

## PUTTING MISSIONS AT THE CENTER

By Bob Young

Note: Jim Killam recently shared some challenging concepts in a Moody Publishers email. This article is built on the concepts he shared. Direct quotes from Killam are italicized.

*Famed 19th-century missionary Hudson Taylor suggested a four-part process for engaging congregations in missions.*

- 1. Missions are preached every Sunday;*
- 2. Every person in the church knows his/her personal responsibility to support the work of missionaries;*
- 3. Missionaries must give accurate and compelling reports; and*
- 4. All of this must be bathed in prayer.*

If in our churches we are really interested in missions, how could we apply these four ideas? How is your church doing on keeping mission in view?

How can missions be preached every Sunday? It would not be practical to make missions the focal point or main idea of every sermon. Some Christian universities include a “mission minute” in chapel each week. Could the church do something similar? What if every worship assembly included a story of how God is at work in the world? Think video clips, sermon illustrations, one-minute mission updates. Think “how God is at work” not how “we are at work.” Note Taylor’s third point and consider the power of compelling stories well presented. Would that make a difference in our churches, in how we seek to impact the world?

Do our church members understand missions? Do we understand that the primary work of missionaries is to share the gospel? In some churches, the biblical concept of missions is watered down because every service project in a location away from “church central” is called missions. Could we develop a more biblical concept of mission with compelling mission reporting? I believe we could. Think inspiring reports of the impact of the kingdom in the lives of people. *With such stories, people pay attention and discover their own role.* Many times that role is not to go, but to send. But such stories will also touch the lives of those who want to go and want to share the gospel. *Every missionary (long-term or short-term) has been influenced by someone’s story. If those stories aren’t being told, or if they’re being told poorly, people don’t pray, give, send or go.*

Both of the first two ideas point to the importance of the third—accurate, compelling mission reports. Think interviews, videos that reflect other cultures and experience, stories that demonstrate the power of the gospel to save souls and change lives. This kind of reporting is transforming, able to transform the concept of missions and able to transform churches. As Killam writes, mission reporting is not Facebook selfies and stories of gross food. Too many short-term missions fail to fulfill a mission purpose. Killam holds out *for well-crafted stories, photos and videos about people whose lives they impacted.*

Finally, missions must be bathed in prayer. I recently heard of a church that used mission prayer stations inside the building to encourage members to pray for the mission works of the church. The church often had waiting lines before or after services. Another church used a mission prayer path on the church grounds. A church can pray for a specific mission work each week, or for a specific part of the world. Such prayers are powerful when they are not generalized but are specifically informed by compelling, motivating reports.