WHERE SHOULD YOUR MISSION BUDGET GO?

Posted on March 12, 2018 by Eddie

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Category: Church: UK

A few days ago, Stephen Kneale made this rather provocative comment in one his blog posts:

> *Perhaps instead of sending the entirety of your missions budget abroad, you might consider supporting gospel work to under-reached areas of the UK.*

For the record, I think this is a brilliant idea and over the next three days, I'll be exploring the concept from the point of view of someone involved in 'overseas mission'. Tomorrow, I'll look at some of the practicalities involved and the following day, I'll deal with one of the most common objections raised to this sort of idea. Today, I'm just having a brief look at the concept.

The first thing to note is that there is a real need; I recently saw figures that suggest that less than 1% of people in Yorkshire go to church on a Sunday and that less than half of those are evangelicals. This is not dissimilar to the figures for, say, Japan and the figures for Yorkshire are still dropping.

However, I would never justify a particular mission strategy on the basis of need alone; there has to be a biblical or theological rationale to what we do.

> *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhereâ€"in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. (Acts 1:8)*

This passage says that we should be witnesses to Jesus wherever we are, that includes our home city, the local region, neighbouring countries and the ends of the earth. There is no functional distinction made between these; there is no hint of home-missions and overseas-missions. The divide that we live with today between mission at home and around the world comes from Christendom - the idea that there is a "Christian world" (Europe and the European diaspora) and a "non-Christian world" (the rest). Mission was sending people from the Christian world into the rest of the world, whereas evangelism was what we did at home. However, that convenient division of the world was never really a reality and it certainly isn't now. There is no biblical or theological distinction between being a witness to Jesus in Bangkok, Bangui or Barnsley. I will be the first to admit that there are some logistic and practical differences; but these are of a secondary importance. It's also true that the skills of cross-cultural mission that were once the staple of overseas mission are every bit as relevant in the cities of the UK as they are around the world, today.

But what about the Jesus command to "go into all the world"? Isn't this a crucial part of mission?

Well, no.

Jesus didn't command us to go into all the world. He commands us to make disciples as we go into the world. The assumption is that we will be going anyway (some go down the road to work, others travel to the far side of the globe), but as we are on the way, we should make disciples.

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