

LABOURERS TOGETHER WITH GOD

by David H. Snyder



As Paul wrote to *the church of God which is at Corinth* (I Cor. 1:2; II Cor. 1:1), he addressed many serious problems prevalent in the Corinthian assembly. Paul's two epistles to the church at Corinth focus mainly on these issues that needed to be resolved. However, God uses both books to teach us several lessons about the subject of missions. For example, II Corinthians 8 is the classic passage of Scripture concerning Faith Promise Giving. Also, II Corinthians 5:20 reminds us that *we are ambassadors for Christ*. Another lesson on missions is found in I Corinthians 3:5-9 about laboring together with God. Although the primary interpretation of this passage is for the local church, a very solid secondary application can be made to worldwide evangelization.

First Corinthians 3:5-9 states, *Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour. For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building.* I believe this passage of Scripture is illustrated in many different ways throughout this magazine. First, there are the **faces** of missions. Second, there are the many **facets** of missions. Finally, there is the **focus** of missions.

In the New Testament, a variety of different **faces** were used by God to preach the Gospel (e.g., Paul, Apollos, Cephas, etc.). Each face had a distinct personality and specific ministry. As I think about the many different faces in missions today, I am reminded of the over 1,000 missionaries serving with Baptist International Missions, Inc. Our missionaries serve around the globe in

a multitude of diverse cultures. Some minister in the Canary Islands, some in Haiti, some in the Solomon Islands, some in Europe, and some in Canada—just to name a few. Each church planter has his own personality and particular responsibilities that have been entrusted to him by the Lord of the Harvest. Although each is different, missionaries are *ministers by whom many have believed* (I Cor. 3:5).

The faces of missions naturally remind us of the many different **facets** of missions. Just as Paul had planted and Apollos had watered, the work of missions today also involves plowing, planting, watering, harvesting, and so on. Sometimes a ministry may include Bible distribution (see articles on the Solomon Islands and South Africa). Other times, humanitarian aid can be used as a tool to bring people to Christ (see Haiti articles). Often God uses Christians on short-term mission trips to assist in the church planting efforts of long-term missionaries (see article on page 22). These many facets of church planting remind us that we must all do our part. We must be good

and faithful servants of the Lord Jesus Christ. As we fulfill our responsibility, we can rejoice in the fact that *God...giveth the increase* (I Cor. 3:7). Additionally, God is the One Who will reward us for our service to Him. When our work on earth is done, we can look forward to the time when each one will receive *his own reward according to his own labour* (I Cor. 3:8).

No matter what facet of missions we discuss, our **focus** must always be that of planting churches for the glory of God. It is carnal for us to get caught up in personalities, preaching styles and petty issues. When we say, *I am of Paul* or *I am of Apollos* (I Cor. 3:4), our focus is on man rather than God. Truly, *neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth* (I Cor. 3:7). We are only tools used by God to accomplish His will. When it comes to missions, our objective must be the establishment of indigenous, autonomous, independent Baptist churches all around the world. As this goal is accomplished, our ultimate purpose of glorifying God will be realized. As Paul

reminded the church at Corinth, we *are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's* (I Cor. 6:20).

While reading this article, you have probably thought of ways in which you are or have been involved in missions. Maybe your ministry is one of plowing or planting or watering. Possibly you have helped distribute Bibles or assisted with a particular missionary project. Maybe you are supporting missionaries through prayer or finances or both. Perhaps you have served on a

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short-term missions trip or are presently serving as a long-term missionary. Whatever the task, it is imperative that we each fulfill the role God has given to us. Although our job may seem insignificant, we must remember that every act of obedience toward God has eternal significance. As each of us does our part individually, and we see what is being done corporately, it is wonderful to know that we are *labourers together with God* (I Cor. 3:9). **W**