

Missions Analysis

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Introduction to Missions Analysis

What is Mission? A simple question that stumps many believers. Many scholars and missionaries have their own definition of what mission means to them. However, out of all the definitions, there is one that is close to what God has in mind. There is one mission, God's mission which reflects God's initiative in history to bring about redemption for His creation (Tennent, 2010). Now where does the body of Christ fit in God's mission? Well, the church partakes in God's mission by participating with God in the work that he is doing to redeem the world (Tennent, 2010). It is an exciting opportunity for me and you as believers. With that said, in this paper, we will explore more about God's mission from a biblical point of view, discover a missionary's understanding of what is mission to them, and how their definition of mission may be similar or completely opposite to what mission is. At the end of this paper, I will share my personal thoughts and missions possibilities.

Interview Setting

Let me introduce you to the missionary that you will be reading about in this paper. Her name is Caridad Ramirez. Caridad and I have known each other for many years. She is a family friend and leader of the local church that I attend. When I ask Caridad if she was available for an interview that I was required to give for one of my classes, she said yes. The day of the interview was on Sunday, April 16th. It was after church service located in her daughter's house who is also a leader in the local church. The interview was conducted in a room that her daughter's family dedicated to prayer and bible study. Caridad is a local missionary and chaplain from the Spanish American Chaplain Association. She works closely with the Hispanic communities around Brooklyn and Manhattan.

Missions Description

During the interview, I ask Caridad many questions about her work as a missionary but as with all conversations, the subject of the mission changed and I started to ask her to share her point of view on ministry and the church at large. The first question I ask Caridad is where she is in her life right now. She said she works for a company called Maximus Inc which is a government agency. She is also a licensed minister, professor, and author. The following question that I ask was, how long has she been a missionary? Caridad stated that it has been eight years as a local missionary. Then I ask her the number one question that will be important for this paper. I ask Caridad how does she define missions? Her response was this:

“I believe the person who does mission, is someone who goes to other countries. We live in New York so we have people who speak many languages here. So, you don’t have to be in other countries to do missionary work. You can do it here, we have neighbors that speak other languages, and other customs and you can preach the word to them. But mainly I do believe that mission is like opening the door for other countries where the gospel is not preached. For other people to hear about the word of God. To me that is a mission, it is a job that needs to be done.”

Another question I asked was, what are the issues that you have faced when bringing the gospel to other cultures? Caridad explains to me that if there is a language barrier in the community that she is reaching out to, then it would be very hard for her to bring the gospel. She said that she speaks both Spanish and English fluently, so the communities that speak these languages are a lot easier for her to reach out and minister to. Another issue that she faces as a local missionary when it comes to another culture being interested in hearing the gospel. She noticed that if a person is not interested or shows a lack of interest, it’s hard to share the gospel with them.

As the interview went on, I ask Caridad what is her view on social justice. She stated that as Christians we should stand for what is right for every human being. She continued by saying that as a community, we are getting to know one another and should be fair with everyone; even if the person is not Christian, you have to be fair to them because they are human beings. Since Caridad is serving locally, I ask her what is her view on the rise of homelessness. She explains that working with the HRA department, she has seen a rise in cases of homelessness. One of the top issues that she sees in these cases is the lack of shelters or living accommodations where a person can go to. She stated many who are homeless suffer from mental health issues. Some of the homeless prefer to live on the street because they feel that the shelters are not safe for them. Caridad said that there are resources that the government has for them but many homeless people are afraid of being taken advantage of. She explained that the government agencies are not helping the homeless people since they do not investigate the real issue that the person is having whether it is a mental issue, health issue, etc. These agencies she explains just pass the person to another office and give that individual a hard time finding the help that they need. I ask her what can the church do when it comes to the homeless. She said that the church needs to join with community leaders and find out how we can assist these people with the right care.

