

The Workers of the Local Church

Selected Scriptures - NCBC, August 11, 2019

Main Point: **Global Outreach workers are the spiritually mature delegates of the local church sent out for the sake of Christ's name.**

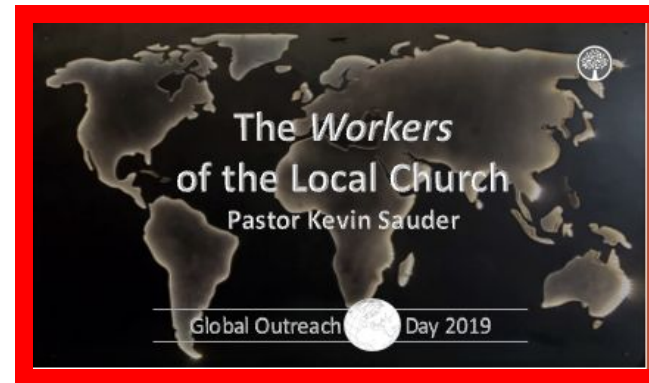
- **GO workers are marked by spiritual character** (1 Timothy 3:1-13)
 - Eagerness does not equal readiness
 - Confirmed in Head, Heart, Hands, and Home
- **GO workers are called by God and sent by their church** (Acts 13:1-4)
 - Not self-appointed but church-confirmed
 - Representing the sending church's ministry team
- **GO workers serve as either church planters or church partners** (Acts 16ff)
 - Depending on the existence of a field church
 - Submitting to their overseeing church shepherds
- **GO workers are accountable to serve their sending church** (Acts 14:26-28)
 - Reporting accountable faithfulness
 - Experiencing mutual encouragement

Application: **Pray that God would call more workers into His harvest** (Matthew 9:37-38)

Opening Announcements:

- **Church-wide Hymn Sing TONIGHT** – 5:30pm on Intersection Patio, weather permitting.
- Opportunities to serve in AWANA – mid-week Scripture Memory ministry for children during school year. Contact Robert Myers for more info – rmyers@myncbc.org

<<In Christ Alone>>



Since Christ is the One who is the head of the church, and Christ is the One who has promised to build His church, it just makes sense that we stand in the power of Christ alone. Thanks for singing the Gospel together this morning.

What a day we've enjoyed so far! I trust you've been encouraged as much as I have been today with the Scripture's emphasis on the centrality of the local church in all our global outreach efforts.

I now have the privilege of directing our attention to *The Workers of the Local Church*, so I'd invite you to open your Bibles to **Acts chapter 13**.



If you do not have a Bible this morning, simply raise your hand as people are coming now with Bibles for you to use. Once you receive a Bible, please prepare to read from the first **five verses** of **Acts chapter 13**.

I'm so thankful for how God continues to grow our understanding and practice of global outreach here at New Castle Bible Church. Our church family has enjoyed a long history of God-glorifying faithfulness in missions. Our dear Pastor Somers is to be thanked and honored for how he helped to press a generous love for the glory of God among all nations into the very DNA of our identity here at New Castle Bible Church. We could not be reaching farther in these strategic ways as a church family now if it were not for the fact that we are building on the faithfulness of the generation that was before us. All glory and praise to God for His kindness towards us.



So before I get into my topic on *The Workers of the Local Church*, let's quickly review what we've learned so far from our first two sessions:

First, when you read history from the lens of the Scriptures, it is clear that God is glorified when Great Commission¹ obedience establishes growing, reproducing, local churches. This is the focus of the last half of **Acts** and all **the Epistles**. The discipleship commands--to baptize and teach disciples everything that God has revealed under the authority of Christ--*necessarily requires* local church ministry. Therefore the practical aim of the Great Commission is *churches planted*, not merely converts won.

The local church is the primary way in which the Holy Spirit works in this world today. In the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit worked primarily through the nation of Israel. But ever since the Jewish religious leaders rejected Jesus as the Messiah in **Matthew 12**, Scripture reveals how the Spirit of God has been granted to all

¹ Matthew 28:18-20

people, and now the local church is the primary way the Holy Spirit works in this world today.² The local gatherings of God's redeemed in their own communities – is God's expression of His kingdom, or His reign, on earth today.

