

Life on a Mission Field-Learning to Live Antithetically

by Kelli Bauman

Living on a mission field is work that is not cut out for just anyone. It takes people with special gifts to be able to work with the elderly, mentally retarded, or to work in the emergency room of a hospital, and it takes people with special gifts to live on a mission field. This kind of living takes a lot of sacrifice, dedication, and hard work. It is not to be thought of lightly or in any fashion “fun” or “something new and different.” To any person who may be considering moving to a mission field, a lot of prayer, thought, and serious consideration must be put into the decision. There can be very heavy consequences if a person’s mind is not focused correctly when making a decision of this importance. But at the same time, there can also be rewards of precious jewels in a Christian’s life i.e. faith, patience, and above all, trust in God.

When you are on a mission field, you must learn what it means to live an antithetical life. This is terribly crucial. The mission field is in the midst of the world, the world’s philosophies, the world’s opinions, and the world’s way of life. You are completely out-numbered. This is something that can be easily forgotten in the church community. You become so surrounded in church life and activities, that you have no real contact with the secular living.

Living in the midst of the world teaches you to soul search and shows you how you are doing in your walk as a Christian. If you are not living antithetically, the world will not see anything different about you. It sees you as “one of them” and that means you are not walking the straight and narrow. It is very easy for this to happen. You just want to stay out of evil circumstances and try to blend in but not fit in. If you notice this to be the case then your Christian walk must be carefully evaluated. Reevaluating yourself and soul searching is not an easy process. It is difficult to learn to stand out and be different.

At first, learning to be called out is awkward. For example, here is a common situation. When a topic of discussion arises about something that you know is wrong, out of fear of mockery the first instinct is to stay silent without commenting instead of voicing what is right. This can and should only work for a short time. You can use this time to evaluate your environment, know what you are up against, and learn how you can counteract your enemies. But this should not last that long. Eventually you have to speak up. You have to earnestly pray for the grace of God to give you the courage to stand for his cause and the wisdom to know what to say and when to say it. Many times you begin to speak your differences, but learning to act upon them is also something different. People out in the world do not like it when someone stands out among the others, especially Biblically. Compared to life on a mission field, living the antithesis in a congregational circle where church life is bountiful is easy. Every person you surround yourself with believes as you do. You walk with people who want to walk as you do. You have the support of other church members, elders, deacons, and the minister for spiritual guidance and direction. You don’t have to think about basic Christian issues because you grew up with them. On the mission field these issues are something never heard of, weird, and definitely not practiced.

There are many things one must get used to quickly. To be blunt, you are not surrounded with Christians, neither Protestant Reformed nor nominal Christians. Everyone you see, work with, and even bump into on the street live ungodly lives. They are profane, blatant, and unashamed about it. They are highly offensive. You do not want to see it, but you have to. Not only do you have to see it, but also you must be called out from among them. This is what you are up against and it is a big world out there. These ungodly do not want to be preached to. They do not want to hear that their lifestyle is wrong. They love living in their comfortable sin. This makes it highly difficult to witness. But one of the most noticeable witnesses a Christian can give, especially on a mission field, is his godly, straight and narrow walk. It is highly effective and probably the most lasting impression one can give about living

for Christ's sake. Words, especially ones the ungodly do not want to hear, can easily go in one ear and out the other. But when you live differently from the world and the world sees it, that is what leaves a lasting impression about you and your personality. That is what the world talks about when they speak of you. Usually they speak evil of you. This is the normal reaction when someone stands out from "normal" worldly living. The words of Christ must be ever present when you are faced with this, *"Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice and be glad: for great is your reward in heaven..." Matthew 5:11-12.* This is the proof that your Christian walk is not only antithetical but also fruitful. This is what keeps you going, the still small voice of the Lord Jesus. This is what is able to give you the strength to continue living antithetically. On a mission field living the antithesis is very real. This is what is dealt with on a daily basis. It is very difficult to deal with this. It is most stressful when the ones you want to teach the most are members of your own family. To be honest, practicing this can make you very weary, quickly.

Living antithetically means more than living a conservative life and looking down on those that are more liberal. On a mission field, issues such as conservatives, liberals, and Christian liberty are obsolete. It is the practical Christian ways of living that are the most important; when in the Christian circle these issues become the shadow of normal life. Living contrary to the world entails normal issues and beliefs that many Christians do not have to think about because it is normal not to do it. It means not taking the Lord's name in vain when every person you come in contact does as often as they use the word "the". It means not using foul language, not using foul language when someone cuts you off on the road, and not using foul body language, by means of hand gestures or other gestures. It means declining to go to a bar after work, or even during work, intentionally getting drunk as a recreational activity. It means publicly criticizing the intentional abuse of alcohol when given the opportunity.

In the workplace, it means having to work for people who seem like the worst of the reprobate. It means constantly hearing the most vile things come out of their mouths. While in the work place you cannot run and hide from it, but you can live contrary to it by refusing to speak the evil. That is what they see in you. *"An ungodly man diggeth up evil: and in his lips there is as a burning fire," Proverbs 16:27.* You not only know this to be true but you really begin to understand what it means.

For single women living antithetically means dressing in a manner that does not intentionally cause a man to sin with his eyes. It means not intentionally acting toward a man flirtatiously for him to have lustful thoughts. It means not dating to rate your beauty by how many dates you can get in a week. It means not agreeing to have a major career in order to work to support herself so she does not need to depend on any man.

For married women it means that children are counted as a blessing instead of a burden. It means not looking down on housewives but actually building them up. It means not speaking up against a man as to show authority. It means not getting married to what the world considers to be the perfect man who will cater to your every need. It means that the married woman is not the head of the home. This is a very difficult area to deal with. In secular living, women as 'housewives' are looked down upon or thought of as lazy unless they have a career or job in which they make as much or in many cases more than the husband does.

On Sunday living antithetically means church is first and foremost. It means we must not go to church on Saturday so you can go to a picnic on Sunday. It means not working on Sunday at all no matter how badly your boss needs you. It means not going out for brunch at Denny's with your family after church. It means not going to the grocery store for milk and bread when you don't have any in the house. It means not cutting the grass because you didn't have any time during the week to do it. It means not doing any kind of major cleaning around the house. Sunday is a large area where you can show your antithetical living. To the world this is the most difficult thing to swallow, Sunday is the Lord's Day.

Living antithetically also means not glorifying fornication or adultery. In the world this is a very offending issue that is everywhere. Fornication, in the world, is a sport. This entails a lot of gloating and the people involved are regarded as trophies. Marriage is thought of as a ball and chain instead of something good. You have to rack up as many trophies as you can before it is time to settle down. Some of the world's philosophies for adultery are "you can look but you can't touch, and it's not cheating unless you get caught." Living antithetically means speaking up against this strongly. This is another large area where antithetical living can be expressed.

These issues are things that are dealt with day in and day out. A Christian on a mission field does not get a break from this. These things are what make you different from the world. Constantly protesting these issues to their faces may not get you very far, but they do notice what you don't talk about, participate in, and what becomes offensive to you. This is the honey that attracts the bees. When people begin to notice these differences, then you start to get quizzed. "Why" and "how come..." are questions that are used for topics of discussions instead of other things. Living antithetically, on a mission field, is most important for the growth of the mission group. If you are living worldly and preaching something else, the world will find you at fault and will bring it to your attention. Then your witnessing becomes even harder. Living antithetically also teaches you to witness because you are called to have an answer for the "why's" and "how come's;" then suddenly witnessing becomes a little easier. *"But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear," 1 Peter 3:15.* ❖

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