

Bedilu Yirga: ‘Go home to your own people and tell them ...’

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“Jesus did not let him, but said, ‘Go home to your own people and tell them how much the Lord has done for you and how he has had mercy on you’” (Mark 5:19).



Bedilu Yirga The man who was evil spirit-possessed pleaded with the Lord, making only one request, “Let me accompany you wherever you go.” The man knew what Jesus did for him. He found himself delivered from the cruelty of the devil, healed and restored to be whole by the power of Jesus. The man wanted to follow the stronger master, the healer and the one who loved him so much he came to find him.

But Jesus told him otherwise. Jesus said, “Go home to your own people, and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you.” The Lord’s reply shows us two significant principles: Go and tell. Only this time, he told the man specifically to go to his own people, town and family.

I wanted to share with you this verse for a reason. As the Baptist General Convention of Texas’ first Ethiopian (African) second vice president, I feel obligated to tell you about mission and mission works from the perspective of an ethnic church leader.



One of the two hand-dug wells completed through the cooperative project in Ethiopia..I personally and all churches in Ethiopia are very grateful for outside missionaries and their work in our country. They brought the good news to places and people who were controlled by the darkness. They paid dear prices, even to death. God the Almighty, the Lord of the harvest, has the rewards for each one of them. Praise the Lord.

But time has changed. We are badly in need of indigenous missionaries who have the passion and the call to share the gospel without any hardship to contextualize it. They know the culture; they speak the people's language; they are very much less expensive, compared to foreign missionaries.

Considering these facts and other advantages of sending local missionaries to fields, the Ethiopian Evangelical Baptist Church of Dallas in cooperation with BGCT launched a mission work project.

Reports from Bambasi show from 2009 through 2014:

- 13 local missionaries were funded and supported.
- 11,300 individuals heard the good news of the gospel in Bambasi and the surrounding areas.

- 1,185 gave their lives to Jesus Christ.
- Two hand-dug wells were completed.
- Two worship shelters—churches—were constructed.
- One elementary school was constructed and furnished.
- Funding and ongoing operational support for the school were provided.

Another report from Central Ethiopia documents the following results for 2009-14:

- 26 local missionaries were funded and supported.
- 32,000 individuals heard the good news of the gospel.
- 1,356 gave their lives to Jesus Christ.
- Two hand-dug wells were completed.
- Three worship shelters—churches—were constructed.
- One training workshop for missionaries was held.

Last October, I visited each mission field and verified the reports. I met local missionaries on the field, preached at the newly planted churches and saw new believers being disciplined.



Bedilu Yirga speaks to new Christians during a trip to Ethiopia. Local fellowships are growing, and some missionaries are planting new fellowships for the second time around. One area of prayer and observation was the fact some village churches might currently be struggling to sustain their ministry and keep their members engaged in fellowship, partially due to economic hardships. There could be an opportunity for all of us to identify and adopt such struggling rural village churches.

I believe the Lord is calling ethnic churches to go to their own people and tell the good news. By creating partnerships between Texas Baptist churches and ethnic churches in North America, we can fulfil the Great Commission effectively.



This is not new to us, Texas Baptists. However, the challenge is how we can coordinate our efforts among Texas Baptists toward the growing work of indigenous missionaries.

Texas Baptists' lives and works are full of testimonies of missions. But there are a lot of works yet to be covered. We need to awaken ethnic churches to

the “Go to your own people” mission. Help those who are already engaged with their own people.

Together, we can do more!

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