**WHAT WILL GOD DO TO ME IN THIS JOURNEY?**

Ephesians 2:1-7 “As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. But because of His great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions – it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with Him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages He might show the incomparable riches of His grace, expressed in His kindness to us in Christ Jesus”.

\*We were all in the same boat, controlled by sin, the objects of God’s wrath – what made the difference?

\*What is our position now (verse 6)?

\*What is our purpose now (verse 7)?

Romans 1:5-6 “Through Him and for His name’s sake, we received grace and apostleship to call people from among all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith. And you also are among those who are called to belong to Jesus Christ“.

\*What does it mean to receive grace? Apostleship?

\*Because of this grace and apostleship, what is our purpose now?

Our goal is to remove “missions trips” from our vocabulary and simply call these short-term ministry opportunities “faith trips”. Although this may seem like an issue in semantics, we strongly believe that the scope of a traditional missions trip is limited in breadth (only there for a week) as well as depth (not something we do on a regular basis). Our hope is to continue a re-education among believers that are already on a missionary journey. Romans 1:5 shows that we receive both grace and apostleship, that is, salvation and the role as a sent one of God. Geography doesn’t make us missionaries, grace does. We have been on a missionary journey ever since the moment of salvation. Any cross-cultural ministry opportunities, whether at home or abroad, simply weave into the fabric of our personal ministry, who we really are in Christ Jesus:

\*You love God deeply: *I dearly delight in knowing that God has brought me a personal message: He loves me without limit or condition regardless of my sinful nature. I know there are no boundaries that can hold back His power to bring me into relationship with Him through Jesus Christ.*

\*You serve others diligently: *As I give my body as a living sacrifice, only God can renew my mind, transform my focus to righteousness, and replace my natural tendency of rebellion with a desire to serve.*

Can you make the above your prayer during this faith trip to the Caribbean? Why not pray now the above two statements to God as your commitment to His purpose for your life during the week in the islands?

**WHERE DO I DRAW THE LINES?**

II Corinthians 5:16-21 “So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them. And He has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making His appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God”.

There are two words that must guide your journey of faith at every step: relationships and flexibility.

God has always been a God or relationships. From Genesis 1 to Revelation 21 the story of the Bible is one of relationships. Thus, the process of missions is not about a plan or program, but also about relationships. While evangelism can take place in a moment of time, the making of disciples requires both time and the existence of a relationship. The model of Christ with the disciples clearly shows this. While His call to them was but a moment in time, the molding of those called to be disciples was a process of daily walking and talking together, both teaching and fleshing out the principles taught taking place every day.

Missions is also not about geography nor construction either. If we build beautiful buildings but forget to spend time building people, then we have failed. The speed with which we complete the project or the procedures we use in completing it have very little value compared to the relationships we build during the project. Stopping to talk to someone from the islands is much more important than mixing another batch of cement or laying another block.

Without a doubt, the key to a great week in the islands is flexibility. We are not on our journey of faith to import our American ways. It is not important to us to do things the way we do in the U.S. What is important is that we stay flexible, ready to adapt to ever-changing situations in a country where that is a way of life. Island cultures don’t run on the clock and calendar…life is much more laid back. Things change quickly, however, and many times these changes provide us with a new and unexpected opportunity to serve God by serving others. It is vital that we stay in a ready mode, eager to move at the Spirit’s command, laying aside our own expectations.

\*What relationships do you hope to start during your faith trip to the Caribbean?

\*What relationships do you hope to deepen during this time?

\*What would you not do for Christ during this week?

\*How ready are you for God to use you (read I Samuel 3:1-10)?

**HOW WILL I BE IMPACTED BY THIS JOURNEY?**

II Corinthians 5:16-21 “So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them. And He has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making His appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God”.

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**TAKING THE CROSS CROSS-CULTURAL**

The challenge to step out of our comfort zones into a cross-cultural setting is at best daunting and at worse, terrifying. What a joy to know that God never sends us into such a situation alone. He is always with us even to the ends of the earth (Matthew 28:20). Not only do we have His presence but we also have His instruction on how to do this. In fact, he modeled it for us in John 4 where He met with a Samaritan woman. How cross-cultural is this? A Jewish man meeting with a Samaritan woman alone crossed at least four cultural lines. Look at the life lessons He teaches us:

1– CROSS CULTURAL MINISTRY IS VITAL AND NECESSARY (v. 4)

2- THE BEST APPROACH IS THE COMMON GROUND OF FELT NEEDS (v. 7)

3- BE AWARE OF THE CULTURE BEFORE ENTERING (v. 9 ff)

4- RESPECT THE BELIEFS OF OTHERS NO MATTER HOW DIFFERENT (v. 19ff)

5– STAY FOCUSED ON THE REAL NEED—JESUS CHRIST (v. 23-26)

\*Grace, not rules

 \*Salvation, not works

 \*Freedom, not ritual

\*How committed are you to cross-cultural ministry at home and abroad?

\*What do you think might be the felt needs of those of other cultures at home? In the country you are going to serve?

\*How does their culture create barriers to the message of Christ? What IS the message of Christ?

\*What is the predominant religion of the area God is sending you to serve? How does it differ from Christianity?

Country: Christianity

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 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Jesus Christ

 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ grace vs. works

Pray now and ask God for wisdom in reaching other cultures in your home town and in the country to which He is sending you and your team.

**WHAT WILL MY LIFE BE LIKE AFTERWARDS?**

“Where there is no vision, my people perish…”

Vision= the God-given ability to see with the eyes of my heart what God wants me to do with His imprint on my life.

Ephesians 1:4-10 “For He chose us in Him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight. In love He predestined us to be adopted as His sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with His pleasure and will – to the praise of His glorious grace, which He has freely given us in the One He loves. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace that He lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. And He made known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment – to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ”.

How God must love us to choose us, trace our lives for us, adopt us, redeem us, lavish us with His grace, and make His plan known to us! He has done all this so that we might be a part of His plan to bring all of creation back under the Lordship of the Son. We are not cosmic accidents but divinely planned as part of God’s plan of reconciliation.

\*Have you ever thought of yourself as wired (created) for a divine purpose?

Ephesians 1:18-19a “I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which He has called you, the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints, and His incomparably great power for us who believe…”

\*How do you see yourself fulfilling the will and work of God on earth?

\*What do you think God’s vision for you includes?

\*What have you been doing by faith in service to God?

\*How do you see this faith trip being a part of the fabric of your life in Christ?

\*What expectations do you bring with you for this faith trip?

Perhaps, if this part of your journey of faith is already traced by the very hand of God, setting aside any personal expectations would be best, allowing God to lead you only as He desires.

Pray and ask God to take away anything in your life that would get in the way of what He has planned for you since before creation…