

Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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Co-working With The Workers; Sending the Sent-Ones

by Dan Trygg

“For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. ¹⁴ But how can they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how can they believe without hearing about Him? And how can they hear without a preacher? ¹⁵ And how can they preach unless they are sent?”

Romans 10:13-15

“Then He said to His disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. ³⁸ Therefore urgently-ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest.’”

Matthew 9:37-38

“Thus the Lord directed to the ones proclaiming the gospel to live out from the gospel.”

1 Corinthians 9:14

“No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, in order that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier.”

2 Timothy 2:4

“...send them forth in a manner worthy of God. ⁷ For they went out for the sake of the Name, taking nothing from the unbelievers. ⁸ Therefore we ought to support such ones, that we may be co-workers with the truth.” ³ John 1:6-8

What made the first century church so effective? How were they able to accomplish so much in such a brief span of time? Starting from a small group of 120 in the upper room at Pentecost, they had ***expanded to over a million by the end of that first century***, some 70 years later. From the small, localized area of Jerusalem to Galilee, the Christian movement ***encompassed the entire Mediterranean sea, and spread down into Africa and eastward as far as India***. At a time when 60% of the populace were slaves, the message of Jesus Christ ***spread throughout every level of society and every socio-economic group***, ...from the lowest levels of extreme poverty and powerlessness to the Emperor’s household and Imperial guard. ***It crossed every ethnic and cultural barrier***, and won followers from every conceivable background. At a time when Caesar’s were jealous and suspicious of any challenges to their supreme authority, Jesus Christ was being preached as a King, and His followers were refusing to offer sacrifices to the emperor as a god. As a result, they faced the confiscation of their goods, persecution, banishment, imprisonment and death, and yet the movement continued to spread. ***People were following Jesus in the face of incredible opposition.***

The first century church had *no* buildings, *no* property, *no* meeting halls, *no* central organization to strategize or plan any efforts at expansion. They had *no* printing presses, *no* radio or television, *no* sound amplification, *no* rapid transit, and *no* special privileges. Colleges and seminaries were unheard of for nearly 1,000 years, yet the followers of Jesus Christ were successfully teaching and training even common people, and the message kept going out to new places and reaching more people. ***What did they have? They had a deep commitment to Jesus Christ and a clear vision of what their purpose and calling were all about.*** They had a living relationship with God that was transforming their lives, and a commitment to help and support each other. Even in the earliest days of the church in Jerusalem, we see that ***they devoted themselves to learn the teachings of the apostles, and they spent extensive time together, sharing their hearts, their love, their service and their goods with one another.*** It was remarkable. No one had seen anything like it! Even the outsiders were exclaiming, “See how they love one another!” ***It was this radical love and the joy they seemed to have that drew people to them, ...that, and the fact that God seemed to truly be at work among them.*** People were being healed, demons were being cast out, prayers were answered, ...and *this* fueled the contagion and confirmed the message.

The first century church clearly knew that they were called to spread the gospel and make disciples. Their strategy was to establish small home churches in new neighborhoods and communities, and these ***new believers were expected to devote themselves to the apostles’ doctrine, to develop an intimacy with the Holy Spirit, and to actively care for one another and help one another grow.*** There were no spectators in the early church; *all* were participants. ***One of their key responsibilities in meeting together was to help one another identify their gifts and callings.*** Some people had a gift and passion for telling people about Jesus; others had a unique ability to teach the scriptures effectively; still others had a passion and skill to go to other places and start small home churches. These gifts, abilities and motivations were recognized, acknowledged, encouraged and developed. ***Because evangelism, discipleship-teaching, and starting new groups were all highly valued, the fellowship of believers would be praying for God to raise up people into these functions.*** Those who showed promise in these areas would be encouraged to continue to develop and utilize their gifts in the fellowship, or in nearby areas.

It is up to the Holy Spirit to distribute the spiritual gifts, and to call or lead people to their areas of usefulness. According to Matthew 9:37,38, praying for God to send out (literally, to “cast out”) workers into the harvest fields of souls He has prepared, should be an ongoing passion of our hearts as we seek God in prayer. The Holy Spirit will call certain people to do this kind of work. ***God is the Caller, not the person. It is not up to them to decide their***

duty assignment. God is the initiator. Now, He may put a passion or burden on someone's heart early on in their lives, or their spiritual journey. Having a passion or vision is not the same as being called to go "right now". That is a matter for prayer and God's leading. **Typically, people are not called into full-time ministry without having shown the effectiveness of God's working in other settings.** They have developed their skills and have shown effectiveness in other, more limited settings.

