

November 10/11, 2007

Global Outreach Weekend
The Need for Urgency
Acts 14: 19-22
Paul Nyquist

Jeff Petersen: I want to welcome you to the second of our global outreach focus weekends. You need to know things look a little differently today than they normally do here at Lincoln Berean as two weekends a year we stop and we focus on needs all around the world. This year we're also taking a look at what we believe are some amazing opportunities that God has put in front of us for the days to come.

Last week we heard of Jesus' compassionate heart—His love for those who don't know God all around the world. We heard of His admonition to us to begin by praying that God would raise up people to go out into the harvest. We are considering together the very real question: How will we personally be involved in helping with the harvest?

Last week we talked about how God can use all of us—regardless of where we live or who we are—and one of the ways we talked about is praying and partnering with our existing missions efforts as we have 43 Lincoln Berean missionaries serving on over 30 mission fields impacting over 30 countries all around the world. We are encouraging everyone in our body to have an Each One Own One perspective, where every person and every LifeGroup would say, "I will be personally praying for, involved in and committed to helping to reach people in one of those mission fields in partnership with one of those missionaries."

I encourage you again this week, if you didn't pick one of these up last week at the Spotlight Booth on the 100 level or at the Outreach Booth on the 200 level, it's got more information about all of that. Also, there are a number of our Lincoln Berean missionaries who are with us this weekend. They'll be in the coffee house following the service. I encourage you to stop up there and connect with them.

We also talked last week about a second opportunity, and that is serving as senders—how together people can serve in helping to build up our Global Outreach Ministry right here at Lincoln Berean, that we can have the infrastructure in place and the resources available to be able to equip and send far more people into the harvest in the days to come. I again encourage you to consider that as a possibility.

And then last week we began to touch on two more aspects of how we can be involved in helping with the harvest through going and investing, as we talked about two major initiatives that we believe God is leading us to launch in the days to come in terms of short-cycle church planting and also our national partnerships around the world. We're going to expand on those two aspects of our focus this morning.

I want to invite up this morning Dr. Paul Nyquist. Paul is the president of Avant Ministries. Last week we introduced you to Avant and some people from Avant. Paul is familiar to a number of people in our body because prior to this role, he has had a number of positions along

the way in ministry including teaching at Grace University in Omaha. He has also been a pastor in Omaha and his last ministry assignment before going to Kansas City was a large church in Des Moines, Iowa, and his youth pastor in both Omaha and Des Moines was our very own Ty Thomas.

So we have a lot of connections and a lot of relationship over the years, and we're excited about the opportunity God is giving us to partner together. I told you last week that we are believing God in the future to use us to send out entire teams of people for a strategy that Avant calls short-cycle church planting. That's where a group of people will go to an unreached place and in a period somewhere around five years seek to plant and launch a church and begin a church-planting movement.

Paul, Avant has been involved in church planting around the world for over a hundred years. We've seen God use your organization through all kinds of strategies over the years. This is sort of a major shift for you guys in focus as you focus on short-cycle church planting. Tell us why Avant has taken this step.

Paul Nyquist: Well, you're right, Jeff, we've been around for a long time. We're one of the oldest missionary sending agencies in the Western world. But the fact is, the world has changed and it's not the same as it was over a hundred years ago when our organization was started. It's not the same as it was 50 years ago after World War II, even as it was ten years ago before 9/11. This world has changed and is continuing to change at warp speed—fuel to buy things, globalization, terrorism, and other factors.

Because that's true, you can't continue to try and do missions the way you've always done them, because in today's world the doors to countries open and close very quickly, and you have to be able to seize those opportunities when they emerge and be able to do your job as quickly as possible, knowing that you may not have a long time to operate in that country. So that's one of the main reasons why we sought to pursue something like short-cycle church planting, which is really to try and see God's power flowing through a high-performance team using a number of principles we developed to try and shorten the time needed to plant a mature church.

Jeff: Now there's another new twist to your strategy, and that is entering into what we're calling a joint venture partnership with Lincoln Berean where we're going into this thing together and saying we're going to believe God to not only send a team from this church, but in the first year to send a team, then the next year to send another team, and another team. Tell me, as you think about that, what excites you about our partnership and how do you see the potential for God using us together?

