

Developing a Sending Base – The Moravian Example

In no other way can we so effectively bring the suffering Savior the reward of his passion as by missionary labor, whether we go ourselves or enable others to go.⁸

The development of a strong sending base is a key to the missionary's success. It was the founder of McDonald's restaurant that said, "None of us is as great as all of us". This is a solid Christian principle that is difficult in practice, especially for those of us from individualistic western churches. In essence, those of us who take the Gospel to unreached nations carry with us the DNA of the church from which we are sent. There are exceptions to every rule, but most of the time this is true.

Many of my (Norm) thoughts come from Andrew Murray's book called, *Key to the Missionary Problem*.⁹ Anything by Andrew Murray is worth reading. His second chapter presents an historic account of the Moravian Church. The Moravians are best remembered for their prayer meeting that lasted for over 100 years, but what fewer people realize are the reasons for that prayer meeting and the strength that fueled such a meeting. Imagine if modern churches sent two missionaries for every 58 church members. This was the Moravian's church member to missionary ratio! There are several characteristics that helped to give the Moravian church momentum to go beyond the norm.

What Gave the Moravian Church Momentum?

- Love for the Lord – They had a love for the Lord that they might reward Him for His suffering. It is important as Christians to meditate on the cost Christ paid for the salvation of sinners. Mel Gibson's film, "The Passion of the Christ," clearly portrays the suffering the Lord went through. This was the hallmark of the Moravian Church.

"While acknowledging the supreme authority of the great commission, the Moravian Brethren have always emphasized as their chief incentive

8

⁹ Andrew Murray, *Key to the Missionary Problem*

the inspiring truth from Isaiah 53:10–12: making our Lord’s suffering the spur to all their activity. From that prophecy, they drew the missionary battle cry, ‘to win for the Lamb who was slain the reward for His suffering.’”¹⁰ They believed the best way to reward Him was by bringing souls to Him. The first principle of importance is to see that there was a joined passion for the love of the Lord by both senders and the sent.

“Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him” (John 14:21–22).

- Discipline – Discipline was characteristic of the church. Character and discipline go hand and hand. You cannot have good character without strict discipline. Discipline and character, as exhibited by Jesus Christ, are the foundation on which ministry abilities must rest. A person may have gifts and the faith for great anointing, but if these rest on a flimsy foundation, sooner or later there will be a collapse. History testifies to this truth.

Discipline goes beyond having mental knowledge. If knowledge could save the world, the world would already have been saved. Knowledge is just theory, but disciplined actions are theory in practice. It is often difficult to practice what we know in our minds. When we began to envision the Elijah Company as a mentorship for missionaries, we felt a tremble in our hearts. This is because we were consciously deciding to balance our time standing behind a lectern teaching truth with standing in an apostolic position saying, “Follow me even as I follow Christ.” Teaching by example is difficult, as it requires a disciplined walk. “And what was their discipline? In every detail of their lives – in business, pleasure, in Christian service, in civil duties – they took the Sermon on the Mount as a lamp to their feet.”¹¹

“But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not found in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me” (I Corinthians 15:10).

- Unity – Unity was an absolute necessity. This is an old message that seems too simple to keep repeating, yet so slowly takes hold of our hearts. There is the kind of unity that says, “We accept those who are dif-

¹⁰ 44.

¹¹ 46.

ferent, but we will not work with them.” Or more subtly, “We accept them but will not think it wrong to not work with them.” There are two things here that we need to see. The first is that the differences between us are the very things we need in order to be complete. My wife and I are as opposite in temperament as any couple could ever be, yet we perfectly complement each other. We need each other, and we would be unbalanced without each other.

As the Church in the non-evangelized world continues to grow, they will begin to outshine their parent missionary congregations in certain areas because the treasures of understanding that can only be perceived through differing cultural lenses will begin to surface. This is already happening. This is also true of different denominations, races and personalities. One prism of truth, Christ, reflects multitudes of colors. The second thing we need to see is that Christlikeness, real Christlikeness, is most clearly seen in self-denial. We must have love and compassion for one another.

“If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interest of others” (Philippians 2:1-4).

- Inspiring Leadership – Their inspiring leadership gave strength to the movement. It seems that we often live in an irony. On one hand we live surrounded by highly motivated leaders, and on the other hand, our trust in leadership has been strained. Because of abuses in leadership even on the mission field, many are suspicious of those who would seek to lead. There are many sheep without shepherds. I asked one person, “Who is your spiritual leader?” The person replied, “Jesus.” Though this is Biblically correct, it is also true that He appoints shepherds for the flock.

Count Zinzendorf gave this kind of inspirational leadership through the love that he had for the church. His acceptance of even strangers, his selflessness and the great love for the Lord and people inspired others. We all need someone to help lead the way. Without saying much more about this, we'll focus on the following: Pray for your leaders. They have a hard job. Ask that they would be kept from temptations and evil and that their own level of inspiration would be kept high. Realize that the leaders of the home churches have much to do with the outcome of mis-

sions.

“Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, serving as overseers – not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock” (I Peter 5:2–3).

This is just a short account of the example of the Moravians. We did not write anything about their intense prayer life. They believed that the enemies of the Gospel took no time off day or night, so their prayer covering needed to have the same intensity. We encourage you to read the history of these great people.

The brethren promised, one by one, that they would be the Savior’s true followers. Self-will, self-love, disobedience – they bade these farewell. They would seek to be poor in spirit, no one was to seek his own profit before that of others.¹²