

Short-Term Troubles

Lessons from the South Korean kidnappings in Afghanistan.

posted 11/07/2007 09:28AM

Should churches send short-term mission groups into dangerous or closed countries?

46% Only under certain conditions

Yes, if mission groups meet two conditions: They address local needs and obtain the proper government paperwork. They must be both capable and wanted.

Not if it were a dangerously closed society, like Saudi Arabia, and the group would be coming in "cold." Yes, if a group is invited by Christians within, and the government tends to look the other way.

Only after: (1) Carefully assessing the mission and its stated outcomes; (2) planning and training, with the understanding that those going take personal responsibility for their actions; (3) receiving invitations and having partnership agreements with the receiving Christians; and (4) planning for contingencies.

Yes, with a caveat: Prepare to be imprisoned or killed.

27% No

Short-term missions do more harm than good. The situation is only compounded in closed or dangerous countries.

The risk is too great, not only to the missionaries' lives but to the authenticity of their witness.

Short-term missionaries have enough to learn without making unintentional mistakes. The sort of work required to share the gospel in these places is anything but short-term.

27% Yes

Christians are to go everywhere (Acts 1:8).

The Old Testament prophets and New Testament apostles spread the message of Yahweh and the gospel in places they were not supposed to go.

Jesus warned us that bearing witness to the gospel involves danger. Sacrifice will be demanded. Lives will be lost.

If we are to take the gospel to the entire world as we're commanded, then these kinds of mission efforts are essential.

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When such groups go and suffer persecution, how should their government respond?

43% The church should expect government help.

The church can appeal to basic human rights laws for help, but the appeal should include the confession of a lesson learned.

They should ask their government and the government of the receiving country to abide by internationally recognized agreements.

They should appeal as citizens for intervention by diplomatic means, but have no justified grounds to ask for military action.

Reciprocity ought to be demanded by the U.S. government. If we afford religious freedom to nationals of one country, the same ought to apply for Americans visiting that country.

39% The church can ask, but it shouldn't expect government help.

Sometimes the apostle Paul invoked the government's protection, but ultimately he suffered the government's vengeance (Acts 16:37; 22:25). He went with the full understanding that he might suffer the consequences.

By going despite the government's advice, the church forfeits assurances of government intervention.

17% The church should *not* ask its government to respond.

We should use the spiritual weapons of prayer and voluntary suffering—not the diplomatic and military rights of our government—to change the hearts of the persecutors.

To do so only confirms the belief of leaders of the country involved that churches are an arm of the government.

The church has no government. It should not petition the government for anything at all. Missionary groups go knowing the dangers and should be willing to accept the consequences.

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