

40 Day Devotional Training Manual

Preparing for Volunteer Missions in Appalachia



Prepared by Bill Barker, Director

Appalachian Regional Ministry

Edited by Volunteers

Appalachian Regional Ministry

Appalachian Regional Ministry is a Partnership Ministry of the North American Mission Board (NAMB), the Woman's Missionary Union, and eleven Southern Baptist State Conventions within the Appalachian Region. The Director, Bill Barker, is an appointed NAMB missionary. He and his wife Arlene are featured in the 2007 North American Missions Emphasis for the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering on Day 1 of the Week of Prayer and in the Adult Mission Study.

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Appalachian Regional Ministry (ARM) is an intentional missions response to the spiritual and physical needs of persons living in the Appalachian region to mobilize Southern Baptists and their resources to provide ministries, to evangelize the lost, to assist existing churches and to start new churches in the multi-state region of Appalachia.

Mission leaders of the ARM region have identified compelling needs that exist among the people of the region and for the future development of Southern Baptist work.

- New work starts
- Large unchurched population
- Struggling churches
- Generational poverty
- Pervasive secularism
- Diverse population
- Development of resort and leisure ministry

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the *New King James Version*.

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The Book of Acts:

A Training Manual for Twenty-First Century Christians

The Book of Acts is not an ancient book of the past, filled with stories of yesteryear; instead, it is a fascinating record of God at work and the advancement of His kingdom. The Book of Acts is a “training manual” for modern Christians, a contemporary guidebook for how the Christian faith most naturally speaks across cultures and around the world. In preparation for your mission trip to Appalachia, let me encourage you to repeatedly read Acts, not as some relic of the past, but as the living Word of God that will speak to you today. Seeing what worked so well almost 2,000 years ago will directly apply to your service to God today and can provide a welcome power boost to your Christian life. A serious study of Acts will bring new intimacy with the Heavenly Father and new joy in doing His will.

Suggestions for reading Acts

The book of Acts contains 28 chapters making it easy to assimilate into daily Bible reading. For example if you read

- 1 chapter a day, you will read through Acts once a month.
- 2 chapters a day, you will read through Acts twice a month.
- 4 chapters a day, you will read through Acts once a week.

A study of the Bible involves reading it with pen and paper in hand. Each time you read through Acts look for key words, phrases, or ideas. Mark them in your Bible and note them on paper. Like a **sociologist** and **anthropologist** look for the cultural issues. Like a **missiologist**, observe how the Gospel was carried to the ends of the earth. Like a **church planter**, examine how Paul started and developed new works. Like a **theologian** scan for key words and explore their usage. Like an **evangelist** check for the methods used to declare the good news of Jesus and the results. Like a **pastor**, discover the process God used to mature His church and move it into ministry and missions. Finally, like a **child**, come asking the Holy Spirit to teach you the “truth” of God’s Word (John 16:13).

Ideas to get you started

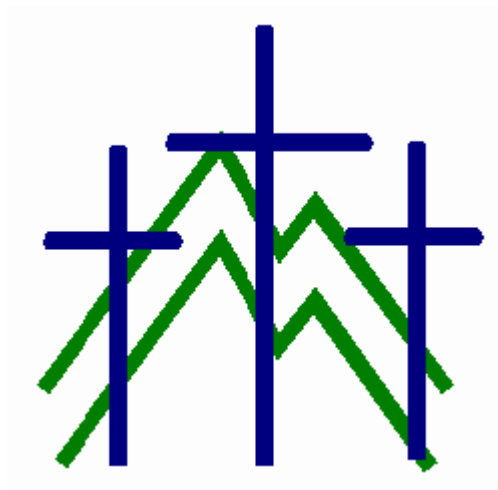
1. Look for key words or phrases – for example Luke’s use of the word “all,” believe, prayer, the expressions used to identify the church, the various names used to refer to Jesus, the Holy Spirit, to name just a few. Circle or highlight each word or phrase.
2. Acts is a great book on cross culture evangelism, mark each occasion and note how the Gospel is taken across culture barriers.
3. Identify the various types of ministry taking place in Acts – i.e. church starts, assisting the widows, relief for the poor, a clothing closet, etc.

4. Identify the different ways the Gospel is shared, the way Paul used his personal testimony to share his faith and reflect on how you can share your personal story of coming to faith in Christ.

In the weeks ahead, as you get ready for your mission trip to Appalachia, spend time in prayer daily and in studying the Word of God. It is my prayer for you that God will use these daily devotional thoughts to spiritually prepare you for the wonderful missions opportunities you will soon experience. Thank you for joining me in reaching my people for Christ.

Bill Barker
Director of Appalachian Regional Ministry

*“Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for (my people)
is that they may be saved” (Romans 10:1).*





Day 1

Missions Is Contagious

“The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which He was taken up, after He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen” (Acts 1:1-2).

You are about to embark on a journey that could change the direction of your life. The writer of the Book of Acts was a Gentile medical doctor and historian named Luke, who set out to research the life of Christ for a man named Theophilus, a Gentile convert (Luke 1:1-4; Acts 1:1-2). As the early church moved from being mission minded to being mission active, Luke found himself going with the church on mission.

This change is first seen in Acts 16:10 where Luke joined with Paul at Philippi and then stayed there until Paul returned from Jerusalem. The emphasis in Acts moves from “they” and “he” to “we.” Luke, in researching the life of Christ and the early church growth movement, finds himself moving from doctrine to duty, from going to church to doing church, from researching missions to being on mission.

As you and your team prepare for your mission trip, be forewarned that a mission trip to Appalachia is contagious. It is something more than the beautiful mountains and clear flowing streams; it is something more than the friendly people and smiling children; and, it is something more than the vast unreached cities, small towns, and rural communities in Appalachia. It is the act of obedience to Christ who has called us to be on mission for Him, and that is contagious.

In the Great Commission Jesus commanded every believer to witness (Matthew 28:16-20; Acts 1:8) at home, to our neighbors, to the next city and state – in fact the Great Commission is all-inclusive. We are to witness to everyone, and when we do, whether it is in a Backyard Bible Club, painting a house or church, driving nails while building a new church, or distributing a box of food to a needy family. We are witnessing and that is contagious.

The Watsons found missions to be contagious. They were a happy Christian family living in South Carolina. That was until the call from their pastor explaining that the church was preparing to go to West Virginia to help build a new church building and they needed an electrician. Mike, who was an electrician, testifies that until that moment they were so content with life that it did not take as much religion for them as most Christians; an occasional Sunday morning worship fix was adequate. Reluctantly Mike and Phyllis agreed to go and help with the mission project. Something happened to the Watsons during that week; they caught a “bug” and found that they could not shake it. Returning home, they discovered that occasional church no longer filled the void in their life. Soon they were attending every available activity at church and talking about

the next mission trip. Today, after serving several years as a pastor in West Virginia, Mike is a North American Mission Board (NAMB) appointed missionary serving as the Director of Missions for the Upper Ohio Valley Baptist Association in the northern panhandle of West Virginia.

The Watsons story is repeated many times across Appalachia, as well as across the mission fields in our world. Mission's is contagious. There is something that happens as Christians, in obedience to Christ, move out into the mission field and begin to serve with the unique gifts God has given them – whether it is to teach, do drama, or use their hands in servant evangelism. Something happens when we are part of a team that has the joy of seeing a lost man or woman, a lost teenager, or a lost boy or girl come to faith in Christ. Something happens when we repair the home of a widow on a fixed income and she, with tears streaming down her face, gives praise to God for answered prayer. Something happens when you paint the face of a child at a block party and hand them a back-to-school pack and that child says, “Thank you.” Yes, something happens inside you that will forever change your life. Mission's is contagious!

Today, as you pray, ask the Father to use you and your team this year in a special way. If you are brave and daring, ask the Heavenly Father to let you catch the “mission fever.” Isaiah caught it.

To learn more about how Isaiah caught the contagious missions fever read Isaiah chapter 6.



Day 2

The Kingdom of God

“To whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God” (Acts 1:3, NKJV).

Preparing to go on a mission trip can be as exciting as the actual trip itself. First, there is the discovery stage. Here you sense God is calling you to be on mission for Him in a particular location. Then you (or your church) begin to gather information about the mission’s project and the people you will be working with. Telephone calls are made, emails exchanged, a visit made to the location of the receiving church, information is exchanged, and the discovery stage soon gives way to the preparation stage.

As you move into the preparation stage, a sense of excitement grips you and your team. More and more people get involved. Materials are gathered, team members recruited, money raised, and the whole church is involved through prayer and offering words of encouragement. It is in this process of preparation that you begin your journey through the Book of Acts, preparing yourself spiritually, for the “mission” God has called you to do. Your mission is about the kingdom of God.

The Book of Acts starts and ends with the Kingdom of God. It opens with a description of the ministry of Jesus during the forty days between His resurrection and His ascension to Heaven as He talked to His apostles *“of things concerning the kingdom of God”* (1:3). At the end of Acts, we find the apostle Paul under house arrest in Rome, receiving visitors and preaching to them with urgency the Kingdom of God (28:31). In fact, the Kingdom of God is referred to eight times in Acts.

What is the Kingdom of God? Peter Wagner gives an excellent definition in his book, Acts of the Holy Spirit. “The kingdom of God is present, first and foremost, wherever Jesus Christ is acknowledged and served as King. It is not a geopolitical territory with recognized boundaries. It could not join the United Nations. It is a kingdom not of this world but nevertheless in this world. It is essentially a spiritual kingdom; but it also has tangible, visible manifestations.”

He continues, “In another sense, the Kingdom of God is future as well as present. There will be a day when Jesus *“delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death”* (1 Corinthians 15:24-26). As long as death is with us,

the *future* Kingdom has not yet arrived.¹ Until that day, we live in a world where God has called us to advance His Kingdom by proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ.

Whether you will be driving nails in a new church building, going door to door surveying a community, teaching a Bible class, repairing a home, or passing out food boxes, you are on mission advancing the Kingdom of God. Your mission trip is all about kingdom business. You will be pointing men and women, teenagers, boys and girls to Jesus, who offers them a life better than they ever dreamed of, abundant life (John 10:10). However, keep in mind, as you advance the Kingdom of God, you will be invading Satan's kingdom. Every time a lost person is saved, every time you become salt and light, you extend the Kingdom of God. Therefore, during this time of preparation be alert to Satan's tactics to keep you from invading his kingdom (2 Corinthians 4:4; Ephesians 2:2; 1 John 5:19).

The weapons to conduct this spiritual warfare are spiritual, not carnal. In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus taught His disciples to pray daily, "*Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven*" (Matthew 6:10). Today and everyday in the weeks ahead, let me encourage you to make this your daily prayer.

¹ Wagner, C. Peter, The Acts of the Holy Spirit. (Ventura, CA, Regal Books, 2000), p.18.

 **Day 3****You are a Missionary!**

“You shall be witnesses to Me ... (you will tell everyone, everywhere about Me)” (Acts 1:8)

With tears streaming unashamedly down his cheeks, a middle-aged man came up to me at the end of a presentation on Appalachian Regional Ministry (ARM). That evening, in a middle Tennessee church, I had placed a strong emphasis on the importance of building construction and home repair projects while doing missions in Appalachia.

I had stated that each man, woman, and teenager who worked in construction or home repair project was a witness and their witnessing role was just as important as the preacher who preached, the volunteer who taught a Backyard Bible Club, or the door-to-door surveyor who witnessed and invited the community to Christ and extended an invitation to attend the local Southern Baptist church. The uniqueness of missions is that God takes our abilities, talents, and spiritual gifts and uses them to His glory. I concluded by challenging the congregation to take their skills and offer them to God to be used as a witness.

With an obvious speech impediment, the man explained to me that nine years earlier he had felt God calling him to the ministry, yet with his speech impediment he had wondered how he could ever be a witness for Christ. That evening it had become clear, God had shown him how he could be an effective witness. He went on to explain that he was a professional house painter and that evening he saw the value of his witness with a paintbrush. He could do servant evangelism. He could be a witness.

A church from Asheville, North Carolina had taken on the task of repairing a church building in North Georgia. The church was in a growing community, but lacked the funds to repair their facilities. Now a sister church had come to help and while the men painted and repaired the building the women and youth had been busy with Backyard Bible Clubs and a community survey. Each evening revival services were held and the community responded by attending.

In the coalfields of Eastern Kentucky and West Virginia, Southern Baptists were arriving to repair the homes of flood victims, often in communities that had no Southern Baptist church. The homes belonged to families on fixed incomes. Leaking roofs were replaced, sagging porches repaired, damaged walls restored and the Good News of Jesus was shared and people were trusting Christ.

In West Virginia and Ohio, teams of builders were constructing new church buildings for small struggling congregations and for new church starts, enabling the gospel to be spread throughout Appalachia. Each new church building stands tall, offering a beacon of light and hope to a lost community.

Jesus said, “You,” meaning each one of us, “shall be witnesses to Me,” that is we shall tell His story to everyone. Witnessing for Christ by sharing the glorious salvation found in Him is the great task of the believer. This is understandable, for when clearly seen, no greater truth exists in the entire universe. Men and women can now live forever; they can now be delivered from sin, death, and hell.

It is interesting that Jesus did not use the word “witness” as a command. Rather, He implied that it is a natural result of the Holy Spirit within a person. Jesus says very simply that a Spirit-filled person has power and becomes a witness for Him throughout the world. This is important, for it makes power and witnessing trademarks of Christian believers. A genuine believer possesses both the Spirit and power in his life and becomes by nature, a witness for the Lord.

Today pray that God will open a door of opportunity for you to be a witness. Surrender your talents, skills, and abilities to Him and ask Him to use them as a witness. Looking ahead to the mission trip, ask God to provide opportunities for you to witness for Him through the power of His Holy Spirit. **Then pray for 13 million persons living in Appalachia who are lost and in desperate need of salvation.** God is calling you to be His witness in Appalachia.

 **Day 4**

Missions Begins At Home – Discovering Jerusalem

“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

In His final statement to the disciples, before His ascension back to Heaven, Jesus gave a simple strategy for spreading the gospel to the ends of the earth. The believer is to begin witnessing right where he is (Jerusalem) and move progressively outward (Judea and Samaria) until he or she is having a part in reaching the ends of the earth. That is, every believer is to see to it that Christ is well known throughout his or her home and community as well as being engaged in taking the gospel to the end of the earth. Thus, each believer is to go as far as they can personally go, give as sacrificially as they can for others to go, and to use and support every means they can to reach the world with the Gospel.

Today, twenty-one centuries later, many Christians are still trying to discover their Jerusalem. They give to the mission offerings, support the Cooperative Program Missions, and brag about the over 10,000 Southern Baptist career missionaries serving across North America and around the world. Yet, many have not discovered their own Jerusalem.

Today, the United States is the largest English speaking mission field in the world with over 210 million unchurched people. Many of our churches are in communities that are 70 to 80 percent unchurched; where 8 out of every 10 people we meet are lost and headed into eternity “without God and without hope in the world” (Ephesians 2:12). We must reach out with the gospel into metro cities like Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania where over 2 million people are unchurched; we must reach rural counties like those in West Virginia that are 85 to 90 percent unchurched; and we must reach the community where you live. One person lost without Christ, is one person too many.

Recently, as I went trout fishing for the first time, I made some interesting discoveries. First, it was a bit expensive. I had to purchase a rod and reel, lures, a fishing license, and several other items the clerk said I would need. Second, I had to go to where the fish were located. Strange as it may seem, the fish did not come up to where I parked my vehicle. Instead, I had to climb (slipping, sliding, and falling would better describe my descent) down a steep embankment to the river’s edge. Then swatting gnats and mosquitoes, I fished. For over an hour I fished and caught nothing. Then I noticed that the men who were catching the trout were wading out into the

“cold” mountain stream. So, climbing over the jagged, slippery rocks, I joined them. It wasn’t long until I had a nibble, then a strike, and finally I pulled in a very small trout.

Churches and individuals that experience effective mission trips are already active doing missions at home. They have discovered their Jerusalem and are effectively reaching it for Christ as they progressively move out into Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

One such church, First Baptist Church of Jonesboro, Georgia, is literally reaching around the world through volunteer missions. During a recent visit to the church, their Minister of Missions showed me their church facilities and explained that everything they did locally was targeted to reaching their community – the health clinic, the food pantry, the new family life center, and on and on the list went. It was no surprise when I later learned that FBC Jonesboro was one of the leading churches in Georgia in both evangelism and missions.

Have you discovered your Jerusalem? Are you doing all you can to reach those around you who are unchurched? It is my observation that churches and individuals who are reaching those around them are effective in reaching the unchurched in Appalachia. Why? God honors obedience. As you pray today, ask God to use you to reach your community for Christ. Remember, to catch fish you must go to where the fish are located. To reach the lost, you must go to where the lost live, play, and work.

 **Day 5**

God Uses All Kinds of People

“Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day’s journey. And when they had entered, they went up into the upper room where they were staying: Peter, James, John, and Andrew; Philip and Thomas; Bartholomew and Matthew; James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot; and Judas the son of James” (Acts 1:12-13).

