

Weekly Connector: Uganda be coming to church this Sunday?

October 27, 2017

Hello, Church!

As our trip winds to completion, I am greeted with the same feeling I experience every year: **the bittersweet mix of emotions** of both leaving and rejoining my families - one in Uganda, the other in Ohio. I saw it on the faces of our family in Gulu as we left earlier this week, and on the faces of the team as we try to wrap our minds around the reality of our relationships so far away.



Often, I have said (and written) that **the potential of our mission trips is so great, because they are meant to be a "win-win-win": a win for the church in Uganda, the church in East Canton, and for God, Himself.** Although it's difficult to quantify or qualify both the investment and the outcome of these trips, I will try.

We are commanded to go. Jesus personally told His apostles (and, by indirection, you and me) that as we receive the power of the Holy Spirit, we are to be His *"witnesses, in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and the ends of the earth."* (Acts 1:8) To be His witnesses is to proclaim the reality of who He is through our words and actions in our local town and region, all the way to the ends of the earth. For us, this means we are to be witnesses for Him from East Canton to NE Ohio, Ohio to the USA, and on to Uganda, East Africa.

We are to make a difference wherever we go. This cannot be stressed enough. Yes, we are to build, teach, encourage, and help develop those whom we visit and serve (locally or globally). But, this includes a demonstration of the witness of Christ in our attitudes, our love for each other, and our love for those we serve from East Canton all the way to Uganda, East Africa. In other words, wherever we are and wherever we go, we are to live such a life that we are missed when we leave.



We are to be changed into the likeness of Jesus. What can be neglected or even forgotten in the life of a disciple is this: we are supposed to be like Jesus. Who you follow, you become. So, if we follow Jesus, we should become like Him, right? In my experience, however, when I obey His commands (like Acts 1:8, above), I put this process of Christ-likeness on a faster track. The more outside my comfort and routine, the faster this track becomes. I have seen in my life and the lives of others that when we go on trips like these (or the right retreat, or local and other missions), we have an incredible opportunity to become more like Jesus. It can be difficult, for sure. But, it is SO rewarding.

We are to glorify God in the whole process. When we plan the trip, we glorify God by seeking His direction and power in the attention to detail. When we collect donations, we glorify God by good stewardship and accountability. When we talk with fellow travelers or the legions of travel support personnel along the way, we shine the Light we've been given so that they will take note of that "light and give glory to our Father who is in heaven." (Matthew 5:16) We continue glorifying Him on the entire trip with all whom we have the privilege to work, study, teach, pray with, and serve. Then, we glorify God as we give our reports to our own families and our church family upon our return. Lastly, we come full circle, so to speak, as the glory continues in our planning for the next trip.





Why am I dwelling on this? Because there are those who read this and think to themselves, "I'll never go". You know who you are. And, I struggle along with you in your dilemma because I have said the same things...and have regretted them. The word "never" should be replaced with this: **if the Lord wills that I go, then I shall go. If not, then I shall send.** But, please don't dismiss the potential of His "go". Never say "never" to the Lord's "go".

To help us, consider what happened to Saul (also called Paul) and Barnabas before their first missionary trip. *"While [the church at Antioch] were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.' Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off. So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went..." (Acts 13:2-4)* The Spirit led the church, the church was willing to send, **and Barnabas and Saul were willing to go!**

Our next trip has been scheduled: Nov. 10-24, 2018. Look at your calendar. Present it to the Lord and ask, "Lord, am I supposed to go to Uganda?" If He is sending you, then I look forward to your application so that we can discuss this incredible opportunity God is offering you to change the world as your life is also changed. If He is not sending you, then you will be even more able to send others because you were willing to be sent yourself!



Oh, how I have missed you, Church. **I look forward to seeing you and telling you so much more about our trip and what God is doing through you and His Church - THIS SUNDAY!** I hope that you will not only come, but will invite a friend or family member that needs to hear of a God who is not only in East Canton, Ohio, but in Uganda, Africa and the rest of the world!

I love you, Church! See you soon!

Pastor greg