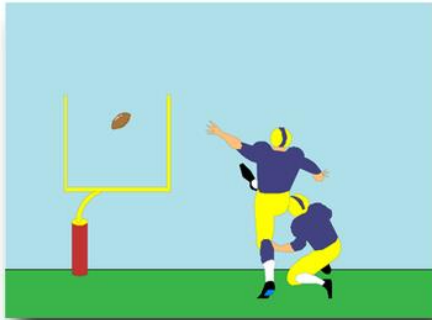


The Goal



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Both the universal church and the local church are God's indispensable instruments for completing the Great Commission. [Slide #1 of the PowerPoint] We will study the following aspects of the church in relation to world missions:

- The biblical nature of the church in regard to God's mission,
- the church as the goal of missions,
- the church as the base for missions,
- new structures inside and outside the local church which help it with its missionary task,
- a new orientation for the church, and
- a tool for evaluating the missionary participation of a church.

The theme "The Local Church and Missions," is very broad by definition, because all the other themes in *Your Church* deal in some way with the church. The Bible obviously talks about the church; the definitions of reached and unreached ethnic groups depend on a viable church, and the history of missions narrates the intentional growth of the church. Prayer for missions occurs in the life of the church; the finances come from the church; the missions committee is a new structure in the church, and the Adopt-A-People program orients the missions ministry of the church.

For this reason, our study of the church in this chapter will be very basic. In another chapter we will study in greater detail the church's missionary work through the new missions committee.



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I. The Biblical Nature of the Church [2]

For our study of the church, we will go to Matthew 16 where Jesus mentioned the word *church* for the first time. In this passage Jesus and his disciples were traveling through a pagan land; they were not in the security of Judea or Jerusalem, the cradle of Judaism. This in itself speaks strongly about the missionary nature of the church. Jesus said in Matthew 16:18, "And on this rock I will build my **church**, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it."

In ancient times, a city defended itself with high walls and a large gate in the wall. If the gate was broken down, the city was defenseless, and the attacking army could invade the city. The gate is an instrument of defense, and the clear teaching here is that the church by its very nature is in a position of attack against Satan's territory. [3] The first time Jesus mentioned the church, he assigned it a mission: tear down the gates of hell.

Satan's last fortress is to keep the 7,000 ethnic groups chained in complete darkness! Many have the idea that the church exists only to protect, pamper, and care for the sheep while Satan is on the attack. This incorrect paradigm gives rise to a self-centered church which does not do its part in fulfilling the Great Commission. According to Jesus, the church should be on the attack and Satan's territory should be on the defensive.

It is time to play... All Aboard the Plane!

What are all the things you can do aboard a plane or a bus?



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[4] Another formative event that defines the church was when Jesus was taken up to heaven, ending his time on earth in a physical body. There began a new era in which the Holy Spirit would be operating through Christ's body, the church. The very moment that marked the beginning of the church, Jesus gave us the Great Commission.

As we saw in our study of the Old Testament, God had two purposes in choosing the people of Israel, the pastoral purpose and the missionary purpose. Just like Israel, it is too easy for the church to forget its missionary purpose. As Peter said, "But you are a chosen people, **a royal priesthood**, a holy nation... that you may declare the praises of him..." (1 Pet. 2:9).

Here is a fun activity [5] to show how easily the church can forget its biblical nature and missionary purpose. Start the game by saying, "Planes and buses are becoming more and more comfortable and luxurious. Let us brainstorm. What are all the things you can do aboard a plane or a bus?"

They will respond with things like: "Read, sleep, watch movies, eat, go to the bathroom, listen to music, use the internet" among other things. Let it be obvious that there is another answer you are waiting to hear, but that they cannot think of. What is interesting is that no one will say, "**Travel!**" That is precisely the point. It is too easy to forget the main purpose. In the same way, the church has many important activities, but it is easy to forget its main purpose - to break down the gates of hell and "make disciples of all nations."