God calls a wide assortment of people, people with different skills and traits, to accomplish His mission. Look at the disciples Jesus chose. There were at least three businessmen: Peter, James, and John. All three were fishermen with rather large businesses (Mark 1:19-20; Luke 5:2-3). One apostle was perhaps wealthy: Matthew, the tax collector. His house must have been an estate, for it was large enough to handle a huge crowd for a large feast (Luke 5:27-29). One was a political nationalist, an insurrectionist, Simon the Zealot. The Zealots were pledged to overthrow the Roman government, and to assassinate as many Roman officials and Jewish cohorts as possible (Luke 6:15; Acts 1:13). One was evidently deeply religious: Nathanael (John 1:48). As far as is known, there was no outstanding official or famous citizen among the apostles.

Their personalities were also a strange mixture. Matthew was a tax collector and ostracized by the Jewish community, was bound to be a hard-crusted, non-religious individual (Matthew 9:9). The fishermen James and John were of a rough breed with thundering personalities (Mark 3:17). Simon the Zealot was possessed with a fanatical, nationalistic spirit (Luke 6:15; Acts 1:13). Peter was apparently a fisherman with a loud, rough-hewn personality (Mark 14:71). The power of Christ to give purpose and meaning to life and to bring peace among men is clearly seen in His ability to bring so diverse a group together under one banner. An assorted group of men brought together with singleness of purpose, to follow Christ and be on mission with Him (Matthew 4:19; 9:9).

When we become involved in missions, personalities, culture, and ambitions become blended together for a common cause. Now, that does not mean that there will not be misunderstandings, but it does mean that the common goal of being on mission for Christ takes priority over personal agendas and personalities. When Christians become totally involved in His ministry, our needs and desires fade away. When we lose sight of our mission, conflict, confusion, and personality clashes become common.

I witnessed a mission team at work in Appalachia during a variety of mission projects. As I became acquainted with the team, I discovered there was a wide mixture of personalities and skills – a petroleum engineer, a building contractor, a retired military officer (he was their Peter),

a supervisor, a preacher, a nurse, two businessmen, a secretary, and several homemakers. Yet, with singleness of mission, they were working together. Their goal was to be one of twelve construction teams building an educational unit for a church in West Virginia. While the men worked on the building, the youth were busy conducting Backyard Bible Clubs throughout the community. By Friday, the team had accomplished its assigned task and celebrated with a “community fair” (Block Party). Over 300 people from the community came and joined in the fun. The pastor had assured them that if they had more than 30 people to come it would surprise him.

Recently, I revisited the church that had averaged less than 30 in Sunday School before twelve mission teams came and constructed an educational unit. The Sunday I visited, 77 people gathered to study the Bible, worship God and fellowship together.

Twelve teams, each consisting of an assortment of personalities and skills, bound together with singleness of purpose, and focused on being on mission for God, accomplished their goal. Missions have a way of doing that – bringing God’s people together.

Today, as you pray, ask the Father to enable your mission team to become so focused on Him and the mission project He has called you to do, that personalities and personal agendas fade away, and His cause becomes the only thing that really matters. That is what bound the early disciples together with one mind (Acts 1:14).



Day 6

The Secret to Missions

“But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said...” (Acts 2:14).

God honors obedience. When Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, stood and delivered his sermon on the Day of Pentecost, he launched New Testament missions. Three years earlier, he had heard the call to missions when Jesus said to him and his brother Andrew, *“Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men”* (Mark 1:17). The Bible says, *“They immediately left their nets and followed Him”* (Mark 1:18).

Two thousand years later the call to missions is still the same. God calls every Christians to be on mission for Him. The Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 1:8) was not a command given to just the eleven disciples who were with Jesus that day, it is a command for all believers, in every generation. At the heart of the Great Commission is this truth, *“Every Christian is a missionary and every sinner is a mission field.”*

This is a truth evangelical Christianity in America needs to rediscover. Today the United States is the third largest mission field in the world with over 210 million people lost without Christ. When you add in Canada, North America is the third largest mission field in the world with over 235 million people who are lost without Christ.

The twenty-first century Christian needs to rediscover their mission. At the heart of missions is the passion of God. This passion is discovered in John 3:16, *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”* Peter, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, clearly stated God’s passion, *“The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance”* (2 Peter 3:9). On the Day of Pentecost, Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, had discovered the secret of mission: availability and obedience.

Availability. When God calls us to be on mission for Him, He never asks us about our ability, but our availability. In fact, if we go on mission for Him and trust in our ability to accomplish the assigned task, we will fail. We are to go where He sends us, trusting Him to take our abilities and use them for His glory. On the Day of Pentecost, Peter, a fisherman, unschooled, speaking in a heavy Galilean accent, addressed a gathering crowd of thousands and declared to them the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He addressed Jews who had gathered in Jerusalem from many nations for the Jewish religious festivities – men and women from every lifestyle, scholars, businessmen, and religious leaders, to name just a few.

Like Peter, our availability should never be an issue when it comes to obeying Christ by being on mission. When you trusted Christ for your salvation, at that moment you surrendered and dedicated yourself to serve Jesus Christ throughout all your life – in everything and through everything, no matter the cost. To “call on the name of the *Lord*” means total surrender and dedication of all one is and has (Acts 2:21; Romans 10:13; 12:1-2; Luke 9:23; 14:26-27). When I acknowledge His Lordship, I also recognize He is Master and I am His servant, that He is the Potter and I am the clay to be molded according to His will and plan (Romans 1:1; 9:20-24; Isaiah 64:8).

It is at this point many Christians struggle with the call to missions; they fail to recognize that every Christian is called to be on mission in reaching the world with the Gospel. While God calls some to a specific task or mission field, He has called each one of us to be on mission for Him right where we are – in our community, our home, at work, at school, where we do business, or wherever we go or in whatever we do throughout the course of the day. Tomorrow we will explore our availability in more depth.

As you pray today, ask God to use your availability for His glory. Then, be sure and make yourself available to Him. Remember, God is interested in your availability not your ability.

 **Day 7****The Secret of Missions**

“But Peter ... said: “We ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29).

It is easier to talk about missions than to do missions. It is easier to study missions than to do missions. In fact, it is easier to give to missions than to do missions. The typical Southern Baptist is very missions minded. However, Christians are not called merely to be mission minded; God has called each one of us to be mission active, to be on mission for Him. When we understand His call on our life, recognize His Lordship, and make ourselves available, God can and will use us to reach a lost world with the Gospel and bring glory to Him.

Obedience. When God calls us to be on mission for Him, we have two choices – obedience or disobedience. Abraham, at the age of seventy-five, heard the call of God to be on mission – to leave the comfort of his home in the city of Ur and follow God into a wilderness, living out of a tent. Abraham obeyed God and set out to be on mission (Gen. 12:1-5). Moses heard the call of God to be on mission – to return to Egypt and be God’s human instrument to lead the Israelites out of bondage and slavery. While Moses expressed reluctance at first, he understood clearly the importance of obedience and in obedience returned to Egypt to accomplish God’s will (Exodus 3:1-4:23).

The Bible is filled with the stories of men and women who heard the call of God and in obedience went out on mission. In every generation, God is calling men, women, and teenagers to be on mission for Him. Jesus spoke of the cost of obedience, *“If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me”* (Matthew 16:24, see Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23; 14:26-27). Moreover, He spoke of disobedience. In Luke 9:57-62 we read the story of a man who committed Himself to follow Jesus wherever Jesus went. Jesus responded to the man’s commitment by warning of the danger of commitment and then turning back. He concluded his remarks to the man with a warning, *“No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God”* (Luke 9:62). John’s Gospel records for us other occasions when Jesus spoke of obedience. *“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me”* (10:27). *“If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor”* (12:26).

Dr. Don Deel, like many native West Virginians, left the mountains, went off to college, and vowed never to return except to visit family. In the middle of a successful career as an engineer, God called Him to be a preacher. Returning to school, he prepared for the ministry. Later, while serving as a pastor, the call of God again came for Don and his wife Cathy to go to Russia and serve through the International Mission Board of the SBC. Then, after five years of service, the

telephone rang and Don was asked one simple question “Isn’t it time you came home to West Virginia.” For the Deels the question was not whether or not to return to the mountains, even though he had firmly stated he had no desire to return to West Virginia. The question for the Deels was obedience and after a time of prayer, they called the Mountain State Baptist Association and began the process of returning home to serve as their Associational Missionary. Similar stories of obedience are repeated throughout Appalachia as men and women come to be on mission in reaching the over 13 million unchurched people who live in the region.

Regularly I work with churches who hear the call of God to be on mission and in obedience respond. Many call Appalachian Regional Ministry looking for a place of service. Bill Mason, pastor of the Morris Hill Baptist Church in Chattanooga, Tennessee, was one such pastor, and this past summer his church was on mission in Kentucky where they made an eternal difference in the lives of people.

As you prepare for your mission trip take time to pray daily, asking God to give you a sensitive heart to His will and to prepare the hearts of those you will be working with and ministering to during your mission trip. When we step out by faith in obedience to God, something wonderful happens. Therefore, like Isaiah, pray, *“Here am I Lord, send me”* (Isaiah 6:8).



Day 8

Discovering Your Judea

“Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. (They were) praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.” (Acts 2:44-45, 47).

Some people look at difficulties and see problems, while others see them as opportunities. When faced with limited resources and overwhelming needs, some retreat in defeat while others rise to the challenge. In the Great Commission, Jesus commanded the church to take the Gospel to the ends of the earth, beginning in Jerusalem and then moving out to Judea. If we understand Jerusalem to be people just like us – our immediate family, relatives, and close friends, and Judea to be people similar, but different from us – different ethnic group, culture, or class with minor differences, then who is our Judea. It could be the neighborhood down the street, the community across the mountain, or the other end of the county.

Discovering your Judea is exciting, especially if you discover it with the desire to reach “your Judea” with the Good News of Jesus. Jerusalem consisted of three types of people. The first group consisted of the Judean and Galilean Hebrews, Jews who were similar, but distinctively different. This group of Jews spoke Aramaic as their mother tongue and worshiped regularly at the Temple. The second group was the Hellenists Jews, a group of Jews who belonged to what is known as the “Jewish dispersion” and because of either a desire to worship God at the Temple or for business reasons lived in Jerusalem. Luke records that they had come “*from every nation under Heaven*” (Acts 2:5). This group of Jews spoke Greek as their trade language and if they spoke Aramaic, they spoke it with an accent, reflective of the people group they came from. The third group was the Gentiles who were there either with the Roman government or for trade.

As the early church began to take shape, they discovered Judea, the Hellenists Jews. On the Day of Pentecost, hardly any Hellenists, even though they were full-blooded Jews, had become followers of Jesus as the Messiah. However, by the time we get to Acts 6, we see a sizeable portion of the membership was Hellenists Jews. How were they reached with the Gospel? What had opened the door for them to be receptive of the Gospel? An examination of the early chapters of Acts reveals that the church was busy ministering in their Judea (Acts 4:32-37; 6:1-3).

The Powell River Baptist Association in Lee County, Virginia has discovered their Judea through ministry. Faced with high unemployment, poverty, and limited financial resources, the

association could have given up. Instead they began to prayerfully look for ways to reach their Judea through empowering the Baptist men, women and youth to do ministry utilizing their spiritual gifts and abilities.

In the fall of 2003 the association gathered to share with one another what God was doing. Eighteen different individuals (15 were laity) stood and shared about the various ministries they were involved in and their vision for the future. Over twenty-five ongoing ministries were discussed – ministries that addressed the needs of Lee County – home repair, food pantries, clothing closets, medical assistance, hot meals for the elderly, youth related activities, job training, marriage enrichment, and on the list went. With tears cruising down my cheeks, I listened as each person talked about reaching unchurched people for Christ. One WMU Director told of a food box ministry to needy families that had resulted in two whole families and several children and youth coming to faith in Christ. The youth had marched across the county, dividing into four groups – three of the groups carrying a cross and one a Bible, marched over a period of a week from the extreme corners of the county towards the county seat, stopping to visit and witness at every opportunity. In the process, they raised enough money to put handicap ramps and porches on several homes using mission volunteers. Another church shared how they had noticed that many senior adults in their section of Lee County were shut-in and lonely. They started a hot meal program that feeds close to forty elderly people once a week. For them it is a ministry – they prepare the meal based on the dietary needs of the individual and when it is delivered, the person making the delivery stays to visit and assist with any needs the family might have, such as empty the trash or picking up a gallon of milk. Is it any wonder that lost people are now showing up, wanting to help?

When I arrived at the associational office, a youth group was painting the metal roof. It was their first mission project. The pastor shared with me that a year earlier, when he had been called to pastor the church; it was on the verge of being closed. A year later, the church is averaging 35 in Sunday School and all six youth on the roof were new Christians. That evening, one of the teenagers, shared with me that God was calling him to ministry.

Discovering your Judea is exciting and it is usually right outside your front door. As you prepare to come to Appalachia on missions, ask the Heavenly Father to open your eyes to your Judea.

 **Day 9**

Sowing Seeds of the Gospel

“And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47).

“And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women” (Acts 5:14).

At the heart of missions is the passion to reach the lost with the Gospel of Christ. As you prepare for your mission trip, you will be involved in one or more stages of reaching people with the Good News of salvation.

In the parable of the Seed and the Sower (Matt. 13:3-23; Mark 4:1-20) Jesus illustrated the importance of sowing the seed of the Gospel. In the parable, Jesus taught truths that apply to volunteer missions. First, Jesus assumed that those listening to Him understood that the soil must be prepared before the seed could be sown. There has to be the cultivation of the soil. Second, in order to have a harvest, seed must first be sown. You cannot reap a harvest where the seed of the Gospel has not been sown; you cannot reap a heart that has not been seeded with the Gospel. The third truth Jesus taught is that only some of the seed you sow will be harvested. While some will respond to the Gospel, others will not. Still others will respond, but in time will fall away and return to the old life. Your responsibility is to sow the seeds of the Gospel to the best of your ability. Fourth, Jesus taught that the sower of the seed and the reaper of the harvest are equally important (John 4:36-38). The apostle Paul explained this truth to the church at Corinth when he explained that he planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase (1 Corinthians 3:6-8).

Missions in Appalachia is multifaceted. One mission team may be involved in home repair, another in a community survey project, another passing out light bulbs, all of which are events designed to cultivate the soil. Another team may be involved in Vacation Bible School, passing out “I Care” packets to white-water rafters, or organizing a block party, all of which are seed sowing events, and then comes the harvest. The cultivating, seed sowing, and harvest may occur within the same week, or you may be involved in cultivating and seed sowing and never see the harvest this side of eternity. For example, a church in South Carolina traveled to Lynch, Kentucky to do a home repair project and mission activities and had the privilege of leading eight boys and girls to faith in Christ. Yet another team traveled to do home repair, and while they were able to share the Gospel with several in the community, they saw no results. One team plants, another waters, but God gives the increase.

The early church understood the law of sowing and reaping. Throughout the book of Acts we find them ministering, evangelizing, and reaping the harvest. They were among the people cultivating, sowing the seeds of the Gospel, and trusting God for the harvest.

As you prepare for your mission trip, remember you are God's instrument for the task you and your church are undertaking. Someone has fittingly characterized a missionary volunteer as

...

A Mind – through which Christ thinks

A Heart – through which Christ loves.

A Voice – through which Christ speaks.

A Hand – through which Christ helps.

Today, as you pray, ask God to use you and your mission team effectively in cultivating the soil for the sowing of the Gospel and to effectively sow the seed. I recall a mission trip several years ago to Southern West Virginia where we saw little response to the Gospel and I left discouraged. However, several years later I revisited the church and listened as members explained how that summer had been a turning point in the life of their church, they had grown from a church averaging in the low 30's to an average in the high 70's. Before they had few children and no youth, but the Sunday I visited them they had babies, children, youth, and young couples in the service. Did the forty-five mission volunteers from our church fail when we went home with no glowing report of professions of faith to give to our church? No! God used us and eleven other teams that summer to prepare the soil and sow the seed for the harvest. We planted, another mission team watered, but God gave the increase.



Day 10

The Impact of Missions

“And all the people saw him walking and praising God. Then they knew that it was he who sat begging alms at the Beautiful Gate of the temple; and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him. Now as the lame man who was healed held on to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them on the porch which is called Solomon’s, greatly amazed” (Acts 3:9-11).

Missions has a direct impact on three groups of people – the doer, the receiver, and the observer, and it opens the door to present the Gospel. This trust is clearly illustrated in the healing of the lame man who sat at the Temple gate begging for money (Acts 3:1-26). First, his healing directly affected him. His feet and anklebones were healed and strengthened and he “walking, leaping, and praising God, went into the temple with them” (3:8). Second, it had an impact on Peter and John. This is the first miracle recorded in the book of Acts and it clearly affirmed to the disciples Jesus was alive and that His power was just as active upon earth at that moment as it was when they had walked across the Palestinian countryside with Him. It also affirmed that Jesus was now working through His followers. Through them, He was reaching out to save and heal the world. His followers were now His instruments, His emissaries, His ambassadors, His representatives, His messengers, His witnesses to a world lost in suffering and death, sin and shame. Third, all the people who had gathered at the Temple to take part in the three o’clock prayer service observed the miracle, and it opened the door for Peter to present the Gospel (3:12-26).

