

The Goal



One of the most difficult and stressful factors for **Latin** missionaries is finances. Since cross-cultural missions are new to many people, giving consistently and sacrificially is also going to be new. For this reason, the goals of this teaching are:

- To study the economic provision for God's servants in both the Old and New Testaments,
- to do a practical analysis of missions financing,
- to examine several models of missions fundraising, and
- to become generous, life-long supporters of missions.

We are getting to the end of the second day in these Missions Saturdays and there is a growing uneasiness in everyone's mind [Slide #1 of the PowerPoint], especially the pastor's: "How are we going to finance these missionaries that we have to send?"

Since we have proposed that cross-cultural missions are near to God's heart, and that the whole Bible is a missions document, we would expect the Bible to also have something to say about funding this great project. And it does! Let us study God's plan to abundantly provide for his servants, starting with the Old Testament.

I. God's Plan for Provision [2]

God established his people in 12 tribes. Genesis 49:28 says, "All these are the twelve tribes of Israel." Of the 12 tribes, God chose one to serve him, as we see in Deuteronomy 10, "At that time the Lord set apart the tribe of Levi to carry the ark of the covenant of the Lord, to stand before the Lord to minister and to pronounce blessings in his name, as they still do today."

God's Financial Plan

Of the 12 tribes of Israel, only 11 had lands. Let us say that each of these tribes harvested 100 measures of wheat. If each one tithed 10 measures of wheat, Levi's tribe would receive $11 \times 10 = 110$ measures. So, the tribe of Levi would receive a little bit more in produce, to compensate for not having their own lands.

The tribe God chose to serve him received no inheritance in the Promised Land; he had other financial plans for them. Numbers 18:20,21 says, "The Lord said to Aaron, 'You will have no inheritance in their land, nor will you have any share among them; I am your share and your inheritance among the Israelites. I give to the Levites all the tithes in Israel as their inheritance in return for the work they do while serving at the Tent of Meeting.'"

If eleven tribes tithe to one [3], that one will receive a bit more than the rest. God wanted to give them the first fruits, not the leftovers. Numbers 18:12 states, "I give you all the finest olive oil and all the finest new wine and grain they give the Lord as the first fruits of their harvest."



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II. Elijah and the Widow of Zarephath [4]

In 1 Kings 17:3-6 God miraculously provided for Elijah, sending ravens to feed him. Sometimes God's people think that all missionaries should survive like Elijah did! Let us reflect on the rest of the story to discover another of God's economic principles.

Verses 7-9 show that this special situation did not last long. From there God sent Elijah on a missionary journey to the pagan region of Sidon, promising that he would provide for him. When Elijah arrived in Zarephath he asked a widow for a piece of bread so he could eat first (verses 13 and 14), knowing that God would bless her for her obedience. And so it was. The principle of giving first to God's servants was one Elijah knew well and put into practice. The oil and flour did not run out! God provided miraculously for them when the widow took care of God's servant first. Would you like to have the same blessings as the widow had?

III. Where the Tithes Go [5]

At the end of the Old Testament God rebuked his people in Malachi 3:8,9 for committing a grave sin - robbing God. The sin can be either robbing by not giving the tithe, or disobedience in not using God's money correctly. The food that God wanted stored in his house was to be used for his servants who ministered in the temple. If God's people tithed, there would be sufficient funds for all the needs of the local church **and** to send many missionaries.

For those who think tithing was a law applicable only in the Old Testament, we have news:

- Jesus affirmed the tithe. Matthew 23:23 states, "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices - mint, dill and cummin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law - justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, **without neglecting the former.**"
- If you would rather not tithe, you can instead follow the example of the first Christians. Acts 2:44,45 says, "All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need."

IV. The Apostles in First Place [6]

God provided for the apostles. In the Old Testament, the Levites had responsibilities in the temple - the sacrifices, carrying the tabernacle, the music, etc. In the New Testament God's servants have other functions. Ephesians 4:11 teaches us, "It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers." Notice that Paul mentioned the apostles (the sent ones) first.

[7] He also mentioned the apostles first in 1 Corinthians 12:28, "And in the church God has appointed **first of all** apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues." The logic is very simple: To establish the church of Christ where it does not exist, **first** you have to send the "sent ones"! The apostles are first not only sequentially, but also in urgency.

Many believe that Paul supported himself by making tents, but this was the exception. [8] Paul, as a missionary, wrote a letter to the Philippians to thank them for their economic support, knowing as Elijah did that the primary beneficiaries would be the givers themselves (Philippians 4:10-19). We love to cite verse 19, not noticing that Paul made that promise to his readers after having received a missionary offering from them.

The Philippian church was not the only one to support Paul. He depended on the offerings of other churches, as he clearly states in 2 Corinthians 11:7-9 and 12:13. We already saw that Paul anticipated economic support from the church in Rome for his missionary journey to Spain.



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The following texts [9] were analyzed in detail in the chapter on "Missions in the New Testament" and they have to do with financing missions:

- Jesus received financial support from the women that followed him (page 77).
- In the parable of the shrewd manager Jesus challenges us to undertake ambitious projects with our money in order to gain converts (pages 77 and 78).
- The Philippians supported Paul on many occasions (see the above paragraph and page 81).
- The proposal to the Romans to finance Paul's missionary journey to Spain served as the historical occasion for the epistle (pages 80 and 81).

