

ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF POTENTIAL MISSIONARIES

I am thankful God is still calling Christians into full-time missionary service. Even more so, I am glad for those who are *surrendering* to God's call (see our newest missionaries on pages 11–13). What does it take to be that kind of Christian? In this editorial, I would like to discuss some essential characteristics of those who both hear and respond to the call of God.

First, potential missionaries must have a **LISTENING EAR**. Sadly, I believe God is calling many people to be missionaries but they do not even hear His call. The world, the flesh, and the devil are doing everything

possible to distract believers from listening to God. One very effective distraction today is technology. Technology can be a wonderful servant but it is a terrible master. Many believers are too busy communicating on social media that they are not communicating with God. They connect with friends on line

but disconnect from God in heaven. They readily receive messages from social media friends but have difficulty receiving messages from their

Lord and Savior. In order to hear God's call, we must silence our electronic devices and spend our time in God's Word and at God's throne.

Second, the only way Christians are going to surrender to missions is if they have an **OBEDIENT HEART**. Hearing God's call is just the first step. We must be *doers... and not hearers only* (James 1:22). Sadly, I have spoken with some who have told me God called them to be missionaries but they never obeyed His call. Each time I hear those type testimonies, they are filled with remorse and regret. Conversely, I have never spoken with anyone who regretted doing God's will. Obedience brings blessing (James 1:25b). God always wants what is best for us. We must constantly maintain an obedient heart so that we immediately and continually respond to the voice of our Lord and Master.

Third, a **VERIFIABLE FAITH** is another major prerequisite to missionary service. *Faith without works is dead* (James 2:26). Potential missionaries are not mysteriously transformed into soul-winning missionaries the moment they arrive on the field. Long before they depart for the field, their works must prove their faith. Scripture shows that God calls those who are already busy (e.g., Gideon

was threshing wheat, Samuel was serving in the temple, David was watching sheep, Elisha was plowing, Amos was following his flock, Peter and Andrew were fishing, James and John were mending their nets, Philip was preaching in Samaria, etc.). In Acts 13, the Holy Spirit separated Barnabas and Paul for the work of missions. This was done through the local church leaders who knew the testimony of these Godly men. Barnabas and Paul had already been faithfully serving the Lord when the Holy Spirit separated them for the work of missions. Missionaries are called out from among those who possess a faith that has been verified and validated by faithful and fruitful Christian service.

Fourth, potential missionaries need to be people who have an **EXPECTANT ATTITUDE**. William Carey said, "Expect great things from God; attempt great things for God." There is no reason to attempt great things for God if we do not expect great things from God. Anyone who steps out in obedient faith to serve as a missionary has the promise of God's unlimited power, unending provision, and unceasing presence. God is *not willing that any should perish* (2 Peter 3:9). He wants every person *to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth* (1 Timothy 2:4). Thus, it is only logical that while attempting to win lost souls around the world, we can be expecting great things from God.

Finally, there is one other characteristic that must be mentioned—**LOVE**. Love is not just an essential part of the four things already mentioned, it actually makes them possible. If we genuinely love God and our neighbor, we will have a listening ear, an obedient heart, a verifiable faith, and an expectant attitude. Love is *the greatest of these*—and all other—characteristics (1 Corinthians 13:13). Jesus said, "*And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength.... And... Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*" (Mark 12:30–31). Thus, the kind of Christian who both hears and surrenders to God's call is the one who completely loves his Savior and compassionately loves his neighbor. **W**



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