

Mahon Dispatch #11 - 02.22.08 The Three Fold Cord of Missions

In this dispatch...

The Three Fold Cord

I. Those Who Pray

II. Those Who Give

III. Those Who Go

IV. Application

V. Prayer Requests: As you pray over the request, please claim the truths found in the passage as it pertains to our ministry...

A. That God would continue to raise up prayer warriors

Romans 15:30

30 Now I urge you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God for me,

1 Timothy 2:1-4

1 First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men,

2 for kings and all who are in authority, in order that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity.

3 This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior,

4 who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

B. That those who pray would be faithful

Colossians 4:2-4

2 Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving;

3 praying at the same time for us as well, that God may open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned;

4 in order that I may make it clear in the way I ought to speak.

C. That God would continue to raise up support team members

3 John 1:7-8

7 For they went out for the sake of the Name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles.

8 Therefore we ought to support such men, that we may be fellow workers with the truth.

D. That those who give would be faithful

2 Corinthians 8:10-14

10 And I give my opinion in this matter, for this is to your advantage, who were the first to begin a year ago not only to do this, but also to desire to do it.

11 But now finish doing it also; that just as there was the readiness to desire it, so there may be also the completion of it by your ability.

12 For if the readiness is present, it is acceptable according to what a man has, not according to what he does not have.

13 For this is not for the ease of others and for your affliction, but by way of equality--

14 at this present time your abundance being a supply for their want, that their abundance also may become a supply for your want, that there may be equality;

2 Corinthians 9:5-8

5 So I thought it necessary to urge the brethren that they would go on ahead to you and arrange beforehand your previously promised bountiful gift, that the same might be ready as a bountiful gift, and not affected by covetousness.

6 Now this I say, he who sows sparingly shall also reap sparingly; and he who sows bountifully shall also reap bountifully.

7 Let each one do just as he has purposed in his heart; not grudgingly or under compulsion; for God loves a cheerful giver.

8 And God is able to make all grace abound to you, that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed;

- E. That God would continue to raise up teams of men to go with us to teach and preach the holy, eternal, inerrant, written Word of God**

Isaiah 6:7-8

7 And he touched my mouth with it and said, "Behold, this has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away, and your sin is forgiven."

8 Then I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?" Then I said, "Here am I. Send me!"

Acts 16:9-10

9 ...a certain man of Macedonia was standing and appealing to him, and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us."

10 And... immediately we sought to go into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

- F. That we would be found to be faithful as we labor in the harvest fields of the world**

2 Corinthians 4:1-7

1 Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we received mercy, we do not lose heart,

2 but we have renounced the things hidden because of shame, not walking in craftiness or adulterating the word of God, but by the manifestation of truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

3 And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing,

4 *in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.*

5 *For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus' sake.*

6 *For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.*

7 *But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the surpassing greatness of the power may be of God and not from ourselves;*

Dear Prayer Warriors,

As in the days of Paul, so it is today, it is an age of short term missions. In saying this I am not at all suggesting or promoting the replacement of long term missionaries, just pointing out that the periods when God opens the door to laymen to serve on a short term basis are truly unique to history and should not be taken lightly. As I have mentioned before it is with some sense of foreboding that I witness this unique opportunity being filled by teenagers and college coeds. All too often, if adults do go they generally chaperone, or build structures or meet physical needs or help with children's programs. The vast majority of short term teaching and evangelism on the mission field is being carried out by our youth. This modern Protestant "children's Crusade" flies in the face of both church history and biblical doctrine. God has always looked to mature adult men to be the foot soldiers in the body of Christ and things have not changed in the 21 century. I cannot think of one example in the book of Acts of the church sending out children, teenagers or young single men and women to do the hard and difficult work of foreign missions. This is not to say they do not accomplish much for the work of the gospel, it is simply to point out that both biblically and historically the church has not sent out children when there were men to do the work.

Dr. Ray Tallman my Missions Professor at Moody Bible Institute pointed out to me that there were four factors at work which made short term missions possible in Paul's day

1. The Roman Roads and Shipping Lanes
2. The Roman coinage and prosperity of the period
3. Roman citizenship
4. The Roman language - Latin (and the prevalence of Greek)

Not for over 1,700 years have all four of these factors converged yet as we enter the 21st Century we seem them once again in place.

