

10 TIPS FOR DEVELOPING A MISSIONS-MINDED CHURCH

By Melanie Stone

When I was a child, I was raised in a mission-minded church, and I have wonderful memories of a value that was woven into the fabric of my heart as a young believer. I cherished the idea that there were children around the world who were my brothers and sisters in Christ and I would meet them one day when we were all together in heaven. I remember hearing stories about far away places and people who had different skin colors and spoke different languages, people who were hearing about Jesus and His salvation, just like me. I remember that my grandmother would illustrate missionary stories and being read these stories in church. I remember looking into the faces of missionaries that came into my class to tell us stories of the people they knew and the places they had been. They would wear clothing from their country and bring us unusual items from that nation's culture to touch and turn in our tiny hands. I was fascinated by them. I remember doing missionary activities, singing evangelistic songs and memorizing verses about reaching the entire world. Once the whole church was challenged to save money for a missionary project and children were given church-shaped banks. I saved my money, trying to gather as much as I could to give on the designated Sunday. On that day, I brought my bank, filled with coins and a few dollar bills. I emptied the bank into my little lap, and I recall the tremendous exploding joy in my young heart to be able to give to missions. I also remember hearing a missionary speak in a church service, giving an altar call for anyone sensing the call to missionary work. I sensed that call then, believing that when I was older, I would be one of the privileged few to go to the nations. Here I am today, traveling the nations to start and strengthen churches.

Jesus gave us what we call the great commission of going into all the world, teaching and making disciples in all the nations. In Romans, Apostle Paul asked, "How will people hear if someone doesn't tell them, and how will they tell them, unless someone goes, and how will they go unless they are sent?" We do have the responsibility to reach those around us, but we also have the responsibility to reach the unreached in the nations beyond us. Jesus wants everyone to hear the Gospel message before He returns. He has a global kingdom-mindset, and He wants us to share that missions mindset with Him.

As pastors and leaders, we should be developing that kingdom mindset in our people, but how? Here are ten tips to help develop and maintain a mission-minded church:

1. APPOINT A MISSIONS LEADER IN YOUR CHURCH

A mission-minded church has to begin in the heart of the pastor. If the pastor does not value having global reach, the church as whole will mostly likely never embrace it. The Board of Directors also have to share the vision and share the heart for the world, and if so, giving to missions will be included in the church budget.

As a leader, a pastor needs a time. A missions-minder pastor will position a leader on his/her team to take on the responsibility of casting and executing vision for missions. That person can be a volunteer with a heart for the world. It can be a responsibility

added to one of the staff. If there is no one else, it can be the Lead Pastor. You can find an example of a ministry description for this role on growchurches.com.

That missions director might also develop a team to help with the missions ministry at the church. They can help with events and fundraisers, meet for prayer, and help share communication through social media.

2. FINANCIALLY SUPPORT MISSIONARIES

What is a missionary? A missionary is someone who leaves their home to travel or live in foreign nations for the purpose of building the kingdom of God around the world.

Missionaries can be in any of the 5-fold leadership roles (apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, or teacher), or they can be in any of the “helps” ministries, but they are serving in their roles on foreign ground.

Most missionaries rely on the financial giving of others. Missionaries have expenses to operate their home office, support their foreign ministry, pay their salary and the salaries of their staff, and to travel internationally. Sometimes missionaries help to distribute funds for kingdom advancement in impoverished nations. To do these things, missionaries work together with partners in monthly support or one-time gifts.

To develop a missions-mindset in a church, be an example to your church members, and support at least one missionary as a church. Even if the amount is small, be obedient and consistent. God sees the heart, not the amount. God is also a rewarder to those who have captured His heart to reach the people for whom His Son died. As we sow into kingdom vision, we will reap in our local churches and personal lives.

As pastors and leaders, you can also encourage your church members to give to missions individually. One church we know of would take the month of January to communicate their missionaries and challenge church members to pray and select a missionary or missionaries to give to throughout the year. A pledge card and twelve envelopes were provided for monthly giving through the church for that missionary(ies).

3. GIVE UPDATES AND PRAY FROM THE PLATFORM

If something is valuable to a church, it will be mentioned from the platform on a regular basis. If reaching the world is a value of a local church, be intentional to mention updates on the missionaries you support and pray over them as a church.

