

Missions in Samaria

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MM-Musings
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Preface

A few years ago I was asked to preach a series of four sermons on missions at West Baguio Baptist Church, in Baguio City, Philippines. I decided to structure the sermons around the idea of missions to Samaria. Dr. Michael Janapin suggested that I could expand on the idea and make it into a book. I did not plan to do this, but eventually, I created an article that was broken into four sections based on the four sermons. From there, I decided to create a short book at a leisurely pace. However, with the COVID-19 pandemic and the enhanced quarantine placed on us here in the Philippines, I found I had time to put my efforts into it sooner rather than later.

Acts Chapter 8 tells of how the church of Samaria was started because of a scattering of the Church at Jerusalem. That scattering was due to persecution. Today, we have a scattering of the church of a different form--- not being able to gather because of a contagion. Perhaps, however, we can gain from the experience of Acts 8. Perhaps this time of scattering can be redeemed. Joseph, in Genesis 50, could tell his brothers that although what they did was intended to do great harm, God intended it for

good to accomplish His will and save many lives.

I don't think it is beneficial to say that God acted to spread the COVID-19 virus, or to come up with broad guesswork regarding the future or the mind of God. But much like Joseph in Genesis and Philip in Acts 8, perhaps we can serve in some small way as God's servants in taking something that does great harm, and find a way to create great good.

During the time of expanding the very short book into its present slightly longer book, I learned that the actions of the Church as it pertained to the Samaritan people was often far less commendable than it was in the first century. I suppose that shows another side of things. As Christians, while we can join in God's redemptive work to make good out of what is bad, we must also fight our tendency to destroy what is good-- squandering what was done and seeking to undermine the Spirit's work with a people.

Bob Munson
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Introduction

This book started from a simple question. Why did Jesus specifically mention Samaria in Acts 1:8? Acts 1:8 is one of the places where the Great Commission is given. Each one of the Commissions has its own unique features.

As Jesus was preparing to ascend to be with the Father, He had one last message to share with His disciples. Part of it is His call for them to serve as witnesses of Him, acting as His ambassadors (apostles) to the world. Each Gospel writer has a different spin on this message. Many people like the Matthew version. It is so popular that it is often called the Great Commission, rather than one of the versions of the Great Commission. No problem. Many have traditionally found it appealing because of the seeming “missionary call” to go. However, with more focus on the original text we find that going wasn't actually the main emphasis of the command. Many in missions like it because it appears to establish a pattern for missions. Wherever we go we must make disciples, baptizing them into the church, and teaching them to follow Christ (which then places the new disciples under the obligation to

obey the Great Commission).

Mark and Luke have interesting aspects. Mark is interesting in that it never mentions God directly. I don't think that is particularly relevant, but is a bit strange since all of the other passages not only speak of God, but each one identifies each member of the Godhead--- Father, Son, and Holy Spirit--- as actively involved in being part of the great Commission.

My favorite Great Commission is the one in the Gospel of John. I like it because it perhaps gives the clearest description of what we are supposed to do, even if that description is very succinct. Go as the Father has sent Me (Jesus). I think John Stott is correct that one must look to the life, character, and ministry of Jesus Christ to see what it means to live out the Great Commission. If one wants to know if one is obeying the Great Commission, one will not learn this by how many tracts one hands out, or how energetically one preaches, but by how one's life is conformed to the words and actions of Christ.

The Great Commission found in Acts 1 doesn't emphasize the how of being witnesses, but in location--- an outward moving as witnesses and expansion of the Kingdom of God. But why would this version emphasize this? Even the version in the Gospel of Luke (by the same

author) doesn't describe this. One reason could be that the structure of the Book of Acts supports it. The gospel went out from Jerusalem to Judea AND Samaria and from there to the ends of the world. However, no other nation or region is mentioned. Galilee, the center of the ministry of Jesus is not listed. Babylon, the home of the largest group of Jews at the time was not listed. Syria was not included in the Great Commission of Acts 1, although it was the primary launching point of Gentile missions.

This book works from the premise that Samaria was specifically noted because the ministry to Samaria was important to Jesus, and perhaps He was concerned that it would not be as important to His disciples. If this is true, why would the apostles not be interested in reaching out to the Samaritans?

We will look at Samaria from two missiological fronts. First, we will look at it historically as an example (good and/or bad) of missions outreach. Second, we will look at Samaria metaphorically as a type of mission field--- one close to home and yet decidedly not local in some key ways. From these two fronts I hope we can come up with a few tentative thoughts of value for us to day.

As Christians we know that we are supposed to love our enemies. However, history has shown

that far too often we have fallen back into the pattern of loving our friends and hating our enemies. This is hardly a deep observation. It is a seemingly natural tendency of mankind to define social groups, establishing imaginary walls separating “Us” and “Them.” Sometimes we will even take those prejudices and seek to turn justify them Biblically, and create new dogma. To reinforce these categories we begin to associate positive commendable qualities with those seen as “Us” and negative, contemptible, qualities with those seen as “Them.” How rarely do these qualities stand up to outside scrutiny.

However, as Christians, we are really called on to do better than that. We are called to love our enemies, and to show kindness to strangers or aliens among us. Certainly, if the Great Commandment, Golden Rule, and Great Commission are relevant in our actions and attitudes as Christians, they are relevant in our interactions with all peoples. Again, this is hardly a groundbreaking observation, but one that needs to be given as a periodic reminder.

This book is broken into several chapters.

Chapter One is “The Problem of Samaria.” It looks at the issues that the Jews had with Samaria and the Samaritans in the Old Testament and Intertestamental Period.

Chapter Two is “The Preparation for Samaria.” It looks at how Jesus ministered in Samaria, and prepared His disciples for future ministry in Samaria.

Chapter Three is “The Potential of Samaria.” This looks at the expansion of the Gospel and the Church into Samaria as described in the Book of Acts.

Chapter Four is “Backpedaling in Samaria.” We might be tempted to think that the work in Samaria in the Book of Acts continued deep into the church age. Surprisingly, Christians soon rejected Christ's example and command, leading, arguably to a form of genocide. This is not exactly a happy ending to the story, but it can be lesson for us. Besides, the ending has not actually be written yet.

Chapter Five is “The Pattern of Samaria.” This looks at how we might learn from the past, the good and the bad. From this we can consider what we can learn as we find our own “Samarias” today.

Finally, in Chapter 6 we will look at “Missions in our own Samarias.” What can and should missions in our own 'Samarias' look like?

This is a short book, and sometimes I feel it should be shorter. But I hope you will take the

time to read it and consider if it has any worthwhile meaning for you, and me, and the church today.

At the end of the book I have a couple of Appendices. They are there to help one think about the Great Commission(s) from a couple of different perspectives. Both Appendices presume that each Great Commission passage was a distillation of the broader guidance of Jesus to His apostles, based on what each writer sought to focus on. Appendix A looks to bring together the different aspects of the command into a broader statement. In a sense, it is then a “Harmony” of the passages. Appendix B does the same thing but in terms of God's role in the Great Commission.

Regarding the Appendices, I think they are relevant since the book is really about the Great Commission. If, however, you don't think so, finding it extraneous, well it is good then that I placed them at the end, right?

Chapter One

The Problem of Samaria

As we see the development of a Jewish perspective of the group that came to be known as the Samaritans, it is understandable that these people were missional challenges for both the Jews and the early church. So let's consider, briefly, their history from the period of the divided kingdom up through the Intertestamental period.

Samaria was originally the term for the city established by King Omri, the ruler of the Kingdom of Israel (the "Northern Kingdom"). He established it as the capital. It was built to rival Solomon's Jerusalem. It was expanded and beautified under King Ahab. <Endnote 1> Of course it was not meant to rival Jerusalem only, but also to serve as part of the rivalry with the Southern Kingdom and the Davidic dynasty. The city of Samaria gradually gained prominence and the name became associated with the region over time. Later, the term Samaria became associated with the region of Northern Israel, especially the area known as the

Samarian Hills.

Samaritans then became associated with residents of the region of Samaria, and the religion that was practiced by Samaritans became known as Samaritanism. The name Samaritan became pejorative, a term of insult, but it is quite possible that it was from the very beginning. The term, after all, tied these people to the rivals of the Jews and linked them to the stereotype of the Northern Kingdom as religious apostates.

So what were some of the challenges or problems that Samaritans provided, unwittingly generally, to the Jews (and later to the early church)?

The first problem was their ancestry. Samaria was the land in Present-day Israel that at one time was the land inheritance of the children of Israel... particularly the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh. According to the Old Testament, when the Northern Kingdom was broken up, Assyria took away tens of thousands of the Israelites and relocated them to present-day Iraq and Syria. Then they brought in thousands of foreigners into this region who intermarried with the Israelites that were left behind. King Sargon II of Assyria had recorded regarding the cities of the Northern Kingdom, "I set up again and made

more populous than before. People from lands which I had taken I settled there.” <Endnote 2>

Ezra 4:2 spoke of people of mixed race who wanted to help in building the temple in Jerusalem. This help was rejected and led to conflict described in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. It is assumed that these people were what later became known as Samaritans. It has also been theorized that after they were rebuffed, they went and built their own temple on Mount Gerizim near Shechem. (Curiously, however, there is no specific information as to when that temple was built. Josephus says that the temple existed for two centuries before it was destroyed, but we don't know where that information came from.)

Ezra chapter 10 and Nehemiah 13 spoke of the efforts of both Ezra and Nehemiah to prevent Jews, especially priests from intermarrying with foreigners. This became a very big issue with calls for men to divorce themselves from their wives and families. Ignoring, just for a moment, the appropriateness of this response, one can see the growing attitude towards racial intermarriage. They tended to see this “unfaithfulness” to race as unfaithfulness to God. The Jews in the time of Christ thought of the Samaritans as descendants of these mixed

groups. In other words, Samaritans were viewed as Israelites who violated God's call to maintain racial "purity" and intermarried with other people. It is worth noting that Samaritans did, and do, consider themselves to be Israelites.

I would like to take a bit of an aside on this issue for a bit. It is interesting to note that the Mosaic Law does not actually condemn intermarriage between Israelite and non-Israelite. In Deuteronomy 7:3, it states that the Israelites should not intermarry with the major Canaanite tribes. However, the main reason for this was because God had put these tribes under condemnation and so they were to be utterly destroyed (Deuteronomy 7:1-2) Therefore the command was limited to specific tribes, for a unique reason that applied to no other people group. However, a cautious note was added after that provided a more universal principle. Intermarrying with foreigners risks leading to sons and daughters following foreign gods,

Generally, moral unfaithfulness that could spring from "racial" unfaithfulness was the big concern, as can be seen by stories of Samson, Solomon, and Ahab. Some marriages were not condemned, such as Moses and Zipporah, Salmon and Rahab, and Boaz and Ruth. In all three cases, the pagan spouse appears to have become a follower of the God of Israel. As such, the key concern was moot. By the time of Ezra

and Nehemiah, this concern of intermarriage with foreigners leading to unfaithfulness to God became such a great issue (Nehemiah actually pointed out Solomon's mistake as the basis for his strong response) that intermarriage with foreigners could be viewed as equivalent to violating the Mosaic Law.

Interestingly, the Samaritans for centuries prohibited intermarriage with non-Samaritans in a similar way for similar reasons. This only changed in the 20th century, where sons could marry non-Samaritan women as long as the women convert to the Samaritan faith.

The Samaritans were relatives of the Jews... but they were the type of relatives that one likes to ignore... the “black sheep of the family.” Samaritans were the black sheep of the Israelite family. Strangely, however, the Samaritans appeared to demonstrate a positive side of intermarriage. The Samaritans in the time of Christ were monotheists, worshiping the God of Abraham, and following the Law of Moses. It would not be too great a stretch to say they were one of the relatively few success stories of the Israelites sharing their faith beyond themselves.

The second problem was their history. After King Solomon died, Israel had civil war and the nation divided into the Kingdom of Israel in the

North, and the Kingdom of Judah in the South. The Kingdom of Israel and the Kingdom of Judah not always, but often, fought with each other. The Kingdom of Judah had as its capital, the city of Jerusalem.

The terms Samaria and Samaritan connect with Jewish history as terms of rivals. The term harkens back to the rivalry, and sometimes even warfare, between the Northern Kingdom and the Southern Kingdom. The term suggests of a region and people who were unfaithful to the line of David, and the line of the Messiah. Even though the political breakaway was a response to the actions of King Rehoboam (grandson of King David), and was prophesied about as well as seemingly approved of by God, it is understandable that the Jews, people of the Southern Kingdom, would see the action as treasonous. The term "Samaria" was associated with that treason.

So the Jews--- the people of Judah--- were often in conflict with the people of Samaria, for hundreds of years. <Endnote 3> After the Babylonian captivity, Nehemiah returned to rebuild the destroyed walls of Jerusalem. While he was doing this, local people tried to prevent the rebuilding of these walls, even sending letters to Persia suggesting that the Jews were involved in sedition.

The Jews considered the Samaritans to be descendants from these perceived enemies of Judah and Jerusalem. Continued feuding, and occasional violence, continued up until the time of Christ. To the Jews, the Samaritans were bad neighbors. But because they were also related, they were more than bad neighbors... in fact, there were bad family. There was bad blood.

In truth, if one was quite honest, it could be argued that the Jews were worse neighbors to the Samaritans than vice versa. During the Hasmonean era, the Jews exercised their growing power in the region by attacking Samaritan sites. During the leadership of John Hyrcanus (ca. 111-112 BC) the Samaritan temple was destroyed along with other sites of importance to the Samaritan faith. <Endnote 4>

We can fall into this trap as well. It is easy for us to view someone through the lens of social class or caste, political party, or group allegiance. It is often hard to see people as God sees them. The Jews could have seen the Samaritans as fellow brothers and sisters of the same faith. This commonly did not happen.

The third problem was their faith. According to the Old Testament, after Assyria transplanted foreigners into the region of Samaria (II Kings 17), the people suffered from a curse (wild animals). The people followed a tried and true

method... learn about the local god and try to appease Him or Her. You may recall Naaman grabbing bags of Israeli soil to bring with him to Damascus. Presumably, in his mind, to be a follower of the God of Israel meant that he should bring some of the land of Israel, the land of Israel's God, to his home. If the God of Israel is the God of the land of Israel, then by having some of the soil of Israel in his courtyard, Naaman would be under the protection of this same God. While we may smile at such superstition, Christians of all flavors often embrace our symbols to curry God's special favor. Such a view may indeed be foolish, but I believe God loves us even in our foolishness.

The transplanted people set up a religion very much in line with the local faith of Israel, but with its religious center not in Jerusalem. Ultimately, they developed a competing religion that utilized a version of the Pentateuch, and eventually its own competing temple and synagogues. Their faith and beliefs were very similar to Judaism. They both believed in the God of Abraham, and in the Mosaic Law. Their differences stemmed from differences in how to interpret the Law. Much like Muslims centuries later, they revised the narrative so that the primary blessing came through them, not the Jews. (Jesus corrected this with the woman at the well, in John 4, by stating that salvation is indeed through the Jews, but also that the disagreement between the two

parties was becoming moot.) As such, despite similarities, the Samaritans were seen as apostates by the Jews. The Jews of Jerusalem and surrounding areas believed that the only legitimate temple was the one in Jerusalem. The Samaritans had their temple on Mount Gerizim. Both locations had great religious significance in Israelite history.

Their faiths, however, were so similar that it may be more accurate today to describe Samaritanism not so much a separate religion, but a separate denomination within Judaism. In 70AD the temple in Jerusalem was destroyed and, like the Samaritan temple on Mount Gerizim, has never been rebuilt. Unlike modern Judaism, Samaritanism did not end the priesthood and sacrifices on their temple site. Until today, Samaritans maintain an Aaronic priesthood that they believe to be descended from Zadok and hold annual Passover sacrifices there. <Endnote 5>

But these problems were not the real problem.

Many Jews had allowed these differences to engender hate in their hearts for Samaritans. They would commonly avoid Samaria in their travels. It seems that (from John 8:48) one of the harshest things a Jew could say about

someone was that he was a demon-possessed Samaritan.

The disciples were not immune to this attitude. Luke 9:53-54 describes two of Christ's disciples wanting to destroy an entire Samaritan village due to a lack of hospitality. They asked Jesus permission to call down fire on Samaritans who did not welcome them. Jesus did not permit this, but offered a preferable alternative--- go to a different village to receive hospitality.

The attitude of the disciples described in Luke 9 was a problem that Jesus had to correct. Just going to the next town would not be adequate. It is not surprising in Luke 10:5 that Jesus told His disciples NOT to go minister to Samaritans or Gentiles. Some have seen this as a racist attitude on the part of Jesus, or evidence that He saw His ministry as local only-- just to the Jews. A reasonable alternative explanation is that Jesus knew that His disciples were not ready to effectively minister cross-culturally. The disciples were trainees. They needed to be trained to serve effectively.

I have certainly known good Christians who are so enmeshed in their own culture, that they could not effectively minister to people in other cultures. Many missionaries have funny, and sometimes tragic stories, of short-term missionaries who come to another country and

just cannot deal with people of another culture. They needed preparation. In some cases, they just should not go. Humans are social creatures, but that social nature demonstrates itself not only in drawing people together, but also driving people apart.

Jesus did not choose His disciples just to reach out to Jews in Judea and Samaria (and Babylon, and diaspora groups throughout the Roman Empire and the Middle East). He was preparing them to go to ALL peoples. In the next chapter we will see some ways that Jesus did this.

Summary

As we enter the first century AD in Palestine, we see the Jews and the Samaritans overseen by a foreign power. This foreign power was hated, but that common enemy was not adequate to bring the Jews and Samaritans together. Issues of ancestry, history, and faith led to bad blood. Still, the issues were not insurmountable. It would however, take one to set the example of a better way.

Chapter Two

The Preparation for Samaria

Clearly, the disciples were not ready to reach out to Samaritans. Much like Jonah, they seemed more open to the thought of God destroying their enemy than saving them.

The attitude of the disciples needed to be changed first. In ministry, it is the minister who has to change first, not the respondent. As noted before, it is hardly surprising that Jesus warned the disciples not to go off and work in Gentile or Samaritan villages. They needed to be prepared to change.

Jesus prepared them on a number of occasions and in a number of ways. He made statements making it evident that His message and mission was to all people (Luke 4 in His message in the synagogue of Nazareth is an example). He used non-Jews in positive roles in his messages (such as “The Good Samaritan”) and even compared them favorably to Jews on a number of occasions. Many of his parables suggested that God was ready to open the doors to people

of all types, not just the “chosen few.” God was about to send out His servants into the highways and byways to invite all to join in His kingdom. He did miraculous acts for Gentiles, such as to the Gadarene demoniac, and the Samaritan leper.

One of these evidences of Jesus' favor of Gentiles is in Matthew 15:21-28, <Endnote 6>

And Jesus went away from there and withdrew to the district of Tyre and Sidon. And behold, a Canaanite woman from that region came out and was crying, “Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is severely oppressed by a demon.” But he did not answer her a word. And his disciples came and begged him, saying, “Send her away, for she is crying out after us.” He answered, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” But she came and knelt before him, saying, “Lord, help me.” And he answered, “It is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs.” She said, “Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table.” Then Jesus answered her, “O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you

desire.” And her daughter was healed instantly.

In this you can see three attitudes exhibited by Jesus that seem out of character. They draw into question Jesus's favor of this woman--- perhaps even Gentiles in general. He acted and responded in ways that suggested that the woman was:

Not worthy of His time v. 23

Not worthy of His attention v. 24

Not worthy of His respect v. 26

Many struggle with this, but in the broader context it appears as if Jesus was teaching His disciples a lesson by mimicking their attitudes. The disciples said to Jesus... Send her away... She is annoying... She is bothering us. She is not worthy of our respect, not worthy of our attention, not worthy of our time.

But the interaction of Jesus with the woman undermined these attitudes, and in the end Jesus gave her all three. He gave her His time. He gave her His attention. He gave her His respect. Instead of Jesus changing His mind, it

seems as if Jesus intentionally used this drama to convey a message to His disciples.

The question is, 'Did the disciples get the message?' It seems as if they did. Firstly, thirty plus years after this event, Matthew remembered it and took time to tell us it. Not only did Matthew remember, but Peter did as well, because Mark recorded Peter's version of this event as well.

Secondly, according to Matthew, right after this event Jesus took them to an area near the Sea of Galilee. But this was an area where the people were predominantly Gentiles, not Jews. Many focus on the feeding of the 5000, but often ignore the feeding of the 4000 (or consider it a competing tradition of the same event). But perhaps the feeding of the 4000 is in some ways more important. The feeding of the 5000 was for the Jews. But the feeding of the 4000 was for the Gentiles. Matthew specifically notes the people praising the God of Israel, suggesting that up to this point, the God of Israel was NOT their god. This event was the largest single event that was recorded where Jesus shared the good news with Gentiles (non-Jews), and He did it right after helping the Canaanite woman.

Reading this story in Matthew 15: 29-33:

Jesus went on from there and walked beside the Sea of Galilee. And he went up on the mountain and sat down there. And great crowds came to him, bringing with them the lame, the blind, the crippled, the mute, and many others, and they put them at his feet, and he healed them, so that the crowd wondered, when they saw the mute speaking, the crippled healthy, the lame walking, and the blind seeing. And they glorified the God of Israel.

Then Jesus called his disciples to him and said, "I have compassion on the crowd because they have been with me now three days and have nothing to eat. And I am unwilling to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way." And the disciples said to him, "Where are we to get enough bread in such a desolate place to feed so great a crowd?"

Here, the disciples did not tell Jesus to send those people away because they were bothersome. They did not suggest that the people were not worth their time, attention, and respect. The only concern was that they did not know how they could help in feeding them.

The feeding of the 5000 already occurred, and

one might say that they should have known what Jesus would do. But to be fair, Jesus did not feed every group that came to Him. And the only other group that Jesus fed was made up of Jews. Perhaps the disciples were not ready to see that what Jesus did with the Jews, He desired to do, and could do, with the Gentiles. Continuing on with the story in Matthew 15:34-38...

And Jesus said to them, "How many loaves do you have?" They said, "Seven, and a few small fish." And directing the crowd to sit down on the ground, he took the seven loaves and the fish, and having given thanks he broke them and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. And they all ate and were satisfied. And they took up seven baskets full of the broken pieces left over. Those who ate were four thousand men, besides women and children.

This showed Jesus working with Gentiles. Jews, as a group at least, saw themselves at odds with Gentiles, especially those Gentiles who lived and ruled on land they considered to be their own. Yet they had even bigger problems with Samaritans. Jesus gave another lesson, this one being in John 4.

It is interesting that in the previous chapter (John 3) Jesus is speaking to a well-respected Jewish religious leader. In the next chapter He is talking to a Samaritan woman who has had many husbands. The fact that she has had many husbands could point to loose morals, or perhaps a more likely scenario is that she is barren. In these times, a barren woman is seen as cursed of God, so either way, in stark contrast to Nicodemus, she is a person shunned by Jews, and even to some extent by her own people, on several levels.

John 4 is a long passage so you can take a moment and read it for yourself. Consider first this passage in comparison to the Matthew passages listed previously in this chapter.

- In the first passage, Jesus goes to a Gentile region and reaches out to a Canaanite, or Gentile woman.
- In the second passage, Jesus goes to a Gentile region and reaches out to a group of Gentiles.
- In this third passage, Jesus reaches out to a Samaritan woman, and then to an entire Samaritan village.

Jesus spoke to the Samaritan Woman in a caring manner. He did this when the disciples were not around. When they came back they were surprised to find Jesus talking to a Samaritan woman. But this time they were getting smarter. They were thinking (in verse 27) "What is Jesus doing... why is he talking to her." But they kept silent.

Jesus let them know that He was planting the seed of God's work in this Samaritan village and giving the disciples the opportunity to join in God's work by harvesting what was planted. (Verse 37) It goes on to say that many Samaritans responded (Verses 38-42). The disciples were able to witness a great revival and even, in some small way, be a part of it. Jesus was modeling what He wanted His disciples to, ultimately, do themselves. Later on when Jesus shares the Great Commission with His disciples, it is in no way a subversion of His previous ministry. In fact, John recorded that Jesus informed them of what they should do by what He has done-- "As they Father hath sent me, so send I you." Jesus may have ministered first to the Jews, but it was never His intention to be only to the Jews. The Kingdom he proclaimed was always far bigger than that.

Summary

These passages suggest a few lessons.

- We need to learn that others are worthy of our attention
- We need to learn that others are worthy of our time
- We need to learn that others are worthy of our respect
- We need to learn to interact with others (talk, share, help)
- We need to see that God is already working with others
- We need to jump in and join God in what He has already started with others

As we read further in the New Testament, we discover that the disciples did learn these lessons from Jesus. Even then it was still a slow process to move from belief to action. Despite the last talk that Jesus shared with His disciples telling them to go into all the world, and despite the Pentecost event that clearly showed that the

message of God was for all people by showing it was for all languages, they were slow in putting this understanding into practice.

Slow is okay. Habits die hard, and new habits only grudgingly develop. But they did eventually learn and act, as we will see in the next chapter.

Chapter Three

The Potential for Samaria

With Pentecost, after the ascension of Christ, the church age formally started, and the twelve disciples were now commissioned as apostles... going out into the world to share the good news of Christ. So what did they do?

They stayed in Jerusalem. This is not necessarily a bad idea at first. But they stayed in Jerusalem quite awhile. They were designated to be apostles. The term “apostle” means that they are called out or sent out, or that they are to act as ambassadors. They were not supposed to stay in Jerusalem or any church. The Didache described apostles (the office, not just the Twelve) as essentially evangelizers and church planters. They visited Christians and visited churches, but their primary ministry was outside and beyond the established church. They were supposed to reach out to new areas and new peoples. Some today have found it strange that James the half brother of Jesus took on the chief elder or pastor role in Jerusalem when the apostles were there. But it was not the job of an apostle to lead, at least not to lead in a formal

ecclesiastical hierarchy. They were to reach out.

But finally, the people in Jerusalem began to reach out to neighboring towns and communities... because of St. Paul. It was not Paul the Apostle of Christ that motivated them, but Paul (aka Saul) the persecutor of the brethren who did. At this time, he wasn't yet what we would normally call a saint. According to Acts chapter 8, Saul (aka Paul) went around Jerusalem house to house seeking out Christians and dragging them off to jail. So Christians began to scatter and tell others about Christ as they scattered. Persecution is NOT always bad. God can use any circumstance. Suffering is NOT always bad. In Acts 8:4-8,

Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word. Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed to them the Christ. And the crowds with one accord paid attention to what was being said by Philip, when they heard him and saw the signs that he did. For unclean spirits, crying out with a loud voice, came out of many who had them, and many who were paralyzed or lame were healed. So there was much joy in that city.

Philip was not one of the twelve disciples. (There was a member of the Twelve who was named Philip, but this was a different one.) He was not described as an apostle, although he embraced the apostolic role of opening up new mission fields for Christ. He was actually a deacon at the church of Jerusalem. In Acts 6 there were 7 deacons assigned to help out in the church. Philip was one of them. Philip was different from the twelve disciples in that he was a Hellenized Jew. That is, he was Jewish by blood but Greek in many aspects of culture. It is interesting that many of the great missionaries and evangelists of the early church were people who were comfortable living in two different cultures. Philip had roots in Jewish culture and in Greek culture and appeared to be comfortable in sharing with people of other cultures. Barnabas was a Jew raised in Cyprus. Paul was a Jew raised in Tarsus, a Greek city known as a center of Greek philosophy.

So Philip leaves Jerusalem because of the persecution and goes to Samaria, and he begins sharing God's love with the people of Samaria. And they responded. Continuing with verses 14-17,

Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John, who came down and prayed

for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, for he had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit.

Here we get to a confusing spot in the Bible. The Samaritans received the Holy Spirit and did so linked to a miraculous sign, in this case speaking in tongues (miraculously speaking foreign languages). Now this is not the only time where the receiving of the Holy Spirit was linked to a miraculous sign. In fact, four times in Acts, the receiving of the Holy Spirit was tied to a miraculous sign. As a sign, it was meant to point to a great truth.

In this occasion, there is a time difference between belief in Christ and the receiving of the Holy Spirit, as evidenced by a delay in this sign. This is the only case that we know of after Pentecost where this has happened. In fact, when we go to the Pauline Epistles, such as Ephesians and I Corinthians, Paul makes it very clear that all Christians have the Holy Spirit, even though not all Christians have miraculous gifts.

Different groups today choose different directions to deal with the contradiction. Some focus on the events of Acts as normative over the statements in the Epistles. Some focus the

statements in the Epistles and view the unique events in Acts as non-normative. This is not that kind of book--- a book to deal with such an issue. However, I would suggest a missiological solution to the time lag issue in Acts 8.

Perhaps, God was still trying to teach His disciples (and us) something very important. Consider the four miraculous signs of the Spirit in Acts:

- The first miraculous arrival of the Holy Spirit was to the Jews... the 120 in the upper room on the day of Pentecost... in Acts chapter 2. It involved the visible sign of flames and the auditory sign of foreign tongues. None of the other three events includes flames as far as we know. Perhaps they needed the flames to unambiguously link it to the Spirit of God.
- The second miraculous arrival of the Holy Spirit was to the Samaritans, here in Acts 8. As noted earlier, there is a delay in the miraculous sign.
- The third miraculous arrival of the Holy Spirit was to the Roman Cornelius, and other Gentiles, in Acts 10. The sign was immediate.

- The final miraculous arrival of the Holy Spirit recorded was to followers of John the Baptist who followed Christ in Acts 19. (The followers of John the Baptist could easily have been thought of by the early Christians as the one group that might “inclusively” be redeemed by Christ without truly following Christ). Upon following Christ as Savior, the sign was manifested.

The receipt of the Holy Spirit is available to all people who place their faith in Christ... to Jews, to Samaritans, to Gentiles. But why would the Holy Spirit delay in coming to the Samaritans when, as far as we know, He never delayed elsewhere after Pentecost? The Apostles were present at Pentecost. Peter was present in the house of Cornelius when Gentiles came to Christ. Paul was present when the followers of John the Baptist accepted Christ.

But the apostles were not there when the Samaritans accepted Christ-- only Philip the Evangelist... a deacon of the church of Jerusalem. God needed the apostles to see something not just hear about it. We are the same way sometimes. It is not good enough to hear about something amazing, or read about something amazing. Like Thomas, sometimes we need to see to truly believe.

The question is, did it work? Did the apostles learn something that changed their attitude and actions. The answer is without a doubt, **Yes**. Continuing with verse 25 of Acts 8,

Now when they had testified and spoken the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans.

Peter and John stayed in Jerusalem for years, apparently, without sharing the Gospel with Samaritans. When Peter and John went up to Samaria to see what Philip was doing, it appears that they went directly there without sharing the Gospel with any on the way. But once they saw that Samaritans were accepted by God in the same manner as Jews, the text states that they stopped in many Samaritan villages along the way back to Jerusalem preaching the Good News.

Some years later, Peter spoke at the Jerusalem Council and summed things up. In Acts 15:6-11, the question was whether a non-Jew had to become a Jew... or at least act like a Jew to become a Christian. A good question. But Peter learned something from this event and the event

with the Gentile Cornelius and his family.

The apostles and the elders were gathered together to consider this matter. And after there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, "Brothers, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. And God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, by giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us, and he made no distinction between us and them, having cleansed their hearts by faith. Now, therefore, why are you putting God to the test by placing a yoke on the neck of the disciples that neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? But we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will."

The Apostles learned their lesson, and through them the Gospel of Christ has gone from Jerusalem, to Judea and Samaria, and even to the ends of the earth.

Summary

So why is this chapter described as “The Potential in Samaria.” The disciples of Jesus saw the problems of Samaria. They experienced the preparation for Samaria as disciples of Christ. Jesus set up the plan for Samaria, training His disciples so that they could not only see the potential, but be part of turning that potential into a reality. As Jesus told them while in Samaria, the harvest is indeed ready, but the laborers are few.

Chapter Four

Backpedaling in Samaria

In the first century, Samaria was a region with a sizable populace, over a million residents, with a vibrant (Samaritan) faith. Not so today. One might wonder what happened to the Samaritan faith. Did it lose the war in the battle of ideas/ideologies? Or perhaps they were lost to assimilation in conversion to Christianity since the Book of Acts describes such a mass conversion. And yes, over 2000 years there were many Samaritans who converted, often willingly and sometimes unwillingly, to Christianity or Islam.

The truth is that the Samaritan faith did not simply die so much as it was murdered. Samaritism did not just fall, it was pushed. This part is a bit sad, but we learn from both the good and the bad, the happy and the sad.

During the time of the Byzantine Empire, Samaria was a turbulent place. Christian writers often used Samaritans or Samaritanism in negative analogies. This is in strange contrast to Jesus who shocked His listeners in using them

as a positive example. The Byzantine government was oppressive, both to non-Christians and to Christians who were not of the same form of Christianity as the emperor. This was so true that Coptic Christians in Egypt welcomed Islamic invaders in the 7th century to free themselves from the tyranny of the Christian rulers of Byzantium. The oppression often showed itself in violence. Samaritans experienced this oppression in terms of taxes, laws, and violence.

Despite the centrality of Christianity to Byzantium, there seems always to have been a certain savagery in the empire. The belief of the early church that Christianity and killing were fundamentally incompatible had long since been abandoned in Byzantium past as it had in Western Europe. The conversion of Rome to Christianity in the fourth century had led to a rapid reinterpretation of warfare as potentially undertaken in service to God; the Christian soldier could fight for his emperor safe in the belief that the emperor's cause was that of God.
<Endnote 7>

During the reign of Emperor Zeno (474-491AD)

tensions grew. According to one account, the emperor had required Samaritans to convert to Christianity. When they refused, they revolted and this led to a violent response killing tens of thousands of Samaritans. Some argue that the historical record is backward and that the revolts preceded the demand to convert. Either way, conversion was less connected with embracing the good news of Christ voluntarily, and more connected to risk of harm. Choose the cross or the sword.

During the time of Emperor Justinian during the next century an edict was established that virtually made being a member of the Samaritan faith illegal. There were a series of revolts by the Samaritans that led to violent reprisals by the government. This resulted in the Samaritan population reducing from the hundreds of thousands to tens of thousands. <Endnote 8>

The Islamic invasion actually gave some reprieve, for awhile at least, but special taxes and periodic forced conversions and killings, especially during the Abbasid Caliphate and Ottoman Empire, took their toll. By the end of the Ottoman Empire in the early 20th century, Samaritanism reached its lowest point with just over 100 adherents. Since then, under the British mandate, the Israeli government, and the Palestinian Authority, Samaritanism has grown such that it has in 2020 over 800 adherents.

Today, the people who identify themselves as

Samaritans are located in two small communities, both of approximately equal size. One of these is on Mount Gerizim, while the other is in a suburb of Tel Aviv. Each has its own Samaritan synagogue, but only the former of these communities has the location that serves as its temple.

There seems more of a tendency today to see Samaritanism as a unique sect of Judaism, as opposed to a distinct competitor to that faith. In fact, the similarities between Samaritanism to Judaism greatly outweigh their differences.

In some ways, the remaining Samaritans are a testimony to the tenacity of faith in the God of Abraham. Sadly, they are also a testimony to the tendency of Christians not to take the message of Christ seriously. Jesus sought to undermine the prejudices of the Jews regarding Samaritans (as well as many other groups), and specially commanded His apostles to reach out to Samaritans with the Good News. Yet as Christianity grew in power these prejudices grew in strength leading eventually to violence, in opposition to Christ's message.

This should serve as a warning to us. There is often a tendency in religion to focus on power. When the Samaritans appeared to have a measure of power, in the 4th to 2nd centuries BC and the 5th and 6th centuries AD, these were the

times when they were attacked most viciously, by the Jews in the first case and by Christians in the second. Their perseverance was a testament to the strength of their faith. However, their relative weakness made them less threatening to those around them, keeping them from being utterly destroyed.

Christians are called to love friend and enemy, not fear and attack. Why would Christians often choose violence over love? There are obvious answers--- sin, selfishness, and tribalism. But these terms are abstract. Sometimes we must personalize it, and try seeing a situation from an uncomfortable position.

Consider some situations from Biblical lands. It is easy to cheer with the Israelites as they marched around the walls of Jericho as the walls begin to give way. It, however, takes a special effort to picture oneself as a father (or mother) in Jericho standing on the walls of the city looking out, fearful for himself and his family and friends, as his world (literally) crumbles around him. The same can be said today as many Christians seem to find it easy to side with the Israelis in the West Bank, while being shockingly unsympathetic of the plight of Muslim and Christian (and Samaritan) Palestinians.

The answer, is not necessarily to pick a side, or at least not to pick a human side. When Joshua

was alone (in Joshua chapter 5. read it now if you don't remember), he saw a soldier dressed for battle. Joshua asked if this soldier was on his side or the enemy. The answer was neither. He was of the army of God. Joshua immediately responded bowing down and taking direction. The question is not whether God was on the side of Israel or the side of the Canaanites. Neither was it whether God was on the side of the Jews or the Samaritans, nor the Israelis or the Palestinians, nor the Christians or the Muslims. The question is are we on God's side--- or not? Jesus has told us that if we truly love Him, we keep His commandments. If we don't keep His commandments, we are not on His side. Pretty simple, but it is hard to let go of the temptation to try to bargain with God to get Him to follow us rather than we follow Him.

