

The Gospel According to
Luke

“Missionary Mindset”

Chapter 9:1-17

Introduction

Somewhere in Church history we began to distinguish between *ministers*, *missionaries*, and *members*. I want us, as a fellowship, to quit thinking in those terms.

The Church has no need for formal membership as an organization. Instead, you're told in the New Testament that every believer is a spiritual **member** of the Church. To help you understand what is meant, the Church is compared to a human body. Your body has many 'members' – arms, legs, hands, feet, eyes, ears, a nose... You get the idea. In the same way, the Church on earth is to be understood as a body with many members. It's not an organization; it's an organism, a spiritual organism, with each believer as a member, interconnected and involved with every other member.

Every member of the Church is called upon to **minister** to every other member. God gives each of us a different spiritual gift or gifts; and our gift or gifts are to be used to minister to one another. There are not just one or two ministers over the members; each and every member is a minister, but with a unique function.

We are members; we are ministers; and we are, each one of us, **missionaries**. After He had risen from the dead, Jesus gave His followers what has been labeled throughout Church history as The Great Commission. He told His followers to **Go** through the whole world, teaching and making disciples. The word for **Go** means *as you are going*. In other words, no matter where you are at any given moment, *as you are going* through life on earth, you are to be winning others to Jesus. When you read the history of the Church, especially in the Book of Acts, you quickly realize that every believer understood they were a missionary in whatever place they found themselves.

The truth is, members might think of themselves as ministers; but we seldom think of ourselves as missionaries. We need to develop more of a **missionary mindset**. Not a mindset that focuses more on sending missionaries; but one that focuses on us being sent as missionaries.

Our text in Luke Chapter Nine can help us sharpen our focus. We'll see the disciples on a short-term mission; and we'll see them get a long-term missions perspective.

We'll organize our thoughts around two points: #1 You Are Called To Maintain A Short-Term Missionary Mindset, and #2 You Are Challenged To Sustain A Long-Term Missionary Mindset.

#1 You Are Called To Maintain
A Short-Term Missionary Mindset
(v1-11)

When you hear 'Short-Term Mission,' you immediately think of a trip to some foreign country. For example: Eight of our members recently went on a short-term mission to Peru. They heard about the opportunity; then they prayed about it, and sensed God's leading to **Go**. From the time they decided to go until the moment they left, they were involved with intense preparations – both physically and spiritually. On the ground in Peru, they were focused on their tasks, but remained flexible to the Holy Spirit. On the way back, they were sensitive to how God could use them as they traveled home. All the time, they maintained a short-term missionary mindset.

The insight I want you to discover today is that *any* and *every* area of serving God is itself a short-term mission for which you should maintain a missionary mindset. For example: On Sunday mornings we have men serving as the Grounds Crew; men serving as Ushers; men and women serving in the Children's Ministry; men and women serving on the Worship Team; women serving in the Café, and in the Chapel Store; families serving as Greeters; guys on the Sound Team; a Facilities Manager; elders and deacons; and I'm here, too. (I apologize if I've left anyone out!).

There is a real sense in which anyone and everyone who is serving in a particular function is on a short-term mission this morning! Just like our missionaries to Peru, there should be intense preparation – both physically and spiritually. We should be focused and remain flexible, and be sensitive to how God can use us.

How can we maintain a short-term missionary mindset? Let's look at Jesus' first short-term missionaries.

Luke 9:1 Then He called His twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority over all demons, and to cure diseases.

Luke 9:2 He sent them to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.

They were sent out primarily to **preach**. To give their preaching validity, they would have **power and authority to heal the sick** by either dispelling **demons** or defeating **diseases**. It was a specific, short-term mission; and there were specific preparations and instructions for it:

Luke 9:3 And He said to them, "Take nothing for the journey, neither staffs nor bag nor bread nor money; and do not have two tunics apiece.

Luke 9:4 "Whatever house you enter, stay there, and from there depart.

Luke 9:5 And whoever will not receive you, when you go out of that city, shake off the very dust from your feet as a testimony against them."

These were not universal rules for short-term missions. There would be other times when Jesus would tell them to take different, or additional, supplies and equipment. In this case, for this service, at that time, these were their preparations and instructions.

Before we go on, I should explain the Jewish custom of **shak[ing] off the very dust from your feet as a testimony against them**. Whenever a Jew returned to Israel from Gentile territory, they would shake the dust of those foreign lands off their feet. For a Jew to shake off the dust in Jewish territory was a symbol that those Jews were acting like godless Gentiles.

Even though these preparations and instructions were unique even for the twelve, there are some general principles we can get from them for our own short-term missions:

1. **Taking nothing** reminds you to serve in total dependence upon God.
2. Going without **staff** or **bread** or **money**, and with only a single change of clothes, reminds you to serve with simplicity.
3. Accepting whatever lodging was offered, regardless how humble, reminds you to be content with the place you have been called to serve God.
4. Finally, you are told that not everyone will **receive** your ministry. This reminds you to look past people and serve as unto the Lord.

Each of those individually; and all of them collectively; are profound ways by which you maintain your short-term missionary mindset.

There's one more thing we need to add: *They were faithful to their calling!*

Luke 9:6 So they departed and went through the towns, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere.

Simply put, they followed through; they were faithful to do what Jesus called them to do, and in the way He called them to do it. It is an encouragement for each of us to take any and all of our short-term serving very seriously.

