

ACTS OF ADVOCACY



Despite considerable challenges, the individuals we serve do not pity themselves, but live with joy- A lesson for us all.



The Mission
Society

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

“It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill. The latter do so in love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains. But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice.”
Philippians 1:15-18

Why do I want to be used by God?

Earlier this month, when I was reading through Paul's letter to the Philippians, the verses above struck me significantly. Paul says that during his time in prison, there were individuals preaching Christ to others out of “envy and rivalry”. He says that they were not sincere, but were thinking they could “stir up trouble” for him while he was in prison. I have found myself re-reading these verses in recent days, and asking, “Is that even possible?”

Is it possible to seek to serve God – to be used by Him – for reasons that really have nothing to do with Him at all, but instead are actually all about us? And if this is the case, is it possible for God to use us anyway?

Oh, how these questions have weighed on my heart this month! And then the questions that have followed...

- Does that mean that my choosing to move to St. Petersburg, Russia may have been for some reason other than my devotion to Jesus?
- Or that my choosing “full-time” service of Him doesn't mean that I'm somehow better than those who never make that same choice?
- Or that when others are blessed through me somehow, it really is *God* blessing them, and really doesn't have any reflection on my own holiness???

And I've got to tell you, I'm really beginning to suspect that the answer to these questions is Yes!!!

Why do I desire to be used by the Lord? I know that I do love my Father in heaven, and I want to honor Him. However, following are some of the other reasons that have occurred to me recently on why I have a desire to be used by Him:

- I want to be able to somehow justify my own existence.
- I want to feel like I am important.
- I believe that *I* have something *others* need.
- I want *others* in the church to know that I love Him.

(and this one *really* hurts to admit)

- I want others in the church to know that *He* loves *me*.

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I was speaking to Charlie about this a little, and we asked the question of ourselves, “During all of the years that we have been working in St. Petersburg, and traveling and preparing to move here, how much of our motivation was solely out of our love for our Father who had called us, and how much of it was for some other reason? We debated a bit, but we both agreed that **less than 10%** of our motivation in all that we have done regarding our call to Russia has been solely because our Father has called us to it, and because we simply want to express our love to Him.

Now, in these years, through this ministry, I have seen the Lord bring kids in Russia and folks in the states to salvation, I have seen God's healing – physical, emotional, and spiritual, I have seen relationships healed, I have seen the Lord deliver individuals from various sin and bondage in their lives. **The Lord has flat out moved in so many amazing ways in these times.**

But I had to ask Charlie, “Imagine what He could have done through us if our focus – the drive of our desire to serve Him - had been to solely show Him we loved Him *20% of the time?*” And then, of course, imagine what He could do if we could actually somehow lay down our own selfish desires and our own need for control all of the time, and if we asked Him to make us so that the only desire of our hearts, the only motivation driving us, was not to give people what we thought they needed, was not to convince people that God loves us or that we are important to Him, was not to justify our own existence, but was completely to express our love to Him?

1 John 5:2-3 says: *“This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out His commands. This is love for God: to obey His commands.”*

I don't think that my being involved in a church, or teaching a Sunday School class, or serving here in Russia makes me any more important or valuable to God than when I was in college, not attending church, making bad decisions, and being an obnoxious, rebellious kid. What I think it does make me, however, is closer to and more in love with Him.

And I know that steps I take to move closer to Him give me opportunity and freedom to be in His presence more and more, which has led to healing, and joy, and peace, and other blessings in my life far too numerous to list here. **I am so sorry that I have put my desire to be used by Him before my desire for Him.** It seems to me now that this is, in fact, idolatry, and I am asking Him to help cleanse me from this sin in my life. I also ask that He help me to trust Him more that He really is all I need to desire – He really will take care of the rest if I truly seek Him first in my life.

We have invited a few girls to begin to gather with us once a month to pray for each other and to learn to pray for others. We ask that you will lift this time and these girls up to the Lord regularly this month (our goal for intercessory prayer for others is going to be 3 times a week – maybe you can join us!).

We love you dearly. The Lord has blessed us immeasurably through your lives and your love. Peace and blessings be with you in Christ Jesus.

Love,
Miki, Charlie & Isabel



Ways to donate to this ministry:

To make a donation by check:

- send a check to the following address, noting “Chastain/Russia 322” in the memo:

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