

## Living as Citizens of Heaven – Part 7

### Ministry Partnerships – Phil. 2:19-30

Crosspoint – Dave Spooner – July 14<sup>th</sup>, 2024

#### Intro:

- If you are around Crosspoint for a while, you will find out that missions is a really big deal for us because it is a really big deal for God. We know this from the Abrahamic Covenant, to John 3:16, to the Great Commission, to the book of Acts, to the epistles, to the book of Revelation, where we see a scene of “a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, ‘Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!’”(Rev 7:9-10 ESV)
- Missions is such a big deal around here that it is woven into the very DNA of this church, as evidenced in our purpose statement: “We exist to bring about the obedience of faith, for the sake of His name, **among all the nations.**” It is evidenced by our intentional giving to missions out of our budget at 10% plus, with a desire to always give more. This is evidenced by our sending and supporting long-term missionaries and regularly sending short-term teams. This is evidenced by our regularly taking time out of our Sunday sermons to highlight missionaries and mission efforts. This is evidenced by hosting and partnering with a Myanmar congregation in this building. It is evidenced by money, time, and effort in our “welcome core” to bring refugee families here. This is evidenced by our mission’s wall and our missionary lists. This is evidenced by our prayers during our Sunday services and our weekly prayer meetings. It is evidenced by our “Go Team,” which focuses on missionary care and concerns. May we always have this heart, and may it continue to grow stronger with greater reach and effectiveness.
- As we turn to our passage today, which starts in Philippians 2:19, I want to remember that Paul has been instructing us as to how we are to live as citizens of heaven. He has used the life of Jesus Christ as our primary example to follow, that we are to have the same “mindset” of Jesus Christ, and he has given us practical ways to live this out, such as doing everything without complaining or arguing. In today’s passage, Paul gives us two more examples of his ministry partners for us to consider as examples as well. He will also go on later to use his life as an example.
- There are three primary things that I want you to consider this morning. The first is, who are the people that we should send as our missionaries and messengers, and how we can become one of them? The second is how should we practically partner with our missionaries? The third is why should we partner with our missionaries? I hope to provide not just what to do but why we are to do this so that our hearts will be continually and completely transformed into the heart of God as we seek His glory and reward.

#### Who do we send?

#### Phil 2:19-20 NIV

**I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you. 20 I have no one else like him, who will show genuine concern for your welfare.**

*Send people who show genuine concern for the people*

- Timothy was a young man who Paul met in a city called Lystra on one of his missionary journeys. Timothy, a disciple of Jesus, was of mixed heritage and was well spoken of by the

believers there. Paul asked Timothy to join him on his mission, which Timothy did (see Acts 16:1-5). Paul was now in prison in Rome, and Timothy, his partner, was still with him. Paul wanted to send him out to the church in Philippi to help care for them. Paul had no one else like him and wanted to send Timothy to Philippi because Paul genuinely cared for the Philippians.

- In describing Timothy's character, Paul said that Timothy "will show genuine concern for your welfare." He was not a "missionary tourist" who was curious to see and experience things and do some "good deeds." This is someone who was genuinely concerned for their welfare.
- "Genuine concern" is shown by thinking about what is most needed and how to meet those needs. It means to follow up, show support, and have continual connection. It means being relationally and emotionally involved and invested. It means self-sacrifice and intentionally meeting the needs of another. You take on their burdens and issues as your own. There is not an "us-they" mentality but an "us" mentality. Genuine concern is shown by going, and giving, and getting involved and becoming intermeshed. Look to send people who show genuine concern for the welfare of others.

### **Phil 2:21 NIV**

**For everyone looks out for their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ.**

*Send people who look out for the interests of Jesus Christ*

- Everyone looks out for their own interests, but not everyone looks out for the interests of Jesus Christ. Now, is it wrong to look out for your own interests? No, it is not wrong to do that. As a matter of fact, Paul told us in the beginning of the chapter to look out for our own interests. We do have responsibilities and needs that must be attended to. However, we not to just look out for our own interests, but we are to also look out to the interests of others (Phil 2:4) and the interests of Jesus Christ.
- Don't limit your interest to only yourself. If all the "arrows" of your life point to you, if you only get involved for what is in it for you, you are a "black hole," not a "shining light." Show genuine concern about the concerns of others and be genuinely concerned about the interest of Jesus Christ. What is Jesus focused on? What are His interests? I know for a fact that His concern is for our neighbors and for the nations. I know His interests are much broader than yours. Have you ever asked God to show you what He is most interested in and then joined Him in His concerns and mission? Become a person like this. Pray this way. Focus this way. Work this way. Send people who are looking to the interests of Jesus Christ.