Remember of course that the local church is not a building or a set of programs – it's a people. And it is local assemblies that are the stewards of God's truth,³ stewards of God's grace,⁴ and stewards of God's presence.⁵ It is the household of God that is charged with confirming the call and sending out workers,⁶ and given the authority to bind or loose its members for the sake of God's kingdom.⁷ It is the Spirit of God that empowers the church's ministry together,⁸ and empowers the church's loving fellowship together.⁹

Therefore, the local church has biblical responsibility to send out whomever God's Spirit calls – all for the sake of His name.¹⁰ The responsibilities of affirming, equipping, training, financing, shepherding, and caring for the sent workers all fall biblically upon the sending church. Of course the local church benefits immensely from its partnerships with parachurch sending agencies and other non-profits in its efforts to effectively fulfill its biblical

² Ephesians 2:11-22; 3:6-10, 21

³ 1 Timothy 3:15; c.f. Titus 1:9

⁴ 1 Peter 4:10-11; 1 Corinthians 12, especially verse 7; Ephesians 4:7-16

⁵ Matthew 18:20; c.f. 2 Corinthians 6:16-18

⁶ Acts 13:1-5; 1 Timothy 5:22; 2 Timothy 2:2

⁷ Matthew 16:18-19; 18:17-20; c.f. Hebrews 13:17

⁸ Acts 1:8; 1 Thessalonians 1:5-6

⁹ Galatians 5:16-6:10, especially verses 22-23; Ephesians 4:3-6; Philippians 2:1-4

¹⁰ 3 John 1:5-8

mandate in faraway lands with different cultures, currencies, and languages. But the Scripture is clear – parachurch agencies exist to help the local church accomplish her mission for the glory of God, not the other way around. The local church does not exist to serve parachurch ministries. In Paul's journeys through **Acts**, it was the church of Antioch to whom he was accountable.

¹¹ In **3 John**, it was the local church meeting in Gaius' home who was ultimately responsible to send global outreach workers in a manner worthy of God.¹²

Church – here's the reality: When you read Scripture from a perspective of American independence, it can be easy to miss the forest of local church emphasis as we gaze upon a particular tree of our individual responsibility before God. But the New Testament clearly emphasizes community more than individuality. The New Testament clearly emphasizes the local church in God's design for His glory among all the nations.

Therefore when our church sends out a worker out for the sake of God's name, who should we send? What should be the nature of our relationship? And to whom is the sent person accountable? These are the questions we will seek to answer in this specific session.

I've selected our Scripture reading from **Acts chapter 13**. Certainly **Acts** is descriptive, not prescriptive. It's a historical reporting of what happened in time, rather than a how-to manual for church's practices today. However there's much we can observe and learn from the example

¹¹ Acts 13:1-4; 14:26-28; 15:30-35; 18:22

¹² 3 John 1

of the Apostles and the early church as it has been recorded for us in Acts.

Please stand in honor of the public reading of God's Word as I read from **Acts 13, verses 1-5**, in the English Standard Translation, to help set our minds on *The Workers of the Local Church*:


Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a lifelong friend of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. ²While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." ³Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off. ⁴So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus. ⁵When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. And they had John to assist them.

This is God's Word. Please be seated.


Let's Pray.

When I speak about the Workers of the Local Church this morning, I'm referring to sent workers – Global Outreach workers. Those workers who are referred to in **3 John** as being *fellow workers for the truth*, all those who have *gone out for the sake of God's name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles*.

My main point this morning is that,

Main Point 

Global Outreach workers are the spiritually mature delegates of the local church sent out for the sake of Christ's name.

