

THE CHURCH'S RESPONSIBILITY TO MISSIONARIES

GOLDEN TEXT

“Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers”. (Galatians 6:10).

USEFUL PRACTICE

It is the role of the Church to take full responsibility for the care of its missionaries.

SCRIPTURE READING

1 Corinthians 9:9-14

9 For it is written in the Law of Moses: “Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain.” Is it about oxen that God is concerned?

10 Surely he says this for us, doesn't he? Yes, this was written for us, because whoever plows and threshes should be able to do so in the hope of sharing in the harvest.

11 If we have sown spiritual seed among you, is it too much if we reap a material harvest from you?

12 If others have this right of support from you, shouldn't we have it all the more? But we did not use this right. On the contrary, we put up with anything rather than hinder the gospel of Christ.

13 Don't you know that those who serve in the temple get their food from the temple, and that those who serve at the altar share in what is offered on the altar?

14 In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

- I) To explain** the Church's support system for missionaries;
- II) To talk about** full-time care for missionaries;
- III) To list** practical ways to commit to helping missionaries.

INTRODUCTION

One of the important duties of the Church is to take full care of missionaries, identifying, preparing, sending and caring for them as they finish their career. This care must also cover the missionaries' spouse and children, taking into account that everyone needs to adapt to a new cross-cultural reality so that the work may develop as closely as possible to plan. Therefore, in this lesson, we will study the responsibility of the local church towards the missionary and his family.

I- THE CHURCH AND THE SUPPORT SYSTEM FOR MISSIONARIES

1- The responsibility of the church. The missionary support system is a basic and ongoing responsibility of churches everywhere. In this sense, certain principles must remain clear regarding the support system for missionaries:

a) the church must be biblically aware that the missionary is a worker trained by the local church and, therefore, is entirely under its responsibility (Acts 11:19-26; Acts 13:1-5; 14:25-28; 16:1-8);

b) he is a worker guided by the pastor of the church and sent to carry out missionary work according to the vision that the Holy Spirit gives to the church (Acts 6:6; 1:24);

c) on the other hand, it is the missionary's duty to provide periodic reports on the development of the work in the field (Acts 15:4,12; 21:19);

d) the entire missionary support system must allow missionaries to use the

most of their time and energy in missions work.

2- The support system and the “work of faith”. All missionary work is “a work of faith,” from beginning to end. So, whatever the support system, missionaries must trust God and depend on the faithfulness of his people. Without faith, prayer and sacrifice missionary work will fail. Thus, both missionaries and those who support them must be people of faith, as they obey Jesus' command (“Go and make disciples”), there is growth and expansion of God's work (Acts 2.42-46).

3- The objective of missions. It is good to remember that the objective of missions is for Christ to be known and worshiped everywhere. Those who do missionary work in a way that honors Christ will have all their needs met (Phil. 4:19). It is wonderful to know that in missionary work, first and foremost, the presence of Jesus is with us. It is no coincidence that the Holy Spirit works through our lives to make the name of Jesus reach places and hearts that do not know him. Therefore, let there be all the support and planning in the local church so that the name of Jesus is known everywhere through missionary work!

II- FULL-TIME CARE FOR MISSIONARIES

1- full-time care. The local church has a more comprehensive responsibility, looking after those who are working in the missionary field. In this case, the missionary needs to be fully cared for by the church. By full-time care we mean the entire sphere of the missionary's life, that is, not only in the financial area, but also in the spiritual, emotional, physical and social area, pastoral support while he is in the field, with love and respect, so that he can overcome the internal and external difficulties that arise during the ministry (Acts 17:14, 15). Throughout the New Testament, we see the constant concern of the churches with the missionaries who preached the Gospel in distant places (Phil. 1:3-11). Therefore, this care also concerns planning visits to missionaries in the field.

2- An agenda regarding the return of the missionary. We can also see how the churches received the apostles in a joyful and honorable way (Acts 20:1-6). In this aspect, the local church must help organize the missionary's agenda during his coming back on vacation, with regard to visits, consultations or medical and dental treatments, leisure and rest periods, as well as administrative activities. Therefore, embracing missionaries and their families is part of the missionaries' full-time care.

III- PRACTICAL WAYS TO COMMIT TO HELPING MISSIONARIES

1- Sharing with those in need. Everything in God's work involves sharing.

We find this principle in the Bible, when we read, “Share with the Lord’s people who are in need.” (Rom. 12:13). In this sense, the local church must commit to regularly sharing with missionaries in their missionary needs and commitments. This sharing can be done during regular worship or via email, telephone, text messages, etc. The idea is for the local church to become aware of how the church's missionary agenda is developed, as well as to receive first-hand news about the main activities in the missionary field.

2- Giving to meet needs. Life on the mission field can be challenging, exhausting, and difficult. In the midst of stress and struggles, many missionaries often feel disconnected and forgotten by the church that sends them, especially when faced with shortages in the field. In this sense, it is important that the local church may give missionaries the opportunity to share these needs and, thus, the church may feel called on to help by giving, as the church in Corinth was called on to do (1 Cor. 8:1-7).

3- Praying and fasting for the cause. We have already studied the importance of prayer in the missionary cause. However, what we want to reinforce here is the need for prayer combined with fasting as a practical way for the local church to commit to missionaries. In this sense, it is very important for leaders of local churches to call on God's people to pray and fast for missionaries in the field. Note that prayer and fasting were essential to the sending of Paul and Barnabas to the mission field (Acts 13:1-3). Furthermore, in addition to collective calls, individual commitment to prayer and fasting is very important. Making this engagement reach missionaries through instant messaging applications is a very encouraging example of commitment, support and aid for the missionary and his family.

CONCLUSION

In this lesson, we were encouraged to learn about the needs of missionaries. You and your family can make a big difference in their lives and those of their respective families. If our heart is set on missions, our knees will be bent, our testimony will reach people and our finances will be invested in what is eternal (Matt. 6:19-21). Therefore, God wants his people to commit themselves and take responsibility for the missionaries who serve in the mission field. There are blessings without measure.