



IT'S A GIRL, THE THREE DEADLIEST WORDS. HOW WILL THE CHURCH RESPOND?



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EDITORIAL

ANAYA IS PREGNANT and along with her husband, Arjun, and their entire extended family, they are hoping their latest child will be a boy. Anaya lives in a remote village of northern India where advanced medical technology such as ultrasound machines is not available. They will just have to wait and see. There are great social status and financial benefit for those families blessed to have a son. Anaya says, “When my son grows up we will arrange a great match for him and his new wife will join our family and she will take care of me and my husband in our old age. We will make sure to find a girl whose family will provide a good dowry.”

Soon the day of delivery arrives and Anaya gives birth to a beautiful, healthy baby girl. This is the eighth girl that Anaya has given birth to. Their dreams of a secure financial future are dashed. What will they do now? A short time later Anaya goes for a walk carrying her new daughter to a secluded area near her home. She lays her yet unnamed daughter on the

ground. Anaya pulls out a beautiful Indian cloth and places it securely over the baby’s face. After a brief struggle Anaya’s baby girl stops moving. Anaya digs a shallow grave and buries her latest baby girl next to her seven other daughters. Anaya says, “I felt we could keep it only if it was a male and kill it if it was a female child.”¹

Anaya’s child is one of over 200 million “missing” girls according to United Nations estimates. More girls go “missing” from India and China every year than all the girls born annually in the United States. Anaya’s choice is but one method by which millions of girls have been eliminated. Most often the sex of the child is determined by ultrasound examination, even though it is illegal to do so, and abortion becomes the preferred method of terminating the pregnancy. The roots of this crisis have been around for centuries. The arrival of modern medical procedures to identify the gender and “quietly” eliminate the female child has turned a long-standing cultural preference for boys in India and China into gendercide—a holocaust of female children unlike the world has ever seen.

These diabolical systems of cultural and financial prejudice against women have to stop wherever they exist. The practice of paying a dowry

must end. To his credit, Indian Prime Minister Modi has spoken out against the killing of girls but the Indian government at every level must get serious about enforcing the laws already on the books. Concerted efforts do make a difference as seen in the article starting on page 30.

It should be noted that the devaluation of women and the gendercide that results is not just an issue for India or China. It’s a global problem and sex selective abortion should be illegal in every country on earth. It is currently not illegal nationwide in the U.S.

Will the Church Provide the Answer?

The murder of girls is deeply rooted in the cultural devaluation of women that has existed in many cultures of the world for millennia. It is tragic that women themselves have felt so trapped by financial, cultural and governmental pressures that they have become at least unwilling participants in their own devaluation and murder. How can anyone read the stories from Jill McEly’s article starting on page 13 and not be dumbfounded by the ability of some to justify the routine murder of girls as a normal part of daily life rather than condemn it as the horrendous moral outrage that it

is. The global church must speak out against this horror on behalf of the supreme value of girls and women created in the image of God.

As those possessing a biblical worldview and a commitment to spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Church should be leading the charge against the devaluation of women in every culture where it occurs. The teachings of Scripture are very clear—both men and women are of equal value and worth as created in God's image. As Paul says in Gal. 3:28, there is now neither male nor female. We are all equal at the foot of the cross as members of the New Covenant. Women are equal members of the royal priesthood of all believers. Women are equal recipients of all of God's spiritual gifts, Acts 2:17-18. Both genders are equally responsible for carrying out Jesus' command to "Go and make disciples of all nations." (Mat. 28:18-20). Women have been called by God to be disciple makers and church planters right alongside their male counterparts. The Church must provide women with the freedom, training and opportunities to excel in this common mission. But, quite often the Church does not. Many churches and mission agencies still hold to a pro-male bias in training, leadership development and ministry opportunities. We must not muzzle or stifle half of the Body of Christ. We need the full participation of both men and women to complete world evangelization.

Based on what Scripture teaches, the Church should be known as the one place in every society where women are protected, respected and empowered to express their God-given gifts for the glory of God and the expansion of His kingdom. Unfortunately, many women see the Church as a place of

limited opportunities and ongoing prejudice and disrespect.

Sadly, all too often the Church simply reflects the beliefs of the surrounding culture. Rather than impacting culture with the truth of God's word as Jesus did, the Church often compromises with culture until little difference can be seen between the Church and the world around it. Raaj Mondol states the problem clearly in his article starting on page 34, "The church in India can play a significant role in stopping this tide of violence by sharing a gospel message that accords equal value to women for being created in God's image and redeemed by Christ to become co-heirs of God's kingdom. This indeed would have been 'good news' to millions of 'missing women' in our country, but sadly the church has largely failed to proclaim and demonstrate this good news."

By its very nature the Church should be a counter cultural institution that critiques every culture by its very presence. As people submit their lives to the rule and reign of Jesus Christ, renew their minds by the washing of the Word and seek to obey all that Jesus has commanded us, then Jesus followers will stand out as shining lights in a dark world.

William Carey gave us a model for Christian activism when he went to India in 1792 to proclaim the gospel and confronted the cultural practice of *Sati* or Widow Burning. This is where a woman either voluntarily or by force is burned alive on her husband's funeral pyre or commits suicide in some other way. Carey worked for years to abolish it. It was banned provincially in 1829 and nationally in 1861.

It is time for the Church to stand up for the inherent value of women as

taught in Scripture. It is time for the Church to provide women with equal opportunities to express their God given talents and gifts. It is long past time to end the slaughter of baby girls.

A New Global Coalition of Movement Leaders is Born: The 24:14 Coalition

Please do not miss reading Steve Smith's and Stan Park's latest Kingdom Kernels column starting on page 39. Steve and Stan are making a *major announcement* introducing a new global coalition of movement leaders called 24:14, named after Mat. 24:14. This new coalition represents the coming together of many networks and coalitions of movement catalysts with the singular goal of initiating Church-Planting Movements in every unreached people and region by the year 2025. Our own Dr. Steve Smith, the regular contributor to the Kingdom Kernels column in MF for the last six years, is the co-leader of this new global coalition alongside Stan Parks. We will have much more on this exciting new global effort in upcoming issues of MF. But for now, read this latest column and get excited. God is on the move! 

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