SOWING&REAPING

DEPUTATION





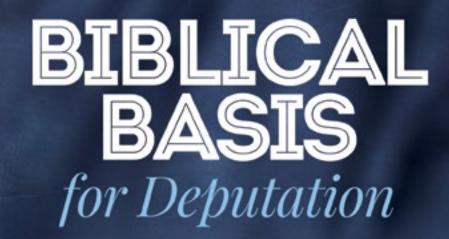
DIRECTOR'S DESK

For generations, deputation has been the traditional method used by faith missions to raise needed finances for conducting Gospel ministries around the world. Deputation requires that missionaries wear out multiple sets of tires on their cars while crisscrossing regions of our country to present their ministries in dozens of local churches. The goal is to procure financial and prayer partners who commit to back them in their missionary work. However, as the financial cost of missions has increased, so has the length of the time taken for deputation. That additional time is causing many to question the validity of deputation. Many ask, "Is traditional deputation broken?" "Isn't it time to find some new way of raising support that will get missionaries to the field more quickly?" "Surely there has to be a better way!"

For almost six decades, GFA has assisted hundreds of missionaries in securing their funding. Missionaries have employed various methods, including establishing their own businesses or working at foreign secular jobs. These servants do what is commonly referred to in mission circles as "tentmaking" – the practice of having the missionary himself supply the financial needs of his family and ministry through his labor in secular employment, following the example of the Apostle Paul in Acts when he worked as a tentmaker.

Like many other mission organizations, GFA has found tentmaking to be a valuable and workable alternative in specific situations. Yet, we still find that "deputation" for the majority of missionaries is the most time-tested and God-blessed method to raise both financial and prayer support. Once a missionary secures supporters for his ministry through this method, he is able to enjoy for decades to come the benefit of devoting his best energy and time to the multiplication of the Gospel on the field where he serves without the distractions of developing a business or working at secular employment. The "tentmaking" missionary often finds himself limited in what he can do ministerially with the strength and resources he has left over from his secular work responsibilities.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 4(





The Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions explains what happens in the current practice of deputation: "In the deputation process initial missionary appointees visit churches and other gatherings of Christians to present their ministry for the purpose of developing prayer and financial support to underwrite missionary endeavors." This is the present-day practice for missionaries under nearly all fundamental mission agencies and has been the common practice from the birth of faith missions in the 1800s. However, we may legitimately ask the question, "Is it biblical?" Or to rephrase it, "Is there a place in the New Testament that comes close to approximating this practice?" The answer is yes, but that place is not where you might expect. It is not in the book of Acts or in Paul's epistles. Rather we find it in the somewhat forgotten book of 3 John (5-8).

In the Apostle John's latter days there were many false teachers; consequently, he charged believers to not in any way bid "God speed" to these deceivers who did not confess that Jesus Christ had come in the flesh

(2 John 7-11). In that environment of itinerant, deceptive but persuasive, false teachers - John also calls them "antichrists" – John warned believers not to give Christian greetings or hospitality to such purveyors of lies about Christ. However, despite his strong admonitions against false teachers, John had equally strong commendations for those who lovingly assisted traveling teachers of truth. So how does this passage relate to current-day deputation? How do these early traveling teachers of truth and their practice correlate with today's missionaries on deputation? In several ways.

First, these traveling teachers were genuine believers and not false teachers; they were "brethren" (5). Though they were brethren, some were also "strangers" (5) and thus unknown beforehand by Gaius and the other believers in the church. This parallels what often happens in deputation today. Missionaries seeking support usually need to go to churches that they have not visited before and whose pastors and people they may not know. Though not mentioned here, we learn elsewhere that traveling missionaries sometimes took letters of commendation (see 2 Cor. 3:1) to introduce themselves. This too parallels what missionaries today practice when they send pastoral letters or even videos of recommendation from their home churches.

A second correlation to today's practice is that these teachers were on the move. As we have noted, sometimes they were strangers, people traveling both far and near in order to meet and minister to God's people. Some on deputation today travel tens of thousands of miles. They

then travel to foreign countries where they are usually unknown even to the believers.