This chapter is a bit sad because it looks like what Jesus and the early church did was destroyed. There is some truth to that, but not entirely. Many Samaritans chose to follow Jesus. Gradually they assimilated into the broader Body of Christ, losing their cultural identity. (This is not the book to decide if this loss of cultural distinctiveness is a good thing or not.) Additionally, there are examples that we can look back on for positive inspiration.

For example, the Byzantine emperor Theodosius forbade special taxes upon the impoverished Samaritans; the Christian Germanus helped the Samaritans continue their rite of circumcision after the authorities had forbidden it; the Chief Rabbi of Jerusalem declared to the Ottoman Turks that the Samaritans, like Jews and Christians, were people of the Book and ought not be persecuted; and the American E.K. Warren built medical and educational facilities for the fragile community at the beginning of the twentieth century. <Endnote 9>

Chapter Summary

These first chapters of this book describe a complex history with a wide range of relations between Jew and Samaritan, and between Christian and Samaritan. But what does this mean to us today? Even though Samaritanism has grown almost 700% in the last 100 years, nearly undoing the losses of a millennium, it is still unlikely that many of us will interact with a Samaritan in our lifetime. But since few of us are likely to live in a completely mono-cultural society, we have the blessing of the story of the many groups, including the Samaritans, that shared the land of Israel over the centuries. For the Samaritans, there were painful times (2nd

century BC and 5th and 6th centuries AD to name just a couple), there has been (relatively few) high-points such as the 1st century. We can learn from the 1st century church. Still, our role is not to recreate the 1st century church, but create, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the 21st century church. So the following chapters will suggest some patterns and lessons.

Chapter Five

The Pattern of Samaria

In the history of Samaria, we can see at least two major patterns. One of these is very negative, and the other quite positive. History, sadly, often is quite ambivalent in this way. We want to look back at history with pride, but there are always aspects of the past that can leave us ashamed, and Samaria is no exception.

Pattern #1

When one looks at the Judeo-Christian relationship with Samaritanism, one sees a pattern. Things started out pretty bad four centuries before Christ and for quite awhile things did not improve. In fact, arguably, it reached its lowest during the destructive attacks by John Hyrcanus. By the time of Christ things had reached an uncomfortable peace--- perhaps more of a stalemate. This peace hid the great anger and distrust that existed between the two groups. As noted before, this attitude can be seen by the disciples of Jesus asking Him permission for them to call down fire to destroy a village that had failed to show them hospitality.

With the ministry of Christ things changed. He challenged the attitudes of the Jews, and then demonstrated care and concern for Samaritans in both symbolic and practical ways. During the Church Age, this openness continued (although it is interesting that it was initiated by a Hellenistic, bi-cultural, Jew, not by any of the Apostles who were Hebraic Jews). This outreach into the land of the Samaritans may have been the high-water mark. After this, things seemed to go downhill, although it is hard to be certain based on the limited sources. As Christianity became more Greek and less Jewish, animosity towards both Jews and Samaritans grew... leading to violence a few centuries later.

What drives this pattern? I am not necessarily competent to say. However, I would like to make a few tentative suggestions. First, the negative attitude of Jews to Samaritans was deeply ingrained, so when the example of Jesus and the early church was removed, the old resilient attitudes returned. This may seem a bit ridiculous, but Christians today can still align themselves emotionally with the Old Testament writers... feeling anger at groups, like the Assyrians, Babylonians, Philistines and more, even though they don't even exist as extant groups today! It is really strange if you think

about it. There are Christian groups today that still hold animosity for the Jews for reasons that are nearly incomprehensible in light of God's sovereign choice to work through them historically for our benefit. Conversely, there are others that place such an unwavering support for the Jews in Israel today, that they will overlook nearly any atrocity done by them. It is important to remember that to support a person or a group means to also hold him, her, or them accountable. To fail to do so is not to be a supporter, merely a fan. Humans are funny, and Christians certainly never cease to demonstrate that they are all too human.

A second possibility is rejected love. As the followers of Christ grew in the first century there were growing conflicts with the Jewish populace who did not decide to follow Christ. This led to forced conversions in the 6th century both in the Eastern and Western church. A similar struggle seemed to happen in the life of Martin Luther who saw the doctrine of Grace Alone as a great boon for Jewish conversion to Christianity, but then preached strongly against Jews, apparently because of their lack of response. Of course, centuries of animosity are not quickly overcome.

Those that self-identified as Samaritans during the Church Age were essentially those who rejected the message of Christ. As illogical as it may be, love easily transitions to hate when

overtures of love are rejected. This is especially true when the love exhibited is conditional---essentially “I love you, but only as long as you do _____ for me.” In a Christian sense, certainly, this is not love.

A third possibility, at least an exacerbating factor, is tokenism. Again, this is a problem that simply doesn't make sense, yet repeats itself across societies and time. Maybe it is easier to use a story to explain this one.

Imagine Tom. Tom is a racist-- perhaps he is racist against people whose skin tone is different from his own. He is racist in attitudes and many practices. However, if you suggest to Tom that he is a racist, he will tell you in no uncertain terms that he is not a racist at all. His proof of this is Bill. Perhaps Bill was a neighborhood kid he grew up with. Or maybe Bill is a friend of his at work. Or maybe Bill is a guy who married a cousin of his and so joins family reunions. Bill is noticeably different in skin tone and therefore it is obvious (in the thinking of Tom at least) that Tom could not be a racist since he is, or was, a friend of Bill.

The reality, however, is that Tom may, in effect, be using Bill as a “free pass” of sorts to feel good about his own open-mindedness, allowing himself to maintain his racist attitudes. In most cases Tom would not be self-aware of this

process. I have known many men who have married a woman of a different ethnicity and yet are surprisingly prejudiced against that ethnic group. It really should not be so, but the human mind just works that way. Perhaps the openness of Jesus and the early church to the Samaritans helped give comfort to later Christians that they were open and loving Samaritans even while enacting legislation and promoting violence against them.

You might say that this has nothing to do with us today. Few if any Christians now feel open animosity about Samaritans living today. It would be embarrassing for Christians, members of the largest religion on earth to be holding deep resentment against a group of less than 1000 adherents.

However, the pattern of tokenism can exist elsewhere. Many Evangelical Christians bristle at the charge that they tend to focus on spiritual concerns to such an extent that they show little concern for social needs of their neighbors. In response to this, the name of William Wilberforce is often brought up. He was a 19th century British Evangelical politician who worked tirelessly for slaves and other abused groups. He is often used, along with a few others who joined in the Abolitionist movement of the 19th century, to show that Evangelical Christians are deeply concerned about social justice and social

care. However, is it possible that Wilberforce and the others from almost two centuries ago have allowed many Evangelicals to feel good about their standing in terms of social responsibility-- incorrectly.

The pattern here is the pattern of relapse. As the pig tends to return to its mud or a dog to its vomit, it is all too common to return to the deep ruts of the past. There may be many rational and irrational reasons for this, but the end result is an undermining of positive past accomplishments.

Pattern #2.

While pattern #1 was unfortunate, Samaria is also part of a more positive pattern. Acts 1:8 speaks of missions outreach beginning in Jerusalem and expanding to Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. Of course, as noted earlier, this statement simply could be looked at as descriptive- what had actually happened as described in the Book of Acts. Additionally, it could be looked at as thematic... providing the structure for the book of Acts. But one can also look at this passage as prescriptive... providing a structure for missions. If the last of these was the case, one could say that missions exists as:

- Jerusalem. Local or E-1 missions
- Judea and Samaria. Regional or E-2 missions
- Ends of the earth. International/cross-cultural or E-3 missions

If one looks at these places as describing different types of missions, it DOES affect how mission work is done.

But should one separate between Judea and Samaria? Both are regional. The obvious difference is that Judea was populated by people that the Apostles would be fairly comfortable with. Samaria, however, was populated with people who were not appreciated. The term Samaritan was used not only to describe people from Samaria, but also “bad” Jews. Jews disliked the Samaritans as a group but tended to deal with them by ignoring them.

I have heard people argue against international or cross-cultural missions on the basis of “Why send missionaries overseas when we have so many people who need to be saved who live next door to us?” On one level I must disagree with this. There is probably no place on earth where there is 100% success in evangelism so

failing to move outward while there are unsaved nearby is nothing less than a call never to reach out beyond ones self-established borders.

On a different level, there is, however, some truth. The gospel is like water in that it flows along the paths of least resistance. A former missions professor of mine described the world as being a waffle, not a pancake. When one pours syrup on pancakes, it spreads smoothly and evenly across the surface. However, waffles are different--- one must move the syrup around intentionally because the surface creates resistance to spreading evenly. The resistance to the gospel message comes from physical distance, language, and culture. However, often these resistances can be just as great locally. Consider the following resistances or barriers that can be local:

- **Aliens and foreigners.** Samaritans were seen as foreigners who had taken over Jewish lands. It is easy for many to be excited about evangelism of foreigners in foreign lands (“where they belong?”), while being very uncomfortable with similar foreigners among themselves. The Mosaic Law required the Israelites to demonstrate hospitality to these people (Leviticus 19:33-34). The argument is that Israelites should be able to empathize with aliens and strangers since they were

themselves aliens in Egypt. As an American, my ancestors came from Sweden to the US in the late 1800s. In theory, most Americans should be able to draw from similar histories and empathize with foreigners (legal and illegal) among them. But this often doesn't happen, even among American Christians. I must admit that my ability to empathize with foreigners in lands not their own comes mostly because I am in that situation at this time, living in a foreign country.

