

Lessons My Dad Taught Me About Missions

Missions Conference is a very important time at Christchurch. It is a time when we reevaluate our seriousness about carrying out the Great Commission, which is to take the Gospel to every person throughout the world. It is a time we take a fresh look at our giving, especially as it pertains to Faith Promise Missions. It is a time when we expect to be revived again in our own hearts. Let us be praying that God will speak to all of us about the world-wide work of God and what He would determine is our role in accomplishing His purposes in the earth. As most all of you know, my father was an inspiration to me in many areas of my life, one of the greatest and most inspiring legacies being dad's insatiable desire to advance missions. I would like to share with you three lessons my father taught me about missions:

1. The responsibility and authority for missions belongs to the church.

My father lived, breathed and died missions. For much of his ministry he was an interstate missionary for the American Baptist Association. That is an old group that shares a unique history. When the Civil War broke out in 1861, the majority of the Missionary Baptists amalgamated into the Southern Baptist Convention. However, there was a an old line of Missionary Baptists that never joined up, but later in the early part of the 1900s formed an association rather than a convention. Their doctrine was virtually identical to the SBC; the difference in the two groups was in the way missionaries were supported. Each and every individual church chose and supported her missionaries directly as opposed to the cooperative board fashion. My father rose up through the ranks of this group and eventually became the Chairman of the Missions of the ABA. His assignment was to oversee the myriad of missionaries around the world and express their needs at the messenger meetings and help the foundering missionaries to get and maintain support from the individual churches.

I was proud of my dad who, in 1972, after spending the greater part of his life with these brethren, addressed over two thousand people at the national meeting in Hot Springs, Arkansas. To the best of my remembrance, this is what Dad said: "The messenger body of the American Baptist Association has sinned against God. We are now hiring and firing missionaries as though we were a convention. It is the sole duty of the local New Testament Baptist Church to determine whom they will or will not support. This messenger body does not have that authority. I have pled with you to not go this route. You have chosen to go against the Scriptures with your hiring and firing, and I will not have any part of it. Therefore, I leave the American Baptist Association for it has ceased to be what it was when I became part of this fellowship." Then he walked away from the microphone, came to where my mother was sitting and they walked out together. At that time I was attending college in Indiana. So now Dad and I were both independent Baptists.

I learned a valuable lesson from my father's actions on the day he became an Independent Baptist. I learned the power of the New Testament, autonomous, indigenous local church. She has the authority to administer the ordinances, bear witness of the Gospel and send missionaries to the uttermost part of the earth. This powerful message was given to the local church: *"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth"* (Acts 1:8).

In the Old Testament it says, *"...I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness"* (Psalm 84:10). As doorkeepers in the house of the Lord, we should be doing all that is possible to bring the lost into this safe house. Think of the local church as God's doorkeeper. Not only are we doorkeepers bringing people into the church, but also we are stones that make up the church built upon Jesus Christ, the Sure Foundation and Cornerstone. The New Testament says, *"Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ"* (I Peter 2:5). This privilege is not granted to a convention, association or co-op. It is uniquely given to the church, His bride, His body, and the expression of Christ's life on the earth. It is the channel of His glory: *"Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen"* (Ephesians 3:21).

2. If we don't care, no one else will.

When I was in high school, Dad and I were coming to the end of a very common day. We had stopped by the feed store to get some grain to feed our chickens. On the way home Dad got quieter than normal and when I looked over to him I saw the tears streaming down his cheek. I asked, "Dad, is everything alright?" Looking straight ahead, he simply said, "They're going to Hell, they're going to Hell. If they don't get saved, they're going to Hell. I've just been thinking about the thousands of people who don't know Christ."

Dad wasn't in the pulpit, he wasn't in a mission's conference, we were just going home with chicken feed. I realized that day that being a Christian was an all-consuming experience. I realized that if we are to succeed in the work of the Lord, we must be passionate and we must be real.

Our Lord looked out over Jerusalem shortly before He died, weeping over the very people for whom He would soon die. He said, *"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!"* (Luke 13:34). Jeremiah was called the weeping prophet. We see that demonstrated in this outpouring, *"Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!"* (Jeremiah 9:1). Jude points out that compassion makes the difference in ministry! *"And of some have compassion, making a difference"* (Jude 1:22).

Many people want to get together, few want to reach out and make an attempt to win a soul to Christ. Many want Bible study; few feel passion about delivering a soul from bondage and Hell. Many want activity and fun, few are willing to take the embarrassment and harassment that may come if we attempt

to be a conscientious witness. In contrast to that modern orientation God said, *“The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise”* (Proverbs 11:30). *“Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins”* (James 5:20). If we don’t care, who will care? If we don’t go, who will go? If we don’t send missionaries, who will? May the Lord give us the surrendered attitude of Isaiah, *“Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me”* (Isaiah 6:8).

3. We must be willing to sacrifice for the most important work on earth!

Dad had an earned doctor’s degree and could have lived far more comfortably in a tenured college position. He instead chose to start missions from scratch in America, Korea, Africa and India. I remember well the times we did without for the mission. On more than one occasion, Dad would speak a morning service and there was no place to go and no invitation to go to a nice accommodation such as a motel, prophet’s chamber or someone’s house. Many a Sunday afternoon was spent in a public park enjoying the swings, monkey bars and slides, but always very careful not to dirty our church clothes because we had services that night. Mom and Dad tried to make it as pleasant for their kids as they could. And really, it was more fun for us than it was for Mom in her Sunday best or Dad who was trying to study in a public park. What stands out in my mind is that souls, missions and church work were more important than our creature comforts. What kept us in the park on Sunday afternoons? Tears of compassion from Dad and the uncomplicated willingness to obey the Lord in the matter of fulfilling the Great commission. *“And He (Jesus) said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature”* (Mark 16:15). *“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen”* (Matthew 28:19,20).

-Pastor Pope-

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