



LEGACY INSTITUTE

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Dear Fellow-laborers,

Gloria and I have just completed a speaking tour traveling in 6 states. Everywhere we went, we were well received. People are excited about the program Legacy has in action for the preaching of the Gospel in remote parts of the world. I have discovered that the people of God WANT to preach the Gospel! Sometimes they just don't know exactly how this should be accomplished and what role they should play.

What does God want us to do in this present age?

Just before the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD, the Church of God was scattered. The headquarters city was soon destroyed! The various pockets of the Church¹ had to fend for themselves. In places like Antioch with an established church organization and leadership, it was much easier to regroup and carry on. But what about the other smaller pockets of worshippers? Their world had come crashing down. They were in disarray and lacking strong, centralized leadership. They now needed to regroup and re-establish their organization and mission. No one likes to be disorganized and unsure of where they are going and how they are going to get there. We like things to be comfortable and predictable, especially when it comes to our relationship with the Church and with God. It is much easier to know ones place in the scheme of things – and to have others plan it all out for us. We like to be comfortable. We hate insecurity.

How do you think the people of God felt in the latter part of the first century? No different than we do today!

An important by-product of the scattering of the First Century Church was the opening up of new opportunities to preach the Gospel in areas as yet un-reached! New and energetic church congregations began to spring up in places such as Britain, Armenia and India. A new wave of evangelism took shape as young men and women took up the baton from the martyred Apostles and elders who had gone before. The Church grew and new administrations came about as the need for organization developed. The MISSION of the Church was again being carried out in POWER and dynamic ENERGY!

However, it is important to consider that while it is necessary to create human organization to establish administration and procedures to accomplish the work of the Church; *organization is not the most important thing.*

¹ I use a lower case "c" when referring to a human organization and an upper case "C" when referring to the spiritual Body of Christ.

The most important thing is the **MISSION** we have been given! **MISSION** is EVERYTHING!

What is the MISSION of the Church?

We can thank God that we don't have to labor to figure this out. That has already been done for us by Jesus Christ Himself! And He clearly gave us these instructions nearly 2000 years ago!

*"And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.*² **Matthew 28:18-20**

Jesus gave us a clear and concise mandate. We don't have to play a guessing game.

He told us that the **MISSION** of the Church was to **GO** and make disciples of **ALL NATIONS**. He said that we are to **BAPTIZE** those who come to Him. He commanded us to **TEACH** the newly converted – **ALL** of the doctrines He taught us. He also gave us a clear **TIME-FRAME** for accomplishing our mission. He said He would be **EMPOWERING** us throughout the age – all the way up until that age ends with His Second Coming! I don't think our **MISSION** could be made any clearer!

Each and every ministry that is formed; each and every human church organization; each and every congregation; and each and every individual member **MUST BE ACTIVELY ENGAGED IN THE MISSION** of preaching the gospel! There can be no compromise!

What about *personal salvation*? Of course, an important part of our calling is to be given eternal life.

"This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day." **John 6:39-40**

Our Lord will see to it that **ALL** the Father gives Him will receive salvation. *But personal salvation is NOT the mission of the Church!* The Church was established by Christ to carry out the same mission given to Him by the Father. The Church is **STEWARD** of Jesus' **MISSION!**

It is a constant battle to stay *on-mission!* It is easy to think we are doing God's Work and think we are pleasing Him when, unknown to us, we are *off-mission!*

It is sometimes easy to forget **WHERE** we are going! So it comes as no surprise that we are confused about **HOW** to get there!

Each of us needs to ask the question: "Am I personally, actively, with every bit of my mind and heart, fully committed and engaged in the mandate Jesus gave me in Matthew 28? Is the congregation I fellowship with fully engaged in the mandate of Matthew 28?"

² NKJV unless otherwise noted.

We all have a personal responsibility to be actively involved on an individual level and a collective level. ARE WE FULLY ENGAGED in MISSION? If not, then we've got some serious soul searching to do!

Jesus said, *"If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me."* **Matthew 16:24**

Taking up our cross is symbolic of full and unconditional devotion to Jesus, His teachings and His mission. Jesus gave His life for the *mission*. We are to follow in His footsteps. There can be nothing more important in our lives. But too often we Christians get sidetracked. We get *OFF-MISSION!*

Our dedication to Jesus the Christ and His mission can bear no compromise. We cannot just DESIRE the Kingdom of God, we must actually be producing good fruit in our lives *right now* FOR the Kingdom of God!

