, because we naturally trust them so much. You must trust them because there is no way you could know what is really going on any-

way. The “mission directors” you support to direct these ministries go about finding nationals to put on a payroll string. They then declare each of these hirelings as being a “church” that this mission director started. Then they market the need to support these national “pastors” in the U.S. The churches at home are led to believe they are spiritually getting a great “bang for the buck” because these nationals “already know the language and culture.” Little do they know they are bankrolling this “missionary” to be the “great white father” that pimps foreign “rice pastors” whose salaries are covered multiple times by different churches. But, you say, “it cannot be a fraud! After all, this ‘good ole boy’ brother has started 50 to 75 churches in third-world countries, winning so many souls. Surely he wouldn’t lie about that would he? Anyone questioning that must be of the devil. Right?”

That is surely not the one we support

“I don’t believe it” you say. Well, the reasons on which you base your unbelief must certainly be noble. You may not have the same opportunity, however, that a pastor friend of mine did some years ago. He was on a mission trip in the Philippines and decided to drop in on some of the national churches they had been funding. What he expected to be a blessing turned out making him feel very angry and

very used. He was every bit as charmed and convinced of those “national pastors” as so many are. And why would he not be? It seemed like such an ideal ministry. I personally know a man that runs a sham mission operation like this from his office in western North Carolina (and he is fundamental, independent Baptist, King James Bible, etc.). There are a number of pastors in that area that know he is a scammer and keep their distance. But his sphere of influence and support is outside his area. And who is going to say anything? How would you know he is dishonest? If you met him you might think he was the greatest investment for your mission dollar. I have visited churches that invest their mission support in that “ministry.” Naturally, of course, I say nothing. After all, what should I tell you if you are one of his supporters? As for me, there are three things I can assume when I see that you support such a ministry. 1) You carelessly accepted the personality and presentation, never researching beyond that 2) Your mission budget is probably now strained or not being blessed. 3) It is unlikely you are able or interested in taking on an honest missionary at this time.

That particular ministry is only one example among several we could give. There is another very popular ministry that raises support for nationals in the Far East that bears the same earmarks. That missionary is so well-known and revered among so

many independent Baptists, that any question of his integrity would be met with great scorn. Yet, over the years, I have known of several unrelated, first-hand witnesses whose stories corroborate of its outrageous dishonesty and immorality. But again, what does it matter? Besides, his presentation is so moving that most churches won't want to know the truth. The striking point in all this is that the character of such ministries is not the issue itself. These things are merely a testimony against ourselves when we yoke up with them without regard to the simplest Biblical qualifications. Such pitfalls would be entirely avoided if we simply fulfilled our stewardship in knowing the relationship with their sending church and its doctrine.

“Oh, I can sniff those out a mile away” you say

The fraud is not limited to just personality operations or national pastor scams. I have personally witnessed individual missionaries come to the field and live in repudiation to what their sending church and their supporting churches stand for. Yet when they go back to the States they are a perfect chameleon of holiness and sound doctrinal practice. I have personally seen such missionaries come home and report the works of others on the field as their own! They do this with impunity. And how would you know any differently? Consider how fellow missionaries could report this without putting

themselves in an unwelcome and damaging light? However, if the sending church had the proper relationship with its missionary, this tragedy would be avoided. Supporting churches that never inquire into that relationship are yoking by presumption. Little do they know that the missionary's relationship with their "sending church" is only paper.

The fact is, many pastors know there are a small percentage of undesirable missionaries. Most seem to rely on instinct to discern them. In so doing, it is a safe bet for a well polished rogue to win your blessing and resources. It is astounding how few pastors ever question the doctrine, ordination or sending church of a missionary while vouching for their impeccable practice on personality alone! These same pastors will just as quickly drop a missionary on the most frivolous whim. It is obvious that something is out of joint, but ask yourself who can legitimately criticize this without bringing damage to themselves? Mission organizations cannot because it is "unprofessional." Good missionaries cannot because it will hinder their cause in getting to the field. The charlatan "moochinaries" may "humbly" do so if it points the blame away from them. Pastors are naturally uncomfortable (and often unaware of the specific details) to deal with it. So we walk around the elephant swatting at flies for the solution while losing our heart for Biblical missions.

