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Dying to Have Access

Sometimes life is easier when we have fewer choices. Often the more choices we have, the greater the risk becomes of choosing nothing at all. We battle to keep all our options open, considering it to be a virtue; yet, frequently, under such circumstances, we become paralyzed, unable to make any commitments at all, often drowning in an endless sea of possibilities. We succumb to the voices of the world which have successfully entrapped our souls, convincing us that freedom is achievable apart from commitment. On a larger scale, we can even become a spoiled culture enjoying the so-called luxury of entertaining many options and possibilities at once without choosing any of them.

In most corners of the Western world, an individual has access to the Good News of Jesus Christ. He or she is able to read a telephone directory, go on-line and find an abundance of Christian communities amongst which to choose. But, sadly in such situations a person often finds themselves in a quagmire, unable to make the difficult decision of which brand of Christianity they prefer, which preacher ignites their spirit the most, which programs of the church community best meets their needs; so, the individual ends up choosing nothing at all. After all, it is popular to think these days that religion causes most wars in the world, clergy often get caught in moral scandals, and Christianity is largely a judgmental institution anyway. Therefore, they conclude, why make any commitment at all? Why not stay home, be in control, listen to a church service on TV or radio, and call it a day?



Meanwhile, in reality, nearly a third of humanity, well over 2 billion people, have little to no access at all to the Good News of Jesus. There are linguistic, political, socio-economic and geographic barriers between them and the Gospel. In mission circles, these people are defined as an unreached people group. Many members of these unreached people groups would do anything to have access to Jesus and his Good News. They are hungry for God's grace in Christ; they are willing to eat the crumbs off the table of other cultures and countries in the world, which are swimming in Gospel alternatives. The last thing on their minds is a desire to differentiate among the various kinds of Christian traditions or practices available to them.

Presently, there are very few Christian communities in Afghanistan. Those that do exist, meet underground in hidden places. Recently, the Afghani government planted hidden cameras in these underground churches, which exposed the faces and identities of many members. Images of these people appeared on television throughout the country and many members of the current Afghani Parliament cried for these followers of Jesus to be executed. As a result, the Christians in Afghanistan are now scattered, some having left the country; and all of this is coming on the heels of 14 Christian eye doctors and nurses being murdered last month by the Taliban. These blatant acts of hostility and prejudice are no different from what many of the Christians endured in the First Century.



We need to pray for these people as often as the Lord brings them to our minds and hearts. We can remember, too, the 50,000 followers of Jesus in Saudi Arabia who are scattered and chased throughout their country. It is illegal in Saudi Arabia to own or carry a Bible in public. And we can pray for the believers in North Korea, who if discovered are forced into

grueling labor camps or prisons. These brave souls would do anything to have a Bible in their own language, let alone enjoy the fellowship and joy of being with other followers of Jesus. The cry of our prayers can help liberate these people from the political oppression under which they suffer. The Holy Spirit is not bound by human institutions, geography, or the devious plans of the world.

It is an urgent matter to advance the Gospel to those who have never heard about Jesus; in fact, it is the responsibility of every church and Christian to become involved in some way with a frontier mission. Listen to the words of Paul in the 10th chapter, 13th verse of the book of Romans, "...Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." But how can they call on him to save them unless they believe in him? And how can they believe in him if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear about him unless someone tells them? And how will anyone go and tell them without being sent? That is why the Scriptures say, "How beautiful are the feet of messengers who bring good news."

In our own particular neighborhood of the world where access to the Gospel is generally easy and plentiful, we must be careful not to be mesmerized by our options and alternatives and end up choosing nothing at all. If we are not careful, our relationship with the Lord can become easily dulled; we can find ourselves relying more on self-identification rather than actual practice and devotion of our faith. We are only fooling ourselves if we think that following Jesus does not involve being a participant in some form of Christian community. Too often, we rationalize that joining a Christian community is not essential; whereas, in reality, we are seeking to keep our options open, our time free, and our accountability to a minimum.



Multiple churches
in one town

Choosing and committing are essential practices for the human spirit. They are our God-given avenues towards true freedom. There is certainly no other conclusion to draw from Scripture. Dedicating ourselves to pray and help those in the world who have little to no access to the Good News, or who are struggling to survive within hostile environments, is not only a commandment but a burning priority of our Lord. Frontier mission involvement is in fact one of God's wonderful provisions for getting our eyes off ourselves and onto those in need.



Stoning of St. Stephen

We are all in need of greater perspective, seeing how fortunate we are to have Christianity available to us within our own culture; and we are even more fortunate to be called to the frontiers of the world to witness Jesus giving birth to a new Christian community among an unreached people group.