

project 142

SAFEGUARDING THE DISCIPLE MAKERS



Years ago in Bible college, there was inspiration for me in “getting lost” in a painting hanging on the wall in our Mission’s classroom. The painting depicted a colorfully festooned rope bridge crossing a raging river somewhere deep within the Himalayan mountains in Nepal. In a strategic location for daydreaming, the painting, hanging behind our professor’s desk, often caused me to imagine myself trekking through the Himalayas bringing the gospel to some isolated Nepalese village. A village unreachable only but to the



adventuresome, crazy few that would dare to try. I remember one particular day during one of my favorite classes, *Doable*, I was particularly engrossed in the usual combination of teaching and losing myself in the painting, when I heard Dr. Delron speak about an interesting encounter he had with God in Kathmandu. Weaving his way through the heart of the city in a taxi, he thought to himself as he saw the thousands of unreached people passing by, *Lord, how is all this possible? How can one man possibly get the gospel to all these people?* The Lord’s reply was simple: “Preach the gospel and make disciples.” Luke 10 is a good reference for this.

A similar thing happened to me about five months ago as I was walking through the town of Madaba, a conservative, Islamic town in the desert south of Amman, Jordan. I had just finished my Arabic language lesson for the morning and was making my way back to our apartment. Winding through the various alleyways of the city, I found myself approaching one of the more busy intersections in town. This particular intersection, one I often tried to avoid, was always crowded with large groups of young men (pronounced “shabaab” in Arabic) and university students who gathered there to catch the bus to the German University north of town.

Seeing the teeming masses as I crossed the intersection, I asked the Lord a similar question Dr. Delron asked as he passed through the heart of Kathmandu. “Lord, how?” Knowing that he knew the entirety of my question without having to speak it, my thoughts immediately ran to the *Doable* class I spoke about before. In all honesty, at that moment in time the whole situation appeared to be more “undoable” rather than “doable,” but there I was, asking the question nonetheless. It was then I heard the Lord clearly say, “I didn’t send you here for **these**.”

Hearing that response quickly brought forth another question that really would, I think, be quite reasonable for someone living on the mission field, studying the Arabic language and culture as Teresa and I were. “What do you mean, I’m not here for these?” I kinda blurted it out. “If I’m not here for these, then *who* or *what* am I here for?” Trying to formulate my own answer as I often do, my thoughts ran down another path – *Maybe He meant I was to go to **another** group of indigenous Arab Muslim people within the Middle East.* It would take a few more months before I would receive my answer.

Fast forward a few weeks to a physical attack that took place on one of our good friends working among the Arab Muslims in Jordan. As she was out walking, an attacker stalked her from a distance, waited for a suitable time and place away from public view, and struck. This was not religious persecution, but a vicious criminal attack. Soon after this happened, I was approached by local missionary organizations to provide security/situational awareness classes that would provide the necessary training to prevent attacks such as these.

As I began to teach, train and further develop security classes over the next few months, Teresa and I gained a revelation. We saw an orchestrated symphony – different parts of the Church body working together as an efficiently oiled machine. Through these classes, we were introduced to **missionaries working within the region as counselors, medical personnel, small-business developers, church planters, construction trade workers, and even tree-planters working to prevent soil erosion, all coming together and working as God intended.** What I didn't see, and most likely never will within the higher-threat areas of the Middle East, were preachers and evangelists holding crusades in the empty lots and on the street corners of the cities. Don't misunderstand me, evangelistic crusades, knocking on doors, and conducting street evangelism are wonderful and permissible ways to reach a large number of people in *most* parts of the world, but not where we were. **In the Middle East, to gain what we call "creative access" into closed cultures – Islamic countries – missionaries must creatively use the unique gifts and talents God has bestowed upon each one of us.**

A clear picture of that symphony gave me the answer to my "Who or what am I here for?" question. In a very clear and precise moment of time, as I was teaching, I paused and saw the answer God set before me – **"I sent you here to know and understand *your* position in the body of Christ."**

We have much work to do. Joshua Project estimates that there are approximately **3.1 billion unreached people in the world that have never had the chance to hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ – with approximately 257 million of those residing within the high-threat areas of the Middle East.**

Confidently aware of our position within the body of Christ, Teresa and I will keep moving forward, **equipping the Church through knowledge and training to function more securely in an ever-changing world.**

Continue to pray and seek salvation, even for our enemies. Preach the gospel, even if that means suffering persecution for preaching Christ. We know we are not alone. Jesus promised those who share the gospel with others, "I will be with you always, even to the very end" (Matthew 28:20).

Thank you so much for your continued faithfulness in prayer and financial support. If you have not already done so, please prayerfully consider supporting Project 142 by becoming a partner or even with a one-time gift.

Help us in our work. Help us safeguard the disciple makers.

Patrick & Teresa Houghteling