

Mission Analysis & Reflection

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Perspective On Missions

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When you think of missions, what thoughts come to mind? Immediately your mind will begin to think about religion and the kinds of religions that fulfill missions. But, what else does your mind go when you think about the meaning of missions. When you define the word missions, two definitions appear, “the vocation or calling of a religious organization, especially a Christian one, to go out into the world and spread its faith” or “an important assignment carried out for political, religious, or commercial purposes, typically involving travel.” Currently, I am taking a course called Perspective On Missions and in the course I learn that mission is more than spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ to all people and fulfilling the Great Commission given to us by Jesus Christ. I learned that missions is also developing relationships with genuine connections, creating a community for people to feel accepted and welcomed, and it is demonstrating the love of God to people who are willing to hear and receive Him. Truly, I was taken aback of how personal missions can be. I have had the privilege to interview a full-time missionary who has experienced moments of joy, sadness, times where her faith felt challenged, and moments of reflections not on you with herself, but with her family. Through our time together, she has shown me the essence of missions.

Bridgie Cooke’s Analysis On Missions

The person I had the opportunity to interview was Bridge Cooke. Bridge Cooke is a missionary under the Christian Missionary & Alliance and has been doing missions in Paris since 2018. She has a family of two daughters and her husband of seven years (I believe). Currently,

they are temporarily stationed in Jersey City, New Jersey in the Alliance University dorms, but will be there until July and return back to Paris to continue their work there. Both her parents are missionaries, her father is a pastor and mother a teacher. Bridge received the call for missions when she was young and began following what God called for her. We had our meeting in her apartment in the University's dorm.

During Bridge's time as serving in missions field, she has had moments of reflections on what missions is, what missions is for her, how to fulfill her role as a leader, and how to serve her community. One out of many that stood out to me while Bridge was talking was how she chose to approach the people she was serving. How she was to bring the gospel to people and how she sees bringing the gospel to people is by having hospitality rather than lecturing to people the gospel. During Cooke's time in Paris, what they noticed about French people is they are not as intuitive with their emotions, which would express themselves emotionally is not easy. How the Cooke's decided on facing this challenge was they would create an atmosphere where they would allow the friends they made in Paris and people within the church they are developing to feel free to express themselves. Meaning allowing them to share the things that are weighing heavily on their minds and their hearts. Once they begin doing so, people would return back to them letting them know that they don't share the things that are on their minds and hearts to their own friends and that it feels good to have a place where they can begin sharing a part of themselves.

A second thing that stood out to me in our conversation was working out personal baggage. Some of what Bridge shared with me is what she is facing presently is seeing other people claiming to be Christians, but what they believe and stand for brings her to question the

side they are on: their stance on poverty, race, gun violence, pro-life, sexuality. The challenge begins when Christians begin to follow what they choose to follow from scripture, rather than accepting and receiving all of what God's words are. With finding Christians choosing what they like and will follow about God leads to confusion because the reality is God is not a buffet table where you can choose what you like and go about your way. Rather, God gives us His words to live by and follow, especially when the world is living according to how it feels. What she is learning is how to be in relationships with people that claim to be Christians, but stand for some things that God, scripture would oppose.

Third thing that stood out to me in our conversation was coming back from overseas and sharing all that you have learned, seen, and taught to people while having the awareness of not everyone agreeing with you and the way you taught the gospel to people. Discerning what can be shared and how she can, the Cooke family deliver the message in a way that can be received while also not wanting to compromise the things that are important. For example, addressing the things that need to change in the church and realities that need to change in the church. Every church has their complications within their congregation and leadership team. With each and every complication that is faced, it is important to stand united as a church. What Bridgie has noticed is there is a desire within her and her church to advance the kingdom of God while at the same time she notices her generation is walking away from ministry, from the church, and from God. This would happen because people within the church would reach their breaking point or reach a burnout. Something that she is remembering and coming to the realization is knowing what is worth fighting for, remembering what is my "why" for it to continue encouraging her to keep working and keep coming back for God. Bridgie believes that If not she called for missions,

then it would've been journalism for her. Trying to get the news and the truths out to the public in order for there to be awareness and change.

