

This Is What Happens When the Church Lets Down Its Guard

One of the mysteries of history is why, after the Roman Empire accepted Christianity, God allowed the pagan Germanic people to overrun Christian Western Europe 200 years later.

The Roman Empire was, of course, not fully Christianized and was suffering from demographic decline and corruption. The empire was also weakened militarily and had shifted to defensive posture. But the real problem was the church, which had also adopted defensive posture and was no longer focused on taking the gospel to the ends of the earth.

With the church unable and unwilling to move beyond its borders, God had to do something. So it appears He allowed the barbarians to invade the Empire's borders to bring them into contact with the church. Amazingly, the pagan Germanic people came to accept Christianity and became the foundation of Christian Europe. Thus, the defeat of the Roman Empire actually led to the expansion of the kingdom of God.

In America, we have (so far) been spared from barbarian invasion. However, God is continuing to bring people who may be otherwise unreachable into contact with the church through immigration, student visas and now as refugees from Islamist terror and gang violence. For example, a Syrian Muslim who has been prevented from hearing the gospel in his own country can be given the good news about Jesus while working or studying in the United States. Those who accept Christ can carry the gospel back to their countrymen, expanding the kingdom of God more efficiently than Americans could.

Many Christians have found that foreign students are responsive to fellowship from American families and are receptive to the gospel. There are also needy refugees who can

be reached by showing God's love and compassion.

An excellent tool to present the gospel has been developed by a U.S. ministry, Christ for All People. They have made Jesus film DVDs available in the languages spoken by many immigrants, allowing our immigrant friends to learn about Jesus in their "heart" language. Check out their website at .

For our part, we must remember Peter's admonition to explain our faith with gentleness and respect (see 1 Pet. 3:15). Christ For All Peoples suggests packaging the Jesus film with other goodies as a Christmas present.

What better time than Christmas to help an immigrant family learn why "Jesus is the reason for the season"? {eo}

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