

Missions Analysis

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Introduction to Missions Analysis

Isaiah 61 expressed that God sent a savior to bring healing from brokenness. God has commissioned Christians to come alongside this mission. The Merriam dictionary defines mission as a calling, purpose, or charge. Tennent defined missions as “missions refers to all the specific varied ways in which the church crosses cultural boundaries to reflect the life of the triune God in the world and, through that identity, participates in His Mission, celebrating through word and deed the inbreaking of new creation (59).” Tennent explains that the purpose of Christianity is to participate in God’s mission. Tub and Gao-Jai Yang are missionaries located in Thailand. Tub Yang graduated from Alliance Theological Seminary. His family decided to follow the calling of God and move to Thailand. In this paper, I will reflect on their ministry and how it relates to the great commission.

Interview Setting

Tub and Gao-Jai Yang are missionaries located in Thailand. Tub and Gao-Jai were part of the leadership in a church plant in New Rochelle, which is the church that I attend. The church plant started in 2020. In 2021, Tub and Gao-Jai moved their family from New York city to Thailand. I was able to meet with them through zoom on April 29, 2023. Our zoom meeting was scheduled for Saturday morning EST and Saturday evening in Thailand. Right before our scheduled meeting time Gao-Jai informed me that she has lost power. She was able to connect through her phone, but she did not turn her video on because it was dark. The meeting started with just Gao-Jai because Tub was bringing some youth that were with him back to their home. Tub and Gao-Jai explained that they were experiencing high winds in the area. In our scheduled time, I was able to discuss with the Yangs about their experience as a family called to do ministry in Thailand.

Missions Description

The Yang family is a family of five. The leading pastors are Tub and Gao-Jai Yang and they have three children. The children's ages are 9-13. The family was sent out from Ridgeway Alliance. The Alliance denomination has guidelines for missionaries. Missionaries are only able to be abroad for a few years before they have to spend a full year in the United States. As part of their requirements, the family has to learn the language and be a part of an existing Alliance church in Thailand. The Yang family has faced many difficulties displacing the family from the United States to Thailand, but one of the hardest difficulties is the language. Goa-Jai explained that learning the language is difficult because she only knows a limited amount of vocabulary. Her limited understanding of the language makes it difficult for her to articulate the gospel and make connections. Her family has found unique ways to connect, and show the love of Christ despite the language barrier. One intentional way that the Yang family has made connections is through understanding the culture. The Yang family quickly recognized that people in Thailand love to share a meal together. Goa-Jai explained that it is considered a high honor to invite someone into your home. Goa-Jai and her family host meals and game nights at their home. Even though they are still learning to communicate effectively, they still find intentional ways to represent Christ.

In the book, *The art of Neighboring*, Pathak, J. and Runyon explained that in building relationships, people could use their gifting to connect. The Yang family has also used that method of connecting, despite the language barrier. In New York City, Tub Yang was a basketball coach and the children were active in sports. Tub and Goa-Jai wanted their children to maintain those activities in Thailand, so they enrolled them in a basketball team. Because of Tub's experience, he is not one of the coaches of the youth team and the children are competing well. Goa-Jai explained that participation in the sports group allows for the family to connect

with people outside of the church. The families and children that participate in the sports team are not Christians. Through relationships on the team, Tub and Goa-Jai are able to share their faith by explaining to the families their purpose. Goa-Jai explained that people learned that they are Christians because they do not practice on days that they go to church.

As part of the Alliance denomination requirement, the Yang family is connected with an Alliance Church in Thailand. Tub explained that because of poverty, there are not many churches in Thailand, because no one is able to pastor those churches. Consequently, the church that the Yang family is a part of, travels outside of the city to help different communities build small groups. Through the small groups, the church is able to equip the families to be disciples and continue the ministry on their own. In Thai culture, they value social status and ranking. Men would be considered the leaders. Tub explained that because of this value, it is hard to convince the population that they all have a part to play in the great commission. Another opposition that the small groups face is poverty. The men in those communities do not have enough time or resources to dedicate to leading a group. The men spend most of their time earning to support their families.

Tub Yang defined missions as coming alongside what God is already doing in the community and using the gifts that would bring others to Christ. He further explained that at the core, missions are reminding people of their creator. Tub's definition of missions is similar to Tennent's. Tennent defined missions as "a joyful invitation to participate with God in his redemptive work in the world. (p.61) Tub and Tennent understand that the core of missions is recognizing the redemptive plan that God has for humanity. The core purpose is to highlight Christ.

Buddhism is the primary religion in Thailand. The Yangs explained that the Buddhist faith is part of the culture. Even Though the Buddhist faith is the primary language, The Yangs

find that people are open to building relationships with them, and learning more about Christ. The Yangs explained that before they became missionaries, they visited Thailand and knew that God called them there. Gao-Jai explained that there is a need for people to know Christ, but she also explained that there is a willingness to learn. The Yangs explained to me that relationships are important in Thailand culture, so they are welcoming and nice to everyone. Which makes it a great place to share the gospel.

Missions Analysis

Biblical Foundations

In Isaiah 61, Isaiah explained the redemptive plan of God. The redemptive plan included, but not limited to proclaiming the good news, fighting against oppression, healing the sick. Isaiah reminds the people of Israel that God loves justice. This redemptive plan was fulfilled through the life and sacrifice of Jesus. John 14: 12 states, "Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father." Isaiah scripture shows that God has a redemptive plan for the world, and that Jesus's sacrifice has empowered believers to participate in the redemptive work. God calls believers to love justice, fight oppression and proclaim the gospel.

Compare and contrast

The Yangs explained that through building relationships, they would be able to come alongside God, in what he is doing in Thailand. The yangs recognize that God desires for the people of Thailand to know the gospel. The Yang family use their relationship as an avenue to spread the gospel through their actions. The core of their ministry is relationships and being an active member of the community that they live in.

Potential weaknesses and Strength in the missions approach

The potential weakness in their method is that they can not quantify their success. The Yangs are supported by a church in New York. The church is looking for success, such as baptism, conversion and churches being planted. The method that the Yang family have, is more about learning the culture in building. The Yang family has been there for about two years, and they are still in the early stages of building a transformative relationship. A strength in their methods is that the Yang family is able to build sustainable transformation. The Yang family is providing God an opportunity to use them over time to be the image of Christ. As language is a barrier, their actions are the most effective way to share the gospel. Actions provide opportunities for people in Thailand to experience the tangible presence of God.

Summary

I was a part of the members that prayed and sent the Yang family to do missionary work in Thailand. I was always inspired by their ability to leave every comfort behind to follow Christ. This project provided me an opportunity to get an update on their ministry. I was able to hear how they have progressed and what challenges that they face. In the class I was able to learn that missions could happen in our neighborhoods and abroad. God did not commission everyone to go abroad, but he did commission believers to spread the gospel. I am encouraged to find ways in my present life to reflect Christ to those that are around me. I am also encouraged to seek justice for the oppressed. As the Yang Family and Tennent explained, missions are about recognizing the work that God is doing, and coming alongside. I am a member of a church plant in New Rochelle. As the Yang family is learning more about Thailand, I am also learning more about the needs of New Rochelle. I am also challenged to see different ways that God is already moving in New Rochelle and finally learning different ways that I could represent Christ.

References:

Pathak, J. and Runyon, D. (2016) *The art of neighboring: Building genuine relationships right outside your door*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.

Tennent, T.C. (2010) *Invitation to world missions: A trinitarian missiology for the twenty-first century*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications.