

A Global Movement of Radical Young Adults Is Emerging

Last week I arrived in Zanzibar, off the coast of Tanzania, to train some missionaries and to speak in a few meetings before heading to the mainland. I knew that Zanzibar was predominantly Muslim, and that in the past Christians there have suffered from persecution. I didn't know that this beautiful island, now a vacation paradise, was once the headquarters of the global slave trade—controlled by Arabs from the nation of Oman.

When I arrived I was greeted by a young leader named Ben, who directs the work of Overland Missions on the island. Ben is only 27, but he and his wife, Kelsi, lead a team of church planters and evangelists. Most of the people working with Overland in Zanzibar and Tanzania are in their 20s and 30s.

I met Alex, 31, a German-Russian guy who has a vision to raise up 1,000 church planters from his base in northern Tanzania. I met Lena, 33, who is bringing the gospel to prostitutes in Zanzibar. (She's now running out of room in a rented hall because so many women are attending her Bible studies.) I met Rodrick, 35, an African American who left his home in North Carolina to win souls in Zanzibar. He's now speaking Swahili and wearing colorful Tanzanian clothes as he shares his faith.

God Promises to Send His Latter Rain

During my three days on the island, I preached at an Assemblies of God congregation in a rural area near the capital. The church has struggled in the past because of persecution, but now they have run out of room, and most of the people who attended the Sunday service are teens or 20-somethings.

When I took a ferry to Tanzania's capital, Dar es Salaam, I

met a young pastor named Margaret, who is 38. With the full support of her husband, and with two young children in tow, she leads a Pentecostal Holiness church on the outskirts of the city and hopes to launch a primary school soon. Her dream is to reach the next generation with the gospel.

Do you see a pattern here? Wherever I go, I see evidence of a rising spiritual tide. Yes, there are huge challenges in this crazy world. But even though many young people in the United States have rejected faith, a spiritual revival is rising among young adults.

“The vision God has given us for Zanzibar is to see God redeem what the enemy has twisted,” says Ben, the Overland leader. “This nation was once the center for slave trade, Islam and darkness, but it will be transformed by a move of the Holy Spirit into a sending nation for the gospel. Our vision is to see revival sweep through the islands and spark a missions movement to surrounding unreached peoples.”

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I see Ben’s passion in so many other leaders his age. Overland Missions, led by Philip Smethurst in Florida, is deploying hundreds of young people all over the globe. While some aging denominations have struggled with stagnant growth, new groups are springing up everywhere. And while seminaries are shrinking, and some older denominations have lost the fire of the Spirit, new training centers are emerging to attract younger students.

When I meet people like Ben, Kelsi, Alex, Lena, Rodrick and Margaret, my heart is filled with hope for the future. The global church is not in retreat.

Many Christians today have a gloomy outlook. We see so many negative trends—the breakdown of families, rising crime,

financial instability, the war in Ukraine and a widespread rejection of traditional values. If you feed on a steady diet of mainstream news broadcasts, you might be tempted to hide in a cave.

6 Ways to Prepare for Spiritual Harvest

That's exactly where Elijah was hiding in 1 Kings 19 after the confrontation on Mount Carmel. Elijah had escaped to a cave because he felt threatened by Jezebel's witchcraft. He was in despair. He had lost hope for the future. Elijah complained in his prayer: "... the sons of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down your altars and killed Your prophets with the sword. And I alone am left ..." (v. 14).

But in that dark moment the Lord gave Elijah a bright promise. He said: "Yet I will leave 7,000 in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal and every mouth that has not kissed him" (v. 18). God was reminding Elijah that He had a remnant of faithful servants prepared to bring change. Things looked bleak, but God had a surprise waiting.

I believe God is shouting this over us today. This is not a time to despair. Look around! A new generation of His faithful followers is emerging. And just as Obadiah hid 100 prophets from Jezebel (see 1 Kings 18:4), God has prepared a remnant of radical Christians to finish the work of Jesus. They are in training now, but they will soon be a part of the greatest missions force in the church's history.

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