

## EXTEND - MOTIVATION FOR MISSION

A man bought a new hunting dog. Eager to see how he would perform, he took him out to track a bear. No sooner had they gotten into the woods than the dog picked up the trail. Suddenly he stopped, sniffed the ground, and headed in a new direction. He had caught the scent of a deer that had crossed the bear's path. A few moments later he halted again, this time smelling a rabbit that had crossed the path of the deer. And so, on and on it went until finally the breathless hunter caught up with his dog, only to find him barking triumphantly down the hole of a field mouse.

Today we are concluding our series called the Four Chairs looking at our missions statement. Today we come to the last chair, the last E which is Extend. We exist to extend God's kingdom in mission.

Matthew 9:35-38 Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. 36 When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. 37 Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. 38 Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."

We see in this story that the disciples had lost 5 things which Jesus had to remind them of;

### 1. Loss of Perception – He saw the crowds

Jesus went through the towns and villages. He taught in the synagogues. He healed those who came to Him. He spent time with people. It says in verse 36 “when he saw the crowds...” He saw them. He saw their needs. He understood what was going on in their lives. That is where missions starts. It starts in the heart of a person who takes the time to see the needs of the people around them.

This may seem obvious, but it is not. So many people go through life insulating themselves from the world around them. We grow up in Christian homes, we hang around Christian friends.

Do we see the needs of the people around us? What you notice about somebody reveals what is truly important to you. When I walk past a shoe shine man he looks at my shoes, because he sees every person as a potential customer. The guy in the cell phone booth glances at my phone to see if I have the latest model or not, because he sees people as potential customers. When I drive onto a car lot the salesman checks out my car. We look at different things. Do we see the spiritual needs in others?

You will never see the needs of people around you until you spend time with them. Until you see and know what they are going through. We often live such sheltered lives that we do not know the pain that so many people around us endure. It is important to get out of your comfort zone.

My first short term missions trip was to Bolivia in 1986 and it was rough. I was working in a free medical clinic. Here is a picture of me using the microscope – sitting on an old piece of wood and using a chair as my desk. Here is me taking a motorcycle across a river. Conditions were tough. People would come from great distances to this clinic since it was free. One day a woman came in with a little baby. The baby was very sick. I remember the doctors were very busy and were rushing around. They laid this baby down on a table and called me over. Through a translator the doctor said to me “This baby is very sick and could die at any minute. I want you to sit here and watch it. If it stops breathing, call someone immediately.” For more than an hour I sat there watching this dying baby. It was labouring to breath. It was a very difficult thing for me to do emotionally.

This is one of the reasons that I am excited about the fact that we as a church are hosting the Compassion Experience in two weeks. It is an easy way to see the developing world without ever leaving Canada. To experience the pain that people go through today in so many countries around the world. Make sure that you take the time to come and go through it.

## 2. Loss of Passion – He had compassion on them

Verse 36 goes on to say that “When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them...” He not only saw the needs of the people around Him (was aware of them) but he opened his heart to feel the needs of the people around him. It is easy to become numb to the world around us.

OK, here is a test to see if you know your opposites. The opposite of Fast is... Slow. The opposite of Long is... Short. The opposite of Cold is... Hot. The opposite of Young is... Old. The opposite of Soft is... Hard. The opposite of Sour is... Sweet. The opposite of High is... Low. The opposite of Rich is... Poor. The opposite of Love is... Hate??? I'm not so sure about that one! From my own experiences, I'm coming to realize that the greatest insult against someone is not to hate them, it's to be apathetic to them.

This is especially true if you are surrounded by needs on a continuous basis. It can be overwhelming. Like my story with the baby in Bolivia, when we see needs like that we can harden our hearts as a way of protecting ourselves. We need to be careful not to let that happen.

William Booth started the Salvation Army. What led him to do that? One night he couldn't sleep and went for a walk thru the slums of London. The rain was beating down that night on the homeless people asleep on the street, and it broke his heart. He went home and when his wife asked where he had been he replied, "I've been to hell." He saw the homeless as more than just drunks, he remembered they were once somebody's baby. They used to be loved. He decided that night to do something about it, and the Salvation Army was born. William Booth not only saw the need that was around him but he allowed that need to break him.

Noticed the two words that Jesus used to describe the needs of the crowd around Him. He said that they were harassed and helpless. The word for harassed is the Greek word EKLULO and literally means to fall apart or faint. The people were weary, they were worn out. Weary of always trying to be good enough but failing. Worn out of trying to keep all the commands and laws and yet never being able to achieve righteousness on their own.

The word for helpless is the Greek word RHIPTO and it means to scatter. To be tossed in all directions. The people had no direction, no idea of where they were going. Certainly our culture today understands this. With absolute truth there is only relativism, no absolutes, no direction, no purpose.

When you see the needs of the people around you, do you feel compassion for them? It is hard for people who are full to understand what it is to be hungry. Likewise it is sometimes hard as Christians to remember what life without Jesus really felt like. Do we have empathy?