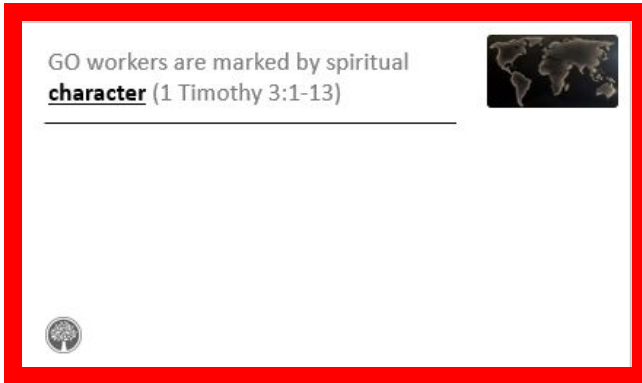


Global Outreach workers are the spiritually mature delegates of the local church sent out for the sake of Christ's name.

I believe the church and her mission can benefit much from some careful consideration of this topic. Who should be sent, and who shouldn't be sent? What considerations are appropriate for a church when discerning God's call for one of its members?

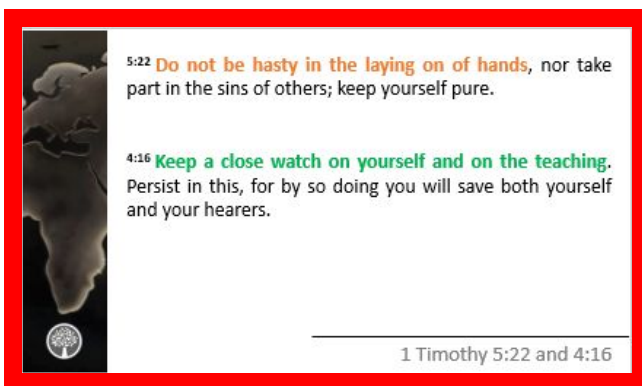
Because here's the reality: cross-cultural ministry is not all glamour and adventure. Representing Christ and making disciples among all nations is difficult work. There are endless spiritual, physical, relational, and emotional obstacles. Leaving the comforts of home and family out of obedience to God's call will test a person's faith, doctrine, and love.¹³ Many sent workers will face persecution, loneliness, conflict, and discouragement. This is why the New Testament clearly emphasizes one leading characteristic for every worker whom the local church would send out:

¹³ Acts and the Epistles testify to the common heresy, confusion, and syncretism that often occur at the edge of gospel expansion.



GO workers are marked by spiritual character (1 Timothy 3:1-13)

The most important quality of a GO worker is not their language aptitude, or their love for adventure, or their flexibility, or their love for strangers, or their Bible knowledge. While all of those qualities have true significance, the most important quality of the local church's worker is their spiritual character.



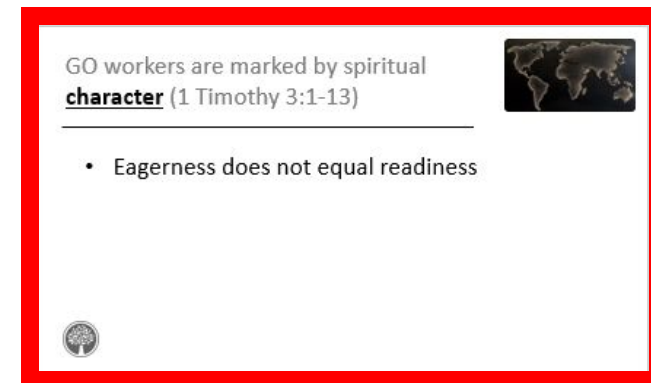
1 Timothy 5:22 is very important, as it speaks to the laying on of hands, or the ordaining or commissioning that the local church does for one of its leaders, or for one of their own who is sent out for the sake of God's Name.¹⁴

This verse warns us against sending a worker prematurely:

Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands...

God's mission is urgent, but it is not frantic. Paul constantly emphasized the priority of the minister's life and doctrine.

God's glory is diminished every time a well-intentioned but unqualified person is sent out for the sake of His Name. Therefore,



Eagerness does not equal readiness

¹⁴ Acts 6:6; 13:3; 1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6; Hebrews 6:2

Just because someone desires to be sent, does not mean the church should send them. We must humbly heed the clear emphasis of the New Testament.


