

Sunday, August 31, 2008  
Living Hope EFC

Art Smith

Refocusing on The Mission! Luke

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**I was at a Church Health Conference last Wednesday.**

- The speaker began with a couple provocative thoughts:
- 1: IF all you're only concerned about is building a *church*, your vision is too small. We need to start a *movement* to reach our community. Christianity – is a movement. We're not called to start another organization, but to build God's Family
- 2: Why would I want to come to your church?

**ILLUS:** Bridge on the River Kwai; Ravi Zacharias,

The movie/ book, *Bridge on the River Kwai*, takes place during WW 2.

Japanese-held prisoners of war were put to work building a bridge that would link the Japanese rail system all the way to Burma and pour more firepower into that theater of warfare. Building that bridge was a vital step in ensuring Japan's military success.

The bridge could be devastating to Allied efforts.

The prisoners of war ordered to do the work would actually be aiding their own defeat.

British prisoner Colonel Nichol森 agreed to organize the project but only under the Geneva Convention Pact, which demanded that officers *not* be forced to do manual labor.

Finally, the Japanese commander recognized he must give in to Nichol森's demands if the bridge would be built on time.

Nichol森 guaranteed the bridge ready in time, and set out with a passion to make it the *best* bridge ever built. He became obsessed with proving British engineering brilliance in the bridge. He even changed the site to make it sturdier and harder for enemy sighting.

The soldiers and officers under Nichol森's authority were completely confounded. They wondered if he'd gone crazy, and ultimately plotted to destroy the bridge.

Ravi Zacharias comments: "This is a classic illustration of a man who got lost in a sublime principle in which he (Colonel Nichol森) won a small personal battle (officer's respect) but lost sight of the bigger war." – *Deliver us from Evil*, 88

Q: As a church, what is **our** greater calling? Mission?

- Q: What are the lesser ideas, projects, *bridges*, that we can become so consumed with that we defeat our mission?  
-Personal preferences? Building location? \$?
- Q: Why would people want to come to your church?

Vignettes from Luke that help us rethink Jesus/ our Mission
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1 – Luke 4:1-13. The Temptation.

Jesus was tired, hungry, in a set of new & difficult circumstances.

**Vs.3:** The Question: **Who are you?** (Are you God, or a man/ servant?)

- Jesus' answer (v.4) is a quote based on **Deut.8:3**.
- In Deut. 8, Moses had just spoken about God providing manna.

- Purpose of the wilderness test: "To know...your heart." Dt.8:1-2.

**POINT: V.8. Q: Who are we worshipping?** Self interest project...or God?

- What lesser project, issue, idea, preference, will get us off track?

In the midst of the tests to move from stage to stage in our mission, God will test our hearts – to see how we respond, Who we will serve?

If we are consumed with our own *bridge*, we're destroying the Mission.

**Jesus:** "It is not about me, but God!" His will & Mission!

- It is not about **us!** My success, way. We are *servants*, not the *Master*

## 2 – Luke 4:14-30. The Mission Clarified.

Jesus clarified His Mission – from Scripture: Isaiah 61:1-2.

- **Q:** Who & what defined Jesus' Mission? V.18-19.
- **Q:** How does His Mission define our Mission?
- **Q:** Are we accomplishing our Mission, or sidetracked with lesser things? Are we setting prisoners free? Helping blind to see?
- **Q:** How was Jesus Mission received? V.22, V.28.

**POINT:** Vs.24-27 Jesus said, "God's people have never responded well to God's Mission." Vs.28 – They proved His statement true.

- *God's Mission always creates resistance.*
- **Q: Are you resisting the Mission, or contributing to it?**

## 3 – Luke 4:38-44. A Balance of Care and Cause.

Jesus stayed involved with individuals while forwarding the movement.