Lastly, something that I found inspiring from Bridgie is she is learning not to compromise the gospel of Jesus Christ. Being able to find a balance between serving people while not compromising the gospel. Currently, she is having a hard time with other believers, with other Christians not remaining steadfast on the truth of the gospel and not changing when not everyone is standing with you or agreeing with you. Remembering the Word of God and what He's standard and expectations towards man are. Has been in scenarios where she is reminding and ushering Christians back into the kingdom of God. I can't imagine how tough that must be for her. To have to see dear friends turning away from God, yet I understand because the challenges that we face are to strengthen us rather than try to take us out. Some say that God saves His battles for His strongest soldier.

My Analysis On Missions

After processing my meeting with Bridge Cooke, it made me realize how much of an investment it is to do missions and it gave me a small form of how challenging missions can be. I am saying a small form because I only listened to one person's perspective on how they are experiencing missions. From my understanding from the meeting with Bridge, missions requires discernment, your heart, compassion and empathy, and personal convictions that can not be projected on other people as if it is the Bible. I believe it requires discernment because when Bridgie was sharing about needing to know what her and her husband can share about during their time away once they return America, it made me think about when Jesus would do signs

and wonders to reveal that he is the Messiah, but would say to everyone in the room, “You can not share to anyone what happen,” and when Jesus said to his disciples, “You will do greater things than the Son of Man.” It made me think that there are certain things can be shared that will amaze everyone and give praise to God and then there will be times when we could encounter God in such a way where it will challenge, possibly even test of faith and it will lead us to refuse that God can move in such a way. It made me think how many and how often do Cooke have to have the conversation of what can and can not be shared. Secondly, how much of your heart is needed on the mission field. It truly amazed how much God moves through us if we allow Him to. God reveals his love to people in numerous ways and one of them is using us to let people know that he loves us with an everlasting love. Sometimes words can only go so far and God would want us to do something, meaning showing affection to one another or performing acts of service or kindness. Or, God could just simply have us listen to people about what they are concerned about. Maybe God will give a word to say to the person, maybe He wants us to simply listen, or simply show compassion and empathy towards the person for healing to begin. Either way our hearts, my heart is needed because we can have all the gifts of the Spirit, but none mean anything if we do not have love. With that being said, we can not tell people, “God loves you” if we don’t believe for ourselves. The overall take away from my meeting with Bridge was informative and I felt challenged. Challenged to allow God to heal me as much as possible before I truly get involved in a church and begin leading and counseling people. Challenged to allow God to unravel me by knowing what is it like to be served first to want to serve others from a genuine and honest place. Challenged to allow God to take my pride so I can follow wherever He goes. Personally, I believe that I will be doing a small form of missions in my life,

but when that day comes I want to be ready and approved by God to go into the mission field confidently saying, “God loves you” all because I let God love me first.

From this experience I have a deeper perspective on missions. Prior to taking this class, my understanding of missions was that people of any denomination would go to country to country within their state or go international to share information about their beliefs and disciple people for a while and return back to wherever they came. After my time with the Cooke family, I realized that missions were also about building relationships with people, establishing a community, creating an atmosphere where people can gather to feel seen, heard, and understood. Yes, it is about spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ, but what the Cooke family gave me was something passed the surface, pass superficial. What they gave me in our time of meeting was introspection to what living a life as a missionary. It made me realize how personal missions can be because just like from Miraculous Movement, “But he had learned the secret in his disciple-making training: if you want to touch a Muslim’s heart for the gospel, you have to be a genuine friend. You need to ask God to give you honest concern for them, not see Muslims as trophy conversions, but as people whom God loves in whom you can love as well. And Wasim was good at that,” (Trousdale pg: 83). Having an honest concern and compassion for the people you are going to befriend, to disciple is and will always be the takeaway from this project, rather than seeing someone as a prize to be won. Because I believe that is how people who do not know will be able to see God’s heart, God’s image through me.