

Being Missions-Minded

Read the following words slowly and thoughtfully. “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations” (Matt. 28:19). This is the task of every person that names the name of Christ. To ignore these words of our Lord is in essence the rankest form of spiritual snobbery. It’s to say that the gospel is for me and not for everyone else. It’s to play favorites with who should hear it and who should not. This sort of arrogance is certainly not new to the scene. Actually, it was because of such an attitude that the modern-mission movement was begun.

After he began a pastorate in Moulton, England in 1785, William Carey attended a fraternal of ministers in Northampton. One of the pastors present, John Ryland, Sr., called for the men to propose a topic for discussion. Carey stood up and proposed the topic of, “The duty of Christians to attempt the spread of the gospel among the heathen nations.” As if Carey had uttered something vulgar, Ryland shouted back at Carey, “Young man, sit down. When God pleases to convert the heathen, He will do it without your aid or mine!” One biographer says that Ryland even called Carey a “miserable enthusiast.” Though Carey would sit down at that meeting his convictions would not change but would only grow stronger with time.

Carey and his friend Andrew Fuller understood that a high view of the sovereignty of God was not out-of-step with a high view of the gospel call to the nations. Actually they saw God’s sovereign election as a catalyst for missions that placed the emphasis on the message and not the various techniques used. Some years later, Charles Spurgeon looked back at the churches of Carey’s day and said, they were “chilled to the very soul.” Carey and Fuller wanted to combat this unbiblical attitude toward missions so they committed themselves to prayer as to what might be done. They saw prayer and theological renewal as keys to laying the right foundation for missions. They each put forth their understanding in two short books: *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation* (Fuller) and *An Inquiry in to the Obligations of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens* (Carey).

Their writings were not just zealous attempts to stir up the people for missions. They were thoughtful treatments on what needed to be done and how the task might be accomplished. Carey's book contained hundreds of statistics on unreached peoples that amazed many in his day for their accuracy. Carey would later give his life to this mission and spend the rest of his days on the field in India, Bangladesh, and Myanmar (Burma).

Today there is a mission's crisis of sorts. That may sound absurd since we live in a day where there is more money and people given to the cause than ever before. However, I believe there is a crisis for at least four reasons. I believe these may get to the root of some of the problems and expose what needs to be done to be missions-minded and not missions-blinded.

First, I believe there is a crisis because churches are wealthier than ever before. While this may not sound like much of a problem, it has two unfortunate results. Churches have become like malls offering everything the modern consumer could imagine. Massive inward focuses on pleasure and entertainment have depleted valuable resources that could be used for greater purposes in foreign lands. This great wealth has also caused some churches to waste money through bureaucratic agencies that are legendary for their misuse of missions' dollars. One large denomination has proposed spending \$176,962,402 this year on "missions." Some who have investigated these numbers have determined that less than 5% of every dollar actually makes it to the cause of missions. God has certainly blessed many American churches with abundant resources and that is not the problem. The wisdom in how these resources are used is the problem. Remember, money and true support are not always the same.

Another reason for the crisis is due to a lack of proper training of missionaries. In some seminaries a missionary's training consists of a few personality tests and one year of a scaled back seminary curriculum. It is no wonder that many zealous missionaries get on the field to find that they have been ill-equipped to handle their task. A missionary should be given the best possible training available and should have not wait to have their first

church experience on the mission field. If one can not serve in their home church, they will certainly have difficulty on the field.

The third reason for the crisis in missions is a result of the former. There is an overwhelming lack of accountability between churches and the missionaries they support. It is not enough to throw millions of dollars at the cause without taking up the cause yourself as individuals and as a church. Churches must be accountable to the missionaries they support and likewise the missionaries to the churches. There must be a relationship of prayer, financial support, training, and doctrinal fidelity. The supporting church must seek ways in which to minister to their missionaries whether it is personal, on the field support or a much needed furlough.

The final reason for the crisis in the state of missions is simply involvement. Each member in the body of Christ must take up the missions call themselves and pray how they might be used to be obedient to Christ's command. The level and extent of involvement will be different for everyone but the issue is still the same. Grace Community Church needs to be a church that takes what Christ says seriously. In foreign lands the needs along side of the gospel are many. Missions is centered on the preaching of the gospel, but it also involves discipleship which includes issues like medical care, orphans, widows, unwed mothers, hunger, abortion, hygiene, farming, and poverty to name a few.

There is no limit to how GCC can be used in the coming days to further the cause of missions. Let me call you, like William Carey, to pray how you might be used in this commission. The Elders of GCC will be sharing more in the next few weeks some opportunities to further the great commission. Please be in prayer as to how you might be used.