Because every time the church sends a person out a worker, they are sending out a spiritual leader. It doesn't matter if they are sending a pastor, or a medical doctor, or a Bible translator, or a teacher, or a pilot. If that person is sent out for the sake of God's Name, they will be received on the field as a spiritual leader. As an exemplary model of life and doctrine for the benefit of the souls on the field.

This is why **1 Timothy 3** is such a relevant Scripture for assessing all sent workers. Because **1 Timothy 3:1-13** carefully describes the required character – whether for pastor/elders in **verses 1-7**, or deacons in **verses 8-13**.


Now you might object, asking, “Are you saying that the church should only send out elders and deacons for the sake of God's Name?”

No. I'm not saying that a person must occupy the *formal office* of elder or deacon before they can be sent. But I am saying that they should exemplify the character of spiritual maturity *just like* elders and deacons. Why would a church ever send out a worker who wasn't spiritually qualified to serve as one of their own church leaders at home?

GO workers must be marked by spiritual character and spiritual fruitfulness that the sending church has,


GO workers are marked by spiritual **character** (1 Timothy 3:1-13) 

- Eagerness does not equal readiness
- Confirmed in Head, Heart, Hands, and Home



Confirmed in Head, Heart, Hands, and Home

After all, it is our head, heart, hands, and home of Christlikeness that are the necessary means to the glory of God in our lives. And a careful study of **1 Timothy 3** shows how,

GO workers are marked by spiritual **character** (1 Timothy 3:1-13) 

Head	Clear understanding of God's Gospel, firm grasp of sound doctrine
Heart	Spirit-controlled temperament and speech, not lover of money, humble, lover of good
Hands	Not a novice, good reputation with unbelievers, proven ministry
Home	Faithful to spouse and children, good household manager

Spiritual maturity is demonstrated by the head of doctrinal soundness, the heart of humble dependence, the hands of missional faithfulness, and the home of relational wholeness. In other words, the most important

characteristic of the local church's workers is that they are,

GO workers are marked by spiritual **character** (1 Timothy 3:1-13) 


Head	Clear understanding of God's Gospel, firm grasp of sound doctrine
Heart	Spirit-controlled temperament and speech, not lover of money, humble, love of good
Hands	Not a novice, good reputation with unbelievers, prudent in his way
Home	faithful to spouse and children, good household manager

Above reproach. Growing in Christlikeness. Faithful and fruitful. Not perfect, but exemplary.

Church – a lack of godliness will disqualify a sent worker and harm their ministry quicker than anything else. How many sent workers have harmed God's kingdom through pride, lack of submission, anger, moral failure, or doctrinal compromise? The local church must guard against impatience or pragmatic pressures in our sending. It is the church's responsibility to confirm the exemplary quality of the workers character, doctrine, and ministry fruitfulness before ever laying hands on them to be sent. Global Outreach workers are marked by spiritual character.

Second,

GO workers are called by **God** and sent by their **church** (Acts 13:1-4) 



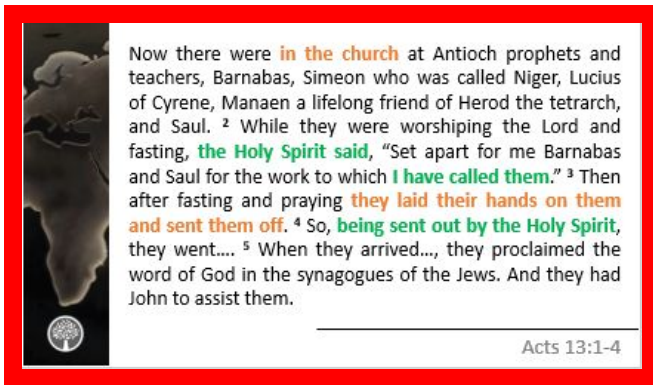
GO workers are called by God and sent by their church.

It is the Holy Spirit that *calls* GO workers,¹⁵ but it is the local church that *sends* GO workers out for the sake of God's name. We must stand against the harmful individualism that is so common in missions today. God is the supreme sending agent – He is the Lord of the harvest.¹⁶ However because the primary way that His Spirit works in the world today is through the local church, the local church is God's mediating agent in the sending of all GO workers. Like we heard last hour, it is the responsibility of the sending church to confirm the call and consecrate the workers into God's grace.