Today, Jesus is still working through His disciples. His presence and His power are still at work, still available to His followers. His great love and concern for the world is still being manifested through the lives of His disciples. In fact, Jesus has...

- no feet but our feet.
- no hands but our hands.
- no voice but our voice.

If we do not go and do and speak the work of God, His work does not get done.

Rocky Fork Baptist Church in Iva, South Carolina, discovered this truth. In the fall of 2001, I presented to them the work of Appalachian Regional Ministry and the mission opportunities available throughout the Appalachian region. After the service, one of the men, a farmer, told me how he would like to go on a mission trip, but his cows and chickens could not take care of themselves for a week. However, for over the next few weeks the church came to realize that it could be “On Mission”. They decided to collect food for West Charleston Baptist Church, an inner city ministry. A list of staple food items for a family of four was compiled and taped to a

cardboard box. Each family was encouraged to take a box home and over the next couple of weeks to fill it up with the listed items. The idea quickly caught on. Soon families living in the community, who did not attend church, were coming by and asking if they could participate. Attendance on Sunday morning started going up. A sense of excitement permeated the air. Finally, the day came when the pastor and two men from the church loaded the largest U-Haul rental truck they could find with food boxes and drove to Charleston, West Virginia to deliver the food, leaving behind a half a truck load of food to be delivered on the next trip. Then, “in Jesus’ name,” Norm and Debbie Cannada passed the boxes of food out to needy families, thus opening a door to share the Gospel.

Your mission opportunity will affect you, those you help, and those who are observing you – both at the mission site and at home, and will open the door for the sharing of the Gospel. Moreover, the greatest joy may only be discovered in eternity when you discover the effect your faithfulness to God on your mission project had in bringing lost men, women, teenagers, and children to faith in Christ.

Today pray that God will use your mission opportunity as an open door to share the Good News of Christ to those who are lost, both at your church and at the mission site. Pray that God will enable you to be a faithful witness for Him.

 **Day 11****A God Sized Opportunity Results in Devil Sized Obstacles**

“Now as they spoke to the people, the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came upon them, being greatly disturbed that they taught the people and preached in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. And they laid hands on them, and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening. However, many of those who heard the word believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand” (Acts 4:1-4).

Problems, obstacles, and setbacks will undoubtedly come as you prepare for your mission trip. Whenever we advance the Kingdom of God, we invade Satan’s kingdom and difficulties begin to crop up. Occasionally Satan uses church members to discourage us and at other times he uses his arsenal of weapons, which include discouragement, misunderstanding, financial difficulties, little surprises, and whatever else he needs to do to keep us from doing the main thing, sharing Jesus with those who are lost.

In the name of Jesus a lame man has been healed (Acts 3:6-8), and *“all the people saw him walking and praising God” (3:9)*. One would think that everyone would join in praising God for this miracle. Not so, the response of the Jewish leaders was to incarcerate Peter and John.

Throughout the year many churches contact Appalachian Regional Ministry looking for mission opportunities. It is heartbreaking when a church agrees to join with another church or ministry to reach a community for Christ, and then fails to follow through with their commitment. Disappointment and discouragement grips the receiving church, and a mad scramble is made to find a replacement for the group that failed to come. Often no one is found. Some churches and associations, though, see the difficulties as bumps to climb over and the challenges as opportunities for God to demonstrate His greatness.

Beacon Baptist Church¹ (Georgia), explored the possibility of coming to Appalachia for a summer mission trip. In time, they focused on a mission opportunity in Ohio. When the pastor introduced the idea to the leadership team, several opposed the idea because of the cost and distance. As the missions committee moved forward, the church experienced conflict due to a building program that resulted in several families leaving, the associate pastor resigned, and the pastor became ill. When it was suggested that perhaps the mission trip be cancelled, a member of the church stated that if they felt God had called them to be “On Mission” in Ohio, then that same God was still calling them to be on mission in Ohio. “Perhaps,” he suggested, “this would be a time to exercise faith and obedience.” The church decided to stay with their commitment to the

¹ To avoid embarrassing this church, this is not the real name or location of the sending and receiving churches.

Ohio mission trip. The teams began to prepare and raise the money needed to accomplish the mission opportunities.

During the week in Ohio, missions took various forms – Vacation Bible School during the morning hours, home repairs and community survey work in the afternoon, and revival services at night, and culminated on Friday with a Community Fair (Block Party). During the course of the week many lives were touched in the community, friendships were developed, and several adults, youth, and children made professions of faith.

As you prepare for your mission trip, do not let the difficulties discourage you. Remember that God sized opportunities result in devil-sized obstacles. In the middle of reporting on the setbacks facing Peter and John, Luke inserts a statement into the narrative that informs us of the salvation of thousands. He is also reminding us that when we invade Satan's kingdom there will be problems, but God is greater and when we trust Him, the Kingdom of God is advanced.

Today, pray that as you and your team prepare for your mission trip, the problems you encounter will serve as stepping-stones to greater faith and increased prayer. When we trust God and follow through with His call on our life, He receives the glory and His Kingdom advances forward.

 **Day 12****The Heart of Missions is Jesus**

“Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

I listened as Alma shared with me the Meals on Wheels outreach ministry of her church and then she said, “And we do it all in the name of Jesus.” Olinger First Baptist Church (Virginia) each year prepares home made apple butter and delivers a jar to every home in their community. Each jar has a label that reads, “Given in Jesus name.” All across Appalachia there are ministry centers providing assistance to hurting families “In the name of Jesus.” From time to time, I find a plaque on a church building, built by volunteers that reads, “Built in Jesus name.”

In Acts 4, Peter and John were called before the Council to explain their actions in the healing of the lame man. In response to their inquiry, Peter shared the source of his power, the name of Jesus Christ, and He proclaimed the salvation that is in Jesus (4:8-12).

At the heart of all that happens in missions is Jesus. As you prepare for your mission experience, it is not about you, your preacher, your church, your association, or Southern Baptists; it is all about Jesus. It is not about the physical needs of Appalachia – and there are places where the physical needs are overwhelming, it is all about Jesus. It is not about the spiritual needs of Appalachia – parts of Appalachia are over 85% unchurched, it is all about Jesus. It is not about your personal search for a sense of satisfaction or fulfillment it is all about Jesus. If your primary motivation for doing missions is anything other than Jesus, you will become rigid, frustrated, and return home at the conclusion of your mission opportunity disillusioned.

The motivating force in the life of the early disciples was Jesus. They were convinced that the decisive, redemptive act of God had taken place in Jesus Christ and there was no other hope for lost humanity. Therefore, they boldly declared Him as both Savior and Lord (Acts 2:36; 4:12; 10:36), and the only way of salvation (John 14:6; Acts 3:20; 4:12; 5:31; 1 Tim. 2:5). They were also convinced that all who had not entered into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ through the miracle of the new birth (John 3:3-8) were lost “without God and without hope” (Eph. 2:12). Thus, driven forth by the Great Commission, the early disciples went forth believing that the Gospel was for all who would repent and by faith come to Christ, trusting Him and Him alone for salvation (2 Pet. 3:9; Eph. 2:8-9).

The early disciples endured hardship, persecution, and even death because of their firm conviction that their only hope for lost humanity was Jesus – no other name, no other way, no

other hope. Every Bible lesson that is taught, every sermon that is preached, every nail that is driven, every mile that is walked in prayer, every gift that is handed out is about Jesus. If you are motivated by any other calling or desire – do not come to Appalachia for missions until your motivation changes.

Today, as you pray, search your heart to make sure that you are motivated by no other desire or passion to do missions than Jesus. If you find you are motivated by guilt or the manipulation of a friend, confess that to God and ask Him to fill your heart with a passion to do missions “in Jesus name.” Then, ask the Heavenly Father to use you on this mission opportunity to both sow the seeds of the Gospel and to lead a lost person to faith in Jesus Christ. Ask Him to begin preparing the heart of the lost person you will encounter and to prepare your mind so that you can share the Gospel effectively with them. In the name of Jesus, you will be bringing hope to Appalachia. Remember, it is all about HIM!

“The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise to return, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to perish, so he is giving more time for everyone to repent” (2 Peter 3:9 NLT).



Day 13

No Cost Is Too Great

“Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus. ... So they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said to them, ‘whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard’” (Acts 4:13; 18-20).

Like thousands of Americans, I sat glued to the television waiting for the latest news on the nine coal miners trapped 240 feet beneath the surface of the earth in Pennsylvania. Earlier in the week, while working a seam of coal, they broke into an abandoned mine filled with water and in moments, they were trapped. Within hours the focus of the nation was on Somerset, Pennsylvania, as television crews arrived and live coverage of the recovery operation was reported in living rooms and offices all across America and around the world. Special prayer meetings were held, particularly in the coal mining communities throughout Appalachia.

The nation watched as rescue personnel from across the southeastern United States worked tirelessly around the clock in an effort to reach the stranded miners. First, a smaller air hole was drilled into the area where the miners were thought to be located to pump in air, and then they began drilling a larger hole through which to save the miners, if they were still alive. No cost was spared in the recovery operation, the lives of nine men was the consuming passion and paramount concern for the moment. Then early Sunday morning, July 28, 2002, the nation watched and gave a sigh of relief as all nine miners were removed alive and in good condition considering the ordeal they had just come through. Sunday morning, prayers of thanksgiving and praise were given in churches all across the land. Nine men had been spared a horrible death. No one complained about the costly rescue operation, the man-hours put into the task, or the personal inconvenience the ordeal put him or her through. They rejoiced in the rescue of nine men.

Across the region serviced by Appalachian Regional Ministry are over 13 million lost people – men, women, teenagers, boys and girls, people for whom Christ died. These are not individuals who are in danger of perishing in a mining accident; they are people who are perishing without Christ in Appalachia.

Every mission project provides an opportunity for Southern Baptists to “rescue the perishing.” Like the mining rescue –

- No cost should be spared. The soul of a lost person is priceless. Jesus died for the lost (John 3:16; Romans 5:8).

- Total dedication and focus should be given to rescuing the perishing.
- Utilization of every available resource should be undertaken.
- Tireless energy and effort should be put into the opportunity.

While thousands prayed and families gathered in hope of a successful rescue, there was no guarantee that the coal miners would be rescued alive, in spite of the countless hours of labor and the millions of dollars spent. Likewise, as you prepare to go on your mission trip to rescue the perishing there is no guarantee. Like the disciples we boldly go in the name of Jesus; like Paul we go tirelessly with tears (Acts 20:31; Psalm 126:5), taking the gospel message to those who are lost in the darkness of sin. We go, sharing the gospel as effectively as we can, trusting God for the salvation of those who are lost and perishing.

As you pray today, pray for the lost men, women, teenagers, boys and girls in Appalachia, for on the average 70 percent of the region is unchurched with parts of Appalachia over 90 percent unchurched. There has never been a time in modern history when the hearts of people in Appalachia have been as open to the Gospel as they are today. Pray that God will use you to reach the lost of Appalachia. All across Appalachia, people need the Lord and the region is like a field, "*White ready to be harvested.*"



Day 14

The Power of Prayer

“And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness. Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all. Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles’ feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need” (Acts 4:31-35).

When God moves, something happens! As the Spirit of God moved upon the early church, ministry and evangelism occurred. As the Spirit of God began to move in Eastern Kentucky ministry and evangelism began to take place. Eastern Kentucky sets in the heart of Appalachia, and like the region surrounding it, has immense poverty and high unemployment. Meeting the physical needs of hurting people is critical if you are going to talk to them about their spiritual needs.

When the prayer meetings started, Kentucky Baptists had four ministry centers serving Eastern Kentucky, each struggling at times to find volunteers to help operate the facilities. As the Spirit of God moved, a grass roots movement began with churches and associations looking for ways to address the physical needs of the people. Ministry centers were established, food pantries opened, literacy classes started, home repair programs initiated, creative ways to do ministry were brought to the forefront. Today, 47 ministry centers operate in Eastern Kentucky with thousands of mission volunteers involved, and churches across the region are reporting an increase in baptisms and church attendance. At the July 2002 Mountain Mission Conference, as pastors shared about the number of people being saved, David Aker, the Regional Mountain Missionary for the Kentucky Baptist Convention observed, **“It is as we touch lives and meet needs that we earn the opportunity to share the gospel.”** Earlier Aker reported that in 2001, the total additions by baptism in Eastern Kentucky by Southern Baptist churches had exceeded additions by transfer and that the region had one reported baptism for every twenty-eight active church members (Nationally it is one for every 48 active church members).

One of the stories reported was about a young college girl who had come to Kentucky as a Summer Missionary to serve in Pike County. One spring day, while in prayer, the Spirit of God spoke to her, telling her it was “the time of the harvest.” She understood this to mean that God would use her to win someone to Christ. During her first seven weeks, she personally led 138 people to Christ. The Director of Missions, Carl Boyd, during this same time personally led 45

others to faith in Christ. Another report told of five children and five adults being saved in a Vacation Bible School in Beattyville. A report from Hazard told of a mission team from Anderson, South Carolina taking 11,000 pounds of food and distributing them in one of the “hollers” (that’s a hollow for city folk), then following it up with a “holler party” (block party) where five people trusted Christ. Then the same mission team borrowed a front yard and showed the “*Jesus*” film. Over 100 people showed up and for two hours listened intently to the story of Jesus. When the invitation was given, several people trusted Christ. A mission team from South Carolina reported that during a home repair project in Lynch, Kentucky, people were saved; still other reports told of new church starts, growing churches, and renewed hope as the Spirit of God moved across Eastern Kentucky.

Today, and in the days ahead as you pray, pray for the area where you will be serving. Pray that God will use you to point the lost people you meet, to faith Christ. Pray that God will prepare their hearts to receive the gospel. Pray for the church or ministry center where you will be serving, for the leadership, and for the specific project your team will be doing. Remember, **God will use your act of kindness to open the door for sharing the gospel.**

“Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know” (Jeremiah 33:3).



Day 15

Cultures in Collision

“Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution” (Acts 6:1).

How do we deal with cultural issues? In Acts 6:1, we read the account of two cultures colliding within the church. The first culture was the Hebrews, who were Jews born and reared in Palestine. They spoke Aramaic, the language that had come down from their ancient Hebrew language. They completely rejected all Gentile and Greek culture, and used only the Hebrew Bible in its original Hebrew language. The Hebrews or Palestinian Jews were so inclusive and closely-knit; they despised all Gentiles and the Gentile culture. They actually despised and cursed the Gentiles, believing that God had cursed them for eternity. This hatred even included the Grecian Jews who had been relocated to other lands by the Romans.

The second group was the Grecian Jews who were known as the Hellenists. These Jews had been scattered, deported, and dispersed all over the world by the Romans. Many of them would return for the great Feasts of Pentecost and the Passover. Apparently, some had been converted on the day of Pentecost or thereafter, and had either delayed their return home or decided to move back to Jerusalem. The Grecian or Hellenist Jews had adopted the Greek culture, spoke the Greek language, and used and read the Greek Bible (the Septuagint).

In all probability, this is what lies at the root of the problem mentioned here. The Hebrew Jews, having always been taught to reject and despise anything Grecian, were likely having difficulty getting rid of all their prejudice. No doubt, God had worked in their hearts to cleanse them of prejudice, but they apparently were still hanging on to some feelings against the Hellenists. Perhaps they felt that the Hellenists were not due as much attention or as many rights as they were. Whatever the problem, Luke records for us the account of the two cultures colliding and how the issues were resolved.

The Appalachian region is an area tied together by certain economic, political, and sociological factors that fashion the Appalachian culture. Within that region, there are multiple subcultures. While most Southern Baptists relate well to larger cities and the southern portion of Appalachia, many have trouble relating to the central and northern sections, especially in the coalfields in Eastern Kentucky or Southern West Virginia where life has been hard and until recently isolated. If we are not careful our cultural differences can divide us. Or we can, like the

early church, look for ways to build bridges that will allow us to effectively do ministry together¹. In Acts 6:7 we read, “*Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith*”.

As you prepare for your mission trip, let me suggest to you some items to add to your packing list.

Pray God will use these items to enable you to better relate to the people you will be ministering with.

- A *toothpick* - to remind you to pick out the good qualities in other people (Matt. 7:1).
- A *rubber band* - to remind you to be flexible; things might not always go the way you want, but it will work out (Rom. 8:28).
- A *band-aid* - to remind you to heal hurt feelings, yours or someone else's (Col. 3:12-14).
- An *eraser* - To remind you that everyone makes mistakes, and it's OK (Gen.50:15-21).
- *Chewing gum* - to remind you to stick with it and you can accomplish anything (Phil 4:13).
- A *candy kiss* - to remind you that everyone needs a kiss or a hug everyday (1 John 4:7).
- A *pencil* - to remind you to list your blessings everyday (Eph.1:3).
- A *tea bag* - to remind you to relax daily and go over that list of blessings (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

¹ Before going on your mission trip, learn all you can about the culture where you will be serving. See www.arministry.org/culture.asp for more information.



Day 16

Layman Turned Evangelist

“Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them.” (Acts 8:5).