"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away" **John 15:1-2**

Satan is clever. There are many ways he will lure us *off-mission*. Some are easy to see and some are not so easy to see. The first category includes what the Bible refers to as "cares of this world". We can get so involved in the problems of daily living that we forget WHY we were called in the first place. Just paying the bills and dealing with family, work and social problems and illnesses can divert our minds from the work we have been given to do. Our trials can be so difficult and long-lasting that we sometimes are tempted to lose hope and give up. The Bible talks about this:

"Therefore hear the parable of the sower: When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside. But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles. Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful." **Matthew 13:18-22**

When the Word of God finds a place to grow, you can bet that Satan is right there to keep it from taking root downward and growing upward. And he certainly doesn't want us to bear any fruit for the Kingdom of God!

Some might say that, "If only I could make more money, it would solve many problems." But the problems of this life do not end with increased wealth! The more we become involved in the pursuit of wealth and how to keep others from taking it away, the more our hearts and our time get consumed away. We get *off-mission*.

"No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon." **Matthew 6:24**

During what I call my “Jonah Years”, when I left God’s Work to pursue “success” in the business world, I had the idea that if only I could make a lot of money, I would be able to serve God better by using my wealth in His service. This pursuit took me off mission for over 3 years! I was spending so much time laboring to become successful as a businessman, I forgot MISSION – my real calling! I was bearing NO fruit for the Kingdom of God. I had a “cross” alright! But it wasn’t the same as Jesus’ cross! I “died” to the pursuit of riches, not the pursuit of Jesus.

Another equally devastating seduction is the pursuit of pleasure. There is a cornucopia of pleasures out there that are easily pursued. I see our young people very much wrapped up in it and the adults are not far behind. Countless hours of music, television, movies and video games are another way that Satan uses to take us *off-mission*. America’s youth are “*plugged in and tuned out!*” It seems everyone has an *iPod* with a wire attached to their ear. We in the Church, too, can be seduced to more and more escapist pursuits. While it is important for all of us to have ways to relax and enjoy recreation, we must be very careful not to do it in a way that becomes wrong or destructive.

The technological advances of our modern society bring some real benefits. I am using a laptop computer to write this letter. I can compose on-screen and run off a copy much faster than typing and copying the old way. It even has a “spell check” so I don’t have to know how to spell anymore and it will correct my mistakes as I write. Having a laptop also means that I can take my “office” wherever I go. There are distinct advantages! But along with the benefits of technology come alarming negative side effects.

Video games are increasingly more violent and decadent. Blood and gore are commonplace. Our children are growing up de-sensitized to violent acts and immorality as they are increasingly exposed to newer and more graphic video games. A military friend of mine once told me that the Marine Corps uses the video game “*Doom*” to desensitize new recruits to killing and death. Where is this all heading?

TV, motion picture videos and movies are more and more the recreational pastime of our population. Have you watched the sitcoms and reality shows on television recently? Words and actions that would shock my mother – and cause my grandmother to faint – are now commonplace. Celebrities, talk show hosts and actors use foul language and condone sin on the screen right before us. And if we are not relentlessly on our guard, it is blatantly and deliberately broadcast right in the presence of our children and grandchildren. It is shocking!

Satan uses these tools in his nefarious agenda in the “*numbing*” and “*dumbing*” of our people. And, unless we are constantly on guard against those things that take us away from our MISSION, we also will become numb and dumb -- jaded and desensitized to the open sins around us. Remember Lot in Sodom? He was so affected by the society around him that he offered his young daughters to the mob outside to be ravaged! **(Genesis 19:8)**

The societies we live in are sick and diseased. I won’t even begin to describe some of the things we see in Asia. The point is that, we cannot allow ourselves to be influenced by the pursuit of the physical pleasures or the empty trappings of success this evil world holds out to us. All these things can take us off-track. We have to ask the questions, “How much fruit have I borne today for the Kingdom of God?” “Is the path I am on leading me to MISSION or taking me OFF MISSION?”

“...he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.” Matthew 13:23

I have given examples of just a few things that are easy to see. What about the other, more subtle things that Satan uses to make us unfruitful?

There are many sneaky ways that Satan takes us off mission. There are so many, it is uncountable. One of the most subtle of his deceptions is to make us believe we are bearing fruit for the Kingdom of God. He makes us think that if we are making progress in our spiritual lives and serving in the local church or community, we are doing God's Work.

It is important to work on spiritual development and serve the needs of the Church where you attend. God expects us to do good and serve others. It is an integral and important responsibility of every true Christian.

But, is doing good works – DOING God's Work? Is it truly the MISSION we have been given to do? Sometimes we can get so wrapped up in our good works we begin to think that this is what our calling is all about!

