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February 14, 2010  
Mission's Month

## Plugging Into Missions

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We begin this morning with, "The Missiological Theological test of Missional Aptitude for Laypeople." Better known as the TMTTOMAFL It is a multiple-choice quiz that I have developed to assess how much you have been paying attention during missions month. So let's take this together - respond to each by saying yes or no to each option.

Question number one. Listen carefully.

- 1) What is the theme of mission's month?
  - a. Missions is for professionals.
  - b. Missions is for somebody
  - c. Missions is for everyone.
  
- 2) In Tim Martin's sermon he gave an illustration of being prepared. As a Navy officer, what was he in at that time?
  - a. An airplane
  - b. A tank
  - c. A nuclear submarine
  
- 3) Why did God have Adam name the animals, and not do it Himself?
  - a. God was simply too busy
  - b. God does not really care that much about animals, and especially not about their names.
  - c. It was God's perfect plan from the beginning to engage Adam in meaningful, important work.
  
- 4) Why did God have Jonah warn the people of Nineveh, rather than doing it Himself?
  - a. Jonah had been unemployed for 18 months and needed the work.
  - b. God and his prophets play "good cop / bad cop." This time Jonah was the "bad cop."

- c. One of God's favorite whales was particularly hungry and this was a creative way of feeding him.
  - d. It was God's perfect plan to engage His prophet in meaningful redemptive ministry.
- 5) Who is responsible for carrying out the Great Commission?
- a. *Only* seminary professors
  - b. *Only* those in a small secret society who claim to be authentic descendents of the twelve disciples.
  - c. *Only* people who can recite the 66 books of the Bible in order
  - d. It is God's perfect plan for everyone who believes to carry out the great commission.

That is right, "Missions is for everyone." How many of you got 100%? Great! Very good. I trust that with this simple quiz you have begun to see my focus this morning.

I have two goals - first, I want to remind all of us that we have work to do as Christians, work in the church, and work in taking the message from the church to the world. God could do it all, but he chooses to work through us. If missions is for everyone – than we have work to do. That is my first point. The second point is that, *therefore*, each of us must consider our *particular* job assignments. We must consider where we plug in. If God has work for "us" to do, then He has work for "you" to do.

**So let's begin by briefly examining the work of God in evangelizing the world.**

There are many Scriptures that teach about work - including of course the various restatements of the Great Commission. But I want to take us to the book of 2 Timothy where Paul is giving final instructions to the church. In chapter two Paul argues that after a person becomes a Christian, they are to be trained and established in the faith - to refrain from sin and to commit themselves to God. Why? **2Tim. 2:21 if anyone cleanses himself from these things, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work.** In chapter three Paul continues this theme, arguing that Christians are

to continue growing in spite of hardship we are to press on toward spiritual maturity, studying the Bible. Growing in faith. Why? [2Tim. 3:17](#) so that the man of God may be **adequate, equipped for every good work**. We progress and grow not as an end in itself, but a means to an end – to do the work of God. In chapter four, Paul makes a personal appeal to Timothy, who may have been a little timid and prone to giving up. Paul said: [2Tim. 4:5](#) **But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry**. World evangelization will only be accomplished by hard, sacrificial, work. The harvest fields are ripe – pray therefore that God raise up laborers. Laborers are workers.

My favorite hero of the Christian faith, D.L. Moody was known as a leader who was able to mobilize and motivate the body of Christ to work hard for the Lord. Listen to what he said: “If a great and mighty work is not done, it will not be God's fault, but our own. I find a class of people saying: “Well, we must wait until God works, and when he is ready we will see a great work.” If I read the Bible correctly, God is always ready, and will work through us when we get busy. Some one will say, “Let the Lord do it all.” He could have sent down ten legions of angels to do his work if he wanted to, but God doesn't work in that way. He works through us, and if there are to be any spiritually dead raised the disciples of Jesus must do their part.”

The church is the body of Christ. The church is now the hands, and feet and voice of Christ in this world. The body is to be active and dynamic, not lazy and sedentary.

**Which leads of course to the problem that we face.** This problem is particularly acute in our generation. The problem was well stated by Jerome K. Jerome the famous English humorist who said, “I like work; it fascinates me. I can sit and look at it for hours.”

The problem is that we don't really like to work. At least not to work hard. The puritan work ethic past generations is gone and we are now in a culture of leisure. Whether in the workplace, marriage or church, hard work has fallen on hard times. Our current climate of anti-work was illustrated beautifully in the Pixar movie, Wall-E where humanity achieved the goal of 100% leisure, with no work required at all. And the movie explores those themes. That is our trajectory as a society. I read in a news magazine this week that a job agency in Europe received a job posting from a company who stipulated that the applicant "must be very reliable and hardworking". However the agency rejected that ad arguing that it was illegal to "Discriminate against unreliable people."