I ask Caridad if the Hispanic churches that she has visited are involved in local missions or do they just focus on their own members. She said that there are pastors who work with their members to help the community they are located in. Whether is feeding the homeless or providing food pantries. But there are some churches that are not involved at all because of the lack of volunteers. They are more interested in giving bible studies to their members.

A question that I ask Caridad is what book do you recommend for those who are interested in the mission field? She said “La Iglesia en Misión” which talks about the purpose

and calling of mission, different cultures, and belief systems in many countries. Caridad explains that before you go on any mission trip, you should at least study the place you are visiting.

Even though the interview went on for about an hour and thirty minutes, for the sake of this paper I will include one more question that I ask Caridad. I ask her if she looks up to me as a role model when it comes to mission. She said that the person she looks up to is another sister in Christ from our church who is a missionary overseas. Her name is Otilia. She is an older woman who is in her later 80s and has not retired from missionary work. Even though Otilia is advanced in age, she is willing to travel to different countries and spread the gospel. Caridad explains to me that Otilia was called as a child to be a missionary and the Lord would place in her heart and spirit to go to different places and preach. She is always ready to go, no matter what circumstances she is in. Caridad said that Otilia has a lot of different testimonies of different places she visited and the needs that many of the places she visited have. To give some more background information about Otilia, she is also part of the local church that I attend. She has known my family since I was a child. I was going to ask her if she was available for an interview but she was getting ready to go on a mission trip to Cuba so her schedule was busy.

Missions Analysis

After the interview, I took out some time to write down my assessment of Caridad and her definition of mission. What I have learned about Caridad is the fact that she is very knowledgeable about the word of God and has a heart to reach out to people who do not know God. She loves to study and to teach others about God for it brings her joy in doing so. Her definition of the mission is very unique to me since she stated that mission is a job that needs to be done. To my understanding, I believe that Caridad sees mission as a necessity. It is not something that we just do as Christians but it is required for us to complete in our walk with God. Listening to Caridad's definition and comparing it to other people's definitions seem very

similar to one another. For example, George Peters's definition of mission is: "*Missions is a specialized term. By it I mean the sending forth of authorized persons beyond the borders of the New Testament church and her immediate gospel influence to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ in gospel-destitute areas, to win converts from other faiths or non-faiths to Jesus Christ, and to establish a functioning, multiplying local congregations who will bear the fruit of Christianity in that community and to that country*" (Mays, 2008). Both Peters and Caridad see the mission as an opportunity to reach the unreachable. But compare to Tennent's definition of mission, it is missing the mark in seeing mission as an opportunity to be part of what God is doing throughout the world.

Biblical Foundations

Missions from the biblical perspective is a continuing theme throughout the bible. In the Old Testament, God made a covenant with a man named Abraham and through him, God will bless the nations. This blessing comes into play through the son of God; Jesus. However, before Jesus comes into the picture, God's righteous character shows the reader the mission by His care for the poor, the fatherless, immigrants, and the widows (Tennent, 2010). The covenant that God made with Abrahams's descent (Israel), shows the mission of God in action. In the Psalms, the Lord is seen as the moral judge who will judge Israel if they don't "defend the cause of the weak and fatherless; maintain the rights of the poor and oppressed; and rescue the weak and needy" (Tennent, 2010). The books of the prophets remind the reader that God cares about the most vulnerable (Tennent, 2010). Isaiah 49:1-6 shows that God cares about the nations -- "I will make you a light for the Gentiles". Overall, in the Old Testament, you will see how God is the primary source of care for the weak and defenseless. We as the church bring the source to the feeble and unprotected. How do we do so? By taking care of the disadvantaged, the foreigner, the orphan, and the widow (Tennent, 2010).

