NOT NEW ENOUGH

Posted on February 12, 2018 by Eddie

The most effective instrument in the spread of the gospel "would not be western mission agencies or institutions of any kind,
Category: Observations

Last week I came across a couple of interesting blog posts that are well worth a read: The New Mission and The New Mission: Part II - What Does it Look Like. These are written by Adam Lowe who works with a major mission agency in recruiting young people. The posts address the issues of what needs to be done to drawÂ *millennials* into mission agencies. There are some good thoughts in his posts and there are things that might be useful to church leaders as well as those involved agencies. They are worth a read.

However, despite the value of the pieces, I believe that the articles says things which are common enough in the mission agency world, but which need addressing.

Talking about millenials, the second article says:

> *These generations are the future of missions, the hope of the world rests on their shoulders and therefore I believe itâ€™s vitally important that we release them into mission. If we donâ€™t then we do so at the cost of the many unreached people around the world.*

This is good motivational stuff and you don't have to go far to find similar things in mission agency literature and in books on mission. The problem is that it is wrong. The hope of the world rests on Christ, not on the shoulders of any particular generation. Frankly, if the hope of the world rests on the shoulders of millenials (or any other group, for that matter), we are in big trouble. I realise that this might sound picky, but it is a vitally important point. It is Christ who builds his church, not us. It is the Spirit who draws people to Christ, not us. Amazingly, God gives us the privilege of of being involved in his work and the light of the gospel shines through us; but he is the agent of mission, not us.

I'm all in favour of motivating people to get involved in mission; it's a good thing to do. However, when we use language that implies thatÂ *we* are the ones who make a difference or that God is dependant onÂ *us* to get his work done, we are on very dodgy ground.

My second problem is related to this one. Adam does a great job of looking at how millennials can get involved in western mission agencies. This is an important topic and one that agencies need to get to grips with. However, this isn'tÂ *new* mission. It's the same old mission made more user friendly. New mission is happening already, it involves Christians all round the world crossing cultural boundaries for all sorts of reasons and sharing Christ as they go. The majority ofÂ *missionaries* (if one can use the term) in the world today have very limited contact with traditional mission agencies. This is not to say that there isn't a place for agencies as we know them; there is, but they are not the future of mission.

The following quote harks back to the 1910 Edinburgh missions conference and points to a future, which we Westerners have been very slow to adapt to.

> *The most effective instrument in the spread of the gospel "would not be western mission agencies or institutions of any kind, but rather a great and sometimes unorthodox miscellany of indigenous pastors, prophets, catechists and evangelists, men and women who had little or no access to the metropolitan mission headquarters and the wealth of dollars and pounds which kept the mission society machine turning; they professed instead to rely on the simple transforming power of the Spirit and the Word." (Bryan Stanley)*