We are affirming this morning the importance of hard work, effort, endurance and perseverance, blood, sweat and tears and sacrifice for the sake of the gospel. We must rediscover what it means to work hard for God.

### **Where do you Plug in?**

And so that lead us to our second point. If missions is for everyone, and we all have work to do: where do you plug in? Let me take you back to the very first mission's conference in Jerusalem in about A.D. 50. All the leaders of the church got together to sort out a variety of issues, including issues related to missions. They had to make sure there was clarity on the meaning of the gospel, and then on who was doing what. In Galatians 2 and verse nine we read: Gal. 2:9 and recognizing the grace that had been given to me, James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we might go to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcised. Barnabus

and Paul were off to the Gentile nations. James, Peter and John to the Jews. And the rest of the New Testament details the work they did in these very specific assignments.

What is God calling you to do? You might say, "Craig, I am no Paul or Barnabas! I do not know a lot of Bible. I don't have a seminary degree. I don't know any missionary lingo. I think other people will be better choices for this work. I am just an average person!"

Listen again to D.L. Moody – who himself had no formal theological training. He said: "If this world is going to be reached, I am convinced it must be done by men and women of average talent. After all, there are comparatively few people in the world who have great talents. Here is a man with one talent; there is another with three; perhaps I may have only half a talent. But if we all go to work with the gifts we have, the Lord will prosper us, and we may double or triple our talents. What we need is to be up and about our Master's work."

And not everyone is called to go as a full-time missionary. Maybe your job is to support them through the church. To serve on the Sharing Team. To pray faithfully and to send cards of encouragement. Many of you have seen at our booths many ways to be involved. To visit a missionary, receive their newsletter, go on a short-term mission's trip. We have had four testimonies on how to plug in. Kevin and Laura desire to spend their vacation time visiting and encouraging missionaries. My Dad wants to take all 13 grandchildren overseas to expose them to missions. Ron and Ann went on their first short-term missions trip, and look forward to going again. Nancy, is making a huge difference with the children in her neighborhood and in the public schools. The ways to plug into missions are as creative and diverse as God Himself.

Last Sunday the New Orleans Saints won the Super Bowl and you may be aware that the winning team receives special Super Bowl rings. Key players like Drew Brees and Reggie Bush will get “the hardware” along with 51 of their fellow active players. But did you know that at least 150 rings will be given out? Most of the people receiving a Super Bowl ring are people you have never heard of -- like Rita Benson LeBlanc – Executive Vice President will get a ring. Rusty Bonin – Personnel Assistant, Brian Adams – Assistant Dir. of College Scouting, Danny Callahan – IT / Applications Development Manager, Dan Simmons – Equipment Manager; they all get rings. That is exactly how it is with God! All jobs are important and will be rewarded by God. Everyone played their part to achieve the victory. When we stand before God – he will pass out golden crowns to everyone who has been faithfully at work for His Kingdom. The important thing is to plug into what *God wants you to do*.

Missions is for everyone – all of us must be plugged into missions, to work hard to share the Good News that God has entrusted to us. I would like to now invite the ushers to pass out to you a commitment card we would like for you to fill out now, and they have pens as well. On the cards you may give us any feedback about mission’s month, and then jot down what you have felt God calling you to do as an individual and as a family. We are going to have you turn these cards back in, during the offering, so you can also jot your commitments on your sermon notes page. As the cards are passed out, just take a moment to fill them out as you are led by the Lord. As they are distributed and as you take a moment right now to fill them out, let me close with the words of an old hymn writer Mary Brown who wrote in 1899.

It may not be on the mountain's height, or over the stormy sea;  
It may not be at the battle's front my Lord will have need of me;  
But if by a still, small voice He calls to paths I do not know,  
I'll answer, dear Lord, with my hand in Yours,  
I'll go where You want me to go.

*I'll go where You want me to go, dear Lord, O'er mountain, or plain, or sea ;  
I'll say what You want me to say, dear Lord, I'll be what You want me to be.*

Perhaps today there are loving words which Jesus would have me speak;  
There may be now, in the paths of sin, some wand'rer whom I should seek.  
O Savior, if You will be my Guide, though dark and rugged the way,  
My voice shall echo the message sweet, I'll say what You want me to say.

*I'll go where You want me to go, dear Lord, O'er mountain, or plain, or sea ;  
I'll say what You want me to say, dear Lord, I'll be what You want me to be.*

There's surely somewhere a lowly place in earth's harvest fields so wide,  
Where I may labor through life's short day for Jesus, the Crucified.  
So, trusting my all unto Your care, I know You always love me!  
I'll do Your will with a heart sincere, I'll be what You want me to be.

*I'll go where You want me to go, dear Lord, O'er mountain, or plain, or sea ;  
I'll say what You want me to say, dear Lord, I'll be what You want me to be.*