II. The Church as the Goal of Missions [6]

In the "Definitions" chapter we learned the difference between a reached and an unreached ethnic group - the presence or absence of a viable church. There might be a thousand missionaries in an unreached ethnic group, doing a thousand valuable ministries, but nothing will last until a local church is established. The church is what is described in the Bible with the metaphor, *the body of Christ*. It is a living entity which, once established, grows and reproduces, so much so that missionaries have learned to plant not just one church but a church planting movement.

Church planting is the **goal** of the missionary task. Wherever Paul went on his journeys, he always established a church. This was so important that in his letters to Timothy and Titus he instructed them to establish leaders in the churches before leaving those fields.

We also see more profoundly in Revelation 22 that the church is the final goal of missions. The church, the bride of Christ, the New Jerusalem, descends from heaven to meet her groom. In this New Jerusalem, next to the river that flows from the throne of God, is the tree of life, whose leaves are "for the healing of the nations (ethnic groups)" (22:2). The vision of the church in heaven is the missions task completed, the nations healed. The goal of missions is the church, in both the present, strategic sense as well as in the future, eternal sense.

III. The Church as the Base for Missions [7]

Besides being the goal of missions, the church is the **base** for sending out missionaries. We see this clearly in the Antioch church of Acts 13 and in the missionary offering Paul receives from the church in Philippi. Paul requested economic support from the church in Rome (Romans 15:24) for his missionary trip to Spain. Although there are many organizations such as mission agencies and missionary training institutes, the church cannot neglect its privilege of sending and supporting missionaries. There are seven million churches in the world. Imagine the potential of this sleeping giant!

By now the participants have listened enthusiastically to all the themes in *Your Church*. They may have been impressed by the important role that the local church plays in missions. But they are probably feeling uneasy, thinking: “We agree, but **how** do we do it? It is hard enough for us to get organized to evangelize another neighborhood. How are we going to have any impact on the ends of the earth?” This is where another paradigm change is necessary, the creation of a **world-missions committee** in the local church. [8]

Sometimes all that is needed in a church to change things is a new attitude. However, to channel this newfound missions enthusiasm into concrete actions, we need to create a new structure. The missions committee is a select group of members of the local church which promotes the missions program of that church. We will study this new ministry in detail in the chapter “The Missions Committee in the Local Church.”

The missions undertaking is gigantic. Spiritual power comes from the prayers of the church. The financial support for the missionaries comes from the church. Missionary candidates are raised up through the church’s discipleship. The church is the base for missions.

IV. The Church and the Missions Community [9]

As the base for missions, the local church is a fundamental piece in a cooperating network of many mission organizations. These organizations help the local church or denomination in its missionary projects. A church that is just getting started in missions does not have to start from scratch nor reinvent the wheel.

We have already discussed briefly mission agencies and missionary training institutes on pages 39 and 40. The diagram on the following page shows how the missions community cooperates in an ideal situation. Note how this cooperating network starts with the members of the local church and ends with a new church in an unreached ethnic group. We will see other models of cooperation in the chapter about Missions Committees.