A Biblical solution to an ancient issue

So, what to do? There is a simple, Biblical precedent that if observed, would nearly eliminate the problem at the outset. It also inspires greater confidence and interest in a church's mission program. It was practiced in the apostolic age as well as in New Testament Baptist churches through the ages. Furthermore, the Lord Jesus Christ commended the church of Ephesus for doing it. If you will look at Rev. 2:2, the Lord said "I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars:" Bear in mind here that the generic meaning of "apostle" simply means "sent one." It does not always apply to the 12 (there were at least 19 people beside Judas Iscariot who were called by that title; plus an unnumbered group in 1Cor 15:5-7). It is not likely the church of Ephesus was trying them to know if they were Peter, James or John. But rather whether they were indeed a "sent one." That is, whether they were truly sent to them of Biblical authority. The application for us is clear. The church of Ephesus was diligent in "trying" those that came to them and they had a Biblical way of doing it. For their diligence in this, the Lord commended that church.

So, how do you “try” missionaries? The same way we “. . . try the spirits whether they are of God” (1JN 4:1). The same way you test anything. You try it against the standard. God has given us a perfect standard in the King James Bible. If God commended the church of Ephesus for so doing, then the opposite is surely just as true. He would certainly reprimand churches for NOT doing so. Furthermore, if a missionary is “sent” then the question begs itself: “Where was he sent from?” Have you ever called the church or pastor of a prospective missionary? Have you checked their doctrine or the relationship that church has with this missionary? Have you ever asked if he was ordained by that church to the ministry he is doing? You may be shocked with what you discover.

Oh, but we have a better system of doing it today

Many think the answer is found in another mission organization, another college or some other para-church agency. We always want to pass off the responsibility elsewhere. The fact is, if anyone comes to your church claiming to be sent, it is YOUR RESPONSIBILITY to make sure he really is. It is the responsibility of the churches to try them doctrinally and to know something of the church that sent them. If his sending church is not doctrinally straight or is not completely involved in what

he is doing, he is a bad investment. If he is a better man than his church, (which indeed does happen), he needs to stop and find the Lord's leading. The Lord may lead him to a sound church that already knows him and desires that ministry; or perhaps to a church where he must prove himself a while before continuing. As hard as it may seem at first, doing it God's way will always produce a more efficient and fruitful ministry. I have known good men who languished on the field for lack of a pastor and a sending church that were involved in his ministry. Furthermore, relying on a mission board to oversee their ministry is neither Biblical nor reliable. The missionary in the beginning of this writing is with a para-church board that boasts its oversight and ethical standards. He also claims the name of a reputable college. Furthermore, that individual knows what churches like to hear when they ask him doctrinal questions. Since nobody asks about ordinations or checks with sending pastors, it is a cinch that he will prosper well for a long time to come.

Foxes and fences

When we discover impropriety in a missionary, there is little we can do with that information except avoid them and their associations. Honestly, if we have not done our homework first, the blame for loss of resources and heavenly reward is ours. When

on deputation for our work in Israel, I was in several churches where a certain “Jewish Missionary” had been exposed or suspected as a crook time and again. This was often after he had fleeced the church for one mission project or another. That “missionary” had his own Jewish mission organization in Georgia and did very well for himself. He continues to raise money in new churches who “want to be blessed for blessing the Jew.” Naturally, of course, he boasts of being “KJV, local church and pre-millennial.” How could he be a crook? Yet there are a number of pastors who could tell you of their experience with a shaking of the head. But how could you know about any of this? What pastor is going to publicize his experience with this brother? How could he be a crook when he shares a platform with otherwise good men who know nothing of his character? And how would you ever know the ugly truth that none of us really want to know anyway?

