QUESTIONS 2: WHY BOTHER?

Posted on September 30, 2019 by Eddie

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Category: Observations

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There is no single killer answer that will satisfy everyone who asks this question, but there are many ways in which the question itself is flawed.

Firstly, the presumption of the question is that we should use our resources to meet our own immediate needs rather than serving others around the world; in other words, we should put our own concerns first. The topsy-turvy world of the Kingdom of God is one in which we are called to put the needs of others before our own. This applies to mission as much as to any other sphere of life.

Secondly, it is true that their is a huge need for mission and evangelism in the UK, but despite this we are still far, far better off than many parts of the world. Despite the rapid growth of the church in some parts of the world, there are still many people groups with no discernable Christian witness at all.

A third way in which the question is badly thought through is that it seems to imply that we have to make a choice between work in the UK and work worldwide because resources are limited. Now, I realise that individual churches face real constraints on their income, but this is not a zero-sum game. Ultimately, God is the one who provides the resources and we need to be prepared to trust him. Just a couple of thoughts; when a church gets a real vision for supporting God's work around the world, people tend to be motivated to give to support the work, freeing up more resources. Then again, even if it is true that a church honestly can't give money or send people, it costs nothing to regularly pray for an unreached people group. Supporting world mission doesn't have to be a costly business.

The bottom line is that I don't actually think that this is a very good question, even though it is one that is often asked. To be blunt, I don't really think that it is a genuine question, it is more by way of an excuse. The reason I say this is that I have rarely, if ever, encountered a church with no interest in global mission who had a thriving programme of local evangelism in place. In fact, churches with a strong commitment to world mission are the ones who are most active at reaching their local communities.

Let me quickly say that a commitment to world mission doesn't have to mean sending missionaries, for smaller churches, it may simply involve regular, fervent, informed prayer for different situations around the world. The thing is, if we are concerned for the salvation of people in our locality, we will also be concerned about people at the ends of the earth and vice-versa. This is the implication of the great commission passages in Matthew and Acts. You can't do one without the other.

One last thought. If we are really concerned about the needs in our locality, then we should be interested in learning from and being helped by Christians in parts of the world where the church is growing. Uncomfortable though it may be to admit it, we need help. The church is and always was an interdependant body; we need support from others and we have a responsibility to help our brothers and sisters in other parts of the world. If we turn our back on world mission, we are turning our back on God's people around the world and ultimately, turning our back on God.