THE HEART OF MISSION?

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Category: Mission

I've just done a short exercise for my MTh course. Following on from some reading; the workbook asked, 'which Biblical passages lead you to the heart of mission?'

I raised this question myself in a post a few months back, but my answer to the exercise today is different to the one I gave earlier. This could mean that I'm just forgetful, or it could indicate that I'm learning something. If it's alright with you, I'll go for the second one. So, which Biblical passages do lead me to the heart of mission? Actually, I had no hesitation in writing down two passages which are very key in my thinking and reflection: John 20:21 and 2 Timothy 2:2. Different influences and reading have brought me to consider these two verses as important, but I was surprised to see the way that they flow together when I wrote them down side by side:

> *He spoke to them again and said, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you."*
>
> *You have heard me teach many things that have been confirmed by many reliable witnesses. Teach these great truths to trustworthy people who are able to pass them on to others.*

The Father sent the Son, who, in turn, sends the disciples who have the responsibility to pass the things they have learned on down the generations. There are a number of things that strike me as I read this.

Firstly, there is the way that these verses tie me into the history not only of the people of God, but of the Father himself. He sent the Christ, who spoke to the disciples, who passed on the message to others, and down through the centuries faithfull men and women have passed the word on till it got to my brother Phil, who told me all about it (thanks Phil!) and now it is my responsibility to keep the chain going.

I'm fascinated by the way that these verses emphasise how mission flows from God himself. It isn't an invention of the Church, it is something that God did first. All he asks is that we carry on doing what he did first of all. Don't they say that a good leader never expects his followers to do something that he wouldn't do himself? Well, our God certainly doesn't expect us to do more than he has already done.

I've also found real encouragement in seeing the way that mission is based in the character of God. 2 Timothy 2:2 has long been a major motivation for my work. Translating the New Testament into Kouya was a way of passing on what I'd learned to others, as was teaching language and culture learning at ETP. These days, I spend much of my time teaching and training others in all sorts of areas; I don't get much of a kick out of doing things myself, but I love to see others learn and grow. Putting these two verses together seems to show that this cascade of knowledge and teaching of which I'm part begins with the Father and springs from him. I've been struggling over the last couple of years to know exactly what it is God wants me to do with my life when I grow up. I'm still not

entirely sure about the specifics, but I do know that I'm part of a movement from the Father to the Son and down through the years to the Church. I can live with that!