

## Missions Work Today

Audio Blog by Gregg Harris, President - FEBC

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After weeks of prayer and waiting, twenty-one Korean Christians held hostage in Afghanistan are safely home. Yet, with two dead and many expressing anger at the hostages themselves for entering such a high-risk situation, questions and issues continue to swirl around the survivors. The South Korean government has banned all missionary travel to Afghanistan, and the Taliban emboldened by their success are promising more kidnappings of foreigners. Some experts and analysts are predicting potentially serious consequences for missions work around the world.

Well, many committed Christians especially those of us in the missions community, are struggling for an appropriate response to this situation. Here are three important perspectives:

1. We need to recognize the risks of missions work.
2. We should prepare our workers.
3. And we must stay focused on the eternal.

One of the great lessons we can draw from this situation, is to embrace the risks of being witnesses for Jesus Christ around the world. While Christians should not be afraid to suffer and even die for their faith, they should not venture into perilous areas without forethought, prayer and discernment. Even though Jesus Christ ultimately gave his life, there were times when he walked away from danger. And the Apostle Paul was bold and fearless in proclaiming the gospel, yet he secretly fled Damascus when he learned of a threat against his life.

Throughout history, the spread of the gospel has been accompanied by danger and suffering. In the second century, Tertullian one of the church fathers made this now famous statement, "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church." And today, more than 200 million Christians around the world suffer real persecution for their faith in Jesus Christ. So, while we should not recklessly danger ourselves for the sake of the gospel, we cannot avoid the risks inherent in such a great struggle for the eternal souls of humankind.

A second lesson we can learn is this: we must equip missionaries to recognize and respond to the genuine dangers in today's world. A recent poll conducted today by Christianity Today Magazine showed that 63% of those surveyed felt that missions to dangerous places are irresponsible "only if the missionaries are unprepared." In other words, a majority of evangelical Christians would say that we should continue to have mission work in high-risk areas as long as the workers are trained and prepared. Well that's why, many mission agencies like ours, provide special training for our staff to prepare them for service in high-risk areas. We teach them how to minimize risk through awareness and preparation.

But even with the best training and risk assessment we keep in mind the need for every believer to follow God's call. As the Apostle Peter said when appearing before the Sanhedrin, we must obey God rather than men. And finally, we must keep our eyes fixed on eternity. While society tells us to live for today, God's word points us toward the eternal. And when a committed believer loses his life for his faith, his eternal reward far outstrips his earthly loss. As the Apostle Paul said, "to live as Christ, to die is gain." And so no matter what the earthly consequences of this episode may be, we must turn our eyes to Jesus Christ. In a turbulent and unpredictable world, our only hope is our sovereign God. He has told us that He will make all things work together for good to those who love Him. That's a promise we can count on.

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