1. International air travel
2. The unimaginable prosperity of America and the US Dollar
3. US Citizenship

4. The English Language

We live in a unique age when mature Christian men in churches throughout America can serve teaching and preaching the Word of God in the harvest fields of the world. A grown man can get on an airplane today, land within a matter of hours (or at the most a day) in virtually any country of the world and that very same day be ministering the gospel and teaching the Bible. We must not be found wanting and we must not relegate this to women and children while we busy ourselves with our toys. The period of short term missions quickly passed in the early church and there is no guarantee that it will remain long in our age. There are those who considered going to Belarus - now Belarus is closed. There are those who considered going to Kenya - will Kenya be open next year? Only God knows.

Yet not all are called to go as a lifestyle. Yet God in His goodness has so ordered missions that no one person can "do it all". God has made provision for all to be involved. The question then is not "Should I be involved in missions?" but rather, "How is God calling me to be involved in missions?" Truly, in the New Covenant, "Every man is a missionary" it simply depends upon how, not if.

A good friend of mine and former missionary to Africa, Mark Lewis often quotes William Carey, the father of modern missions, "If you will hold the rope, I will go down to the pit of Hell and bring them out." This quote is taken from the minutes of his mission board, just days before he departed to await the sailing of the ship that would take him to India. (William Carey by S. Pearce Carey Pg 108)

Ecclesiastes 4:12 states eloquently, "*And if one can overpower him who is alone, two can resist him. A cord of three strands is not quickly torn apart.*" This rope which the church holds during this age of modern missions is made up of Three Strands - **Those who Pray; Those who Give; Those who Go.**

Those Who Pray -

I can remember my Junior year of High School as a young Christian doing a report on Uganda for a world history project. I was so moved by the plight of this country that I began to pray for it every day. I wrote the Baptist Mission Board and they sent me the name of a mission from Uganda and I would write him and he would write me back. I would receive this beat up, blue, international mailing letter with many stamps and smudges. I would open it up and there in the faded print of a manual typewriter would be a letter from my missionary. "Dear John, As I type this letter by the gas light I can hear a leopard calling in the dark. Thank you so much for praying. Here are a few more requests..." Oh the joy of getting on my knees, there by my bed, in Houston,

Texas and praying for this missionary and Uganda. Oh the greater joy some 35 years later, when God made it possible to preach and teach the holy, inerrant, eternal, written Word of God at the University of Kampala in Uganda.

Those who pray are helping in the ministry as if they were actually there.

On the ministry trip to Uganda mentioned above I had an allergic reaction to my malaria medication which found me lying in the dirt on the side of a rural road in Uganda with my heart stopping and starting. When I returned home Eleanor asked me if anything unusual had happened. It seems Celia Williams, wife of William Williams had woken up at 4 a.m. with a burden to pray for me. She had gotten William out of bed and they had prayed. Eleanor had had the same experience and related this to Celia who had called that very morning to see if anything had happened. If you work the time zones, while I was lying in the dust in rural Uganda, my heart stopping and starting, God was waking my wife and my prayer warriors to sustain me. I praise God for Eleanor, Celia and those who sustain this ministry thought their prayers.

II Corinthians 1:11 you also joining in helping us through your prayers, that thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for the favor bestowed upon us through the prayers of many.

Romans 15:30 Now I urge you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God for me,

We are commanded by God to engage in this ministry of intercession -

After getting involved with the Navigators at the University of Texas I was encouraged by Sam Clark, missionary to Mexico, to start a prayer notebook. One important section of this notebook is my intercession section. In addition to my family, here I have pictures of friends, ministers and missionaries throughout the world for whom I pray daily.

Ephesians 6:18 With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints,

Colossians 4:2 & 3 Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving; praying at the same time for us as well, that God may open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned;

Paul relied upon the intercessions of his team to sustain him in the ministry

Often while on mission trips we are at the point of despair and we remind each other that our prayer warriors are faithfully praying. This thought came to mind as the little Toyota I was in had become lodged under a 18 wheel Texaco gas truck and we were being dragged along. Eleanor reminded me of this one year when we were stuck in "No Man's Land" between Belarus and Lithuania, in

a blinding snow storm. Every time we cross the border, every time we wait to see if that last box of Bibles and aid will come off the conveyor belt, every time we are stopped at a police check point, we remind ourselves, "Our prayer warriors are praying."