We are the channels God has chosen to take the message of the gospel into the entire world (Acts 1:8). Every believer has been called – no exceptions¹. While some have received a specific call to a specific type or place of ministry, every believer has received the general call to full time Christian service. It is a call that requires our personal attention and something that we cannot pay someone else to do for us. In God’s plan to reach the world with the gospel, the primary responsibility of His work rested on the shoulders of the laity. One of the bedrock beliefs of Baptists is the priesthood of all believers – that all believers have equal access to God and need no human mediator in approaching Him. While Baptists enjoy this foundation truth as they study their Bible and pray, they often neglect the balance of this reality, for the priesthood of all believers also teaches us that all believers are called to be ministers, and with that call comes responsibility and accountability to be obedient. At the heart of that call is evangelism (Matthew 28:19-20), and a reminder that one day each one of us will stand before God and give an account of our obedience to that call².

It is interesting to note that when God was ready to do evangelism in Samaria, he used lay people – an unnamed woman (John 4:28-30) and Philip, a Hellenist Jew. Philip, a layman, was one of the first deacons in the Jerusalem Church (Acts 6:5). It is important for us to note that Philip carried out the first great evangelistic thrust outside Jerusalem after Pentecost. The first time the term *evangelist* is used, it is used of Philip, who was a true servant of the Lord, who preached Christ. He was a man who dedicated his time and energy to proclaiming the things concerning the Kingdom of God.

Nestled in the hills of northern West Virginia is the small town of Cameron, a rural community surrounded by beautiful hills. Ron McCoy, then a deacon at Temple Baptist Church in Moundsville, was asked to serve as interim pastor for a small struggling congregation in Cameron. At that time, the church was located on the side of the hill and you had to climb 100 steep steps to get from the parking lot to the front door of the church. Over the next few years, Ron would repeatedly come and serve as the interim pastor. Cameron Baptist Church would call a pastor who would stay for a short period and then leave for greener pastures and fewer steps. Each time Ron served as interim, the church grew. In the mid 1990’s the call came again to Ron asking if he would be interim pastor. As he drove across the mountains, he felt the call of God to

¹ Romans 8:28-30; 1 Corinthians 1:9, 26; 7:17-24; Ephesians 1:17-19; 4:1-4; Philippians 3:14; 2 Thessalonians 1:11; 2 Timothy 1:8-9; Hebrews 3:1; 2 Peter 1:8-10

² Romans 14:10-12; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Matthew 25:14-46

serve, took early retirement from his job, and became the pastor of a small, struggling congregation in a town of less than 400. Soon he led the church to relocate on a piece of property in the valley.

During the summer of 2001, I spent some time with Ron in Cameron. Everywhere we went he was networking, pastoring, counseling, offering words of encouragement and talking with people about Jesus. In this small town, with six other churches, Cameron Baptist Church had 170 for Easter services and was averaging around 100 in attendance each week. In addition, the church had started two missions, one of which constituted as a church in the fall of 2001. During the summer of 2002, Southern Baptist mission volunteers came to Cameron to join with Cameron Baptist Church and build a new building to accommodate the growing congregation and assist this “deacon turned preacher.”¹

Today, as you pray, thank God for His call on your life to missions, and specifically thank Him for the opportunity to serve at the place you are going on your mission trip. Pray that others will understand God’s call to missions and join with you in reaching people with the Good News of Jesus. Jesus said, *“Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!”*(John 4:35). *“The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest”* (Matt. 9:37-38).

¹ In 2006 the church had when to two Sunday AM worship services and now averages over 170 each week.

 **Day 17****Mission Minded to Mission Active**

“As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison. Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word” (Acts 8:3-4).

An older couple was stopped, waiting for the red light to change, when a young couple, obviously in love, pulled up beside them. The young lady was seated in the middle of the front seat, snuggled up close to the young man. The older lady said, “Look at that young couple!” “Don’t you remember when we used to sit together like that in the front seat, so passionately in love?”

“Yes,” replied her husband, “and may I point out, I’m not the one who moved.”

Many churches are like that older couple, they look out, see younger churches involved in missions, and reflect on their rich mission history, their gifts to mission projects, the Cooperative Program, and special offerings, but they are not personally engaged in missions. It happened to the Church at Jerusalem. Absorbed with the ministry in Jerusalem, they forgot about reaching the world with the gospel of Christ. Undoubtedly they discussed the Great Commission, for when persecution broke out; those who left the city became engaged in preaching the word. The word “preaching” means to evangelize. This means to declare, to proclaim, to preach the Word of God, the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. The problem with the church in Jerusalem was that while they were mission minded, they were not mission active.

It is interesting to note that the believers who were preaching and scattering the Word were *lay believers*. This set the pattern for all time. Most preaching and witnessing was to be done by the lay believers. All lay believers are to scatter the seed wherever they are, wherever duty or circumstances place them. Jesus said, “As you are going, wherever you go, make disciples, baptize them, and teach them everything I have commanded you” (Matt 28:19-20). It took the death of Stephen and the persecution by Saul to awaken the church to its primary purpose.

Many Southern Baptist churches are mission minded. They have mission organizations that provide training, promote the special offerings, and give a percentage of their offerings to Cooperative Program missions, yet they have never personally engaged in mission. However, that is changing.

All across Southern Baptist life churches are rediscovering hands-on-missions. Youth groups, men’s ministries, whole families are becoming involved in missions across North

America and overseas. They are moving from being mission minded to being mission active, and in the process discovering exciting ways to do ministry.

The Potomac Highland Baptist Association in West Virginia took a mission team to North Georgia to do a variety of mission projects. For many it was their first mission trip. This trip not only created an awareness of the needs in their area back home, but also motivated them to begin planning for next year. A ministry center in eastern Kentucky took a youth group into northern Ohio on their first mission trip. I listened as the director gave a report of how God moved through the teenagers to touch lives and already plans were underway for the next year.

For too long the church has taught the membership about missions without leading the church to become engaged in missions. Today, like the church in Jerusalem, the church is becoming not only mission minded, but mission active.

As you pray today, ask God to call out more laborers to join you in being “mission active.” It is going to take all of us working together, preaching the word, to reach the world with the good news of the gospel.

 **Day 18****Discovering Your Samaria**

“Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them” (Acts 8:5).

Crossing cultural boundaries to do missions is exciting for some people and intimidating for others. To help us understand reaching different cultures for Christ, missiologists utilize some terminology we need to become familiar with: E-1, E-2 and E-3.

The symbol *E* stands for “evangelism,” and the numbers stand for different cultural distances from the person or group initiating the evangelistic process. Thus, E-1, or “evangelism-one,” signifies evangelism among people sharing the same culture as the evangelist or the mission team. In contrast, both E-2 and E-3 represent the kind of evangelism necessary to win to Christ people of a different culture from that of the evangelist. E-1 is *monoculture* evangelism, and E-2 and E-3 are both *cross-cultural* evangelism.

The difference between E-2 and E-3 is a difference in degree only. Both are cross-cultural, but E-3 signifies a culture more radically different from that of the evangelist than E-2 would signify. All cultural distances are not equal. This can be illustrated easily by using cultures in various parts of North America as examples.

One does not have to leave America to find clear situations calling for E-2 and E-3 evangelism. An Anglo-American from Jackson, Ohio, evangelizing Hispanic Americans in Dalton, Georgia, would be doing E-2, but evangelizing Cherokees in North Carolina would involve E-3. In many urban areas in the United States, it would be possible to do E-1, E-2 and E-3 evangelism in the same neighborhood, and sometimes on the same block. The essential difference is not *geographical* (although geographical distance often plays a role), but *cultural*.

As persecution broke out against the church, Philip engaged in E-2 evangelism by going down to the city of Samaria and preaching Christ to them (8:5). This is significant, because up to this point the early church had failed to follow through the open door Jesus provided earlier (John 4). Why? There was bitter hatred between the Jews and the Samaritans. The Samaritans were a mixed race that was partially Jewish. Centuries before (about 720 B.C.) the King of Assyria had captured the ten tribes of Israel and then deported a large number of them, scattering them throughout the region of Media (2 Kings 17:6-41). He then took people from all over the Assyrian empire and transplanted them into Samaria to repopulate the land. The result was only natural. Intermarriage took place and the people became a mixed breed. This of course, infuriated the strict Jews who held to a pure race. Isolated from Jerusalem, the Samaritans further exasperated the Jews by developing their own, twisted version of religion and building their own

temple. They accepted only the first five books of the Bible, the Pentateuch, missing all the richness and depth of the Psalms and prophets.

When Mike Watson, who had been an electrician by trade in South Carolina, was called to pastor North Fork Baptist Church in Riverton, West Virginia, he understood he was entering a different culture than his, even though he was an Anglo-American reaching Anglo-Americans. Mike was advised that if he were able to build a church that averaged 50 people each week that would be a major accomplishment. Quickly, Mike realized that in order to reach the people surrounding this rural, Appalachian congregation, he would have to find a way to identify with them. So, he started going door to door, visiting with each family for hours at a time, asking questions and searching for ways he could help them. Over the next two years he chopped wood, cut timber, slaughtered and butchered livestock, bailed hay, plowed gardens, helped do repair on houses and barns, rode shot-gun with 18-wheelers, and on the list goes. He ate a lot of pinto beans, fried potatoes, and cornbread and drank a lot of strong black coffee. He built relationships with each family, and then he shared with them the gospel.

Don Ertel, the Director on Missions in that region of West Virginia states, “During Mike’s time at North Fork, every Christian church in the county experienced growth.” Two years after Mike became the pastor of North Fork, the church was averaging 150 in Sunday School and Sunday morning worship. What was his secret? In part, it was Mike’s recognition that he was going to be ministering cross culturally and he set out to learn the culture and identify with the people.

Take time to investigate the region of Appalachia where you will be on mission. It may be E-1 *monoculture* missions. However, it may be E-2 or E-3, cross-cultural missions. For example, a mission team from urban Atlanta, Georgia or Columbia, South Carolina planning a mission trip in the heart of the coal fields of Southern West Virginia or Eastern Kentucky, could experience E-2 missions and most likely will experience E-3 missions, even though they speak the same language.

Today as you pray, ask God to help you to become sensitive to people of different cultures and to discover ways to effectively relate to them. Also, pray for those you will be serving on your mission trip, that they too will be sensitive to people of different cultures.



Day 19

Missions was the Heartbeat of the New Testament Churches

“Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word... Now those who were scattered after the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to no one but the Jews only. But some of them were men from Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they had come to Antioch, spoke to the Hellenists, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord.” (Acts 8:4; 11:19-21)

Jesus clearly taught that His mission was to continue after He ascended. Each of the Gospels and Acts contains an account of His mandate to His followers, telling them to go to all the world, make disciples, baptize them, and preach the Gospel (Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:46-49; John 20:21-22; Acts 1:8). Jesus assumed that the church would reach out beyond itself to a lost world. This commission made a dramatic change in the emphasis of missions. Now, instead of looking to foreigners to come to Jerusalem, to worship at the Temple, the church’s mission is to go into the entire world, no longer waiting for the world to come to it. Jesus intended for all the believers to go and tell what they had seen with others.

The scope of missions is inclusive. The church is to cross all barriers—to reach out to all ethnic groups, clans, tribes, social classes, and cultures. The message of salvation is to be shared with all people everywhere. The message is exclusive, the Good News of Jesus. The new disciples were to be baptized and taught. The purpose of the teaching was to do more than share information. It was to provide nourishment in the faith as well.

Since the Great Commission is a mandate, the church is expected to be obedient. Yet, it cannot do the job alone. Christ has promised that He will be with the church until “the end of the world.” With this assurance, the church was obedient, for the Gospel was presented first in Jerusalem (Acts 1-8), then in Samaria (Acts 8-12) and finally to the entire world (Acts 13-28).

Jesus’ presence would be felt through the Holy Spirit. In fact, the disciples were not to go out into the world until the Holy Spirit had come upon them (Acts 1:8). This is the only time in the Bible that a church is told not to be involved in mission. The reason is clear. The Holy Spirit empowers the church. He also convicts and converts sinners (Acts 5:14; 11:21, 24; 18:8), performs mighty works of grace in believers (Acts 4:8-10), disciplines the church (Acts 5:13-14), sends forth workers (Acts 8:26; 13:1-3), presides over the missionary council (Acts 15), restrains and contains workers (Acts 16:6-10), and exercises supreme ecclesiastical authority (Acts 20:28).

Empowered by the Holy Spirit, the church did missions by preaching Jesus (Acts 2; 8:35; 10:36-44; 1 Corinthians 2:1-2). The church's mission to the world was strengthened through its intimate fellowship and unity (Acts 2:44), and every effort was made to maintain this characteristic (Acts 6:1-7; 15). A study of Paul's letters to the churches in Corinth and Galatia, for example, reflects the importance of intimate fellowship and unity within the church.

One of the early missionaries was the apostle Paul. God had called him as a missionary to the Gentiles (Acts 26:16-18; Romans 1:5; Ephesians 3:1), and he was sent out by the church in Antioch (Acts 13:1-3). The Holy Spirit led him in his ministry (Acts 16:6-10). He preached Jesus (1 Corinthians 2:1-2), met people on their own level (Acts 17), established autonomous, indigenous churches (Acts 14:23), and worked with others—often training them to do the works of the ministry (Acts 16:1-3). Paul further refused to be dependent on the work he established for his own livelihood, yet he was grateful when churches responded to his needs (Philippians 4:14-18). Significantly, he identified with those with whom he worked (1 Corinthians 9:19-23).

Just as Jesus called the early disciples to be on mission, He has called you. Today, the United States is the third largest mission field in the world – China, India, and the United States – with over 210 million unchurched people. To bring that huge figure down to where you live, statistically, for every ten people you met today, seven of them are unchurched, unsaved, and headed into eternity without Christ.

Today as you pray, begin a prayer list of people you know who are unchurched – family, friends, neighbors, people you work with, go to school with, or do business with. Contact the church or place where you will be doing missions and ask them for a list of people in their community who are unchurched. Then begin to daily lift them up before God, by name and pray for their salvation.

 **Day 20****Missions through the Eyes of Jesus**

“But the Lord said to him, “Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel” (Acts 9:15). “So Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you’” (John 20:21).

You have been chosen by God to be “On Mission” with Him. Your assignment: to reach and reconcile a lost world to God. While Jesus could have won the world by Himself, He was not content to do that. Instead, He realized that it was the Father’s plan to involve each born-again believer in taking the gospel to the ends of the earth – to all people. The call of God on the life of Paul is the call of God on the life of every believer – take the Gospel to everyone regardless of his or her ethnic origin.

You cannot accomplish your mission by yourself. If you could, God would not receive the glory and your work would be of man not of God. Therefore, He has given to you the Holy Spirit, to work in and through you (Acts 1:8). The early believers realized this truth and allowed the Holy Spirit to work through them and we read, *“And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47).*

God has given to you a plan of action – that every believer would be a witness, believing with the heart and confession with the mouth that Jesus is Lord (see Rom 10:9-17). God’s game plan has not changed. Just as the disciples were commissioned and empowered then, the Holy Spirit commissions and empowers you today to be His witness to people in your family, in your neighborhood, in your city, in your state, in your country, and around the world. You are a believer on mission.

“God has not only chosen you, but He also has chosen the church, which means the called-out ones. Everyone in His body is chosen for His purpose. Think about the church of which you are a member. For what purpose has God chosen you? Each church is to be a world-mission strategy center. Each church has distinctive local and global roles to play.”¹

As you and your church prepare to come to Appalachia, remember God has chosen you for this assignment; it is not by accident or chance. Whatever your mission opportunity involves – construction projects, home repair, community survey, block parties, sports clinics or anyone of the many other opportunities in Appalachia, you are coming to be a witness for Christ. Your

¹ Avery T. Willis, Jr. and Henry T. Blackaby, *On Mission With God: Living God’s Purpose For His Glory* (Nashville, TN, LifeWay, 2001), p. 111.

attitude, your conduct, and your willingness to be flexible all reflect on your witness. *“Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God”* (1 Corinthians 10:31).

North Columbia Baptist Church in, South Carolina has discovered this truth. Repeatedly they have come to southern West Virginia to do missions, often in isolated communities that are difficult to reach. Their mission projects have ranged from assessments of project needs to actually completing the project. No project request has been seen as too small or too great. They arrive, often sleeping on church pews or on the floor. They approach each mission opportunity with a vision of what God is going to do through them to reach the lost in that community. Yet, wherever they go, they are able to experience God working through them as lives are changed and a positive witness is left in the community. Only eternity will reveal the total impact of their faithful witness.

Today as you pray, thank God for your salvation. Take time to reflect upon what it means to be reconciled to God, to be saved, to be His child. Then thank God that He has called and empowered you to be on mission for Him. As you pray, ask the Father to enable you to be sensitive to the lost people around you and to be an effective witness for Him. Then pray for the place you are going on your mission project, asking the Father to effectively use you and your church as a witness. God has chosen you for such a time as this (Esther 4:14).



Day 21

Tell Me about Jesus

“So Cornelius said, “Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing, and said, ‘Cornelius, your prayer has been heard, and your alms are remembered in the sight of God. Send therefore to Joppa and call Simon here, whose surname is Peter. He is lodging in the house of Simon, a tanner, by the sea. When he comes, he will speak to you.’ So I sent to you immediately, and you have done well to come. Now therefore, we are all present before God, to hear all the things commanded you by God” (Acts 10:30-33).

