



## Ten Lies the Church has Believed in Regard to Missions

by Dr. Nik Ripken

Jesus was both lead and tested in the wilderness by environmental harshness and by a forty day fast. Satan, in a bid to distract Jesus from His mission, began whispering in Christ's ear, often quoting and twisting scripture in ways as to lessen the focus of the Son's mission, diluted by satanic lies.

Satan continues to whisper lies in the ear of the church today.

Why do 90% plus of the world's evangelical ministers serve less than 10% of the world's population? Why does the Western church spend over ninety percent of her resources on herself, often sharing with the Nations the leftovers? Why do unreached people groups remain without an incarnational missionary presence yet many Western seminaries, while filled with students, offer 6-8% of their graduates to the Nations? Of course the answers are often complex and legion, but this article suggests ten lies the church, and its members, have listened to and incorporated into their ethos.

These lies need to be recognized, answered and avoided.

### ***Lie #1: The Bible is an old book and it should be studied as history.***

This lie, fleshed out, implies that the Bible simply records what God has miraculously accomplished, with the implication that God is not concerned in this modern age with the miraculous any longer.

He was approximately 30 years old when he heard that an interviewer had arrived in his country, attempting to understand how men and women among his people group were coming to Christ, alongside the persecution that almost always accompanied faith. His people group numbered approximately twenty six million at the time of this encounter. Known to outsiders were only three believers. There was no known church.

He told the story of his life when it was a mess. His wife and he often fought. His children were sickly. His crops refused to grow. His livestock multiplied erratically. True to his folk-Muslim culture, he went to the spiritualist for advice and assistance. Describing for this diviner his problems he was instructed, "I will sacrifice a chicken on your behalf. You

return home, fast and meditate three days and three nights. On the third night the answer to your problems will come."

Returning home, he did as he was instructed. He told this interviewer, "On the third night a voice without a body came to me, saying, 'Find Jesus, find the gospel.'" He knew nothing but Islam and an oral Quran. He had never met a Christian or knew there was a Bible. He did not know whether "Jesus" was a fruit, vegetable or a rock. He did want whatever "good news" had to offer. This voice without a body instructed him to go to a city, five hours away, a city that he had never visited. Arriving there, he was to ask the first two men he met to direct him to a certain street. Finding the street, he was further instructed by this voice to look for a door with a certain symbol, numbers, on the outside.

Without informing his wife or children, this oral communicator simply left his village. He walked five hours over the mountains and up the coast. Arriving at the city, he asked the first two men he saw to direct him to a certain street. He walked that street until he came to a door with the correct number on its face. He beat on the door until an older gentleman opened it. Asked what he wanted, the village Muslim answered, "I have come to find Jesus and to find the gospel!" A hand shot out the door, pulling the young man into the house, with the door slamming behind. The older gentleman said, "You Muslims must think that I am an idiot to fall for something as transparent as this?" The young man replied, "Sir, I do not know if you are an idiot or not, but this is why I have come."

The young man told his story over the next hour. The Holy Spirit of the Living God had led him directly to the home of one of the three believers known among that people group at that time! Wisely, this older man took his new village friend through the scriptures until the Good News of Jesus became his own. Returning home he allowed his wife to see his changed life until she believed. His children regained their health, his crops and livestock prospered. Faith began to break out in his village.

Everything that God has ever done He is still doing. He has not ceased in His miraculous work. In the darkest corners of the planet He is making Himself known, often with signs and wonders of biblical proportions. Do not believe the lie that the Bible is relegated to the ash heap of history.

***Lie #2: God is moving powerfully overseas, defined by miracles and movements. Yet such miracles and movements are not to be found within the Western world.***

Reports abound, recording the mighty acts of God among the Nations. Reports from Central and South Asia testify to hundred of thousands of baptisms and new church starts. The Western church hears astounding stories about believers and churches doubling in numbers annually. Missionaries return home with reports of mighty movements of the Holy Spirit among the Nations. Surely such miracles of faith are the purview of the Two-Third's World?