We see this pattern clearly described in **Acts 13:1-5:**

¹⁵ C.f. Acts 20:17-38, especially verses 24, 28

¹⁶ Matthew 9:38



Verse 1 introduced us by name to some spiritual leaders within the church, and **verse 2** makes it clear that the *Holy Spirit said*, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them. In **verse 4** Paul and Barnabas were *sent out by the Holy Spirit*. Yet all of this work of God's Spirit took place *in the church*. **Verse 3** describes how the local church at Antioch fasted and prayed and *laid their hands on them and sent them off*.

Let's not miss this: GO workers are called by God but sent by their local church. To many times well-intentioned believers have separated God's call from His church. It is the local church which is responsible to confirm the worker's character. It is the local church that is responsible to confirm, equip, and send in a manner worthy of God.¹⁷

In other words, Global Outreach workers are,

¹⁷ 3 John 5-8
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Not self-appointed but church-confirmed.

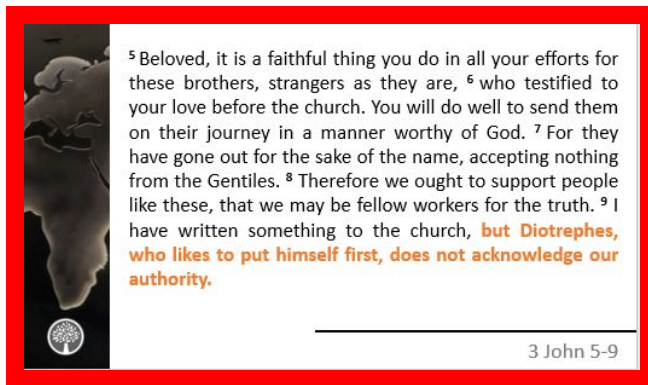
Can you imagine what would happen if anyone could self-appoint themselves as a church leader?¹⁸ There's a reason that pastor ordination councils are important. They protect the character, doctrine, and ministry of the church from both ignorance and ill-will. Scripture doesn't ever speak of any spiritual leader laying hands on themselves... that would be silly.

And yet, so often today's GO workers are viewed as self-appointed free-agents who choose their own agencies, their own people group, and even their own sending churches according to their own preferences. This is very different that God's design.

Do you remember how Paul handled his apostolic calling after his time alone with God in Arabia? He went and submitted himself to the other apostles in Jerusalem *in order to make sure that he was not running or had not*

¹⁸ For a real-life contemporary discussion of this destructive reality in an African context, see <https://africa.thegospelcoalition.org/article/stop-pastoral-self-appointments/>.

run in vain.¹⁹ He was called by God, but confirmed by the church.



In **3 John**, immediately following John's encouragement to the local church to send out workers in a manner worthy of God, **verse 9** warns against the self-appointed Diotrephes, *who does not acknowledge our authority*. There is no biblical possibility of a self-appointed GO worker.

Do you remember what happened in **Acts 15**? A team of workers had arrived on the field teaching false doctrine,²⁰ but when Paul connected with their sending church in Jerusalem he discovered that they were ministering outside of the authority of their sending church on the field.²¹

So here's the point. The workers of the local church are never self-appointed. They are called by God and sent

¹⁹ Galatians 2:1-10, especially verse 9

²⁰ Acts 15:1

²¹ Acts 15:24

by their church. They are a true extension of the sending church's ministry to the field where they serve. They are sent out as spiritual leaders,



Representing the sending church's ministry team

When the sending church lays hands on a worker and sends them out, they are effectively confirming the worker as an official delegate from their church to the field. If we wouldn't hire a person to serve at New Castle Bible Church, then we wouldn't send them to serve others on our behalf. For GO workers are an official delegation from us to those on the field.

And further, when the local church sends out workers for the sake of God's name, there are two distinct kind of workers which the church can send:



GO workers serve as either church planters or church partners.

