

Today's message, is about the place of the **whole** church, in ministry and mission.

For 9 months now, we've been studying this **amazing** letter that the Apostle Paul wrote (a couple of thousand years ago) to the church in Rome. And it's simply incredible how relevant it's been for us today... There's nothing 'dated' about the Bible... The same amazing insight, that captured their attentions back then, is still capturing our attention today.

But now we're coming towards its end, and Paul's beginning to wrap it up. And today we learn something about the man himself, and about his calling.

If we were to differentiate between a missionary and a pastor, I would probably define it like this: A pastor, is someone who is based at a local church, and cares for that church, and preaches and teaches, and builds that church up, to be the people of God that the Lord is calling them to be.

A missionary however, is somebody who is sent out into the world – somebody who goes out as an evangelist, and preaches the gospel (often in places where the Gospel may have never been heard ever before). And when people respond to the Good News of Jesus Christ, they set up a little church of believers; They appoint a pastor; And then they move on, and they do the same thing, all over again, in another location.

And the Apostle Paul, was called to be a missionary. In V20, he said,

²⁰ I make it my ambition to preach the gospel, not where Christ has already been named,

lest I build on someone else's foundation,²¹ but as it is written,

"Those who have never been told of him will see,
and those who have never heard will understand."

Now, let me assure you: there's nothing at all wrong with "building on somebody else's foundation" – There's nothing at all wrong with being a pastor of a church, and working with people who are already Christians.... That just not what **Paul** was called to do. Some are called to be pastors; Some are called to be missionaries.

We don't have missionaries visiting here too much at Bush Disciples, because we're a new church; We're a long way from the city; We're a very small church, and nobody knows about us. But sometimes missionaries on furlough will visit existing churches, to talk about the mission work that they've been involved in, in far-off lands. And most of us love to hear their stories. I love to hear the stories of how the gospel is being preached in obscure lands, in obscure languages, and of how people who have never heard the gospel before, are repenting of lives of spiritual darkness, and believing in Jesus...

When I was growing up, in our church in Goondiwindi, there was a lady by the name of Jean Sizer, who'd been a missionary in Papua New Guinea. And she used to tell us these most amazing stories of transformations (that she witnessed) from cannibalism to Christianity.

And sometimes, when a church hears the story of a missionary, somebody in that congregation, may be moved by the Holy Spirit, to **also** dedicate **their** lives, to becoming a missionary for Jesus Christ, and they commit their lives to serving Him in other lands, taking the Gospel to people who have never heard it before... It's a calling of God. And maybe somebody here (in this church) is being called to be a missionary.

But you know, sometimes we hear the stories of missionaries, and no other ministry seems to quite live up to it... And we might find ourselves beginning to feel that **our** gifts and **our** calling, is inadequate. And we hear the wonderful things that missionaries do in the name of Jesus, and we find ourselves feeling "Oh, imagine what **our** church would be like, if that missionary was **our** pastor"... Or a pastor might begin feeling that it would be better if he could quit being a pastor and begin being a missionary instead...

How do you think that might all work out? Probably pretty badly.

You see, some people are designed and built by God, to be missionaries – that's the way God's made them. And you pull them out of that role, and ask them to be a pastor of a church, you've got a square peg in a round hole, and they might be a terrible pastor... And Visa Versa, a very good pastor may make a **terrible** missionary...

(and maybe at this point, some of you might be thinking, "Well Michael, maybe you'd better give 'being a missionary' a go.... Because being a pastor's not working for ya....")

And that's why Paul had never made it to Rome – he was called to be a missionary, and he was too busy being a missionary.

But now, something's changed (No he hasn't lost his call to be a missionary)... But now he's pretty keen to visit Rome. Why? Because he wants to enlist that Roman church, to be **involved** in his missionary work.

So, how can an established church in one location, be involved in the work of a missionary (in another land far away)?

Well, I'm going to share with you, 3 ways:

1. Personal involvement;
2. Financial support; and
3. Prayer

1
Not many are called, to be missionaries to foreign lands. But some **are** called. And as **Paul**, went from place to place, he would sometimes, recognise in somebody, a gift and a calling, to be a missionary. And names come to mind like Timothy; Barnabus; Silus; Aquila and Priscilla. These are all Christians, who he'd met up with in various churches, and taken them along with him, as missionaries.

He was on his way to take the gospel to a new region, and he would invite them to join him.