- **Religion.** While to us today, we may see Samaritanism as being a version of Judaism--- worshipping the same God, utilizing the same sacred text, and practicing their faith in almost the same way as Jews--- for many first century Jews the Samaritans were part of a competitive, even virulent, faith. The nearness of Samaria to Judea and Galilee most likely has been a factor in this. The places on earth that are religiously mono-cultural, are rapidly becoming few and far between. Many struggle with this. When I first moved to Baguio City, local pastors warned me about the “invasion” of Muslims from Southern Philippines with their intent of creating a sultanate based in Baguio. I don't know about that, but the opportunity

of Christians to reach out to people of other faiths is so much easier if they live next door. Despite that, Christians (like most groups) like to be around people that they BELIEVE share the same culture, values, feelings, and motivations. It is hard to see diversity as a good thing. We tend to rebel against diversity.

- **Classes, castes and “moral groups.”**. Samaritans were an entire society in Samaria. As such, it included many classes and other groups existing together. However, Samaritans can also serve as a group within Jewish society or other societies. For many centuries a sizable population of Samaritans lived in Damascus-- a minority culture within the broader society. Sadly, centuries ago that population was destroyed by a Muslim ruler. In situations like this, such a group could be lumped in with some other classes or marginalized groups--- such as the poor, the destitute, or the homeless. Or, they may be seen like groups looked down on or judged because of profession. In the first century in Judea, publicans (tax collectors) were looked at unfavorably based on stereotypes as to how they may be presumed to be criminal and greedy in behavior, as well as the view that they were treasonous against

their own people. Prostitutes were also looked down upon as being especially sinful. Some groups may be looked down upon not because of profession but because they may be seen as especially under the judgment of God. This may include the leprosy, those with visible disabilities, or those who are seen as sexually deviant. (Interestingly, the only Gospel reference showing Jew and Samaritan dwelling together harmoniously was a group of ten lepers.)

When you get right down to it, there are an awful lot of people in any community that may be avoided by those who claim to have the good news of Christ. Even when reached, the local church may struggle to open up to them. I have seen people who were desperately poor, or recovering drug addicts, or former Muslims, or former prostitutes, or those struggling with sexual identity find themselves not welcomed into the local church. This pattern repeats itself in societies around the world.

Perhaps we can look at Samaria as describing the people near us that we ignore, actively avoid, or act against. Perhaps we hold stereotypes about them. Or maybe we don't appreciate their unique qualities. Or maybe we

don't understand them... or we are just made uncomfortable by them.

Often Christians are not good at recognizing their own Samarias. All Christians (definitely myself included) need to consider who and where are our Samarias.

So what are the characteristics of the pattern of building bridges rather than walls to the ignored groups among us?

First, it is **intentional**. The Great Commission is not just about moving further and further outward. There is an intentionality to reach those who are despised and/or ignored. Jesus spoke to many different people and peoples, but He did, with intentionality, prioritize His time and energy to be where such groups (including the Samaritans) were and demonstrate God's love to them.

Second, God uses the **right people** to reach these groups. The "woman at the well" was the right person to open the heart doors of the people to listen to Christ. In the New Testament, it was Philip the Evangelist (a Hellenistic Jew) who first reached out to the Samaritans (and the Ethiopian eunuch). It wasn't the Hebraic Jews who initiated this. Perhaps the bi-cultural standing-- one foot in Judaism and one in the

Greek culture- gave him an advantage to be open to those of other cultures. Certainly, it took the command of Christ, a special vision, a divine command, and miracle of the Spirit to open Peter's mind to the idea Gentiles are welcomed into the Kingdom of God. Still, God did use Peter--- not being bi-cultural is not an excuse with God. Still, it was more common for Gentiles to be reached by Hellenistic Jews, such as Barnabas and Paul. It is perhaps the reason that Paul thought of himself as an Apostle to the Gentiles, as opposed to the Twelve who he saw as Apostles to the Jews.

The “right person” may either be an outsider or an insider. In fact, it is likely to include both. In different ministries names for such a person may include: Missionary, Man of Peace, Good Informant, or Champion. The terms describe those who can bridge the gap incarnationally between the Gospel and the people, or between outsiders and insiders.

With all of this in mind, I believe we can explore a few possible responses. Jesus did not accept the status quo. He broke cultural taboos... and today as then, there are taboos that deserve to be broken. During the persecution of the Church in Jerusalem, many Christians used the scattering of the church to spread their faith to other parts of Judea. Philip, however, used it as an opportunity to spread the gospel into

Samaria. We live in a time of fear and uncertainty as well. What opportunities does this provide us today?

Summary

While some believe that they have received a unique calling to spread the gospel to distant lands, cross-cultural ministry can often happen by simply crossing the street. Christians can bemoan the fact that people unlike themselves live among them--- or they can see this as a wonderful opportunity, a divine appointment, to express God's love to people that may feel marginalized by so many others. Christians have a choice as to whether to fall into the easy ruts of the past, building barriers, or take the more difficult but rewarding activity of building bridges.

The next chapter we will explore this further. Such a chapter should be a whole book. (In fact, more than one person has written such a book.) Instead, we will explore just a couple of ideas and expand them for ministering in 'Samaria.'

Chapter Six

Mission to our own Samarias

So how do we reach out to our own Samarias? If one accepts the metaphor that Samaria is that community near us that is different from us and that we don't really interact with, and Samaritans are those who live in these communities, how might we break down these barriers? Here are a few, tentative suggestions.

Change the Narrative

While we may say that we care about truth, we really care about how truth interacts with feelings. Truth plus feelings equals meaning. Stories are more meaningful to us as humans because stories pull us in emotionally, not just intellectually. Barriers often exist because of stories that we tell ourselves (or “they” tell “themselves”). How might we use stories to build bridges rather than barriers?

One way is to Subvert the Tropes. Jesus did this in the Parable of the Good Samaritan. The story could have followed a classic structure

maintaining a mythic role supporting cultural values and prejudices. Consider the following story:

One day a Gentile had business in Jericho and so started the windy arduous road down to that village from Jerusalem. At one of the blind turns of this road he was accosted by highwaymen who stole everything he had and left him for dead.

As he was lying there bleeding, a tax collector came upon him. However, the tax collector did not even slow down but hurried on past. "No profit here for me," he thought, "and whoever attacked him may be waiting for me as well." Soon another man came along the trail-- a Samaritan. "Better him than me." He also hurried on to his destination.

After awhile, a poor Jew came by. He saw the Gentile and had pity on his plight. He thought to himself, "The Law says that I must show hospitality to all, including aliens and strangers. I certainly cannot just leave this man here." So the poor Jew cleansed and bandaged the Gentile's wounds and clothed him as best he could, and put him on his donkey and brought him to Jericho where he tended to the man until he was able to care for himself.

This story fulfills the common tropes of the time

with tax collectors being too concerned with self and with money to provide help, and Samaritans being bigoted, selfish, and not obeying the Mosaic Law. The poor Jew, however, piously does what is right in honor to his faith and to his God.

As you know, I am sure, Jesus did not do this. The unmerciful ones were not only Jews, but they were Jewish religious leaders. The merciful one, the hero, was the Samaritan.

By learning the stories, tropes, prejudices that exist driving communities apart, we have the tools for subverting them. Stories that challenge the status quo and the preconceived notions of a culture have a parabolic role-- serve in the role of a parable. Jesus did that a lot. His stories would often subvert commonly-held values. The one most precious is the one that wandered away. Divine love is most clearly visible when it is given to those who seem to deserve it the least. The most weak or seemingly insignificant things are often what matters most. The wealthy may not only NOT be closer to God, but the wealth may actually be a hindrance to their being righteous in God's sight.

A second way to change the narrative is to Change the Focus. Consider the old trope of the silent era (lampooned in the cartoon shorts of "Dudley Doright") of a love triangle of a

rejected ugly bad man, a beautiful but helpless young woman, and a handsome noble hero. Ultimately and predictably, the hero overcomes the bad man and wins the heart of the 'fair maiden.' There are many options to subvert this story, such as making the woman heroic and capable rather than helpless. However, the narrative also changes when one changes the focus. In this classic example, the focus is on how the hero resolves the conflict by "saving the day." But one can also focus on the woman who lives in a world of objectification, or on the bad man, driven to hate and revenge for reasons that could be fascinating to explore.

In the story of the ten lepers we see a change of focus from the norm. Jesus tells ten lepers who are seeking to be healed to go to the priest to be declared clean (a requirement in the Mosaic quarantine laws). On their way, they discover themselves healed. Nine of them joyfully continue their journey to be legally declared clean. One however, turned back to express thanks to Jesus. The story specially notes that the man who thanked Jesus was a Samaritan. The story could be presented as many other stories in the Gospels with Jesus as the focus. In this one, however, the focus is not on Jesus primarily. It is also not primarily on the lepers as a whole, but is rather on the Samaritan who returned to express gratitude.

Sometimes we need to change focus. A few years ago in the United States there was a movement called “Black Lives Matter.” It was a response to some questionable shootings of African-American men by police officers. In many of those cases the police were exonerated by the justice system, often despite pretty damning evidence against them. Some people, including many Christians, responded negatively to the Black Lives Matter movement suggesting that it is better to say “All Lives Matter.” In a sense they are right-- All Lives DO IN FACT Matter. However, when there has been a strong amount of discrimination and marginalization in a society, it needs to be responded to with focus, not with generalities.