The Chinese House Church Movement is one such miraculous harvest field. Conservative estimates of believers in house churches number between 100 million and upwards. The interviewer was astounded by the church growth witnessed in three church planting movements. In one location he observed over 150 house church leaders being trained. As these pastors sat in rows on the ground, four or five other leaders passed between those gathered, seemingly tearing some books in pieces, distributing pages, much like the early disciples distributed the loaves and the fishes.

In horror the interviewer realized that these leaders were tearing the Bible into page-sized pieces. Asking what would predicate such malicious destruction of God's Word he was told, "There are about 150 pastors and leaders here today. Only five of us own a Bible. We are tearing our Bibles into its separate books and distributing them so that each leader can return to their house church with at least one book to teach from the Bible. The interviewer watched as they passed back and forth, asking, "Have you taught Genesis? No? Here it is. Have you taught Luke yet? Here is Luke."

Rip.

The interviewer felt sorry for that unlucky leader that only received Philemon or III John with which to return home!

Then the house church leaders began to ask the interviewer some revealing questions. One asked, "Has Jesus made it to other countries or has He only come to China?" As they were told of millions of believers in other countries they cried out to God in joy that, indeed, Jesus had made it to other countries. As questions poured forth amidst their joy, they went silent as they heard about churches that were free to meet whenever they wished. They were struck dumb as they heard the interviewer state simply that he himself had seven Bibles of differing translations and many personal books relating to Christian music, devotional materials and other aids.

Suddenly these Chinese believers began to cry out to God in real pain, "Oh God why don't you love us like you love the believers in America? Why can we not experience the miracles as do the believers in America?"

The interviewer could not believe his ears. He asked them to explain their anguish as he had witnessed faith on par with the saints of the Bible. Miracles of healing abounded. Thousands were coming to Jesus. Approximately 40% of the pastors had served three years in prison for their faith, often starting house churches and movements in prison.

The house church leaders were amazed at his lack of understanding concerning the miraculous. "Which is more miraculous, they asked, that we can divide our Bibles chapter by chapter or that you can own dozens of Bibles, chorus books and study materials? Which is more miraculous? That Chinese are being healed by the hundreds of thousands and maybe a thousand can figure out that their healing came from God and make it to Jesus or that you can access doctors and health care any time you wish? Which is the most miraculous? That we move from house to house, different days of the week and differing times of the days, or that you tell us that you can go to church all day, every day and no one will bother you nor arrest your pastor? Which is the most miraculous? That we view prison as our theological training school or that you can study in schools set aside just for believers? Which is the most miraculous?"

It was the interviewer's time to weep. He realized that he had called common in his country, and in his faith, what most of the believing and persecuted world would deem miraculous beyond all miracles.

***Lie #3: I have made a bargain with God. If I work hard in my church, especially in mission circles, He will not call my children to the Nations, leaving me without my children and grandchildren.***

He was the toughest man the interviewer had ever met. From Muslim background, he agreed to meet in a room filled with shadows in a major Central Asian city where he was not known. His hawk-like features were arresting, his eyes chips of coal. His presence seemed to fill the room.

For years he was a freedom fighter, leading a squad of fifteen men in attempts to run the foreigners out of his Muslim country. He stated, that as a freedom fighter, he reveled in stalking his enemy until he could slit their throats with his own hands. Those from his country who cooperated with these godless foreigners often met the same fate by his knife. He rejoiced to feel their blood wash over his hands. He could not number the dozens or hundreds that he had put to death personally. He planned, he led and he killed.

He recalled when the day came that he could not get the blood off his hands. Try as he might. Wash as he would. He could not remove his victim's blood from his hands. He saw the blood every waking minute and in his dreams each night. This went on for weeks.

