

Look At America: Why Focus On World Evangelism?

Some actually pose this question to me aloud. Many others I know are thinking it—"David, we're not even evangelizing our own country. We're losing ground right here. How can we possibly talk about evangelizing the world?"

It's a good question—with a good answer. Jesus Himself gives the answer: "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). These are concurrent assignments—one does not exclude the other. In fact, we cannot be fully effective in evangelism *here* without a commitment to what God is doing *globally*. At the same time, we cannot broad-jump to an unreached people group and carry no concern for our neighbors' salvation. We are to proclaim Christ where we live, beyond our own city, and because we are a covenant people, we're also assigned to bless all the families of the earth (see Gen. 12:1-3; Gal. 3:13-14).

Jesus wants His disciples to think and believe *big*. He said, "Be My witnesses in *Jerusalem*"—to your entire city! Then He stretched the disciples' vision even broader, commissioning them to reach the ends of the earth. It's as if the Lord were saying, "The very *smallest* terms in which I want you to think is taking whole cities."

William Carey, the father of modern missions, caught this extravagant evangelistic spirit when he challenged the church, "Attempt great things for God; expect great things from God." Protectionism juxtaposed against globalization may be argued politically. However, a protectionist mentality in spiritual matters is always unhealthy and counterproductive. There are no merits to "spiritual protectionism;" it is always lethal.

The most patriotic thing I can do for my country is to love the world. And the healthiest thing I can do for the American church is to point us beyond ourselves.

A great spiritual exercise would be to spend a day in prayer, fasting, and meditating on the phrase *and not for us only*. If I were president of a Bible college or seminary, I would make it the school motto. The gospel is not for us only. The benefits the gospel brings are not for us only. Jesus is not for us only! "He Himself is the sacrifice that atones for our sins—and not only for our sins but the sins of all the world" (1 John 2:2, NLT). As someone well said, "Jesus left us a Great Commission, not a limited contract with America."

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