During this pandemic, there are people, again including some Christians, who are making the argument that the elderly should be given lesser priority. Some see it as a “thinning of the herd”-- a surprisingly Darwinian attitude. For others, it appears to be driven by a higher value on economics than on human life. If one would seek to counter this attitude, saying “All Lives Matter” would be inadequate. We would need to say that “All Elderly Lives Matter,” or “All Medically Under-insured Lives Matter.”

Taking this same example into first century Judea, saying that one must love one's neighbor, or one must love everyone, may be

true but is too general to hit home. Focus is needed to make the message hit home. You must love your enemy. You must love Samaritans. You must love the poor. You must love Gentiles. You must love tax collectors and prostitutes. And you must demonstrate that love not only through words but through action. This leads to the second point.

Christian Community Development Principles

If one considers Samaria to represent a community that is marginalized and discriminated against, then such a community is very much like the communities that John Perkins has targeted as part of Christian Community Development (CCD). <Endnote 10> He is well known for the “3-Rs” of Christian community development. However, for this book, I will follow the expanded list (adding five more principles to the original three) as described by Wayne Gordon.<Endnote 11>

Relocate. Incarnational ministry. One must go to them. To reach the Samaritans, one must go to Samaria. This may seem obvious, but to many it isn't. There is still the temptation of Christians to try to do stuff to entice them to

come to us. The Christian church in the book of Acts reached out to Samaritans by going to them because the Samaritans would not show up in a church group in Jerusalem on the Lord's Day. In CCD, being a long-term form of ministry, the focus is not simply on going into the community, but dwelling in the community. One does not simply visit and leave, visit and leave. If the one who is ministering is an outsider, the hope given is likely to be seen as an outside hope. More generally however, when one seeks to reach out to marginalized communities, one must minister incarnationally, practicing a ministry of presence-- going there and being there with them.

Reconciliation. Reconciliation is the breaking down of barriers. Moving into the marginalized, stigmatized communities around us is a beginning of reconciliation. Evangelizing is a ministry that seeks to reconcile people to God. But both fall short of transforming society. The barriers of mistrust and stereotypes must be addressed directly and honestly through both words and action. Jesus said that a day is coming, and now is when the old argument of where one should worship, Jerusalem or Mt. Gerizim, is irrelevant. Where must one worship was the single greatest barrier between Jews and Samaritans, Jesus said that this was no longer a cause for separation. These words

strengthened what He had already demonstrated through action--- in going to Samaria and speaking to a locally shunned Samaritan woman. Philip went to preach in Samaria. However, barriers between Jewish Christians and Samaritan Christians were torn down, symbolically, when the Apostles went there themselves and affirmed God's acceptance of them as His children and part of His church.

Redistribution. Barriers are not meant to be broken down simply to create dependent second-tier churches. I have to admit, living in the Philippines, I am not a big fan of churches that were started by outsider mission groups that use terms like "Mission Church" or "Mission Outreach." In my mind, this emphasizes their secondary, dependent status. God's plan was neither to have Samaria second-tier to Judea, nor Samaritan (or Gentile) second to Jew. In CCD, the economic and power disparities must be dealt with. In the broader sense, we must act to remove the hints of superiority of one group of Christian over another. The Jerusalem Council was established (in Acts 15) with the explicit concern of the status, and validity, of Gentile Christians. It was determined that Gentiles did not need to become Jews to be Christians. That same principle applied, by inference, to Samaritans. Samaritans did not need to become

Jews to be Christians. Extending what Paul said, In Christ there is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither male nor female, neither slave nor free, neither Jew nor Samaritan. This is not an attack on diversity, but a recognition that there is no hierarchy of groups before God.

Leader Development. Samaritans should be led by Samaritans. For the Samaritan church, this was shown, symbolically with the Apostles affirming the validity of the Samaritan church, and then leaving. The Apostles evangelized, Philip evangelized and baptized, but each went elsewhere. Presumably, the churches formed were left to be led by Samaritans. It is important to recognize that despite the resilience of Samaritanism, many did become Christians, but much like with the Jews who converted, most all left their own unique cultural identity. As previously noted, one can argue whether loss of this cultural identity was a good thing or bad. However, ultimately, the local churches formed were locally led. It is not clear to what extent this was intentional or to what extent it happened organically. Generally in missions, however, it is quite tempting for outsider missionaries to hold onto power and leadership on the presumption that they are indispensable.

Listening to the community. It is tempting to enter a community and talk, talk, talk. However, the Great Commission of Christ to be a witness is secondary to the Great Commandment to love others. Love is tied to respect, and respect is tied to listening. Besides, it is hard to know how to demonstrate love, and how to be an effective witness unless one has first listened to them and found out their fears, hopes, and needs (both felt and real needs). Perhaps the two most well-known conversations Jesus had were with Nicodemus in John 3, and the Samaritan woman in John 4. Jesus listened to each and His responses were different because the concerns of the two were different.

Every community is different. We need to honor this uniqueness and see what God will do uniquely in that group. Samaritans responded to the gospel message. These, however, did not receive the Holy Spirit until a later time. As noted previously, this unique occurrence appears to have been necessary in building a connection between the church of Jerusalem and the young believers in Samaria. These young believers were led to Christ by Philip, a deacon, but God wanted the Apostles to witness in no uncertain terms that the Samaritans have received the Holy Spirit as they have. They are not second-class in God's eyes.

Church-based. There is something to be said for short-term missions. Jesus promoted short-term missions by travelling from town to town, and He established it by sending His many disciples out two-by-two to villages. The main Twelve, He sent to Jewish towns. The seventy disciples He placed no such limitations. This is hardly surprising since 12 would make the people think of the 12 tribes of Israel, while the 70 would make people think of the 70 nations of Genesis chapter 10. Presumably at least some of the 70 went to Samaritan villages. There is nothing wrong with mission organizations or other para-church organizations. However, the defining characteristics of a local church are, firstly, it is local, and secondly, it is a spiritual community of people. Ministry to a community is not truly successful until it has become local. It also does not become successful until the local people take ownership of it.

It is curious that the Bible does not give explicit information that Samaritan churches were established. Ministry was done there but the establishment of local churches has to be inferred. However, early church history shows that many churches were established in Samaria and other areas in the region. While we may rightfully decry the estrangement that Christianity had with Samaritanism in the 5th and 6th centuries AD (particularly), the conflict came, in part, because there were established local

churches existing within walking distance of Samaritan synagogues. Sadly, close proximity of diverse groups does at times create conflicts.

It is sad that there could not have been a better peace. It is worthy of note that the tensions that we know most about came from outsiders, from Byzantium. It would be nice to think that Samaritan Christians were a positive presence living in community with their Samaritan neighbors. If that did not happen, however, that does not imply that it cannot happen. We can learn from the past and (prayerfully) do better.

Holism. Holism speaks of the philosophy of intentionally seeking to meet the needs of the entire person and entire community, not just one aspect (such as spiritual needs, or food, or employment). When Philip went to Samaria he followed the example of Jesus in providing miraculous healings and exorcisms. These are often seen as signs of the Kingdom of God. They certainly are signs, but they also meet the diverse felt and real needs of the people. Combined with this, such service expresses value and concern for them as human beings rather than merely as 'lost souls' or 'potential converts.'

It is interesting to note that the story of the evangelization of Samaria also includes the

story of Simon Magus. He was a magician who, apparently sincerely, became a Christian. However, he could not let go fully of his old ways and so sought to pay the apostles for the ability to do miraculous signs. Peter reprovved him severely. Miraculous signs were to be done for the benefit of the recipient, NOT the minister.

A classic verse of Holism is Luke 2:52 where it states that Jesus grew in wisdom (psycho-emotional growth) and stature (physical growth), and in favor with God (spiritual growth) and man (social growth). There are other models for holistic health or growth, but regardless of the one chosen, the key idea is that the whole gospel of God is concerned with the whole individual and whole community.

Pastoral Care Principles

Perhaps the principles already mentioned are adequate, but I would like to note that they overlap commonly with what could be described as Pastoral Care principles. In pastoral care, we need to exercise the ministry of presence. We don't minister from a safe distance (I will ignore the fact that I am writing this during the COVID-19 pandemic). Being there starts to break down barriers, prejudices, and assumptions. Jesus and Philip specifically and intentionally went to where the Samaritans lived, rather than

complaining that the Samaritans did not come to them.

We need to practice the ministry of silence. We need to overcome the idea that ministry is happening only when we are talking. More often we need to listen, and be there in their pain and struggles.

We need to practice the elements of pastoral care, including:

- Sustaining
- Healing
- Guiding
- Reconciling
- Nurturing
- Liberating
- Empowering <Endnote 12>

These elements break down barriers, build bridges, and open the door for God to work in places that are all too often ignored.

Summary

Perhaps the catchphrase from the 19th century book, "In His Steps" by Charles M. Sheldon, summarizes this chapter nicely. That phrase was "What Would Jesus Do." The book was fair---

good people may disagree what Jesus would do in certain situations. In many others, however, the answer is clear. Jesus would reach out lovingly to those who have been marginalized or rejected. God would welcome all to His Kingdom, equally.

Conclusions

Again, I am writing this during the COVID-19 pandemic. On one side the disease drives us apart. It places us in our own homes, physically distanced and masked. We may live in voluntary quarantine, or in enhanced quarantine, or in lock-down. And yet it can also tear down barriers. When faced with a common scourge, we begin to identify the commonality that we have as human beings. Before, we may focus on our differences, but the common enemy can lead us to recognizing our commonality and see many of the differences as trivial. It can drive reconciliation.

