

Missions Analysis

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Introduction to Missions Analysis

The goal of this paper is to highlight the missionary work taking place in a city in Mexico. I interviewed a family who has uprooted their entire life from the United States and has served as missionaries overseas for nine years. They have planted churches and established schools in Paraguay and now are currently serving in Mexico. I will compare their real-life experience to the biblical texts and readings I have digested throughout this semester. It was a pleasure connecting with the missionary and encouraging to hear of the great work they are doing.

Interview Setting

This interview was conducted via WhatsApp on Tuesday, April 4, 2023, with “Lily” Saavedra in Mexico at an undisclosed location. The area of Mexico where the Saavedra family are stationed is extremely violent with cartels running the streets. There are times when the kids would not go outside due to the graphic nature of the violence outside their door. There aren’t many Christians in their area, so they are integrating their life with those in their village sharing the love of Christ in normal everyday activities.

Missions Description

I let Lily know she could answer the questions as her current mission or previous assignments. Whichever she felt comfortable with.

How do you define missions?

I would say missions are going cross-culturally to share the gospel of Jesus Christ.

How would you describe the style of mission work you do?

We are church planters. We strive to build relationships with non-Christians, and we listen to the Holy Spirit what to say and when to say it. We reach out in love.

Were you involved in church planting? If yes, what was that like?

One has to learn the new culture, what's right, and what's appropriate. Language learning.

What are some issues you faced in bringing the gospel to a different culture?

We live in Mexico, and it is violent and dangerous where we live. We need to think of safety issues (Especially with kids) much differently than we do in the USA.

What are some issues and situations you face as missionaries day to day?

Tiredness because of a lot of interaction with people.

How do you serve those in your village?

We help the women in the village make money by selling jewelry, so they don't need to prostitute.

What is your posture toward social justice?

I believe social justice is very important. Jesus tells us how we treat the least of these we have treated Him.

Why did you choose the specific country and culture you went to?

We felt like the Lord led us to Mexico. We spoke Spanish and it's 2 percent Christian where we live so we went where there was great need.

How long have you been involved with missions?

We have been working for the Alliance for 15 years, and we have been international for 9 years.

Missions Analysis

Learning from Lily and the work she does with her husband is quite humbling. It is scary to bring their children to a country that is so very violent. I met Lily 6 years ago at the Empower program. She was in my cohort group and then she shared with me how amazing it is to be in a room filled with women hungry for Christ. It was refreshing for her to be amongst fellow Christians because her family had been serving overseas in Paraguay for a few years. Since then,

we've stayed connected and I even helped her sell blankets and jewelry made by the women in her village here in the United States as well as sent monetary gifts towards their assignment. Her heart is to help the women in the village who are abused on a daily to refrain from prostituting to make money.

I think the missionary and her family are the real deal. When they were serving in Paraguay, they successfully planted a church and established a school. They packed up their whole family, put all their personal belongings in a storage unit, and lived out of a backpack and suitcase with their children. There is much sacrifice not only for their personal life but also of their safety. The violence from the cartel groups is very real and brutal. They chose an area that is only two percent Christian, and I think that is brave and an example of going after the unreached people group. Lily's husband is of Hispanic descent, and that helps with blending into their setting. Their children are fluent in Spanish and understand the work their parents are doing. The Saavedra's approach is to meet the needs of their village and not impose their

Biblical Foundations

My understanding of missions from scripture is that God wants all nations for himself. In the Old Testament, it was prophesied that God will be exalted in all the earth. Isaiah 52:10 "The Lord will lay bare his holy arm in the sight of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth will see the salvation of our God." In the New Testament, the same theme carries over to God's interest in saving all persons. Luke 19:10 "For the Son of Man came to seek and save those who are lost." Jesus charged the disciples, "Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit." Matthew 28:19 Before Jesus made this charge He declared what would take place in the future, "and the Good News about the Kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world so that all nations will hear it; and then the end will come." Matthew 24:14 God's great redemptive plan has always been in full effect.