On August 31, 2005, a FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) worker emailed the FEMA director regarding the situation in New Orleans immediately following Hurricane Katrina. The worker wrote: “Sir, I know that you know the situation is past critical. Here are some things you might not know. The hotels are kicking people out. Thousands are gathering in the streets with no food or water. Hundreds are still being rescued from homes. There are dying patients at medical tent.

Estimates are that many will die within the next few hours. Evacuation is in process. Plans are coming together for the dome evacuation, but the hotel situation adding to problem. We are out of food and running out of water. The need is critical. Our staff is OK and holding own but the conditions are deplorable. Phone connectivity is impossible.”

The director responded: “Thanks for update. Anything specific I need to do or tweak?” No wonder President Bush ended up firing him. His insensitivity to the real needs of real people was deplorable, but sometimes we can be just as insensitive.

### 3. Loss of Precept – He said to his disciples

After seeing and feeling the needs of the people around Him, Jesus turns to His disciples and speaks to them. He gives them instructions.

Matt 9:37 Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few..."

The church is called to meet the needs of the world. Jesus said it, so we should do it. Jesus gave the Great Commission almost 2000 years ago, and we have still not completed it. We are failing to obey God's command to go, failing to obey God's word in living and failing to use God's power in going. We need to be sharing our faith if for no other reason than the simple fact that Jesus Himself has told us we should. Jesus told us to GO! That was not a suggestion, it was a command.

Matt 28:18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Why should we share our faith? Jesus told us to. That in itself should be enough for us. If you are in the army and your commanding officer says MARCH than you need to march and you keep on marching until he tells you to stop. Almost 2000 years ago Jesus told us to march and He has not said stop so we must keep marching until the work is done. We have been given a message to proclaim.

The term POSTHASTE goes back to the time of Henry VIII. Postmasters were given relays of horses to carry messages from the king to important cities in England. Because some couriers were irresponsible and wasted time in taverns and inns on the way, a drastic law was put into effect demanding that every dispatch carrier should "ride for his life." The king's edict meant that anyone caught delaying his messages would be publicly hanged. Often there was drawn upon important letters the figure of a man suspended from a gallows. Beneath was this ominous warning: "Haste, post, haste! Haste for thy life!" A number of men did suffer death because of their inefficiency, but in the 19th century the practice was discontinued. However, the old expression still remains as a reminder that the utmost speed and urgency is required when the king's business is involved!

### 4. Loss of Prayer – ask the Lord of the harvest

Matt 9:38 Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."

Asking the Lord of the harvest means prayer. Prayer must be central in all that we do. Often we see prayer as a last resort instead of our first priority. In your personal prayer life, when was the last time you prayed for God to raise up more workers for his harvest fields?

Somebody once said, "Satan laughs at our toil. He mocks at our plans. But he trembles when we pray."

We need to be praying for the lost. We need to be praying that they would find the truth. In order to do that there needs to be someone that goes and declares that truth to them.

Romans 10:14 How then can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?  
15 And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

People cannot receive salvation until they have first believed the message. They cannot believe it until they have first heard it. They cannot hear it until someone goes to them and tells them. People cannot go to them unless they have help and are first sent. Can I add one more level to this, something that is not directly in the verse but is implied? People will not send until they are first motivated to action. We will not act until our hearts are broken by the things that break the heart of God. Until we have the same passion for the lost that God has.

We need to pray like never before because the world is changing like never before. We are seeing a harvest of souls like never before in human history.

In his book "The Faith Equation," Dr. Marvin Bittinger, Professor of Mathematics and author of over 175 books, claims that by 2033 every person on the planet capable of understanding the gospel will have been presented the gospel at least once, according to modern evangelism trends. Some of these trends are that;

30,000 converts each day in South America  
30,000 Chinese converts daily  
23,000 African converts daily  
16,000 Muslims come to Christ daily

A few years ago a leading Saudi cleric, appeared on a live interview on Aljazeera satellite television to confirm that, sure enough, Muslims were turning to Jesus in alarming numbers. He said that "In every hour, 667 Muslims convert to Christianity," He warned. "Every day, 16,000 Muslims convert to Christianity. Every year, 6 million Muslims convert to Christianity." Stunned, the interviewer interrupted the cleric. "Hold on! Let me clarify. Do we have six million converting from Islam to Christianity?" The cleric repeated his assertion. "Every year,"

At the same time that we are seeing the greatest harvest in history, there are more martyrs for Christianity today than at any other time in history. In the last 10 years it is estimated that almost 1 million Christians have been killed for their faith.

The late Vance Havner used to say, "The tragedy of our time is that the situation is desperate but the saints are not."

5. Loss of Perspective – HIS harvest field

Notice the end of verse 38. There is one word I want to highlight here. We are to ask the Lord of the Harvest to send out workers into HIS harvest field. Not THE harvest field but HIS harvest field. The harvest field belongs to God, not us.

