

Bible Study

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together everywhere

Together with all those
everywhere who call
on the name of our
Lord Jesus Christ
1 Corinthians 1:2

Introduction

I was recently invited to present about short-term missions at a small, inter-denominational theology discussion group. I came with photos from several trips I had been on, some notes on cross-cultural communication, and a handful of Bible verses that talked about the importance of missions and evidence for it throughout Scripture. As I started to present my material, the host of the group listened for the first little bit and then politely interrupted me.

“What I really want to know, and the reason I asked you to present,” he stated, “was to answer two questions for me about missions: 1) is it really effective ministry in our modern world to go on mission trips, specifically short-term ones, and 2) wouldn’t it be better to just send money to the places instead of going ourselves?”

These two questions seem to be at the heart of most objections to going on short-term mission trips and/or supporting missionaries living overseas. From a practical standpoint, certainly sending money to places that need buildings, wells or orphanages, instead of going ourselves, accomplishes more for those projects more efficiently. But there is a *huge* aspect to missions that is missed if it is reduced to efficient use of funds. That aspect is the importance of togetherness as Christians and the beauty of sharing faith with all those who are part of the body of Christ everywhere.

Read the following passage:

1 Corinthians 1:2 – “To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be his holy people, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ — their Lord and ours.”

- When Paul writes his first letter to the Corinthians, to whom is he addressing it?
- Who are we called to be “together with”?
- What does it mean to be “together” with all those “everywhere”?

Over the centuries Christianity has done a pretty good job of following Jesus' command in Acts 1:8 to tell people about Him, “in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” We have spread the gospel story in one fashion or another to most corners of the world. This means there are now, more than ever, opportunities and ways for us to connect with our Christian brothers and sisters who live in vastly different cultural contexts and settings. The scope of “all those everywhere” can be overwhelming. Thinking about the context of Jesus' command can help.

For the disciples Jerusalem was their home city or worship center; Judea encompassed their countrymen; and Samaria represented those living near them but socially and culturally separate.

- What areas of your life are represented by Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the ends of the earth?
- Which of these areas have you personally found a way to be “together with”?
- Which of these areas are you not “together with”?

Our Christian testimony to the world is displayed most powerfully in our togetherness. Togetherness is a sense of connected heart and purpose centered in Jesus Christ. Contrary to what we often think, this does not come about through simply giving money. In fact, the goal of togetherness and unity can often be *hindered* by giving money to solve a problem rather than actually connecting with people. Instead of staying apart from each other, Jesus commands us to be connected with other Christians. Most of us probably understand that in terms of those immediately around us; we try and connect with those in our churches, our workplaces, our homes, etc. But once we start to move beyond that context, being together with others can get difficult. Missions is one of the primary ways we can connect with others in far places of the globe. Does this mean every person is called to be a missionary? Of course not. God places many parts of the body in various locations for various ministries.



Scripture Study

Read the following passage:

Acts 13:1-3 – ¹Among the prophets and teachers of the church at Antioch of Syria were Barnabas, Simeon (called “the black man”), Lucius (from Cyrene), Manaen (the childhood companion of King Herod Antipas), and Saul. ²One day as these men were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Dedicate Barnabas and Saul for the special work to which I have called them.’ ³So after more fasting and prayer, the men laid their hands on them and sent them on their way.”

- Who was called to go?
- Who was called to stay?
- How were those who were called to stay still involved in the going?

Now read about the end of their journey:

Acts 14:26-27 – ²⁶Finally, [Paul and Barnabas] returned by ship to Antioch of Syria, where their journey had begun. The believers there had entrusted them to the grace of God to do the work they had now completed. ²⁷Upon arriving in Antioch, they called the church together and reported everything God had done through them and how he had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles, too.”

- How did this sending and coming back affect the church in Antioch?
- Do you think there was a greater sense of “togetherness ... everywhere” through Paul and Barnabas’ journey?

In view of this biblical calling for “togetherness ... everywhere” and the example of the church in Antioch, how would you answer the questions my moderator friend asked me?

- Is it really effective ministry in our modern world to go on mission trips, specifically short-term ones?
- Wouldn't it be better to just send money to the places instead of going ourselves?



Application

As a group discuss some ways you can effectively strive to be “... together with all those everywhere.” Consider both personal ways and corporate ways.

(Some suggestions are to connect with your church or conference supported missionaries, read the FM missions reports and pray for FM churches overseas, support an ICCM child, go on a short-term mission trip, etc.)

Be careful in your discussion to keep in mind not to suggest things that might unintentionally make others *go away* instead of being *together with* them.

What steps might you take to implement these ideas?



Expansion *(Optional, based on time available)*

One of the common ways we think of being *together with* those in other parts of the world is to financially support them. This is certainly important to do, and there is a strong, biblical precedent for doing so. However, there is a potential danger in just sending money to people in need. We are very used to giving money to make uncomfortable situations go away. If we are sick, we pay a doctor. If our roof has a leak, we hire a roofer or plumber. If we are bored or want to relax, we pay for entertainment. Our general response to hard situations is to throw money at them to make them simply *go away*.

- Can you think of a time when you have used money to make a problem go away?
- Have you ever tried to help someone financially but found it created distance or separation between yourself and them?
- Can you think of a time when you have used money to make your uncomfortable conscience go away?

Read the following passage:

Romans 15:25-28: ²⁵ Now, however, I am on my way to Jerusalem in the service of the Lord's people there. ²⁶ For Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the Lord's people in Jerusalem. ²⁷ They were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in the Jews' spiritual blessings, they owe it to the Jews to share with them their

material blessings. ²⁸ So after I have completed this task and have made sure that they have received this contribution, I will go to Spain and visit you on the way.

- Why were the Gentile believers giving a gift to the Jerusalem Christians?
- What motivated the Gentile believers to give a gift to the Jerusalem church?
- What do you think they were hoping to accomplish?
- Is there a clue in verse 30 where Paul asks for prayer for the gift to be accepted?