

Title: Four Walls  
Date: November 22, 2020  
Subject: Missions  
Scripture: Matthew 28:19, 20 and more

It's been three weeks since I mentioned one of my favorite sandwiches in connection with our *missions sandwich* with S&W, Steve and Elizabeth Williams. From the feedback I've received, it's not one many or any of you will indulge in. Other foods came up in the Membership class that morning as the group discovered some of my other cravings, this time of the dessert variety – sour cream raisin pie, ice cream with crunched up potato chips. I failed to mention ice cream in which I smush and smash cake until it's spread throughout the ice cream.

Sometimes we have to wait before we're ready for dessert. And with what I mentioned, you may decide to wait a long time. This morning, it's time to top off our missions meal with some dessert.

READ Matthew 28:19, 20. Jesus Christ charged his followers to take the good news of the salvation he brings to the entire world. It's not limited to everyone going to the ends of the earth – Americans to Vietnam, Brazilians to Russia. The idea is to present the good news of Christ to people far as well as near, wherever near and far are. The challenge is often called *The Great Commission*. The sad thing is sometimes Christ followers don't view it as a priority and it becomes *The Great Omission*.

David Kinnaman, Barna Group president clarifies the mission, “Our calling as Christians was never about demographic dominance. Nor is it about cultural survival, nor simply about securing the faith of the next generation (as important as that is). The church's mission is to spread the message of saving, sacrificial love and ultimate hope that Jesus commissioned his followers to proclaim” (Outreach Magazine, p. 71, 7/8 2019).

Barna Group researched “faith-sharing experiences and expectations of Christians and non-Christians.” An article summarized the attitudes of practicing Christians defined as those who “identify as Christian, agree strongly that faith is very important in their lives and have attended church within the past month” (2/5/19, [barna.com/research/millennials-oppose-evangelism](http://barna.com/research/millennials-oppose-evangelism)). The vast majority, over 90 percent, strongly or somewhat agree “part of my faith means being a witness about Jesus ...the best thing that could ever happen to someone is for them is to come to know Jesus... when someone raises questions about faith, I know how to respond.” When it comes to feeling gifted in sharing their faith, the percentages drop to about 3/4 of millennials down to a little over half of people in the elder group.

Kinsman wrote in another place, “Some of the most troubling numbers emerging from the data are not about “them” at all. The majority of practicing Christians do not consistently support evangelism, and 47% of millennial Christians believe it is flat out wrong to evangelize” (Outreach Magazine, p. 72, July/August 2019).

He states, “This study highlights a need for Christians to bolster their confidence in certain convictions—among them, the belief that “evangelizing others is good and worthy of our time, energy and investment” ([barna.com/research/millennials-oppose-evangelism](http://barna.com/research/millennials-oppose-evangelism)).

How do we overcome our struggles, my struggles, the struggles that all believers face? What will it take to complete *The Great Commission*? Steve Williams opened the door slightly for what I had in mind. This morning we're gonna walk into the room to see the four walls that support the structure.

## I. The wall of praying

READ Matthew 9:37, 38. Our missions speakers gave us ways to pray for them. S used Colossians 4 to enumerate requests like praying for opportunities, gracious speech, to have the right words to communicate the gospel clearly. Steve and Elizabeth spoke about things they've been facing and ministries in Senegal.

Those types of requests are about praying for the harvest -- that it would be plentiful, that there will be a response to the presentation of the gospel. We need to pray in that fashion.

However, the theme of Christ's prayer is a step before those kinds of requests. It's about the first priority of getting people to become involved as workers.

When we back up to v. 36, we find another component that should be included in praying for workers. It's the idea of compassion. Jesus is the supreme example. He viewed people as sheep without a shepherd and had compassion them. We're to be people of compassion.

When we pray "Lord send more workers" the kind of people who often come to mind are young and have the ability to go to Timbuktu, Patagonia or Ulaanbaatar. But notice, the Lord didn't specify any age. He didn't specify a gender. He didn't specify any intellectual criteria. He didn't specify a geographical location. He simply said, "Ask the Lord to send more workers into his harvest." The solution to the request is anybody and everybody which means...trumpet fanfare...we can be answers to the prayer as well.

A diligent worker keeps in mind his purpose, his reason for working. As Christ's workers we're to keep in mind our purpose is to talk about Him and help people come into a right relationship with Him.

