

# CRITICAL OTHERS

## **Critical Others in the Bible:**

Paul was one of the first missionaries who ever existed. He couldn't help but travel from city to city preaching the gospel and sharing about the life of Jesus. And Paul really laid the groundwork for the missionaries who would come after him (you and your team included). In fact, most missionaries today consider studying Paul and his epistles a staple in preparing them for their own mission. He was brilliant, a risk-taker, uncompromising and courageous. His life was thoroughly lived out by faith, and his focus was laser-like. Paul was really a great example and a great missionary.

Paul understood, however, the importance of "critical others" when it came to his impact in a city. No matter how much effort Paul put into it, he knew his impact was often determined by those around him. And this is where we find Paul in Acts 17 when he arrived in Athens. Paul actually had a little time to kill, waiting for Silas and Timothy, but when he saw how lost the city was, his heart was burdened. So he began. First he went to the synagogue, where he could connect with people who at least had some understanding of what he was talking about (being that he served in the synagogue himself). Next, he hopped over to the market place. This would have been where he could connect with a ton more people and get a chance to start up some real intentional conversations. It was also where he would get to know "the who's who" in Athens. This brought him right into conversation with elite and highly influential philosophers, and eventually the leader Aeropagus.

## **Read Acts 17: 15-34**

### **Discuss**

- Who were some of the critical others in Athens? Make a list
  
- Now write down next to each name why that person was critical to Paul's impact as a missionary?
  
- What was Paul's potential if he did not identify and connect with these critical others? What if he had just stayed in the synagogue or waited for Silas and Timothy?
  
- What was the impact that Paul had in this short time in Athens (vs. 33)?

## **Critical Others for your team:**

It's always surprising the amount of critical others that exist for every mission trip team. There is always the typical list (the local pastor, the owner of the house you are fixing or building, etc.), but there always ends up being more than that along the way. Some you can't plan for, but some are just a matter of thinking through ahead of time and then intentionally reaching out to them.

A great thing to always do is get to know someone in the local hardware store. The experienced man with a beard in an orange Home Depot vest can be one of the most critical people to your worksite. Depending on where you are from, you don't know all about the hurricane building standards of Pawley's Island, or constructing in sands of a Navajo Reservation, but he does. You don't know the best way to link a pipe to the natural spring in the rainforest, or when the next bags of concrete will be in stock, but the guy at the local hardware store does. The person at the local hardware store can be your best advocate, gathering local supplies you thought were impossible to get, and giving you tips which could save you hours. Not to mention the chance you have to impact his life by valuing him, offering thanks, and telling him about your team and what they came to do.

Another critical other that is always surprising are neighbors. Whether it's the person living next to the place you're staying, or the neighbor next to the place you're working, these people are critical. Why? Well, what happens when the electricity gets turned off at the worksite, and you need a place to plug in? Or when you need that frying pan, ladder, or directions? Yes, neighbors are a great resource, but even more than that, isn't the point of your trip to reflect Christ's love? Aren't you working and serving to show His love to the local church, kids at VBS and community? Well what if you helped your missionary partner, or local pastor, by already connecting the dots with the neighbor? Or maybe by getting the neighbor on board and supportive of what the long term missionary is trying to do? Or maybe by sharing Christ's love in a way that sets local believers up for maximum impact?

## ***Discuss:***

- These are two examples of critical others, yet there are a ton more. Who are some other people that are critical to the impact of your team? Make a list....A long list!
  
- Who are some of the critical others that you'll have before your trip?
  
- Who are some people that are critical to your individual impact, but not necessarily the impact of the whole team?

## Activity

As a team take about 20 minutes time to fill out this chart and begin to make a plan to connect with, serve, and partner with your team's critical others. (You may need to add more spaces to it on a separate piece of paper).

1. Begin by listing the critical others that apply to the whole team, both before and after the trip. (Column 1)
2. Why is this person critical to our team's impact? (Column 2)
3. Make action steps that your team will take in order to partner with each critical other. (Column 3) Remember, action steps are measurable. They answer the questions: Who will do this? When will they do this? What will they do? Here are some questions to help you brainstorm some action steps you can take...
  - How can we partner with this person?
  - How can we share Christ's love with this person?
  - What is this person's greatest need?
  - How can we encourage this person?
  - How can we serve this person?
  - How can we go above and beyond for this person?

<b>Critical Other</b>	<b>Why this person is a critical other</b>	<b>How you will best partner with this person</b>

### **Apply It:**

Share with your team at least one way you are going to care for a specific critical other on (or even better, before) the trip. Then choose a teammate to keep you accountable for this action. Between whole team, there should be enough intentional action steps to make sure that all the critical others in the community and your church are cared for, encouraged, and inspired to keep going.