

REFLECTION ON MISSION

1. The Call to Mission – how looking at our relationship with God and our commitment to faith allows us to see potential to serve in mission

God calls anyone to share the good news of Jesus Christ. Each individual is unique in the eyes of God. All Christians have skills, interests, gifts, and experiences. God's call to mission is different for everyone. Some of us were chosen to cross cultures and take the Gospel to those who have never heard of it. This experience is similar to that of Paul's and Barnabas' in Acts 13. Some people are also called upon in their communities to share the good news of Jesus Christ. As a missionary, I consider the call to mission a secret and a divine call that is a result of my relationship with God. God gives mission to the person whom He trusts to enter in covenant with Him. It is because of spiritual maturity that God decides to give us responsibility. Carlos F. Cardoza-Orlandi's definition of mission is as follows: "mission is a term of multiple and intense meanings. On the one hand, it evokes responsibility, outreach, overseas service, funds, cooperation, unity, redemption, conversion, dialogue, witness, and so forth. On the other hand, it brings to mind such negative elements as colonialism, cultural and religious superiority, imposition of denominations, dependency and exploitation."¹ The first part of the definition demonstrates that only those who are spiritually, emotionally, and intellectually prepared can join missionary service. Regarding the second part of the definition, we have to understand that for many centuries, politics destroyed the image of mission and why we should ask ourselves when we receive the call for mission. What is

¹ Carlos F. Cardoza-Orlandi, 2002. *Mission, An Essential Guide*, Abingdon Press, Nashville. P17

the motivation inside of us when we say: God calls me to mission? Are we called to dominate or are we called to save and share the good news of Jesus Christ?

Christian Mission is not a desire or an aspiration but the participation of Christians in God's action in the world. Anyone who wants to hear that he/she has been called by God to join the mission service should learn the scripture. A candidate should spend time praying and listening to what God has to say about his plans and purposes concerning the world; only then the candidate will be inspired to see the personal interests to follow. Our personality, interests, and spirituality work together to discover God's call in this world. It is very important to share with our spiritual leaders our passion and interests to seek church support in the call.

Sometimes the candidates fear to go where Jesus promises to send the Holy Spirit to his disciples; regarding this, the Bible gives a good example in John 14. Jesus ensures us that "He lives with you and will be in you." God appears before a missionary, and the Holy Spirit goes with him so that He can work through him. When it comes to God's mission, you will never be alone.

We are often asked, "Have you received God's call to mission?" This is a fundamental question which pushes us to reflect on our history, our relationship with God, our faith, and our call to serve the mission. Our call to mission is rooted in our understanding of God. He calls us first to Himself, and through our spiritual disciplines (Devotions, prayers, Spiritual retreats, etc.), God will give us the capacity to understand and to respond to His voice calling us. Jesus said, "My sheep hear my voice... and follow me." God is the caller, not the church. Many are disappointed when they have been called by men and some by their church leaders. Those who have been called by God have a spiritually intimate life with Him.

We discover our God's call when we become a part of His family. Those who are part of His family can hear His voice. It is only through Christian spiritual disciplines will we learn to live

with Him and grow in our ability to hear His voice in our lives. God will give us the conviction of His call in our lives when we spend time with Him. The Holy Spirit will lead us to discern God's call to us. The Spirit of God will comfort and guide us to follow the direction.

Those who are called to God's mission are prepared to do good works. The Bible says that Paul tells us that God has prepared good works for us to do. God created us and saved us to do these good works. We have to cultivate closeness and intimacy with God for us to discover the good works. God calls His followers first, and this is what we should understand as children of God. Those who are followers of God are good servants for the mission field. During *my first time on a mission, I was presented with many deeds for me to accomplish in Kenya. By mistake, I considered the mission to be an action to help people. Probably, some of you think the same—missionaries are not called to help people; they are called to follow Jesus Christ. During my first year in service as a missionary, I learned to follow Jesus, which helped me to discover who I am. I got to know about my skills given by God, and I found a way to serve people and, at the same time, assistance from people.*

2. The Cost of Mission – how to grow in the understanding of the cost of leaving a home context to serve in new and challenging situations, a willingness to live in a serving role

This is the most challenging part of our journey as missionaries. The cost of mission touches all aspects of life, such as the spiritual aspect, the emotional aspect, the social aspect, the physical aspect, and the economical or financial aspect. Most of the missionaries are excited when they are commissioned and sent forth to mission fields through a beautiful worship service. During the beginning experiences, every missionary starts writing a personal diary.

Spiritually, mission service is a spiritual battle which needs a missionary to be a prayer warrior. The force of the darkness cannot be happy to preach the Gospel in an area where a missionary is sent to. For a missionary, prayer is the key to fight against the evil spirit. The spiritual cost of mission is to make more sacrifices through prayers to secure the work you have been assigned to do to reach the goals. Missionaries are not tourists but followers of God, which means they must depend on God. The inspiration comes from God when we share a spiritually intimate life with Him. Missionaries face oppositions, which calls for more prayers. Local people, in some cases, may oppose our ideas, and we may feel rejected, but we have to remember that the Lord Jesus Christ is with us.