### **Phil 2:22-24 NIV**

**But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel. 23 I hope, therefore, to send him as soon as I see how things go with me. 24 And I am confident in the Lord that I myself will come soon.**

*Send people who have proved themselves*

- You don't send just anyone or everyone. Send people who have a proven track record, and who have been vetted. People who have proven characteristics. And these are the characteristics to be looking for.
  - "As a son with his father" – this is a person who is connected to others by love and honor, who is loyal, self-sacrificing, in it for the long-term, involved, etc.

- “Served with me in the work of the gospel” – are they a servant? Do they serve others? Do they do what is asked of them? Are they teachable and willing to do what needs to be done, no matter what it is? And do they work? Do they apply energy and effort? Do they focus and finish what they started? Do they do it in a timely and skillful manner? Do they work, and work hard and focused and consistent?
- We are to send people who are like this and have proven themselves in this way.

## **How should we partner?**

### **Phil 2:25 NIV**

**But I think it is necessary to send back to you Epaphroditus, my brother, co-worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger, whom you sent to take care of my needs.**

#### *Take care of the needs of our missionaries*

- When Paul names Epaphroditus, he also layers on other titles and characteristics, such as he is “my brother, co-worker, and fellow soldier” along with their messenger. This is not a weak and wimpy guy. He is someone who Paul considers as a brother. There is genuine love and respect for each other. This person is a co-worker, given to do the work alongside Paul as they serve together like “fellow soldiers,” bearing the burden together to accomplish the task. They are in it together, and they give their lives for others.
- His other role is to be a “messenger,” one who carries things back and forth from one party to another. If you need a biblical basis for short-term missions, I present to you the example of Epaphroditus who was sent to “take care” of Paul’s (the long-term missionary) needs.
- We should partner with our missionaries by taking care of their needs. This is what they need to continue to minister in their context. These are things like living expenses, travel expenses, medical care, etc. Take care of the needs of the missionaries themselves. Know their needs and send them money and aid. In this instance, Paul needed to pay his expenses. He had to pay for his imprisonment and for all his needs. He could not do so on his own. He needed financial help and support. \*It is also good to note that Paul chose to be a “tentmaker,” someone who can and chooses to work to support their own needs as they minister to others (see 1 Thess. 2:9, 2 Thess. 3:7-8, Acts 18:2-3, 1 Cor 9:6, 11-12, 18, 2 Cor 11:7).

### **Phil 2:26-30a NIV**

**For he longs for all of you and is distressed because you heard he was ill. 27 Indeed he was ill, and almost died. But God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, to spare me sorrow upon sorrow. 28 Therefore I am all the more eager to send him, so that when you see him again you may be glad and I may have less anxiety. 29 So then, welcome him in the Lord with great joy, and honor people like him, 30 because he almost died for the work of Christ.**

#### *Welcome and honor our missionaries*

- Our missionaries have taken on the interests of Christ Jesus and have answered the call to minister to the nations of the world. It is, at times, daunting, dangerous, and depressing. There are challenges on all sides, both from within and without. They give their lives and sometimes risk their lives in the work of Christ.
- When we see them, they should be welcomed with joy! They should be celebrated, included, taken care of, and honored. Often, they feel like second-class citizens or the “weird ones” who are out of place or marginalized. This should never be the case. If you see them in their

missionary context, you will see them in a different light, and most often, it is a glorious light as they are the hands, feet, and heart of Jesus.

- We support them by giving them places of honor, by welcoming them into our homes as honored guests, by meeting their needs. They empty their lives for others, and after missionaries come to us, they should leave with their hearts and pockets full. Let's be a church that abundantly does this. May God expand our hearts and our giving and going capacity.

### **Phil 2:30b NIV**

**He risked his life to make up for the help you yourselves could not give me.**

#### Provide help to our missionaries

- This is why we send short-term teams. We send people on our behalf to provide help that we can't give them. Not all of us can go. Not all of us should go. But we should send people to help them in their calling. To encourage and strengthen them and to bless them by providing funds and items for their ministries. To provide expertise and experience they don't have. To join them in the work of the ministry. To let them know they are not forgotten and not alone. To partner and participate with them in the interests of Jesus Christ.