Here it is important to mention an erroneous paradigm we have in Mexico due to our proximity to the United States. [10] For us, if someone goes abroad it is to find a good job and send money back to Mexico! For the most part, it is illegal for our missionaries to find work in the countries of greatest spiritual need, so it is crucial that we support the missionaries with our offerings from Mexico.

V. An Analysis of Our Spending [11]

The biblical starting point for funding missionaries and all full-time servants is the tithe, but the New Testament exhorts us to go beyond the tithe. Many Christians think they do not have any money, that they are poor. Often the problem is not that that we do not have the money, it is the way we waste it! (The following analysis of our wasteful spending is also found in a convenient flyer on the CD and on the website.)

There just is not enough money!



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Mexico is the world's largest per capita consumer of soft drinks! Mexico recently surpassed the United States as the most obese country in the world! We are pretty good at eating junk food. Let us calculate how much the Christian church in Mexico spends on junk food with an activity called "One Hundred Christians Said." (This is based on a popular game show called "The Family Feud" in the United States and "One Hundred Mexicans Said" in Mexico.)

[12] Missionary candidates looking for financial support often hear from our churches the same answer as our friend on the left. Could it be true? Have we given all we can to send our missionaries to the 7,000 ethnic groups in the world who are still waiting to hear the name of Jesus? Let us start by analyzing our missions budget.

[13] The evangelical church in Mexico is currently supporting about 400 missionaries. We should praise God for this! If each missionary receives approximately \$15,000 pesos a month (about US\$750) in support, the total of missionary offerings are:

\$15,000

x 400

\$6,000,000 pesos every month!

(That is about US\$300,000 a month!)

That is a lot of money!



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Sure, that is a lot of money, and many are giving sacrificially, but now [14] it is time to play...

One Hundred Christians Said...!!

We asked 100 Christians in Mexico the following question:

How much money does a Christian in Mexico spend on junk food every week?



Population of Mexico:
100,000,000 people

Percentage of Christians in Mexico:
About 7%

Christians in Mexico:
7,000,000

Amount spent every week on junk food by Mexican Christians:

7,000,000	
X	\$50 (US\$2.50)

\$350,000,000	

Every month:

\$1,400,000,000!
(US\$70,000,000)

By “junk food” we mean soft drinks, chips, packaged sugary pastries, gum, ice cream, and candy. We are not talking here about the famous “vitamin T” (tacos, tamales, tortas, and tostadas) nor the “gringo invasion” (hot dogs, hamburgers, French fries, and pizza)!

After interviewing thousands of Christians (not just 100!), we took an average, and reduced it by more than half to be on the conservative side. One hundred Christians said: “50 pesos a week!” (That is about US\$2.50.) So, we will work with \$2.50 dollars per Christian per week. [15] You can see the calculations on the left.

Seventy Million dollars a month!!

That is over 230 times more than the Mexican church is currently giving to cross-cultural missions! God asks us in Isaiah 58:5, “Is this the kind of fast I have chosen?”



To unleash the economic potential of the church we need to achieve this dynamic: **Each one making a small, daily sacrifice!** In southern India the Christian women set aside a handful of rice each day as they prepare their meals. Every week they get together in cell groups to pray for their missionaries. At the meeting, they collect all the rice and one of them sells it in the market. In this way, hundreds of these prayer cell groups are supporting, with the money from the sale of the rice, an army of missionaries in northern India where there is little gospel presence.

Selling unpackaged rice in an informal market would not work in a world of supermarkets, but we can achieve this same dynamic by controlling our spending on junk food.

We already saw on page 60 [18] that **only 0.5%** of the offerings of the evangelical church worldwide go to support missionaries working among the 7,000 unreached ethnic groups. There is a gold mine waiting to be tapped to support cross-cultural missions.

VI. Models for Financing Missions [19]

There are various ways of collecting and dispersing offerings for missions. Each church should determine which model best suits the policies of their church or denomination. Several different models can be implemented simultaneously in the church, as long as the leaders are aware of them.

A. Where the mission offerings go - There are three models for sending money to the missionaries:



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- Some churches send their offerings through their **denomination**. The best example of this model is the Assemblies of God.
- The missions committee of a **local church** can collect the money from its members and deposit it directly into the account of the independent mission agency.
- **Individuals** can deposit their offerings directly in the missionaries' accounts or send them to the mission agency to support the missionaries they know personally. This is a good way to get started if your church shows no interest in supporting missionaries.

B. Collecting the offerings [20] - There are various methods within the local church:



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- A church can designate a **fixed percentage** of its tithes and offerings for missions.
- The **Faith Promise** is a promise each member makes to God to give a specific amount each month to missions, in addition to their tithes.
- Some churches collect a **single offering** during their annual missions conference.
- You can also have **special projects** such as bake sales, recycling, car washes, etc. to raise money for missions.

Reports are coming in from all parts of Mexico about many creative ways to fund missionaries. A widow in Puebla started gathering plastic bottles, and now all the neighbors on her street bring her their bottles which she sells for recycling. In San Cristobal de las Casas they designed a label for a soda bottle that says, "Refresh your missionary!" (*Refresh* and *soda* are the same word in Mexican Spanish.) They give up a soda once in a while and put the money saved in the bottle for their missionaries. In Tuxtla-Gutierrez they started a program called PPP - "A Peso Per Person per week.."

[21] Paul received a missionary offering from the Philippian church. He knew that God is faithful to those who are faithful to missions, especially in the area of finances. Note the promise Paul makes in Philippians 4:19. We often cite this verse without recognizing its missionary context, making it into a universal promise. Paul would say, "Since you gave to the cause of cross-cultural missions... my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus."