

On Mission 2020

Topic Focus: Mobilization

Grant Haynes - Global Frontier Missions Working To, Through, and From the Diaspora

Hi my name is Grant Haynes. I'm the Executive Director of Global Frontier Missions. I also represent a group called NextMove, which is a group of people that try to help missions agency bring diaspora missions to the forefront of their strategy. I'm really happy to be with you today to talk about diaspora missions. The word diaspora means the dispersion of people outside of their homeland. So what would make people leave their homeland? It could be genocide or war - that's the case of refugees and why they have to flee their homeland. For some people it may be famine or economic opportunity outside of their homeland so they leave as immigrants. Some people go to other places in order to study and further their education - international students. So we've got this dispersion of people all over the world for a whole lot of different reasons and we want to talk about how strategic that can be for the fulfillment of the Great Commission.

I'm really passionate about diaspora missions. I worked down in Southern Mexico in a place called Wahaca for about 14 years. There were 155 different people groups in that state. About 38 of them were unreached with the gospel. Some of the villages we worked in, it took five years to see somebody come to know Christ and get baptized. As we started looking at the villages that were reached with the gospel, we were trying to figure out how did the gospel make it to these places. And what we realized is that a lot of these places got the gospel when people left their homeland, left their villages. Heard the Gospel in Mexico City, or Baja California, or a lot of them in California, or Texas or North Carolina. They heard the good news, responded to Jesus and brought the gospel back to their own people. That actually led us 10 years ago to pack up our bags in Mexico and to come to the United States and to focus on diaspora people groups - international students, refugees, immigrants that have come to America. So my context is North America. They say about 12% of the United States is foreign-born. If you get to some cities like Los Angeles or New York, you're looking at 37%. But outside of America there's a lot of diasporas as well. You look at the European diaspora that have come in from Syria and Iraq and Afghanistan. You've got people going to Spain from North Africa. You talk about the diaspora in Africa, in Kenya. People are coming from Ethiopia and Somalia. You've got places like Sydney, Australia. We had a team, there because 42% of Sydney is foreign-born. Foreigners. People that were born outside of that country.

So we think it's really strategic to reach out to the diaspora. See them fall in love with Jesus, hear the good news of Christ, experience the Kingdom of God and watch the good news continue to

spread around the globe. I want to talk about three things. I want to talk about Missions To The Diaspora, Through The Diaspora and From The Diaspora.

So Missions To The Diaspora - that's what we're doing in Atlanta. We've got 90 unreached people groups there. How do you minister to the diaspora? We try to meet physical needs and spiritual needs. A lot of times when you talk about people from the diaspora, they have needs of learning English, they have needs of learning how to operate in the country that they're living in because they are foreigners, and out of their comfort zone. Sometimes, maybe they need job training. What we found is a lot of times they just need friendship. A lot of these guys just feel really lonely. Whether it's international students or immigrants or refugees.

So we reach out and build friendships. sometimes we just knock on doors and say, "Welcome to America. We're glad that you're here. Is there anything that we can pray for?" So we've got a missionary training school in Atlanta that equips people that want to go serve long-term overseas by working with the diaspora in Atlanta. We also try to get American churches excited about reaching out to these foreigners and these strangers that come from all around the world. So we help churches and we help individuals know how to reach out to Muslims and Hindus and Buddhists. So that would be ministry to the diaspora. And that's needed all around the world. We need people in Thailand to reach out to the Laotians or the Malay people or the Mung people. That would be missions to the diaspora and we need a lot more of that in the Great Commission world, in the missions world.

I also want to talk about missions through the diaspora, with the diaspora. There's a lot of churches for example, in America that are diaspora churches or ethnic churches - a lot of Korean churches, a lot of Hispanic churches, a lot of Vietnamese churches, Cambodian churches, Burmese churches. What would it look like instead of just seeing the diaspora people as our mission field, we started seeing them as the mission force, as well? So, majority culture churches and believers alongside ethnic churches or minority ethnic believers and indigenous people hand-in-hand could go out and do ministry together. We do a lot of that in Atlanta as well. We help ethnic churches learn how to share their testimony, how to share their faith, how to start new house churches, how to raise up leaders. So it's been really awesome to work with the diaspora, through the diaspora.

