

WHAT IS YOUR RESPONSE?

By Mark Lockhart

Each time we read Hebrews 11, we glean lessons from the faith of saints such as Abraham, Sarah, Rahab, and Moses. We usually focus on specific people and certainly it is beneficial to do so. Our nature moves us to want to know who, what, when, where, and why. Sometimes all we need to know is who—then we are willing to hear the rest of the story. However, what if we do not know who; does the rest of the story even matter? It certainly matters to our Lord. In five verses near the end of this faith chapter, the author comprises a list of tremendous struggles and persecutions endured by unidentified saints.

What then are we to learn from these verses? Perhaps, the sentiment is best perceived in the words of the Apostle Paul as he declares his desire to visit the Christians in Rome.

First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world. For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers; Making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you. For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established; That is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me (Romans 1:8–12).

Tricia Crabtree, a friend of ours, composed a song years ago titled “Bury My Heart on the Mission Field.” The mission field is so much more than a particular plot of land. It is a place where the missionary has invested his or her life in the inhabitants. Perhaps it is a place where his children were born and reared. It is a parcel of land that has become the burial place for children or a spouse. Such is the case for Margarita Johnson in Honduras who has laid to rest her husband, Carlos. The mission field is a place and a people for whom the missionary has sacrificed and faithfully served.

Pastors, missionaries, and donors are faith partners. This partnership is the foundation of their communication with one another. Communication is of great comfort and encouragement for the missionaries. Proverbs 25:25, *As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country.* It is then that we can appreciate the why and be encouraged and challenged through the faith of one another. This is the focus of Scripture. Hebrews 11:1–2, *Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders*

obtained a good report. It is through faith that these and other saints, such as missionaries, continually look to God while being obedient to their call and service. Likewise, God has you in a particular place at this precise moment. While we look to others and see their faith, we are able to be encouraged to continue in spite of difficult circumstances. Every day I live, I am proclaiming a message. It is proclaimed in what I say, in what I do, and in how I am responding to others.

The work of missionaries and their sending churches through Baptist International Missions, Inc., as an organization, is carried out through a partnership of faith. I once heard the following statement, “It is criminal to give missionaries money and send them to the field and not pray for them.” (*Author unknown*)

Who are the readers of *BIMI WORLD*? Well, for the most part, the answer is pastors, missionaries, and donors. In an informal poll, I posed the following question to several missionaries: What percentage of your donor partners faithfully communicate with you outside of contributing financially to your labor? The answer was an average of about 18 percent. The missionaries I spoke to were quick to assume personal responsibility, stating that if they would do a better job of communicating, then most likely, so too would their donors.

It is by grace and our obedience that we participate together in the work of missions. William Carey said, “I am in a strange land, no Christian friend, a large family, and nothing to supply their wants.” He also said, “Bless God, I feel peace within and rejoice in having undertaken the work.” (Howell, Clifford G. *The Advanced Guard of Missions*. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing, 1912)

In this age of technology and advancement with multiple ways to save time, it appears that not much has changed. Can you imagine, William Carey, the father of modern missions, felt as if he had no Christian friend? In spite of the fact that pastors, missionaries, and donors are busy and that neither is less busy than the other, there remains a practical challenge of how to build a level of communication.

How can this happen? For the missionary, it is to keep our donor partners informed. For the pastor, it is to keep missionaries’ names and needs before the congregation. For the donor, it is to get to know the missionaries.

What will be the result? Pastors, missionaries, and donors who encourage and pray for one another will inspire the other to remain steadfast in his commitment to the task at hand. What is your response to this need? 



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