- **This is the challenge of us all! Care for one another, & reaching out.**
  - The Great Command & Commission – drive us outward.
  - The Second Greatest Command – draws us inward, together.
  - *BALANCE – is crucial.* Forget either, & you destroy the Mission!
  - The people wanted Jesus to stay in their town; build His church there. He couldn't.
- Vs.43 – "I came to advance a movement. Not just start a church."

**POINT:** We must do both!

## 4 – Luke 5:1-10. The Call to Commitment & Enlistment in Mission.

Jesus called the disciples to commitment – 1-1 ½ yrs *after* knowing Him.

- John 1:29-4:54 took place between Luke 4:13 & 14.
- The disciples had met Jesus first in **John 1:29**. See 1:35f.
- Review their experiences of **John 1-4**.

**LUKE 5 – NOTE the odd setting!** The disciples are back home, fishing???

- They had started, experienced some high times, amazing things, and some troubling resistance & behaviors of Jesus (Jn.2:15; 4:27).
- What might He do next? He was not what they had expected!
- *Who could say what they'd experience in the future?*
- It seems they lost a little of their initial steam. Maybe discouraged?

Jesus now comes to **re-recruit** them to the Mission.

- **Q: What makes them re-enlist?** Vs.5, 8-11!
- *Because He said so!* Because of who He is, and because He called!
- **FAITH!** IN CHRIST AND HIS WORD, PROMISE- Vs.10.

**Q: What is our motivation to plant a church in North Fort Collins?**

- To build a bridge that will prove "British engineering brilliance?"
- Prove – the value of modern church planting techniques?

- To prove our worth? To get praise from the district as a “church planter?” Prove that our calling/ vision was from God?
- To build a church that will finally meet *my* needs? Be like I want it?

**ONLY one motive finally passes:** “Because You say so Lord!”  
The mark of a true disciple is “Because You say so Lord!”

**Q: What is your enlistment status? Why?**

- Who are we worshipping? (4:8)
- **Q:** Are you resisting the Mission from Jesus or contributing to it?
- **Q:** Are you caring for one another, & reaching out.
- **Q:** *What is our motivation to plant a church in North Fort Collins?*
- ONLY one motive finally passes: “Because You say so Lord!”

FAITH IN CHRIST & HIS MISSION: Romans 4:16-22

God made a promise to Abraham – in Gen.12:1-3

- **Q:** What was the promise? How old was he? How many kids?
- At 75 there may have been hope – for a son, humanly.
- Gen.15:1-2, 5. “As the stars, so...” At age 80, 85, 90 ?
- How much did Abraham have to go on? More wrinkles...
- Humanly, every year wrote failure to the *probabilities*.
- At 99, what did Abr & Sarah have to contribute to God's promise?

**Rom.4:18-22!**

All hope, humanly, was gone! How do we usually respond?

- “What’s the use?” We check out our track record, our past, our circumstances, human possibilities...and we give in or quit.
- **That is not living by FAITH, but by PROBABILITY.**
- **Q: Why does God want us to live by faith?**
- **Q:** When Isaac (Laughter) was finally born, Who did it? 4:17.
- **Q:** Do you believe God still brings life out of death? (v.17) Calls things that are not, as though they are?

**Heb.11:39** - Are you willing to enlist in the Mission – even if you don’t see it completed in your lifetime? BUT – “**Because He said so?**”

- **Q:** Do you have the faith of Abraham?
- **Q:** Can you continue “against all hope,” yet believing God? Fully persuaded that God has power to do what He has promised?

Art,

The church was Peninsula Bible Church in Paulo Alto, CA. In 1980, I asked Bob Smith (Ray Stedman's co-pastor) how their church grew to 1,500 people (rare back then). He said, "It was easy. **We grew one person per week for 1,500 weeks.**" That represented the 30 years Stedman was there. The point of the story is that there is no substitute for hard, consistent, long-term ministry. As George Sweeting used to say when I was a student at Moody, "It's always too soon to quit."

Blessings,  
Phil Spry