One night he dreamed a different dream. In this dream Jesus came to him and told him that He, Jesus, could remove this blood stain forever. This Divine Encounter led this fighter to investigate this Man named Jesus and His claim of cleansing. The blood of Jesus washed this fighter clean of his blood lust by cleansing his soul.

His change was so great that he began to carry the Good News to others in his country. He smuggled Bibles, obtained in a nearby country, through the mountain passes of his homeland. He did this for months until, one day in an isolated mountain pass he came face to face with the fifteen men that he once led. They had been looking for their former commander, turned traitorous believer. They threw him to the ground and proceeded to break his wrists and ankles with their rifle butts. Before they could kill their former leader, a secret believer in their midst suggested, "If we kill him then we cannot uncover others that might be helping him spread this foreign faith. Let me take him to a nearby village. I will patch him up so that we can beat the truth out of him, uncovering other apostates."

They gave their former leader into this man's care. Traveling to the nearest village, one believer patched the other one up and then fled with his brother into a neighboring country.

Hours went by as the interviewer listened to a faith as hard to describe as it is to emulate. After hours of listening the hawk-eyed believer was asked to speak concerning his wife and children. With a cry of despair this nail-hard follower of Jesus fell into the light of the room crying, "How can God ask this of me? I have given so much but I lie awake at night worrying that my son, daughters and wife may have to pay the same price that I have paid to follow Jesus. How can God ask it of me?"

What risks are we willing to shoulder, along with our children, for the sake of the kingdom of God? What is the hardest task? Going? Certainly not. The hardest task is sending; sending our sons, daughters, our loved ones to serve the Nations. Which is harder, dying on a cross or sending that which we love the most to die on a cross? Most parents would willingly die on a thousand crosses rather than allow their child to die on even one. Both the sending and dying are intrinsic to the nature of our God. If the church recaptures the responsibility of the sender it will either revolutionize the church or she will stop sending.

The American church idolizes its children. Bargaining with God, withholding our children for the "good life" within the

American dream is to believe a lie that causes the church to deny the Nations the best that the Father has to offer.

#### *Lie #4: God is calling more single women cross culturally than single men.*

Take a careful look across the denominational and para-church spectrum. It matters not if the cross cultural, single servant is Mennonite, Baptist, Assembly of God, or whatever. For every single man on the mission field there are approximately four single women. Why is this? Does the heavenly Father have a communication problem with single men? Are single men simply reading past the biblical commands to go to the nations? Is it that God simply needs more women than men?

One mission leader, suffering on the field from this trend, often addresses gatherings of college and seminary students, many of whom are single. He suggests to the single young men that they need to cease praying the prayer that exclaims, "Here am I Lord.....send my sister!"

That would be funny if it did not feel so true.

What is happening in Western and US cultures that single women are far outstripping single men in their numbers among the Nations? Global demographics seem to be evident. Go to the toughest places on the planet, places defined by civil war, famine and lostness and you will always find single women. And these single women will often outnumber single men by four to one. What makes this such a problem?

The trend seems to suggest the following. Ten single women obediently serve on the mission field for two years, having God's call to witness cross culturally affirmed in their lives. Not "called" to be single, they return to the USA, seeking a godly husband to walk alongside them overseas. Recent evidence seems to suggest that three out of these ten will be successful in finding such a man with whom to return. Conversely, compare the above to ten godly men who obediently serve on the mission field for two years, having God's call to witness cross culturally affirmed in their lives. Not "called" to be single, they return to the USA, seeking a godly wife to walk alongside them overseas. Evidence seems to suggest that eight out of these ten men will be successful in finding a godly woman with whom to return.

