

To Go or Not To Go: That is the question!

At the risk of being crucified by the whole of the church world, I can but share the following with the prayer God gives me the ability to articulate this in a way that shares God given insight without offense.

With much thought and several years of prayer I have reached the conclusion that the church is in grave error overall in the methodology of her mission to the world with the Gospel of Christ. Several areas of church/family life are interwoven into this conclusion. The attempt will be to separate those in a systematic way where all can see how I reached this conclusion, and why I believe it to be of the Bible and insight given by God.

Before the foundation of the world God existed in an economy of community, where we find the perfect unity of family with total equality, yet very definite and distinct lines of subjection. I came to this place by way of a four year study of the Ten Commandments, especially as dealt with by the Westminster Assembly. In considering the whole I reached the conclusion that these were not just laws laid down for man, but with the exception of the fourth commandment had been in place as the way the Godhead ruled itself from all eternity. That is, the fourth commandment deals with the creation and does not apply to God in the beginning. From there the first three then relate to how Son and Spirit deal with Father, and the last six with how all three persons of the Godhead deal with each other. Application will perhaps be more spiritual in nature less much of the pragmatics needed in the flesh for obedience, but nonetheless they so existed as the prime directive as such in the Godhead.

The rest of my position depends heavily on this statement being true concerning the Ten Commandments. It will flow from the Scriptures after this fact I think, but the real weight lies with this being an eternal foundation or background upon which the present sits.

God exists in three persons in perfections beyond our wildest dreams. Many of these perfections deal with relationship within the Godhead. Moving from the eternal counsel of God to the first of His revealed Word we find we were all created in the image of God. From this image now broken and buried under sin, flows our desire for worship, for love and acceptance, for family. True there are some biological factors involved, but this is but God=s works of providence, and a product of creation. In the image of God means we too were created for an economy of community.

I believe that God chose marriage and family as the visible way to relate to mankind how this perfect unity and yes subordination was to work. We see this in many of the laws given to Israel concerning head of household and the normal progression of passing present positions and wealth to the next generation. In the plan of God families are to exist in such perfect harmony and unity. Apart from sin I am positive this would be true. Our families are in trouble because in many ways we do not place the importance of this godly unity within the family at the head of Christian life as it should be. We do see God pass it along for elders in the church ala Timothy and Titus. Is it not a truth that the kingdom of kings and priests is a biblical fact? If so, why should it only be church officers that must toe these more exact rules of personality and conduct? From experience, the people I have the most trouble teaching the things of God are those from

broken families. They have no visible concept of loving and caring parents, and thereby a father that loves them unconditionally is a completely foreign thought to millions of Christians.

Red flag number one raises its ugly head here. What are we saying to pagan nations when we send them missionaries that desert family in a very realistic way and say God is their Master. By desertion I mean either the place is too dangerous and the children don't go to begin with, or are sent away for school at very early ages. Often the parents will only see their children a few times to perhaps only once a year and in the case of older children perhaps every two or three years.

Premise number one then is that young couples with children should not be sent into areas where the complete family cannot remain together. This means acceptable schools are available or the parents are able to home-school through high school as a minimum. The area must be safe enough for the parents to feel comfortable having the children present.

This removes much of the world from mission efforts you say? Perhaps, it definitely limits whom we may biblically send into those areas in my opinion. But only perhaps, I am not saying we don't go to these places, just that we qualify whom we send.

Which leads to premise number two: Only those who have been qualified to hold the position of elder should be sent into the mission field. One cannot be an elder and divide the family for this violates the principle that an elder must have his children in due subjection and properly rule his own household. You do not rule your own household well when you don't have direct care of your own children for most of the formative years of their lives. The church is not testing spirits in my opinion and those called are moving ahead of God, going where there has been a subjective unction to go without command from God to go to this specific place. The church praises the destruction of family and sets a poor witness before the pagans in the name of God.

Premise three flows from two this way; if it is so unsafe the children cannot go, where do we find biblical sending of the head of household? Christ sent His disciples forth with the command to move on when they were not received warmly. We are called not to make converts but to disciple the nations. We do not disciple by being where we are not wanted and in arguments with pagans and their government. We could also look to Romans 13 here and ask ourselves how we can pit the command to go against the command to obey civil law. We must find unity and perfect harmony in the whole of Scripture or we are on the wrong rabbit trail, for our God is one and of perfect unity. God's Word is in a very real sense God Himself revealed, and cannot contradict itself in such a glaring way (or any way) and be the Word of a perfect Sovereign. The God of peace who said obey the civil magistrate did not say go out and break the laws of a nation by preaching my Gospel where you are not only unwelcome, but illegal.

