# MISSION ALL OVER THE PLACE

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**Category:** Observations

It used to be simple. Evangelism was what we did in the UK and mission was what special Christians did in other countries. If you had to get on a ship or a plane to do it, it was mission, otherwise it was evangelism. What could be simpler?

However, the world has changed and so have the meanings of these words. There are now far more Christians in parts of what we used to call theÂ *mission field* than there are in the UK and they are sending missionaries here. In additionÂ the church in the UK has realisedÂ the needs in our home country and so there is a lot of talk about churches doing mission in their home towns. You don't even need to dig your passport out of the drawer if you want to get involved in mission these days, much less buy a plane ticket.

Mission happens everywhere. Meanwhile, evangelism, proclaiming the good news of Jesus, has been recognised as a central theme of mission and it happens everywhere too. Got that?

Broadly, I think that this is a good thing. Functionally, there is no real difference between serving the poor and preaching the good news to the people of LeamingonÂ or doing the same in Lima.Â Presenting the Gospel in a way in which it speaks into the culture is a challenge wherever you are. Our call is to make disciples and to love our neighbour wherever we find ourselves at home, or across the world.

However, I can't help feel a little bit of nostalgia for the old days, when mission was all about overseas. Let me explain.

Firstly, I think that the current stress on UK based mission means that we have allowed ourselves to take our eyes off the wider world. I see an awful lot of stuff about mission on the internet that has no international dimension to it at all. Yes, there are huge needs in the UKÂ andÂ we have to reach people here. But this does not mean that we no longer have a responsibility to take the Gospel to the ends of the earth. There are all sorts of ways of doing this, but there must be an international dimension to our mission.

Another thing that concerns me is that we are losing site of the specifics of international/cross-cultural mission. One one level preaching the Gospel in LeamingtonÂ and LimaÂ are the same thing, but on another level they are completely different. For a start, people are likely to be far less receptive in Leamington! However, there are some challenges involved in taking the Gospel across cultures. Going to a new place involves learning a new culture and a new language and these are significant issues.

By talking about mission as if it were a single phenomenon, we are losing sight of some of the real challenges that face the church as it seeks to bear witness to Jesus in a complex world. Mission is from everywhere to everywhere and that means some Brits will need to continue to go to far flung places and when they do, they will need to learn new languages and new approaches.