

## Missions and Me

By Inga-Lill Guzik

John 20:21

*So Jesus said to them again, "Peace to you!*

*As the Father has sent Me, I also send you."*

The core of missions is something we find in God's Word, where the pattern of making disciples, baptizing and teaching is made clear. These are done in Christ's authority and love through the powerful leading of the Holy Spirit.

A passage you have likely heard preached on several times, perhaps as a mission's team gets ready to leave. It's hard to think of "missions" without thinking of the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20: Jesus came and told his disciples, *"I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."*

Jesus is our message. He is our everything and the One who gave us our mission: to show and share the gospel in every way possible, show and share what a disciple is, preach the gospel in words and in actions, in the love of God's grace.

Over time what the Great Commission has become for me is this: "Great "because He is great, not I. He will do the great works. "Co" means "with." — I go with God, with His authority, I go with others, I join them, come alongside them and become part of what God is already doing.

"Mission" means I go with purpose to share the gospel of love through much needed dental work. This is not a "social gospel", meaning only humanitarian help but it is bringing the gospel in real dire social settings of poverty where no other solution is available. Jesus' love abides in the care through His people. Therefore, in my experience I believe nothing is impossible when He sends me in His authority.

John the Baptist taught, *If you have two shirts, give one to the poor. If you have food, share it with those who are hungry.* (Luke 3:11)

I had to realize that gospel-centered missions cannot be simply humanitarian in nature but must also be spiritual in nurture. People will know Jesus sent us in His love and He wants to care for, teach, and disciple them through us. It matters greatly to seek the Holy Spirit's guidance and allow His transforming work in our heart prior to going to do His work.

When the Word speaks to us, "*go therefore*" (Matthew 28:19), we should be willing. Seeking God's timing and direction, covering every step - even the practical details, in prayer and fasting. That when the Lord reveals His direction to pursue, we remember that the touch point of the gospel of grace must begin with us being grateful for the message of the gospel.

We go where God leads us in utmost humility because we also know the gospel is love that gives: "*for God so loved... He gave*" (John 3:16). Once this love is settled in our heart we go by faith where He sends us, doing all things through Him.

When I live out the actions that Christ taught His disciples, others will know His teachings and be drawn to Him. Reminded what Jesus said "*observe all things that I have commanded you*" (Matthew 28:20), disciples are often made as they "catch" the concepts and conduct of the Christian faith by watching His disciples in action.

Even so, the mission field is accompanied by countless unexpected challenges. All too often the temptation to act in the flesh rather than continuing to walk by faith in the power of the Spirit. The two-step dance move that I have made my motto in both leading and in following another's lead is: first, go low (be humble) and secondly, be easily led as an example to others. This is easier said than done.

Because it really is true: I have found that the greatest moments on any mission is when we consciously "allow" enough room for God to move in difficult situations. He reveals His almighty power when unforeseen circumstances arise. This is part of the adventure I look forward to. Every trip I have ever been on is a faith builder and stretches not only me but each person on the team in unexpected ways.

God began this work in me when I was a young girl. I was fascinated by people who left the comfort of their home to be missionaries out of obedience to Christ. I had no idea what that meant, but I knew I wanted to be called to a "missions-life." I saw families go to Africa, I saw old missionaries come off the field after decades of service and share their testimony of adventures. I gave part of my weekly allowance to missions in

Sunday school, and I prayed for missionaries I had never met. Decades later when I choose a career as a dental assistant and hearing of the opportunities to go on dental missions, the light went on and I asked the Lord to send me. Many years went by as the Lord prepared me and gave me a deeper understanding of the Great Commission and the goals for missionaries.

Mark 12:29-31 says: Jesus answered him, .... *And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.* 'This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: *You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*' There is no other commandment greater than these."

These verses are the greatest goal in the life of the missionary minded. This takes humility, courage, trust, and most importantly, death to self. Loving God fully and others as ourselves is also the missionary's highest call—requiring prayer, gratitude and obedience. Relying on the power of the Holy Spirit, we get to be Christ's witnesses wherever He calls us to serve Him. In doing this, we see Acts 1:8 lived out today in that power: *"You shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."*

So, let's ask ourselves: Where and in what ways is God leading me to proclaim and show the gospel?

Where is my Jerusalem? Places close by.

Where is my Judea? Places with a short travel distance. Where is my Samaria? Those who are in great need.

Where is the (my) end of the earth?

After more than 35 short term missions around the globe and a 7-year mission's life in Europe, my sincere encouragement to you is this—humbly bring yourself before the Maker, submit to Him, allow Him to prepare your heart to send you: *"for so the Lord has commanded us: I have set you as a light to the Gentiles, that you should be for salvation to the ends of the earth"* (Acts 13:47).

Lord, send me.