

Leading Forward

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"Seeing at a Distance"

We have become accustomed to reading glasses and jokes about a person's arms being too short when their eyesight is described as farsightedness. But we have taken less notice of those whose eyesight functions fine up-close but are unable to clearly see those things that are far from them.

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Nearsightedness or **myopia** is the inability of the eye to focus on distant objects. The nearsighted eye has no difficulty viewing nearby objects.

While it is easy to agree that some people do become myopic, can it also be said that some churches become myopic? Remember Jesus' words from Acts 1:8 about us being His witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth. Did He mean that all the believers in all the churches collectively would be witnesses worldwide or did He mean that all believers in all the churches individually would be witnesses worldwide? I have always

believed and practiced that He meant the latter. In other words, my church and I have this responsibility as do you and your church.

If we are not careful, we lose sight of "the ends of the earth" and sometimes even lose sight of "Samaria." In other words, we become nearsighted and have difficulty seeing the opportunities and responsibilities that are geographically distant. In the church world we have designated these distant places as missions. While we see clearly the need for new churches in our community and maybe even in our county or state, we have a much more difficult time seeing beyond our local boundaries and borders.

I want to encourage every believer and every church within our association to give serious consideration to including active participation in world missions within the overall vision of the church. Several churches have already adopted goals of significant numbers of their church members participating in distant mission projects and trips on an annual basis.

Our association has adopted a partner association in Vancouver, BC, Canada. While it is part of North America and part of the Northern Hemisphere, it is still

part of our "ends of the earth." With only 3-5% of the over 3 million population being part of any evangelical church, the need is great. Our role is three-fold. First, we want to help the Capilano Southern Baptist Association (Vancouver Focus) to strengthen the existing congregations. Four of our churches are already relating to some of the churches there. Second, we want to help them start new churches. Starting new churches is one of the main strategies of both Denton and Capilano Associations. Third, we need to learn from them how to relate to a greatly diverse population in a very secularized culture. Why? Because that is who we are quickly becoming.

I would never pull you away from "the ends of the earth" where you are already serving. But if you would like to consider Vancouver, then give me a call. In 2007, I hope to see churches relating to churches, association to association, and some just going to see if God is leading in that direction. Our partnership extends through 2010. What great things can God do through us from 2007-2010 in both Denton County and in Vancouver if our vision allows us to see both up close and far away?