

As America Goes, So Goes the World

I love traveling abroad, and since 1986, I have traveled outside the United States (primarily overseas) close to 200 times, including almost 50 trips to Asia and more than 70 trips to Europe.

During these trips (all for ministry purposes), I've spoken thousands of times through translators, sometimes in exotic jungle areas where man-eating tigers have been on the loose, sometimes in massive stadiums, sometimes in majestic, old church buildings, sometimes in huts.

Who can describe the experience? The different sounds; the different cultures; the different tastes; the different clothes; the different languages; the different expressions—yet always the same love for the same God.

Last week, during the 17th annual missions conference for an organization I helped birth (called FIRE, an acronym for Fellowship for International Revival and Evangelism), I had a very intense experience during one of the night services.

We currently provide oversight for more than 150 individuals serving in about 25 different nations (mainly grads from our ministry school and their families), some of them involved in rescuing children sold into sex-slavery, some involved in caring for orphans, some involved in feeding programs for the needy, some providing education for the poorest of the poor, some starting their own ministry schools, some planting new churches in unreached regions—often in dangerous parts of the world, including right in the heart of the Islamic civil wars in the Middle East as well as very close to Boko Haram in Africa.

During our annual mission's conference, many of our workers

come back from these foreign nations and share their stories and we help them raise funds for their overseas projects.

On this particular night, Friday, Oct. 21, as we sang and worshipped together, I was overwhelmed with God's love for the nations, and I began to weep, my heart bursting with the desire to take the Good News of Jesus' death and resurrection to the ends of the earth. (As a Jewish believer in Jesus, I'm always thinking about my own people as well.)

But then the thought hit me: Then why have and others I spent so much time and energy fighting the culture wars in America? Why not give all my time and energy to reaching the nations?

Immediately, I knew the answer: As America goes, so goes the world.

You see, our nation has had an incredible, unprecedented impact on the world, both for good and for evil, and if America has a complete moral and cultural collapse, the ripple effect will be felt around the world. In the same way, if we lose our religious liberties—we who are known for the themes of freedom and independence—it will have a chilling effect all over the planet.

As we think of America's positive contributions over the decades, just ask yourself where Europe would be today without American intervention in World War II, or consider what international healthcare would look like or what international disaster relief would look like if America wasn't here. The loss would be felt deeply across the globe.

But there's a negative side to our influence too, and over the years, as I have traveled overseas, I have watched with grief as the worst aspects of our culture—our narcissism; our carnality; our obsession with violent and sexual entertainment; our divorce culture; our LGBT activism—have spread through the nations.

On my first trip to Singapore in 2000, I was speaking with a Christian leader there who was bemoaning the rising divorce rate in his conservative Asian country.

I asked him, "Did American media have any influence on your culture?"

He replied, "Once MTV came in, it was all over."

He was dead serious.

And over the last few years, as I have sat privately with government leaders in different countries, they have shared with me the pressure they are under from America—sometimes straight from the White House—to embrace the goals of LGBT activism, or else.

Professors have talked to me about American pressure put on their universities; businessmen have told me about the pressure put on their companies; elected officials have told me about heavy-handed calls from our government—and in each case, the message has been the same: You need to change your antiquated standards and embrace our enlightened standards if you want to be partners with us. Otherwise, you will pay a steep penalty.

In other cases, pressure is not the issue, seduction is—by which I mean the effect of our TV shows and movies on other nations, as the message of Hollywood and the morals of Hollywood infiltrate homes and hearts across the globe, especially among the younger generation: "This is how we want to be too!"

And so, on the one hand, we continue to stand for what is right in America because we love our country and we love the people of our country and we love what is best for our country and we love the great heritage of our country.

But we also stand for what is right in America—which means

engaging in the so-called culture wars—because we love the nations of the world, and what happens in America most certainly does not stay in America.

That is a sobering thought.

What will America export in the next 10-20 years?

The answer to that question falls largely on us.