

Safe

I heard a disturbing story not too long ago. It was about a fireman who refused to fight fires? The bell rings and he refuses to go to the fire. The reason given was that he might get burned, hurt or even killed. Wow can you believe that, a fireman who refuses to put out fires? Sounds like he needs to move on and do something he believes in?

Well this is a false story! Please read this. THIS STORY IS FALSE! To see a fireman refusing to attack a fire is nonsense. Firemen in America are extremely brave men and women as witnessed by 9-11-01. They are right up there with some of the bravest we have to offer.

But I think this story illustrates something that came to my attention not too long ago. There was a group of people commenting that they are basically afraid or not willing to go on some of our mission trips due to safety. One person commented "can't you go some place that is not so dangerous or so far?"

The answer to this is, we could. We could go places that are safer, easier, and for that matter cheaper. But in deciding where to go on a mission trip these are not our main considerations. Let me share why.

First, when it comes to determining safety, we as Christians must be careful whom we rely on to determine what is safe and what is not. As Christians we cannot rely on the news media to always give a correct picture of the world. In all places we go like, Chad, the Middle East, Russia, and more, we have always found the status of danger way overblown. The people in all these places have treated us extremely well. We found nothing of what people fear from watching the news media. For example in the Middle East the people among our partnership group, actually like Americans. We received far better treatment there than in our own country. I realize it is not like that everywhere but it is like that in a lot of countries. We need to listen to what is being said by the media, but we also need to hear from God, the missionary in the field, and others in determining how safe it is for us to go.

The second point is that we, as a church, are obeying scripture when we take trips to some of these far out places. We could tailor our trips with a consumer mentality where the trip is safer, cheaper, and easier. But our trips need to reflect what God is telling us to do. This is a key of our strategy. Let me explain.

Throughout scripture God has shared His plan of reaching the ethnic groups of the world with the gospel. The word "nations" in the New Testament is the word "ethnos" meaning ethnic groups, or tribal groups. It does not mean political countries. (The same holds true of words in the Old Testament.) The word refers to groupings of people based on ethnicity.

This has always been God's plan from the beginning. (See Gen 12:1-3, Ps. 67:1-3, Rev. 5:9, Rev. 7:9 and Romans 15:20-21). The LBC missions ministry believes that when we follow God in going to those unreached places, we are following Him in His world wide Biblical plan. God's goal is to reach all the ethnic groups with the gospel. The salvation message needs to go to those who have never had a chance to respond to Jesus. Therefore we believe that God's will is that we go to those areas of the world where the gospel is the least and where there are no churches.

But really listening to the news media and not understanding the scriptural ideas on missions is not the problem. I think the main problem is that of our American brand of Christianity. Americans seem to have a view of Christianity that says God will take care of us and we will be safe and sound. Francis Schaeffer said that the two highest

ethics in American evangelicalism are personal peace and prosperity. It is fine to hold to these ideas, but it is not Biblical. Jesus actually said if we were His disciples we might encounter severe punishment, and even death for His sake. What does that say of my discipleship and me if I am unwilling to go where He leads? Scary thought for me.

I want to share the following e-mail written 5 years ago by one of LBC's own missionaries before she left for Africa. Please read it and pray with us that people will see that God is in control and that Satan is the author of fear, not God.

Missionary Wrote:

We have been talking and praying about going to Northern Africa lately...a lot. So much is said and shared regarding our safety and the safety of the people who may desire to receive Christ as their savior. Questions constantly arise regarding our own safety as we go to a volatile place,

and a harsh climate... so many fears, concerns, worries. God has spoken, and clearly, to me about HIS heart on the matter :-))It is neat! It is true! I prayed about who to share this with and prayed as I went down the e-mail list. Ya'll are the ones God laid on my heart. Blessings

from Him. We are so shortsighted sometimes! I pray that He would use us to help each other look the "right direction" with our HEARTS!

God's definition of "safety" is totally different from ours. We sometimes "expect" God to keep us safe. That can mean many different things. Safety to us can mean that we stay healthy. It can mean that He keeps our families alive and free from disease. It could mean that He keeps us safe from enemies in this world. It can mean that He keeps us safe from danger. That He protects us from death...

that He would never send us into the midst of discomfort, danger or death.

BUT Safety to Him means... saved. That's it. Those that are saved are safe. Those that aren't are in grave danger. The only kind that really matters. AND if we are safe...saved, then anything... ANYTHING could happen and we would still be SAFE! Forever! Praise God!!!!

Do not be afraid. He has promised to be with us always! AND He has SAVED us! Wow! There is truly nothing to fear. There is truly no reason to tell Him "no". He has thought of everything... even possible "consequences" when He calls. And His view of the consequences is that His perfect will is being accomplished. His ways are truly, truly NOT our ways.