

# Jensen Missions

Iringa, Tanzania

East Africa

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## Food For Thought For The Mission-Minded (part 2)

When elderships, congregations, and individuals ask about mission efforts it is a good sign. We each reveal our interests by the inquiries we make. For example, who has not heard a question about the most recent standing of a sports team? Sports fans are usually easy to detect. So also Christians ought to be known by their enthusiasm concerning work about the great commission (Matthew 28:18-20). In a previous article we addressed one primary consideration when assessing the worthiness of a mission worker or work. Namely, it must be biblical throughout! Not only must the missionary teach the truth, but also the way the work is carried out must conform to New Testament authority.

We now turn our attention to an “evaluation tool” which is sorely misunderstood and frequently abused. This tool or test may be termed the “numbers test.” It takes various forms and is spoken of in a variety of ways, but one basic attitude prevails. “How many baptisms do they have each year?” “How many congregations are being established?” In reality, if you ask faithful veteran missionaries, they will readily admit that this mindset often comes out in “mission reports” more as a numbers *game*, rather than a true *test*. I heard from the lips of one church leader the statement: “We choose a work where we can get the best bang for our buck!” There was no mistake about it – the only determining factor to him was – number of reported baptisms.

What about the fantastic “results” that we are reading and hearing about? One writer simply took the figures another man reported, and the length of the short mission trip, and calculated that it would have require having one baptism about every 20 minutes, if the brother slept at all. Some are reporting thousands of baptisms that simply stagger the mind. And yet, I heard from one native Indian preacher, that he had worked... *cont.*



## Member of the Month

Meet Sara! As with most members of the church, she has a fascinating history. Sara used to live in Dar es Salaam with her husband. However, on one occasion she traveled to visit her father, who lives in a village near Iringa. While she was away Sara learned that her husband took another wife. Sara decided to stay with her father. She searched the area a year before she found the Lord's church. Though traveling the 25 km. to worship every Sunday on public transportation is often a challenge, she rarely misses an occasion to assemble with fellow Christians.

## Food For Thought...continued

in India, as an Indian, for about a year and a half in one place, without anything remotely like what he read in some US reports. My own short two visits to India sadly revealed some disturbing activities. I am presently living and working in Africa, and can tell you the problem is not unique to India.

Consider momentarily the examples of Noah and Jonah. Noah was “a preacher of righteousness” who faithfully proclaimed for Jehovah, and God “preserved Noah with seven others” (2 Peter 2:5). In contrast, Jonah enjoyed overwhelming response (Matthew 12:41). Is it possible today, were Noah traveling the country seeking financial support, that he would be turned away empty-handed, because his work was “just not showing the numbers.” What about the ministry of the Son of Man? His primary focus while upon earth was to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. In mass He was rejected!

Please listen. We are not suggesting that numbers cannot be considered. I am not unaware of the principle forbidding casting “pearls before the swine”(Matthew 7:6). However, I know the “pressure to produce” has been a mighty temptation behind many skewed numbers and many an inflated presentation. The problem goes deeper than most know, and it troubles me more than I can herein describe. Furthermore, a desire to retain support from number-minded supporters has also lead to a laxity in the second part of the great commission. After making disciples, we are commanded to also give attention to teaching these new converts to observe all that Christ commanded (Matthew 28:19, 20). How sad when a missionary can be in a place for many years, and report “great success” (numbers of baptisms), only to have the work collapse after his departure.

God desires “all men to be saved, and come to a knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4). It would be another discussion to address what it takes to bring someone “to a knowledge of the truth.” But I have no doubt it cannot be done by hastily uttering five steps conjoined with five verses and then urging one to the water. Many of the reported “baptisms” are not conversions at all.

The word of God is likened unto seed (Luke 8:11). When the farmer plants the seed, it takes time to grow. Personal evangelism requires patient teaching. I recall years ago when the Crossroads/Boston movement was in its hay day. One brother fell into their trap, thinking they had found a way to make converts quickly. I had no doubt about his motive. However, there are no shortcuts to reaping a healthy harvest.

*George Jensen 2011*

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## Journey with Joy

Living in Africa must be done with a sense of humor. Without one, I would have a much harder time coping with some things that aren't so pleasant.

For example, yesterday morning I began preparing some pancakes for our breakfast. I then realized that we were out of pancake syrup, so I got out my recipe book and quickly began to gather the ingredients. I had to step out of the kitchen for a moment, and upon my return I glanced back at my recipe, only to find a slug crawling in my book. Yes, a slug. Where was it a few minutes ago? I guess in the middle, near the rings. It had rained heavily the night before and that tends to drive things that creep and crawl to a higher, drier place. About that time I looked up and saw another one on the wall. Ughh!!

In situations such as these, and believe me, there are many, I have a choice. I could fuss and fume and refuse to touch my cookbook, or I could go outside and flick it off and continue my work with a laugh. I chose the latter.

Now, I admit there has been more than one occasion when I haven't dealt with a situation in the best way, but I'd like to think those are becoming fewer. There are numerous occasions in which the only real sensible reaction is to laugh! It keeps me sane, at least that's what I like to tell myself. I prefer not to discuss the other option.

How do you react to life? Sure, there are serious occasions in which laughing would be highly inappropriate. I'm not talking about those. But what about those things that happen to us that might be unpleasant, embarrassing, etc. How do you react? Do you allow yourself to be easily agitated or do you laugh it off, even if it means laughing at yourself? I think the world would be a better place if we all learned to laugh a little bit more.

**A joyful heart is good medicine,  
but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.**

**Proverbs 17:22**