

WHO IS A MISSIONARY

Joy Gilbert 6/29/2014

A missionary is a disciple and messenger, one who is sent on a mission to do religious and/or charitable works.

According Matthew 28:19, Jesus said, “Go therefore and make disciples. . .” so... We are ALL missionaries!

Isaiah 6:5-9

Then I said,

"Woe is me, for I am ruined!

Because I am a man of unclean lips,

And I live among a people of unclean lips;

For my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts."

6 Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a burning coal in his hand, which he had taken from the altar with tongs. 7 He touched my mouth with it and said, "Behold, this has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away and your sin is forgiven."

8 Then I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?" Then I said, "Here am I. Send me!" NASU

Isaiah cried out to be cleansed inwardly, and God met his need. If this scene had been on earth, the coals would have come from the brazen altar where sacrificial blood had been shed, or perhaps from the censer of the high priest on the Day of Atonement. Isaiah's cleansing came by blood and fire, and it was verified by the word of the Lord (Isaiah 6:7).

Before we can minister to others, we must permit God to minister to us. Before we pronounce "woe" upon others, we must sincerely say, "Woe is me!" Isaiah's conviction led to confession, and confession led to cleansing (1 John 1:9).

Like Isaiah, many of the great heroes of faith saw themselves as sinners and humbled themselves before God: Abraham (Genesis 18:27), Jacob (32:10), Job (Job 40:1-5), David (2 Samuel 7:18), Paul (1 Timothy 1:15), and Peter (Luke 5:8-11).

James 2:14-16 *what does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled," but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit?*

UNDERSTANDING THE CALL TO BE MISSIONARIES

1. RECOGNIZE THE PURPOSE – a missionary is God's servant, one in whom God is Glorified. Our life is **His sermon**.

Matt 5:14-16 NASU

14 "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; 15 nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. 16 "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

As most of you know, I was a resident missionary in Nigeria from 2002—2008, six years. When I first arrived most could not understand my words, but they were always watching what I did and then

would pattern themselves likewise. I quickly learned that we must always endeavor to set a Christian example.

There are 532 languages in Nigeria. And there are about 20 languages in the two states where I ministered, Akwa Ibom & Cross River. The King's English is the national language because for decades they were a British colony. I found that language almost as difficult to understand! They definitely do not speak/understand American!

With so many tribal languages, the way they communicate with each other is in pigeon English, which I don't speak and barely understand. It led to some comical moments in the mission field.

When I arrived, I had one room with only a mat on the floor to sleep. So I asked for the village carpenter to please come and make me a dresser with four drawers to keep my things. When he came, he had no idea what I was talking about. I said I needed dresser drawers. And he just stared at me like I was from another planet. Now understand that the area I was in had no white people and so I was a novelty. Also. These people usually only had two sets of clothing and few possessions.

Eventually there were five Nigerians trying to 'help me'. No one could understand what I was wanting. I tried to use my arms and hands like in charades to show what I wanted, but nothing worked. Everyone was talking and it all just sounded like jabber to me. I was completely frustrated and it was only my first day!

Finally, I just gave up and started laughing, thinking God must surely be trying to teach me something! After everyone laughed with me, all of a sudden, the carpenter said, "Oh I know, you want locker!" That is what it's called in the King's English!! A locker... who knew? That first day, I learned that what is most important is how I handled the frustration of the lack of understanding more than the issue at hand.

It is the same today—most of you do not speak street language and, just like in Nigeria, people watch what you do more than listen to what you say. You may be the only Jesus they ever see. A famous quote is, "Preach the gospel always, and if necessary use words."

2. RECOGNIZE THE GOAL – The goal is to do God's will, not to be useful or win souls. A missionary is useful and does win souls, but that should not be the ultimate goal—the goal is simply to do whatever the Lord leads.

Heb 13:20-21 NASU

Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord, equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Phil 2:13 NASU

for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.

When I first arrived I had big ideas about evangelism and reaching souls for Christ. But just like James said, what could my prayers and words do for people who are sick, hungry, abused, and dying? Within the first two weeks my focus totally changed to meeting medical needs and looking after widows and orphans, who were outcasts in this culture. The area I served was 11 villages with a total population of over 40,000 souls.

My experience in Nigeria reminds me of a story I once heard. A man heard the Lord tell him one morning, "go out and push that rock." The man had a huge boulder in his front yard and he went out

and pushed as hard as he could. He pushed all day but the rock never moved. The next morning the Lord told him again to go push that rock. The man tried again all that day, but the rock would not budge. The third day the Lord again told him to go push the rock. The man cried out, “Lord, I have tried so hard but the rock cannot be moved!” The Lord answered, I never told you to *move* the rock, just to *push* it. I will move it at the right time.” Many times we want to move something that the Lord is asking us just to push.

