

Christian Extremism Can Bring Tsunami of Disaster

✖ Worldwide, more than 5 million Christian missionaries are connecting with people to share Christ's love with their neighbors. Of these, according to Todd M. Johnson, director of the Center for the Study of Global Christianity at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, roughly 30,000 are in the parts of the world where little is known about Christ. Each day these people put their lives on the line to share the gospel with those who may otherwise never know Him.

Evangelism is built on relationships, which take years to establish. With the freedoms we enjoy as Americans, sometimes it's hard to imagine that in some parts of the globe people are beaten, jailed and killed for their faith. The danger of Christians taking an extreme approach to other belief systems is that it could bring about a tsunami of disaster for the missionaries and other humanitarian groups around the world.

Everywhere, countless people are working in the name of Christ to make life better for those around them. Whether providing, food, medical care or education, the humanitarian outpouring of love for our neighbors is evident.

Global disasters pull people apart while also bringing them together. Such was the case with the recent Haitian earthquake and following the 2004 tsunami in Southeast Asia. In both instances, relief organizations from all over the world joined together to provide hope to the hopeless.

Our relief ministry, Mustard Seed International (MSI), was among the first responders in the tsunami zone back in 2004. As a result we were able to be the hands and feet of Christ to many. We also constructed and now operate a Christian school, reaching out to the indigenous people with Christ-like love

and compassion.

Prior to that fateful day in December 2004, Christians were not welcomed nor even permitted in this region. Today, children of various faiths sit side-by-side at the MSI Christian school, which is accepted within the community due to its high academic standards and achievement. They are taught using a Christian curriculum developed by MSI specifically for this people group.

While our MSI volunteers may be serving halfway around the world, actions in the U.S. and other countries can greatly affect them and their efforts-for good or bad. Although we are a planet of 6.8 billion people, technology has made us into a global neighborhood. The path of extremist destruction is far and wide.

The effect of radical actions is most apparent in the faces of the children, where the masks of adulthood have not yet disguised their countenance. Fear, shock and devastation mar their youthful outlook, and through new, pain-filled eyes they see the distorted reality of violence all too clearly.

The international impact of extremism has left open wounds for many-wounds that will take generations to heal. Because of the situations we have seen unfold in different parts of the world, I believe a collective voice is shouting to stop any further potential match-lighting, which in turn could create a wildfire of further destruction.

It's time for all peace-makers to stand together in unity and find peaceful solutions, which will drown out extremist actions. It is time to stand up for the children – our planet's future – to learn a better way to coexist. There is much to be done together.

Much can be accomplished on this planet we all share. It's up to us to lift our voices above the din and say that the time is now to work together.

Bill Deans is president of Mustard Seed International, a South Carolina-based ministry that sponsors schools, orphanages, pastoral training and medical missions in Africa, India, Southeast Asia, Taiwan and parts of Eastern Europe.