

## **Missions in the 21st Century** by Max Frazier, Jr.

I would like to share with you some books I have found to be very helpful in understanding the new world of missions in the twenty-first century. The first book is titled, **Stepping Out: A Guide to Short Term Missions**. It is published by the staff at Youth With a Mission (YWAM). When I made my first overseas short-term ministry trip in the fall of 1992, a short-term missionary leader recommended this book to me. Having never been overseas before, I was somewhat anxious about what I was getting myself into. The thoughts of working alongside a translator and of sharing in a totally strange culture were frightening I must admit. Yet I knew that this trip was of God.

This little volume really helped me to better understand my role in a short-term mission context. The writers told me that a short term trip would change my perspective. They quoted two proverbs of Jesus. First, Four months more and then the harvest? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. (John 4:35). The disciples had looked at these Samaritans as only people from whom they could purchase bread to satisfy their physical hunger. Jesus wanted them to see these people as a harvest field for God. A short term will change your perspective on the world. On a short term, you can sense the urgent need of real people. Perhaps there is no better way to see the world as Jesus sees it but to interrupt your routine and serve overseas for a short time (pages 29-30).

The second proverb is this: One sows and another reaps (John 4:37). In this world there are those who sow and those who reap. It is a partnership with God in order to bring in the harvest. Sometimes, during a short-term ministry, you are the sower; at other times, you are the reaper. But, in any case, you are there helping people give praise to God.

Whether you are planning your very first short-term ministry opportunity, or returning on a second, or third, or fifth short-term trip, you will benefit greatly from reading this book.

The second book on missions that has gripped my heart is also published by YWAM. It is titled, **The Great Omission**, and was written by Steve Saint, son of the missionary martyred in 1956 by the Auca Indians in Ecuador. This book opened my eyes to see the strengths and the weaknesses of the modern mission movement. Mr. Saint asks the question whether the American Church has helped or hindered the viability of the indigenous church. Yes, we have built churches, hospitals, schools, and airstrips for them. But have we adequately equipped them to reach their own people with the gospel? Have we taught them so they can, in turn, go and teach others? Have we foisted a feeling of dependency by them upon our expertise?

After reading this book, I reflected upon the ministry God has opened for us in India, working with Pastors PK and Solomon Philip. What kind of a partnership has been established? First, Pastor PK created the initiative for this partnership. While browsing the Internet, God led him to our website, and as he read there, he was convinced that it was through the Village Schools that God was answering his life-long prayer for a systematic approach to Bible teaching.

Second, Indians are doing all of the teaching, except for those times when a group of us have traveled to India for a special ministry. They already know the people in the villages and their language. Villagers are ready to hear and to study the Scriptures with them. Indians do even the ministry at the Training Center. They created the program of training, selected the ten students, located the site for the school, and are making all the day-to-day decisions with regard to the Center. Friends, the vision for this ministry is an Indian vision! That is the way it should be! We have encouraged them to develop a plan to become financially self-sustaining in the near future. Again, that is the way it should be!

So, what is Village Schools providing in this partnership? We have provided the biblical courses, given Pastor PK and Solomon permission to translate and to use these courses in their village ministry, and provided both financial and spiritual encouragement to them as they have begun this Training Center.

I am thankful for the encouragement Steve Saint's book has been to me. If you are serving on your church's missions committee, or if you have a heart for missions, then you owe it to yourself to read carefully this book. It does not describe missions as usual, but as God has desired.

The winter months are a great time to curl up in front of a warm fire and to read a good book. So, I wish you happy reading. Ω