

Going to the World ... Going Next Door

One central truth—the gospel of Jesus Christ can impact any culture—has driven the church for centuries to engage in missions and take that gospel into other cultures.

- There are **140,000** full-time missionaries around the world, and 46 percent of them come from the US.
- In recent years, upwards of **1.6 million** Americans went on mission trips averaging eight days.



I applaud our mission efforts, and I pray they only increase, but let me offer an additional way your church can do missions.

Stay home.

Don't neglect the open doors to go, but the door has also swung open another way: **they're coming to us.**

America is increasingly becoming culturally diverse. More and more ethnic groups are coming to America. Many among us bemoan this because it feels like we're losing "the American way of life" (whatever that means). But what if American Christians stopped seeing this as a threat and saw it as an opportunity? The world has come to us, and we have the opportunity to show them Christ.

According to The Travel Team:

- 22 million people come from other countries each year to visit our country.
- Almost one million students come from 220 countries to study in our colleges and universities. About 25 percent of those students come from countries that prohibit Christian missionaries.

And I haven't even touched on those who have come to our country with work visas, to join family, or as refugees. Opportunity abounds to take the gospel to

the world just by stepping into our own neighborhoods.

Don't try to sidetrack this into a debate about immigration. I definitely have concerns about immigration and protecting our borders, but for the moment, let's set aside our American citizenship with our "America first" mindset and see this as citizens of the kingdom of heaven (Phil. 3:20).

For the sake of the kingdom of God, reach out to your Muslim neighbor. The Korean family. The influx of refugees in your community. That guy at work from that country in eastern Europe you can't pronounce.

To do so will mean stepping outside our comfort zone and separating Jesus from our Americanized version of Christianity. Paul gave us a great example. He regularly went to synagogues and persuaded his fellow Jews that Jesus was their long-awaited Messiah. But when he had the opportunity to share Jesus with a group of philosophers and thinkers in Athens, he set aside the Old Testament and references to Jesus as Messiah. He talked in terms familiar to them. (See Acts 17.)

As we share Christ with the world that has come to our doorsteps, we also impact the countries from which they came. Those with family in their native countries could tell them about the one true God—Jesus Christ—they now follow. Forty percent of the world's 220 heads of state once studied in our country. Think of the impact had those 80+ leaders



been exposed to the gospel and accepted Christ while studying in America.

Great opportunities are there. And we don't even need a passport and plane ticket.