A BIBLICAL EXAMPLE OF MISSION FOR TODAY?

Posted on October 29, 2019 by Eddie

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Category: Observations

If I were to ask you to dig into the Bible and to come up with the person who best illustrates mission today, who would you suggest?

Just to make things a little more difficult, I'm going to rule Jesus out. Yes, obviously he is the best example, but as the incarnate Son of God, he has a position that elevates him to a different level.

With that in mind, I suspect that a lot of people would default to suggesting Paul fits the bill. After all, when you talk about the Bible and missionaries, the answer is almost always Paul. However, I'm not convinced that Paul provides the best illustration of where mission is going today.

The cynic in me suggests that if you really want to understand mission today, you should look at Luke. After all, we don't actually have records of Luke doing a great deal, but he did tell people what Paul and the others got up to. In the age of Twitter, Instagram and blogging (I know), Luke seems a perfect example of some strands of modern mission. Although to be honest, the care with which Luke did his research and dug out original sources would make him rather unusual in the social media world. I told you I was being cynical (and undoubtedly unfair on Luke).

Being serious again, I think there is one clear candidate for a biblical model of mission today: Apollos.

Look at this introduction from Luke 18:24-28

24Â Meanwhile, a Jew named Apollos, an eloquent speaker who knew the Scriptures well, had arrived in Ephesus from Alexandria in Egypt. 25Â He had been taught the way of the Lord, and he taught others about Jesus with an enthusiastic spirit and with accuracy. However, he knew only about Johnâ€™s baptism. 26Â When Priscilla and Aquila heard him preaching boldly in the synagogue, they took him aside and explained the way of God even more accurately.

27Â Apollos had been thinking about going to Achaia, and the brothers and sisters in Ephesus encouraged him to go. They wrote to the believers in Achaia, asking them to welcome him. When he arrived there, he proved to be of great benefit to those who, by Godâ€™s grace, had believed. 28Â He refuted the Jews with powerful arguments in public debate. Using the Scriptures, he explained to them that Jesus was the Messiah.

Apollos was a Jew from Alexandria - in other words, he was African. He met Priscilla and Aquila in Ephesus and studied the Bible with them there and then he went on to Achaia, or Greece, if you prefer.

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If you want to know what mission looks like across the world today, think about Apollos; someone from outside of the traditional "sending centres", who has a wide range of experience and who is probably flying more or less below the radar.

At this point, the more biblically astute will probably be saying that this is all very well, but Apollos didn't really have a good grasp of the faith and needed Priscilla and Aquilla to put him on the right track. Something similar may well be true of much of the rising mission movement across the world today - though I'm not sure that it's our place to say so. However, there is a clear need for Priscillas and Aquillas in the mission movement who can encourage, disciple and teach the next generation of Apolloses (Apolloi?).