

It's Easy Update 10-27-05

I just happened to be standing next to my co-worker when the call came into our emergency line. After being very polite and hanging up from the caller, my co-worker began to share with me what the caller said. Before I share with you what they said let me offer a little background.

Here at our church each associate pastor is on call at least one week in a 6 week rotational schedule. The purpose of the on call number is to handle emergencies. Unfortunately people ignore the emergency tag with the on call and use it as an after hours information line.

Back to the caller. This particular call was one of those non emergency calls. They were asking about the schedule of a particular project we were coordinating here at the church. Our church was acting as a collection point for all churches in our area in this nationwide ministry project.

After asking about the times they could drop off their packages the caller made what I consider a very revealing look into American mission efforts. She said:

“I love this project so much! It does not cost me much, it is easy, and it makes me feel so good about myself!”

Upon hearing that, a huge light bulb went off in my head. “That’s it”. This is the way many people and churches in America view and do missions work.

We want mission projects that are easy to do. Some of the most popular mission activities are ones that will not take too much of our time. After all God does not want me to burn up my vacation time or days off on a mission trips and projects. “There are many lost people right here in America that need us too” is a statement I hear quite often. Why should I go across the ocean when there are lost people here?

Feeling good about myself is also key to making it a complete missions activity. It does not matter if what I do is an effective missions strategy or not, as long as I feel good about myself. I see this all the time in people who want to go do a mission project. They push the missionary or the field worker to allow the church or people to come when the church wants to come, or do what the church wants to do , even if the field really does not need it.

I guess a secular or Christian marketer would take this information and design mission projects and activities that fit this consumer mind set or cheap, easy and feeling good to get a lot of people to participate. But is participation in a project that is not needed what God wants from us? Are the people at home the ones who know best about what is needed on the field? Aren’t the ones closest to needs on the field best qualified to tell us what they need, even if it is not what we want?

We are not marketers. We are those called by God to take the gospel to the world no matter where and even in situations where it is very tough. There will be times when it does not cost much, and is easy. But there are times when it is hard, takes a lot of time, and may cost us a lot, including our lives.

Update: Just recently there was a hurricane in New Orleans. There was/is lots of devastation and horrific things. Around 1000 people died. That is tragic and sad and should have never happened. Some because they could not leave, others because they chose not to leave.

The church in America has stepped forward in amazing ways. I truly have never seen anything like it. I could not find a church not doing something on this. People in our church were even mad that we did not go the day after it all happened. There were people chomping to go, pressing to go even when those on the field were saying wait, a bit. ALL that is GOOD and I am glad.

But something happened recently that really has made my ears perk up. There was an earth quake in Pakistan. 80,000 people have died , 3 million are homeless. These are people who make the poorest in New Orleans look rich. They live high in the mountains and do not have supply lines like we do here in the USA.

In New Orleans there are many churches and Christians including a large Southern Baptist Seminary. These are Muslim people who, even if they wanted to hear about salvation in Jesus, they have no access to the gospel. They do not have the gospel in their language and could not read it even if they did have it due to illiteracy.

Interesting thing on all this, I have yet to receive my first phone call about these people in Pakistan. I have yet to hear how we need to go and now! I have yet to have any of our people get frustrated with me because they feel we are not moving fast enough. I have yet to hear about how this is an open door to share the gospel. I have yet to have people say I will go and pay my own way. By the way we are planning to take a trip there in 2006.

My prayer for us here at Liberty Baptist is that we would not become like this caller. I pray that our missions efforts would not be contingent upon the closeness of the need, the cost of the trip, or the amount of time it takes. More than anything I hope that it is never about us and how it makes "us" feel.