In regard to Jewish missions (a field very dear to me) there are at least a baker’s dozen Messianic, para-church (doctrinally Protestant) organizations that subsist themselves mainly from independent Baptist churches. The Lord’s command and our desire for the Jewish people provide a great exception for their contempt in things we hold dear (including the New Testament church, separation and even the King James Bible). The three or four organizations

of which I am most familiar succeed through the same operational procedure. Their modus operandi features a Baptist front man (or men) that profess the same doctrine you do. It doesn't matter what their organization practices or believes. It doesn't even matter that it is not the ministry of a New Testament church. Their representative attests to being gun-barrel straight and "solidly local church." He even uses the same Bible you do. The important issue, of course, is that your support is "a blessing to God's chosen people." The inference, of course, is that you will therefore be blessed yourself, (regardless of all other truth you disregard in the process). Your cheerful support of this good brother helps fill the coffers of an unbiblical organization. But your perception of this great cause overrides the reality - not to mention your own principles. It is appalling how so many Baptists give no thought to these things - which is exactly why it works so well.

There are many such protestant organizations and colleges (fundamental, neo-evangelical or otherwise) which subsist themselves on Baptist money the same way. Why is this? Because Bible believing Baptist people are motivated to give to spiritual things more than any other people. You will not find it to this degree among Presbyterians, Methodists or even Southern Baptists. We independent Baptists are generous, but we sometimes equate gullibility

for spirituality. When doctrine and sending- church credentials are no longer the criteria, your predisposition toward missionary endeavors are a calling card. The situation is ideal for these mission works that simply claim to believe what you do. All they really need is personality, a slick emotional presentation and your check book. Genuine missionaries of true doctrine and character cannot – and typically will not – participate in that arena. They may not always have the polish or the personality, but they will be sound in doctrine and practice. They will also have a New Testament church and pastor that stand with them in the true work of God. Perhaps some readers would prefer I go back to swatting at flies instead of jabbing the sacred elephant, but I am only getting started.

So why does the Lord allow them to prosper?

As contradictory as it may seem, I personally believe the Lord has a purpose for dishonest mission works. They are there to try us in our Biblical faithfulness. Surely the church of Ephesus understood the need to try those who said they were apostles (sent ones) and the Lord commended them for it. Somehow we feel we can abandon Scriptural criteria and be blessed of God because we simply gave so many dollars to missions. We know that Paul desired for the church of Philippi that fruit may abound to

their account (Phil. 4:17). Paul was a legitimate, God-called, New Testament church-sent missionary. Why do we loftily presume the same reward to our account simply because we carelessly support ministries we have not examined? As we commit our resources to unscriptural ministries, it hinders our ability to invest in Scriptural ones. This directly affects our reward. It is ultimately our faithfulness that determines our true fruit. Even the world understands the exponential drain of bad investments in their realm. But we somehow blind ourselves to any application in the spiritual realm. Like the parable of the slothful servant, we presume upon the Lord and have as little regard for His business.

The questionnaire

In an effort for our church to be more diligent in this matter, we have composed a questionnaire for prospective missionaries. It deals with some issues that most churches take for granted. No, it is not a time-consuming hoop-jump to see who we can exclude. It is concise but thorough enough to know a lot about the missionary as well as the doctrine and involvement of his sending church. It is not designed to rebuff those who come to us, but to see who we can find in a Scriptural manner. What normally happens in churches is they arbitrarily thin out missionaries only when their mission program

is in a financial crunch. Not us. We have mission money on hand which we want to give. Our diligence in this matter is not due to financial necessity but the fear of God and desire of His blessing. There are God-called missionaries out there that are faithful in sound doctrine and, therefore, also truly sent by a true New Testament church. They need support and we are honored to have part in their ministry. There is also an overwhelming majority of (Baptistic) Protestant-evangelical missionaries that are faithful to the light they have. They have a huge pool of churches from which to draw support. But we are a very small, New Testament church in the middle of Wyoming. We rejoice in the souls saved through the efforts of any missionary preaching the gospel regardless of persuasion. We believe it is a matter of faithfulness on our part, however, to put our resources behind those who are themselves faithful to Christ in all matters of doctrine and practice.

