

The Mission of the Church

The first really clear call to missions that I heard was the call to pastoral ministry. At first it was an internal thing, just a sense that this is what I'm supposed to do, but then, after I'd been in business for awhile, two people on two separate occasions made it into a verbal call. "Dave, I don't think you should be doing what you're doing -- you should be in full-time ministry, pastoring somewhere." That's often how God leads, so pay attention to the comments people make -- often they're casual, seemingly not very intense or anything like that, but they touch something inside you, and they gain meaning from that something.

That happened to me in October 1990 while I was at a seminar on worship in a church in Burnaby. The speaker was Bob Fitts and he casually mentioned that they had a school of worship in Hawaii and that it was part of YWAM, or Youth With A Mission, and he said something like, "There's maybe one or two people here today who should come and take the school with us." And those words went right to my heart, were confirmed by two other people who were there that day, and 15 months later we were at University of the Nations in Hawaii taking our DTS -- I'll get the girls to explain what that is in a minute. That was followed by a School of Worship and by an outreach to Germany. It was a wonderful and life-changing experience.

But the call of my life, with the exception of those seven months and a couple of weeks in Kazakhstan, has been lived out here in the Lower Mainland of B.C. The big call of God is for the whole world to hear the good news and to be disciplined in obedience to the message of God's love . . .

We're familiar with the final words of Jesus at the very end of Matthew's gospel:

Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commended you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age. (Matt. 28:19,20)

We know that someone's gotta go, sometimes we feel like maybe we're supposed to go, but then it takes us by surprise when someone actually says that they're going. Just over 2 years ago Teresa told us that she was going to China, to live there, to work with seniors care facilities and to help bring the presence of Jesus into those facilities. She would be a chaplain to the workers there, offering them training in how to love seniors, to offer them compassion-ate care and to deal with the issues that arise that cause inexperienced workers to become frustrated and angry. She sold her home and furnishings, moved her and Danila to China and has been on the move there, working with different organizations, trying to find the best way to influence that culture, those people, with the love of Jesus.

Murray and Carol are on the road much of the time with a different kind of calling. They travel to meet with people, sometimes small groups of people, sometimes large gatherings, but all with the aim to grow the church around the world through the

strategy of planting new churches and new forms of churches wherever possible. How does one couple get into the strategies of national leaders and local planters and international evangelists and bring these people together in common purpose? I don't know, but I hear the stories of effective ministry, of people maturing in their faith and spreading good news, and I feel glad that Murray and Carol are doing what they are doing.

Today we are saying good-bye to two young ladies from our church who are off to a missions training school for 6 months. Sarah and Katie are going to be spending the next three months of their lives in a training school run by Youth With a Mission in Perth, Australia, then a further 3 months in an outreach with that school in some other country, perhaps South Africa, perhaps India, Indonesia, the Philippines, Nepal -- we don't know yet, but probably will hear soon. Six months of training for missions, half in the classroom, half in the mission field. I want them to tell their stories today and hope that you will all remember to pray for them as they go.

Questions: When did you first feel a tug towards missions?

What attracted you to the YWAM base in Perth? What do they offer there that appeals to you?

What's a D.T.S.? What is the special emphasis of the "Compassion" D.T.S. that you will be attending? How many other students will be in your school and where are they from?

What have you done so far to fund-raise for your mission experience and how has that gone? What financial needs do you have going forward?

What would you especially want your home church to be praying about on your behalf? What are the challenges that you suspect you might encounter?

What do you hope to learn during your time away? Is there an element of seeking God's further direction for your life in this short-term missions experience?

What are your plans for next summer and fall, after this Discipleship Training School is over?

Anyone who feels inclined can contribute directly to Sarah or to Katie -- there will be expenses that they can't guess at yet. They're not sure where the outreach will be headed and there are often things that need to be purchased for that. So, while they have enough for the fees and transport-ation, they may well need to buy a blanket or get more shots or incur other expenses -- both in relation to their time in Perth and their time on outreach as well.

Nobody likes to send their child half way around the world and realize that they might not see her again for months or maybe years. That's the cost of taking the gospel to

every tribe and tongue and nation and people group. Someone has to go and carry the good news with them and these girls have both been willing to do that.

But they don't just go on their own. They go with a church backing them with prayer. Your decision to pray for them is as big a deal in the kingdom as their decision to go. It's this combination of obedience and prayer that makes their experience powerful in their lives, and through their lives to others. Scripture teaches that God works His will through the prayers of people and this is what Paul asked of the church in Ephesus. After listing each part of the spiritual armor that Christians are to put on in order to resist the schemes of the devil, he writes this:

And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints. (By saints he means Christians, all believers, not just a few that would later be classified as especially holy ones). Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly as I should. (Eph. 6:18-20)

Twice in this passage Paul uses the word "fearlessly" to describe how he wants his preaching of the gospel to come out of his mouth. He doesn't want to be seen as timid or fearful or doubtful, but to be seen as convinced and bold and confident of the mystery of Jesus Christ and of what He has done for us.

That's how we need to be praying for Katie and for Sarah over the coming months. They need us to pray for them that they will have courage and strength, endurance and joy, as they learn and as they tell, the truth of God's great love for the human race and His great act of mercy in redeeming us through the gift of His Son.

Missions is the call of all who are Christ-followers, but not everyone answers that call in the same way. Some will support missionaries by helping meet their financial needs. Some will respond to the call by reaching out to the people who live and work near us. Some will work with organizations that meet special needs, like the Salvation Army ministries we looked at last week. Some will go to the far reaches of the earth, in short term missions and in lifelong commitments. But we all can, and should, be involved in praying for those we support.

So, to send Sarah and Katie off, I'd like to invite all who wish to to come forward and we'll gather around them in a circle and pray for God's richest blessing and the Holy Spirit's leading and the joyful fellowship of the Son to be with them every day they're away from us.