4. HAVE A MISSIONS-MINDSET DISPLAYED IN YOUR CHURCH

From world maps to missionary boards to flags of the nations, I have seen a variety of missionary visuals in churches that we have visited. These visuals intentionally communicate a global vision to the people in our churches.

5. INVITE MISSIONARIES TO VISIT YOUR CHURCH

Missionaries are a link between the nations to communicate what God is doing around the world. When missionaries travel to visit supporters, they are reporting to the work being done around the world.

When you invite your missionaries to visit, ask them to share from the pulpit, speak with your teams, share with your children/youth. They give a face to your giving, and they share your value of spreading the Gospel to the regions beyond you.

6. COMMUNICATE DIGITALLY AND IN PRINT

Some churches put photos of their missionaries being supported that year on the church website. Others put out a newsletter with updates from each of the missionaries.

7. OFFER SHORT-TERM MISSIONS TRIPS

Ministry is about serving people. For missions to be in the heart of a pastor, we suggest pastors and leaders go on mission trips themselves. This way you can meet the people they are reaching, see the needs first-hand, participate and serve, and develop relationships through trust.

In addition, offering short-term mission trips for your church members can help develop a mission-minded church. It might even confirm callings for people to be missionaries themselves, to become more of a giver, to develop a servant's heart, or to ignite a heart to pray for the world.

You can find a free training guide for short-term missions on growchurches.com.

8. HAVE A MISSIONS SUNDAY ONCE A MONTH

You may share about missions naturally; however, setting aside a Sunday a month to include an update on missionaries is one way to assure you are communicating about missions. It is also a good reminder for people to bring their offerings for the missionaries that day.

Take the day to share about a missionary, put their family photo and nation on the screen, share their update, and pray for them as a church.

9. HOST OR ATTEND A MISSIONARY CONVENTION

There are some churches and associations of churches that like to offer a week a year for missionaries to come in all at once. I attended a church that would open up a space for missionaries to set up a table with materials from their ministries. They would decorate the tables with printed fabrics, items from the country, videos and music of the ministry, or even serve food/drinks from that nation. It's a fun way for people to experience other cultures. It helps to expand the way we think about the world and about the kingdom of God.

10. HAVE MISSIONS ACTIVITIES IN YOUR KIDS/YOUTH MINISTRIES

At the beginning of this article, I shared my personal experience growing up in a mission-minded church. Here are a few of those ideas and more:

- If the church does a Missions Sunday once a month, make sure the kids and youth are doing the same thing at the same time. Your missions director can work with teachers to help this happen. The missions director may even use this day to share with the children/youth as well.
- Have photos of the missionaries and their families to share with kids either on a large screen or in small groups. Let the kids pray over the photos. Perhaps decorate part of the room with a missionary theme.
- Share videos of the ministry provided by missionaries or other missions videos.
- Invite missionaries to take part of the service to visit the children or youth and share about the ministry in their country. Sometimes if those missionaries have children or youth, they may also want to share.
- Have the children sit in on the adult service when a missionary is ministering.
- Encourage the children to give offerings for a special project. Some churches do this during a kids or youth camp or vacation Bible school.
- Ask kids to bring in school supplies and send them to children in other countries that are in need of them. Perhaps send gifts at Christmas for children in poverty in other nations.
- There are missionary materials available that can supplement your curriculum or be used to teach during midweek services.
- There are some family-oriented short-term trips children and youth can go on.
- Use evangelical tools to teach children, including songs, color sheets or worksheets, games, drama skits, dress up activities, books, etc. Some ideas and resources are available on growchurches.com.
- Some churches will offer a pen pal program where kids from different nations can send letters or messages to one another for a year at a time.
- Have the class make cards and send them to children of missionaries. The cards can be for birthdays, holidays, or as a special project. With the help of a trusted missionary to assure privacy, they could also send photos or videos of themselves sharing their faith, singing, or just saying hello.

John 3:16 says that it was because of God's great love for people that He sent His Son to die for them. Our Father loves us, and He loves everyone in all the nations of the world. When you care about the things God cares about, you will want to reach the unreached from whom Christ died. Thank you for your interest in developing a missions-minded church. I believe God will bless you for capturing His heart.