

The Frontiers, and Health and Mission?

By **KEVIN HIGGINS**

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Just this morning I was reading through Luke's gospel these words about John the Baptist:

"So, with many other encouraging words he 'good newsed' the people" (Luke 3:18, my own version).

Right before that summary we are given glimpses of what the encouraging words were with which John was goodnewsing: calls to repentance, "children of snakes", and comparing people unfavorably to the stones from which God could raise up new heirs for Abraham!

Why begin here in a column about health and mission? To highlight a point:

That study seems to indicate that missionary care was the responsibility of the agency.

In our evangelical heritages we have tended to equate "good news" with a particular message, or particular points in a message, namely the wonderful message of the way Jesus' death for our sins has brought us forgiveness and justification. And hear me, that IS wonderful

news! But that is not the gospel, not in its entirety and richness.

So, John's words of repentance are also counted as good news.

Mark's gospel opens by saying "this is the beginning of the good news of Jesus....", and then tells the whole story. The life of Jesus, what Jesus said and did is the good news for Mark. Indeed, one might say safely that *Jesus* is the good news.

And now for my main point, to draw just one implication from the above, we see in the life of Jesus in all four gospels that a total, holistic healing of human beings was a part of the good news.

In Frontier Ventures, one of our core organizational values is "health" and we state it in this way:

Health: of body, soul, spirit, relationships; of organizational life, finance, systems, pace.

So, for us as a people in Frontier Ventures, we are increasingly shaping our way of being an organization, and being people, around what it means to be fully, wholly, healthy.

But how does this relate to frontier mission?

I opened with reflections intended to clarify that the good news itself includes "health".

Health and mission do not relate to each other in a "means to an end" mode. That is, there are some who might argue that missionaries should be involved with health-related service so that they can gain access, or gain a hearing, etc. In each example, health is a means to some other end.

Others normally not in the evangelical camp, might argue the opposite and suggest that health-related efforts should never be connected with evangelism, as serving and caring for the



health of people should be an end in and of itself.

My contention is that the truth is something other than either, something deeper.

Health, the total well-being of people in every facet of life, is not a separate “add on” to the good news, but inherently and deeply connected to it.

“Salvation” is the whole restoration of who we are as people: body, soul, spirit, relationships.

And so, the frontiers:

If one were to take a map of the world that highlighted all the locations of least reached peoples by using the color red as a shaded highlight, and then using that same map, using a highlight shade of, say blue, to indicate the regions of greatest need related to health, much of the red (least reached) would turn to purple.

That is, the peoples that are least reached and the peoples with the greatest need in terms of health and many other indicators, almost fully overlap.

The good news we claim to present in those frontiers needs to be the same good news we see in the New Testament. Who we are, what we do, and the good news that is our message all need to align, in the “frontiers.”

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This edition of *Mission Frontiers* addresses this reality in a number of ways. I trust it might also challenge us in our understanding of the good news itself. Maybe the good news is even better than we thought. ☒