He sent his only son into the world to save each and every single person. Every person matters to God, and Jesus teaches us to do as we see what the Father is doing. It's not in our own strength or own accord but in partnership with God and the advancement of His kingdom. "So Jesus explained, "I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself. He does only what he sees the Father doing. Whatever the Father does, the Son also does." John 5:19

Compare and Contrast

My understanding of missions is similar to what was shared in the interview with the missionary. I believe meeting people where they are is important. I also think going into places that are the least reach is key when it comes to missionary work. I appreciate Lily and her husband's approach where they don't impose themselves on their target group. The articles and books we have read all have the same theme of partnering with God and teaching Jesus. To not make it about ourselves, but to humble ourselves and pay attention to what God is doing/

Potential weaknesses in the mission's approach

A potential weakness in the mission's approach is when the missionary approaches the people they are trying to reach with an elite posture. As if the missionary would let those, they are supposed to share the gospel with how they are to really live. That approach is weak as it is insulting and may cause persons to not want to engage or hate the religion due to the poor representation. With the missionaries, I can see a potential weakness in the mission's approach with their children in tow. It is extremely dangerous, and I can see their children wonder why can't they live normal American lives, possibly turning them away from the faith.

Perceived strengths in the mission's approach

The perceived strength is all persons will know the love of God. When the gospel is shared, and people come to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ all prophecies will be fulfilled. Transformation happens when we have an encounter with Jesus. When Lily and her family

integrate their family with those in their village and partner with them in life, that is a strength. Coming alongside and loving on others is a foundational mission approach. I can also see a potential strength with their children in tow be in awestruck wonder as they witness the power and move of God in regions that did not know him.

What insights did you gain from this exercise?

Missionary work is a sacrifice. I didn't realize how dangerous and exhausting missions really can be. The reality of uprooting your entire life and sacrificially giving it to others. There is trust in God that He will provide and protect you as you minister to others. Encompassing all of the readings, class time, and the interview with a real-life missionary is humbling and makes me feel very small. There is a great big world and I am only a speck of sand in God's great restoration project. God has a perfectly orchestrated plan and truly it is for us to stop making it too much about us and listen in on what He is doing. God is alive and well constantly moving and talking from His throne, and our job is to love others and Him in the process.

Summary

Personal Impact

This course has impacted my approach to sharing the gospel. The freedom to share doesn't need to be cookie cut. Preach Jesus and go for the peacemaker in the group. The biggest takeaway for me is the humbling aspect of missions is the idea that I really don't have to do as much. Meaning I really just need to pay attention and lean into what God is doing. It's a partnership with Him in the advancement of His kingdom. "The human body has many parts, but the many parts make up one whole body. So it is with the body of Christ. Some of us are Jews, some are Gentiles, some are slaves, and some are free. But we have all been baptized into one body by one Spirit, and we all share the same Spirit. Yes, the body has many different parts, not

just one part. If the foot says, “I am not a part of the body because I am not a hand,” that does not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear says, “I am not part of the body because I am not an eye,” would that make it any less a part of the body? If the whole body were an eye, how would you hear? Or if your whole body were an ear, how would you smell anything? But our bodies have many parts, and God has put each part just where he wants it. How strange a body would be if it had only one part! Yes, there are many parts, but only one body. The eye can never say to the hand, “I don’t need you.” The head can’t say to the feet, “I don’t need you.” In fact, some parts of the body that seem weakest and least important are actually the most necessary. And the parts we regard as less honorable are those we clothe with the greatest care. So, we carefully protect those parts that should not be seen, while the more honorable parts do not require this special care. So, God has put the body together such that extra honor and care are given to those parts that have less dignity. This makes for harmony among the members so that all the members care for each other. If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it, and if one part is honored, all the parts are glad. All of you together are Christ’s body, and each of you is a part of it.” 1 Corinthians 12:12-27 Everyone has a part to play in God’s great redemptive plan. He wants all nations to Himself and it takes all of us to partner with Him to get there. We each were created differently and can participate in our own unique ways in the giftings and callings He has given us.

Missions Possibilities?

I still don’t know if I would do a long-term mission trip. I will financially support and encourage individuals who give up their life to do so. I would love to get involved with a short-term mission trip to a place like Haiti. It is where my husband and his family are from, there is so much pain and suffering taking place in that country. The people are resilient, but there is a need for serious help and love of the Father in that region. Many turn to witchcraft or really wicked

methods of survival, and the real-life horror stories I hear from my husband's family break my heart.

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