



Never alone

Inspired by Matthew 28:16-20

The eleven finalists went to Georgia, to the mountain to which the Christian company, Sustain, had ordered them.

When they stepped into the beautiful chapel at the entrance of the property, they all took a few moments to kneel down and pray. Each poured out private praise to God for giving them this opportunity to serve Him, the Church, and the community in their professional career. This is an exciting time with much to look forward to, but they doubted. Sustain was founded 20 years ago with the mission that no person goes without the basic needs of shelter, food, and running water.

The founder believed there is more than enough for everyone, and most who have would gladly share with those who are in need. His calling in life was to connect the two groups so that life, peace, health, and harmony may be sustained in our world. What a tremendous goal! It is literally a mountain of work, so he built the company on a beautiful mountaintop. When you stand in such a space as this, the sky stretches in all directions beyond imagining and your lungs fill with that crisp, clear air. How can you not feel God's presence?!

Sustain's company prayer is printed above the door, "With God all things are possible. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, bring us shelter, food and water." Simple. Basic. And, a tangible reminder they are here to do God's work for His people.

The eleven sat in the quiet chapel and waited. It was a linear design with windows along both sides revealing the wondrous views. The windows start small at the entrance, increasing in size as your eyes are drawn down the aisle to a giant mural of Jesus. It depicted a gentle loving Jesus standing by a well, holding a basket of food, surrounded by villagers. He is blessing them. You can tell they are very poor by the shabby houses in the background and the ragged clothes they are wearing. But, the artist was able to capture a spirit of radiant joy! When you stand and gaze upon it, you feel as though you are peeking into the hearts of a people who know the beauty of life in relationship with Jesus. Their basic needs

are met. Through His love, they have shelter, food, and water. It is absolutely breathtaking! The newcomers sat and quietly took it all in. This is what Jesus taught. This is the essence of Sustain. What a blessing to be a part of this company!

The founder approached the front and stood in silence before the mural with his back to the eleven for a full 25 seconds. It seemed more like 25 minutes before he turned and faced his newest team members. He smiled and said, "All power in heaven and on earth was given to Jesus. He told His disciples to go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. He taught them to observe all He had commanded them. Jesus promised to be with them....and us.....always, until the end of age."

"When I was a young man," their new boss continued "I heard this and knew that God was calling me to gather more disciples and bridge the gap of poverty. I am from the Mississippi Delta. I never understood the discrepancy of wealth in our world. I would see a mansion with 10 bedrooms and 10 bathrooms and only two residents just down the road from a shack housing 10 people with no electricity and no indoor plumbing. In truly poor households, adults take turns fasting from meals so that all the children are fed."

He paused and looked in each person's eyes. "I knew in my heart that our world could do better," he said. "It takes physical, emotional, and spiritual strength to give assistance, comfort, and encouragement to others. When you are born in wealth and privilege, you have a leg up on being successful yourself. You have a safety net to catch you when you fall. I believe most of those people truly don't want the family down the road to go to bed hungry every night. They just don't know a good way to go about helping them.

"When you are born in poverty, you already have a huge burden to overcome in order to be successful. You have no safety net, no guarantee of education or opportunity. When you are hungry and afraid, it is easier to fall, and harder to rise above. I believe most of those people don't want to take anything away from their wealthy neighbors. They just want to work toward something better so their family doesn't have to go to bed hungry again. They just don't know a good way to go about it.

“When we bring those two groups together in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, we sustain a life rich in many ways.”

Cathy sat in the front row and listened. Her heart soared with hope that she could be a part of this. But, she doubted. Was she good enough for this job? She obtained the knowledge earning her master’s degree. But, would anyone listen to this blonde haired, blue eyed girl who was inexperienced and overweight? She grew up very comfortably, never wanting for anything. She didn’t know how to do this.

Daniel sat two rows behind Cathy and listened. His mind raced with excitement that he could be a part of this. But, he doubted. Was he good enough for this job? He isn’t as young as the other newbies in this room. He has years of experience in sales but no college degree, and not much flair with social media. Would anyone listen to this balding, middle-aged man? He wasn’t sure he would be good at this.

Jamal sat in the very back row and listened. He looked calm, cool, and collected. But, he doubted. Was he good enough for this job? He grew up in a place a lot like those children in the mural. Raised by his grandmother, he remembers her pretending she wasn’t hungry when there wasn’t enough supper for everyone. He loved his family, but always worked to rise above such poverty. He studied hard, and worked hard, and earned his degree. Would anyone listen to this overly ambitious, poor boy? He wasn’t sure they would think he could do this.

Sustain’s founder spoke what they were all thinking. I know you have doubts. I’ve had them myself along the way. What you’re thinking is true. You can’t do this. You can’t bridge the gap of poverty. It’s just so wide and has been there for all of time it seems. You can’t do this — ALONE! But together, we can. Together we harvest the good and sustain life for all — just like Father, Son, and Spirit — forming a strong, unbreakable bond.

In the One God of three persons, life comes to breathe, kindness comes to work, hope comes to love, eyes come to see. Their new leader had everyone’s full attention. He pointed to the window, “Look at the beauty He created.” Then, pointing at the painting he added, “He is with us always! Together, we can do this!”

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