Numerous campus ministers, youth leaders and pastors have been asked to comment on this social and cultural anomaly. Many have struggled to explain the imbalance in biblical obedience between single men and single women. Two observations by ministry professionals are emerging, attempting to explain this imbalance. Both observations suggest a Western, cultural illness infecting the body of Christ. First, statistics depict that churches, seminaries and ecclesiastical ladders in general are climbed by the male

species. This is not meant as a moral or biblical indictment, it is simply an observation. Many of these ecclesiastical ladders are not readily available to women. Therefore while men climb professional ministry ladders, women are familiar with ministries of service.

Mission fields are notorious for the lack of ladders to climb. A successful missionary seldom gets more salary, receives a promotion or is bestowed with a title more prestigious than his peers. Leadership may have more to do with longevity than aptitude! Advancement cross culturally usually means one is simply given more tasks to perform. Such a lack of clear social and work advancement fails to reward men in ways that their culture has taught them to expect. Conversely, many women were service oriented in the US so their expectations for advancement and salary are more realistic once arriving on the mission field.

Secondly, what models do single young men have in regard to full time ministry in the US today? Many young men in this "Y" generation come from broken homes, having little male leadership in their lives, let alone experiencing a father who was the spiritual head of the home. Increasingly, in the US, mega churches are replacing the mom and pop, blue collar churches of the previous generations. The image of a successful Christian leader is a white collar worker, in an immaculate suit, in a pulpit or classroom, articulate, telegenic, well groomed and socially skilled. The western male functioning as spiritual and professional leader is versed in Greek and Hebrew and can hold his own on "Larry King Live." Their tools of the trade are commentaries, microphones and carefully crafted words.

The mission field is more blue collar. It often requires calluses on one's hands and soul in a world defined by lostness, persecution, starving people and flying bullets. While seminaries and scholarship are important, who mentors today's single, western male in being physically tough, able to re-wire a generator and operate in a hostile culture that neither reads nor writes? Needed today are fathers and religious leaders in America who can model for their sons and those they disciple not only the ability to quote the book of Exodus but who can also model carrying the Ark of the Covenant across the harsh desert and into battle. Perhaps a deficit of young, single men who are willing to serve cross culturally is due somewhat to a Western model that serving Christ professionally has more to do with putting on a suit and tie than it does with wrapping a towel around one's waist and washing the feet of others?

What is it about our culture that sends four single women to every one single man to serve the most lost among the Nations? Is God calling more women than men? This is a lie.

***Lie #5: As a young lady I was called to the Nations. I have decided to marry a man who does not share my faith or my calling. Surely God will now call my husband?***

This is a devious and subtle lie. Many cultures look upon a single person as less worthy than one married, especially one married with children. This is a heart rending issue that seems to be verbalized, if it is ever really expressed, by something like, "Does not my desire and call to be married outweigh my call to missions?" What are godly, single women to do? The global evidence illustrates that the ratio of single women exercising their biblical obedience in going to the Nations far outstrips the numbers of single men.

When obedient godly women cannot find obedient godly men to marry as global partners among the lost, which choice should they make; Nations or marriage?

Experience sadly records that a significant, unhappy subset of the American church is women, 30-45 years of age, who traded a call of obedience to the Nations for marriage. Is it that these women feel trapped in their marriage or regret the children that they have borne? No, seldom is that expressed. The issue is that they knew early in their lives that the Father had His hands on them and affirmed His call in them. This was a biblical call of obedience to be salt and light to those who have little or no access to the gospel of Jesus Christ. This was the call they traded for a husband in the US rather than remain obedient to God's biblical affirmation that they were to go to the Nations, whether single or married.

With a sense of joy, mingled with some sadness, the trend today seems to be changing. Larger numbers of single women are obediently going to the Nations, in a career capacity, without a husband, though they are not necessarily called to be single. They determine early in any relationship to share with a budding significant other their commitment to the Nations, not waiting until a marriage proposal is on the table to spring their desire to serve cross culturally.

