

6 Contributions the Global Church Has Made to Missions

by Ravi David

Jesus said “I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.” Despite many challenges, divisions, lukewarmness and deviations in the work of the global church, the Lord has not given up on her and never will. This gives us hope to persevere, knowing that He is the head of the church and the Lord of the church around the globe.

The global church has made several contributions to world missions. Much more is yet to be done, and not all churches have made mission a priority. However, the contributions of the global church to missions have been significant. Here are a few.

1. A Biblical understanding of mission

Churches around the world have included missions as an important part of their teaching and preaching curriculum. Jesus’ command to go and make disciples of all nations (Matt 28:18-20) has been emphasized at mission conferences and other efforts made by mission committees of local churches and denominations. I grew up in a church that has a missions and evangelism department. This group proactively organizes annual mission conferences and other evangelistic outreach programs to remind church-goers that the Lord is concerned about “other sheep” that are not yet in His fold.

2. Mission has been taught as both local and global.

Churches around the world have based their mission strategies on Acts 1:8, highlighting the importance of mission both within the local community and beyond. This has ensured that mission initiatives address local, national, and international community needs. Basing mission thinking and strategy on biblical teaching is an important contribution of the global church to mission.

3. Envisioning people to be involved in missions

Flowing out of a Biblical understanding of mission is the envisioning, the invitation, or “the call” for people to engage in mission. Many people have responded to the call and have invested their lives in serving God. Countries that were missionary-receiving countries have now become missionary-sending countries, and every country continues to be a mission field. Churches have taught that mission is not

exclusively for those called for “full-time” Christian service, but for all followers of Christ. A phrase used at one of the mission conferences in my home church in India still rings in my mind: “Every heart with Christ is a missionary, and every heart without Christ is a mission field.”

4. Sending people as missionaries

The global church has sent out many missionaries to various parts of the world. Inspired by Biblical teaching, several people have been sent as pioneer missionaries to places where local communities have not adequately heard, understood, and engaged with the gospel. I think of the many missionaries who came to India and brought the gospel. I am grateful to the churches who sent them and for the sacrificial services of the missionaries themselves. They had a ministry of both service and proclamation of the gospel, a characteristic which tends to be missing today. This has been a major contribution that the global church has made to missions.

5. Giving of money and encouragement

The global church has invested large amounts of money into mission. People have often given, not out of abundance but out of sacrifice and in obedience to God as good stewards of the riches that God has entrusted to them. Practical needs of missionaries have been met by God’s people who gave selflessly. This is a major contribution that the church has made to mission. Besides giving money, the global church has given encouragement and support to people on the field as mission work can often be lonely, discouraging, and challenging. Words of encouragement at such times are a huge blessing.

6. Praying for missions around the world

A significant contribution that the global church has made to mission is its prayer and intercession. This is perhaps the biggest contribution the global church has made and continues to make to world missions. Praise God for the faithful who fervently pray “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth....” Jesus asked us to pray that the Lord of the harvest would send forth laborers into the harvest fields. Many prayer warriors have obeyed this command and have prayed consistently, fervently, and faithfully for God’s mission in our world.

Though not always the case, the global church has looked beyond itself and has actively contributed to world mission by teaching, envisioning, sending, giving, and

praying for people involved in making disciples of all nations, so that people from every tribe, tongue, and nation may receive the glorious gospel of Jesus and become His followers.

Mary Thompson (1834-1923) beautifully captured all of this in the hymn she wrote:

O Zion haste, thy mission high fulfilling, to tell to all the world that God is light, that he who made all nations is not willing one soul should perish, lost in shades of night.

Give of thy sons (and daughters) to bear the message glorious, give of thy wealth to speed them on their way, pour out thy soul for them in prayer victorious, O Zion haste to bring the brighter day.

Publish glad tidings, tidings of peace, tidings of Jesus, redemption and release.

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