Kinnaman, "Our message of new life in Christ must connect to the inner yearnings of a potential Christian for abundance, forgiveness, purpose, meaning or relationship...Finally, let's become people of extraordinary prayer. We can revive evangelism only to the extent that we locate ourselves in God's plans and God's reality, through a discipline of prayer. Take time to pray. Pray for nonbelievers. Intercede for the next generation of Christians. Ask God to show you his heart for the world and for those who do not yet know him. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, keep living Christ's kingdom where you are, and inviting others to join you" (Outreach Magazine, p. 72, July/August 2019).

## II. The second wall is giving

READ 2 Corinthians 8:7. Excel in the grace of giving. It might be surprising that the Lord stated through Paul that the Corinthians excelled in their spiritual lives. One aspect needed further development so they would excel in giving of their finances. Though the specific need was providing for those affected by famine, the principles this chapter and the next extend to the whole area of giving.

Giving financially is vital to what happens. You could say it's one of the necessary evils that money is the grease that lubricates the engines of business and missions and churches.

I heard of a young girl who wanted to give to missions, but she only had a penny. She gave it and the missionary was very appreciative. He decided he wanted to do the most he could with her penny to honor her sacrificial gift. He invested in a tract which he gave to a young tribal chief. The chief appreciated it as it was in his language, but he was too proud to admit he couldn't read. He desperately wanted to know what the words on the paper said so he traveled a long distance to find somebody who could tell him. He found a person in a distant city. The chief was moved by the message about Jesus Christ. He gave his life to the Lord and went back to his village where he told his tribe what had happened. Many came to know Jesus as Savior. They sent out a call for missionaries to come to tell them more about Jesus. All because a young girl gave what she had.

The recent issue of Alliance Life magazine connects the dots between giving and the results. The opening editorial, *Giving Makes a Difference*, states "Giving changes lives, keeps Alliance workers in place and changes us." The magazine has articles that expand the various kinds of giving and generosity. It shares stories of a stone age people group receiving the light of Christ, Alliance Women projects like a home for pregnant teens, prison ministry; food, water and hope to displaced Africans; relief efforts after the California fires.

I read about orphanages in Eastern Europe. Many kids are forced to live in them because their parents have abandoned them. They don't have the means to care for the kids, don't want their kids anymore or the kids have disabilities. In one city, 240 children including 50 babies lacked life-saving medicines. Alliance workers partnered with local believers to provide them needed cleaning supplies, gloves and sanitary items. Local Christians were able to do this while those from outside that country were under strict quarantine. All made possible by the giving of the Alliance United States family, by the giving of our church family.

Local results of giving: building the community of believers in this place, salvations in youth group, AWANA, VBS, outreaches through community appreciation.

Giving is too often thought of only in dollars and cents. The truth is giving includes all the things the Lord has given to us - talents, time, abilities, weaknesses. We're to give them back to him so he can use them.

III. The third wall is going

READ Romans 10:14, 15. Preaching is to be understood as proclaiming the message. It can be done by a 5 year old telling in simple form what he knows: "Jesus loves me. This I know for the Bible tells me so."

The principle of going is often used to describe the worldwide missions challenge. There are people who need to go to cultures and societies not their own. They learn another language, adapt to new surroundings because they desire to take the good news of Jesus to a people group that is unreached or under reached.

The idea of missions is not the exclusive territory of the United States, or North America or the western world. Initially, these areas were the agencies of missions. However, as the gospel has spread, so has the desire from people in other countries to send missionaries. South Korea has been very active. Even groups in the jungle of Papua New Guinea who've had the gospel for a relatively short time of 70 years have been sending missionaries to other tribes on the island who haven't heard. They also have to adapt to a different culture and learn a different language, all with the desire to tell about Jesus.

Going isn't limited to overseas missions. Jesus tells his disciples they're to be his witnesses in "Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). Sometimes the going involves a long plane ride or crossing the ocean to the ends of the earth. Sometimes the going is nearby to one's Jerusalem. The idea of a witness is somebody tells what they know. It's been likened to one beggar telling another beggar where they can find food, in this case vital spiritual food that can satisfy the soul.

One of Jesus' trips took him across the sea of Galilee to area of the Gerasenes in Gentile territory. There he encountered a demon possessed man. The Savior freed the man from a legion of evil spirits which were allowed to enter a herd of pigs. The man begged Jesus to be allowed to travel with him. Jesus had other plans. "Go home to your own people and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you." The man went away and began to tell in the Decapolis (or 10 cities) how much Jesus had done for him" (Mark 5:19, 20). Luke's account makes the order even more localized. Jesus tells the man to "Return home" and "the man went away and told all over town how much Jesus had done for him" (Luke 8:39).