From the beginning of time, prejudice has existed¹. Prejudice is everywhere in the world—in every nation, state, city, and neighborhood. Prejudice or discrimination even exists within families between parent and child, brother and sister, family and relatives. Feelings toward and against people are a tragic reality.

There are at least two basic reasons for prejudice. **First**, people differ. They differ in nationality, color, beliefs, religion, speech, looks, behavior, ability, energy, position, status, social standing, possessions, wealth, birth, and heritage. Prejudice arises when people feel they and their differences make them better than others. **Second**, mistreatment causes prejudice, both mistreating others and being mistreated. When a person mistreats others or is mistreated by others, his nature is immediately aroused to become prejudicial and judgmental. The mistreatment that gives rise to prejudice covers a wide range of behavior: ignoring, neglecting, joking, gossiping, opposing, cursing, abusing, fighting, persecuting, passing over, segregating, enslaving.

The present passage (Acts 10:1-48) strikes a fatal blow against prejudice. It shows forever that Jesus Christ has erased all prejudices and barriers between people. Jew and Gentile are now one in Christ Jesus. However, for Peter, reaching beyond his prejudices to a Gentile took divine intervention.

The Jews, like all other people of the earth, had developed their own laws and customs; and every Jewish child was born and reared in the environment of those laws and customs. They, like all other people, were steeped in their own nationality and looked upon other people with suspicion. The Jewish people had always been mistreated, enslaved, and persecuted much more than the other people of the world. Through the centuries, the Jewish people had been conquered by army after army, and by the millions, they have been deported and scattered over the world. Even in the day of Jesus, they were enslaved by Rome. Their religious beliefs and their rules had

¹ Read the account of Cain and Abel - Genesis 4:1-15.

kept them from alien beliefs and from being swallowed up by other people through intermarriage. Their religion was what maintained their distinctiveness as a people and as a nation.

Because of their prejudice, the Jew had misunderstood God's purpose for them. God had called Abraham and given birth to the Jewish nation for one primary purpose—that they might be His people, His witnesses, His missionaries to the rest of the world. God had given the Jews His Word and instructed them to take His Word to the world and tell them about God. They were to bear witness that God is – God does exist – and that men are to worship and serve Him and Him alone. It was here that Israel failed. Instead of proclaiming God and His Word of righteousness and morality to the world, Israel separated itself from the world, hoarding and claiming that God and His law were theirs and theirs alone.

We must be careful that prejudice does not keep us from sharing the Gospel with others who are different in nationality, color, beliefs, worldview, religion, speech, looks, behavior, ability, energy, position, status, social standing, possessions, wealth, birth, and heritage. Simply because a person is different does not negate our responsibility to share with them the Gospel. People everywhere need the Lord. The central and northern regions of Appalachia are areas that are often overlooked in reaching people for Christ. Their culture, mannerisms, and worldview are different and can at times create a barrier to reaching them with the Gospel. Moreover, it is difficult to reach many of the inner, isolated areas of Appalachia. Yet, people in Appalachia need Christ. Whole counties and many towns and cities do not have a Southern Baptist church, over 13 million people living in the Appalachian region are unchurched and many of those who are churched understand salvation as something one earns by good works or church membership. Many people living in Appalachia have never entered into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ through the new birth – salvation by grace through faith² – as Baptists understand salvation.

Today as you pray, will you ask the Father to let you see Appalachia through His eyes, to see the people as He sees them and to love them as He loves them (John 3:16; 2 Pet. 3:9)? Then ask the Father to use you on your mission trip to share the gospel and to see lost Appalachians be saved. Remember, Jesus prayed for the day when you would join Him in the harvest (Matt. 9:35-38).

² Ephesians 2:8-9; Romans 10:9-13

 **Day 22****Knowledge Lessens Prejudice**

“While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word. And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also” (Acts 10:44-45).

Prejudice can blind us to people and truth. The six men who came with Peter were astonished and amazed that God was saving and pouring out His Holy Spirit upon the Gentiles. All their life these leaders had been taught and steeped in bitterness that bordered on hatred for the Gentiles. What a radical course of events to see their God pouring His Spirit upon the Gentiles, just as He had on them on the day of Pentecost.

Likewise, often those living outside Appalachia have preconceived notions toward Appalachians that prejudice them toward the people who live in the region. Most people living outside the mountains of Appalachia think of the area as one particularly singular place. While the old stereotypes of the male mountaineer as a bibbed-overall-clad, moonshine snorting, hound-dog-loving, welfare-dependent, and lazy, and the female as a bonnet-wearing, pipe-smoking, toothless, weary-to-the-bone piece of background scenery have been, for the most part, put rightfully to rest. The misconception that one Appalachian is pretty much like the next one still holds sway. This is due in part to the misconception portrayed by such films as “Deliverance,” such television shows as “The Beverly Hillbillies,” and the comic strip, “Li'l Abner.”

There are three Appalachians: the town and city dwellers, the valley farmers and the branch water mountaineers. The city dwellers live in incorporated places of 1,000 or more residents and tend to separate themselves from their more rural neighbors and they tend to resist the term “mountaineer.” The valley farmers, largest of the three groups, are those living along main highways or river valleys or at the mouths of creeks. This group is more or less typical of people living in other parts of the country. The third group, the branch water mountaineers, lives up the hollows and coves, on the ridges and in or on any other inaccessible part of the region. It is this last group that has become the stereotypical mountaineer of fiction and has received media attention.

Today, there is as much cultural differences between rural Appalachia and urban Appalachia as between the Anglos and Mexican Hispanics who live in the same city. The people living in Ashland, Kentucky or Beckley, West Virginia have more in common with people of similar small towns in Georgia or South Carolina than they do with their cousins living up Six-Mile Hollow or in the small dying coal towns, isolated in the mountains.

Across Appalachia, the towns and cities are slowly merging with the valleys and main roads to create almost continuous strips of malls, shopping centers, trailer lots, restaurants and bingo parlors. However, still branching off the highways are the dirt and crumbling-asphalt roads of the hollows. Here, and only here, can be found the last lingering traces of the real mountaineer, that rugged, determined, free-spirited isolationist who became so unfairly stereotyped. Today, “holler” Appalachians come into the light of day on a regular basis, making up a huge portion of the customers frequenting the Wal-Marts, Kmart’s, Lowe’s, Dollar Generals, Applebee’s, Ryan’s and Olive Gardens.

Whether it is in the large cities of Appalachia, the small town, the rural communities, or up the “hollers,” people in Appalachia need Christ. Today, God is opening up doors of opportunity to present the Gospel and grow churches in Appalachia as never before. Will you come determined to love and share with Appalachians – city folk or “holler folk” the Gospel?

As you pray today, ask God to let you see Appalachian people through His eyes and love them with the same love for them He has. Pray that God will effectively use you, and if you have any prejudice toward Appalachians, that He will reveal it to you so that you can confess and turn from it.

 **Day 23****Linking Arms**

“And when Saul had come to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, and did not believe that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles” (Acts 9:26-27a). “Then Barnabas departed for Tarsus to seek Saul. And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people. And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch” (Acts 11:25-26).

Working together as a team is essential. Barnabas understood teamwork and the importance of using the abilities and spiritual gifts of others to enhance the team. Barnabas, a Levite, was from the Island of Cyprus and his name means “Son of exhortation” or “Son of consolation.” Barnabas was an extremely important person in the life of the early church¹ and an example to follow today.

Saul², converted and preaching Christ, returned to Jerusalem and repeatedly tried to join with the believers there, but they did not accept him. Because of his past fierce and determined persecution of the followers of Christ, the disciples probably felt that this was just another tactic to invade their fellowship, identify them, and then launch a new wave of persecution. Paul’s past as the arch-persecutor of believers haunted him; the believers would not believe his testimony.

Finally, Barnabas befriended Saul. Somehow, Barnabas began to sense Saul might be telling the truth. Apparently, he sat down with Saul and had him relate his experiences with Christ. Thoroughly convinced that Saul was truthful, Barnabas took Paul to the apostles, Peter and James, the half-brother of Jesus who was to become, if he was not already, the pastor of the church at Jerusalem (Galatians 1:18-19). Barnabas was building a team.

Several years later when the Gospel reached Antioch, the third largest city in the Roman world, many Gentiles came to faith in Christ. Hearing the report of the great numbers who were saved, the church at Jerusalem sent Barnabas there to help the new believers. Realizing he needed help, Barnabas set out to build a team. A unique person was needed, a person who not only had a Jewish background, but who knew the Greek language and culture and could relate to both Gentile and Jew alike. The person also needed to be fearless and bold in his witness for Christ because of the godless, immoral society of Antioch. Barnabas knew such a man: Saul of Tarsus and he set out to find him.

¹ For an interesting study, read through the Book of Acts marking each time you find Barnabas and noting his role or activity. You can begin in 4:36-37.

² Paul the Apostle

As you prepare to come to Appalachia for your mission trip, building a team is very important. Take time to get to know the others from your church who are going with you. Pray together, plan together, and discover how you can effectively work together for the glory of God.³ Simultaneously, include the receiving church or association in your praying and planning. Make the presite visits, discover ways to involve them in your project, seek their advice and guidance. Regularly communicate with them by telephone or email. Plan some fellowship or fun activities while you are on your mission trip which will include them. Incorporate them in your mission project while you are there working alongside them. Be a Barnabas, build a team, be part of a team, and let God receive all the glory.

Today as you pray, ask God to enable you to be a team player and a team builder. Ask Him to set in motion opportunities and circumstances that will bring your team and the receiving team together to effectively serve in reaching the place where you are going with the Gospel.

³ 1 Corinthians 10:31; Col. 3:17, 23; 1 Pet. 4:11

 **Day 24****Off To Antioch, Or Wherever You Are Going**

“But some of them were men from Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they had come to Antioch, spoke to the Hellenists, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord. Then news of these things came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent out Barnabas to go as far as Antioch. When he came and had seen the grace of God, he was glad, and encouraged them all that with purpose of heart they should continue with the Lord” (Acts 11:20-23).

In the Great Commission Jesus charged every believer with these profound words, *“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”* (Matt 28:19-20). This passage is one of the most crucial passages of Scripture. No passage is more important for genuine believers. Every believer is charged with the responsibility of discipling and evangelizing the lost and teaching new believers. Our Lord is not only telling us to evangelize, but also how to evangelize, make disciples, and then teach them. Far too often we obey the command of Christ to evangelize the lost but fail to disciple and teach those who respond to the Gospel.

The Jerusalem church understood the command of Christ to disciple and teach the new believers, as well as to evangelize the lost. When the church at Jerusalem heard that people were being saved in Antioch, they sent Barnabas to Antioch to encourage, disciple, and teach the new believers (Acts 11:22-26). The early church understood that the success or failure of the new believers depended on discipling and teaching them the Word of God. Repeated studies show that new believers, who are not disciplined within the first year of their Christian faith, seldom develop into committed believers.

As you prepare to come to Appalachia for your mission’s project, reflect upon your ultimate purpose. Is it to repair a roof, construct a building, do a Backyard Bible Club, or is it to evangelize the lost and disciple the saved. Often mission teams come to Appalachia, do their project and leave. The next year they come back, repeating the same process and after a few years wonder why no change has taken place. Usually the solution is to move on to another place and repeat the process – come, do the project, leave. One church recently called concerned that in the four years they had conducted Vacation Bible School at the same small church, the same group of children and youth made professions of faith each year. When I suggested they involve the church in the process of preparation and then allow them to participate in the teaching, they rejected the idea. When I suggested that they assist the small rural church with follow-up, again they resisted and simply said they would go elsewhere next year. As I hung up the telephone, I

wondered aloud, “And probably repeat the same process and ask the same questions in a couple of years.”

How different it was with a church from South Carolina. In 1997, they agreed to assist a small, rural congregation in West Virginia¹ with their Vacation Bible School. Each year they shared more and more of the responsibilities with the receiving church, involving them in first the planning, progressing each year until in 2001 the church conducted Vacation Bible School without any assistance. Recently the pastor shared with me his goal of taking his church to do missions – yes, you guessed right, to help another church learn to do Vacation Bible School. Missions is more than just going and doing a mission project, it is sending volunteers to join with a sister church to help them with the work.

As you plan your mission trip, take time to involve the receiving church in the process and provide for them ways to join with you as you join with them in missions. As you pray today, ask the Father to show you ways that you can work together to advance the kingdom of God in Appalachia.

¹ The name and location are not given to protect the identity of the congregation.

 **Day 25**

We Still Have Variety

“But some of them were men from Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they had come to Antioch, spoke to the Hellenists, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord” (Acts 11:20-21).

“So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus. And when they arrived in Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews” (Acts 13:4-5).

From Jerusalem to Antioch the early church was filled with a diversity of people who implemented church in a variety of patterns. In Acts 2:9-11, Luke records that people from all over the known world heard the news of Christ and returned home with news of all they had seen and heard. Probably they were part of *“those who accepted his message and were baptized.”* Then Luke reports that about 3,000 were saved that day (Acts 2:9-11). From the beginning, the church included Galilean and Judean Jews and *“converts to Judaism”* (2:11), the God-fearing Gentiles, some of whom would be proselytes.

As you travel through Appalachia you will discover that Southern Baptist churches are as diverse, if not more so, than the early church. You will discover a wide array of churches in size and worship – from the mega church to the small congregation; from traditional style worship services to praise and worship, from a blended style of worship to shaped note music. Some churches use modern translations of the Bible while others recognize only the King James Version (KJV). Some churches use the piano and organ in worship, others have no musical instruments, some use CD players or electronic boxes, still others use a wide assortment of musical instruments ranging from a full orchestra to guitars, fiddles, and banjos.

One Sunday, in the spring of 2002, I spoke in a mountain church where the pastor greeted me in the parking lot and requested that I not wear a coat and tie, which I gladly removed, and then he wanted to see my Bible to make sure that it was a KJV and contained no notes. I passed the test and had a wonderful worship experience with the pastor and his congregation. Incidentally, this pastor baptized one person in 2001 for every two resident members. The next Sunday I preached in a church where the pastor called to remind me that he always wore a suit and he preferred that I use a modern translation. By the way, I used sermon notes while preaching and had a wonderful worship experience. This church is also reaching many people for Christ.

Recently, on a Sunday morning, I visited with and preached at a new church start that was designed to reach unchurched boomers and busters. The atmosphere was relaxed, few men wore

ties, modern translations of all sorts were being used, the music was a heavy praise and worship format with a live praise band (drums, guitars, and a keyboard), praise singers, and PowerPoint. The worship was exciting with a lot of congregational participation. There was no pulpit and the congregation sat in comfortable chairs. Over 100 people were present for the service and the church is reaching many people for Christ.

That evening, one mile away from the church mentioned above, I spoke at another Southern Baptist Church. Earlier in the day, the pastor had called to request that I use the KJV and wear a coat and tie. When I arrived at the church, I noticed that every man entering the building wore a suit and every woman a dress and they had approximately 100 people present. The music was from a shaped note hymnal, a piano was the only instrument in the building and while the congregation sang vigorously, there was no clapping of hands or verbal expresses of praise. This church has just experienced a year of growth and is very effective in reaching people for Christ.

An effective mission trip means adaptability “to” the receiving church or association. The way you do church at home may not be the way they do church where you are going. The issue is not what translation of the Bible you use, the type of music you sing, or how you dress to come to church. Every mission trip, successful as it might prove to be, must always be seen as a means to an end, not as an end in itself. The end is to bring unbelievers into faith in Jesus Christ, and if this requires an adjustment in the way we do church to make that happen, so be it.

As you prepare for your mission trip, if you are going to be participating with the receiving church in any worship experience, take time to discover how they worship. Ask the receiving church/association about the style of worship, music, and Bible translations they prefer you use and either accommodate them or prayerfully seek a new place to be on mission. In addition, if their style of worship is different, please don't spend your time in debate or dialogue with them about which is right or wrong. Spend that energy in reaching the unchurched in Appalachia.

Today as you pray, ask the Father to enable you to be flexible and adaptable as you prepare for and go on your mission trip. Pray for those with whom you will be working with that they too will be flexible and adaptable during the mission project and that in the end people will be saved and God receive the glory.

 **Day 26****The Cold Water Committee**

“Now it happened in Iconium that they went together to the synagogue of the Jews, and so spoke that a great multitude both of the Jews and of the Greeks believed. But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brethren. Therefore they stayed there a long time, speaking boldly in the Lord, who was bearing witness to the word of His grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands” (Acts 14:1-3).

Most churches are blessed with distracters. They are members of the cold-water committee and with religious piety attempt to distract you from your mission. In Pisidian Antioch¹ and Iconium², Paul and Barnabas preached the Gospel and many Jews and Gentiles believed. At the same time they experienced intense and violent opposition from the religionists (Jews). They were expelled from Pisidian Antioch and forced to flee Iconium to avoid being stoned to death.

Who were these religionists Jews? They were Jews who did not accept Jesus as the Messiah and stirred up trouble over the preaching of the Gospel. The word “unbelieving” means disobedient, implying that they were unwilling to believe or to be persuaded. They deliberately withheld belief, disobeying God. They went about stirring up the city against the Lord’s servants, making a deliberate attempt to arouse the people by spreading rumors, making false suggestions and insinuations. Their goal was to embitter and provoke the people and the officials of the city to get rid of the preachers.