Paul: Oh, it excites me a lot, Jeff, because when you have two organizations coming together, they can do things more efficiently and better than they could when they were operating independently of each other. Here we have Lincoln Berean who has a passion to plant the church where the church doesn't exist. You've got Avant who has been involved in planting the church in some of the most difficult areas of the world for over a hundred years. And we've now developed this strategy that is very effective in this changing world that we live in.

So by working together we can do this and both fulfill our passion in the world in a better way. It's like if you had a business here in the States and you were very successful at that, but then you wanted to take that business to another part of the world—a different culture, a different language—you know there's some different ways you could do that. You could go and try and do it yourself and stumble through it and figure it out and make a lot of mistakes, and maybe finally be effective at it. Or you could call on some who have been there and done that and can help train you and coach you to do that effectively.

That's what we're doing here—we're partnering together so that we can accomplish this Great Commission work. I think it's going to be a win for Lincoln Berean. I know it's going to be a win for Avant. And I trust it will be a big win for God.

Jeff: I mentioned last week that we are going to take a number of people, a huge group from our church, on what we're calling *The Ultimate Spring Break*, because while we recognize that many people who are sitting out here today aren't going to be on one of those short-cycle teams, we want the entire body to be involved and a part of this exciting strategy. And it's going to take all of us together to really see God bring this to pass.

On the front page of your Loop today you'll find more information about *The Ultimate Spring Break*. I really encourage you to look at that and prayerfully consider the last week in March, concurrent with Easter and LPS spring break, going with us to Europe and North Africa to get an exposure to what God is doing in the world, and already last week amazing response from people saying, "Yes, I'd like to know more about that." So we're excited about that possibility.

Paul just returned Friday night from Spain and North Africa, the very places that we're going to be going in the spring. I just want to ask you, Paul, why would you encourage someone, even if they're thinking, "*Oh, I'm not going to do this short-cycle deal*", why would you encourage them to consider going on the *Ultimate Spring Break* trip with us?

Paul: Well, I'd encourage anyone here because, as a believer, your life is a great adventure with God and you really don't know how He is going to lead you in the future. I can say that personally because 31 years ago I graduated here from the University of Nebraska in architecture. I never would have imagined I would end up investing my life in missions—or leading a mission agency. But God so worked in my heart that this became my passion and my desire.

I know that if God can do that with me, He can do that with anybody, so I encourage you to consider going on this *Ultimate Spring Break* because you will see short-cycle teams in operation and this allows you to just open the door and let God work in your life. You might end up being surprised, just as I was surprised.

Jeff: If you have even just a bit of a heartbeat of interest in that, I encourage you again, just put your name on a list out there so we can get you more information at the Spotlight Booth and the Outreach Booth. Now Paul, would you just share with us what God has put on your heart about His heart for reaching the nations.

Paul: Will do, thanks, Jeff. There's a missing term in missions today. As I travel the country speaking in colleges and in churches, I find that there's a term that rarely comes up in our conversations about missions. I find that we will talk a lot about the lostness of the lost. I find that we will talk a lot about reaching the unreached. I find that we even talk a lot about complex subjects like contextualization and incarnational ministry. But in all that, I find there's a missing term in missions today, even though I believe it's very near and dear to the heart of God—and that is *urgency*.

Now we all know what **urgency** means. It means there is a critical situation that demands our immediate, effective and efficient involvement. On a football field, there's *urgency* when you get the ball back on your ten-yard line with two minutes left in the game and you're down six points. In an emergency room, there is *urgency* when an ambulance delivers a patient whose vital signs are dropping quickly because of a serious accident. In a house fire, there is *urgency* to locate and evacuate all the occupants before the smoke overcomes them.

We know what **urgency** means. It means there's a critical situation. The demands are immediate, effective and efficient involvement. Now if that's true, how come we have lost a sense of urgency when it comes to missions? How come we don't demand that same immediate, effective and efficient involvement when it comes to reaching the lost for Jesus Christ? How come we don't demand that we do this as quickly as we can, as well as we can, and as often as we can when it comes to global evangelization?

Is it because we have a faulty eschatology and we really don't believe in the imminent return of Jesus Christ? Is it because we have a faulty anthropology and we really don't believe that unsaved men will go to a Christless eternity? Those may be true, but I think at the core is a faulty missiology, where we don't think we can translate urgency into church planting today—that we can't do church planting quickly and efficiently today.

So that means we tend to act like Jesus really added another word to His statement in Matthew 16:18 where He said, "**I will build My church.**" We tend to act like what He really said was, "**I will build my church *slowly*,**" because we tend to assume it's going to take a long period of time—decades—to perhaps reach these people for Christ and to establish the church, and we lose all sense of urgency.

