

SOBERING STATISTICS

The U.S. Population Reference Bureau in Washington D.C. said that in July 1999, the world population passed the 6 billion mark (6,000,000,000). Eleven countries on the planet now have populations exceeding 100 million. Of the population in those 11 countries, 93% live outside the U.S., not counting Japan, with the vast majority living in dire poverty. These poverty stricken people like “Lazarus, full of sores” are lying outside our door so that we are faced daily with blessings and responsibilities. What can we do so that we will not hear the same words the rich man heard, i.e. “child, remember that during your life you received your good things and likewise Lazarus bad things, but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony.” (Lk. 16:25).

I can **PRAY**. It costs me nothing to discipline my heart to remember hurting souls who need the gospel as much as we do. On the other hand, praying about the matter not only draws our Father’s attention, but also focuses my mind on the situation and makes me more aware of opportunities to help when those doors open before me.

I can **GIVE**. Not only does this writer regularly visit outside our borders, but any number of men are traveling through the year or have taken their families to live overseas for extended periods. Every trip costs thousands and support for some is hard to raise by letter and/or email. If you can’t go, will you send someone?

I can **ENCOURAGE**. Soviet bloc countries are lonely places for most Americans to live. Cards, letters, greetings from classes, and emails are some things that encourage those living overseas. Additionally, I can encourage the senders, elders, and members that consider their stewardship in these works, as well as the preachers who leave their family for months at a time to work (and it is work, not a vacation) in this way – these things are needed also.

I can **START**. In the first century the gospel went into “all creation” (Col. 1:6, 23), but it did so in stages. It started in Jerusalem with people speaking to one another in their community. It went from Jerusalem into Judea, then into Samaria. It went into Israel as a whole and then into the whole world. I can start taking the gospel to the world by taking it to the person I work with or my best friend or schoolmate. I can invite others to Bible class and worship.

The magnitude of our task is overwhelming. Will we, like Jesus, preach the gospel to the poor? God help us not to become so comfortable, wrapped in our blessings, that we fail to remember that we are less than 1% of the world and the Great Commission was intended to go into all nations, not just ours.

Carl McMurray