As you pray and prepare for your mission trip, do not be surprised if good, religious church folk oppose what you feel God is leading you to do. When you become engaged in missions it creates either a positive or a negative reaction from fellow believers for several reasons. First, it reminds them that the United States is a mission field. For many years, the United States has been considered the great mission sending nation, not the largest English speaking mission field in the world that it is today. Recently during an “On Missions Celebration”, I shared the above mission’s fact and a member of the congregation where I was speaking strongly objected. He was receptive to no reasoning, mission facts, or other pertinent information. In the end, he still felt that the USA was not a great mission field. Second, when you begin talking about missions and evangelism you remind others of their responsibility to be on mission for Christ in reaching the lost with the Gospel; for many that is disturbing. Too often the unspoken belief among Baptists is that evangelism is the work of the spiritually gifted and the pastor, not the church member. Third, as you talk about doing a mission project in Appalachia, it draws awareness to the needs in your community or in a surrounding community. It is easier to talk about the

¹ Acts 13:42-52

² Acts 14:1-7

physical and spiritual needs in South America, for example, than to talk about the needs down the road. Missions close to home reminds believers of their responsibility to be on mission for Christ in their Jerusalem.

When the cold-water committee throws water on your mission trip, remember God has called you to be on mission for Him, has a place for you to serve, and has a people waiting for you to come. Whether your mission project is cultivating the soil or planting seed, your faithfulness will influence the harvest. This past summer two churches cancelled their mission trip to Appalachia at the last minute because of difficulties with the cold water committee. Appalachian Regional Ministry was unable to find a last minute replacement for the two rural, mountain churches. Because of limited financial resources and other factors, the boys and girls in their communities did not have a Vacation Bible School or a Back to School Fair, both of which depend on outside churches to assist them. I could not help but wonder how many boys and girls were lost because someone took a project and failed to complete their mission.

Today as you pray, ask the Heavenly Father to give you and your church the spirit of determination to see your mission opportunity through to completion and that whenever obstacles come before you, He will reveal His glory by bringing victory. Remember, others are counting on you, many of whom are lost.

 **Day 27****Don't Forget the Follow-up**

“And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith” (Acts 14:21-22a).

There are two great ministries in the church, that of preaching the gospel and making disciples, and that of strengthening the church. Both the work of evangelism and strengthening the church are often neglected. This was not true of Paul and Barnabas, who were not content to just travel through a town, preaching the gospel, evangelizing the lost, and establishing a new church. They knew the importance of returning and strengthening the new disciples. The reasons are clear.

First, there was the excitement of a new work with large numbers of receptive people and conversions taking place. The remaining people in a community had not been as receptive as those who were the first to make decisions, and Paul knew that the longer a church waits to reach out, the more difficult it is to reach people with the Gospel. The work of day-by-day ministry in the same community, preaching to and teaching the same people is not as exciting as reaching out into new areas and establishing new works.

Second, strengthening and making true disciples of the new converts is much more difficult than leading them to Christ. Leading people to Christ involves a one-time decision, but strengthening and making disciples involves many decisions that take place over many days and months and sometimes years. Other factors enter in such as different personalities, different levels of spiritual growth, different levels of commitment, different emotions, different ages, and opposing thoughts and ideas.

As Paul and Barnabas returned to the cities, it is important to note that they did not require full maturity in the Christian life. They, as outsiders, did not assume the leadership of the churches. They did not offer a financial subsidy to support the new leaders and congregations. Instead, the developed goal was to make sure that the fruit of evangelism was fruit that remained. I mention this because in modern missions we tend to go to one of two extremes. Either we tend to take over or we come and do the mission's project without any follow-up contact with the receiving church, ministry center, or association.

There are three important phases to any mission trip: preparation, the trip itself, and follow-up. Often we do an excellent job of preparation for the mission trip and completing the mission project, but fail to follow-up. Then sometimes promises are made to the receiving church or

ministry center in Appalachia, but those making the promises fail to follow through with their commitment. Please do not make promises you cannot keep.

Follow-up is important in missions. Many of the churches in Appalachia that provide us with mission projects are small struggling congregations with limited financial and human resources to do the work God has called them to do. While they rejoice in mission teams coming and are grateful to God that they can provide the opportunity and receive assistance from fellow Southern Baptists, they often are unable to effectively follow-up on the decisions that are made during the mission project. Here is where you can join with them in the follow-up efforts.

- Keep a list of the names of those who make decisions during the summer and daily remember them in prayer. Ask your church to add them to their prayer list.
- Provide the materials that are needed for follow-up. Be sure and use materials that communicate clearly and are written on the reading level of those who have made decisions. Be available and willing to answer their questions. For example, the central and northern sections of Appalachia are strongly Armenian, that is, they do not accept the doctrine of eternal security. Helping new Christians understand not only the assurance of their salvation, but also the security they have in Christ will enable them to grow as young believers.
- Keep in contact with those who made decisions, either by telephone or by mail. Sending them a card on their birthday or on holidays can be effective. Be an encourager.
- Plan to go to the same church or ministry center for several years. Effective ministry in Appalachia usually begins in the fourth or fifth year of a partnership.

Today as you pray, ask God to show you how you can become effective in following up with those who make decisions during your mission trip. Begin now praying for those at the mission site who will be hearing the Good News of Jesus. Ask the Father to prepare their hearts to receive the Gospel and be saved. Then ask Him to prepare your heart to be faithful in follow-up.

Youth Are Important

“Then he came to Derbe and Lystra. And behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a certain Jewish woman who believed, but his father was Greek. He was well spoken of by the brethren who were at Lystra and Iconium. Paul wanted to have him go on with him. And he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in that region, for they all knew that his father was Greek. And as they went through the cities, they delivered to them the decrees to keep, which were determined by the apostles and elders at Jerusalem. So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and increased in number daily” (Acts 16:1-5).

Mission opportunities are an effective part of the spiritual development of youth. As teenagers prepare for the mission trip, a new level of maturity grips them as they see the eternal significance they will be making. Paul understood the importance of using young people, even though he was not always patient with them.

In Acts 15:36-41; Luke records the controversy over John Mark. This young man had joined Paul and Barnabas on the first missionary journey out of Antioch. For unknown reason, John Mark had left the two missionaries in Perga and returned to Jerusalem. Paul saw him as a quitter; Barnabas saw him as a teenager in the process of “growing up” and wanted to give him a second chance. When Paul refused, Barnabas took John Mark and went in one direction and Paul went in the other direction. However, Paul’s first stop was to find a young man named Timothy to serve with him.

Incidentally, John Mark made it this time. With the positive influence of Barnabas, his cousin¹, he would later write the first of the four Gospels we have in the New Testament today, the Gospel of Mark. At some point, he was able to make amends with Paul, who he later called a fellow labor² and near the end of his life asked Timothy to “*get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry*” (2 Timothy 4:11). Time and maturity had made a difference.

When Paul visited Lystra on his first mission trip around five or six years earlier, Timothy was just a child probably around ten to twelve years old. He was still a young man when Paul wrote his first letter to Timothy³. This entire means Timothy was a teenager when Paul met him on his second mission to Lystra. While it is possible that Paul led Timothy to the Lord on his first mission tour, it is more probable that Timothy’s mother and grandmother led him to the Lord.⁴ Timothy astonished Paul. The word “*behold*” conveys the idea of looking and gazing at a

¹ Colossians 4:10

² Philemon 1:24

³ 1 Timothy 4:12

⁴ 2 Timothy 1:5; 3:14-15

wonderful discovery, at an unexpected surprise. Timothy's love and maturity in the Lord struck Paul.

The passage before us today is significant, for it shows how Paul took Timothy under his care to continue the process of discipleship. Timothy was a teenager who was destined to become one of the great servants of the early church, the one to whom the Lord had Paul write two of the great letters of the New Testament, and missions was an important part of the process.

Down through the centuries God has continued to use young people in missions. My personal passion for missions developed during the three summers I served as a summer missionary while a teenager growing up in West Virginia. For eight weeks, a group of us would divide into groups of two and teach four to six Bible clubs daily, with each club lasting one week. Riding bicycles, walking, or catching a ride with a local pastor we would travel across the Kanawha Valley – going into isolated communities, city parks, up hollows, and to small churches teaching boys and girls about Jesus. Only eternity will reveal the hundreds of children and youth who came to Christ during those exciting days. It was during that first year of summer missions, at the age of 14; God called me to be a preacher and placed in my heart a passion for missions that only grew with time. While I was not called to be a career missionary until over 34 years later, my passion and love for missions was born while serving as a summer missionary.

As I go from church to church encouraging Southern Baptists to be on mission in Appalachia, I hear again and again the stories of pastors and missionaries who felt the call to career ministry or missions while on a summer mission trip. Remember, in the beginning you were reminded that missions is contagious!

Today, as you pray, if you are an adult, ask God to use you this on this mission trip to influence the young people in a positive way towards missions. Ask God to enable you to be a Barnabas, patient, forgiving, and encouraging; not a Paul, so task oriented that you tend to lose sight of people and reject those who fail you. That young man or woman you are working with just might be the next William Carey, Billy Graham, or Annie Armstrong.

If you are a teenager or young adult, ask the Heavenly Father to use you effectively on this mission trip. Then ask Him to allow the preparation, circumstances and mission related activities to enhance your spiritual maturity.

 **Day 29****Come To Appalachia and Help Us**

“And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, “Come over to Macedonia and help us.” Now after he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them” (Acts 16:9-10).

When God closes one door, He opens another. Certainly, Paul experienced that on his second missionary journey. As he prepared to go to Asia (modern Turkey) to preach the Word, he was forbidden by the Holy Spirit from entering. Then attempting to go into Bithynia, the Holy Spirit again did not permit Paul and his company to enter. With closed doors all around him, Paul could have quit, but instead he moved on to Troas. There God spoke to him through a vision and Paul received the Macedonian call, *“Come over and help us!”*

Thus, Paul was called to Europe and God gave him the vision of a man in Macedonia crying for help. The words in the man’s cry, “help us,” are plural. Paul was given a vision of a man who represented all of Europe, crying and begging Paul to come and help. The desperation of the cry would both break and stir the heart of any true follower of Christ. It was such a striking scene that Paul would never forget it and neither should any other believer.

The cry of desperation is emphatic, declaring both to Paul and to all succeeding believers that the door of the whole world is open, wide open. Souls are ready and crying for help. The harvest is truly ripe and the need is great. It is not only one man who needs help, but also *all of us* in Macedonia (Europe, the world, Appalachia). The Macedonian call is a call of the church. The church must go and go now or else the desperate cry for help will never be met. The need is now. The response must be quick, immediate. A day must not be wasted; a slow and aimless route must not be taken.

Today, the Holy Spirit is generating a fresh new call to missions in the hearts of God’s people. No longer are true believers content to just send money and let the “professional” missionary do the work of ministry. Having heard the Macedonian call, thousands of mission volunteers are now serving around the world, giving of both money and time to missions, serving alongside the career missionary. Some volunteer for extended periods, while others serve in short-term mission opportunities.

A small part of God’s world is Appalachia where the physical and spiritual needs are at times overwhelming. With over 13 million unchurched persons, the Appalachian region represents a large unreached section of the United States, and God is issuing the “Appalachian call.”

Norm and Debbie Cannada heard the “Appalachian call” and came to Charleston, West Virginia to start a church in the inner city. Happy and content in North Carolina where Norm worked as a successful newspaper editor, they left the comfort of a secure salary to come and establish West Charleston Baptist Church in a part of Appalachia that had been passed over and forgotten by others.

Bob and Brenda Underwood heard the “Appalachian call” and left a secure job in the heating and air conditioning business, serving for a while on a church staff in Atlanta, Georgia, and then came to Logan, West Virginia to start a new church. Today New Covenant Fellowship is reaching out and touching the lives of people and advancing the Kingdom of God across a difficult area in Appalachia.

After years of ministry in other states, Lonnie & Belinda Riley heard the “Appalachian call” and came home to Lynch, Kentucky to start Meridzo Ministries. Today, Meridzo Ministries is ministering in Harlan County, Kentucky and seeing lives changed that long ago had been forgotten.

While serving as a deacon at Good Hope Baptist Church in Tunnel Hill, Georgia, Mike Cook heard the “Appalachian call” left a successful telecommunications company he had started and today is planting a church in the West Side community, a growing area of Whitfield County, Georgia. Currently meeting in a local elementary school, LifeWay Baptist Church is reaching out to middle and upper income level families that are relocating into this growing community.

These are just a sampling of the many stories of those who have heard the “Appalachia call”, changed directions, and today are serving in Appalachia. Thousands of others have heard the call and came year after year as short-term volunteers, serving in the big cities, small town, and rural remote sections of Appalachia telling the wonderful Good News of Jesus.

Today as you pray, thank God that you are a part of those who have heard the “*Macedonian call*” and are joining Him on mission in Appalachia. Pray for the members of your team and for the thousands of others who will be coming to Appalachia on mission, that God will use you, your team, and others to reach this region of our world.



Day 30

Carry a Rubber Band

“And when they had laid many stripes on them, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to keep them securely. Having received such a charge, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks. But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them” (Acts 16:23-25).

Flexibility and creativity are two essential ingredients for volunteer missions. Without them, you will quickly grow frustrated and hinder the Kingdom work of Christ.

The apostle Paul, by nature, was not very flexible. A study of his life from the New Testament reveals a man who was systematic and methodical in his planning. Like a modern day engineer, he wanted every “i” dotted and every “t” crossed. However, Paul quickly learned in missions you have to be sensitive to the leadership of the Holy Spirit, who does not always tell you, in advance, what He has planned. He had to learn to work with people who were not always prepared and who did not always share his passion for missions. Moreover, he had to learn to adapt to the ever-changing situations he encountered.

For example, study the second missionary journey of Paul. The journey is filled with ever changing circumstances and circumstances that would challenge the best of us.

- Acts 15:36-41 – Paul and Barnabas have a sharp disagreement over John Mark that resulted in Paul having to put together a new mission team.
- Acts 16:16-40 – When Paul delivers a young girl from a demonic spirit, he and Silas are stripped, beaten, and put in prison. Instead of crying out “why me Lord,” they started singing praises to God, resulting in the salvation of the jailer and his whole household.
- Acts 17:1-15 – because of the preaching of the Word of God, Paul and his mission team are run out of Thessalonica and Berea.
- Acts 17:16-32 – in Athens, while waiting for his mission team to join him, Paul reasoned with the Jews and God-fearing Greeks and debated with the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers, who made fun of him.

Paul never quit or complained, he had learned a valuable lesson, be flexible. As you prepare for your mission trip, purchase a **rubber band** for members of your team to remind them that flexibility is essential in volunteer missions. Remember, when circumstances change and we can allow them to hinder the work of Christ, or we can exercise flexibility and creativity and allow them to bring glory to God.

From time to time, a mission team will arrive in Appalachia and discover that circumstances have changed and what they planned to do will not work as originally planned. Some teams quickly adapt and turn the week into a wonderful experience, while others leave, at best upset, and others leave a bit on the angry side.

While traveling through Pennsylvania, I was introduced to the **“rubber band”** by a church from Fort Worth, Texas. Two vanloads of senior adults had traveled for two days to do missions with a church in Pennsylvania. Their mission project involved four Backyard Bible Clubs daily in subdivisions surrounding the receiving church. When they arrived, they discovered that the week before, another Southern Baptist church had come, unannounced to the area and conducted Bible Clubs in the targeted areas the week before using the same material they were using. What a bummer! Not really, the leader quickly identified two other areas that needed Backyard Bible Clubs and assigned the responsibility to part of the team. The remaining part of the team met with the pastor and discovered that the church had an unfinished basement, resulting in limited educational space. A survey of the basement, a call to Fort Worth, and a trip to a local building supply company and the team went to work hanging and finishing sheetrock. On Thursday, I visited with the team and listened as they excitedly told me about how God was using them to prepare Sunday School space for all the boys and girls that were being reached through the Backyard Bible Clubs. They shared how they were working fourteen hours a day in order to complete the project before they headed for home on Saturday morning. I saw men and women with aching muscles and bruised hands weeping as they told of how God was using them. I noticed as they shared their experience with me that several of them had rubber bands on their wrist and others were fiddling with a rubber band. Noticing my curious glances, they explained that when they begin praying and preparing for this mission trip they were issued rubber bands to constantly remind them to be flexible. One man explained, “Missions and flexibility are synonymous terms. How true.

As you pray today, ask the Father to help you be flexible in the preparation and implementation of your mission trip. From time to time circumstances will change and a successful mission trip will depend on your flexibility and creativity.



Day 31

Who's Watching You

"Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30).

When faced with difficult circumstances or even persecution for your faith, you never know who is watching you. Confronted with a hostile environment, Paul and Silas could easily have called it quits, said that mission work was too difficult, and went back to Antioch. After all, everyone would have understood. The thought may have even crossed their minds. They could have reasoned, "Let someone else tell these people about Jesus. Let's plan a new mission trip to a friendlier place, like a beach town on the Mediterranean Sea."

