CRUCIFORM MISSION

Posted on March 21, 2016 by Eddie

If you believe that you have a call to be a missionary, you have to ask yourself whether or not you are willing to deny yourself and to take up your cross daily. If not, you'd better stay at home. But be aware, the same standard is demanded of disciples wherever they find themselves.

Category: Christian Life

Christians follow a crucified Lord; someone who was executed in the most brutal and barbaric fashion imaginable. Not only that, but we are called to follow in his footsteps - it's hardly an attractive thought.

This week, Easter week, I'd like to spend some time looking at the issue of mission in the shadow of the cross. Lets do that by starting with a perennial Kouyanet topic, the 'missionary call'.

The question of whether someone is called to be a missionary is a complex one and, to be honest, there are no easy answers. It involves not only the individual, but their church and those who will be responsible for caring for them and supporting them. However, there is one clear-cut qualification for being aÂ missionary, that is you must be a disciple of Jesus. That's straightforward enough. However, the qualifications for being a disciple are tough:

> *Then he said to them all: â€œWhoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. (Luke 9:23)*

To be a disciple of Jesus you must, first of all, deny yourself. That means that your own wishes, desires, dreams and aspirations come second to the Kingdom. You must be prepared to sacrifice your career, your comfortable house, your nice lifestyle and anything else that is important to you in order to follow Christ. That doesn't necessarily mean that you will have to give up your house or career, but it does mean that you must be prepared to. There are no options here; either we put Christ first, or we put ourselves first. It's a call to a radical, counter-cultural lifestyle and it isn't easy.

This principle is incredibly important in Christian work and ministry. As soon as we start to think that we have a right to be involved in something, to lead something or to do anything at all in church, we are thinking about our own concerns and not those of Christ. Likewise, if we demand that we be allowed to go overseas as missionaries because we have a call, we've missed the point. The disciple is prepared to deny themselves and follow Christ wherever he leads them; be that to the other side of the world, or on the seven-thirty bus to the office. The language of rights has no place in Christian service. If we are disciples, the first thing that we acknowledge is that we have no rights.

Disciples also take up their cross to follow Jesus. This is a tough saying. The only time someone carried a cross was on the way to their own execution. Jesus is saying, that if we follow him, we have to be prepared to give up our lives in his service. This is the logical extension of denying ourselves, but it doesn't make it any easier. However, if you are thinking about cross-cultural ministry, then it's something that you should probably think about. I have good friends who have come close to death through disease, accident and violence because they found themselves in tough places through following Jesus. I know a smaller, but significant, number who did not survive.

If you believe that you have a call to be a missionary, you have to ask yourself whether or not you are willing to deny yourself and to take up your cross daily. If not, you'd better stay at home. But be

aware, the same standard is demanded of disciples wherever they find themselves.