

May 2001: High Stakes (Part Three)

by Aaron Greenway

I attended a concert a few years in which a Great Commission-minded brother got up and sang a tongue-in-cheek song roughly titled “God, please don’t send me to Africa.” Amazingly, God sent him to Africa anyway. Ironically, I told the Lord eight months before I moved to Dallas that I would never move to Texas. The Lord answered, “Oh yeah?” Maybe our Creator has a sense of humor or maybe we are not going to dictate to Him what we are going to do with our lives OR maybe both!

For the past two months we have been discussing the Great Commission and the different aspects of that Commission. First, we are to pray for the spiritual needs of lost people; second, we are to be faithful to share our faith with others. And lastly, we are to do this to the ends of the earth.

I had the privilege of sitting under a pastor back in Iowa named Tim McClellan who introduced our church to more of a global outlook. One of the strengths of this assembly was the fact that the pastor cared not just for the people in the community, but for those all around the world. As a result we had seen many people do short-term and long-term missions. Looking back on that experience, one might come under the impression that there was this unspoken competition between Iowa’s Pastor McClellan and Minnesota’s Pastor John Piper. Perhaps not. It is just proof that God is at work in the Body.

As for me, it was early 1995 and I was booked every weekend in a church around the state of Iowa. The high school youth group at my church had just come back from a mission’s trip to Jamaica and on a Sunday evening they got up and gave testimonies of their experience. Several young people, though far from being great orators, passionately expressed how the Lord had moved in those few days. At the end the youth pastor, Pastor Mitch Olson, got up and gave an altar call for those who would consider going into missions. I cannot explain to you what happened except that years of apathetically turning the other way every time a missionary got

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up and spoke was melted away into a Holy Spirit-given sensitivity for the fate of lost people outside the borders of this country. In other words, God implanted within me a heart for the lost. And being that I knew Spanish and being that God, from that moment on, put missionaries in my life, AND being that this love seemed to aim itself at Latin America and the people there, I then knew that I was called to be a missionary. And so I stumbled up the isle with tears flowing. The youth pastor looked into my eyes and said, “You are being called, aren’t you?”

But what about the music? God has brought that further and further into focus as well. As a result, the music has been used to raise missions awareness in the United States, and in the future, it will be used to reach the people abroad. Believe it or not, there is a huge hunger for American-based pop music in the Latin world. Who knows what the Lord will do in the future?

Now, I am not saying that my experience should be the experience of everyone else, however bear with me and consider this scenario. Hypothetically, if you owned a McDonalds and you wanted to expand that business by adding a new restaurant and if you hired 40 people for that business, how many of the 40 would you expedite into that new location? 10? 20? How about 30? Granted, you may have needs at your home base, but most of them you are going to send to the new location.

I believe God is a business God. God does not commission the majority of the body of Christ to be missionaries to the most evangelized areas (10%) of the world and then send a small percentage to the rest (90%). Why is it that our mission force is so lopsided? Have we considered the reason? I think there are several reasons this could be, but I think there are three major ones:

1. Some have never asked God where they are to go or what they are to do;
2. Some have become calloused over the years to anything having to do with missions that they have become accustomed to not hearing God’s voice, even if He were to call them
3. Some have fears and insecurities. Fear or insecurity of what? The unknown...uprooting a family, potentially...money...persecution...leaving family and friends...leaving comfortable living. All of these are fears. But let me remind us what Jesus had to say about leaving all to follow Him (Matthew 16:24-25).

Would anyone reading all this consider that God HAS CALLED them to the mission field? It is not a matter of “if”. He has! Would anyone reading this consider that God has called them

outside the borders of this country? With the overwhelming bulk of evangelical Christians hibernating in North America and the majority of the need outside of those borders, is it possible that some (if not many) of us are becoming more and more hardened to the possibility that God is, indeed, tapping us on the shoulder.

But what about ministry here? If modern evangelical efforts are doing what they say, then those Christians who are called to the United States will have no problem winning the lost here and discipling them. Remember Peter and the other ten disciples in Acts chapter two, tore up this planet for the Lord Jesus Christ in a very short time. If our lives are evidenced that we have walked with the Lord and if we have a passion for lost people, then we will go anywhere, we will do anything, we will stop-at-nothing to see that this world can be won to a saving knowledge of the Savior Himself.

How passionate are we about this? Maybe it is time to set aside our pride and our securities and consider that God has plans for us overseas as well as here on the home front. In fact, we ought to consider the latter before we do the former, just so God can see that we are fully surrendered to His will. If this cannot be accomplished in our lives, then there is no guarantee that any self-proposed ministry here in the United States will have any lasting effects because we are operating in direct disobedience to the Lord.

Today, are we willing to at least pray and ask God, “Dear Father, are you calling me to serve in missions to some capacity? Are you calling me to be an agent of mercy and grace in a society that has never heard the name of your Son, Jesus.” How utterly tragic it would be if many souls were lost to an eternal damnation because we would not heed the call of our Savior’s voice? That would be a very sad day. Perhaps, instead, we can be praying that God would melt our hearts and then inquire as to how we can serve. A short-term mission trip may be all we need to become exposed to people on the other side of the world. Let me tell you, they are real, living, breathing, human beings. I know. I’ve been there. Will you join me?

P.S. For more information as to how you can get plugged in to missions, contact us at missions@aarongreenway.com.