

Because God Opened a Door

By Bob Young

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From time to time someone asks why Jan and I are so involved in mission work and why we travel so much. I can hear another question “between the lines.” Aren’t there good evangelistic works that can be done closer to home with less expense? The answer we give is this: We are involved where we are because God opened those doors rather than others.

From time to time I hear someone ask why a local church is involved in foreign mission works when there are so many people in our own nation and in our own cities and communities who have not heard the gospel. Generally, the answer is this: Churches are involved in certain mission works because God clearly and widely opened some doors while other doors remained closed or barely open.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians and said that he had delayed his planned trip to them because God had opened a door of opportunity (2 Cor. 2:12). The continued explanation in that text suggests that even with the open door, Paul was concerned for Titus and moved on more rapidly than he would have liked.

Almost 30 years ago, the church in Lansing, Michigan where Jan and I were ministering came face to face with the fact that we had a limited vision of the world. God put an interesting series of opportunities, obstacles, and people in our path. It changed me, and it changed that church. We began sending out and supporting world missionaries in distant places. We decided that God has called us to put in a good word for Jesus wherever he opens a door. The fact is that we have a tremendous task in taking the gospel to our local world and to our global world. John Naisbett said, “Think Globally, Act Locally.” Someone has coined the word “glocal” to describe the task before the church. We face a big challenge in a big world, but we serve a big God.

The situation today is different—mission doors open more easily than they did 50 or 30 years ago. The world has shrunk. We are interconnected. But...the world is still lost. And, truth be known, we still struggle with the challenge of being global Christians with a global view. The church needs to ask why we have such a hard time seeing the lost—whether they live next door or around the world. Borrowing from a list written by Roger Greenway, let me suggest that we are not global evangelistic Christians because (1) we don’t care enough, (2) we don’t see very well, (3) we think, even hope, there must be some other easier way, (4) our prayers remain peripheral and not focused, and (5) we aren’t listening. We may see more open doors if we learn to care more, broaden our vision, are willing to pay the price, pray specifically, and listen to the call that comes from God and from our world.

God is opening doors around the world, and he is revealing those open doors to his people so they can walk through the doors of opportunity. In the past several years, God has shown this church open doors in Mexico, Honduras, Guatemala, Nicaragua, and Colombia. We have tried to walk through as many of those doors as we can.

I know there are other open doors—even next door to where we live. Can we see them? Can we help open them? How will we know when it is time to walk through them? Let us continue to walk through the doors God opens, while we pray that he might open even more. The doors next door may not open until we really care, sharpen our vision, focus our prayers, and spend the time and resources to listen to the call that rings forth daily in the little corner of the world where we live.