In verses seven, eight, and nine, you get the reaction of Herod to their mission:

Luke 9:7 Now Herod the tetrarch heard of all that was done by Him; and he was perplexed, because it was said by some that John had risen from the dead, Luke 9:8 and by some that Elijah had appeared, and by others that one of the old prophets had risen again.

Luke 9:9 Herod said, "John I have beheaded, but who is this of whom I hear such things?" So he sought to see Him.

Herod's reaction will make more sense when we discuss verses eighteen through twenty-one, in a later study. For now, we see in his reaction that the disciples were indeed faithful. They went about preaching and performing healings, and news of it was spreading. But, more than that, we see that Jesus was faithful to His disciples in that He empowered them to do everything He sent them to accomplish.

Listen: Your particular service, at a particular time – like the things I listed going on here on Sunday morning – *are every bit a short-term mission requiring your full focus and faithfulness.*

Luke 9:10 And the apostles, when they had returned, told Him all that they had done. Then He took them and went aside privately into a deserted place belonging to the city called Bethsaida.

Luke 9:11 But when the multitudes knew *it*, they followed Him; and He received them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who had need of healing.

These verses are an important transition. The disciples had been sent out on a specific short-term mission. Now it was over, and they were retreating for rest. To put it in our own terms – it wasn't their week to Usher, or be on the Grounds Crew. The **multitudes** found them. Jesus would take it as an opportunity to show them, and us, that there is also a long-term missionary mindset.

#2 You Are Challenged To Sustain A Long-Term Missionary Mindset (v12-17)

The thing to note in the feeding of the five thousand is how quickly the disciples quit thinking like missionaries.

Luke 9:12 When the day began to wear away, the twelve came and said to Him, "Send the multitude away, that they may go into the surrounding towns and country, and lodge and get provisions; for we are in a deserted place here."

These guys had recently been dispelling demons; they had gone throughout the region defeating diseases. Faced with a crisis, they formed a committee; and the committee decided nothing could be done to help these needy folks.

By the way, I always like to give this definition of a committee - A group of people who individually can do nothing, and who collectively think that nothing can be done!

I want to suggest that the disciples had only a short-term missions mindset. Jesus began to expand their thinking:

Luke 9:13 But He said to them, “You give them something to eat.”
And they said, “We have no more than five loaves and two fish, unless we go and buy food for all these people.”

They had been sent out by Jesus and told exactly what to do – preach the Gospel and heal the sick. There was nothing in their ministry description about feeding the multitudes. It wasn’t their job.

Yes, it was! Because their ‘job’ was to show God’s love and compassion to everyone at all times. They may have returned from a short-term mission, but they needed to understand that life is one long-term mission.

You can always tell when you lack the long-term missions mindset: You look to your own resources and wisdom rather than to the Lord. Our own resources and wisdom will always be like a few loaves and fishes among multitudes – insufficient.

Luke 9:14 For there were about five thousand men.
Then He said to His disciples, “Make them sit down in groups of fifty.”
Luke 9:15 And they did so, and made them all sit down.

Counting women and children, you can probably double the total number of people to ten thousand or more. The disciples organized them into between 100 and 200 groups of fifty and had them seated.

Luke 9:16 Then He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke *them*, and gave *them* to the disciples to set before the multitude.

Luke 9:17 So they all ate and were filled, and twelve baskets of the leftover fragments were taken up by them.

The Lord loves order. Even miracles must be done in an orderly way. You should always set out to serve in the most orderly, the most excellent, way possible. God is not honored when you wait until the last minute; or pay no attention to detail.

Each disciple served between 8 and 16 groups of fifty. Even a good waiter cannot carry enough fish and bread for fifty people at once, let alone multiple groups of fifty. The picture you get is that the disciples had to keep returning to Jesus for additional food over and over

again. Each time they returned, Jesus gave them just what they needed for their group – no more, no less.

It taught them, and showed the people, that you must keep coming to Jesus to receive what you need. In Him are sufficient resources to meet the need. But those resources are provided through His servants, as needed, as they return to Him over and over again.

There is something slightly humorous in them taking **up twelve baskets of the leftover fragments**. There was one basket for each of the twelve disciples. On the one hand, it was great that the Lord was providing for them. After a long afternoon of serving others, they had more than enough for themselves – a whole basketful each.

But they had to settle for the leftovers! It would be like a waiter or waitress having to settle for the leftover food on the plates of the people they served all day.

When you serve others, giving them God's best, you can be left with leftovers. But God's leftovers are better than anything the world has to offer, because one day you will hear the Lord say, "Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of your Lord."

There were many lessons that day. Among them was the one we're suggesting. You are challenged to live your life sustaining a long-term missions mindset. Along the way, you serve in particular ways as a short-term missionary. But, when you're 'done' with a particular assignment, you are still the Lord's missionary, wherever you find yourself, as you are going through the world.

Conclusion

There is always more going on in every text of the Bible. In the feeding of the five thousand, you have the Gospel illustrated for you:

1. The multitude is representative of mankind. We are a company of poor sinners, sorely in danger of perishing for lack of spiritual food.
2. Jesus is now high in heaven, at the right hand of God; but He still looks down with compassion upon us, still pities us, still desires to meet our deepest need.

3. Jesus tells His believing ministers, **You give them something to eat.** He sends believers into the world, scattering them as He sees fit, to preach the Gospel.
4. Those who receive the Gospel find their spiritual hunger satisfied, with enough to spare.

Jesus is that Bread of Life that comes down from heaven, to all who are hungry. He is that Living Water, to all who are thirsty.