The missionary questionnaire has also proved to be a great blessing to our church. I have taught through each question to our people in which we discussed the reasons we ask what we do. The members of our church body have taken to this like the noble Bereans with an appetite for Biblical truth. Some have testified of how it has given them a greater zeal and desire toward missions. The light of Biblical doctrine has a way of blessing exponentially in

this way. We also felt it important to send our questionnaire to the missionaries we currently support. Several of our missionaries commended us in our diligence and were glad to answer. Some ignored us, as if it was beneath them. One angrily called stating he need not answer, but that we should continue to support him. One resigned admitting he did not believe the King James Bible to be the word of God. We found questionable things in the doctrine and practice of some and were given reconfirmed confidence in others. There is one missionary that impressed me with an excellent spirit. He was separated and sincere though with a “Baptistically” Protestant ecclesiology. There was a time when I myself was very much of the same influence, knowing nothing better. Is this not a great opportunity to help a man of God that is fervent of spirit “and expound unto him the way of God more perfectly”? (Acts 18:26) That very thing was done for me by a pastor in Spring Valley, CA. I met him while on deputation and he took time to challenge and help me on these important doctrinal issues. I am eternally grateful for that man of God who was more interested in helping me than in cutting me off for my ignorance.

But question your own questionnaire

A word of caution is in order here also. Missionaries often have legitimate reason to resent ques-

tionnaires. Quite often, questionnaires are time consuming with trick questions that are ultimately meaningless. The motive on that kind of questionnaire is normally to “thin out” missionary applicants – but not on the basis of their doctrine, purpose or character. They simply want to create a hoop-jump to indiscriminately reduce the bulk of missionaries that call them. This resort is usually the fruit of not emphasizing the sending church of the missionary. Instead, many will base their preference on a missionary’s fellowship with a “camp” (or their non-fellowship with another “camp”). I have known where they ask the missionary to comment about a certain celebrity pastor. If he doesn’t happen to know much about that pastor, (or the controversy involved with him) he is culled.

Others will ask indecent questions that should never be graced with an answer. One pastor I knew asked personal questions in regard to the missionary’s marriage bed and their use of birth control. Some have asked what the missionary’s wife wears to bed. (While her convictions in public attire are vital for testimony, identity and Scriptural obedience; prying into the private bedroom is simply indecent). In my experience, those who lack discernment in asking such questions are either corrupt themselves or are soon fleeced by scoundrels that easily jump their hoops.

Make your spirit and intent clear

Furthermore, a questionnaire from a supporting church is often interpreted to mean the church is looking for a reason to drop you. It is important to consider this from the missionary's point of view. They are often struggling on the field fighting battles that people at home could never fathom. Their support level is in constant attrition as churches face financial strain and lack of interest. Since many churches do not Scripturally discriminate true missionaries, they lump them together in what becomes a crowd of pan-handlers begging support. And now a supporter sends a probing questionnaire as if it were the welfare office and he the applicant. If he does not comply, he loses support. If he does comply, they will probably find a reason to drop him. Experience has taught some missionaries to save their time and dignity by throwing the questionnaire in the trash. There are pastors that would do the same if they had to answer their own questionnaire.

With these things in mind, it is fair and right that we properly communicate our intent and spirit when sending a questionnaire to our missionary. This is easily done through a cover letter and/or a phone call. When your spirit and purpose is made clear, the missionary will most likely feel honored to answer. If your questions are Scriptural, he is without excuse not to answer.

So, in your opinion, what are important questions to ask?

I am so glad you asked. By no means, however, do we set ourselves up as a standard. Every church has issues it must deal with in its time and region. Some of the prominent issues of our time were not issues fifty years ago. If the Lord tarries another fifty years, there will doubtlessly be issues in the forefront that are not the hot-point of our battles today. Below is a sample of the questionnaire we are using. In the questionnaire form we send out, we leave appropriate space for the answers. There is a reason for every one of these questions, which might not catch the eye at first. Therefore, I am putting a notation in *italics* to stress some reasons why we ask these as we do.

