

## How to get from “Here” to “There”

### I. Introduction

By now, some of you are probably wondering how one would go about getting to the mission field. That is the purpose of this class – to give you some information on several programs offered by the International Mission Board and tell you how to begin getting involved.

### II. The Need

Use the transparency of the IMB map of the world. An interesting way to do this is to show only the Western Hemisphere (North and South America) at first. Let the class try to figure out what the different colors mean. Read the following IMB definitions, which can be found in “The Unfinished Task, 1999” –

Green – **Evangelized People** -- The majority have heard the gospel with such cultural and personal relevance that it results in sufficient understanding to accept Christ by faith as a believer (disciple) or to reject Him.

Yellow – **Unevangelized People** – The majority have never heard the gospel with such cultural and personal relevance that it results in sufficient understanding to accept Christ by faith as a believer (disciple) or to reject him.

Red – **Unreached, Last Frontier People** – An unreached people for which the majority have little or no access to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

There is very little red area in the Western Hemisphere. We’re doing pretty well. Now reveal the rest of the map. The result among the class members will probably range from stunned silence to a few audible responses.

**The Last Frontier is sometimes also called the “10/40 Window,” because much of it falls between 10 degrees and 40 degrees north latitude. 2,161 ethnic and linguistic groups are there. That is 17 percent of the world’s people groups making up 28 percent of the world’s population, or 1.7 billion people.**

### III. Am I Called

One of the greatest difficulty for Christians thinking about any sort of “special” service is the issue of calling. How do we know if we are “called” by God to serve in a special ministry? And what does it even mean to say that we are “called?” Well,

we could make this the sole subject of this class and still only scratch the surface of what has been said on this topic.

But let me make just a few observations that may be helpful.

1. All Christians are “called” to aid in the spread of Christ’s kingdom
    - a. Matt. 28:18
    - b. Biblical calls require no sense of calling, just the sense to read and obey God’s Word.
    - c. Read J.I Packers definition of “Missions” in Concise Theology p. 223. (First point only.)
  
  2. Special vocational leading or “callings” are more difficult to understand.
    - a. Internal – sense of desire
      - i. Immediate...for the action itself, as well as the good.
      - ii. Distant...for the good flowing from the action.
      - iii. EX. Wanting God to be glorified in all the earth, though not really immediately enjoying foreign travel or cultures.
      - iv. Sense fruitfulness in a particular area.
      - v. God equips for what he intends his children to do.
  
    - b. External – confirmation of the rightness of your desire by those in spiritual authority over you.
      - i. Required for a Biblical calling in any general sense
      - ii. You may feel called, but if those around you don’t see it, the church is not confirming your call.
      - iii. Requires two things:
        1. Initiative – let folks know what you are thinking.
        2. Humility – to accept the wisdom of others around you.
- IV. Addressing a sense of call
1. Some are called generally to greater obedience to the missionary call. Not looking to move to a new culture, but how can you be more obedient.
    - a. Reach out to aliens in our land (non-Christians and non-Americans)
      1. First let me be clear, in the old testament “strangers” or in NT Greek “xenos” meaning “foreigners” is probably more analogous to non-Christians than immigrants, those who are strangers to the covenant, not strangers to Washington, DC, but there is still a Biblical principle regarding foreigners that we can work with.
      2. Mercy in the Old and New Testament was far and away first to the poor within the Covenant Community of the church. That is the vast, overwhelming and primary focus of all passages about helping the “poor”.

3. But there is some limited direct teaching, and a lot of implications, that point to helping those poor who were in poverty because of injustice or calamity (not really much about material support of those made poor by sinful choices or rebellion.) Note Luke 6:35-36.
4. Third to the alien or “sojourner” in the land.
  - a. In the OT these were classed with widows and orphans as defenseless. (Ex. 22:21 and Lev. 13:33-34.)
  - b. In the NT we are encourage to show hospitality to strangers. (Heb. 13:2 and 1 Timothy 5:10.)
  - c. General principal of showing compassion to foreigners commended.
5. So...if you want to get more deeply involved in “missions”, but are not expecting to move to another culture, then as we talked about on the last week before I left for Central Asia, look for ways to engage with people from other cultures living here in Washington, DC.
  - a. Consider helping a recent immigrant to learn English. David Hill, a member of CHBC, works with English as a Second Language Programs, consider talking to him or to Karen Townsend who works in those ministries, too. Just transferring your normal knowledge of English is a valuable work of mercy you can perform to a non-English speaker.
  - b. Look into ways to help a recent immigrant get settled in DC. Volunteer to do so with a local University or better yet talk to Pamela Allen or Mark Sherid to get connected with a graduate student from another nations who’s new in DC. I’m sure there are lots of ways that your simple knowledge of how to deal with life in America could be great service to them.
  - c. Talk to Jason and Anna Townsend about ways to help some of the many recent immigrants from El Salvador that they know in the DC area.
  - d. These are just some examples of ways you can engage the world by engaging those from other cultures who have come from all over the world to live in DC.
  - e. Other ideas for ways to personally engage the world?
6. Discipline yourself to read about the world (internet, operation world) and pray for the work around the world.
7. Pray for the supported workers in the back of our directory.