But when I look at the ministry of the apostle Paul, I don't see that. I don't see someone who invested years and even decades in one location establishing a church. Instead, I see someone who established an amazing number of churches in a very short period of time. I see someone driven by biblical urgency.

To refresh your thinking in this area, I'd like to have you turn with me to the last part of Paul's missionary journey (his first one), and that is found in Acts chapter 14. So turn with me if you would to Acts chapter 14. Let's look at the last part of this first missionary journey and consider what that means for us as we live in a world that demands urgency, Acts chapter 14 beginning in verse 19.

Now we're jumping in at the end of this first missionary journey, so let me quickly review what has transpired before this point so you get the full context. The three-man team consisted of Paul, Barnabas, and John Mark, who left from Syrian Antioch. They sailed to the west, landing on the eastern shore of the island of Cyprus, which as you know was Barnabas' homeland. They trudged all the way across that island, preaching the Gospel as they went. They left again from the western shore from the city of Paphos and they sailed north-northwesterly, landing in Perga of Pamphylia in Asia Minor.

Now at that juncture in the journey, quite inexplicably John Mark left the team. Now some think that he was homesick. Others think that he was not tough enough to live out in missionary rigor. Still others think that he was offended that the apostle Paul was planning to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles. For whatever reason, at this juncture in the journey John Mark picks up his ball and he goes home, leaving only Paul and Barnabas to trek farther north, finally coming to Pisidia Antioch.

Now the text tells us in Antioch that a number of the Gentiles believed but the Jews were resistant. Finally the resistance of the Jews grew to the point they chased Paul and Barnabas out of town. They went farther to the east and they came to the city of Iconium. Now in Iconium it says a multitude of the Jews and the Gentiles believed. But again, the Jews became hostile and they chased Paul and Barnabas out of the town this time with a threat of stoning.

They went farther to the east and to the south and they came to the city of Lystra. Now in Lystra Paul caused quite a stir by healing a man who had been born lame. You can read about that in verses 8 through 18 of chapter 14. But once again, rabble rousers came from Antioch and Iconium and the whole mood of this city changed rapidly. Let's pick it up now in verse 19. It says:

But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having won over the crowds, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead. (*NASB: Acts 14:19)

Wow, what a rapid change in the mood of those people! I mean one moment they're praising him as a god. The next moment they're pounding him with stones. Now most commentators believe that the reason they drug his body out of the town was to conceal the evidence, because this was not a judicial stoning. I mean this was an old-fashioned lynching. This was an angry mob taking matters into their own hands, which was illegal in the Roman empire. So not wanting to be detected, they drug his body out of the city, before the authorities could find out.

The disciples gathered around his body. Some think they were praying. I think they're planning his funeral: *“Jonathan, you better get a hold of the morgue. Bartholomew, you take care of the graveside service. I'll find a pianist and an organist.”* And they're just divvying up the responsibilities. As they're doing this, an amazing thing happens.

But while the disciples stood around him, he got up and entered the city. (vs. 20a)

Now, friends, this is not a resurrection, because Luke, the author of this particular book, who was a physician, makes very careful note in verse 19 that they only supposed him to be dead. So this

was not a resurrection, this was a resuscitation — that is Paul miraculously revives from this stoning that probably should have killed him. Then, more amazingly, it says he went right back into the city. Now if I had just been lynched, I would not go back to the scene of the crime. I mean, I may be bald, but I'm not dense. But Paul does, but only for one night, because it says at the end of verse 20:

The next day he went away with Barnabas to Derbe. (vs. 20b)

Now Derbe was not exactly right across the street. Derbe was another 60 miles to the south and east, which means it would have taken Paul and Barnabas a few days to get there. But he dragged his bloody body there.

Now in contrast to the other three cities, very little is said about their ministry in Derbe. Notice in verse 21 that the only thing it says is that they preached the Gospel in that city and they made many disciples. But that's it—no record of stonings, antagonism, resistance, none of that—just that they preached the Gospel and they made many disciples.

Now from that point in the journey, the quickest way home would be to continue to the south 150 miles, going through Tarsus, which was Paul's hometown, and then all the way back down to Antioch. That would be the quickest way home. But notice they don't do that.