Emotionally, serving in a foreign country is not easy. Leaving our country, our home church, our friends, our family is not easy if we don't have a conviction in God's call. Missionaries must leave their family members and the home church to follow God. It is an adventure, where God is the commander and we are His soldiers, who must obey only His voice. When a missionary accepts God's will to enter the new society, everything in his or her life changes. In the history of mission, "the protestant missionaries had even more trouble than the Catholic Brethren because

they were also responsible for their children and wives, and many of them blamed themselves for the illness and death of their family members.”² This reality holds good even today in some places of service. When you visit different mission sites, you will find many tombs of previous missionaries and the members of their families. There is a risk in accepting the offer to go, which is part of a missionary’s call. Missionaries who are dedicated to the Lord have confidence to go by faith. The reality of a missionary’s life is, “The mission bell dictated the daily life rhythm of a mission. Not only the Indigenous residents, but the missionaries themselves were regimented by this pulse of activities.”³

In addition, missionaries have to control their attitude vis a vis towards the people God has sent them to serve. In my experience as a missionary, I learned that my attitude will determine my integration into the new society, and it will also be the source of our success or, in some cases, failure to make an impact in the new community and the way you will be received or welcomed in the new country. For instance, the process to settle down (letter of invitation, visa processes, new language, children education, house, and other basic needs) can motivate or demotivate a missionary.

When it comes to communal life, Ganter says, “the remote mission workers had to rely on each other for economic, social and emotional support and, if one of them became ill, they were a drain on everyone else. In these small and isolated communities friction easily arose, whether over working hours, over mission policy or over personal incompatibilities.”⁴ In all these experiences, God is present to support us as missionaries. When I look back, I think about how difficult it is for

² GANTER, R. (2018). The trials of missionary life. In *The Contest for Aboriginal Souls: European missionary agendas in Australia* (p. 155). Australia: ANU Press. Retrieved July 15, 2020, from www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv301dv4.10

³ Ibid.156

⁴ Ibid.158

a child who must go to another country to attend a boarding school; this was a big risk to take for my daughter. She was supposed to leave Ivory Coast and return to Kenya. Nevertheless, God was present with her, and she graduated High School. All the new missionaries should know that it is God who is calling them and not their desire. Mission belongs to God Himself, and all the risks are part of God's plan to help the missionaries grow.

4. The Culture of Mission – how exploring our openness to other cultures and beliefs informs our potential to engage well with a foreign community

Preaching the gospel among people of different cultures needs the capacity to adapt to another culture. It is a process of adjusting with patience and, in some cases, with culture shock. When these happen in the new communities, we start learning. When we compare our culture with the new one, we might be shocked, but when we allow the Holy Spirit to guide us in the process of entering the new culture, that will happen. Hiebert said, “God is not a tribal God, but the God of the world; that the gospel is for everyone; and that the church is one body that breaks down the walls of ethnicity, class, and nationalism that divide humans into warring camps.”⁵

Missionaries should be Christians who are open-minded, who are able to accept people as they are. In doing so, they will have an opportunity to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Missionaries are called to love all people in their place of assignment.

It is important for missionaries to have knowledge in social sciences such as anthropology, sociology, psychology, and history. These sciences have tools to understand people and their culture better. Though I speak Kiswahili, my Kiswahili spoken in Congo is different from Kiswahili spoken in Kenya and Tanzania. While preaching in Kenya, I was using a translator to avoid any misunderstanding with the community. Hiebert says, “anthropology can provide us with many insights into such specific mission tasks as bible translation.”⁶ It also helps missionaries to understand the processes of conversion.

Love is the key to open a new community. A missionary must give love through words and good works while sharing the good news of Jesus Christ. Each culture has its values, norms, and

⁵ Hiebert Paul G. 1985. *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries*. Baker Academic. Grand Rapids, Michigan. P 9-10.

⁶ *Ibid.* 15.

customs which the missionary should learn and respect for him or her to be able to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with the new community. When the missionary shows respect toward the values of the new community, it allows the community to accept him or her.

Living in a foreign country allows the missionary to learn humility and solidarity. A new community is a place where the missionary should learn to practice humility, respect, and listening to others. God is present in all the processes where the missionary is trying to adjust in the new community. God always sends people to the missionaries, so that they can advise and teach them. Living in a foreign country needs the attitude of a student who wants to learn, and that of a teacher who want to teach. If we listen to the local voice, God will give us the opportunity to find our entry point into the new community.

Elmer says, “The ways we are effective in culture are also the primary ways we serve others. We serve people by entering into relationship of love and mutual commitment. As the apostle Paul says, we loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well (1 Thess 2:8).⁷

When missionaries felt the capacity to enter in relationship with local people, they will not have a chance to serve longtime on their place of assignment. When we develop an attitude of servanthood, we can work like Jesus who came in the human form to live among humans (Jn 1:14) and served in Jewish culture.

To serve in another culture, a missionary should behave humbly and avoid exhibiting superiority over others. Only by being humble can we connect with other people. When missionaries serve in a different cultural background, they should develop the attitude of welcoming people in their presence, communicating with respect with other people. They should

⁷ Elmer, Duane. 2006. *Cross-cultural Servanthood, serving the world in Christlike Humility*. IVP Books, Downers Grove, Illinois. p13.

learn to build relationships based on trust with local people. We are not just teaching others, but we also learn from others while serving. For instance, in my case, I have learned to mobilize local resources from my place of assignment, Cote d'Ivoire, to my supporting churches in the US. Mission field in another culture is an opportunity to serve Jesus and grow spiritually and socially.

It helps to form growing and deepening relationships with people and with God. Elmer says, "when God chose to connect with human, he did so as a servant."⁸ While serving in a new culture, a missionary should be a servant like Jesus. In my experience as a missionary, I have developed the humility to work local leaders, to allow myself to grow and serve them.

If a missionary learns the local language, it will open the door for him or her to understand more about the community. Language is a powerful tool to share the Gospel and receive feedback. Ruffle says, "learning a new language calls for a sense of humor and good dose of self-deprecation."⁹ This is just to insist the importance to learn the new language.

⁸ Ibid.21.

⁹ Ruffle Douglas. 2016. A missionary Mindset. Discipleship resources. Nashville. p. 74

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