*Philippians 1:9 For I know that this shall turn out for my deliverance through your prayers and the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,
II Thessalonians 3:1 Finally, brethren, pray for us that the word of the Lord may spread rapidly and be glorified, just as it did also with you;
Philemon 1:22 And at the same time also prepare me a lodging; for I hope that through your prayers I shall be given to you.*

Those Who Give

I can remember my first student conference. A missionary, Tom Eynon, was being sent to Taiwan and then on to Hong Kong. An appeal was made for support. I had worked hard all summer, my college was paid for with a little left over. I knew if I made a pledge I would have to take a job at school, something I had worked hard at to avoid. However the chance to be involved in the next mission wave to China could not be passed up. I remember how important it was for me in my Christian life to write out that check every month and send it in for Tom and his ministry in Taiwan. Now I was not just praying for missionaries, I was actively participating in their material needs. The letter Tom sent telling how my small gift was reaching the Chinese was a great encouragement and stimulus to me in my Christian life as a University student. It caused me to begin looking at international students on campus in a new way and I began to pray for African and Chinese students to whom I might witness and minister.

As in prayer, those who give become co-laborers in the ministry -

II John 1:6 - 8 and they bear witness to your love before the church; and you will do well to send them on their way in a manner worthy of God. For they went out for the sake of the Name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles. Therefore we ought to support such men, that we may be fellow workers with the truth.

Did you ever feel that life passed you by? Perhaps you received Christ late, perhaps you have family constraints, perhaps you have health constraints, perhaps you are not gifted nor called. You can still go. Your checkbook or your debit card is your passport to world missions. My good friend Sheldon Hdogson reminds me of this. I once mentioned to Sheldon that he should join me on a mission trip. Sheldon in turn reminded me that he had been on every mission trip I had ever taken since our first Bible study. He reminded me of his prayers and gifts. You know, I should listen more carefully to my own sermons

because that is exactly right. By giving and praying Sheldon is as much a part of our mission work as we are. In God's eyes each of these contributions is equal. They require equal diligence, equal sacrifice and they reap equal rewards.

By giving we are adding an international element to our spiritual portfolio - *Matthew 6:20 & 21 "But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."*

Paul relied on this ministry - *Philippians 4:18 "But I have received everything in full, and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God."*

We participate in giving through our church... *Philippians 4:15-16 "And you yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone; for even in Thessalonica you sent a gift more than once for my needs."*

We participate in giving to individual missionaries... *Philemon 1:1 "Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, to Philemon our beloved brother and fellow worker,"*
Philemon:7 "For I have come to have much joy and comfort in your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you, brother."
Philemon 1:22 "And at the same time also prepare me a lodging; for I hope that through your prayers I shall be given to you."

Those Who Go -

We can all go. You can go physically like Eleanor and I - but that is not always God's will. Often family, health, responsibilities and circumstances close this door to some. Yet we can still all go. We can go through prayer and we can go through our gifts. This is not simply motivational exaggeration. God the Holy Spirit has no need of such tactics, nor would I stoop to this. Rather it is the clear teaching of the Word of God. We see this illustrated in David's army. Those who went out to battle and those who kept the supply lines open were to share equally. They were to share equally in the responsibilities and they were to share equally in the rewards.

I Samuel 30:22-25

22 Then all the wicked and worthless men among those who went with David answered and said, "Because they did not go with us, we will not give them any of the spoil that we have recovered, except to every man his wife and his children, that they may lead them away and depart."

23 *Then David said, "You must not do so, my brothers, with what the LORD has given us, who has kept us and delivered into our hand the band that came against us.*

24 *"And who will listen to you in this matter? For as his share is who goes down to the battle, so shall his share be who stays by the baggage; they shall share alike."*

25 *And so it has been from that day forward, that he made it a statute and an ordinance for Israel to this day.*

This is true today. Those who Go; Those who Pray and Those who Give all share equally. They share equally in the responsibilities. They share equally in the faithfulness. They share equally in the sacrifices. And they share equally in the rewards. That is why God the Holy Spirit assures us in *Philippians 4:17* ***"Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit which increases to your account."***

As always we minister together.

We who have gone down into the pit minister with you our rope holders.

By the Grace of God

And

By your faithful and sacrificial prayers and gifts.

By His mercy,

II Corinthians 4:1

John and Eleanor Mahon

Laboring side by side in the harvest fields of the world with those who pray and those who give.