

THE EXHORTER'S CALL

“Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.”
Hebrews 10:25

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FOLLOWING GOD

Proverbs 3:5 Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.

We recently held a missions conference at my local church. As always, it was a wonderful time to visit with the different missionaries we support and hear their amazing tales from around the world. There were many stories of danger, i.e., close calls with armed militants, dangerous rogue government officials, and of course, the ever present threat of strange local “delicacies” that missionaries are frequently offered! However, one story in particular offered such a clear view of God’s prescience that it gave me pause to consider how God may lead each of us in our own lives, if we are only willing to trust him.

Missionaries to the Sudan encounter great need amongst the population ranging from the spiritual to the most basic of physical necessity. A glance at the evening news will offer a glimpse of the violence and instability that is endemic to that region today. War and genocide is the order of the day and disease is rampant. Sudan is also well known in the War on Terror as an outpost for Al Qaeda and terrorist training camps. Sudan boasts a very large Islamic presence and, needless to say, Christian missionaries are woefully outnumbered.

Nevertheless, God has called people to minister in this region and they have been faithful to respond. This story begins with a trip to Sudan where the missionaries expected to have access to certain villages only to discover that the areas had been sealed off by the Islamic chieftain who refused to allow them entry. Not only were they refused entry, but their convoy came under attack by stone throwing, angry Muslims. Discouraged, they turned back to more welcoming areas. The missionaries diligently sought the Lord for

guidance in this situation, feeling as if their entire effort to Sudan had been in vain. That is when God spoke into their hearts about... dentistry.

The missionaries learned that there was not a single dentist available in all of southern Sudan, a very large region. But what to do? They had only a brief window of time to remain in Sudan. Knowing that they could not remain in the region, they developed a plan to train local villagers in basic dentistry and provide them with portable tools and work stations. The villagers were given a 2 week crash course in dentistry and how to use the tools and equipment. The missionaries knew the whole idea seemed crazy and some missionaries from other areas even ridiculed their efforts. Who ever heard of a two-week school in dentistry among a population that certainly had no prerequisite background? Still yet, the missionaries were convinced that God had led them in this direction although they too could not foresee what possible benefit it could bring. However, compared to the brutal digging out of teeth with large knives that they had witnessed from the local medicine man, how could what they were leaving behind be any worse?

Well, shortly after the missionaries left Sudan, guess who came down with a tremendous toothache? That’s right, the Islamic chieftain. The only people who could help him were the Christianized villagers and their scant two-week missionary dentistry training. The procedure was a success and the chieftain was so overjoyed to be relieved of the pain that he immediately opened access to all areas for the spread of the Gospel.

You may not see where God is leading you at the moment, and the path you’re on may seem crazy, but if you trust Him, He can open doors of access in your life as well.