MISSIONARY SAYINGS: GO, SEND OR DISOBEY

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In which I question the appropriateness of a well worn Christian saying about mission.
Category: Observations

This is another in my occasional series on famous missionary sayings. I've heard variations on this saying from a number of sources, but one version of it reads:

> *In Christian mission, you have three choices: youâ€™re primarily a goer, youâ€™re primarily a sender, or youâ€™re primarily disobedient.*

Like all of the other sayings that I've covered in this series, this is pithy, memorable and has a grain of truth in it. However, as with all of the others, I'm not entirely convinced that it is helpful.

There are a couple of things that I'd like to highlight.

Firstly, I'm not entirely convinced that guilt is a great motivation to anything in the Christian life. Saying that if you don't do X you are being disobedient may well be true and it is certainly a classic strategy of many evangelical teachers. However, in my experience, saying this sort of thing just makes people feel bad and doesn't do much to change behaviour. It is far better to demonstrate the joy, and privilege of being involved in mission work than it is to make them feel guilty for not being involved.

Secondly, the saying is all about going - something that isn't actually central to the New Testament teaching on mission. I know that many people will want to point me to Matthew 28:19, where the text says "Go and make disciples" or something like that, depending on what translation you use. Â The problem is, that in the original Greek, there is only one command in this verse and it isn't "GO!". A better, but not very idiomatic translation would be "going, make disciples,...". Essentially, the command is to make disciples wherever you are. Some people go to the the far corners of the earth, others go to the office; but we are all called to make disciples. If you don't believe me, read this.

By focussing on "going", this phrase misses the point of what the Bible is saying. It makes something incidental the main point and misses out the main point altogether.

The thing is, you can 'go' and not make disciples; in which case you are being disobedient. Or you can stay at home, without sending, but still make disciples, in which case you are being obedient.

Before anyone complains; I do think that sending and going are important - it's just that they are not the whole story. What the sent people do when they've gone is far more important than just the fact that they've relocated to somewhere else on the planet. Not only that, but sending people to make disciples on the other side of the globe doesn't absolve us of our responsibility to make disciples at home and across our own nation.

I don't suppose anyone would take any notice if I re-wrote the saying; but I'd want to cast it in a positive light and then focus on what the Bible focuses on.

> *Serving Jesus by making disciples wherever you are is the greatest privilege you can have;*

> *you'd be daft not to do it.*

It'll never catch on...