A lot of times people that are from ethnic minorities are just going to see a lot more fruit than us that have more of a cultural distance. So we had a lady that went to our missionary training school, she was Hispanic and she had a lot of favor with the Afghan ladies that were around. She wasn't Afghan. She didn't speak Arabic. But the fact that she had had the diaspora experience and had to live in America and grow children in America as a Hispanic woman. That gave her instant credibility and friendship with these Afghan ladies. So we think the people in the diaspora make great evangelism missionaries to their own people and to other people in the diaspora. So what would it look like for Hispanic churches and Korean churches that have been through the struggle of growing up as the minorities, in another culture, helping others along the way and sharing the love of Jesus? So that's what we mean by diaspora through missions and ministry through the diaspora.

And then I want to talk about missions and ministry from the diaspora. Not only do we want to see the diasporas a mission field. We don't want them just to be our project. We want to work hand-in-hand with our brothers and sisters in Christ to help them reach their own people and for them to have a heart to serve cross-culturally in their own neighborhoods, in their own context. But man, we want to see ethnic churches, the diaspora embrace their call to missions as well. The Great Commission wasn't just given to the Americans, wasn't just given to the Brits, wasn't just given to the West. We know that missions used to be from the West to the Rest. And now it's from everywhere to everywhere. We see our brothers and sisters in the global South rising up to be the next mission force. And that's what I want to see happen with the diaspora as well. I actually think that the diaspora is actually uniquely suited to take on the Great Commission. They've already learned how to live and adapt in another culture. Most of these guys speak several different languages and field-competent in several different cultural contexts. So my heart is to see the diaspora catch the vision for being the senders and the goers, and the future mission force. And we're starting to see that. We've got Burmese people in Atlanta that are starting to go to Iraq and Saudi Arabia. They're saying that they're not just on the receiving end of missions but they're the missionaries themselves and their going out and fulfilling the Great Commission and going to serve among unreached people groups.

So I'm really excited and just want to encourage the missions community that we need to be thinking about how can we do really intelligent Christ-centered, gospel-centered Kingdom ministry to the diaspora. How do we do ministry with and through the diaspora hand-in-hand with our brothers and sisters in Christ? And then, how can we also see the diaspora raise up as their own mission force these multicultural, multilingual, multi-talented, multi-gifted apostles, evangelists, shepherds, teachers? How can we send them to the nations, to the end of the earth for the glory of God?

I want to end with one little story that's kind of a case study, kind of fun. We had a Baptist Church in Atlanta and they started catching the vision for reaching out to the diaspora. They started hanging out in international communities, international apartment complexes, sharing the gospel. They came across Burmese believers of Burmese church and they found a friendship there. They said, "Hey, we have a heart for Burmese in the neighborhood and other ethnicities. What would it look like for us to work together through the diaspora, with the diaspora?" So American church and Burmese church started ministering together in this community in Atlanta. From there that partnership grew and the friendship grew to the point that this Burmese church was skyping in what's happening back into Burma, sharing the things that they've learned - about sharing the gospel, sharing their testimony, looking for people of peace, starting discovery Bible studies, starting house churches. So they were ministering back into their own country and even sending teams and laborers into the country.

Last April, there was a team that went into the country to train the Burmese there and we've seen 27 house churches planted as a result of this partnership - an American Church, a Burmese diaspora church engaging locally in Atlanta and then engaging globally back into Burma. And now these Burmese missions conferences where their young people are excited to go to unreached people groups in Afghanistan and Syria. It's a new day in missions and we're really

excited to be a part of it and just want to encourage you to think about how your church and agency might minister to the diaspora. God bless.