THE FUTURE OF MISSIONS 2

Posted on October 12, 2020 by Eddie

Quotes from a report; some interesting, some thought-provoking and at least one which is infuriating.
Category: Short-Term Mission

Following on from my previous post which looked at some of the relevance of the Barna report on the future of missions to the situation in the UK, this one will look at a few quotes from the report and make some brief comments. I realise that taking quotes out of context is problematic, but I'll aim to be fair. There is some good stuff in the report and some not so good stuff!

> *Technology is not the only thing that has transformed the context of missions. Attitudes toward Christianity have also shifted.*
>
> *p. 10*

This quote illustrates one of the great weaknesses of the report. In context, it is suggesting that technology and the attitude to Christianity in the US have had a massive impact on missions. That is true, but the elephant in the room is the growth of the church around the world. That is (or at least should be) the greatest factor in changing our thoughts about mission.

> *â€œPutting human beings in a context where they are always â€˜specialâ€™ and celebrated, at home and in the field, is spiritually destructive to self and others. It breeds narcissism and can have far-reaching negative effects.Â Obviously not everyone falls into this trap but those who arenâ€™t self-aware and vigilant inevitably do.â€*
>
> *p. 26-27*

I think this is an excellent comment about some of the dangers that missionaries face. Some churches do put them on a pedestal and the temptation to constantly put a positive spin on your life and work (because your income depends on good prayer letters) is a real temptation.

There are a number of good statements about the nature of short-term mission work that I found thought-provoking and helpful.

> *â€œOur tendency to make overseas trips about OUR experience (or lack of it) and OUR imposition into cultures and communities that we donâ€™t have a stake in really makes this kind of missionary work seem out of touch and time to me.â€*
>
> *p. 27*

> *On top of all that, are short-term trips really as life-changing as we think? The course of our lives and ministry changed because of missions, absolutely. But I can think of dozens of people we served with for whom that wasnâ€™t the case, and half a dozen more who walked away from faith and church because of their missions experience. It just wrecked them.*
>
> *p.63*

This next quote is particularly powerful and absolutely true.

> *As far as Iâ€™m concerned, the burden of proof is on people who say short-term missions is good. Just because weâ€™ve been doing it this way for years and years doesnâ€™t mean we should keep doing it.*
>
> *p.64*

> *The gospel is not delivered, itâ€™s lived. Incarnated. The way we do missions has to embody the truth of incarnation, and I donâ€™t think the short-term model passes the smell test. Jesus has to be our model, our archetype for mission. He embodied our flesh to show us what God is like!*
>
> *p.64*

> *The Church is growing in the global South, and itâ€™s just possible that we have more to learn from them than they do from us.*
>
> *P.64*

To put it mildly, I was somewhat shocked by this quote referring to a couple of missionaries in Kenya. What planet are they living on? That shift happened a generation ago.

> *Looking forward, Donna and Jim see the Churchâ€™s center of gravity shifting to the global South.Â*

> *p.41*

I was rather amused by this quote as it is exactly the opposite of my experience. I'd call myself a missionary in Africa, but never in the UK.

> *A Europe-based artist, for example, said, â€œIn America I call myself a missionary, but not here. Here Iâ€™m an artist and a social worker. I do community development work. My story includes my faith, but I donâ€™t lead with that.â€*
>
> *p.34*

There are some interesting reflections on funding which are worth pondering on in the UK context.

> *Whatever the case, a significant minority of young engaged Christians isnâ€™t sure that international missions is where their money can do the most good.*
>
> *p.51*