### Why should we partner with missionaries?

- At the end of this letter to the Philippians, Paul wrote this:

### **Phil 4:14-19 NIV**

**Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles. 15 Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only; 16 for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid more than once when I was in need. 17 Not that I desire your gifts; what I desire is that more be credited to your account. 18 I have received full payment and have more than enough. I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God.**

- Know it is good for us to share in the troubles of our missionaries. It is good for us. Let that sink in. This gives us perspective; as we loosen our grip on our stuff, it loosens its grip on us. It is good for our soul to do this.
- The message of the gospel is to be spread to the nations. We are working with God to make sure all people and all people groups will be around the throne of God. True transformation happens when God's people do God's work. People matter to God. The nations matter to God. This is an expression of His goodness, which is His glory.
- Know that when you give these things and partner with others in the work of God, these gifts are *credited to your eternal account*. You are not taking any of this stuff with you, so the wisest and the best thing for us to do is to invest in our eternal "retirement account." Don't be so short-sighted and consumed by this world; there is so much, much, much more. Jesus told us to "lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven" (Matt. 6:19 – 21). This is not a suggestion but a command. And the more you do, the greater the impact and reward.
- Meeting the needs of our missionaries, honoring them, and helping them is a fragrant offering to God, it is an accepted sacrifice (and it is a sacrifice) and is pleasing to God. As citizens of heaven, the best thing we can do with our one and only life is to give it to glorify and please God.

## **Conclusion**

- We are going to pray for those who are going on this trip and for Holly, who is already there. We will pray for the Dellamaters and the mission that God has called them and others to.
- I am asking you to live this message. Be involved in what we are doing here. Join the welcome core, care for those who are coming, teach ESL between our services or serve on our GO team. Open your heart and home to missionaries. Welcome and honor them, genially care for them, and care for those they work with. Give your finances, consider going on short-term trips, and consider going long-term. Pray for them, and pray for us as a congregation that we have the heart of God for the nations. Pray that there will be a flood of generosity and sacrificial giving in the interests of Christ.
- Grab a list of our missionaries, get to know them, and intentionally and repeatedly pray for them. (This list and pictures are also at the back of our directory along with a list on the next page.) Grab a bookmark and use it to remind yourself of them and to pray.

## **Benediction**

*Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;  
Praise Him all creatures here below;  
Praise Him above ye heav'nly host;  
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.  
Amen.*

## **Questions for Growth Groups**

- What about this message stood out to you?
- What do you think about missions and missionaries?
- What are you going to commit to do because of this message?

## International Missions

**Brian & Heather Dellamater (Kijani Farm, Kenya - GOI)**

<https://globaloutreach.org/giving/missionary-details/brian-and-heather-dellamater>

**Every Day Ministries (Dominican Republic)**

<https://www.everydayministries.com>

**Ben & Jeana Hansen (Modern Day Missions)**

<https://team.org>

**Tim & Martha Hatch (Closed Country - TEAM)**

<https://team.org>

**Jeff & Sarah Johnson (CRU)**

<https://www.cru.org/> ,

<https://give.cru.org/0959083>

**John & Elaine Mehn (Asia - Converge)**

<https://converge.org/missionary/john-elaine-mehn>

**Jeff & Marilee Nelson (Latin America - OCI)**

<https://www.onechallenge.org>

**Philadelphia Ministries (Central America, Dan & Luz Cromer)**

<https://philadelphiaministries.net>

**Todd & Emeris Rhines (Kijani Farm, Kenya - GOI)**

<https://globaloutreach.org/giving/missionary-details/todd-and-emeris-rhines>

**Ripe For Harvest (Ukraine & Russia, Dennis & Lydia Bowen)**

<https://ripeforharvest.org/?s=bowen>

**Matt & Sara Titus (Czech Republic)**

<https://team.org>

**Bill & Carol Turner (Tennessee)**

<https://team.org>

## National Missions

**Dave & Joscey Brecheisen (Chicago - One Collective)**

<https://www.onecollective.org>

**Jill Bryan (JillyBean)**

<https://chaplainjillbryan.org/#>

**Converge MidAmerica**

<https://convergemidamerica.org>

**Gospel Coalition**

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org>

## Local & Other Missions

**Burmese / Refugee Ministry**

<https://www.facebook.com/ROCKFORDCMC>

**Child Evangelism Fellowship**

<https://www.cefonline.com>

**Fish-Abled Foundation**

<https://www.fishabled.com>

**Intervarsity Christian Fellowship**

<https://intervarsity.org>

**Life Decisions**

<https://www.lifedecisions.net>

**One Body Collaboratives**

<https://www.onebodycollaboratives.org>

**Pregnancy Care Center of Rockford**

<https://thepregnancycarecenter.org>

**Rock House Kids**

<https://rockhousekids.org>

**Rockford Rescue Mission**

<https://www.rockfordrescuemission.org>

**Short Term Missions**

**Stateline Youth For Christ**

<https://www.statelineyfc.org>