A Global Outreach worker is not just any Christian who lives cross-culturally and shares the gospel.²²

I want you to think carefully with me for a moment. Have you ever heard the well-intentioned phrase, "Every Christian is a missionary!"? Now, of course every believer is called to be salt and light in this world.²³ All Christians are called to make disciples and seek to advance the building of Christ's church.²⁴ We are all called to evangelize the lost.²⁵ But not every Christian is a sent worker.

We don't say every Christian is an elder or pastor. Scripture does not portray every believer as one who

²² The fellow workers of the truth referred to in 3 John 5-8 are in a different biblical category than those faithful believers who were proclaiming God's Word cross-culturally because of being scattered by persecution (Acts 8:4) or those who travel in pursuit of business (James 4:13).

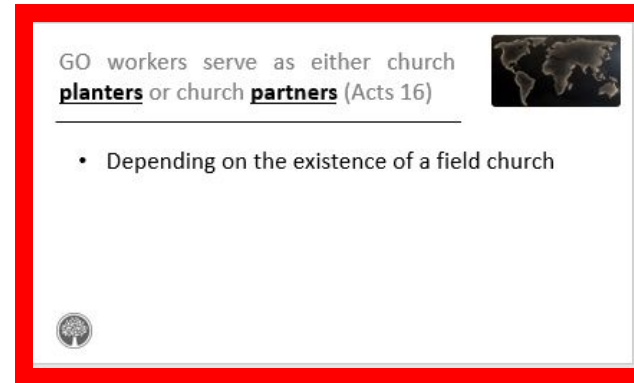
²³ Matthew 5:16; Philippians 2:15-16; 1 Peter 2:12

²⁴ Matthew 28:18-20

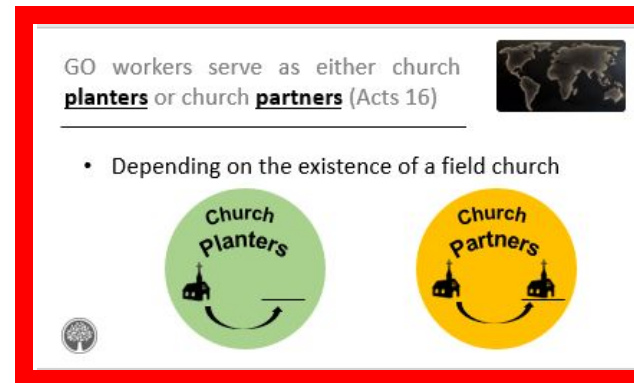
²⁵ 2 Corinthians 5:18-20

should be financially supported and sent out by the church for the sake of God's name.

To be a GO worker is to engage in a specific calling on behalf of the sending church. Therefore in **Acts** and the epistles, we observe two distinct kinds of workers that were sent out from local churches. Church planters, and Church partners. And the difference between them simply,



Depends on the existence of a field church. Here's a diagram to help illustrate the difference.



If the worker is sent where there is not yet a biblically-defined local church on the field, like Paul and Barnabas were in **Acts chapters 13-14**, then they are a **church planter**.²⁶ Church planters, and all who go with them in support,²⁷ desire to reproduce the sending church in a place where there is presently no local church.

But this is not the only kind of sending that glorifies God. The Scriptures also testify to Paul and his team being sent from their church in Antioch to **partner** with existing churches on the field.²⁸

Therefore, notice that the distinction between church planters and church partners has nothing to do with whether the sent worker is a pastor, or a pilot, or a doctor, or a translator. All those kinds of skills and more can be useful in *both* kinds of sending. The primary distinction between the 2 kinds of sending is whether or not there is a biblically defined local church on the field.

I wish to be very clear. Both church planters and church partners glorify God. Both are praiseworthy and biblical. One is not better than the other. But to fail to recognize the difference between the two kinds of local church workers risks unintentionally undermining the God-given authority of the receiving churches on the field.

