

What Makes You Discontent?

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My wife and I have been on staff here at Frontier Ventures since 1982. We joined staff because we were compelled by the vision of seeing God's kingdom extend to Unreached Peoples. It made us discontent about the status quo. Information was much harder to come by then but we still prayed for the world country-by-country. Leaders talked about missions. But other than isolated tribal work, most were talking in terms of furthering "evangelism," not pioneering work among Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists.

Evangelism is crucial, but it is not sufficient. We remember hearing that even if the church were to reach out as far as it could in effective evangelism, half the world would not be touched! Still, today, perhaps a third of the world remains beyond the reach of current church witness.

That is changing. More "younger" missions from various cultures around the globe are catching a vision for reaching out to the least reached. Areas that were once nationalistic and even ethnocentric are beginning to break out of those patterns (like we all need to) and send global workers to least reached peoples. As I travel around the globe, it is refreshing to hear leaders from other nations express their heart and vision. I spend far more time listening on these trips.

But sometimes it seems like we are stopping short of the goal. I know God sends folks where he will, but

(humanly) it seems like we still don't go, or don't stay long, in the most difficult places. We've noted examples of some who have in *MF* over the 38 years since it began production. We will continue to do so.

Our calling hasn't changed. Yes, now many are talking about what my wife and I experienced as fresh and new in 1982. Almost the entire evangelical mission movement from Latin America has an unreached focus. The Perspectives course is desired by other language groups. So now the core unreached vision is established and standard.

But because that vision is well-known in certain circles, it may hinder our outreach at the frontiers of the gospel. More and more, all over the world, individuals look for things that are new: the latest phone, clothes, TV show, car...just like our economies, which are increasingly driven by retail sales growth. That, in turn, depends on discontent to be sustained. Do we do the same in the church and in mission strategy?

I hope you saw a crucial point in Dave Datema's article, "40 Years of Unreached Peoples Effort" (page 29). He argues that the Unreached Peoples concept is strategic, not tactical. Things like justice, urban mission, work with the poor, creation care, or ministry to the disabled are important tactics that build upon existing church work and foster the spread of the gospel among

groups within the church. Those tactics can also be used to help bring initial gospel breakthrough. Either way, that "breakthrough" phase is the beginning of all that God may want to do through his body.

Another way to say it is that while we can and should work for justice and these other foci, the Bible does not say that everything will be "just" or all the poor will be better off before the Lord returns. The idea of reaching the least reached is clearly biblical and isn't something that changes. People groups (however defined by God, and often changing before our eyes) will be represented around the throne according to Revelation 7:9.

Yet, after working at this a long time and seeking to honor God in the midst of ministry I find myself weary at times. I must heed Paul's admonition to the Galatians that they not grow "weary in well doing" (Gal. 6:9). I exhort you, as I do myself, to pray earnestly...as Jesus said (Matt 9:38 & Lk 10:2). But I was impressed recently—at a global meeting in Asia, by an Asian preacher—to focus on praying earnestly. That is prayer that is somehow more engaged. I want to obey the Lord in that too.

So, pray earnestly the Lord of the Harvest to thrust out workers into his harvest fields. Until we see that happening in its fullness, I hope you too, will continue to be discontent. 