

MISSIONS ANALYSIS

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INTRODUCTION to MISSIONS ANALYSIS

The intent of this paper is to make a comparative analysis of what it is like to be practically involved in missionary activities in the real world vis-à-vis the theoretical perspectives of the mission experience as examined in class.

Interview Setting

The interview setting was in a quiet place in the home of the missionary. My home was also in a quiet place without interruptions. We introduced ourselves to each other exchanged graceful pleasantries. The interview began. We had difficulties with the level of sound while speaking as well as the frequency. The verbal atmosphere of this interview was very pleasant and familiar; so much so that during the course of our interview, Rebecca asked me to pray for Kezia who is a woman that she is teaching English there in Indonesia. She asked that we pray for Kezia to be willing to let go of the voices in her head. My response was in the affirmative, and she thanked me for the prayers. The call dropped at 6:51 and we began communicating through texting. Our last text was at 9:30PM.

The name of the missionary is Rebecca. She is married. She and her husband are missionaries in the mission field together. Rebecca has been in the field of missions for thirty (30) years. The interview took place on 5/2/23. The interview began at 6:00 PM. The time allotted was 6:00-8:00 PM. She is committed to missions. The culture with which she is working is that of Indonesia. There are hundreds of languages that are spoken; however, English is spoken in the city. Its climate is largely hot and humid, with rainfall occurring mostly in low-lying areas and mountainous regions experiencing cooler temperatures. Indonesia experiences a number of climates, it is a mostly tropical rainforest and tropical savannas with high precipitation, the area continually experiences tropical monsoons. The cities

of Jakarta, Ujung Padang, Medan, Padang and Balikpapan have an average minimum temperature of 22.8C = 73.4 Fahrenheit and 30.2C = 86.36 Fahrenheit.

Missions Description

Rebecca was asked, “Why did you choose Indonesia?” Her response was that she didn’t. It was decided. I’d like to take a moment to note that for security purposes, Rebecca informed me that only first names are used, also for security purposes, all workers use the word “cousins” for Muslims and the word for workers is “the missionaries”. She was expecting someone to come over to work in the garden while it was still cool. I said that it is awesome to have a garden, and did she feel tranquility while engaged in that activity? Her response to that question was “It is awesome to have a garden, working in the earth. It is therapy for me. I love feeling the dirt in my fingernails and toes.” I realized she was barefooted. She continued, “It is also a good place to share the experience with others. I like to bake, too, with children who come to our house frequently.” Further, Rebecca said that there is something about doing an activity that gives us opportunities to share deep heart issues. When asked what was she planting, she said, “Right now, I am using pots, so I have flowers and other green plants.” Rebecca expressed the desire to plant more lettuce and vegetables in the future.

I asked, “How would you define missions?” She said, “Missions is something for everybody to follow Jesus.” Rebecca’s style is loving people and walking with God and the Holy Spirit. She is loving, and enjoys working with God’s people. She believes in using what you have, ie, gifts, talents, and experiences to help to lead God’s children back to Him. It is important to learn and develop our weaknesses as we walk with God. God only can develop our weakness, if our hearts are open. She says, “It’s simple, and not at all one way. Missions is a team effort. God’s people working together in parts, each bringing what they have.” The expressed definition by Rebecca coincides with the class definition. One of the class definitions notes that Missions is the “intentional, sacrificial penetration of major

human barriers to plant communities of responsible disciples of Jesus Christ among groups of people where none have existed before.” (D. Bryant, 2008).

Rebecca was asked if she was involved in church planting and she said yes. Church planting as she sees it is not building a building but, building up a people for God’s use to spread His Gospel message. I totally agree with that explanation because Jesus did not build buildings, He built up people, and His work is continuous. Although, we see Jesus mentoring His disciples for three years, there has been no time limit regarding the work of building disciples. This building is now considered missions’ work or ministry. Time limits are man’s idea. This is so true since the church is a breathing organism and there will always be people to disciple.

The missionaries do face issues in bringing the Gospel to a different culture. Rebecca gave an example of this regarding the Indonesian culture/customs. The missionary brings customs from his/her culture that is different from the existing culture, for example, the missionary may eat cereal and milk for breakfast and the existing culture eats rice for breakfast. This situation requires adaptability, adjustments and letting go some of our own wrappings on the part of the missionary. There is a primary responsibility of a missionary which is to have respect of the existing culture. There are serious issues/obstacles to navigate in the cross-cultural context. Some are the adjustment to weather/environmental challenges, sacrifices which are tremendous, worldview clashes (Spiritual and Physical Realities) trust, and language barriers. Rebecca agrees that language is the most difficult hurdle to overcome. Language is more than the spoken word. It is receptive, expressive, body languages and culture nuisances. It is the central part of how we communicate our thoughts, feelings and needs as people.