So, whenever doctors would come on a mission trips, we would organize medical outreaches. We were just pushing the rock, for little was changing. It was like a drop in the ocean of need.

Eventually, we were able to find an abandoned hospital, and God moved the rock! With God’s help, we equipped it, hired 24/7 staff, including 2 doctors and security. Today the 60 bed hospital is still functioning, being run by the Nigerians.

I was also given some land by the chiefs in the village where I lived, which we used for a widows and orphans farm. The outcast widows taught the outcast orphaned children how to Farm and the children gave the widows purpose and a sense of family again. It brought a lot of healing. There are many orphans due to TB and AIDS. So we setup a HIV/AIDS testing facility. And, with God’s grace and favor, everything built in Nigeria still stands.

It wasn’t until the last two years that I began establishing churches and finding Nigerian pastors to staff them. We had seven churches at one time but, because of a tribal war, there are now only five. But God really moved the rock for us!!

3. RECOGNIZE YOUR PREPARATION – Everything that happens in our life is preparation for where God will use us—every battle, every sorrow, every joy, and every victory—all is preparation to do His will.

Rom 8:28 NASU

And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

In Nigeria I had to utilized everything I had ever learned; my education in psychology as well as religion, my computer skills, mechanics that I had learned from my father, and, most of all, my understanding of sanitary practices, which probably saved my life! Teaching the person cooking my food to wash their hands first was vital, as was teaching everyone to boil water!!

One of the biggest cause of illness besides TB & AIDS it polluted water. The most difficult part of teaching the need to boil water is the fact that it takes a lot of time and energy. The women and children collect the water from the river, which is about a half a mile away. Then after carrying it to their huts, they go back into the bush (jungle) to collect the fire wood. Then they return to make the fire to boil the water. It was very difficult to explain why they needed to go to all that work with boiling water. But eventually, I was able to get most to understand and illness was greatly reduced in that area.

4. RECOGNIZE YOUR DUTY – Our duty is to be attached only to the Lord. The Lord and His will must come first before anyone or anything. We cannot be too attached to the work, to people, or even family, we must be completely committed to the Lord to be effective and able to easily obey Him.

Luke 5:11 NASU

When they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed Him.

Once a year I would return home to preach in churches and to raise funding for the mission. The first year, my sister Sandra died during my US visit. It was difficult to return to the mission field with my family mourning the loss. But the day after the funeral, I had to go.

The third year when I visited the US, just as I was leaving for the airport, my mother, Sally Roos (who many of you know) had suddenly fallen ill and was rushed to the emergency room. I was with her there, but it was time to leave. I was so torn! We didn't yet know what was wrong with her, they were still doing tests. But I had to choose; the call to the mission field, or stay with my mother. I asked my mother what she wanted. She said to go, so I left her.

It was probably the hardest time for me, except for when I had to leave Nigeria for good, returning to the states due to illness, I had had malaria off and on for two years and the doctors said it was time to come home, as did my pastor.

Thankfully my mother was okay after a couple weeks in ICU and I was relieved. But the 16 hours flight to Nigeria was terribly difficult. But that comes with being a missionary overseas. That's why it's important to give support, both finances and prayers. Overseas missionaries struggle with so many issues that we never even think about. But I'm happy that I am still a missionary right here in Jackson County! **If fact, all of us are missionaries right here!**

5. FOLLOW THE FIVE GUIDELINES FOR AN EFFECTIVE MISSIONARY:

1. Honor your differences as long as they are in line with the Word of God.
2. The vision of the mission must be bigger than the pain you are enduring.
3. Never breathe life into something that God is killing.
4. Where the focus goes, the power flows.
5. You are someone's answer, not everyone's—but always some.

BE ON THE LOOKOUT!

The words of Charles Spurgeon, spoken in a sermon on April 22, 1877, remain extremely relevant for today:

“Let those who love Him, as they perceive all around them the terrible token of the world's dire need, cry in an agony of Christian love, ‘Here am I; send me.’”

Let Us Pray

In the words of St. Francis of Assisi, “Lord, make us an instrument of Your peace. Where there is hatred, let us sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy.”

“O, Divine Master, grant that we may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love; For it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; it is in dying that we are born again to eternal life.”

In the Name of Jesus, Amen.