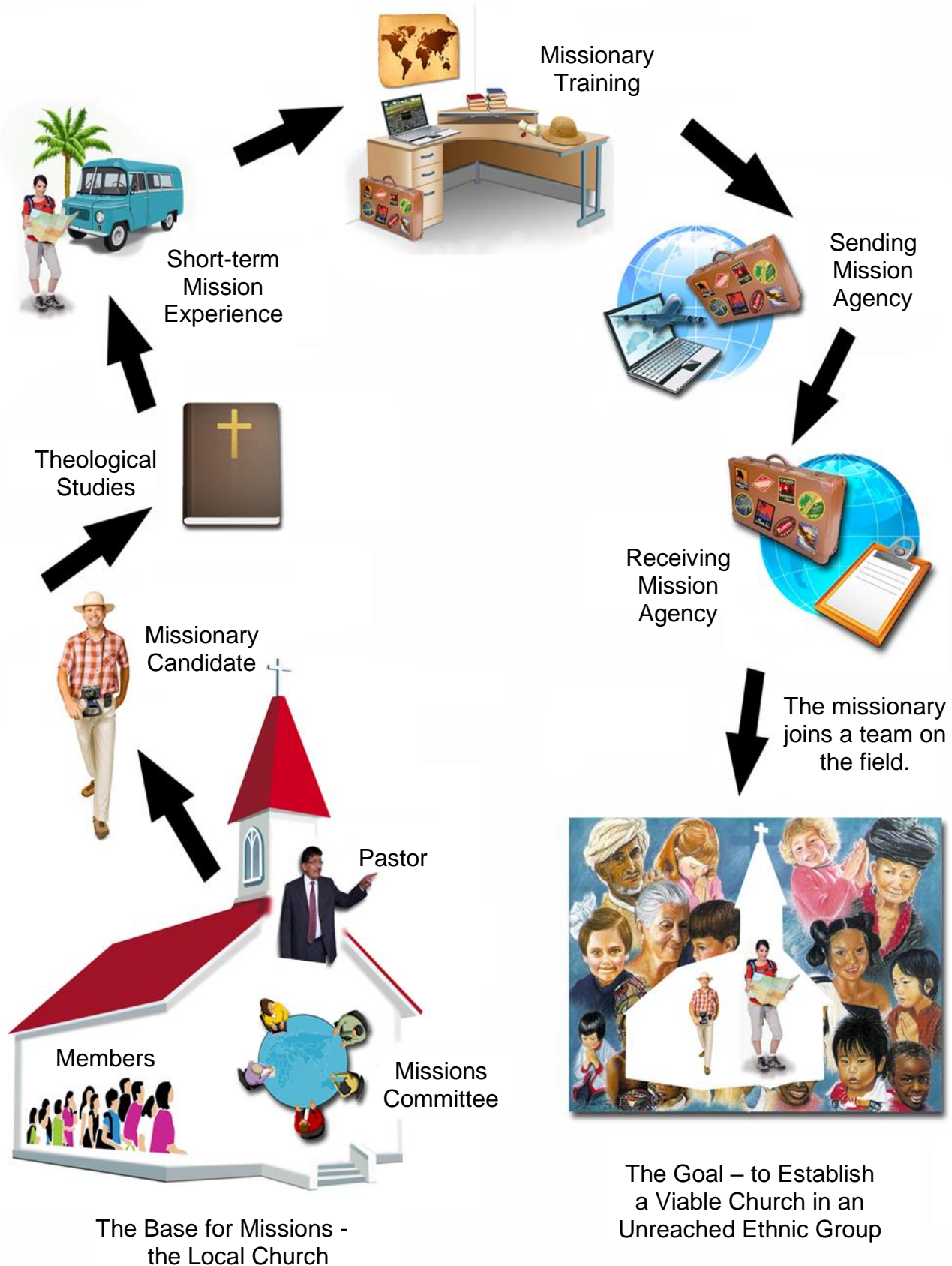
For more information about mission agencies, missionary training institutes, and short-term mission experiences, please visit the **COMIMEX website**,

