

Evaluating Missions: Seeking Eternal Results

By Bob Young

I'm sorry. I apologize in advance! I am raising an unspeakable question. I am asking questions no one wants to hear, much less answer. Have I not heard the saying, "One soul is worth all the money in the world"? Yes, but my sense of stewardship and honesty says the questions must be asked. How is the mission effort in your local church doing? How many new disciples are being won for Christ? How many new churches are being planted? How many disciples are being equipped as active workers in the kingdom? What are the eternal results?

My goal is to help us improve our mission efforts. A first step toward improvement is to understand our weaknesses. In raising the above questions, I am urging a careful evaluation of our mission efforts. A second step is accountability. A missions' deacon in another state told me, "Our elders have their favorite mission works and the missions committee cannot ask for accountability from those mission points." Sad. Those involved in mission work should be held accountable for the eternal results. Those who oversee mission programs in local churches are accountable to God for the results. Church leaders are accountable for results. Missionaries are accountable, those who go on short-term mission trips are accountable. When money given to the Lord is used for "mission work," all of those involved are accountable.

I think I am not manufacturing a problem. I write about real situations, not imaginary. I read numerous mission reports each month. Last month, a mission report caught my eye. The report was from a church (not my home church), summarizing the mission activities of the past year. The report said that the "efforts of the local church are making disciples all over the world." The evidence given was that the church provided support for a certain number of full-time missionaries, and that a certain number of members of the local church had gone on mission trips. If the claim is for "disciples," should it not be possible to mention also the number of disciples?

Missionaries...mission trips...but what were the results? How many disciples? How many new disciples? How many stronger disciples? Does anyone know? The book of Acts includes numbers in the early chapters—3000, 5000; then it seems that the numbers became too large for counting—the number multiplied, many more were added.... Let's be honest. We do not mention disciples because the results are meager. We do not count and demand accountability because it would be embarrassing.

I could share the names of some very effective missionaries, but you would not recognize the names. They are not North Americans. Many of them work in full-time or part-time jobs to support their families; they then work for the Lord in their spare time, spending most evenings and every weekend. In numerous places across Latin America, the results are amazing—new churches planted, 16 baptisms last month, 150+ baptisms last year, 12 baptisms this year in a new church plant, 16 baptisms this year in a new church plant, 24 baptisms in the first eight months of this year, three more churches that are biblically organized, a new network of churches....

I believe in evaluating the past and planning the future. Here is a brief summary of my 2017: 30+ churches visited; contact with leaders from 70+ churches; evangelism training, campaigns, seminars, leadership development; the churches I work with are evangelistic; a conservative number is at least 1000 baptisms in these churches and church plantings during 2017. Brothers and sisters, the fields are white unto harvest, pray for laborers who will reap the harvest!

God is at work among his people. I cherish you who are prayer partners and financial partners in this ministry. You make possible the work—eight international trips, US trips, publishing and production of materials. Here are seven places you have made an impact in 2017.

- Chile, help with church planting and evangelism
- Peru, help with preacher training, church planting, discipleship training, evangelism
- Ecuador, help with church planting and discipleship training, church buildings
- Colombia, church planting, church buildings, and evangelism
- Venezuela, assistance in evangelism and helping meet the needs of the churches during difficult times
- Honduras, support for preacher and missionary training, training in marriage and family
- Honduras and El Salvador, preacher training, church planting