

Date: Tue, 10 Nov 2015 09:59:16 -0600

Hey PEPC!

It is great to be back in the saddle here in the States again! We had a truly amazing trip last week to Ethiopia, treating around 1350 patients and training almost 200 church planters. In addition, we were able to continue our work giving microloans to several widows to start new businesses and develop our child sponsorship program for the orphans in the city of Gojo. While there, we heard stories of healings and resurrections and the casting out of demons. We got to see the Bible come to life as the people of Gojo brought their sick to us on mats so they could be treated. Our team got to worship at Ethiopian churches one Sunday and experience the power of worship in another language and culture. The combined team from PEPC and SE Christian church bonded well and built friendships that will last for years to come! We cannot thank you enough for your prayer support while we were away.

The most common question I get when I return from these trips is "***Why doesn't God move as powerfully in America as He does in Africa or other parts of the world where the church is exploding in growth?***" It's a great question and one I have pondered deeply. As I have prayed and prayed over this question, the Holy Spirit gave me the following answers...

**1. Prayer.** In Ethiopia, prayer is never the last resort...it is always the FIRST resort. And when they pray, they pray with power. With passion. With an expectation that God will answer. They pray for hours, even days at a time. They dedicate whole seasons to prayer. Prayer is a huge part of their corporate worship. They pray together. They pray on their own. They pray over the sick. They pray for the lost. They pray God-sized prayers and they pray in accordance with God's will as it is revealed in the Scriptures. I literally have never heard a prayer for "safety" in Ethiopia. Never heard an Ethiopian pastor ask for prayer for personal protection. Never prayed with a church planter for personal needs. Instead, they pray boldly for the proclamation of the gospel! Boldly for the expansion of God's Kingdom! Boldly for their own faithful witness and personal courage in the face of persecution and violence! They pray boldly for the sick to be healed, the lame to walk, the blind to see. They pray boldly for God to raise the dead. Not for the spectacle of it all but so that God's name will be lifted higher than that of Allah, Kalu, or any other idol/false god that is worshipped in their villages. And God answers them. Not always in the way they expect or want. Not always according to their timetable. They will tell you God is in charge and not them. They simply trust God to answer in the way He knows is best.

**2. Humble Hearts.** The most striking thing about our Ethiopian brothers and sisters is truly how humble they are before the Lord. If the kinds of things that they see regularly happened in America, the pastor would probably write books titled, "Seven steps to Performing a Resurrection" and go on a book tour. He or she would speak at the Leadership Summit or Catalyst. They would be a special guest on TBN or maybe even get a movie deal. They would build themselves a million dollar home and talk about how blessed they are by God. But you rarely see that happen in Ethiopia with the church planters we are working with! These humble men and women understand that what they do is NOT by might nor by power but by My Spirit says the Lord! (Zech. 4:6) They tell their stories with eyes downcast. Humble before

the throne of God above. They understand the fundamental truth that it is not about them! It is ALL about God and what He's doing in the world! So they serve. They put the needs of the community above their own. They put all of their resources, even their families and their futures, in God's hands and trust Him to use them for His glory. You rarely see them get competitive or jealous of one another. Rarely see them argue or fight or get their feelings hurt. They rarely complain or blame others or play the victim. They consider it the greatest privilege of their lives to serve God and His Kingdom.

**3. Radical Obedience.** The final piece may be the most important. Simply put, they obey God's commands. They take the Great Commission seriously when it says, "Go and make disciples of all nations...teaching them to **OBEY** all that I have commanded you!" And I actually think this is where we see the greatest difference between American Christianity and Ethiopian/African Christianity. They actually believe God's Word and seek to align their lives accordingly. They rarely neglect corporate worship because they know Jesus is present with power when two or three are gathered in His name. They give sacrificially (remember most make less than \$5 a day) to the work of the Lord, trusting God when He says that the one who sows generously reaps generously. They serve one another with love and compassion, each using their gifts to build up the Body of Christ. They rarely church shop or church hop when things go bad and instead commit themselves to do the hard work of forgiveness and reconciliation. Contrast this with what we know of American Evangelical Christianity where the average person reports attending corporate worship about once a month, rarely uses their spiritual gifts if they can identify them at all, bails on their church family at the first sign of tension/frustration, and gives less than 4% of their income away. And given these realities, is it really any wonder why we don't experience God's power in our churches?

Sobering, isn't it? Convicting even. It sounds so simple and yet we all know it's not. Even for our African brothers and sisters, it's a difficult journey. They aren't perfect by any stretch but they are further down the road to the Kingdom than we are. And every time I go I feel like I learn a bit more about what the road ahead looks like. Prayer. Humble hearts. Radical obedience. It's not the latest formula for success rather it's a lifestyle we choose to live. So let me frame the original question differently. Rather than ask why God isn't moving as powerfully in America as He does in Africa...let's instead ask, "What is keeping me from committing to a life of prayer? How can I seek the Kingdom of God first in my own life rather than chasing my own needs, wants, desires? And finally, what steps of radical obedience do I need to take today? Where in my life am I purposefully, willfully ignoring the will of God? I know I'll be answering these questions as well! So glad we're in this together, PEPC! See you Sunday!

In Christ, Doug