8. Be a student of what others in CHBC are doing in missions. Work to keep abreast of short-term trips and activities of those who have gone out long term. Read monthly updates and be here on Sunday nights when those who have gone out return and give reports.
  9. Other ideas?
2. Called specially to live and work cross culturally
    - a. But what about those who do feel called to be involved in more full-time work.
    - b.
  3. Several types of missions –
    - a. Short-term missions. The IMB offers several short-term missions opportunities ranging from one week to four months. Many college students use their summer vacations to go on mission.
 

The purpose of a short-term mission is to be of assistance to more permanent missionaries. Don't expect to change the world in a week, or even in a summer. The missionary enterprise is a long, hard battle. Another use of short-term missions is to test out your abilities and desire to be on the mission field. How well do you adapt to another culture? Is this something that you could do for a longer period of time?
    - b. Medium-term missions. These are programs like Journeyman or International Service Corps that offer opportunities ranging from four months to two years. Use IMB material to go over the qualifications and some of the positions that will be filled by Journeymen and ISC.
    - c. Long-term/Career Missionaries. These are the backbone of the missionary endeavor. There is a long application process. Most of the people in the room are probably two years away from being on the field as a career missionary.

## V. Why we work with the International Mission Board

1. Their Theological Soundness
  - a. Growing and encouraging focus on World –A groups.
  - b. Encouraging focus on church planting.
  - c. Special relationship with the leadership of Central Asia region.
2. Our Financial Responsibility.

They will fund the missionaries we send. Other groups like Frontiers, Navigators, YWAM, etc. require the missionary to raise his own support. 86% of the money given to IMB goes overseas. 66% of the money is used for missionary support. See p15 of "The Unfinished Task, 1999."

CHBC does not have the resources to fully support all the people who have and may yet go out from here. But we do have the IMB that uses the resources of thousands of other churches, who may never send out any of their own people, but who's gifts to support M work will support ours.

## VI. Process for how to Get There from Here

1. Realize that the church does the sending. Individual missionaries do not send themselves. Mission organizations do not send missionaries. You will not send yourself out from this church. The local church sends missionaries through missions organizations. And in order to do that, the church must know you and must have had an opportunity to assess your fruitfulness, wisdom, consistency and abilities.
2. Talk to the elders, one or more. Their guidance will be useful to you as you are deciding whether to go overseas as a missionary. We want to be a part of helping members think about these issues.

Talk to one of the elders *early*. The process for being a missionary, even short-term, is rather long. The sooner you begin exploring your desire to be a missionary, the sooner you will be on the field. You are not wasting our time if you come to us BEFORE you are sure...that's what we WANT you to do. We want the church to be a huge part of helping you get SURE about what you should or shouldn't do.

3. Be prepared for a time of training and opportunities and encouragement here at CHBC. Consider the internship program. Also, elders are working on one-on-one training programs for women in the church thinking of working overseas. In most cases it will be about a year from the time someone approaches the elders before we are ready to recommend them for overseas service.
4. Consider going on a short-term trip as a way to learn more about certain areas of the world and about your ability to function in those new cultures. And again, talk to the elders and other mature believers at CHBC early. Let them help you think through the wisdom and strategy of your short term ideas.

5. Pray and talk with others about your ideas regularly. Again, don't wait until you have made up your mind before talking with others. That will rob you of the value of their council at the time when you need it most.
  
- VII. Getting from here to there is a long process. Be ready to think ahead, take council from others and look for ways to grow now, through discipling, leadership and service at CHBC.
  
- VIII. And finally remember, in the end it is not about you and what you do or don't do, not finally. It is finally about God's passion to spread a knowledge of his glory to all nations for the joy of all peoples. Keep your mind fixed on the final goal of missions...the glory and praise of God for his mercy in Christ.

Missions is not finally about you or me, though our obedience is incredibly important for us, finally it is about Christ receiving the reward for his suffering. What a privilege that God has given us to participate in that great, eternal work.