We do see two very different models of ministry in the NT.

Paul said that **the normative model was that of the person God calls out to be dedicated to full-time faith ministry, ...meaning a ministry supported by voluntary gifts alone.** It was what we saw Jesus Himself do, when He began His public ministry. He left His carpenter business to travel and preach. **It is also the model Jesus utilized with His disciples.** He required them to leave their businesses in order to be trained more deeply by Him (they had *already* been following Him and had been participating in His ministry), and to be sent out to preach. **How were they supported? People donated gifts to provide for their needs.** They *lived* what Paul later said was Jesus' instruction (prescription, precise-direction) for those who proclaim the gospel: They should live out-from the gospel. In other words, they ought to be supported for their work, and they ought to embrace that arrangement. **It is important to see this verse in the light of its context. Paul uses seven word pictures to support this statement: (1.) Soldiers** should not serve at their own expense; **(2.) a vineyard owner** should be able to partake of the grapes he planted; **(3.) a shepherd** should be able to drink from the milk of the flock he cares for; **(4.) an ox** should be allowed to eat of the grain it is threshing; **(5.) a plowman** ought to plow in hope of a share of the crop; **(6.) a thresher** ought to thresh in hope of a share of the crop; In case they had not been following his train of thought, he makes the application – Those who sow spiritual things among them ought to be able to reap material things in return. Then, one more example: **(7.) those who perform sacred services in the temple** (priests) have a share from the altar. **Then, Paul states Jesus' maxim.**

The other model Paul describes in I Corinthians 9 **is that of working for a living, and doing ministry on the side.** Some people call this a "tent-making ministry", because Paul made tents as his employment of choice. He said that he and Barnabus were the only ones among the apostles who were operating this way. **For him, it was a way to somewhat "make amends"** for his persecuting believers before he had been converted. It was an extra sacrifice. **It enabled him to preach the gospel without charge.** But, the people in 3 John 1:6-8 were *also* offering the gospel without charge to the unbelievers, ...and they were supported by the offerings of people who were believers! **Furthermore, we see that Paul would also accept the donations of people,** and when he did receive such support he "devoted himself *fully* to the preaching of the Word" (Phil. 4:10-20; Acts 18:5) – the same rationale that he later used to advise Timothy to *not* be involved in "the affairs of everyday life" (2 Tim. 2:4).

Why is this important? Because in the first century **there was a well-established mindset that those who are set apart to preach the gospel ought to be supported for their preaching/teaching ministry.** Notice, however, that this was a "faith ministry". The preachers of this time were NOT going around *raising support*, nor were they *getting a salary*. They were preaching the gospel, and *trusting God for their support*. This was a walk by faith, ...and a sacrificial lifestyle. And, while Paul took it upon himself to lay out the theological basis for being supported for being a teacher or preacher of the Word, he *never* demanded anything from anybody. He clearly stated that he wasn't in it for the money. Those who were, ...those who were charging people for their teachings, "peddlers of the word", were charlatans, in Paul's estimation. A second century document, the *Didache*, agreed. If a person *asked for money* in exchange for his preaching, he was thought to be a false teacher.

Here is the significance of this expectation of being supported, and of supporting people in ministry. Those who chose to live this way were very committed, *sacrificial*, and *willing to take risk* in order to get the job done. They were **serious people of faith.** They were people tried in the fires of faith-testing. As a result, they learned to trust God, and discovered that He *could* indeed take care of them. As a result, they were willing to *GO* at the leading of the Spirit, ...on a wing and a prayer, as it were. **It was people like them, ...as well as the people of faith who were trained by the Holy Spirit and the mindset of the first-century church to obediently, sometimes sacrificially, support such people in order to send them..., that fueled so much of the radical expanse and growth of the gospel in that first century.**

We witnessed a rediscovery of such a dynamic with J. Hudson Taylor and the China Inland Mission of the 1800's. Again, **committed people, sent by God to be workers in the harvest fields** of China, went in obedience to God's call, ...and committed people of faith back home were willing to obediently, often sacrificially, join with them as "senders", "co-workers" in the work of the gospel. **As a result, amazing things were done in the name of Jesus.** Ordinary people took great risks because of great faith and saw great results and great impact, all because our great God was involved on both sides of that equation. **I believe God desires to raise up another generation of faith-preachers and faith-senders, ...co-workers in the gospel..., to do radical, sacrificial, faith-stretching things in our day.**