

Live with Intentionality¹

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We now live with intentionality about most things in our lives— our jobs, our children, our fitness, our technology. Why not spiritually and missionally? At a time when the world is connected, interdependent, global, urban and conversing— and peoples from around the world live within blocks of each other—finishing what Christ left us to do has never been more possible. Many have asked, “What will it take to finish the job?” We would like to pose, “Who will it take?”

I (Caroline) had a strong sense that I was called to the mission field as a child. My dream was to help finish the task. With each attempt to get to the field— at several different stages of life, I was told I didn’t qualify (wrong kind of training, children’s ages, husband was an engineer— not a pastor, etc.). In retrospect, I now see His missional purpose for my life was not a field, but many fields as an activator of others. It was not any particular degree that qualified me, but the unique array of experiences, opportunities and skill sets that had been forming in me that gave me the pioneering spirit to contribute to His purposes in a changing world. It was through my local church, on a shared strategic journey, that amazing Kingdom initiatives flourished around the world. Time and again, local relationships and connections opened global opportunities. We eventually worked in partnership with one of the very mission agencies that had declined my application years before.

Who will it take? In this era of God’s story, we must re-visit that question from a different perspective. In a world...

- that does not ask for missionaries, and visas are rarely granted where the unreached live;
- where there is little access to the masses and influential leaders by career missionaries or national believers;
- where the ordinary believer is invited through their job skills and expertise to help build their nation, nanny their children or solve an immediate crisis;
- where it is through their job that believers have everyday access to nationals for relationship and conversations as well as their paycheck; where believers can bring real solutions— often from home or with intermittent trips in and out;
- where the unreached world often feels comfortable and responds more quickly to those with roots in the non-Western world.

¹ From Winter, Ralph; Steven Hawthorne (2013-07-21). *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement* (Kindle Locations 22569- 22584). William Carey Library. Kindle Edition.

Who Will It Take?

Who will it take? Wouldn't it seem strategic to activate the whole church from the whole world to join the mission force in these opportune times and places? Each believer, every church and all ethnic, age and expertise groups have their own distinctive contribution.

Some will go and stay; others will go short term; others will make their mark from home; and still others will go in and out, as needed. It needs to match the role that only they can play. It's about intentionally living out our call as believers to the mission of God.

We are created by and for God and His greater purposes of His glory in the nations. We are alive in this generation— not another. In this world, we must erase the lines of our compartmentalized lives that limit our perspective and our Christian service to what we do at church. We must lay all of our gifts, expertise, specialties, connections, influence, relationships, experiences (good and bad), resources, job titles, opportunities and all that we are before God. He has entrusted it all as a stewardship we hold. He wants and will multiply it all. God desires...

- **Your Skills.** Whether professional training or life experience, you have talents and abilities that are urgently needed.
- **Your Spiritual Gifts.** When you offer them for blessing nations, you will be surprised how God uses them supernaturally.
- **Your Passions.** What do you enjoy the most? What makes you angry? Answers to those questions may reveal your strongest passions.
- **Your Experiences.** God wants the good and the bad. Many negative experiences have been redeemed for kingdom purposes. What might you surrender for His use?
- **Your Christian Experience.** Most people in North America have more theological education from participating in church life than most pastors leading in developing countries. How might God want to use the information that you already know?
- **Your Relationships.** Engaging neighbors, family, co-workers, boards, sports teams, even businesses you frequent can create powerful impact for the kingdom.
- **Your Profession.** How can your profession, including the industry and professional associations be used to bless nations?
- **Your Community.** Your city has a sister city partnership with an urban center somewhere in the world. How might you engage in that partnership?

What does it take for God to utilize all of our capacity for His purposes? It takes intentionality and initiative.

