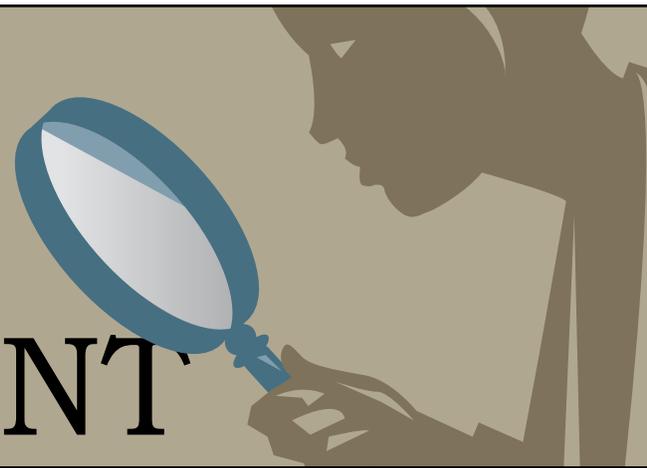


When mission work is GOD-RELIANT



I envy those of you who have no daily commute. My drive is normally an uneventful but intense 25 miles. This morning I jumped out into traffic and was quickly keeping pace with the cars a few feet in front of me and behind me. We averaged around 65 miles per hour with four lanes going each direction. You learn from experience that you must keep your focus on the car in front of you. If you look away, even for a fraction of a second, you can get into trouble. So you don't even take your focus off the traffic to adjust the heat. You quickly learn to turn it up or down by feeling for the knobs.

Keeping your focus in the right place is essential in life as well as driving. The Bible reminds us that our focus must always be on God and not on man. "This is what the Lord says: 'Cursed is the one who trusts in man ... But blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord'" (Jeremiah 17:5, 7). Our mission works must encourage people to focus on what God can do through them, rather than focusing on what we can do for them.

Many mission works are set up as structures of support that foster a never-ending dependency on man. These mission works are institutional and top-down. The institution is funded with buildings, a denominational structure and pastor's salary. The outside funding can never end because those being reached for the Lord have no reason to mature, sacrifice and pay for something they are now receiving for free. There is also no ownership in a church that is funded by someone else. The problem is that the focus and trust has been placed on what others can do for us.

Other mission works are set up to birth and develop spiritual life. These have a never-ending dependency on God. They focus on developing spiritual life and a maturity that centers on the provision of God. These works do everything they can to point people to a trust in God rather than man, even when it would be easy to step in and provide everything needed. What are the results of these two vastly different focuses?

The result of a never-ending dependency on man:

- Those reached will have a hard time maturing and will become dependant on outside support. They may never become self-supporting and dependent upon God. Their

focus and trust will be in man and what others can do for them.

- They will always be subservient to the leadership of others. They receive their funding from an outside source and that source will either dictate exactly how the ministry should function, or allow them the temptation to use the funds without accountability.
- They will never fund another ministry, because they believe they can't even fund their own ministry.

The result of a never-ending dependency on God:

- Because they depend upon God, they will become spiritually mature and support their pastor and congregation. They may not be able to afford to construct church buildings like we have, but they will be able to build churches similar to their own homes.
- Because they are relying on the Lord rather than man, they will mature. They will not have to be subservient to the dictates of a donor that doesn't understand their culture or situation. Rather, they will develop their own leadership, which is guided by the Word and Spirit of God.
- Because they are focused on God and what He calls them to do they will reproduce. They will realize that they can do all things through Christ who strengthens them, and they will rise to His calling, reaching others at home and around the world.

Where is our focus in missions? Is it in setting up man-made structures that will focus on us and depend on us forever? Let us make every effort to focus on God and what He has commissioned us to do. Let us focus on personal spiritual life that leads to maturity. Jesus said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I will be with you always to the very end of the age."

When we focus on God the ministries we start become led and supported by God, and reproduce.

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