Jesus used other images to communicate his followers' role. "You are the salt of the earth... You are the light of the world... let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:13, 14, 16). "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:39).

Loving our neighbor may include going to their child's sports event before inviting them a movie at church, taking Christmas cookies before inviting them to Christmas Eve service (maybe not in the same year), having a block party. Our son in law Mark is going to his neighbors. He's been friendly and having 5 kids creates some interest in the new people on the block. He's notified them that he is praying for them and is soliciting prayer requests.

It may ease our trepidation about going to learn something Barna research discovered about the top qualities people are looking for in a person with whom to talk about faith. 62 % said "listens without judgment" and 50% "does not force a conclusion." They aren't looking for someone who has all the answers or is perfect. They just want someone who is real and authentic.

Our responsibility isn't to reap but to sow. The apostle Paul spoke of his role and God's: "I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose, and they will each be rewarded according to their own labor" (1 Corinthians 3:6 – 8).

A woman driver was tailgating on a busy road. When the man ahead slowed to a stop at a yellow light, the woman hit the horn, cussing and screaming in frustration and gesturing angrily. She was in mid-rant when she heard a tap on her window. She turned to see a police officer who ordered her to exit the car with her hands up. He took her to the police station and placed her in a holding cell. An hour later, the officer returned, "I'm sorry, Ma'am. This has been a big mistake. When I pulled up behind you, I noticed your 'What Would Jesus Do?' license plate holder and your 'Follow Me to Sunday School' bumper sticker. I assumed the car was stolen!"

Pastor Alistair Begg quipped "If you can't shine, at least twinkle!" She wasn't doing even that.

#### IV. The fourth wall is sending

Stay in Romans 10:14, 15. A person can believe once they've heard. They can hear when somebody tells them the good news. That requires a person going to make contact. That person is sent, especially true when it comes to overseas missions, which requires someone or some group as the sender. The ultimate sending agent is Jesus who sends his followers into the world as witnesses. Luke's account of Jesus telling his followers to ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into the harvest field is followed by the Lord saying, "Go! I am sending you out..." (Luke 10:2, 3). We connect the four walls as the Lord of the harvest sends workers in answer to prayer. Each Christ follower is to be involved in these four. It will look different from person to person. One wall may be thicker and have more substance to it.

We often think, and it's the general opinion of many followers of Jesus Christ, that it's harder to share our faith and to be a witness for him today than it was in the past. Evangelist Luis Palau disagrees. He admits there are problems to overcome like Christians using "insider theological terms" and resistance from those who think if we make salvation too easy, everyone will want it, to which he says "Isn't that the point?"

He asserts Christians are the real obstacle. "We will have moments of difficulty, even persecution. But in the big picture those are typically relatively limited. We evangelicals have too much of a martyr complex...The No. 1 barrier is our own minds, our own *Christian* embarrassment about Jesus. We are so quick to make assumptions. We think we know what the other person is thinking. We construct elaborate apologetics in our head, all based on what they might feel, words they might say, how they might react. We argue on their behalf against us, thinking they'll dismiss us as an extremist nut or a fundamentalist or whatever. Come on. We don't know our own minds most of the time, let alone someone else's. These made up arguments in our heads about all the reasons why the other person is uninterested or will reject us or whatever only paralyze us. It's silly. And it's because deep down, we're embarrassed. I don't think there are that many barriers to evangelism. We imagine there are, but that's on us. Many obstacles transform into gifts when you get close to them in faith...There are fewer external barriers to the gospel than we act like there are. We hold ourselves back" (Outreach Magazine, p. 84, July/August 2019).

Mathematical problem – You're driving an old-time steam locomotive, leaving New York at 6:00 AM, traveling at 50 mph headed for Chicago. Another engine leaves Chicago at the same time, but travels at 40 mph. The distance between Chicago and New York is approximately 800 miles. Who is the engineer of the first train? (YOU ARE). It can be easy to lose track of the most important detail. The same thing can happen as we follow Christ. We lose track of the mission, which is the completion of the Great Commission.

John Harper, a widower, and his 6 year old daughter were among the passengers on the Titanic. The other thing you should know about him is he loved Jesus and wanted people to know Him. When the ship hit the iceberg, Harper put his child in a lifeboat and ran back into the chaos to save lives. He distributed life jackets and reportedly shouted, "Let the women, children, and the unsaved into the lifeboats!" He shared about Jesus with those around him until he breathed his last breath. Harper didn't lose track of why he was on earth.