

Anny Buzzell chose to be uncomfortable, learning a different language and culture than remaining comfortable at home. And she isn't the only American Baptist missionary to make that choice.

b) Sometimes we become uncomfortable because we are surprised by others' reactions to what we risk.

Recently my daughter and son-in-law traveled to Texas to view land that has been in Lawrence's family since his great-grandmother's time.

Damaris described how when she and Lawrence entered a restaurant or went to the hotel, there was a pause, slightly too long. She described how this happened several times in the short weekend they were there. And she couldn't quite identify the reason for the pause that was slightly too long: was it that the other person was uncertain what to say to this couple? Was it that Damaris and Lawrence, a white woman and a black man, were unusual, unexpected? Was it that the other person disapproved of a white woman and a black man being a couple?

Was she simply overly sensitive? Damaris has never felt this same dis-ease, and in her teens and early 20s she had many reasons to feel uncomfortable. Her comment to me was, "Now I have a glimpse of what Lawrence has experienced all his life."

When we engage in mission, when we serve others, we may be surprised:

--surprised because everyone's life isn't exactly like mine;

--surprised everyone doesn't believe and value exactly what I believe and value;

--surprised that our good intentions may be rejected.

And we have to expect there will be times we are uncomfortable.

Romans 12:9 Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good;

12:14 Bless those who persecute you, bless and do not curse them....

12:21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

3

If we are to fulfill our church's mission statement, there is a second action we must be ready to take:

2) Giving/serving even at a cost to ourselves

There is a wonderful Canadian advertisement making the rounds of Facebook. (Canadian "Wheels") These boys have discovered how to serve, even when it means they have to play basketball on wagons and other make-shift wheels.

In 1942, Clarence Jordan made a decision that would cost him over and over again. He started a community farm in Georgia: Koinonia Farm. Blacks and whites lived on the same property, working alongside one another as equals. 1942: this was unheard of!

(Clarence Jordan): "We shared, taught and were members of local churches. From the beginning, Koinonians emphasized the brotherhood and sisterhood of all people. When we could afford to hire seasonal help, Black and White workers were paid a fair, equal wage. When the community and its guests prayed or ate a meal, we all sat together at the table, regardless of color. Our commitment to racial equality, pacifism, and economic sharing brought bullets, bombs, and a boycott in the 1950s as the Ku Klux Klan and others attempted to force us out. We responded with prayer, nonviolent resistance, and a renewed commitment to live the Gospel."

Several years ago, I met Rev. Conrad Browne, by then a pastor in Kansas. He recounted some of his experiences at Koinonia Farm, during the boycott trying to sell eggs in the neighboring towns and being rejected for the eggs came from that place where blacks and whites worked together. He told of being beaten, when he went into the area towns, beaten for living at Koinonia Farm.

Sometimes we have to serve, to give, even at a cost to ourselves. We have to ask ourselves these questions: Is my comfort more important than telling another of God's love through Jesus Christ? Is my comfort more important than taking time to assist another in need of help?

4

Prov. 3:27-28 Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due when it is in your power to do it.

Do not say to your neighbor, "Go, and come again, tomorrow I will give it"—when you have it with you.

We are to do good when we have the opportunity to do good. We are to give when we are asked, give when we are able to give. As we read in Matthew 25:40, "And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.'

Romans 12:11 Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord

12:21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good

If we are to fulfill our church's mission statement, there is a third action we must be ready to take.

3) Choosing urgency over complacency

You may be the only Jesus some will ever see. This one time you encounter another, this may be the only opportunity you have to share God's words of life with that person.

The staged version of Victor Hugo's *Les Miserables* has been performed for more than 25 years. Set at the time of the French Revolution, it is the story of Jean Valjean, imprisoned for 20 years for stealing a loaf of bread to feed his niece. Once a convicted felon Valjean found it almost impossible to find a job. Desperate, he broke into a church and stole the silver candlesticks. Trying to escape, Valjean was caught by the police and taken back to the church. "We've caught this man stealing your silver," the police told the priest as they returned the candlesticks. The priest, without pausing, turned to Jean Valjean, handing him back the silver candlesticks. Addressing Jean Valjean, the priest says "You left in such a hurry, you forgot some of what I gave you." Then the priest hands Jean Valjean another piece of silver, perhaps a platter, perhaps a bowl. Of course the police are frustrated. Now Jean Valjean has to wrestle with his understanding of life: it isn't take all you can get. There is mercy, grace, even for one like him—a common thief.

5

He changes his life's direction, eventually becoming a factory owner and mayor of his town. Of course there is much more to the story. It is a story of redemption; it was the priest's act of forgiveness and grace that made the difference. Of course, Jean Valjean could have taken the silver objects and continued to be a common thief. But the risk the priest took in giving away the church's silver changed a life...

"Truly I say to you, just as you did it to one of the least of these, you did it to me."

Romans 12:13 Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers

12:21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

If we really believe God loves us, if we really believe God is merciful and forgives, shouldn't we want to share this exciting news with others who haven't heard it? Risk-taking mission and service: Do I really have to be uncomfortable? Probably. Do I really have to serve, even if it costs me something? Probably. Do I have to have a sense of urgency, not complacency? Probably.

This week the Lenten Season begins—Wednesday, March 1 is Ash Wednesday. We are preparing to remember Jesus' death on the cross, and then his resurrection. Jesus showed us the level of risk we must be ready to take: he gave his life for us. Compared to that, being uncomfortable doesn't seem like much to ask.

What can we do in risk-taking mission and service?

What can I do?

What is ONE thing you can do TODAY to shine the light of Jesus into someone's life?

One thing that may make you uncomfortable, may cost you something and recognizes that your service is urgently needed?

It starts right where you are

What might you do in mission and service to your neighbors and neighborhood?

"We aren't neighborly any more....."

6

I enjoy walking on State St. with so many front porches—
and people on their front porches

It moves to your community

ABCUSA has a program titled: Joining God in the
Neighborhood. The purpose is to walk through the neighborhood
and learn about those living and working there. For FBC this
includes office employees, jail employees, hotel employees, condo
residents

We can list organizations in the community needing our
time and skills..

Schools, such as volunteer tutors, food pantries, Munson
hospital, care centers

We help support Love INC; perhaps we could do more.

It moves beyond your community to national and international
mission

Cadillac FBC Clean Water Project in Haiti

Friendship House in Hamtramck

ABC-MI coordinates mission trips to Haiti each year. In
previous years, volunteers have led VBS, built a small
home, added an exterior stairway to a school .

ABCUSA Volunteers in Mission is our nationwide mission
effort.

For the last several years, volunteers have gone to New
Orleans Lower 9th Ward to continue rebuilding after
Hurricane Katrina.

Murrow Indian Children's Home in Muskogee OK always
needs volunteers.

We have financially contributed to ABC missionaries. We
need to continue our support!

7

When you did it to one of these, you did it to me.

Let love be genuine, love one another

Contribute to the needs of the saints, extend hospitality to
strangers

Do not be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good.

Madeleine L'Engle, noted author, has written:

We draw people to Christ not by loudly discrediting what they
believe, by telling them how wrong they are and how right we
are, but by showing them a light that is so lovely that they want
with all their hearts to know the source of it."

You're the only Jesus some will ever see.

What is ONE thing you can do TODAY to shine the light of Jesus
into someone's life?