A third parallel is that the traveling teachers of John's day went forth "for His name's sake" (7). They were not sightseers and peddlers of spiritual remedies, but rather men with one motivation and one purpose – the motivation of honoring Christ's name and the purpose of making that name known wherever they went. Today's true missionaries are not going forth because they want adventure, though they probably will have more of that than they desire, or because they want to travel the world, but because they know there is no other name under heaven whereby men can and must be saved.

A fourth parallel between modern day missionaries on deputation and these traveling teachers is that they needed financial support and hospitality and were not looking to the unsaved for that support: "taking nothing of the Gentiles" (7). This verse assumes that they were not only teaching believers but were aware of the spiritual needs of

the unsaved and were preaching the Gospel to them.

The final parallel we will note is the reception that God's people should give traveling missionaries. John lauds the welcome that Gaius gave to these men, telling Gaius that he had acted faithfully in all that he had done for them, even though they were strangers (5). John's reference to the teachers' testimony about Gaius (6) shows that Gaius showed them warm, loving hospitality. Besides his commendation of Gaius for the love he had shown to these men, John exhorted him to "do well" (6) by "send[ing] them on their way in a manner worthy of God" (6b,

NASB). In other words, these true missionaries should be treated as honored servants of God. "Sending them on their way" translates one Greek word and often connotes missionary support based on the particular need.2 One standard Greek lexicon defines the word this way: "to assist someone in making a journey, send on one's way with food, money, by arranging for companions, means of travel, etc."3 Remember, they are accepting nothing from the Gentiles. Therefore, we "ought to support such men" (8, NASB). "Ought" is a word of obligation - not doing this would be wrong. Why this obligation? Because by doing so we are "fellow helpers to the truth" (8b). What a privilege, what an opportunity, and what a responsibility we have to assist missionaries who are going out on deputation for the sake of His name to preach the truth. When missionaries visit your church, are you proving to be a fellow worker for the truth by your love, hospitality, support, and encouragement?

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¹ Easterling, "Deputation," Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions, ed. A. Scott Moreau (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 2000), 271.

² See also 1 Cor. 16:6, 2 Cor. 1:16, and especially Titus 3:13.

³ W. Arndt, F.W. Danker, and W. Bauer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 873.

FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK (CONTINUED)

To gain a sense of perspective, it is helpful to recognize the effects of inflation on the deputation process. A missionary's financial need today is on average five to six times greater than four decades ago. In the 1970s the average deputation time for a GFA missionary was just under two years. Forty years later, the average length of deputation has doubled. However, the good news is that the length of time required today for deputation has not grown at the same pace as the ever-expanding support levels. If the length of deputation matched the growth rate of present-day support levels, deputation would now require an average of twelve years! Therefore, as we consider the ratio of growth of support levels to the growth of the length of time now needed for deputation, the deputation model is not broken; rather, it is quite alive and well!

Back in the 1950s when missionaries John and Bettie Dreisbach went on deputation for their ministry in Africa, the support amount they needed to raise was only \$95 dollars a month! They were on deputation for less than a month and ended up slightly over-supported with \$110 coming in per month. That was the era when having an American passport and a few dollars in your pocket opened the door to the world for American missionaries. Although times have drastically changed, making Great Commission work more financially demanding, the Lord's people must not draw back from the responsibility of supporting missionaries.

