

ANOTHER LOOK AT MISSIONS FOR THE NEW MILLENNIUM:

**A New Age for Missions Demands a New Paradigm to Accomplish
The Great Commission in this Generation.**

By Dr. Jack L. Arnold

Missions are at another crossroads in the history of Christianity. The church is growing by leaps and bounds in the Third World, modern technology and travel affects world missions, true Christianity in the U.S.A. is becoming weaker by the day, and Christians are more and more distrustful of traditional mission organizations. It is time to take another look at modern missions as we move into the Third Millennium

There are myriads of needs on the mission field today. The gospel must go to the 10/40 window so that the Muslim and Hindu worlds can be reached for Christ. Many wars and natural disasters create an environment where there is a great need to provide food and medicine to those in crisis. There is the need for true Christians to unite around Christ and Scripture in order to be a major force against secularism, and the rise of the Muslim religion and the cults. These are just a few of the needs in modern missions.

However, the greatest need, in my opinion and the opinion of most missiologists who are on the cutting edge of world missions, is to train the pastors and Christian leaders in the Third World countries where the gospel is spreading like wildfire. There are millions of people coming to Christ in China, Asia, Africa, South America, and Eastern Europe. It is estimated that right now there is a need to train two million pastors to meet the needs of an exploding Church, and by the year 2015 that number will escalate to five million. How can we accomplish this monumental task? Certainly not by the traditional method of training men for the gospel of Christ through Bible schools and seminaries. By the old methods, the most men and women who could be trained in a fifteen year period would be about five hundred thousand. While there will always be a need for formal theological and biblical training, it is time to rethink missions strategy so that a maximum amount of people can be trained for gospel ministry.

You may think the best way to train national pastors is to bring them to the U.S.A. for training in an evangelical Bible school or seminary. But in reality this is the worst method. Why? Statistics show that 95% of all foreign students who come to this country to train, whether Christian or non-Christian, never return to their native countries. They taste the good life in the States, and have no desire to live in the standard conditions of their home countries. I can't blame them because life in Third World countries is very harsh, but this does not solve the need for national pastors to be trained so they can reach their own people. Furthermore, it is much more economical to send one pastor overseas for several weeks to

train 300 national pastors for around \$3,000 than it is to send one national pastor (and most likely his family) to the States for three years at a cost of approximately \$90,000. By these numbers, it costs about the same amount to train one pastor in the States as it does to train 300 pastors in their native countries.

The key to training pastors is to keep them in their own countries, and to bring the biblical and theological training to them. How can we do this, and what role do American pastors and churches play in this strategy? America is a great and wealthy country, and there are still many fine believers in this nation. Yet, the materialism in America is sapping Christians of spiritual vitality, and the American church is growing more indifferent and in many segments even apostate. Abroad, Americans are not well-accepted by many countries because of our wealth and misuse of that wealth in foreign politics. But American Christians still have two wonderful resources going for them. The first is trained pastors who have far more knowledge of the Bible and theology than do most national pastors. The second is money. American Christians have great wealth, especially by global standards. If they committed just a small portion of that money to training pastors in other countries, perhaps the world could be evangelized in only a few years, and the church could be under the leadership of trained men. God has richly blessed American Christians with educational resources and wealth, and with a little commitment there could be revival abroad and hopefully at home.

God is raising up an army to meet this need of trained pastors in the Third world. Recently over a hundred organizations met, all of which are committed to training pastors. Unfortunately, doctrinal and philosophical differences still prevent many organizations from wanting to pool their resources, but at least there is a desire to begin to work together loosely.

I am intimately affiliated with one of the organizations God has raised up to meet this need: Equipping Pastors International, Inc. (EPI). In 1997, God called me out of my Presbyterian (PCA) pastorate of eleven years and gave me the vision of EPI. EPI is an independent, tax-exempt missionary organization that exists to train pastors anywhere in the world. The main burden of EPI is to give practical biblical and theological training to Third World pastors who never get an opportunity to receive any formal training. For instance, in Uganda only about 6% of the Pentecostal pastors have any formal training. Yet, the Pentecostal Church is reaching millions in that country, especially in the countryside and villages. The Pentecostal Christians are full of spiritual life, but they have hardly any training. What is their need? Their pastors equipped so they can reach their own people with the truths of Scripture. The Pentecostals in Uganda have asked EPI to train their pastors, and have indicated that this will open doors in Kenya, Tanzania, Burundi, Rwanda, and the Sudan. This is an incredible opportunity! These kinds of opportunities are also developing to teach Anglican pastors (The Church of Uganda), and it has been indicated that the doors

will swing wide open to train these dear Christians. There are also open doors with Presbyterians.

How then can EPI and like-minded organizations accomplish this monumental task? We can't, but God can! Let me tell you a little bit about our model. At EPI our plan is very simple. We get American pastors to commit two weeks a year to teaching pastors in nations in which we have set up contacts to train national pastors. The local churches give money for the pastor to travel, and some extra money to help feed the pastors when they come to the conference: The amount is about \$3000 per person. The pastor (and perhaps his wife) experiences a cross-cultural ministry, and his home church gets the blessing of a pastor fired-up for Christ and missions when he returns. Modern airplane travel has made all this possible. When the pastors go to these other countries, they do not have to learn the language or the culture. They simply have to teach biblical principles, and the native Christians (such as the pastors they are training) make the material culturally relevant. The pastors sent by EPI also leave notes for the national pastors to study in the future. Many of these national pastors base their preaching on these notes for months and even years to come. With this system, American pastors do not have to leave the States for long periods of time, but they can go to hungry hearts and change foreign cultures by teaching God's Word simply practically to national pastors.

EPI's own ministry is one of multiplication. For instance, if every 50 American pastors we send teaches and equips 300 national pastors, and these pastors return to their local churches of at least 300 to teach the truth they have learned. EPI has reached 4.5 million people. I and others believe that this is an extremely economical and effective way to reach the world for Christ, and to train up the church for the work of the ministry. Through such a ministry of multiplication, one gets "the biggest bang for his missionary buck," and works quickly to build up the kingdom.

EPI does not start anything new overseas. We work with existing denominations, churches, and Christian organizations that want their leaders trained. EPI has a Reformed, sovereign grace emphasis, but obviously must have a broader doctrinal statement because it works across denominational lines.

This is a new age for missions, and we all must set forth strategies which will meet the needs of our rapidly expanding church in the world. Pastors in Third World countries do not need American academic degrees, but they do need knowledge of God's Word and how to apply it. A few will be fortunate enough to get a degree from an institution, but the vast majority will get needed knowledge as organizations like EPI take the Bible school and the seminary to national pastors themselves.

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