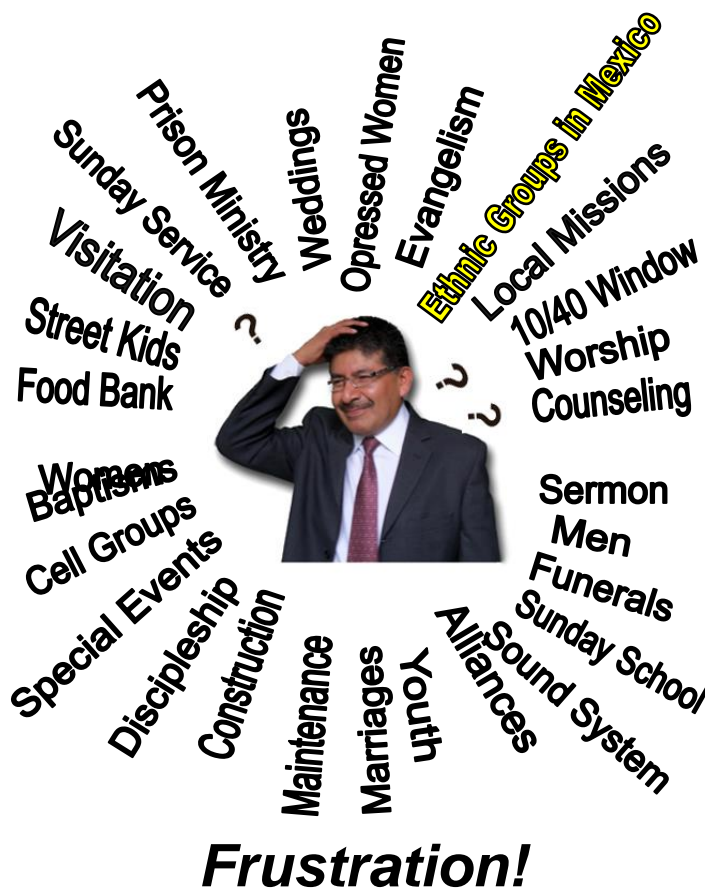
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The Missions Committee - a New Ministry in the Church





V. A New Orientation for the Church [10]

Despite the urgent need for forming the missions committee, we are not just looking to add another activity to the church, nor another monthly meeting. With this mentality, the pastor who already has too many obligations will only feel more pressured, as we see in the figure on the left. Since we can count 28 activities clamoring for the pastor's attention, the ethnic groups of the 10/40 Window cannot simply be just one more.

On the other hand, if the church recaptures its true nature and purpose [11], with the pastor leading the way, it will set its sights on Jerusalem, all of Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth, taking back Satan's territory. This is the biblical church.

This is not to abandon the traditional activities of the church, but rather give them a new purpose and direction. The pastors of churches with a missionary vision are in agreement: "When we focus on the ends of the earth, God pours out His anointing and blessings on the whole church." With a missions program in the church, the pastor's ministry has a global impact.

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A Survey [12] for Measuring the Missions Participation of a Church

The following questions are to help us evaluate the missionary participation of our churches. There are many churches in Mexico that are doing all these things and more, so we are not proposing an unrealistic ideal, but concrete examples of what is being done.

- As you walk into your church, do you see anything that communicates a cross-cultural missionary vision? (Maps, missionary verses, flags, or images of ethnic groups, etc.)
- As you sing *Here Am I, Send Me*, is there any understanding in your church that this implies being a missionary in another culture and with another language?
- Is there any way the needs of missionaries or unreached ethnic groups are communicated to all the members in your church? (Bulletin board, announcements, bulletin inserts, or copies of missionary prayer letters.)
- Is there any strategy to cover the missionaries or unreached ethnic groups in prayer?
- Is there a well-defined way in which missionary offerings are collected? (Annual offering, monthly faith promises, special projects, or a fixed percentage of the offerings.)
- Is your church supporting both economically and in prayer any missionary who is working in an unreached ethnic group among the indigenous groups of Mexico?
- Is your church supporting both economically and in prayer any missionary who is working in an unreached ethnic group among the Muslims, Hindus, or Buddhists in the 10/40 Window?
- Are there any missions activities on your church calendar? (Monthly missions service, annual missions conference, or missions moment in each service.)
- Is there an identified world missions committee working in your church?
- Is your church collaborating with any mission agency to channel missionary offerings and to care for your missionaries?
- If there are more than 1,000 evangelical churches for every unreached ethnic group, is your church in a strategic alliance with other churches to multiply the impact and effectiveness of your missionary efforts? (Denomination, movement, network, pastoral alliance)
- Have you discerned the Lord's will as to which of the 7,000 unreached ethnic groups of the world your church should adopt to reach with the gospel?
- Has your church defined its missions policy?
- Is the missions policy you discerned from the Lord communicated to the church?