

God's Mission Involves Multitudes

By Bob Young

When Paul describes God's revelation of his eternal purpose in Christ (Eph. 1:9-10), he says that it includes the uniting of all things in heaven and on earth. It is clear that this includes everyone! No one is excluded. Jesus sent his disciples into "all the world." The commission of Acts 1:8 is to the "ends of the earth." God has an eternal purpose for every person in this world. This includes friends, family, coworkers, acquaintances, neighbors—everyone we know and everyone we do not know! Those who are on God's mission are constantly working to include more and more among the saved—in the church—because God's eternal purpose is for the multitudes!

Because of what the Bible says about God's eternal purpose and his purpose for the church (Ephesians 1), I am amazed that some "mission work" seemingly contributes little to God's eternal purpose. A mission report I recently received—the result of several weeks of focused work by a short-term team was "four contacts." Sorry to be a contrarian, but in my visits to Latin America, local Christians and I have found four contacts in a single afternoon by visiting the grocery store or the mall and simply talking with folks. In another report, an international trip was described, "We went to share the gospel with the city of 'Somewhere'." No results were mentioned, but inquiring minds want to know. What happened? Were the local Christians edified or trained? Were souls contacted? Were Bible studies taught? Were people influenced by the Good News? The implication is that there were few if any visible results.

The desire of many Christians to "go" is commendable, but as Phil Slate said a few years ago, at a mission conference, "When you receive a request for financial help from someone who wants to make a mission trip, the first question is 'what will you do when you go?'" Will you help advance the gospel? Will you really do "mission work" or will you do something else? In many cases, the costs are high and the results are minimal. Since God's mission was to the multitudes, should we not at some point ask ourselves, "How we are doing with the multitudes?"

My world is full of generous people who support this mission work with funds and with prayer. I am grateful for generous people. God showed us the highest motivation for generosity: "*For God so loved...that he gave!*"

I can assure you that when you participate in this mission work, you are helping win souls to Christ. I spent two days helping train the ministry team in a church—that church had 130 baptisms last year. I gave an evangelism workshop for a ministry team—they had 25+ baptisms last year. I worked with a small group in a new church—they had four baptisms soon after I left by using the evangelism techniques I shared. Through a partnership with Spanish Literature Ministry, we have 50000+ evangelistic lessons in print. I teach evangelism using various materials and techniques. I visited a new church that has a clear focus on evangelism—we set up Bible studies, there were three baptisms the weekend I was there, they had over 30 baptisms last year. A primary goal of this work is to teach native missionaries, leaders, evangelists, and new Christians how to evangelize.

I work with about 100 churches each year. In 2016 I taught, preached, and presented seminars in 27 locations across Latin America. Some of the churches are new, some are developing, only a few are older and more mature. Not every church has spectacular results in evangelism every year, but the churches are growing and new churches are being planted by indigenous churches without U.S. support.

Through our efforts together, Christians are maturing in the faith, and as a result elders and deacons are being appointed in many churches for the first time. The local church is responsible for doing the work. Christians who have the gospel also have the responsibility for sharing the gospel. And, when people are baptized, there is a local church capable of assimilating them, maturing them, and keeping them. This is God's plan! May God bless us as we strive to reach the multitudes for Christ!