

Faith Pulpit

Why Should Missionaries Attend Seminary?

Missionaries should attend seminary because they ought to train well for the challenges on the mission field. The apostle Paul, the greatest missionary in the history of the church, certainly was well trained. His life and accomplishments would constitute an impressive resume, which would include the following: apostle personally called by Christ, theologian par excellence, and published author whom the Holy Spirit used to pen some of the letters included in the Bible—the world’s all-time best seller, with an estimated two and a half billion copies sold since 1815. He was also a scholar, teacher, prophet, church planter, preacher, traveling evangelist, and a home and foreign missionary.

But before Paul experienced any of these accomplishments, he was a student. The apostle Paul, first known as Saul of Tarsus, received an excellent education under Gamaliel, one of the most noted teachers of his day. Paul had the privilege of studying at the feet of this highly respected Pharisee and leading rabbi (Acts 5:34; 22:3). Paul was fluent in Hebrew and Greek and probably Latin as well. The numerous biblical quotations scattered throughout his writings are a testimony of his exceptional knowledge of the Hebrew Scriptures (our Old Testament).

Paul was at home in the midst of both the Jewish and Gentile cultures. He could relate to the greatest thinkers of his day but also to the simple, uneducated people of his society. Paul addressed the Athenian philosophers at Mars Hill (Acts 17:16ff), and he evangelized the simple Philippian jailer (Acts 16). We can declare with certainty that Paul was “Christianity’s greatest missionary.”

The apostle Paul ministered in a pagan world with many conflicting worldviews, but his life and training had prepared him for this ministry. To the Jews he became as a Jew, and to the Gentiles he became as a Gentile, that he might by all means win some (1 Corinthians 9:20).

Today’s missionaries are also facing paganism and a revival of other non-Christian religions. It is imperative, therefore, that twenty-first century missionaries be well prepared to face the challenges of

missions at home and abroad. Following are some benefits that missionaries gain from a seminary education.

First, a missionary who attends seminary and applies himself to his studies becomes better prepared theologically to serve on the field. As mission fields have matured, Bible colleges have sprung up around the world, and the nationals are expecting more from missionaries.

Several years ago I taught a summer module at a Bible college in Trujillo, Peru. The students were not novices in their grasp of Scripture but were eager to learn even more—they wanted the “meat” of the Word. A number of them were pastors of flourishing churches in their cities. They wanted to sit under teachers who knew the Scriptures well. These pastors then planned to go back to their churches with good spiritual food to feed their flocks.

Although both Bible colleges and seminaries teach Bible and theology, seminary studies offer a breadth and depth that undergraduate classes rarely offer. Seminary is higher theological education at its best. Students learn to sharpen their skills through research projects, class discussions, class presentations, and class lectures on various biblical subjects.

Second, a missionary who has graduated from seminary will have better credentials than one who has not. Many developing countries are requiring more education of foreign missionaries who enter their land. A Bachelor of Arts degree was sufficient a generation ago, but today mission boards and churches often prefer a Master of Divinity degree for many positions of service. Theological institutions in third world countries are offering multiple levels of study, from a Bible institute diploma to a Master of Arts or even a Doctor of Ministry degree. The growing number of mission institutes, colleges, and seminaries necessitates sufficiently trained faculty members.

Third, a missionary who goes to seminary may have an advantage when learning a foreign language. Because seminaries generally are more specialized than Bible colleges and Christian liberal arts colleges, they usually require more work in the biblical languages. Seminary students typically gain a good background in Greek and Hebrew and sometimes other Semitic languages like Ugaritic or Akkadian. When I went to France last summer to speak at a conference for missionaries ministering in that field, one of the leaders mentioned the great benefit and blessing of having studied biblical languages in seminary. He said that his study of Greek had made it easier for him to grasp French.

Fourth, a missionary who attends seminary will make valuable contacts while he is a student. These contacts often open doors later for prospective missionaries who are on pre-field deputation work, because other seminary students have since become pastors of local churches. Personal acquaintances open more church doors than do telephone calls to unknown pastors.

Why should missionaries attend seminary? Because seminary education will train them for many of the challenges they will face on the mission field. As the apostle Paul, who was well trained for the work

in his day, today's missionaries should seek to acquire all possible training available to them. If you are a prospective missionary, your future plans should certainly include seminary! If you are already a missionary, plan to take a seminary class or two on your next furlough. Doing so will enhance your missionary endeavors as well!

Dr. John Hartog, II

Former Professor at [Faith Baptist Bible College & Theological Seminary](#) | [Other Articles](#)

Dr. John Hartog II (D.Th., Grace Theological Seminary and D.Min., Central Baptist Theological Seminary), was a beloved professor, pastor, and scholar who faithfully served the Lord for over 50 years. He earned degrees from Moody Bible Institute, Wheaton College, Grace Theological Seminary, and Central Baptist Seminary. Dr. Hartog was a passionate teacher and pastor, spending much of his life at Faith Baptist Bible College and Theological Seminary, where he taught for 23 years.

Known for his deep love of Scripture and engaging teaching style, he made a lasting impact on students and congregations alike. Dr. Hartog's legacy is one of unwavering devotion to Christ, a love for God's Word, and a heart for ministry. He went home to Heaven on August 18, 2024.