And I believe I need to say, “If you are somebody who feels they may be called to become a missionary, please, do not leave it until you feel you have reached an appropriate stage of life. ... Look into it now. Get in touch with some missionary organisations, and begin building those relationships, and see if this really is a calling that God is putting on your life... And act on it. Because if you don’t, you probably never will.

Alright, so some people will be called out of a local church, to become missionaries in another land. Does anybody here, feel that calling? Be honest... (I’m not talking about a short-term trip of a couple of weeks for an experience – I’m talking about a permanent call, to being a missionary)

2

Well maybe there’s another way that more of us can be involved with missionaries. The second way that we can support the work of missionaries, is financially. It’s a very practical way of supporting mission.

I’m going to ask a rhetorical question (I don’t want you to answer it), but I do want you to think about it.

When it comes to giving (giving financially), how do you decide, how to cut up the pie??? Do you know what I mean by that? If you think of all the financial resources that you have:

- Wages or the salary that you earn
- The money that your business makes
- The return that you get on your investments
- Your pension

- What about your assets themselves? (Land; cattle; cars; machinery; shares; superannuation)

If all of these resources that we have, are ‘the pie’, how do you divide it up? How do you decide:

- How much to spend on buying or paying off more land; and
- How do you decide how much to spend on education; and
- And health care
- Holidays
- Replacing your motor car
- What about Food and clothing
- And then of course, there’s things like insurance
- And how do we decide how much of the pie gets tucked away into Superannuation
- Or how much of the pie, do we put into more investments

- And how do we decide what sized piece of the pie, we give away???

My practice, and I’ve taught a few people how to prepare a cash-flow budget, and what I encourage them, is in the very first couple of lines of expenses, **to budget to give money away**. And I really encourage them to put it **right at the top**, because I believe that giving money away, is **the most important expense / investment** that we can have. And if we **don’t** budget for it, we nearly always end up spending it on ourselves, and we won’t end up giving it away....

But then the question comes, “If that piece of the pie is what I give away, how do I decide how to divide **that** piece of the pie up?”

- Do you give money to support your local church?
- Do you give money to support a missionary overseas?
- Do you give money to helping the poor?

There are so many really good causes to give to. How do we decide who gets what?

This is a very practical decision that we all have to make... Unfortunately, sometimes it can all seem just too hard, and we throw our hands up in the air, and the decision we make, is not to make a decision. Guess who ends up with the dough? We just don't give it away at all... I would suggest that you don't do that.

Today, I want to share with you, a few principals that I use to decide how much of the pie gets given away, and out of that, how much goes where.

1. The first principal, is Biblical principal, that we give as we are able¹. We can't all give the same amount. We shouldn't expect that a pensioner is giving the same amount as a successful businessman. Some are only able to give a little bit. Others are able to give a lot. And we shouldn't **expect** that everybody's giving will be the same **amount**, or the same %. Some people may only be able to afford to give 10% of their gross income. Somebody else may be capable of giving 95% of their income. The Biblical principal is that we give as we are able.

2. The second principal, ⁱⁱ is that if we sow sparingly, we reap sparingly. If we sow bountifully, we reap bountifully... And please, don't get confused by this: A heart that seeks after material possessions, might say "That means if you give away lots of money, you will get even more money back...." I don't think that's what it's really talking about... It's talking about an increase in the harvest of righteousness...

If we sow bountifully, by being generous in our giving, there will be a bountiful harvest of righteousness. And I reckon that happens in 2 ways: Ministry and mission, will not be starved of resources. And the harvest of righteousness will be the effectiveness of that ministry (properly resourced). But also, when we are obedient to God, we ourselves, receive a harvest of righteousness – a heavenly reward.

The maths isn't difficult. If in a church, everybody was giving at least 10% of their gross income, and if ministry staff were paid the equivalent of an average wage, for every 10 wage earners, that church could support one full time pastor, youth worker, or missionary.

So even a little tin-pot show like Bush Disciples, if we were sowing bountifully, we could support a full-time pastor, **and** a full-time missionary... (and you know what? If we took an assessment of what missionaries we were all supporting, and what ministries we were all supporting, we may already be doing exactly that). When we sow bountifully, we reap bountifully. But when we sow sparingly, we reap sparingly.

3. The third principal, is the Old Testament principal of the tithe. That simply means "a tenth"... In the Old Testament, it was a religious law. But we're not **bound** by that law any

more... But I **do** find myself feeling, “If I am a recipient of the grace and the mercy of God, and if I want to worship Him and serve Him, and love Him with all of my being,,,,, if those of old could give 10% of what they grew; or 10% of their livestock; or 10% of what they earned, why wouldn’t I be able to do that????