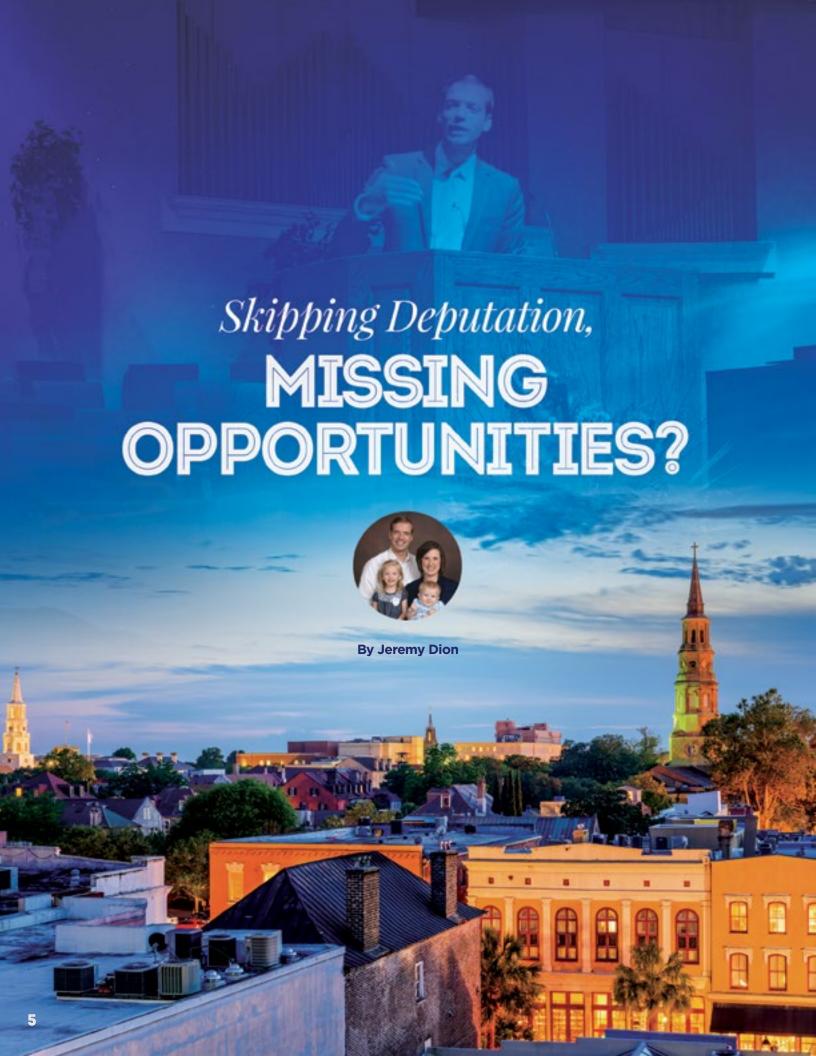
Deputation continues to be an effective method for meeting the ever-growing need for missionary funds. In order to continue being viable, it is vital that support levels be routinely reviewed so that they accurately reflect the cost of living and ministering in foreign countries and offer a proper stewardship of funds. But ultimately, deputation will work as God's people renew their own commitment to how they can better support and send the heralds of Christ's message to the ends of the earth.

MARK BATORY
DIRECTOR OF GFA MISSIONS

GFAMISSIONS.ORG







You've probably heard the dramatic stories of missionaries on deputation—showing up for a meeting only to have the pastor not know who you are or what your ministry is, only having enough gas money to coast into the parking lot of the next church, or discovering that your sleeping quarters are actually located in someone's unfinished attic—but I'm afraid I will have to disappoint you and tell you that I don't have any dramatic stories to share. The fact that none of those things have happened to us after a little less than two years of part-time and then almost one year of full-time deputation goes a long way towards demonstrating that no two deputation experiences will be the same.

The Lord providentially customizes the life experiences of each of His children in order to bring him to a greater Christlikeness, and deputation ministry is just one of those many seasons of life for missionaries. You may have noticed that I called it deputation ministry, and truly that is how we view it. It's not a dreaded drudgery through which we drag our family so that someday we can get to the real ministry on the field. It is our ministry right now! Of course, we have plans and desires of being able to reach our field of service and advance God's kingdom there. And yes, of course, we do find ourselves regularly praying and hoping with each new church we visit that another one will be able to partner with us. But we have discovered that the Lord wants us to be learning lessons all along the way, and very likely we will find those lessons to be the exact ones we need when we face new pressures after arriving on the field.