***Lie #6: If God wants me to be a missionary He will give me a special call.***

He came late to Jesus by western evangelical standards as he was eighteen years old, out of high school and working in a factory. Hearing God's call to salvation and service one night in that factory, he gave his life to Christ. Per the culture, he made his way to a denominationally based college where, for the first time, he opened the New Testament, beginning to read the Gospels. An avid reader, he was a bit chagrined by these first four "books," Matthew, Mark, Luke and John and how they were put together. They were so repetitious, not well written with a plot as a book should!

Learning better the nature of the scriptures he fell in love with the work and will of God. Seriously unaffected by most theological positions swirling within western evangelical circles; he simply trusted God and the Word that God had given as being authoritative in his life. Reading what he later learned was the "Great Commission" in Matthew 28:18ff and another command to the Nations in Acts 1:8 he thought, "This is God's word and it is definitive for my life. God commands in His word to go to the Nations so I guess that is what I have to do if I am to be His follower?" It was with joy that this farm boy read and believed that nowhere in the entire world was closed to him, his God and the Bible.

Until the day he encountered the MISSION AGENCY.

Married now and thrilled at the prospect of making good on the biblical command to go to the "ends of the world" he applied through his denomination, along with his wife, to begin the overseas pilgrimage. Soon he was in a small room with his wife and some really serious men in suits. Quietly they looked at the former farm boy and said, "Tell us about your call to foreign missions." The potential missionary looked at the men and stated, "I read Matthew 28:18 and Acts 1:8." Smiling the men said, "That's good but with this board one has to experience and express a "Divine Call" to foreign missions. We need you to share with us when was it that God called you to serve overseas?"

The young candidate repeated with some confusion, "I read the Bible; Matthew 28:18 and Acts 1:8. I read God's command to go to all the nations and I am TRYING TO GO."

By now the young man's wife was near tears, as she could see, as one raised within the denominational milieu, that her husband did not know the secret code words that opened the doors to getting on a plane and going to Africa.

With great patience the suits explained the agency's position again on a "call" that would allow the sending agency to support said family on the mission field. Not knowing better, the mission candidate replied, "I am simply

trying to be obedient to what God through His word has commanded me to do. It seems that this denomination has created a special call to foreign missions that would give people an excuse not to be obedient to what God has already commanded them to do in going to the Nations."

Dead silence. He was approved, with his family, for service overseas.

Each culture has filters through which it conditions its population to transfer truth, even to how it hears the Almighty. The longer a religious system is in place, the more hoops develop that inform and guide its adherents. Call is vital. Call is important. But can a conversation be reopened where call is more about location; Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria or to the ends of the earth rather than IF one is called?

Perhaps obedience initiates and call defines? Read once again Matthew 28:18 and Acts 1:8 for yourself.

***Lie # 7: I go on many short term mission trips therefore I don't really need to serve in my local church.***

Thankfully tens of thousands of Christian volunteers travel the globe annually. From youth of high school age to retirees, planes and buses, especially in the summer months, are filled with volunteers going to the Nations. Capitol cities are inundated with these volunteers. Many, blessedly, make every attempt to fit into long term strategies while others perpetuate the impression of the stereotypical "missionary tourist." Let us investigate briefly the mindset and practice by some volunteers who regularly go overseas that, while being a blessing in the overseas setting, can leave a bad taste in the mouth of their home church pastor and members.

Regularly missionaries return to their sending and partnering churches. In good faith they thank the church and pastoral staff for sending godly and helpful volunteers their way. Later, after the service, it is not uncommon for pastors, lay leadership and others to remark something like, "Well I am glad that they were of good service to you but we have never been able to get them to lift a hand in support of the local ministries in their home church." In some places even regular worship attendance and financial giving by such volunteers is in question.

Perhaps serving the cause of Christ overseas can seem to be glamorous and, at times, exotic? Perhaps one feels freer to share their personal testimony in environments where they are not known and will not hang around long enough for one's character to be obvious? Perhaps a stint overseas will be used of God to focus the new volunteer's attention on ministries of service in their own neighborhood? Perhaps funds can be more easily raised,

cloaked in the jargon of unreached people, poverty, famine and war?

