

On Mission 2019

*The State of the Global Gospel:
Present and Future Trends*

Allan Matamoros - Vision 5:9

Are Unreached People Still A Driving Force for the Missionary Movement

Hello, my name is Allan Matamoros. I am a Partners International Director for the North Africa and Middle East Region. And I've been serving in cross-cultural missions during the last 25 years leading Latin American church-planting and holistic missional teams in the Muslim World. So, I have spent many years of my service among Muslims and leading Muslim Mission Societies among them.

Today, I want to approach a very basic theme, but has been a growing concern for me. About 25 years ago -30 years ago- in the Latin American world, we have received first from the Word of God and later on, challenged by many of our missionary friends living in our lands in the Spanish-speaking and Portuguese-speaking world. The challenge, number one, of sending long-term missionaries from Latin America, especially focused among the un-reached people groups of the world. The Muslim world has been a very important place in our passions, but you can find Latin Americans today serving among Hindus, tribal people, Buddhists and different parts of the European continent. So today, there is an estimation of about 20,000 Latin American overseas, cross-cultural missionaries, serving in different places of the world with a special passion for an un-reached people, and especially in those places where the name of Jesus Christ is not known yet.

Romans 15:20, 21 has been placing a very key role in our side of the world and is being a special passion for a large segment of the movement to be doing transplanting in this place, "...that has been my ambition." Paul said, to preach the Gospel in pioneer places, frontier places. So over the years, I got involved with a large network of mission societies called Vision 5:9 which represents about 200 mission societies -evangelical mission societies- from the United States, Europe, Latin America, Asia and Africa. And I've been perceiving a number of things that I want to share with you and maybe challenge you this morning.

Today, there is an estimation of about -according with IMB- about 7,000 unreached people groups from which about 3,200 are still, what somebody called unengaged. Which is, basically Romans 15:20, 21. This is unreached people groups where there's no witness, an indigenous movement of indigenous churches growing hopefully, spontaneously among them. I mean, no presence of the Gospel either from foreign workers; or national workers; or proximity nationals; living, surrounding these people groups.

So, and then, we still have about 3,200 unengaged people groups. So, I'm going to just repeat what has been a common knowledge in the mission's world. Number 1 - it's being a matter of concern to see how we can be switching the priorities of the Great Commission, rather than long-term workers going to spend our or their lives in pioneer places given to every human being, the possibility to hear the Gospel and to see effective church-planting efforts -movements of church planting efforts- in every single nation or ethnic people groups. So, there's a movement from long-term to short-term missions. Reading recently the International Journal of Frontier Missions, I just learned that every year, just in the United States, about 1 million and a half short-term trips are organized, going to different parts of the world for one week to one month. And common sense can teach us that, that's going to be a good experience maybe, for the participants. But this kind of efforts are not going to change the realities of the unreached and the unengaged from tier people groups. So that's a matter of concern about prioritizing our resources on our people. And it's already well known that a large number of short-termers are not going to long term service. On the other hand, Becky Lewis recently -and at the International Journal of Frontier Missions- was affirming that about just one in thirty new missionaries are going to the unengaged frontier areas of the world (Romans 15:20, 21 fields). So, we are then basically repeating the process that we were already attaching 30 years ago about deploying strategically our finances and human resources, obeying Jesus' Great Commission, trying to make the Gospel available where His name is not known yet.

On the other hand, finances are on the same place and we, from the Vision 5:9 perspective, this coalition of almost 200 mission societies, we have seen how the pace of making engagements among what-is-so-called unengaged people groups. People groups where there's no presence of workers, not witness, and not effective church planting efforts in place, aspiring to see movements of church planting initiatives. So, we are basically managing the same, the same parameters that we have seen about 30 years ago. So it's been a surprise, as a chairman of Vision 5:9, seeing that after 4 decades, the development of the unreached people movement, we are using the same figures and numbers, which is, we are still deploying more missionaries in Christian areas or in places where the Gospel is available. And, I guess we all agreed that the challenge of the Great Commission is not about need, as necessarily speaking. It's about availability. Need is everywhere. But the Gospel is not available for everyone. I am wondering if, pioneer work, going to unreached places, going to the frontiers of the Great Commission -which represent at least one third of the 7,000,000,000 people on Earth- is still a priority for mission societies in the West or churches in the West. My Lord help us if we've forgotten the one third of the global population. I am praying for mission societies. I have seen in Vision 5:9 how many missions' societies are going farther from the priorities of making the Gospel available everywhere. I know that this is not the only one option for missions. But I would love to believe that the church still has passion for the unreached and the unengaged. Thank you.