And this is a personal thing for us – it’s not a law – I’ve always set 10% of gross income, that’s before tax, and before any expenses – it’s before we pay off any of our business assets or personal assets.... That is the minimum that we give away for local ministry and mission.

So the tithe, is no longer a law, but I do believe it’s a very good starting point. And I can testify that it’s do-able.

4. The fourth principal, is the necessity to support local ministry. (this is where it gets hard for me to teach on giving)

If you’re a regular here, you know I hardly ever teach on giving (I believe this may be the second message in 3 or 4 years) And I feel at this point, I should remind everyone that Bush Disciples does need your support. And I would ask that if you’re not currently supporting the work of Bush Disciples, please consider it. If you **are** already, please consider whether you can afford give some more.

But there’s other local ministries here as well. I think of the school chaplaincy program, and the important work that they do amongst the children in the schools.

So, I believe it’s very important to support local ministry.

And for us personally, that's where we've always directed our tithe.

5. The 5th principal, is in addition to what we give to ministry, we should always be generous to the poor (**particularly** Christian brothers and sisters who are persecuted or in poverty)... And I want you to note, If you are into the tithing principal, Biblically, giving to the poor, was always on top of the tithe. The Tithe was used to support the ministry of the temple (the local ministry)... Giving to the poor, was done in addition to that.

And we have plenty of opportunities to give to the poor, through organisations like Compassion; World Vision; Samaritans Purse; Open doors; any number of overseas or local missions to the poor.

When we give to the poor, it's simply a matter of us giving up some of our little treats, so that we can share with those who can't afford the necessities.

6. Righto. Now we come to the 6th principal – the support of missionaries.

Something I noticed in the reading today, was a very different side of Paul. Usually the Apostle Paul is very forthright and blunt. But no so today. Today, he was very tactful in the things that he said. For most of us, our most sensitive part, is our hip-pocket. And I've noticed (as I'mn sure you have) there's two types of preachers in the world – those who are never shy to ask for money, and those who are quite reluctant to do it. Paul is of the latter type. He boldly asks, for money

to take to share with the poor, but he very tentatively, seeks financial support for himself. And I can identify with that, very much.

I know when I was writing this, I thought, “I hope there aren’t any new people there this Sunday. I don’t want them to get the picture that we’re one of those churches that are always asking for money”... And I decided that I’d just have to explain that I preach my way through whole books of the Bible, and today happens to be talking about the ministry of giving.

It talks about giving to the poor, and then Paul very tactfully gives them the ‘heads-up’ that he’s going to be looking for their financial support, to take him on his planned missionary trip to Spain.

So, how you divide up your financial pie, is between you and God, But there are just a few biblical principles that I use, and I hope they may be useful for you.

3.

So, finally we come to the third way that we can support the work of missionaries: (We’ve had: go and be a missionary yourself; support them financially); Prayer.

V30: ³⁰ I appeal to you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive

together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf,

Not everyone, is called to do what missionaries do. I suspect that most of us, **are** called to support them financially... But something we are **all** called to do, **is to struggle with them**, in our prayers.

You do understand, don't you, that missionaries are involved in a very real struggle.... It is a spiritual battle. They are shining the light of Jesus, into the dark areas that are Satan's territory. They are involved in a struggle, and we can struggle with them, as we pray.

Robyn and I, are so thankful for those of you who pray for me and my family, as we minister in the name of Jesus, in this district. But let's not forget about missionaries.

If you don't already have a relationship with an active missionary, I would encourage you, to seek one out.

- CMS (Church missionary society of Australia)
- MAF (Mission Aviation Fellowship)
- Compassion

Local contacts:

- Sam Hemming
- Timmers
- Bennie and Sherie

- Meredith Tweddell

And so I'd encourage you to be informed about missionaries, so that you can become involved with them in their work.

- Supporting them financially
- Struggling with them in prayer
- And maybe even being called to mission yourself.

Questions:

ⁱ Deuteronomy 16:¹⁷ Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the LORD your God that he has given you.

ⁱⁱ 2 Corinthians 9:⁶ The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. ⁷ Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. ⁸ And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work. ⁹ As it is written,

"He has distributed freely, he has given to the poor;
his righteousness endures forever."

¹⁰ He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. ¹¹ You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God. ¹² For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God. ¹³ By their approval of this service, they will glorify God because of your submission that comes from your confession of the gospel of Christ, and the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others, ¹⁴ while they long for you and pray for you, because of the surpassing grace of God upon you.

¹⁵ Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!