

What does “Missionary” mean to Missionary Baptists?

What does the term missionary mean? Simply stated, it is a person that has been sent by a church into an area to carry on evangelism or other activities such as education or hospital work. While this definition is an accurate one, it does not show us the character of the person or the church that sent them. If we then assume that person and church as having selfless and caring characters, we lose sight of the leadership of the Holy Spirit and God’s will within the mission itself. The purpose of this topic is to explore what missionary means to us.

As we begin our study, we must understand that the need for being missionary minded was not present before sin entered the world through the disobedience of Adam and Eve. Once sin was imputed, God himself taught us of accountability, grace, mercy and forgiveness sacrificially through the shedding of blood. These teachings were then given to us not only by prophets of old, but also through the laws of God which He freely gave. If we seek to fully comprehend the meaning of a missionary, then we must first realize that as aforementioned it was God who gave us knowledge, the prophets, His laws, and then His only begotten son. In Romans 7:12, we find that the law of God is holy, just and good; and in Galatians 3:24 its’ purpose is to bring us unto Christ. Therefore we can surely say that Christ is God’s fulfillment of love by the shedding of His blood on the cross of Calvary as well as His desire to reconcile us to Him when a person is saved. For we love Him because He first loved us. 1 John 4:19. Acquainting ourselves with this love is of necessity in becoming a proper missionary.

Upon reflection of the life of Jesus Christ, we see that in John 6:38 He testified that it was not His will He sought to complete, but rather the will of God who sent Him. It is not God’s will that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. 2nd Peter 3:9. Upon His crucifixion in John 19:30 Jesus stated “it is finished”, referring to the completion of God’s will. Later, at the ascension, Jesus testified that all power in heaven and earth had been given to Him. He then commanded us as His Church to go out unto all nations preaching the word of God and baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. It can then be said that Jesus certainly gave us the plan by which to follow when attempting to become suitable missionaries.

It is our responsibility first as individuals then as churches to always follow God’s word and the examples of Christ, who is the express image of God, leaning on His understanding and not our own. Jesus commanded His church to carry out the great commission, which is accomplished by the work of individuals called out for that purpose. Acts 13:1-3. An individual must always follow the leadership of the Holy Spirit which will bring them closer to Christ and better enable them to let their light shine to bring Christ to the lost and dying world. Before a church sends a missionary or even considers supporting one, the church must determine what that person believes and plans to teach thereby confirming that biblical truth is to be conveyed. Over the last 2,000 years many people have sought their own will and way, which has caused confusion and led to separation within the fellowship of God’s people. As this has progressed several different variations of belief, even within our own denomination, now exist. If we are to be proper missionaries, then we must cling to every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord. Duet. 8:3 thereby holding fast to the truth of God’s gospel.

To be an acceptable missionary the character of a person must reflect God’s love through them by following the examples and attitude of Christ. This can also be said of the church that sends a person or group into a mission field. What does missionary mean to us? Truly, that whether a person is carrying out a mission from God themselves or a church supporting someone, the leadership of the Holy Spirit sent by God is crucial.

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