

A New Column is Beginning on the Missions Web Site

Welcome to a new addition to our Liberty Missions web site. This is our first missions column that we know here from the church. My name is Ken McLemore and I am the Missions pastor here at Liberty Baptist in Hampton, Virginia. I will be the author of most of the articles you read in this column.

The goal of this column is to share our vision for missions and ideas that have here at the church. We feel that God has given us a unique vision to see the church take greater steps in taking the gospel to the whole world. Over the next year I will be writing articles attempting to share where we should go in missions and how we intend to get there. We hope you will read it and give it some thought.

We want your feedback on this. We need to hear from you. You can write to me at kmclmore@lbcmin.com to let me know your thoughts. Here is the first article.

A New Paradigm in Missions

I hate learning new lessons. It seems the only way we can really learn them is through some kind of long, hard, process. This is what has happened here at our church in missions. Through a process we have learned much about missions and ourselves. There is one key lesson that we believe is more important than any other. It is nothing new, except maybe to us. The lesson is this: **Missions is the responsibility of "The Church"**. I am sure that some of you are sitting there saying duhhhhh, you did not know that? Well I did know that, but not to the extent that we have come to "know" it. Let me explain.

For years our church, and others, have been involved in missions. We gave money, went on trips, did building and prayed for missionaries. To many people that is missions. We had a missions committee that handed out lots of money. We felt very proud of ourselves in the amount we gave to mission efforts. The lesson we came to understand is that this did not really own missions. God wants more from us. God wants us to own the great commission to the fullest.

What God began to reveal to us at Liberty was that we have done missions by proxy. **We had handed off missions to be done by others for us.** We were glad to give a lot of money to others so they could do missions on our behalf. Some churches do this so they can brag about the many mission projects they are involved in without having to really put forth any effort.

It is like the lady who called us recently from another church. She said one reason she liked a particular project she was involved with was 3 fold. " 1) It was easy, 2) It did not cost her much money, 3) It made her feel so good about herself". Wow, this is empty and it is not Biblical! That is why we have seen such a rise in Para church organization rise up in America. The church refuses to take the full responsibility that God has given her to carry the gospel to the hardest to reach places.

While the lesson has been a hard one to learn, we at Liberty desire to learn the lesson and correct it. So what does this mean to us at Liberty Baptist Church?

It means that we need to understand that the responsibility of reaching the world (Here and out there) is ours. **It is not the job of the International Mission Board, North American Missions Board, Navigators, or any other group, it is our job!** We want to fulfill that responsibility.

So what does this mean for the church? It means that we will take seriously the idea that we should be the ones raising up missionaries to go to the world, training them, directing them, taking care of them, and making sure they are on the right track. We desire to shepherd them and help them when they come home. These tasks are not to be delegated to a mission board. These are not someone else's task, but rather our tasks.

The obvious question is: Does this mean do away with organizations like the IMB? No, it means that we can partner with them. They are experts at administration, insurance, and other such tasks. LBC is not prepared at this time to do such things. But we are prepared to assist in strategy, and take on the responsibility of reaching those places God desire us to go. That is the direction we are headed and need to continue going that way.

This will also mean that our church people need to rise up like never before. Liberty needs to understand that missions is not about a trip, but instead about year round, strategic involvement in missions from this side of the water. It will mean that people at LBC will need to be trained in mission principles. We will need to train our missionaries, before they go to the field how to work with churches, how to allow the church to participate in the work, how to develop stateside networks, teams, and more. Both the missionary and the church will need to learn to be humble and listen to each other. We are both co –equals in this task. God is calling us here at Liberty to move forward and be leaders and we must, in God's power, rise up to fulfill our responsibility.