Intentionality

You don't have to have a degree in missions to connect to God's work in the world. You do need a growing sense that your gifts, passions and relationships can open up incredible things for God's purposes. God has done amazing things through:

- An engineer who observed an agricultural byproduct going to waste in a southern country. He gathered others in his industry at home to design a way to use the waste as a resource to manufacture a product useful for construction, which gave sustainable work to whole new communities of farmers.
- A youth minister who was quickened through a short-term mission and within months brought his church to the place of adoption of an unreached people group, sold his belongings and moved with his family to begin a business in a highly unreached area of the world.
- A young mom with a baby and toddler on either hip who challenged her women's Bible study group to learn about the sex trafficking issues. It has grown to a group of 40 who are raising funds for the prevention and rescue of children in Asia.
- A professor who utilized his grad students in designing and developing a suspension bridge using indigenous material brought trade capacity and development to an impoverished community in a developing country.
- A retired pastor with a passion for woodworking who built and sold 3,000 birdhouses to raise \$ 85,000 for training national pastors and leaders in Eastern Europe.
- A teacher who engaged her elementary school to raise the money needed to rebuild a school for a war-torn country in Central Asia.
- A technology specialist who intentionally volunteered with his company for the overseas liaison position in Asia and planted churches while there.
- A small group who adopted an unreached people, committing to pray and go on short-term prayer teams. They met national leaders who agreed to partner to reach this people and six years later a church planting movement of 300 churches was birthed and is still growing.

- A teenager who sold \$ 20 Mother's Day gift cards to classmates and her youth ministry, raising micro-loan funds for Third World moms seeking to support their families.
- A college videography student who filmed a moving documentary of street boys sniffing glue in Africa. In addition to film awards, the relationship he built with national churches resulted in street kid ministries being started and his own parents adopting two young orphans.
- A church pastor who catalyzed an entire community in a communist country by asking how they could help bless their nation. The community contributed to building infrastructure and, eventually, an approved theological training school with the blessing and help of the government.

Initiative

You might be thinking you don't know significant people like the bridge-building professor or influential technology specialist. You might be a mom with a heart for her kids; a college student with dreams and education debt; a professional hitting half-time in life and wanting to leave a legacy; or an entrepreneur with ideas frustrated by the organizational hoops keeping them hidden. May we offer something a bit prescriptive to challenge you toward God's purpose in and for your life:

Learn to Listen. Do you know God's voice in your life? He has been whispering and shouting to His followers from the beginning of time. You can learn to listen by reading your Bible with a missional lens. Ask, "What does this passage tell me about God and His purposes?" over "how does this apply to my life?" Spend time in silence and write down thoughts, re-occurring themes, frustrations and passions as they arise. These often point to how God would have you participate with Him.

See God's Work. Watch CNN and consider how God may be opening doors for his church to declare Good News in new harvest fields. The harvest is ripe where there is a vacuum of leadership or sustainable resources, a ravishing by natural disasters or wars, and the migration of peoples. Evaluate the expertise, resources and relationships in your life to help determine where to connect for God's glory.

Join God. Yes, it really can be that simple. Step out in action and take someone with you as you do it. Keep growing in your awareness of His global purpose. Seek how you can strategically give your life to fulfill what He's doing. You may not feel that you have the big picture or a profound revelation. Instead, He may be giving you a simple prodding of His Spirit. Act on it. His revelation often comes in successive steps as we follow in obedience.

Plan. Think through your year. Use your vacation for a purpose this year. Consider how your relationship circles can be catalyzed for a cause. Pray diligently for world needs as a family, believing God to act. Assess your activity level and create margin for God to “interrupt” your life with opportunities and conversations.

Ask Others. Be purposeful and intentional in your relationships as you invite others to join you in serving God. Ask people what they dream about doing for God. Ask people to consider joining you in what you feel led to do. Seriously explore how you can join others in your church or how you might contribute to the ongoing work of mission efforts which has been unfolding for many years. God’s strategies always call for us to work in community with others.

God is asking all of us to participate with all of what we have in our lives. The dreams or task may seem overwhelming, but when we intentionally bring our little lunch of fish and loaves to Jesus, he will bless it, break it, and multiply its effect for the sake of His kingdom.

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