After they preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God." When they had appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed. (vs. 21-23)

It says in verse 26, they finally end up where they sailed to Antioch, “**where they were commended to the work that they had accomplished.**” So instead of taking the most direct route home, they instead went back to these cities that they had worked in. And then they finally set sail and they ended up in Antioch where they gave the very first missionary report in history, complete with a closing scene of a sunset.

Now I want to stop here and note three things this team of two left behind in these cities, because the text makes it very clear they left behind three things in these cities.

First, they left behind churches because it says in verse 23, “**they appointed elders for them in every church.**” Now when Luke uses that word, he's not talking about stained glass and steeples. He's talking about an assembly of believers who have organized themselves to do the will of God. That's what the word church, *ecclesia*, means, an assembly of people who have organized themselves to do the will of God. That's at the very center of the work of missions. We're seeking to plant the church where the church does not exist, because what did Christ say again in Matthew 16:18? He said, “**I will build My church.**” That's exactly what Paul and Barnabas left behind. First, they left behind churches.

Secondly, they also left behind disciples. It says in verse 22, **“they went through these cities and they strengthened the souls of the disciples.”** Now the word "disciple" means a learner. It refers to someone who has chosen to forsake the ways of this world and instead follow Jesus wherever He leads. It's at the very core of the Great Commission, because remember what Jesus said in Matthew 28. He said, **"Go therefore and make disciples."** That's what Paul and Barnabas did. First they left behind churches; secondly they left behind disciples.

Third—and perhaps even most amazingly—they left behind elders. It says in verse 23, **“they appointed elders for them in every church.”** Now this is an important use of the word "elder" in the New Testament. It's only the second time in the New Testament where the word "elder" is connected with a Christian church. The first is found in Acts chapter 11 and verse 30, where it's referring to a church at Jerusalem. This is the second use in connection with a church.

Now you could ask the question, are we talking about elders the way that we think of elders? Are we talking about godly mature leaders who can shepherd the church? There's no way of knowing for sure, but let me remind you who it is that wrote the qualifications for elders in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. It was Paul, and knowing that Paul wrote those qualifications and knowing that it was Paul who appointed these elders, I really can't imagine that they fell too far short of those standards.

So that's what this team of two left behind in these cities. First they left behind churches; secondly they left behind disciples; third they left behind elders. And they didn't do it in just one city or two cities. They did it in all four of these cities. In other words, when Paul and Barnabas picked up their tent and went back home, they left behind four complete churches with disciples and elders. That's pretty impressive.

Now that fact, I think, causes us to ask a couple other pertinent questions. First, how long did this take? How long did it take Paul and Barnabas to get this done? Well, biblical scholars have pretty well documented the missionary journeys of the apostle Paul, and this first one lasted two years: from AD 46 to AD 48. But that's the entire journey. This portion of it was less than that.

Remember, before this point they sailed to Cyprus, preached the Gospel there, sailed north to Asia Minor, kissed goodbye to John Mark and continued to Antioch. So this is only a portion of that, and according to research that was done by Dr. Harold Honer in his doctoral dissertation at Cambridge University, this portion of the first missionary journey lasted just 15 months, just one year and three months. So that means this team of two planted four churches in four cities with disciples and elders, and they did so in a span of just 15 months. That's impressive.

But that raises then a second question that we need to consider, and that is did this happen because this was an unusually receptive area? Did this happen because they were just wildly receptive to the Gospel? Is this why they could do that?

Well, I think the text shows us that there was a response to the Gospel in every place. That's true. But I don't think you would call this receptive as an area when you consider the fact they were chased out of the first town. They were chased out of the second town under the threat of stoning. And then, sure enough, they got stoned in the third town. So you'd have to have a

rather twisted sense of humor to call that a wildly receptive area. In fact, you'd probably want to say it's hostile or resistant.

Yet, despite that, the facts remain. This team of two missionaries planted four churches in four different cities in a hostile area, complete with elders and disciples, and they did so in a span of just 15 months. And it didn't just happen here. It happened everywhere Paul went.

Roland Allen in his book on Paul's missionary methods says this: "In a little more than ten years, Paul established a church in the four provinces of the empire: Galatia, Macedonia, Achaia, and Asia. Before AD 47 there were no churches in these provinces, and in AD 57 Paul could speak as if his work was done." Any way you look at that, that's short-cycle church planting.