Premise four is a necessity of number three. When we do deliberately place our missions effort against the Word of God making it appear God contradicts Himself, and deliberately destroys family, we need to rethink the whole of how the church does missions.

I pretend not to have all the answers, only God does. Nonetheless I would say that we need to send forth only elders, and those fully qualified by the biblical standard. Many women will find

this offensive, but so be it, I simply speak the Word of God as He has revealed it to all, not me alone. We only send where the door has been opened by God. That some nations will not be reached today or perhaps in this generation is but the providence of God. We have servants willing to enter into the harvest, but it is of necessity that God first open that door or there will be no movement toward God.

I believe that the prime directive and purpose of the church is not to go into all the world, but to gather and mature the saints that they are able to effectively go into all the world. The visible church is not in the salvation business, this isn't our first duty, nor within our power. While one seeking God should surely expect to find Him in any local church, the purpose of the church isn't to gather converts, but to teach the saints present raising up mature and willing servants for the harvest.

Yes the church is commanded by God to send. But who, how and where we send needs a long prayerful study in my opinion. The only valid mission in many places may only be the translation and making available the Word to a people who do not have access to our resources. Even in this we must be careful and not trample Romans thirteen in the giving of the Word. Trust God, providence is a reality.

In Eastern Europe where the church was once heavily persecuted we now find governments mandating religious education in the public schools. God has opened the door! The most prosperous churches in the world speaking of new converts and discipleship are not where we have missionaries, but indigent house churches hosted and led by local saints. The saints in China are a prime example of a border still closed, yet the church prospers in this way. God has not opened that door to outsiders so to speak. We need to pray for the saints in China, and help where we can legally do so, not seek ways to send in cross culture missionaries under every guise known to man.

I believe that when a church places the emphasis on its first order of business, to gather and mature the saints we will find an abundance of men ready to enter the harvest of Christ, and the means to send them. Perhaps we need to close the front door of the church as another has said and open the back door while we perfect those God has given us. Being a part of the kingdom is a much desired position, and when we quit being Aseeker sensitive@ and go about teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded at home first, the church will become healthy, and the mission fields Aripe@ for the harvest needful of called harvesters; called of God and the needful people in the pagan world. Macedonia will call when God has prepared the hearts for the reception of the Son ahead of the sending. The church will remove herself from the business of destroying the visible image of the Godhead in its perfection as reflected in the family when we select and send in accordance with the whole of the Bible, not a few chosen verses to justify our own personal agenda, nor for our denomination to have churches in another part of the world before anyone else. We are all of the same body, or we are not of God. If of God we need to be mindful that we obey the full Word of God.

Questions for reflection:

1. Where in Scripture do we find God tearing apart the immediate family (separating parents from children) for the purpose of spreading His glory? The opposite, the calling of a child out of

the household into His service doesn't count. Begin your search with the call of Abraham. Consider Noah and Lot, God does work in covenant.

2. Where in Scripture do we find God deliberately placing a person in constant jeopardy, to the point he leaves behind his family to spread the Gospel? That God has mightily used some men in this way has no bearing, for God uses even that intended for evil to His own glory.

3. How can the church send those it does not fully support? Being sent means the ability to go has been taken care of. That our missions budget isn't second in line speaks for itself. First place belongs to providing the necessary means to equip and mature the saints so they can be sent. In the process of evaluating missions we need to examine local church budget and its priorities. What is necessary to obeying God, not what will build the biggest and fanciest church on the block.

Friends, God is family, and gave us first our earthly families as a visible means of understanding Him and being created in His image, understanding ourselves. The church is family, and should exhibit this same healthful unity of body and purpose. Thus Paul could say that where division exists, we are yet carnal. God is one, family is one, the body of Christ is one, and each of necessity in the economy of God become one. Love, joy, and peace aren't pipe dreams, they are the mandate of God and the fruit of the Holy Spirit in believers. There is no love, joy, and peace in a family divided by vast distances, especially when supposedly at the call of God. Don't ask the missionary, talk to his children. Don't ask the pastor, talk to his children! The church needs to be more mindful of family and examine her methodology of missions, to include pastors and elders at home.

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