

Our Role in Sending Laborers

By Randy Mitchell

The Bible says Christ looks upon the earth with compassion. What He sees is a lost and dying world. His observations led Him to assert, the harvest is plentiful but the workers are few, and then we are given these instructions—pray to the Lord of the Harvest to raise up and send out workers into His Harvest fields.

36 When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. 37 Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. 38 Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field." Matt 9:36-38 NIV

We can trust Him to raise them up, to put such a burden for the nations that their hearts seem to ache with it. I have met many throughout the nations that carry this burden. We can trust him to put the "go" in them. That compelling urge to leave home, family, and friends to journey to far away places and live in unfamiliar settings, all for the sake of the call. However, it cannot be assumed that any of these things will occur apart from human involvement. His instruction to His true disciples is to *pray*. The Message version says that we are to pray for Harvest Hands. The scripture implies that it is not enough for us to pray that God would thrust others into the harvest fields, we ourselves must be willing to go. So we pray and go, we go and pray. John Wesley once said, "God is limited apart from the praying of humanity." We have a very vital role to play and as His true disciples we must pray. Nevertheless, I do not believe that our responsibility ends there. Yes, we can trust God to raise up those called, and apart from this, all of our best efforts to mobilize the church will be in vain. However, it is also implied that having received the calling to go there is still much to be done to see these laborers faithfully serving in God's harvest fields. Romans chapter ten says that we must participate in this sending part.

*14 But how are people to call upon Him Whom they have not believed [in Whom they have no faith, on Whom they have no reliance]? And how are they to believe in Him [adhere to, trust in, and rely upon Him] of Whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without a preacher?
15 And how can men [be expected to] preach unless they are sent? As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of those who bring glad tidings! [How welcome is the coming of those who preach the good news of His good things!] Rom 10:14-15 AMP*

Verse 14 introduces us to the same perspective that Christ revealed in Matthew, the people are lost, and they need someone to share with them the truth about God's love and His Kingdom. They cannot place their faith in Him or His salvation unless someone proclaims to them the truth. Then He introduces us to the continuation of this thought. How can they go unless they are sent? I believe this is the real issue here. We know that if Christ's church will pray He will lay that call to the nations upon the hearts of individuals all over the earth. But here is where much of our failure has occurred. Many have been called, many carry that burden for the nations in their hearts, but few out of that number are being sent and even fewer are being sent effectively. God has laid this responsibility squarely upon the shoulders of the church. In answer to the concerts of prayer that are being offered up all over the earth, thousands upon thousands of people are answering Christ's call to make His name known in the nations. This is happening in house churches, village churches and mega churches in every nation among peoples of almost every ethnicity. God is speaking to individuals in China, in the Philippines, throughout South America. He is calling them out of Central America, He is raising up missionaries out of the South Pacific and throughout Europe. From every continent true disciples are praying, "Here am I Lord, Send me." So what is our responsibility? In answer to our prayers they are willing and ready to go, to serve, to die if need be. What now is our role in sending them? Surely, our prayers must continue. We cannot treat prayer as some type of initial thrust needed to propel this movement forward, for without continued prayer all of our efforts will eventually coast to a stop.

Do we not also have the responsibility to assist them by preparing them for the ministry in which they will serve? Would it not be irresponsible to fail in providing such training when and where it is possible? Are we willing, after all the prayer and effort that has gone into raising them up to send them out doomed to repeat the same mistakes that were made by the last generation of missionaries that answered this call? If we are ever to fulfill the Great Commission, can we afford to continue to take two steps forward and one step back? Do we really want to see them fail, to return home dejected, discouraged. can we afford to loose one precious laborer serving in God's harvest fields when we have already been told that the Laborers are already too few? No, no and *no*. We must do our part in providing adequate ministerial training, excellent cross-cultural training, and at least a rudimentary understanding of the complexities and challenges that they will face as they set out to answer this call. We need to address the need in the developing nations for adequate missions training. We need to pray that the Lord will reveal a new paradigm for missions mobilization. We need to pray for the church to recognize its role in sending and supporting. Again, I will refer to the passage in Romans, "*...how can they go and preach, unless they are sent*". In addition, may I add that sent includes supported.

We share in this responsibility to pray that God will raise up the laborers that are so desperately needed around the world. We recognize that He is answering that prayer by mobilizing believers and thrusting them out into service from nations around the world. We understand that we must provide them with adequate training and preparation both before they leave for the field, as well as while they are on the fields to assure that they are being refreshed while they are laboring. We understand that these laborers are coming from a diversity of nations, cultures and circumstances and we must seek God concerning how we might practically aid them in going. We understand that in order to keep them in the field they will need our ongoing prayers and financial support. These things are simply not an option. Moreover, what is the result of our obedience to this action? The Message version says that it is "A sight that will take your breath away, grand processions of people, telling all the good things of God."