One day-to-day challenge might be finding a quiet time and place for a devotional walk with the Lord (which can be tricky when staying in someone else's house in the same room with your two young children). Or the challenge might be spending quality time together as a couple and training children while on the road in a wide variety of ever-changing circumstances. Whatever challenges we faced, the Lord has never failed to give grace when

we asked Him! It is always helpful to refocus on the big picture of what we're doing before zooming back into the current task and seeking to be faithful stewards of our time and energies. One day we might be learning patience

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with the raw amount of time it takes to contact pastors and set up new meetings. The next day we might be learning to work together as a family. I've lost count of how many times we've had to pack and unpack

at each new stop—hauling the suitcases in and out of our minivan for the umpteenth time! The Lord has a way of emphasizing our need for Spirit-filled reliance on Him.

What if we could skip the whole deputation process?
That may sound appealing at first, but I can't help but think of the things we would miss—opportunities to hone preaching skills, challenge young people for missions, and minister musically. We would also miss the opportunity of being in many different churches, each with its own unique ministry, and learning the burdens pastors have for their people while being encouraged to

observe their faithful shepherding of their flocks. We would miss building personal relationships with people who will pray for us through thick and thin during the coming years. We would miss rubbing shoulders in mission conferences with veteran missionaries who've been exactly where we are now—only thirty years ago! We would miss the time it takes to begin to transition mentally from living in the United States to life on the field. As I write this article, we're still in deputation full swing, but the Lord has provided two-thirds of our needed support. Even when the day comes that we're finally finished with our deputation, we will still look back with grateful hearts for all that the Lord did through and for us.





Our area of Italy has recently been shaken by a series of earthquakes. August 24, 2016, a 6.2 magnitude earthquake destroyed Amatrice (about 1 hour away from us) and other nearby cities, killing about 300 people and rendering many others homeless. Significant aftershocks continued for weeks, keeping our neighbors in constant fear. Several slept in their cars days after the initial earthquake for fear of being crushed in their apartment buildings during the night. Life slowly returned to normal, and people forgot their vulnerability before our Almighty God, when a 6.1 magnitude earthquake on October 26 struck Visso (a little closer to us), causing significant damage. This earthquake was followed by a 6.6 magnitude earthquake 4 days later in roughly the same area.

In the midst of such times, we all face uncertainty: uncertainty of our possessions, uncertainty of our lives and the lives of those we love. After each earthquake, many people exited their apartment buildings houses (no matter what time of day or night) out of fear and the desire to talk to people—to be reassured of life. Everyone wanted to talk about the earthquake and how they felt about it.

One day, after I listened to several of my friends at the playground discuss how terrified they were of these earthquakes and how difficult it was to sleep at night, they asked me, "Are you afraid?" The question startled me, and though I didn't want to humiliate any of them, I expressed the reality that I wasn't afraid. "Why not?" "Because God is in control of even the earthquakes, and I trust Him. He is good and always does good." They wanted to know how I could say He is good in light of all the death and destruction. I replied that I didn't know exactly what He was doing, but I

good. He didn't start all the death and destruction in this world. I began sharing from Genesis the story of Adam and Eve's bringing death, destruction, and separation from God into the world by their sin. Yet, God promised them a way to life, peace, and a restored relationship with Him through His Son, Jesus Christ. They sat quietly while we walked through the Gospel for a few minutes. Jesus alone is the only One Who can bring peace to their hearts. Alegra asked me to pray for her to have peace. I said I was praying for everyone in Italy. She said earnestly, "No! Put ME at the top of the list!"

Since then, I've had several other opportunities to speak with Alegra about God's peace and even read through a tract with her. She has shown continued interest despite the frequent interruptions of my children or her grandchildren, but God hasn't

opened her eyes to accept His salvation yet.

We are now down to under 900 tremors a week, but we can't feel the vast majority them since they're too small. And, though people periodically speak of the possibility of more severe earthquakes, life has returned to normal in our area. (I believe the main Catholic church in our area may even have reopened after needing some repairs due to the earthquakes.)