²⁶ C.f. Acts 13-14, 16:9-18:21, 19:1-41

²⁷ Consider John Mark in Acts 13:5

²⁸ C.f. Acts 11:27-30, 15:36-41, 16:1-5, 18:22-23, 20:1-38, 21:4-16; Rom 15:25-28; 1 Cor 16:1-11; 2 Cor 8-9; 1 Tim 1:3-4

In the words of the apostle Paul, if you are going to build on someone else's foundation, *let each one take care how he builds upon it.*²⁹

There is a very practical difference between church planters and church partners when it comes to,

Submitting to their overseeing church shepherds.

After all, since church planters don't have a field church overseeing their work,

²⁹ 1 Corinthians 3:10

GO workers serve as either church **planters** or church **partners** (Acts 16)

- Depending on the existence of a field church
- Submitting to their overseeing church shepherds

3 Jn 5-8

their spiritual authority for their mission according to God's design is still their **sending church**.

But when a local church sends a church partner, the worker is being sent to strengthen another local church on the field. To encourage or partner with their ministry in some way. Therefore,

GO workers serve as either church **planters** or church **partners** (Acts 16)

- Depending on the existence of a field church
- Submitting to their overseeing church shepherds

3 Jn 5-8

Heb 13:17

When sending church partners, the local church on the field must be responsible for the spiritual oversight of the worker to prevent the sending church's help from

unintentionally hurting or supplanting the receiving church on the field.

So while there are many implications of this we don't have time to unpack this morning, for now just recognize that there are two distinct kinds of global outreach workers found in Scripture: church planters, and church partners.

And then finally, it's worth briefly noting one final characteristic of the local church's workers.

GO workers are accountable to **serve** their sending church (Acts 14:26-28)

GO workers are accountable to **serve** their sending church (Acts 14:26-28)

Scripture records how the sent workers of the local church actually have a responsibility back towards the church that sent them. They are accountable to serve their sending church in a mutually encouraging relationship.

First, GO workers are accountable to serve by,

GO workers are accountable to serve their sending church (Acts 14:26-28) 

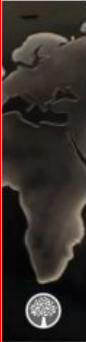
- Reporting accountable faithfulness



Reporting accountable faithfulness


Testifying to what God's grace has fulfilled in and through their ministry. Demonstrating accountability to their sending church's spiritual authority with clear and transparent communication.

Just as we see in **Acts 14, verses 25-28,**




²⁵ And when they had spoken the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia, ²⁶ and from there they sailed to **Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work that they had fulfilled.** ²⁷ And when they arrived and gathered **the church** together, **they declared all that God had done** with them, and how He had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles. ²⁸ And **they remained no little time with the disciples.**

Acts 14:25-28




Where Paul and Barnabas return to their sending church, gather the church together, and *declare all that God had done with them*. And then notice **verse 28,**

And they remained no little time with the disciples. There was time and priority given to the relationship of the sent workers with their sending church body. What we see described in **Acts 14** is God's design for GO workers and their sending churches to,

GO workers are accountable to serve their sending church (Acts 14:26-28) 

- Reporting accountable faithfulness
- Experiencing mutual encouragement



Experience mutual encouragement together.

When workers return for a time of furlough, it shouldn't be so full of travel to various supporters that their souls become exhausted, and their supporters only get to hear a formal presentation for 1 hour. As **Romans 15** reports,



The workers' interactions with their sending church should be full of great joy and refreshment for the worker, and mutually increase the eternal joy of the church. After all, as the worker serves the church, and the church serves the worker – God is glorified and all are encouraged as the body loves one another.³⁰

These are some of the biblical priorities and qualities that mark *The Workers of the Local Church*.



Global Outreach workers are the spiritually mature

delegates of the local church sent out for the sake of Christ's name.

So then, as we recognize that God calls those whom we are responsible to send out, it means that we must,



Pray that God would call more workers into His harvest.

Ask the Lord of the Harvest to raise up more men and women from New Castle Bible Church who are exemplary in spiritual character. Pray that God would give us the grace to send out our best for the sake of His name in a manner worthy of God, so that they could serve as either church planters or church partners around the world in a relationship with us that could be mutually encouraging for God's greater praise and glory.