In the New Testament, we see Jesus as a living example of how we bring the source (God) to the unreachable and bring the mission to life. Jesus modeled for us how to speak the truth in love to those who do not believe. God the Father sends Jesus Christ into the world to be the New Creation and shows how to use truth and kindness to talk to a world that doesn't believe in God (Tennent, 2010). In the gospels, you see that God is determined to undo the curse of death and restore every part of human life and honor that the Fall and the introduction of human sin took away (Tennent, 2010). God accomplishes this through Jesus Christ. In the book of Acts and the rest of the books, you see the Holy Spirit continues to carry out God's mission and help the church to be God's witnesses to the mission (Tennent, 2010). Acts 4:30-31 we see that the church is asking God to heal and do signs and wonders so their community can believe (Tennent, 2010). So through the scriptures, we see that God's Mission is essentially for the world to know that God has a continuous plan to redeem mankind by inviting us the church to bring his love to the lost world.

Compare and contrast

Caridad's understanding of mission is very different from my own. Since this class, I have learned that a mission is more than a task or a program. That mission is a mindset; to constantly engage with my community and bring God's love to them. Caridad believes that we should bring the gospel to them in different matters. She sees mission as an event or a program or even a ministry not as a lifestyle. What Caridad believes is what I used to believe before this class. I used to believe that mission was just to travel to a different place where the gospel has not been reached. Or a big church event where we do outreach to the communities and share the gospel that way. I believe that Caridad sees the mission the same way.

Potential weaknesses in the mission's approach

Caridad's mission approach can improve if she steps out more into the community. Since she is a local missionary and chaplain, she has access to groups of people that I do not have access to. She can engage with groups of people in NYC that have not yet received or heard the good news. Plus, she is bilingual which gives her even more accessibility. I notice that during the interview Caridad seem like a very busy person and is part of many different ministries. She is teaching on the weekends, preaches in different churches, has a full-time job, writing a book, and is the vice president of the women's society in Brooklyn. She seems to be overwhelmed. Sometimes when we are too busy, we forgot about God's mission. Sometimes we are too tired to even think about doing God's mission. For Caridad to improve her mission approach, she may need to prioritize what is more important and reorganize her schedule.

Perceived strengths in the mission's approach

Caridad has some strengths in her mission approach. It is good that she understands part of the bigger picture about God's mission which is for every single human being. What is also good is that she understands that social justice is part of the mission and that there can be many biases toward many different communities. She explained that a person should know their bias, and ask God to help them correct those biases before ministering to any lost soul. Caridad is very knowledgeable about the scriptures but is open to learning more. She is open-minded and willing to grow which means that she would be open to learning what this class has taught me.

What insights did you gain from this exercise?

I have learned that not everyone sees mission the same. We all have a different perspective on the Great Commission. Some believe that the Great Commission is just spreading the gospel and that's it. Others believe it is spreading the gospel, and making disciples by creating programs,

events, outreach, etc. Only a handful of people know that Mission is reflecting God's initiative in history to bring about redemption for His creation through the church.

Summary

Personal Impact

I have learned so much during this class. I am truly grateful for the opportunity to learn what the mission is really about. I understand now that the mission has always been the main idea in God's mind. It is not an after thought. That mission has always been the plan that God had for humanity. Now I know that the Great Commission is not just a command but an invitation to join God. It brings a new desire and joy to serve my community. I see how my church functions now with a different set of lenses. My prayer is that God will show me all the different opportunities to share what I learn from this class with others around me and join me to follow God's mission.

Missions Possibilities?

If I could choose a mission field to get involved in, it would be in the education department. I love to teach God's word; it is one of my passion and joy to do for his kingdom. I do not mind not being paid to teach. I rather do it for free. I believe that learning the word of God should be free and accessible to everyone. If a community needs someone to teach the word of God, I am here to volunteer. Need a teacher in El Salvador, I am there. Need a teacher in South Africa, I am there. Need a teacher in Japan, I will pack my bags and I will be there. If there is a nonprofit organization that is in need of a teacher, I am here to help. This is a desire that has been placed in my heart for many years now and I am definitely ready to go to teach anyone who wants to know about God and his word.

References:

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