Thank God, they did not quit, for when the going gets tough, the tough get going. Certainly, that was true of Paul and Silas. In Philippi, a man had been observing these two men. He had heard the stories of Paul's preaching, listened as they gave praise to God in spite of their suffering and discomfort, and witnessed the power of God revealed through the earthquake that opened the prison doors and caused the chains to fall off every prisoner. Then assured by Paul that no one had escaped, the jailer cried out, *"Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"*

As you prepare for and carry out your mission trip, people will be observing you. Some will offer words of encouragement, others words of discouragement, while still others want to see if your faith is genuine. Remember your actions speak louder than your words.

Paul and Tracy Curry, a young couple from Georgia, came to Oceana, West Virginia to start a new church, Harborlight Baptist Church. Their first year was tough. They converted a former furniture store into a ministry center, visited in hundreds of homes, attempted to conduct Bible studies, and had no success, and then came the floods of 2001. The Curry's, setting aside their own comfort and safety, begin to assist the flood victims. They provided shelter to the homeless, passed out clothing and food, and worked with Disaster Relief volunteers to clean the mud out of houses. Incidentally, the day before the floods, a trailer load of clothing had been delivered to Harborlight Baptist Church. As the floodwaters came through the front door and started rising, the Curry's prayed, that God would spare the clothing. Just inches from the boxes the water stopped. While it continued to rise outside the building, inside the building it stopped rising and not one box of clothing was damaged.

The floods of 2001, as disastrous as they were, opened the door for ministry in Oceana. In the spring of 2002, Paul baptized five new converts and other baptisms soon followed. People were watching, wondering if the Jesus Paul and Tracy talked about was real.

Similar reports have come in from others areas of Appalachia. The Columbus Baptist Association, Columbus, Georgia, served in Oneida area of Eastern Kentucky for five years. In the summer of 2002, they witnessed fifty-four professions of faith. For eight years, Carl Boyd has faithfully served in Pike County Kentucky, spending long hard hours developing ministry opportunities, utilizing **World Changers** and **Kentucky Changers**, and seeking ways to assist the churches to better share the love of Jesus. In the summer of 2002, there was a reaping of the harvest as he witnessed over two hundred professions of faith. He personally had the joy of leading forty-five people to faith in Christ.

As you come to Appalachia, people will be watching you to see if your faith is genuine. They do not care about your Jesus until they see Him in you. Today as you pray, confess those times to God when you have been unfaithful, when you have complained about your circumstances, or those times when you were discouraged and wanted to quit. Ask the Father to strengthen you when you are weak, encourage you when you are discouraged, and to empower you with the Holy Spirit to be an effective witness. Pray that you will ever be faithful, no matter what the cost.



Day 32

Bloom Where God Plants You

“Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him when he saw that the city was given over to idols. Therefore he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and with the Gentile worshipers, and in the marketplace daily with those who happened to be there” (Acts 17:16-17).

With all the planning, praying, presite visits, and communication you make, sometimes your mission trip will not go as you intended. The apostle Paul discovered this fact on his second missionary journey. Consider for a moment:

- He prepared to depart on the journey; only to enter into a sharp disagreement with Barnabas over John Mark that resulted in them parting company (Acts 15:36-41).
- Leaving Lystra, Paul and his companion headed towards Asia, preaching the Gospel, only to be restrained by the Holy Spirit from going there (Acts 16:6-7).
- Taking a new direction, they arrive at Troas where Paul had a vision of the man of Macedonia standing and begging him to “Come over to Macedonia and help us” (Acts 16:8-10).
- Concluding that God had called them to preach the Gospel in the region of Macedonia, Paul and his company headed straight for Philippi, where, after they had preached the Gospel, Paul and Silas were beaten and placed in prison (Acts 16:11-40).
- Leaving Philippi, bruised, sore, and in pain, they travel to Thessalonica, where, in just a matter of time they were driven out of town because of the message they preached (Acts 17:1-9).
- Arriving in Berea, they again begin to preach and teach the Word of God, where it was received with great eagerness. However, it was only a matter of time until Paul was driven out of town. Some men escorted him to Athens, where he was to wait on Silas and Timothy (Acts 17:10-15).

Faced with all the difficulties, ever-changing plans, and persecution, many would have returned to Antioch and reported to the church that they had cancelled the trip due to the circumstances. Surely, the church at Antioch would have understood, after all they had tried. Perhaps the thought of quitting crossed Paul’s mind. However, in Athens, while waiting for his friends to catch up with him, he observed the idolatry there and was deeply troubled by it. Soon he was debating with philosophers in the public square and before long, while some sneered, others wanted to hear more of the message Paul was preaching (Acts 17:32-34).

Paul’s second missionary journey puts an end to two assumptions that volunteer mission teams often make. The first assumption is that **“every mission trip will go just as planned.”** In

a perfect world that might be true, however in volunteer missions, that is not always the case. For example, at the last minute a key member of the team cancels out, or you arrive at the mission site, planning a week of outdoor activities, and it rains – all week. On the other hand, you arrive on the site prepared to paint, only to discover that the team before you did not finish the sheetrock. Or perhaps you arrive at the mission center, planning for a series of early morning activities, only to find out that the children do not get up early and you have to drastically change your plans.

The second assumption volunteer mission teams often make is this. **“When things do not go as you planned them, the mission trip is a failure.”** You and I serve a sovereign God who uses the difficulties we encounter for His glory and our good¹. God may have ordered the changes we encounter so that someone else, unknown to us, might hear the Gospel and be saved. Additionally, He may be in the process of teaching you or members of your team key lessons on trust and obedience. When we give our best, no mission trip is a failure.

Today as you pray, ask God to use you on this mission trip in a mighty way regardless of the unforeseen circumstances. Also pray, that God will use this trip to mature those who are saved and to see many who are unsaved come to faith in Christ.

¹ Romans 8:28



Day 33

A Tent Making Missionary

“After these things Paul departed from Athens and went to Corinth. And he found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla (because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome); and he came to them. So, because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and worked; for by occupation they were tentmakers” (Acts 18:1-3).

Paul, frequently referred to as a “tentmaker” missionary, would today be called bivocational*. The term “tentmaker” implies that such a missionary earns a living by working in secular employment while doing missionary work in the country or city in which they are employed. Paul regularly worked as a tentmaker. Besides here in Corinth, he did so in Thessalonica, in Ephesus, and possibly in other places.¹ He did it out of financial necessity, and it freed him from asking for material support from the new believers, although he had a basic right to accept financial support from them².

The term “tentmaker” referred to the trade of leather workers. This trade included the making of tents, which were often made out of leather. In Paul’s day, it was customary for all Jewish boys, even rabbis’ sons, to learn their father’s trade. He had no doubt learned from his father to work with this skill. Rabbis were not paid for their teaching, so Paul would have had a trade even in his pre-Christian days as a Pharisaic rabbi.

Today the term “bivocational” is frequently used to describe a missionary or pastor that earns a living by working in secular employment while serving in ministry. Across the Appalachian region, there are many bivocational pastors. These men work in a variety of occupations in order to serve the church they pastor or to work in a particular ministry. As you prepare to come to Appalachia this summer, find out if a bivocational pastor serves in the place where you are going. If so, keep in mind the challenges facing the pastor and his family and the privilege you have of serving alongside him on this mission trip.

If the mission project you have prayerfully undertaken involves a bivocational pastor, you will need to include him in your planning because many of the bivocational pastors schedule their vacation time to coincide with the week of mission activities. If the pastor is not available during

* The bivocational pastor is a pastor whose pastoral ministry is carried out while being partially supported by a church. Usually the pastor has at least two paying jobs concurrently with one of those jobs being the pastor of the church.

¹ 1 Thessalonians 2:9; Acts 20:34

² 2 Corinthians 12:13; 1 Corinthians 9:6

the day, find out to whom you will be relating to from the church and include them in your planning. One important key to a successful mission trip is including the receiving church in the planning and implementation of the mission project.

Because of the busy schedule of bivocational pastors, do not start a project that he cannot handle or finish once you leave without carefully discussing it with him first. Follow-up is critical, especially if professions of faith were made out in the community. Offer to assist the church with the follow-up by telephoning or writing those who made decisions. Perhaps a follow-up trip would be beneficial. Several churches that I am acquainted with plan a follow-up trip in the fall; usually the last week of October and they have a “harvest party,” as well as visit those who made decisions during the summer mission trip.

Whether you work with a bivocational pastor or a full-time pastor, take time to discover the needs of his family. Visit with them, put them on your prayer list, find out their birthdays and send them a card, and communicate with them often during the year. Let them know that you care.

Today as you pray, ask God to bless and use the over 10,000 bivocational pastors in the Southern Baptist Convention in a mighty way. Pray for the churches they pastor to be effective in reaching the lost and discipling the saved. If your mission project involves a bivocational pastor, ask God to enable you and your team to be especially sensitive to him and his family during your mission trip.

 **Day 34****Making a Long-Term Commitment**

“Now the Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision, “Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent; for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city.” And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them” (Acts 18:9-11).

“And this continued for two years (in Ephesus), so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks” (Acts 19:10).

Paul was anxious to get the message of the Gospel to the ends of the world as Jesus had commanded. His method was to visit a city, locate the local synagogue, and using it as a base, teaching the people the Gospel. If a synagogue was not available, he found an audience and declared the message of salvation. Never staying long in one place, Paul and his friends carried the Gospel to a number of strategic cities. However, when Paul got to Corinth the Lord slowed him down, gave him a word of encouragement, and left Paul there for eighteen months. Then shortly after that Paul arrived in Ephesus, where he stayed for two years.

Modern-day volunteer missionaries still follow Paul’s model through short-term and long-term missions. A short-term mission trip is one day to six months in duration. A long-term mission trip is one that lasts longer than six months. Many are also following Paul’s example by entering into partnerships with the church or association where they are doing missions. If your church has not entered into a partnership with the place where you are doing missions; encourage them to do so.

Each year many churches come to Appalachia and participate in mission opportunities. Some go back to the same area year after year, while others like a butterfly move from place to place, seldom going back to the same area they were in the year before. Although both types of churches are important in missions, the church that makes a long-term commitment to do missions at the same church year after year has proven to be the more effective model.

Entering into a long-term partnership¹ has many benefits that will enable you to be more effective in your mission work. In Corinth and Ephesus, Paul discovered these benefits. The first benefit is relationship building. As you go back to the same church year after year, you get to

¹ A long-term partnership is a three-year or longer commitment to work with a church or association in missions. Most long-term partnerships involve a covenant that clarifies the responsibilities of each party. Your state conventions or Appalachian Regional Ministry can assist you in developing a long-term partnership in Appalachia.

know the people and they get to know you. A bond of trust begins to develop. In Appalachia, we call this the four-cups of coffee rule.

Year 1: I will share a cup of coffee with you out of obligation for you are a stranger and the conversation will be superficial.

Year 2: I will share a cup of coffee with you as a guest, but I am still not sure about you or why you are here.

Year 3: I will share a cup of coffee with you as a special guest. The conversation will still be superficial.

Year 4: I will share a cup of coffee with you as a friend. The conversation will move beyond being superficial, maybe.

The second benefit is leadership development. Paul's time in both Corinth and Ephesus allowed him the opportunity to train and develop leaders to do the work of ministry, thus multiplying himself. A key objective of any long-term partnership must include leadership development. A third benefit is the encouragement you are able to give and to receive. In both cities, Paul encountered individuals who became encouragers to him as he became an encourager to them. Read Acts 18-19 and note the mutual encouragement that took place. A fourth benefit is that a long-term partnership enables you to do year-round missions. You get to know the needs, the people, and out of that come opportunities to work together during the year. While there are many other benefits to a long-term partnership, I trust that you will seriously consider entering into one with a church, association, or ministry center in Appalachia.

Today as you pray, pray specifically for the place where you will be going on your mission trip. Ask the Father to open up opportunities for you to begin building long-term relationships with the people you will be serving with in Appalachia.

*"I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your **partnership** in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus" (Philippians 1:3-6 NIV).*



Day 35

A 20/20 Vision

“How I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house, testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Acts 20:20-21)

Paul never lost his vision. He saw himself as an evangelist, having a mandate to reach sinners with the truth of the Gospel, and after years enduring hardship and persecution, Paul remained faithful to the vision Jesus gave him on the Damascus road¹. Paul was so passionate to reach the lost that he cried out, *“Woe is me if I do not preach the gospel.”*² He even made the shocking statement that, if possible, he would be willing to give up his own salvation to see unredeemed Jews saved.³

In Acts 20, Paul met with the elders of the church in Ephesus in Miletus. He was on his way to Jerusalem with a love offering for the struggling believers who lived there.⁴ Then, he planned to go to Rome to preach the Gospel.

As Paul meets with the Ephesian elders, Luke gives us an insight into Paul’s personal approach to sharing the Gospel. Paul taught both publicly and privately. He used every opportunity he could to teach, even going from house to house. While Paul did fellowship with believers in their homes, the social visits were used to teach the Word as well. He went to the homes of believers as well as non-believers. He taught both Jew and Gentile. He showed no favoritism or partiality. He preached to all men, color, nationality, belief, status, poor, or rich—nothing mattered. He reached out to all. The driving passion in Paul’s life was to reach the lost with the Gospel of Christ.

When you come to Appalachia for your mission project, your motivating passion for being here must be to reach the lost. Whatever your project involves – construction, home repair, servant evangelism, or any one of the many different types of ministry taking place – the focus of all we do must be to share the Gospel. Lonnie Riley with Meridzo Ministries in Lynch, Kentucky constantly reminds mission volunteers that no matter what you are doing, do it in such a way that you can share the gospel. For example, he states, “If you are passing out food boxes, tell the person receiving the food box that you are doing this because of Jesus, and then tell them about Jesus.” If you are painting a house and someone stops to watch, tell them you are doing this because of Jesus, and then tell them about Jesus. Whatever you do,” he states, “is to point people

¹ Acts 9:1-16; 22:6-21; 26:12-18

² 1 Corinthians 9:16

³ Romans 9:3

⁴ 2 Corinthians 9:1-5; Acts 19:21

to Jesus.” In the summer of 2002, he had youth teams cleaning the streets and sidewalks of Lynch, Kentucky in the name of Jesus. At the end of the summer, people were asking him to reopen the local Baptist church that had been closed several years earlier. In many parts of Appalachia door of opportunity are being opened, barriers are coming down, and people are open to the Gospel. In the Potomac Highland area of West Virginia, a senior adult couple went door to door through a small town and discovered 40 unchurched adults who were open to hearing the Gospel.

Many of the mission opportunities available through Appalachian Regional Ministry will give you the opportunity to visit in the homes of people living in Appalachia. While you are there, make sure you talk to them about Jesus, and if they are lost, share with them the wonderful Good News of salvation.

Today as you pray, pray for the 13 million lost persons in Appalachia and ask the Father to open doors up during your mission trip for you to share the Gospel. Ask Him to make you sensitive to the opportunities He places before you and to give you the right words to say at the right time. The story of how you came to faith in Christ is a place to begin.

Keeping the Main Thing the Main Thing

“And when they had come to him, he said to them: “You know, from the first day that I came to Asia, in what manner I always lived among you, serving the Lord with all humility, with many tears and trials which happened to me by the plotting of the Jews; how I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house, testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:18-21).

It is easy to get sidetracked. A key person at the last minute cannot make the mission trip. A problem develops that you had not planned on or a situation changes at the last minute and suddenly you are more focused on the difficulties than on the main purpose of the mission trip.

Paul knew the danger of allowing circumstances to divert you from your main task. Read the Book of Acts, marking each time he faced a diversion – persecution, rejection, misunderstanding, loss of friends to name just a few. Paul understood that when you invade Satan’s domain, he responds. Thus, Paul states to the Ephesian elders, “I have kept the main thing the main thing. In spite of the difficulties, I never shrank from telling you the truth, either publicly or in your homes. I only had one message for everybody – the necessity of turning from sin and turning to God, and of faith in our Lord Jesus.” He continues, “I’ve done my best, I’ve given you my all, therefore no one can blame their damnation on me because I declared to you everything you needed to know about God’s will.”

If Paul had focused on his trials, he would soon have become discouraged and possibly quit, or at best gone back to his friends and talked about how difficult it was to serve the Lord. As Paul spoke to the elders he shared three things that enabled him to keep the main thing the main thing, to stay focused on Jesus in spite of the hardships he endured. First, he stated, “I served the Lord.” The word served comes from the Greek root word used for bond slave. Paul constantly called himself the slave of Jesus Christ. In Romans 1:1, he referred to himself as the bondservant or devoted slave of Jesus Christ¹. A bond-servant or slave was owned by his master, was subject to the masters will, had no personal rights, and existed only for the purpose of service. So it was with Paul: he lived only to serve Christ – hour-by-hour, day-by-day, and night-by-night. Second, Paul served with humility, always putting the needs of others above his own. Thirdly he served

¹ Romans 1:1; Philippians 1:1; Titus 1:1. James was a slave of God (James 1:1); Peter was a slave of Jesus Christ (2 Peter 1:1); Christian believers are to be slaves of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:18; 1 Corinthians 7:22; Ephesians 6:6; Colossians 4:12; 2 Timothy 2:24).

with tears. He had a tender, understanding, and compassionate heart, weeping over the lostness of humanity and carnality of believers.

