

Jamie Buckingham: Face Your Fears, Find Your Purpose

In March 1975 I received an impassioned plea from an ad hoc committee of missionaries in South Vietnam. The letter was written and signed by a Christian and Missional Alliance missionary who represented a large number of missionaries from many denominations.

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It said, essentially

The communists have started their final push, and it is no obvious we are going to have to leave. The sad part is, all we've worked for and accomplished so far will be destroyed when we pull out. The communists will burn the Bibles we leave behind; they will turn the church building into communist meeting halls; they will take over our hospitals; they will disband the churches and kill the pastors. There is nothing we can leave behind which will have a lasting effect.

As we prayed together and searched the Scripture, we have discovered Jesus faced a similar situation when He left earth to return to heaven. He did not leave anything behind. No church buildings, no Bibles, no trained pastors. All He left was His Holy Spirit.

We are writing to ask if you are willing to come to Vietnam and impart to use the same gift Jesus imparted to His disciples, that we might in turn give this gift to those we are going to have to leave behind.

There was more, but those were the essentials of the letter.

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I didn't know how I should respond.

Our church was small at the time and had no money to send me. The publishing company I worked for was on the skids and also had no money. Even if I had been able to come up with the money, there was another factor looming over me: I was afraid to go. This was a time when tens of thousands of people were fleeing Vietnam. It made no sense for me to go there. And possibly die there.

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