We have a wonderful church, and God has called us to be a light to this city and to the world. Last year we did a survey of the congregation, just to get an idea of what our church looks like. The survey included over 1,250 individuals from almost 500 households. So what did the survey find?

Well, obviously we are a very diverse church. There are people from over 60 nationalities represented. That is not surprising as you look around this room. Of the people who took the survey, 47% were born in a country other than Canada. That is amazing!

We as a church are diverse not simply in our backgrounds but also in age. From the survey 42% are over the age of 50. Of the 58% under the age of 50, 23% were adults, 13% were young adults and 11% were youth and 11% were children.

Of those who took the survey, 42% have been coming to BBC less than 5 years. That is good news, it means we are growing! It means that sometimes I can use an illustration in a message from more than 5 years ago, because only about half of you have heard it. It also means that we need to focus on the basics, moving people towards maturity.

We have a wonderful church. God wants us to use our diversity to reach out to this diverse city that we have been placed in. We need to use our time, treasure and talents to reach out, but we always have to remember that ultimately it is God who brings the harvest. I remember in seminary hearing this line and it has stuck with me through the years. Our job is to go and sow. God's job is to make it grow.

Will Graham – story of speaking in Thunder Bay with Starfield and thinking it is a small crowd and writing it off during the message but then having a huge response.

The Russian war with Afghanistan began in 1979. Before that, the government allowed a small Christian church to service internationals who worked there. During that time a man named Len organized a musical team of young people to tour countries in the Middle East. With some trepidation, he also accepted an invitation to extend the trip to Afghanistan for a concert in downtown Kabul. Len made the teenagers write out exactly what they would say, subject to his approval. "This is a strict Muslim government," he warned them. "If you say the wrong thing, you could end up in prison and at the same time jeopardize every Christian who lives in this country. Memorize these words and don't you dare stray from them when you perform." The teenagers listened wide-eyed as he described the ominous consequence of a slight misstep...

The night of the official concert in Kabul, almost a thousand Afghans filled the hall and spilled outside the open doors to listen. All went well until one teenager on the team put down his guitar and started improvising: "I'd like to tell you about my best friend, a man named Jesus, and the difference he has made in my life." From the side of the stage, Len motioned wildly for him to stop, drawing his finger across his neck. Ignoring him, the teenager proceeded to give a detailed account of how God had transformed his life. "I was practically beside myself," Len told me. "I knew the consequences, and I sat with my head in my hands waiting for the sword to drop. Instead, the most amazing thing happened.

The Minister of Cultural Affairs for Afghanistan stood up and walked to the stage to respond. "We have seen many American young people come through this country,' he said. 'Most of them come for drugs, and most look like hippies. We have not seen nor heard from young people like you before. God's love is a message my country needs. How thrilled I am to hear you! You are a prototype for the youth of Afghanistan to follow in the future. I would like to invite you to expand your tour so that you visit every college and faculty and also give this same message on Kabul Radio. I will make it happen."

Len was dumbfounded. That night he gathered the musical group together. "Did you hear what the man said? We're changing our tickets, of course, to lengthen our visit. And he wants you to give this same message--you'd better not change a word!" Over the next few days, the musical team held other performances. After each event Afghan young people crowded around with questions. Tell me more about this Jesus -- we know of him through the Qur'an. You speak of a personal relationship with God. Can you describe it? How does your faith change you? Some asked to pray with the teenagers. Nothing like it had ever happened in Afghanistan.

On the last day, after a triumphant tour, the teenagers met J. Christy Wilson, a revered figure in Afghanistan. Born of missionary parents in Iran, he had spent 22 years in Afghanistan. Wilson drove the teenagers to an unusual tourist site, the only cemetery in Afghanistan where "infidels" could be buried. He walked to the first, ancient gravestone, pitted with age. "This man worked here 30 years and translated the Bible into the Afghan language," he said. "Not a single convert. And in this grave next to him lies the man who replaced him, along with his children who died here. He toiled for 25 years and baptized the first Afghan Christian." As they strolled among the gravestones, he recounted the stories of early missionaries and their fates. At the end of the row he stopped, turned, and looked the teenagers straight in the eye. "For 30 years, one man moved rocks. That's all he did, move rocks. Then came his replacement, who did nothing but dig furrows. There came another who planted seeds, and another who watered. And now you kids -- you kids -- are bringing in the harvest."

"It was one of the great moments of my life," Len recalls. "I watched their faces as it suddenly dawned on these exuberant American teenagers that the amazing spiritual awakening they had witnessed was but the last step in a long line of faithful service stretching back over many decades."

God has given us a job to do. He has given us a message to bring. We need to be diligent.

In Oct of 1963 President John F Kennedy said, "Almost all presidents leave office feeling that their work is unfinished. I have a lot to do, and so little time to do it." He had no idea how little time he really had left. Just a few weeks later he was assassinated. As followers of Jesus Christ, we have much work to do and little time to do it. We must give ourselves to it. The times demand urgent action. Remember, the gospel is only good news if it arrives in time.