As you prepare for and go on your mission trip, be prepared for difficulties to arise that will keep you from the main thing, telling others about Jesus. A mission team from Georgia arrived to do Backyard Bible Clubs, only to discover that four of the six locations had fallen through at the last minute. Instead of being discouraged, they quickly discovered four new locations, one of which was a health care facility for senior adults. In each of the locations people prayed to receive Christ. A team from North Carolina went prepared to paint a widow's house, at the last minute she declined, so they roofed the house of an elderly couple. A team from northern West Virginia was headed to the coalfields to do Vacation Bible School for a small church and at the last minute discovered a second team from Ohio was coming. The two teams talked, and the team from West Virginia quickly discovered a mission request for VBS in Kentucky that had not been filled, and with a quick change of plans left for a successful mission trip.

As you pray today, ask the Father to enable and empower you to keep the main thing the main thing, and when difficulties arise, and they will, to help you stay focused on Him. When you stay focused on Him, He will receive the glory and you will share the Gospel with expectancy to those who need Jesus. Remember, it is all about Him. He's the Master, you are the slave. He's the Potter, you are the clay.

 **Day 37****Tell Your Story**

“Brethren and fathers, hear my defense before you now” (Acts 22:1)

Witnessing is not as complicated as you may think. Actually, it is rather simple, for it is one person telling another person about the greatest thing that has ever happened in their life. You do not have to memorize a lengthy presentation, nor do you have to remember all the key verses in the Bible. Witnessing is simply you telling your story of coming to faith in Christ.

Luke records two occasions when Paul, while under arrest, shared his testimony with others.¹ Each time his primary concern was not his personal welfare, but the salvation of others. Paul’s passion was for the salvation of the lost, especially his own people, the Jews. That is why he wanted to speak to the mob that was screaming for his death (Acts 21:39-40). He was willing to face death to save as many people as he could. He had been saved and he desperately wanted everyone to know the same salvation. On both occasions, Paul told his story, sharing his testimony in three parts. Like Paul, your testimony is unique to you and can be shared using the same basic format.

First, *Paul briefly shared his life before he was converted or saved.* He shared his roots, his personal heritage, and his personal struggle to find God. He even shared about the early part of his life, which had been hostile to Christianity.² While he did not glamorize his past, neither did he hide from it.

Second, *Paul told of the circumstances surrounding his conversion.* Paul recounted how he was on his way to Damascus to persecute the followers of the Way. He told how a bright light from heaven blinded him and how Christ personally confronted him and how he came to believe by faith. He related how Ananias came as a messenger of God to confirm his call to bear witness to the Lord and to baptize him.

Third, *Paul told of his life since his conversion.* On both occasions, Paul shared a brief account of his life following his conversion. He told how the Lord had called him to preach the Gospel, calling all people to repent and turn to God and to show evidence of their repentance by their deeds. He concluded his testimony to King Agrippa with these words, *“Therefore, having obtained help from God, to this day I stand, witnessing both to small and great, saying no other things than those which the prophets and Moses said would come – that the Christ would suffer,*

¹ You can read the testimonies in Acts 22:1-21 and in Acts 26:1-23.

² Acts 8:1-4; 9:1-2

that He would be the first to rise from the dead, and would proclaim light to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles” (Acts 26:22-23).

What is your story of how you came to faith in Christ?³ Your story is powerful and meaningful, for it is your story. It is a story you can tell wherever you go and as you share of how you came to faith in Christ and what being a Christian has meant to you. God will use your story to show others the need of salvation.

Several groups have told me a similar story of how they take one evening of their mission trip and have several on their mission team to come and share their personal testimony. They invite others to join them for the testimony time and a time of fellowship. Without exception I have repeatedly heard how, following the testimony time, people were saved. So tell your story, tell it often, tell it prayerfully, and let God use it to point others to Jesus.

Today as you pray, thank God for your salvation. Thank Him for sending Jesus into the world to die on the cross for your sins in order that you, by grace through faith, might have eternal life. Then ask the Father to give you opportunities to share your story with someone today.

³ A guide has been prepared to help you tell your story and is included at the end of the devotional material.

 **Day 38****Do Your Best**

“Paul looked straight at the Sanhedrin and said, ‘My brothers, I have fulfilled my duty to God in all good conscience to this day’” (Acts 23:1).

Have you ever had a day when nothing turned out right? In Acts 21 Paul arrives back in Jerusalem with a love offering for the impoverished believers. While some were glad to see him, others were not, especially his former Jewish friends who had not become believers in Jesus as the Messiah. At an opportune time some Jews from Asia, stirred up the crowd with the intent of having Paul killed. The Roman army intervenes and rescues Paul, placing him under arrest and when the angry crowd would not hear Paul’s explanation, he arranges for a hearing the next day to hear the charges against Paul from the Sanhedrin.

Now, standing in a Roman court, facing his former friends of the Sanhedrin, Paul makes one of the greatest claims possible – that he had lived “in all good conscience before God.” Apparently referring to the years since his conversion, he was saying to the council that his conversion to Christ and his life since that day had not been displeasing to God, but instead pleasing. He was innocent of breaking the law of God and Moses. His conscience was pure. As those who knew him could attest, he had always been motivated by a desire to please God. A week later, standing before the governor in Caesarea, Paul again affirmed, *“This being so, I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men”* (Acts 24:16).

As you prepare for your mission trip to Appalachia, God does not expect perfection from you, only obedience. The success of your mission trip will not be determined by your ability, but your availability. God is interested in your faithfulness, not your accomplishments. If, like Paul, your mission trip in the eyes of others is less than successful, remember, when you have done your best, followed the will of God and been faithful, which is all He requires. God honors faithfulness and whatever God honors is successful.

Recently a team leader called to discuss what he perceived to be a wasted mission trip to Appalachia. Nothing had gone as planned. A telephone call to the host pastor revealed that it had been one of those kinds of weeks when nothing went right. Miscommunications lead to misunderstanding, which in turn lead to tension. Then on Monday morning, when the mission team arrived on site, with the materials to repair and paint the house of a widow woman, she, without explanation, told the team she had decided not to allow them to do the work. Unable to change her mind, the team left, frustrated. For the rest of the week they did other types of projects like passing out bottles of cold water to joggers, donuts and coffee to people on the streets, and other, similar types of servant evangelism.

Several months after the trip, while speaking in a church in western North Carolina, a teenage girl came up to me at the end of the service and told me about her recent mission trip to Appalachia. She told me how she and the others teens with here had been able to witness to other teenagers while passing out coffee and donuts on a street corner, how at a city park they had given cold bottles of water to joggers “in Jesus name.” With excitement in her voice, she told me how she anticipated getting to come back next year to the same place and to do the same thing. Not once did she mention the change of plans, the frustration, or the disappointment the group experienced. She was excited that everywhere she went, people were eager to hear the Gospel, and that she had been able to see lost teenagers come to faith in Christ.

Today as you pray, ask the Heavenly Father to give you a sensitive spirit to what He is doing on this mission trip. Ask Him to enable you to be flexible and teachable. Ask Him to use you on this mission trip to tell others of Jesus. Remember God asks that you be faithful, available, and teachable. That is your goal.



Day 39

When Your Motives Are Misunderstood

I've been out of the country for a number of years and now I'm back. While I was away, I took up a collection for the poor and brought that with me, along with offerings for the Temple. It was while making those offerings that they found me quietly at my prayers in the Temple. There was no crowd, there was no disturbance. It was some Jews from around Ephesus who started all this trouble. And you'll notice they're not here today. They're cowards, too cowardly to accuse me in front of you. "So ask these others what crime they've caught me in. Don't let them hide behind this smooth-talking Tertullus. The only thing they have on me is that one sentence I shouted out in the council: 'It's because I believe in the resurrection that I've been hauled into this court!' Does that sound to you like grounds for a criminal case?" (Acts 24:17-21 The Message).

Accused of being a troublemaker, Paul is on trial before Governor Felix. When given the opportunity to defend himself, Paul explains that far from seeking to stir up trouble, he had come to Jerusalem on a mission of mercy. He brought an offering for the needy Jewish Christians, collected from the Gentile churches. After delivering the offering to the Jerusalem church, he had agreed to sponsor four Jewish Christians who were taking Nazirite vows. As their sponsor, Paul would participate in the ceremony marking the end of their vows. Having recently returned to Israel from Gentile regions, he needed first to undergo ritual purification. It was while doing that, Paul informed Felix, that they had found him in the Temple, quietly in prayer, with no crowd around and doing nothing to create a disturbance.

As you become involved in volunteer missions, occasionally your motives will be misunderstood. Perhaps your motive, based on your presite visit was to organize a food drive. During the visit, you observed clear signs of poverty in the community and you envision a food pantry as a way to minister to needy people and open the door for sharing the Gospel. Because of your vision and the food drive, you arrive with a truck loaded with groceries. To your astonishment, the pastor of the church does not get excited; instead, he becomes distant and uncooperative. It is only after prayer and several conversations you discover that he is concerned not with the food you have brought but with the long-term impact it will have on the church and the community. Since he is bivocational, he is worried about who will maintain the food pantry, he is concerned about starting something and not being able to keep it going, especially in view of their limited finances, and because he is active in the community he knows that while many are impoverished, there are several other agencies adequately meeting the food needs.

When you come to Appalachia on a mission trip and your motives are misunderstood, there are four questions you need to ask yourself. First, did I communicate clearly with the receiving church? Did I discover their needs? Did I discuss the project with them? Did I really hear what

they were saying? Secondly, you need to ask yourself, did I come with a personal agenda? Third, through this experience what is God trying to teach me? Then lastly you need to ask, what have I learned from this experience?

During a presite visit to a church in central Appalachia, a church from the south determined that this small congregation could better serve their community if they had central heat and air conditioning. Without talking to the pastor or the congregation, they went home and raised the money to purchase the needed equipment and in June arrived, installed the equipment, had a dedication Sunday, and went home, never once asking the church if they needed the central heat and air conditioning. In August they received an electric bill for \$283.00, with a note attached that read, "We cannot afford the gift you gave us, and since we didn't ask for it, please pay this bill." The note continued, "We have disconnected the thing."

Sadly, both of the above stories are true and similar incidents repeatedly occur in Appalachia. A church shows up unannounced to do a block party, or at the last minute the "preacher" decides to go and preach a revival, or an impromptu crew shows up ready to do home repair, never understanding why the receiving church is taken aback and at times uncooperative.

Today, as you pray, ask the Heavenly Father to help the team leaders to be sensitive to clearly communicating with everyone involved. Ask the Father to use this mission trip to bring glory to Himself and for the mission team to show the love of Jesus in all they do.

 **Day 40****Empowering Kingdom Growth**

“Then Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house, and received all who came to him, ³¹preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him” (Acts 28:30-31).

The Book of Acts ends where it began – preaching the Kingdom of God. Acts begins with Jesus gathering His disciples together and *“speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God”* (Acts 1:3) and commissioning them to take the Gospel to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). In thirty years, this handful of believers had spread the Gospel throughout all of Jerusalem and Judea, Samaria and into many parts of the Roman Empire. Now, as Acts closes, the gospel has reached the center and capital of the world, Rome itself.

2,000 years later thousands throughout the whole world are still proclaiming the gospel. Sometimes the message flows freely without opposition; at other times, it is threatened with violent attempts to silence it. Sometimes false ministers and teachers have infiltrated the church and have counterfeited the message. Others have added to or subtracted from the message, but it has never been stamped out.

As you leave for your mission trip, you join with thousands of other Southern Baptist mission volunteers who are literally taking the gospel around the world. Using Acts 1:8 as their strategy, churches of all sizes are preaching the Kingdom of God by sending out mission volunteers to people groups and cities all over the globe, and you are a part of this mighty host of volunteers. You are an important part of God’s plan for world evangelization. The mission volunteer who comes to Appalachia is just as important as the mission volunteer who goes to China or Romania. The mission volunteer who leads a Backyard Bible Club is just as important in advancing the Kingdom of God as the volunteer who helps build a new church building. The mission volunteer who repairs a widow’s house is just as important as the volunteer who does street evangelism. God is using each to spread the gospel and advance His Kingdom.

It was after a team of mission volunteers left, a fourteen-year-old girl said, “I feel God is calling me to be a missionary.” When Gateway Baptist Church came to West Virginia to assist Little Birch Baptist Church in the summer of 2002, little did they realize how God would use them to revive a struggling congregation that was desperately needed in the Little Birch community. Wherever you go in Appalachia, mission volunteers are making an eternal difference in communities, churches, and most importantly, in the lives of people as they experience the power of the gospel.

While you may not fully understand what God has in mind for you on this mission trip, you can rest assured that you are a part of “fulfilling the Great Commission” as you bring the gospel to Appalachia. On this mission trip, relax, trust God, and let Him use you as only He can do to share the gospel.

Today as you pray, pray specifically for your mission team. Name each member by name and ask God to use each of you on this trip to share the gospel. Pray that the team and those you are going to serve with will work together in unity and reflect the love of Christ throughout the mission trip. In closing, read again your “marching orders.”

“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen. (Matthew 28:18-20).



Reporting on the Progress

“From there they sailed to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work which they had completed. Now when they had come and gathered the church together, they reported all that God had done with them, and that He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles. So they stayed there a long time with the disciples” (Acts 14:26-28).

There is a time to work and a time to relax. A time to do ministry and a time to celebrate what God has done¹. The Bible reminds us *“To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven” (Ecclesiastes 3:1)*. At the completion of their missionary journey, Paul and Barnabas returned to the church in Antioch for an **On Mission Celebration**. The church at Antioch was undoubtedly overjoyed at the return of their two beloved pastors. Their work, commended at the outset to the grace of God², had been very successful, as the missionaries began to report, telling in detail how God had used them to open the door of faith, so that the people of all nations could walk through and be saved.

Some may have boasted of all they had done, of the churches they had planted, the number of converts they had made, and the miracles they had performed, but not Paul and Barnabas. They kept all their accomplishments in the proper perspective, noting that God had done all those things through them and that He had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles. They saw themselves as instruments through which God had accomplished His purposes; and all the glory went to Him. That is an essential perspective for a servant of the Lord. Through their obedience, humility, persistence, caring, commitment, and reverence for God, Paul and Barnabas had been used to accomplish much for the kingdom. Those qualities still mark those who walk the path to effective Christian service.

When you return from your mission trip, you will want to do the same, reporting on how God allowed you to be a part of the door of faith He has opened in Appalachia. Just like Paul and Barnabas you will want to share all that God has done through you and your mission team.

On Mission Celebrations (OMC) are Biblical and a key theme running through the Book of Acts. As a matter of fact, Acts is a report by Luke to Theophilus concerning the events surrounding the early church as it advanced across the Roman Empire. Then Luke records for us the ascension of Christ (Acts 1:9-10). Imagine for a moment what it was like as Jesus returned to

¹ Ecclesiastes 3:1-11

² Acts 9:15-16; 13:2-4

heaven and “*sat down at the Father’s right hand*”³, reporting to the host of heaven on His incarnation. Earlier Luke recorded Jesus sent out seventy-two disciples to go ahead of Him into the towns where He was about to go. Later they came back and gave Jesus an OMC report (Luke 10:1, 17). Other examples in Acts include:

- Peter and John reporting to the church after the healing of the lame man and their subsequent trial (Acts 4:23).
- Peter reports to the church in Jerusalem on how God lead him to reach the household of Cornelus (Acts 11:1-ff).
- Barnabas and Saul return to Antioch after delivering a special offering to the church at Jerusalem (Acts 12:25).
- In Acts 15:4 Paul and Barnabas gave an OMC to a sister church. The first OMC was to the home of a sponsoring church. However, in Jerusalem they encountered opposition instead of rejoicing. Opposition, so deeply entrenched that it resulted in the first major doctrinal council and opposition that, while resolved in the church council, was never fully accepted by the Jerusalem church (Acts 21:17-ff).
- Paul returns to Antioch and reports on what God is doing (Acts 18:22).
- Paul tells the church at Jerusalem the things God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry Acts 21:19-ff).

Luke records an interesting moment in the life of Christ when the seventy-two disciples returned and gave their report. “*At that time Jesus, full of the joy through the Holy Spirit*” (Luke 10:21). The OMC filled Jesus with joy. Jesus reminds us that the same thing occurs in heaven every time an unsaved person comes to faith in Him (Luke 15:7, 10). As you give your OMC, remember heaven is listening in and rejoicing with you and your church in every life that has been eternally changed because you were obedient to the Father.

Today, as you pray, first ask the Heavenly Father to direct you to those that you can ask to be your prayer partners during the time of preparation for and while you are on your mission trip. Then pray for those who will hear the Gospel to be convicted by the Holy Spirit and be saved. Whether you are repairing a house, constructing a building, conducting Backyard Bible Clubs, or doing any of the many different mission opportunities, God will be bringing people into your path that need to be saved. Pray to the Lord of the harvest for their salvation and anticipate the rejoicing that will take place in heaven.

³ Acts 2:33; 7:56; Romans 8:34; Ephesians 1:20-22; Colossians 3:1; Hebrews 4:14; 8:1; 10:12; 12:21; Peter 1:21; 3:22