

Reaching the Unchurched Is Your Responsibility

Reaching the unchurched ... is the responsibility of every follower of Jesus Christ in this country. Period.

A hazard of being a traveling evangelist is coming home to the sight of a pile of unpaid bills. While I'm gone they stack up on my desk. If I were to let them go unpaid (which I don't) the debt would just accumulate until, sooner or later, I would be forced to pay what I owe.

On an entirely different front, America is not meeting its obligations. It is drowning in an ocean of ignored, unpaid bills. Congress has no power to pay this debt; these bills are spiritual. Call it the American church's "national debt": the mushrooming unchurched U.S. population that the Spirit-filled church has mostly ignored.

Our church leaders have repeatedly made us aware that we have rapidly become a nation of unchurched people. Even in many Bible Belt communities the influence of Christianity is in marked decline. The "bills" are stacking up.

Sooner or later we must pay this growing debt. Why? Because reaching the unchurched and lost people in America is the responsibility of every single follower of Jesus Christ in this country. Period.

Before discussing how we can address this burgeoning spiritual debt-load, let's look at two factors that are adding to it.

1. We have turned away from the harvest. People in our country have become devalued, not only by society but by the church as well. When we talk of receiving a harvest, our thoughts often race to material blessings (yes, hallelujah, God does bless us in this way). But Jesus also speaks of harvest in terms of

people exiting darkness and entering the kingdom of God.

2. Our focus isn't on the main thing. We often substitute prayer for action. Prayer is incredibly vital, but to pray only and not act is pure spiritual laziness (see Ex. 14:15; Matt. 9:38).

Ever heard of the church's "MapQuest trap"? That's what I call it when we must map out and identify spiritual strongholds as a prerequisite to evangelism. Try telling Philip that was necessary after his preaching experience in Samaria (see Acts 8:5-7).

What about our tendency to "tarry" until all the fivefold ministry gifts are lined up? While preachers try to figure who they are and what they are supposed to do, who is obeying the Great Commission? Are we supposed to procrastinate about that? Why is it that gatherings of apostles, prophets, pastors and teachers rarely include evangelists?

As believers, we Spirit-filled, charismatic or Pentecostal Christians are the most exuberant at expressing our faith. We are also the most easily distracted and gullible—how often we fall prey to subtle spins on genuine Christian practice!

When it comes to taking the gospel to the unsaved, we're like people who run everywhere on vacation all the time—doing anything to avoid taking care of their obligations. We must understand that America's unchurched are the unpaid spiritual bills we must pay.

Now let's discuss a few ways to address this spiritual debt.

Take responsibility. Become accountable to the Great Commission. Have you ever been with a group of people at a restaurant when the check arrives at the table and everyone ignores it? Let's you and I reach out and pick up the tab.

Cry out to God. Get down on your face and pray. Repent if you

need to, but pray in faith. Believe that God wants you to pray this way and know He is listening. By faith, see both the action and the answer, but also be ready to be an answer to your own prayers to reach the unsaved. Jesus said: "Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours" (Mark 11:24, NIV, emphasis added).

See the harvest. Wake up to the fact that the possibilities of reaching people abound even more during times of adversity. The time is not coming; it is here.

Just do it! Gird up your mind and get the information you need to become one who reaches the lost. Change whatever you have to so you can expedite paying the "bills"! God has provided every heavenly resource we need to pay these unpaid bills. Let's go and do it!

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