The fear has abated again, and the

window of special opportunity to share God's peace has passed. Though I will likely never know everything God was doing with these earthquakes, I know one thing for certain—that He was opening the eyes of my friends and neighbors to their lack of control over their lives and pushing them to ask questions of eternal value. I thank God for His good plan.



PRAYING BIBLICALLY

– Clarity –

By Alan Patterson

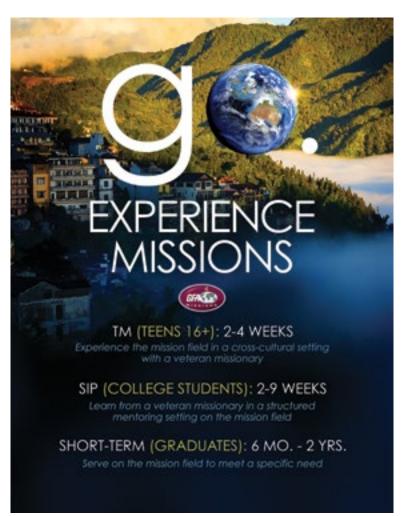
In our last issue we began to consider the third matter of biblical praying for missionaries: the necessity of making the message clear. Open doors and boldness are of little use if we do not speak so that our hearers understand. In Colossians 4:3-4, Paul asked prayer that he would be enabled to "make manifest" the mystery of Christ. One would think that Paul, master theologian, soulwinner, and preacher, would know how to do that, but he assumed nothing and always relied upon God's help. Notice that in this text Paul was not simply asking for courage to preach, he was asking for supernatural help to be able to plainly and in an understandable way explain the Gospel message. As one commentator accurately puts it, Paul's request is, "Pray that I may know exactly what approach to use when questioned by groups or individuals of various backgrounds: visitors who come to see me in prison, soldiers who guard me, and the Roman authorities before whom I may be summoned."

Paul's realization of the need for different approaches with hearers of various backgrounds and capabilities is also seen in the parallel, but differently-worded text in Ephesians 6:19. In Ephesians Paul makes this request: "And [praying] for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel." Note the word "utterance," for it is simply the Greek word "logos," which means "word." What Paul is asking then is not the same request we have discussed in an earlier article—he is not asking for boldness to open his mouth. He is rather asking for the right words to use when he does open his mouth to witness. Picture a missionary witnessing to a secular, atheistic European college student. What words should be used for this opportunity? Then picture a missionary speaking to a Chinese farmer who has been taught Communist theory but who has a more deep-seated mindset of Confucianism and Buddhism. It is easy to understand that the appropriate words will not be the same and must be chosen for each situation. A good example of the need for keeping in mind the hearers' biblical background and worldview is Paul's preaching in Acts 17. Paul preached quite differently to the Jews in Thessalonica (he preached from the Old Testament and talked about Jesus as the promised Messiah) than he did to the educated idolaters of Mars Hill (he preached basic creation truth to these proud but utterly idolatrous intellectuals). The truth of the Gospel is the same, but where one starts on the continuum of truth may vary depending on the understanding of the hearers.

Therefore, when you pray for a missionary, request that he will have the right words for the situation before him. Pray also that he will have the skill in the language to convey the truth on his heart and meet the needs of each individual.

¹W. Hendriksen and S. J. Kistemaker, Exposition of Colossians and Philemon, vol. 6 of New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2001), 182.







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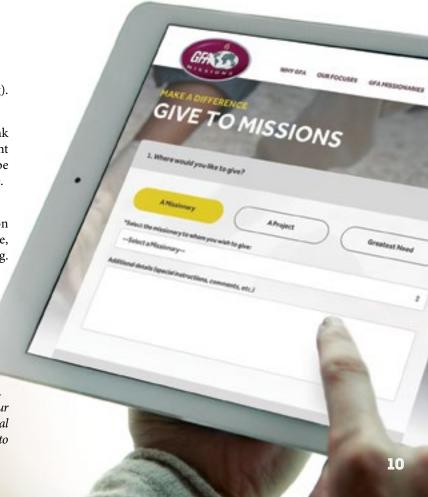
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