Perhaps.

Yet the practice of going thousands of miles across continents and oceans while neglecting one's lost or needy neighbor through local ministries suggests a biblically unbalanced personal focus. Christ commanded all of His followers to incarnate Him wherever their own Jerusalem might geographically be located. Neglecting the spiritual base of Jerusalem is to eventually threaten the entire mission endeavor. Attempting ministry to and among the Nations should, idealistically, be an extension of whatever the individual is attempting at home. Being a poured out and broken vessel among those who know us best is an awesome preparation for exporting faith to those we have yet to meet. Also, volunteers then can get most of their mistakes out of the way on their home soil, being wiser and more experienced as they attempt to witness and serve across cultures! Going strongly to the Nations from a foundation of a faithful witness at home will serve as great preparation and will lessen the charge and impact levied against the missionary tourist.

***Lie # 8: The giving of money is the central means by which our church supports missions and goes to the Nations.***

This lie has paralyzed mission endeavors across the globe. Many church members give of their funds sacrificially. Stories abound of widows giving their egg and quilt money to missionary enterprises. Individual church's giving to mission causes can be the largest annual budget item.

Yet when the majority of mission support is defined primarily by the giving of money, though vital, there can develop a line between the church and the field, a "them" and "us." Missions become something the church does, rather than defining who the church is. How can a church determine if they have listened to the lie that can hide within even sacrificial giving? Listen to how the church talks and prays. Do they pray "for" the missionaries or do they pray "with" the missionaries? Can they articulate what they have done "with" their money among the Nations?

Missionaries in a "closed" Muslim country had for decades heard and prayed "for" the persecuted around the world. They had heard modern stories of extreme suffering and marvelous faith of biblical dimensions. Often they wept with sorrow, mixed with joy, as they listened to stories from across the globe describing the lives and challenges of those persecuted for their faith. They felt privileged to pray for the persecuted.

Then that day arrived.

It was that day when four of their colleagues were shot by a Muslim extremist. Three cherished followers of Jesus were martyred. Global resources within the body of Christ were mobilized. Prayers flowed, counselors were flown in. Scores of those who witnessed and survived the event were debriefed by their local and home governments. Spiritual leadership arrived to walk beside them. Answers and meaning were sought. After a long morning of debriefing the event, the local team returned to the large conference room. Centered in the circle of chairs was a table. On that table were a cup and some flat bread. In the midst of this overwhelming tragedy this group of grieving missionaries approached the Lord's Table and His Supper.

The Holy Spirit fell.

It can be argued that for the first time in their lives these missionaries, rather than remembering the Lord's suffering, entered into the suffering of their Jesus. No longer were the sufferings of Jesus historical or abstract. They were real and they were shared. In that holy moment these Western missionaries no longer prayed "for" the persecuted. They now could pray "with" the persecuted. Giving and praying "for" something implies a distance, a disconnect. Praying and giving "with" missionaries implies a shared burden, a shared ministry and a shared task unto the ends of the earth.

Erase that line between your church and the field. The offering that God requires the most is not one of "sheep and goats" but the giving of one's life and one's children. It is then that the local church will begin walking alongside the missionary rather than having missions as yet another budgetary item.

***Lie # 9: We must reach America first and then we can go to the Nations.***

Spinning this lie out further one can hear remarks like, "There are millions of lost people in our country. It is foolish and a waste of money to go halfway around the world when there are so many needs right here at home!" It can even get a bit ugly and pointed when some pious brother or sister is heard to say something like, "I am tired of giving my money, and money from the church budget, to support members from our church to go on vacation overseas."