General information:

- 1. Your name(s)**
- 2. Your home address.**
- 3. Your field address (if applicable).**
- 4. Phone number and Email contact information:**
- 5. Field you are called to and nature of your ministry.**
- 6. Commissioning church and phone number where your pastor can be reached.**

7. How long have you been a member there?

8. If you are with a mission board, please give its name and contact information.

9. What is your goal or total need for monthly support?

10. What percentage of this support are you currently at?

11. When do you anticipate leaving or returning to the field?

** As simple as these may seem, there are some crucial points found in the general information section. For example, a home address in the States that is in another state from the sending church might be a concern. In some cases, the "sending church" is only on paper and has no real involvement or supervision of the missionary. Furthermore, we make sure we contact the pastor and church listed. There are many missionaries that have little to do with their commissioning/sending church. These are not those whom we seek to find. Nor do we consider those who are yoked with para-church ministries.*

Testimony:

1. When were you saved?

2. Where and when were you baptized?

3. When was your wife saved?

4. Where and when was she baptized?

** These simple questions are rarely asked and are taken for granted. As incredible as it may seem, there*

are missionaries that go to the field as Baptists who never had Baptist baptism or who have questions of their own salvation. I have known missionaries that settled their salvation and baptism after being on deputation. I have known others that were haunted on the field with doubts concerning either themselves or their spouse. These usually fail quickly or do not see much fruit. The best thing we can do for them is to ask these questions. If either of these are not clear in their questionnaire, we may offer to help them settle it.

Ministry:

- 1. What position(s) of service have you held in your commissioning church?**
- 2. Please briefly describe your calling:**
- 3. Please briefly list your training:**
- 4. Have you been ordained to the position of service you now hold? _____ If so, where were you ordained and under whom? _____ if not, will you be ordained before going to the field? _____ If so, where do you hope to be ordained?**

- 5. Years on field/deputation? _____**

- 6. (For missionaries/Evangelists we do not yet support) Please provide the names and phone numbers of pastors from the five most**

recent churches where you have presented your work.

7. (For new missionaries) have you and your wife visited the field where you plan to go?

8. If married, have either you or your spouse ever been previously divorced? If so, please explain.

** There may be legitimate reasons why a missionary never held a position of service in his commissioning church, but these will be clear. I have known missionaries whose original sending church shut down or went into apostasy. In such cases, the missionary may have had a work in progress and came under a church that knew him and was led to take part in his ministry. In normal circumstances, however, if a missionary never served in his commissioning church, there may be other questions to clarify as to why this is.*

**Also, ordination is a question that is rarely asked or considered. There are many issues this uncovers also. For example, there are missionaries that were never ordained by their so-called "sending church." This again needs to be clarified. Furthermore, there are missionaries that operate under the "ordination" of a college or para-church ministry. While they may declare themselves Baptist, their recognition of a non-church authority for their work is simply Protestant.*

** Question # 6 above is very important. I have known missionaries that leave an odious testimony be-*

hind them in other churches. But you won't know it unless you ask those churches. Certainly there will be occasional issues of incompatibility or misunderstanding where any human relationship is concerned. However, if there is a pattern in previous churches, it is a good bet that they have a problem. I knew one missionary family that had horrible, undisciplined children. They were in a different church nearly every service and therefore were able to keep it somewhat hidden – sometimes. But over time, they had a trail of relieved pastors that they were gone. But that family raised their support. They are now funded by churches to carry their terrible testimony to the field. Other missionaries have been known to wear out their welcome in other ways. Good missionaries won't have a problem providing references of previous meetings. But those that will not provide these well, save yourself some grief. Let them be funded by the huge pool of churches that will never ask.

* Question #8 is normally never asked. I was in a mission conference once where a good, Bible-believing, Baptist pastor unknowingly invited a Ruckmanite missionary. That conference ended in grief and great embarrassment to that church. First, that missionary disrupted the meeting by protesting the New Testament church, (Baptist) doctrine being preached. Then it was found that he and his wife were previously divorced/remarried and on their second or third marriage. I have known other “church-planting” missionaries that were

disqualified in this and other areas, yet nobody bothered to ask. Here again, most of these things are automatically avoided when you know something of their sending church and pastor. But it still should never be taken for granted.

Doctrine:

1. Eschatology: Please circle which most closely describes your position on the rapture:

Pre-Trib - Mid-Trib - Pre-wrath - Post-Trib

2. Please circle which most closely describe your position on the millennial reign of Christ:

Pre-Mil - Post-Mil - A-mil

**You can never assume that everyone is pre-tribulational and pre-millennial. It may surprise you if you ask. There are brethren who are neither but who will not offer that information unless asked outright. They consider it a minor detail while raising support. But their doctrine unfolds into a convoluted mess which you are supporting them to teach on the field.*

3. Which English Bible translation do you believe is the most accurate to its text?

4. Which English Bible translation do you use?

**There is a reason we ask these in this order. There are those who are blind to their own hypocrisy in this area. They will proudly proclaim an Alexandrian translation to be "the most accurate" while using the*

King James Bible at your church. We even had one missionary that authoritatively declared the New American Standard to be unquestionably the most accurate and he uses the New King James Version on the field. We no longer support him, of course.