In Mark chapter 14, Jesus and His disciples were in Bethany at the house of Simon the Leper. A young woman brought an alabaster flask of very expensive spikenard and anointed Jesus' head. Judas Iscariot and some others became indignant and said: *"Why was this fragrant oil wasted? For it might have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor."* But Jesus said, *"Let her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a good work for Me. For you have the poor with you always, and whenever you wish you may do them good; but Me you do not have always."*

Jesus and His mission on earth take precedence.

In another passage, Jesus taught:

"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'" (Matt 7:21-23)

Now how could Jesus say that people who were *doing good works* like preaching in His name, casting out demons and doing many wonders in the service of Him could possibly be unfruitful servants? Is Jesus harsh and unseeing in this passage of scripture?

If we read carefully, we can see that the operative phase here is, *"...but he who does the will of My Father in heaven."* This is the key. We must relentlessly ask ourselves, "Are the pursuits of my life carrying out the Will of the Father?"

What is the Will of the Father?

"My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me." John 5:30

Jesus made His mission statement clear. He was sent by His Father to accomplish the Father's Will on earth. But what is that Will? We can find it outlined in Luke:

"So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read. And He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written:

*"The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me,
"Because He has anointed Me
"To preach the gospel to the poor;
"He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives
"And recovery of sight to the blind,
"To set at liberty those who are oppressed;
"To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD."*

*"Then He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him. And He began to say to them, "Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." **Luke 4:16-22***

This was Jesus' first recorded sermon in the Bible. In it He outlines His job description. He tells us (His disciples) that He is commissioned to come to this earth and, first, **PREACH THE GOSPEL!** He will heal the brokenhearted; proclaim liberty to those who are captives of Satan's world; give sight to those who are spiritually blind; release the oppressed and proclaim **JUBILEE**, the year of release when all debts are cancelled and the people return to their inheritance.

That is Jesus' job description. And as His disciples, it is **ALSO OURS!** Jesus founded the Church and gave us a commission. That commission is to help Him accomplish the mandate of His Father and our Father. Again, we are *stewards of that mission!*

Some people claim that the cross was the end of Jesus' Work on earth. No. It was not the end. Rather it was only the beginning! Jesus told us that the harvest is plenteous.³ He told us that the harvest has *already* come.⁴ Jesus said that the **TIME** of the **HARVEST** is **NOW!**

*"Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work. Do you not say, 'There are still four months and then comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, **lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!** And he who reaps receives wages, and **gathers fruit for eternal life**, that both he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together. For in this the saying is true: 'one sows and another reaps. I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored, and you have entered into their labors.'" **John 4:34-38***

Other disciples of Jesus have gone before us. All who joined the gathering of God's fruit received the wages of eternal life. The same is true today. God is busy sowing by the Holy Spirit. Sometimes He moves from one field to another and uses different laborers and

³ Matt 9:37-38

⁴ Mark 4:26-29

techniques. But he continues sowing. We are being sent to REAP so that we join in and rejoice with Jesus' fellow-laborers who have gone before.

The purpose for which you were called to be a part of the Body of Christ is NOT JUST for personal salvation. Notice Jesus said that salvation is *the wage* or *result* of doing the Will of the Father. The harvest is the Work we are to be doing!

Now, what I am not saying is that we should abandon our responsibilities to family and church. *What I am saying is that MISSION takes precedence.*

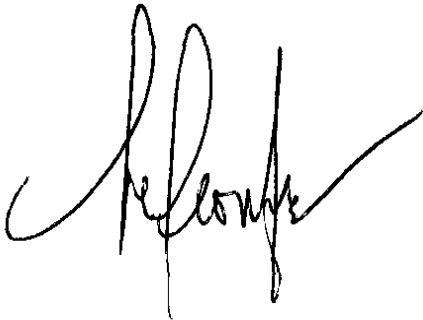
You and I were called to the Church of God to join Jesus in the end-time harvest of the world! Our hearts and minds; and all our God-given talents and resources; are to be marshaled and engaged in direct support of that Work Jesus started almost 2000 years ago.

Jesus said He would finish His Father's Work. When the harvest is complete and He returns to make a final accounting, will you be there to hear the words, "*Well done, good and faithful servant*"? Will I?

We must be on our guard. We must be vigilant. We must be discerning. We must not allow anything to take us away from the purpose of our calling.

Let's all evaluate, each and every day where we stand. Are we *ON-MISSION* or are we *OFF-MISSION*?

Your Fellow-laborer in the Harvest Fields of God,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T. Leon Sexton', with a large, stylized initial 'T' and a long, sweeping horizontal stroke at the end.

T. Leon Sexton