Well meaning perhaps, but have these church members gone to the Nations themselves? Have they walked alongside Afghanis, Somalis, held Aids babies in Ethiopia or looked into the hopeless eyes of those never hearing that there is actually Good News? What is behind this? What should leaders be listening for when comments like the above are uttered? Has it been the experience of local pastoral leadership that, when they respond to such

comments by forming local outreach teams, that these friends of Job sign up and do expressly that which they were advocating?

Of course not.

The number one hindrance to the kingdom of God globally is racism. Advocating reaching the local national population first is a global epidemic. Cries of, "We must reach our own people first," can be heard in the mountains of Algeria among the Berbers. It was the cry of whites under apartheid in South Africa. It is well known in the Bible-Belt of America.

Cloaking racism in the acceptable clothing of nationalism does not lessen the sin of racism. Perhaps, while Matthew 28:18 houses the Great Commission, a greater truth is that this commission houses one of the most anti-racial passages in scripture as Jesus commands his followers to go to all people in all places? Often the races disliked the most are those in next door in "Judea and Samaria." How easy it has been to take the Gospel to black Africans while withholding grace from one's neighbor of color. Does Jesus intend for the church to finish the task in Jerusalem and then venture into Judea? This false missiology should have been killed and buried for decades. Going just to "our" people is the antithesis of the gospel and contrary to the nature of the Christ.

### ***Lie # 10: The safest place in the world is within the will of God.***

"Are our missionaries safe?" is an oft asked question. Missionary safety is of prime importance. Yet if it is the number one issue for families, churches and agencies, then there is only one thing to do.

Stop sending.

Western culture has attempted to cleanse faith of its rough edge. Surely God only wants what is best for me, my family and my country? When troubles, suffering, persecution and, whisper, even death come are they not a sign of God's disfavor? Can it be admitted that Western Christianity has attempted to neuter the heart of faith by removing the suffering and persecution that the New Testament promises are intrinsic to following Jesus?

Many workers from the West are not into church planting among those dangerously unreached. They are into rescue missions. Missionaries who work within Islam will often remove Muslim Background Believers (MBBs) from persecution to a safe place in the West. It can be argued that Western missionaries, observing that Joseph has been unjustly arrested and thrown into Pharaoh's prison, would be incensed. They would advocate for him in the press, secular and sacred. They would demand action by their

governments. They would do all that they could to free Joseph from prison with the end result being that he had no chance to interpret Pharaoh's dream.

Therefore both Egypt and Israel perish.

How do missionaries, and those that advocate for the persecuted, spiritually discern when to leave Joseph in Pharaoh's prison, never ceasing to pray for his and their obedience?

It may be time for the church in the West to admit that we are afraid? Often when MBBs are asked what they learn from missionaries they sadly respond with, "Missionaries teach us to be afraid." This is not just a missiological mistake. It is a sin. They expound that missionaries are afraid of getting local believers arrested or harmed. They are afraid they will lose their visa or work permit. They fear moving, learning yet another language or placing their children in yet another school. Where did missionaries learn to be afraid?

They learned fear from their parents, churches and sending bodies.

The lie that personal safety, and an absence of risk, is of paramount importance above risks for the kingdom of God is a heinous lie that has infected Western, believing enterprises globally.

What do Chinese house church leaders call prison? They call it their "theological training school." What do pastors and lay leaders alike call persecution, and even martyrdom, in their environment during the years of the Soviet Union? They called it "normal."

Fear is devastating. It paralyzes. It causes one to run when no one is chasing. Fear is a black hole, an abyss, which will suck the joy from the soul of a believer. Fear is the most deadly enemy of the church, especially since the horrors of 9/11. In many mission fields after 9/11 about 60% of all US volunteers cancelled their trips and almost 100% of all pastors. Yet it was in the US that thousands were murdered?

What can believers within and sent from the church do in the face of such a destructive lie? All can choose, choose not to be afraid! The one thing Satan can never take from one of God's created is the Divine Ability to make the right and godly choice. Not being afraid is commanded, ordered and always possible.

Give into joy. Give up the lies.

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