

## Do we celebrate sacrifice?

Just after Easter, MB Mission hosted "Spring Adventure" - a week long event where people who are considering service in long term mission are invited to discern their call. This year 18 people attended from churches in Canada and the United States. It was exciting to see the mix of singles and families in this discernment process.

Each year the leadership team is asked to teach sessions on our core values - Risk Taking Obedience, Relational Integrity, Dependency on Jesus, Community Transformation, and Celebration. The year I was asked to teach on Celebration. My first reaction was, "What can I teach about celebration? Can I trade topics?" But as I prayed and asked the Holy Spirit to teach me what to say, I soon understood that there was something I could teach based on my experiences at MB Mission. It was definitely not your typical celebration talk. It was challenging and spoke a lot about the upside down kingdom and a long term Kingdom view.

I would like to share a little of what I said...

To begin, I asked everyone (and I would ask you) to identify something they had celebrated recently. Their list included events such as birthdays, anniversaries, new children born, graduations, marriages, health, etc. And of course, Easter was also mentioned. So I asked the participants, "Do any of you celebrate your sacrifices?" Focusing on Easter, I noted how we call the day of Jesus crucifixion Good Friday - it was the day of sacrifice and I don't think there was much celebration by Jesus followers at that moment. As we all know, the celebration came 3 days later. But could there have been any celebration without the initial sacrifice?

I read the text from Philippians 3:7-11. Again, this is not your typical celebration text. Paul writes how "whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ... I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things." Paul had a very different view because he understood the journey that Jesus had chosen and he understood the journey he was walking by following Jesus.

Without the death, there could be no resurrection. But we don't tend to celebrate the death, or more so the obedience to the way of the cross. We celebrate the victory over death and the resurrection power. But between the death and resurrection, there were the 3 days in the grave. So what was my point? As missionaries (Christians), we are called to leave our families. We give up jobs and careers. These decisions have long term implications for your children, their educations, and so much more. There are incredible sacrifices made - obedience to the way of the cross. But we can celebrate these sacrifices knowing what it is unto. So, will we celebrate our sacrifices now or do we need to wait the 3 days?

I shared some of the things our family chose to give up to move to Abbotsford and join MB Mission. I described how we had no idea what the outcomes would be. 3 days in the grave. Six years after that initial choice, I am able to see some of the outcomes and there is so much to celebrate. I know that I am a new creation in Christ which I would not be without making some sacrifices. God is so good and He wants to encourage us along the journey. Because of the decisions made, it looks different here and now; but what is more important is that it looks different eternally.

Success in long term mission service comes from Romans 12:2 thinking. It is the love of 1John 3:16. We do not celebrate the things of the world but things to come, things eternal. When we make sacrifices, we do not have to wait to celebrate. We need to trust God and have faith. The bible describes faith as being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see (yet). Missionaries need to claim the promise of Matthew 19:29. It is an upside down kingdom.

Today, God may ask you to make a sacrifice, or maybe you have made the sacrifice and are in the 3 days of waiting. Whatever your circumstance, don't be afraid to celebrate right now the faithfulness of our God, for He is great and He is merciful and He is faithful to complete the good works He has begun in you!

As I close, my prayer for you today comes from the word of Romans 15:13, "May the God of hope fill you with all peace and joy as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."

Trusting in Him,

J.P.