5. In languages other than English, which translation do you use and why?

6. In the case of translation work, which underlying text would you refer to?

** We are looking to know here if they have an understanding and conviction for the pure text (Textus Receptus) which underlies the King James Bible. If they are going to use or translate foreign language Bibles from the Westcott-Hort text, they need to do it on someone else's dime. We do not want any part of it.*

7. Which do you believe most closely matches the Scriptural definition of the true church? (Please check all that apply).

- o All who are saved in this age.
- o All who have ever been saved in history and future.
- o An assembly of baptized believers organized to carry out the Lord's work.
- o The definition fits both all that are saved as well the local NT church.

8. Which do you believe most closely matches the Biblical definition of the body of Christ?

- o It is a spiritual body containing all believers

over which Christ is the head.

- o It is a metaphor for a literal NT church over which Christ is the literal head.

- o It is both the local church and the invisible body of believers.

9. The universal, invisible church is:

- o All believers in Christ past, present and future.

- o The body of Christ on earth will be one universal church after the rapture.

- o I do not believe in a universal-invisible church.

10. The church began:

- o During Christ's earthly ministry and was empowered at Pentecost.

- o The church began at Pentecost.

- o This is an unimportant, hair-splitting issue.

- o Other: _____

11. 1Cor 12:13

- o This text refers to Spirit baptism of all believers into the body of Christ.

- o This text refers to water baptism of believers into a local church. o Other _____

12. Galatians 3:27

- o This verse refers to salvation and the work of the Holy Spirit placing us into Christ.

- o This verse refers to being identified with Christ through water baptism.

13 The "one baptism" of Ephesians 4:5 is:

- o The spiritual baptism of salvation. The mo-

ment we come to Christ we are baptized in spirit.

o The ordinance of water baptism which Christ
gave His church. o Other _____

14. Church planting

o The pattern of the Bible is that the authority to start a church is through the ministry of another church.

o Though I readily acknowledge the importance of a local N.T. Baptist Church. I do not believe the authority for the existence of a church comes directly from another church but from Christ and from the New Testament. I believe a church can be founded upon that authority and does not have to be founded directly out of another church as a type of required linkage.

** 0 Questions 7-14. There are a lot of Baptists that are thoroughly confused and "Protestantized" in their doctrine. Nearly EVERY Baptist will answer #9 saying they "do not believe in a universal invisible church." But many will contradict themselves in the other questions surrounding that one. We recognize there are those who simply do not know or are repeating what they have always heard. We seek to help those who want to know through books, material or correspondence. However, we desire to support and yoke only with those who believe and practice Biblical Baptist doctrine. For some good useful material on this subject, consider our book "The mystical, invisible, universal 'church' examined in Scripture" 4th edition, by Les Potter Ph.D. This is published by Calvary Publishing, Lansing, Michigan. Phone: 517-882-2112.*

www.LocalChurchBiblePublishers.com

Practice:

1. What is your primary purpose on the mission field?

2. Please explain briefly how you accomplish or will accomplish that purpose.

3. To where will/do you tithe while on the mission field?

4. Do you financially participate in the support of missions? _____ If so, where?

5. To what degree will financial help be given to native congregations and national pastors?

6. Who are you directly accountable to while on the field?

**This should be his church and pastor*

7. Please note any doctrine or practice of your sending church or its leadership that you do not necessarily agree.

**If there are doctrines or practices that differ between the sending church and missionary, then they are not a team. If the missionary is in error, that church needs to revoke his commission. If his sending church is in error, the missionary does not have a Scriptural calling until this is taken care of.*

8. Does your sending church support you financially?

**If they don't, then they should not ask anyone else to.*

9. How often do you report and interact with your pastor?

10. What involvement does your sending church provide in your mission?

11. Do you solicit support or meetings from anything other than Independent Baptist Churches?

**You might be surprised if you get the truth on this one.*

12. In regard to the Lord's Table, there are three ways it is commonly practiced. Open (for all who profess salvation in Jesus Christ); Close (any may participate who are a member of a Baptist church of like faith); Closed (it is only for that particular church body and no others).

