

The Whole Church, Taking the Whole Gospel, to the Whole World.

Recently Evangelist Franklin Graham was dis-invited from speaking at a special Pentagon “prayer service” because of his views on Islam. This raises the question of the churches role in expressing their faith. Is the church to be a missional church who’s primary objective is to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ or is it the role of the church to be more passive and non confrontational in the expression of their faith and be relegated to doing primarily social work such as helping the poor, caring for the socially disenfranchised and advocating for the disadvantaged.

A missional church is a church that takes the Gospel of Jesus Christ out into the mission field, which is just outside our doors. If the church is to be effective as a missional church we must leave behind the concept that the church building is a safe haven where we are separated from the world and the vile affects of this post modern and post Christian culture and realize that it is one of the commands of Jesus to take the Gospel outside the walls of the church building and into the community where we are to engage the culture on their turf. No longer can the church be effective in ministering to the community in which it serves by expecting that they will flock to the church house on Sunday. In this post modern culture the church who is to be a replica of the very nature and character of Christ must take the living breathing Gospel out into the market places and confront the culture with the message of Jesus Christ.

How do we practically achieve a missional ministry in a culture that is hostile to the Gospel? I think the greatest example is that of the Apostle Paul. Paul founded missional churches that went out and impacted their communities with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul himself was sent from a missional church in Antioch for the purpose of evangelizing the world. World evangelization is still the heartbeat of God for His church today.

Lets notice the key elements that made the Apostle Paul effective in his missional ministry. 1) **Paul was a mighty prayer warrior.** Paul writes in first Thessalonians 5:17 “Pray without ceasing.” Paul would be found in continuous prayer. He began and ended His ministry with prayer. Paul prayed in prison in Acts 16 and led the jailer to Christ. If we are to be successful as a missional church body in reaching our communities and the world for Christ we must employ the “Jericho approach” of surrounding our communities with intercessory prayer for the purpose of petitioning God to pour out His Spirit so that we as a church body can be effective in reaching the lost.

2) **Paul was a very tactful Christian.** I Corinthians 9:19-22 “For though I be free from all men yet have I made myself a servant to all that I might gain the more”. We could learn a lot from Paul in this regard. Sometimes we just don’t have much tact. We just let fly what we think with little or no sensitivity to the feelings of others. Paul was stern, but very tactful. Paul had learned to be patient with people because he knew that unless people knew Christ as their savior they had no spiritual discernment. It did no good to blast people out for their sins. The Holy Spirit has to do the convicting while God uses his messenger to present the gospel in a loving compassionate manner. Paul demonstrated that in Acts 17 when he engaged the Philosophers in Athens. Paul got their attention, won their respect and then he preached to them and some were saved.

3) **Paul did not bear or harbor grudges.** Any time you deal with people there will be misunderstandings, hurt feelings and differences, but never ought we allow ourselves to become vindictive and spiteful. Paul writes in Romans 12:18 “If it be possible, as much as lieth in you live peaceably with all men”. We ought to make every effort to live peaceably with all people as Paul did.

4) **Paul was a consistent example.** Philippians 3:17-4:9, “Brethren be followers of me”. II Timothy 2:2, “and the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men who shall be able to teach others also”. No less than five occasions Paul said, “follow me as I follow Christ.” We must live our lives in such a manner that it provides a credible, consistent Christian example for others to emulate.

5) **Paul was a compassionate soul winner Acts 20:20-21.** In Ephesus Paul went door to door with tears witnessing and trying to lead people to Christ. It was a life and death issue with Paul. Paul loved people and saw each person as a soul that Jesus loved and would not rest until he gave the gospel to the world.

6) **Paul was a separated saint.** (Romans 1:1) There are two kinds of separation. There is a separation from the world and there is a separation unto the Lord (sanctification). I am concerned that we exhibit both types of separation, but I am far more concerned about the second separation as was Paul. Paul believed in separation from the worldly philosophy, but he did not believe in isolation from the worldly philosophy. Paul was separated unto God as a chosen vessel and took the gospel to where the sinners were and that is what we as the church ought to be about as well.

In order to have an effective missional ministry in this postmodern culture that challenges the validity of nearly every Judeo Christian principle as witnessed in the case of Franklin Graham being banned from the Pentagons “prayer service”, we must employ the methods of the Apostle Paul which is the whole Church, taking the whole Gospel, to the whole world that resides just outside our doorstep and impact the culture we live in.

Pastor, Randy Mason www.libertybaptistofmarshalltown.com
Liberty Baptist Church of Marshalltown