

Being Good Missionaries in Isolation (Growing in Isolation Week 8)

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Date: 13 May 2020

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[0:00] Hey guys, Donnie here. Welcome to our last week in this little series we've been doing called Growing in Isolation, where we've been trying to help us grow together rather than sort of, you know, lose ground during COVID-19. I really hope this series has been helpful for you.

This last week, what we're going to look at is the topic of mission. Now, the word mission we get from this Latin word or this Latin phrase, *missio dei*, which means the mission of God or the sending of God. And Jesus, he, you know, he was sent by the Father on mission to us, right? God so loved the world that he gave his only son. He sent his only son, right? And then Jesus says in John 20 that just like the Father sent me in the same way, I'm sending you. And he spells out in Matthew 28, he's back from the dead and he spells out why he's sending us and what we're supposed to do. And I'll read that for us. It's such a great passage. And Matthew 28, 18 says, and Jesus came and said to them, all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. I mean, what a statement. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations. That word nations is *ethnos*, which means subcultures, people groups, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I've commanded you. And behold, I am with you to the end of the age. This has become known as the great commission. And it's always relevant for every Christian.

This is what Jesus tells all Christians to do for all times. So that's the first big thing here to consider is that the great commission is always relevant, even in a pandemic, even right now. Jesus makes it clear he's back from the dead, which means he's in charge. He's got the keys. He has the authority. And with that authority, he commissions his disciples. And by commissioning them, he's commissioning us. We're just their predecessors. He doesn't give caveats like you guys should go and do this unless you're too busy or, you know, unless there's a pandemic. He doesn't do that. He doesn't give any caveats. In fact, if you go back and study history, throughout history, you know, things like plagues have actually led to the rampant spread of Christianity because Christians in the middle of those plagues took the great commission seriously. And so rather than sort of withdrawing from this command of Jesus, they ran into it. And it led to just rampant spread of Christianity as Christians loved and served, even at risk of their own peril, like Jesus had loved and served them and suffered for them. So the great commission certainly has become less relevant when things like this happen to us. And as someone has said, it wasn't a great suggestion. It's a commission, which means we don't get to vote on it. It's what we're supposed to do. So even now, those of us who are Christians, we're to still be on mission, on this mission of God, this great commission as much as ever before.

[2:54] But how are we supposed to do it? Well, that's the second thing. I think it's worth acknowledging that COVID-19 has made being a missionary tricky. Now, that's not as true for everyone, I think. I think if you are someone who's on the front lines of COVID-19, maybe you're a first responder or, you know, you work in a hospital or something like that, you've had really clear opportunities to love and serve people. But for many of us, we've been pulled back from society. We've been really taken out of society. We've been told to, quote, stay home. We've been told to isolate ourselves. And these are the very opposite things that we normally would be doing to actually go and be faithful to the mission.

Normally to be faithful to the great commission, you don't stay home. You go outside of your home. You don't isolate yourself. You go and be with people and you meet people and you spend time with people. I personally have never had a harder time trying to obey the great commission than I have during this season. This has been so hard for me to do. Many of my rhythms and really all of

our rhythms of loving and serving people have been paused or have been severely altered. And so it's just worth acknowledging that. It's even worth grieving that, you know, that we've fallen out of that sort of normal rhythm of loving and serving people in these opportunities. So what do we do? Do we just kick up our feet? You know? No, we can't do that. We've been commissioned, right? We can't take a break from it. We can't. We don't retire from the great commission. We never stop doing this until we're face-to-face at home with Jesus. So what do we do? Well, I think good missionaries find a way to still be on mission. Good missionaries find a way to still be on mission. You've heard the phrase, when the going gets tough, the tough get going. Well, this is a time where we find out what's really inside of us, right? Are we really convinced as Christians, as disciples of Jesus, that we are to love and serve others the way Jesus has loved and served us? If we're convinced of that, we will still find a way to do it, even with all these restrictions. And I have heard and seen some amazing stories, man, just incredible stories. You know, people sewing, you know, little gifts and blankets for new moms, people doing drive-up, you know, baby showers for new moms, people hosting a social distance, like church service in their cul-de-sac, people making meals for singles or those who are isolated, people making cards and delivering them to elderly people who are staying at home, people, you know, asking their neighbors, you know, who are forced to stay inside if they can go get groceries for them or can help with anything in the yard or people buying toilet paper. This is, this is groundbreaking.

This one, people buying toilet paper, finding it, buying it and giving it to someone else who needs it. It's amazing. Community groups rallying around people in their group who've lost employment, people reaching out to first responders and hospital staff saying, how can we help? How can we serve?

What can we do? People going out of their way to be kind to those who've been deemed essential and have to work? People watching the kids of single parents who have to work while their kids aren't in school and are now at home and don't know what to do. I'm only scratching the surface. I'm sure a lot of you have done this or more, but, but all this is the work of innovative missionaries who won't be stopped. Good missionaries, they don't quit. They just find a way, right? So what should you and I, what should you and I be doing, right? Should we, we should be praying this goes away.

[6:17] We should be doing that. Good missionaries pray for things like that. We should be praying for a cure, right? We should be following protocols. Those are all things that good missionaries would do.

But man, the last thing really is this good missionaries should also make the most of every opportunity. We should be making the most of this opportunity. You know, speaking of how to act and how to, to live, you know, in view of the fact that life is short and lots of people around us don't really know who Jesus is, Paul says this in Ephesians 5 verse 15. He says, be very careful. Be very careful then how you live. Be careful how you live, like the way you live your life. He says, making the most of every opportunity. And he says, because the days are evil. And he's speaking about the shortness of life. It's just a favor. It's just a breath. So Paul says, hey, in light of that, in light of the fact that so many people around you don't know who Jesus is, in light of the fact that life is really short, man, you better take every opportunity. Which means that this season that we've got for however long we've got, it isn't a season where you can afford to kick our feet up and sit back and just, you know, hopefully this thing will be over soon. We can get back to it. No, we have to find a way to make the most of this opportunity. Instead of complaining about this or twiddling our thumbs until life's back to normal, we should make the most of this opportunity in this season. So that's my hope and my prayer for you guys. God bless you. God bless me as we seek to love and serve like Jesus has loved and served us.

And may God use this moment. All of its terrible things. May God use this moment to draw many people to himself. Have a great week.