Go and Do Likewise


“Our deepest calling is to grow into our own authentic selfhood, whether or not it conforms to some image of who we ought to be. As we do so, we will not only find the joy that every human being seeks—we will also find our path of authentic service in the world. True vocation joins self and service, as Frederick Buechner asserts when he defines vocation as “the place where your deep gladness meets the world’s deep need.”

–Parker Palmer

As Amy Canosa and I prepared for a joint spring break trip for students of University Baptist Church and CO-Op at UNC, we allowed this quote to guide our thoughts and inspire our plans. The constant questions students are grappling with in these four years are, “Who am I?”, and “What in the world am I going to do with my life?” Amy and I desired for this trip to expand vocational imaginations beyond pre-law, pre-med, or the other expected paths of the “Carolina Way.” UNC is a campus of activists, decrying the plight of those on the margins with protests, marches, and displays for causes in constant visibility. Our goal was to connect concern for social justice to a theological vision. We attempted to do this through connecting our students to those who were using their skills and passions on a daily basis to work for the kingdom of God.

The first morning of our trip we volunteered with Calvary Baptist Church, playing games, doing skits, and building friendships with patients from a local mental hospital. This fellowship club meets at Calvary on a weekly basis http://calvarydc.com/. That afternoon we headed for Alexandria, VA, to learn about an intentional community called “Casa Chirilagua” http://www.casachirilagua.org/. We spent the evening learning from a group of young men and women who have committed to living together and sharing their resources in an immigrant community. Those in this house and others in the neighborhood are working to be a voice for the voiceless in the community and in the workplace as teachers, neighbors and friends.

Our second day in DC, We visited the headquarters of International Justice Mission http://www.iwm.org/ and Bread for the World http://www.bread.org/. At IJM we saw a beautiful collaboration of skills as lawyers, law enforcement, politicians, theologians,
accountants, and IT professionals worked together in the name of the gospel to break the bonds of human trafficking around the world. In our visit to Bread for the World we were exposed to a similar range of professionals working together to end hunger through political advocacy.

From the woman at Calvary Baptist who has volunteered with mentally-ill patients weekly for decades, to the men and women who have committed to being neighbors to undocumented immigrants, to the professionals who use their vocations to end human trafficking and hunger, it is clear that God desires to use our unique passions and gifts for kingdom work. How will we “go and do likewise?”

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