Now the final question we need to consider is: Can we do this today? Can we plant the church quickly and efficiently today? Can we bring biblical urgency back to the church-planting world today? Can we do this today? My answer to that is: Why not? *Why not?* We have the same sovereign God who rules over the hearts of men. We have the same Spirit within us. We have the same powerful Gospel that is able to penetrate hearts. My answer is: Why not?

Now I understand there are differences between our day and the first century. I understand that. I know there are linguistic and cultural barriers that Paul probably didn't face. But I also know we've got advantages that Paul didn't have. We've got the entire Word of God today. Paul didn't have that. And we also have technology that's able to penetrate into areas that was not even possible ten years ago. So my answer to the question is: Why not?—especially when you consider there are more unbelievers alive than at any other time in history.

So does God love these people less today than He did in the first century? Has God's power dwindled so we can't do that anymore? See, that's what short cycle is all about. It's about God's power flowing through a team using principles that are designed to shorten the time needed to plant a mature church. And it's working.

Our first team landed in Poland three-and-a-half years ago in a city of one quarter of one percent evangelical. They learned the Polish language, which is a difficult language. They learned the culture and they believed God to do amazing things. And after three-and-a-half years I am excited to be able to tell you they not only planted one church but that church has now subdivided and started another church. These two churches are now sending out missionaries to another city to plant another church.

We're sending out more short-cycle teams. Three more landed in this world this year. Three or four more are landing next year, and the year after that, and the year after that. But what's so exciting to me is now Berean and Avant are going to be working together to send out team after team after team after team to reach this world for Jesus Christ.

You can be a part of this historic partnership. You can be part of that very first short-cycle team to leave from Berean. I urge you to carefully consider that opportunity—because I can't imagine being involved in anything more exciting in my life!

Let's pray together:

Father, I thank You for Your awesome heart for this world. We know You want to reach this world with the Good News with the grace of Jesus Christ, and You choose to use us. I pray, Father, You would go before us and Your hand of blessing would be upon this partnership and that we'd be able to see team after team after team plant reproducing churches so that this world could be changed—transformed—by the Good News of Jesus Christ. Father, thank You for the privilege that we have to be involved in Your work in this way. We look forward to all that You're going to do as You use us in this area. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Jeff: Worship is amazing. Worship is truly one of the greatest sources of joy in my life, and I think it only makes sense, because really, isn't worship as close to heaven as we can get while we're still on this earth? Redeemed men and women drawing near and touching the heart of our Father God, recognizing and understanding what He has done to give us new life and redemption. Yet, as Pastor John Piper has rightly said, "Missions exists because worship does not."

Right now, this morning, there are billions of people on this planet who have not and cannot enter into the kind of experience that we have just enjoyed—because they have not yet heard the Good News of salvation and they do not know our Jesus. That's why we're so excited about what God is calling us together to do as a body as we send people out from this church to urgently be involved in planting the church where it does not exist.

That's why we're also excited about our second major global initiative for the future, and that's national partnerships—because the world has changed and we believe that just sending western missionaries is an inadequate solution for the needs of the world today. So we want to be involved in equipping nationals around the world. We're excited about what God is going to do in large measure because of what we've already seen Him do over the last several years in India.

If you've been around here for very long, you know we've been heavily involved in launching church-planting movements around India. It is incredible what God has done. We've told you about the need. We've told you about the opportunity. But we felt like it's important to come back and just give you a glimpse of some of what God has done. By His Word and by His Spirit, He has been sweeping across that country. Take a look at this.

(Video)

Jeff: Look what God has done through us, and that's just a glimpse. I wish that I could somehow show you what God has really done all across India in place after place after place. On behalf of the thousands of people whose lives have been forever changed, I just want to say thank you to all of you who have been a part of this partnership—those of you who've cared and prayed, so many of you who have invested your resources that we might be able to train, equip, send and support men like Prem Kumar.

It is such a joy to see how God can work when we all come together to help in the harvest. That's what we've talked about these past two weekends. The challenge as we close is that you would do what Jesus said, and that is to pray—pray that God would raise up workers and pray that God would clearly lead you, whether it's praying and partnering with our existing missionaries, whether it's serving as a sender here in our local church, whether it's going on a short-cycle team on the short-term trip in March, or whether it's giving, investing your resources that we might start more national partnerships all around the world. God wants to use us together.

As we close, we want to sing just one more song. As we do, we just encourage you to surrender your heart to Him. God will lead in exactly what He has for your life. It will look different in every life, but it starts with all of us together saying yes to Him.

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