A. Which form of communion does your sending church practice?

B. Please note any circumstances where you may practice differently on the field or deputation.

**This question not only reveals what they believe about the ordinance of the New Testament church, but it also shows another aspect of whether the church and missionary are in harmony.*

Separation:

1. Please specifically state the convictions you practice in regard to clothing for yourself, your wife and your children (where applicable).

** This one should never be assumed. This is not only because these issues are vital for effective testimony, but they are under the greatest attack in our generation. Even the ungodly recognize the light of testimony in this area. A missionary is in the service of the Lord. Service comes after sanctification. If they do not already have victory in this thing, they have other spiritual issues to attend to as well. Unless you ask, you might not know.*

Missionaries will typically have enough sense to come to your church dressed according to a standard that assumes Biblical gender-identity, separation and modesty. But don't be surprised if, when the meeting is over, they change into clothes that violate the Biblical standard and befit the standard of the world. If you don't ask, expect to be surprised. If you do ask, don't be surprised to learn you were lied to. We have had missionaries who dogmatically affirmed their Biblical convictions in this matter, only to shocked that they lied.

We knew independent Baptist missionaries on our field (Israel) that conformed while among Bible believing brethren in the US. But while on the field, the spiritual pull toward the world's standard and the desire to wear "that which pertaineth to a man" was too great for the wife. (It is likely that even their own pastor and church in Ohio were unaware of this). There are a plethora of spiritual issues attached to this one issue already. In this case, there was also hypocrisy. The result in this case was that it brought reproach to their testimony

and effectiveness on the field. It also brought confusion and trouble to our own work when, after years of labor there, these sought to attach to our name. Our people saw their testimony was different, yet they claimed to be the same as us. They were obviously not in doctrine, spirit, practice or character.

2. Please explain how these convictions may differ from the world or culture in which you live.

**Obviously, if we hold to a Biblical standard on anything, it will differ from this world. The reason we ask it this way is to let them tell us what they actually practice rather than asking them to toe our line.*

3. Definition of Christ honoring music (please check all that apply).

o Music itself is neutral. There is nothing in which we can apply Biblical criteria. It is the message of the words that really matter.

o Music is preferential and controversial. It should be left to the individual's interpretation. A person's musical preference is no indication of their spiritual maturity or their walk with the Lord.

o Music is made up of melody, harmony, and rhythm. Godly music should focus on the melody and target the spirit and soul of man

** Music is another spiritual area. Those who lack spiritual understanding and wisdom in music will have issues in other spiritual things as well. In that*

case, they will generally answer that music is “neutral” and/or that it is determined by preference. They will defend the idea that music does not indicate a person’s spiritual walk precisely because they lack spiritual discernment in this area.

4. What criteria do you deem necessary for working with other pastors/ evangelists or missionaries in the work of the ministry?

**For all the dogma and clarity of purpose we may have here in the US, the mission field is “another world.” For some, the difficulty and loneliness make it easy to compromise in things they wouldn’t here. This is especially true when they are not working closely under the accountability and advisement of their sending church. Even so, it is important for the missionary to nail it down now what and who he will work with and who he will not.*

If any of the above questions were unclear, or did not offer a statement that you could fully agree with, please note which question and explain what you believe below.

We value any further comments, suggestions or input about this questionnaire itself. If you have any, please feel free to express those here.

Please also list any needs you might have that we might pray about.

The cover letter.

The following is a sample of the cover letter we send with our questionnaire. We modify it as needed. It is included here just for a reference.

Dear Missionary,

We at _____ Baptist Church believe in missions and seek to be an encouragement to those who labor in our fields. We realize that, for reasons both spiritual and economical, it has become increasingly more difficult for missionaries to raise and maintain support. It is therefore a challenge to us in these last days to seek out those whom we can undergird more strongly with the investment of our resources and prayers.