³⁰ Ephesians 4:16; Colossians 2:2, 19; Romans 12:4-5
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Now as a joyful conclusion to this message, we have the privilege of formally commissioning some new sent workers this morning!

CJ's Commissioning

With God's help we are going to use technology at this time to discontinue our live stream for security reasons, and patch into our service our beloved CJ family who are currently serving as planters in Topaz.³¹

The CJs are not unknown to our church family. For several years we've had the privilege of partnering with others who sent them...but in the last year that situation changed and the CJs have been working with our elders and their field agency to transition into becoming one of our formal sent planters. You can learn more about the CJs and their work at our Global Outreach wall.

³¹ The exact location of these workers cannot be identified due to security concerns.

So let's say good morning (or should I say good evening?) to the CJs! K&H, it is so good to have you join us today. We want you to know that your family here can see you, and we dearly love you, and we are humbled by your exemplary character, your supernatural calling, your faithfulness in your planting efforts, and your joyful submission and accountability and encouragement back towards us all. On behalf of New Castle Bible Church, please accept our sincere love and gratitude for your faithful work on our behalf!

Would you please share a brief update with New Castle at this time?

<< CJs update >>

Now if all of our elders who are present in this service would come to the front at this time, I'm going to invite us all to stand together and pray for the CJs. I'd also like to invite those who serve on the CJ's care team to come forward and join our elders on the stage in a representation of our church's care for them. I also invite the musicians up to the stage to prepare for our last song.

Since the CJs are not physically present with us this morning, we are not going to be able to physically "lay hands on them," however we are still able to pray with them and for them as we send them out as an extension of our family into Topaz.

Let's pray.

Thank you, CJs! Officially welcome into our family!! You are dearly loved!! Any brief closing words or

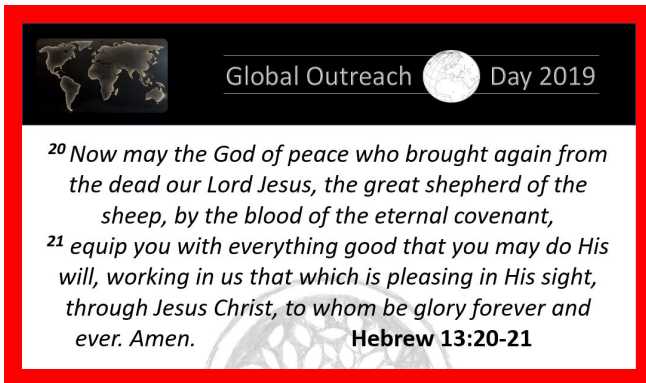
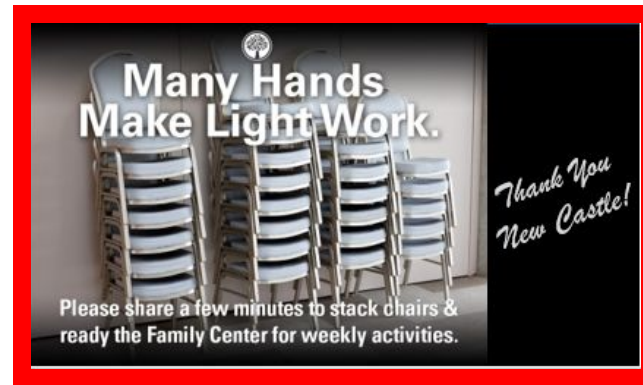
encouragement to share with your New Castle family at this time?

<<CJs comments>>

Amen. Thank you for being able to join us via technology today. Church – please remain standing now as we respond in song to the preciousness of our Savior, who is worth leaving everything on this earth for a greater fame of His Name.

<<All to Us>>

Let's pray our benediction together as we dismiss.



²⁰ Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, ²¹ equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.
Hebrews 13:20-21

Recommended Resources on *The Local Church and God's Mission*:

- *Missions*, Andy Johnson
- *For the Sake of His Name*, David M. Doran
- *Let the Nations be Glad*, John Piper
- *Senders*, Paul Seger
- *Serving as Senders*, Neal Pirolo