Yet it doesn't have to happen. The Roman threat did not really bring the Jews and Samaritans together. Today, during this pandemic, we still find many people trying hard to make barriers higher--- blaming political, national, or ethnic groups for the virus and the suffering we are undergoing during this disease event. Self-labeled Christians appear to be as prone to this as anyone else. Nations are being blamed, right or wrong, for the problem, but clearly wrong is the temptation of some to blame people of

certain ethnicities tied, no matter how loosely, to those nations.

If a common experience, a common enemy, cannot bring us to break down our prejudices, what will? And as Christians, if the example of Christ of building bridges (to Samaritans, Gentiles, publicans and sinners, to religious elite) cannot inspire us as Christians to do likewise, then what would?

Perhaps this is a good time to think about what are our Samarias? Who are the Samaritans in our lives? How can we be different in the future to reach out to them, tear down barriers, and create beautiful moments of reconciliation, regardless of the fear and anger that appears to dominate our society.

Robert Dykstra described a study that came out a few years ago that looked at various forms of written media, in the English language, for approximately a century. The researchers identified different feeling words and their prevalence. The researchers discovered that most feeling words declined over the decades, all except one. That one is FEAR. It grew in usage throughout the 20th century and into the 21st century. The language frequency seems to point to a growing importance of that term. Fear is a God-given emotion. We are called upon to have courage through fear, rather than called to

not feel fear. One of the great fears is “Fear of the Other.” <Endnote 13>

However, when Jesus spoke to His disciples, now described as Apostles (“sent out ones,” ambassadors/missionaries of Christ) Jesus said that they will receive power from the Spirit of God. From there they would be able to serve in their apostolic role as missionaries, witnesses of the good news of Christ, starting at home (Jerusalem), and Judea (moving out into the broader neighborhood), and Samaria (those people they once wanted fire from heaven rained down upon) and even to the ends of the world (the most terrifying and alien places). In all of those places, God will already be there waiting for them, and providing power for them.

I don't believe God has changed in this. Do you?

Appendix A

Harmony of the Great Commissions

Not everyone agrees as to what should be listed as a version of the Great Commission. Personally, all versions of the command for the disciples of Christ to go as His witnesses to the world given by Jesus shortly before His ascension count in my view. There are five such passages. There is a sixth passage where Paul gives his calling to be an apostle. Since Paul was given the call to be an apostle by the post-resurrected Christ in a message similar in content to the others, I think it is reasonable to include it as well. Therefore, the following are six passages that will be used.

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

-Matthew 28:19-20

And he said to them, “Go into all the world and

proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.”

-Mark 16:15-16

and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.”

-Luke 24:46-47

Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.”

-John 20:21

He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

-Acts 1:7-8

But rise and stand upon your feet, for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a servant and witness to the things in which you have seen me and to those in which I will appear to you, delivering you from your people and from the Gentiles—to whom I am sending

you to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.'

-Acts 26:16-18

So what do we do with these? We can recognize that each of these are related and yet intentionally separate. After all, each writer (speaking of the first five listed) presumably had access to the same basic message and yet each one chose to focus on a different aspect of the message of Christ. Because of this, there is a possible error to harmonizing the message--- we may lose the specific message of the writer. This is much the reason that Harmonies of the Gospels have lessened in appeal in recent decades.

That being said, one may still look at something like the Great Commissions and recognize that these different perspectives may be able to come together and inform our own individual perspective of the God's call.

So, in reading these, consider taking a few minutes to meditate on the passages. Then perhaps circle those items that strike you as especially important. Perhaps you would circle those items that are most universal. Additionally,

you might circle items that strike you as being something that God is specifically speaking to you about.

This is a personal activity. However, I will share one such attempt at a harmonization--- my own. Jesus said (in effect),

I have sent you, empowered by the Holy Spirit, to be a witness of me everywhere. You will make new disciples, preaching the good news of repentance, forgiveness of sin, and release from Satan's control.

So why include this appendix in a book about mission work to "Samaritans." First, knowing what the Great Commission is also informs us as to what it is not. Especially reading some of the interaction between Jews and Samaritans, and then later between Christians and Samaritans, there was much done that seemed appealing religiously, but were far and away outside of what Christ called us to do. Second, knowing the Great Commission, in its broadness can avoid excessively narrow views. For example, some may read the version in Mark and believe that it is only about preaching. Or perhaps read Matthew and believe that it is only about Discipling. We may need to look at other versions to see that God may have a broader role for each of us.

Appendix B

The Trinity and the Great Commission

I chose Great Commission passages slightly different for this. I did not include the Mark version of the Great Commission because it does not mention God directly. (Yes, I am aware that some believe the broader passage that the Markan Great Commission is included in was not in the original autograph, but was added at a later date. I will leave that argument for others, but I see no reason for disqualifying it due to this controversy. That is why I included it in Appendix A.) For this appendix, however, I want passages that mention God explicitly.

I also did not include the passage of Paul's calling. I did in Appendix A, but chose not to here because it is not from the same event. I also chose different boundaries for the great commission passages in some cases. For example in John, I added surrounding a bit more because the short-form of the Great Commandment is embedded in a broader context. That broader context is still relevant.

Note: Following the pattern of my original blogpost on this topic (Endnote 14) I am using Christian Standard Bible for the translation.

And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to **me**. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the **Father** and of the **Son** and of the **Holy Spirit**, teaching them to observe all that **I** have commanded you. And behold, **I** am with you always, to the end of the age.” Matthew 28:18-20

*“Thus it is written, that the **Christ** should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in **his** name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And behold, **I** am sending **the promise** of my **Father** upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.” Luke 24:46-49*

*Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the **Father** has sent **me**, even so **I** am sending you.” And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the **Holy Spirit**.*

John 20:21-22

*He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the **Father** has fixed by **his** own authority. 8 But you will receive power when the **Holy** Spirit has come upon you, and you will be **my** witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." Acts 1:7-8*

Looking at these passages, consider the mention of each member of the Godhead (marked by bold script in the passages). The following shows how often each is mentioned in each passage.

God the Father:

Matthew:	1
Luke:	1
John:	1
Acts:	2

God the Son:

Matthew:	3
Luke:	3
John:	2
Acts:	1

God the Holy Spirit:

Matthew:	1
Luke:	1

John: 1
Acts: 1

Now, suppose one combines these points into a Great Commission that shows the interaction between us and God in its execution. We might get something like this:

We are to be:

- **Empowered** by the Holy Spirit, promised by the Father, and sent by the Son
- **Made confident** by presence of the Son, sent by the Father
- **Accepting our calling** from the Son to go into the world.
- **Giving the message** of God to others
- **Being witnesses** of Christ
- **Baptizing believers** in the name of the Triune God
- **Training up people** in the teachings of Christ
- **Doing all** of this until the end, as decreed by the Father

To me, this is not a bad description of our calling based on the Great Commission. It also has the benefit of not being unbalanced in our relationship with God. God has not dumped this work on us. And God is not simply doing it all

Himself. Rather, God is active in carrying out the ministry associated with the Great Commission, but invites us to be involved in the work that He is doing.

Endnotes

1 See I Kings 16:24. Also you may refer to Bernard W. Anderson, *Understanding the Old Testament* (Quezon City, Philippines: Claretian Publications, 1986), 265.

2 Robert T. Anderson, Terry Giles, *The Keepers: An Introduction to the History and Culture of the Samaritans* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2002), 2. This book is a very thorough look at the Samaritans. If that is what you are looking for, please read it. For more on the quote of Sargon, refer to Daniel Luckenbill, *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia*, 1927, Vol. 2, Part 4: Sargons's annals.

3 The Samaritans recognize the canonicity of the Pentateuch (and perhaps to a lesser extent the Book of Joshua). However, they don't see the other parts of the Hebrew Bible as canonical. Some may see in this information as to when the Jewish and Samaritan faiths separated. On the other hand, it may be that Samaritans saw much of the other writings as having a pro-Jewish slant. Certainly, some of the prophets used the

term Samaria harshly, often representing the sins of the region. Consider:

-Isaiah 10:9-11

-Hosea 7:1; 8:5-6; 10:5; 13:6

-Amos 3:9; 4:1

-Micah 1:1, 5, 6

4 Bernard Anderson, 530-531.

5 Robert Anderson, 6.

6 Revised Standard Bible is used here, but you are welcome to use the version of your choice.

7 *Jonathan Hill, Zondervan's Handbook to the History of Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing, 2006), 132.

8 Wikipedia article, "Samaritans." Yes, I am well aware that intellectual snobbery dictates that one should not reference Wikipedia. Sometimes such an attitude is well-founded. However, the article on Samaritans is very good. Definitely worth a read.

9 Robert T. Anderson, 2

10 A good place to read more about this is the website of the Christian Community Development Association (www.cdda.org)

11 Wayne L. Gordon. "The Eight Components

of Christian Community Development,” <https://nsc-church.org/CCDA%208%20Points.pdf>. You are also welcome to websearch “The Eight Components of Christian Community Development” to find the slideshare presentation made by myself based on the above article.

12 Robert H. Munson and Celia P. Munson, *The Art of Pastoral Care* (Baguio City, Philippines: Bukal Life Care, 2016). These ideas are drawn from Emmanuel Y. Larty In *Living Color: An Intercultural Approach to Pastoral Care and Counseling* (Philadelphia, PA: Kingsley Publishers, 2003).

13 Robert Dykstra, *Finding Ourselves Lost: Ministry in the Age of Overwhelm* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2018), In the Introduction.

14. <https://munsonmissions.org/2011/10/21/the-trinity-in-the-great-commission/>

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