We also recognize the prevalent short-comings in how missions are commonly conducted. Few people are more aware of this than those laboring on the field. There are missionaries standing true to the word of God in doctrine, ethics and genuine purpose who lack the barest essentials to carry out their calling. Meanwhile, there are those who draw great resources through talented means whose true character, doctrine and purpose are sad to mention. We recognize that these serve a purpose in testing the faithfulness of their supporters and sending church. We believe the Lord judges us in regard to our diligence and faithfulness to Him in our resources. It

is in this spirit of accountability, therefore, that we undertake to seek faithful servants with whom we may labor together.

Lest it be misunderstood, please be assured that our purpose is not focused on eliminating but in finding. Nor do we want to misuse your time in a lengthy questionnaire with tricky questions. The questionnaire we have is purposely designed to be practical and straight-forward. We count it a great honor that you would represent us on the field and we want to get to know you. We also know that these kinds of questions are welcome among faithful brethren who seek to work with churches who believe as you do.

Sincerely,

Pastor _____

As an extra matter of encouragement, I want to share with the reader an interesting story in regard to this questionnaire. Our church was Scripturally founded in February 2012 under the Headship of Christ, through the auspices of a NT church. But the core of our people at that time had formerly been a 'Baptist church' that was incorporated under the state with a dubious beginning and some doctrines that were not befitting a NT church. But they had a number of missionaries they supported. Some of them were very solid and we carried them over

when we founded. For years, the former congregation supported a missionary who, for health reasons, returned to the states and continued his work among the Spanish speaking people in his community. He was getting on in years and was recovering from a stroke. But he was a man of God that couldn't quit. When I called him to get acquainted, I told him about our questionnaire which we had initially designed for new missionaries coming to us. He was quick to point out we should send it to all our current missionaries also, because they can change their beliefs while on the field. He then told me to send him our questionnaire and that he would be glad to fill it out. A few weeks went by and we had not heard from him. Then I got a call informing us that he had died. On his death bed, a young Spanish speaking man was saved who came to visit. I told the church that we needed to continue supporting his widow as long as she needed it. The Bible is clear that God frowns upon those who do not look after the widows and the fatherless. We want to be on the side of God. A month went by and I called to check on her. She was radiant in her testimony and desire to continue helping Spanish-speaking women in their walk with the Lord. She then told me she would be sure to send us that questionnaire. I told her that was the least of our concerns right now and that she need not do so. She said, "No, you don't

understand. My husband loved your questionnaire and was so encouraged that you would ask those questions. It was very important to him. He had it almost filled out before he died.” I began to choke-up upon hearing this and thanked her for her faithful service to the Lord. I could not help but think on the striking contrast in spirit between this dear servant of God and those other few we supported who did not stand valiantly for truth or would not even answer. It is also an example for us that truth is not offensive to those that love it. This dear saint of God was encouraged with where we stood and that we shared the love of truth enough to ask these things. If you ever have missionaries that are offended at your love of doctrinal truth, you might reflect on how it differs from the spirit of these who are not.

In conclusion, let it be understood by the reader that the intent of the author in dealing with these things is ultimately for the furtherance of the great commission. If the status-quo of ignoring the elephant in our living room continues, the matter of missions will soon become only a noble concept among the majority. In practice, the “little leaven” will redefine the lump of many who identify as “independent Baptists.” Indeed, it already has, for which reason we prefer to consider ourselves as an historic, unaffiliated, New Testament church which is therefore truly Baptist in the historic sense of the

word. As such, we view every mission project according to that paradigm. The Lord gave us plenty of warning and admonition in regard to the spiritual condition of these last days. How will the Lord find it when He returns? The Lord said in Luke 12:37 “Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them.”

Should any desire, the examples of the questionnaire and cover letter may be freely adapted or revised for your own use. Furthermore, the unnamed characters depicted throughout the text are real. I have no personal vendetta or score to settle with any, save only that I despise fraud in the name of the Lord. Jeremiah 48:10 says “Cursed be he that doeth the work of the LORD deceitfully, .” Therefore, if due diligence compels any to inquire as to their names and further details, I have no compulsion to withhold that which I know and have seen to be fact. I will give those names and information upon request.