Social justice is a concern globally, and another consideration/hurdle on the mission field. The interviewer wanted to know what was Rebecca’s posture on this subject. Rebecca referred to the

compassion of Christ lifting up women in society, the poor, and “the least of these”. We find in Matthew 11:28-30. States, “Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest”. Jesus demonstrated only the highest regard for women, in both His life and teachings. We see Jesus’ compassion for women throughout the New Testament. There are other Scriptures displaying the compassion of Christ towards the marginalized. We see in the Bible the ways in which Jesus exhibited His compassion for women, the wedding at Cana, John 2:1-12, where Jesus and his disciple were invited to a wedding and the host ran out of wine. Mary His mother, His mother approaches Him to solve the problem; The female followers He amasses, see Luke 8:1-3; A woman subjected to bleeding, Luke 8:43-48; The woman caught in adultery, John, 8:1-11; and the women He appears to at the resurrection, Matthew 28. During these days, women were counted as nothing in the religious culture priests would pray “Blessed are you, Lord, our God, ruler of the universe, who has not created me a woman.” (Morning Blessing, A. Siddur, 2018).

The concern for financial well being is of great concern for missionaries. The interviewer asked, does the organization you are involved with offer financial support. Rebeca stated that the people in the community help but she has a job teaching women and children English. There is no financial support from the host organization for the missionaries in Rebecca’s group. Their work is truly a Kingdom assignment.

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The interview with Rebecca, a missionary located in Indonesia, is a clear calling by God to go into the world and teach. She is truly committed, having been serving for 30 years, in carrying out God’s commandment as seen in Matthew 28:19-20. The expression of love for the people of God and the love for children. “God said suffer little children, and forbid them not, come unto me: for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven”. (Matthew 19:14). We have to come unto God as little children!

BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

Biblically speaking, missions is a here and now concept, emphasized in the Great Commission found in Matthew 28:18-20. These verses are the pinnacle to the call of all believers who have been witnessed to the saving work of Christ portrayed on the cross of Calvary. This is not the only verse that compels us to take on God's mission. The Bible does not simply speak about missions. The Bible is Missions. We see the accounts of missions from Creation to its final destination in Revelation. Therein, every verse of Scripture is proof of missions. Old Testament missions is seen in Genesis 12:1-3, "Now the Lord said to Abram, 'Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all families of the earth shall be blessed.'" (The Bible). Revelation 7:9-10 states, "After this I looked and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes, and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, 'Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and the Lamb!'" (The Bible).

Compare and Contrast

The missionary interviewed was clear of her understanding of missions. Missions are not done in isolation nor is it autonomous. It is a team effort where each member brings what they have, vis-à-vis talents, gifts, experiences and themselves (their spirit). This sense of wholeness is my belief as well. A willing heart to accept one's weaknesses and availability for change for the glory of God and the team. Missions is also a continuous commitment of the concept "to go".

Potential Weaknesses in the Missions Approach

Global missions is some of the most difficult work in the world. There are some difficult challenges in doing missions. It demands sacrifice. "Global missions has an inescapable element of sacrifice for the church/organizations and for those individuals that are sent. Leaving behind family, vocational identity, familiar environment, and, in some cases, modern conveniences to cross geographic, cultural, and/or linguistic barriers can be extremely challenging. Foreign Context can be daunting. Missionaries are most often sent into a completely foreign and unfamiliar context and culture. They experience some common themes, such as, being directionally lost, mentally exhausted trying to navigate life in a new context, bombarded with new tastes, sounds, and smells; vulnerable as an outsider, and lack of meaningful friendships. They also face economic and security challenges. Language or language learning is another area that is a potential weakness the inability to communicate can manifest a "feeling of lost, confused, and unsettled are real emotions for missionaries as they move to a foreign context. The possibility of Worldview Clash (Spiritual and Physical realities that takes place every time missionaries try to share the gospel. "There are myriad of challenges and hardships related to carrying out the missionary task, but those hardships can be met with an enduring hope". (P. Akin, 2018).

Perceived Strengths in the Missions Approach

The surge of technology is a definite a strength. It has already strengthened missions around the world with the ability to hear, and to see without anyone the physical presence of another. The missionaries are able to convey the gospel in languages to millions of people and worshippers. Languages is no longer a piercing obstacle. There are now translations and recordings of gospel stories recorded in textual forms that people are able to read, sing, memorize and recite in prayers; this is especially helpful for children.

Insights and Summary

The insight that I have gained from this exercise is the enormous sacrifices and commitment that an individual must have to successfully work in missions.

This course has impacted me as a potential leader of a church in ways that help me to understand the great importance of missions work as depicted in the Bible. It allowed me to further realize that missions is an absolute team effort. One must meet people in their comfort zone, and begin the work from there.

Unfortunately, at this stage of my life, I don't foresee my travel for missions; however, I am able to partake in missions work here at home. I am fully committed to the work that I am able to participate in with my home church, and I am committed to work within the ministry of prayer for all that are in need.

