

## **A Different Kind of Third World**

- **By Mark Hornback**

When Third World countries are mentioned, we automatically think of Haiti, Romania, Pakistan, and many countries throughout Africa, Europe, and Asia. By definition, a Third World country is poor, developing, or lacking resources for prosperity. The phrase Third World is from the Cold War and was developed to describe countries left in the wake of the war. It has since included countries that have been devastated with natural disasters and strong dictatorship. Economically speaking a Third World country is filled with impoverished, hungry, and hopeless people.

Spiritually I would say we are facing a different kind of Third World. We live in a world where people are abandoning hope in Christ and pursuing worldly success, fame, fortune, spiritual and physical highs, and validation. In schools and higher education institutions kids and young people are being exposed to godless teaching and silenced from speaking the truth. We see protests in the streets calling for the destruction of Israel in the name of peace. We see foreign governments rising up against faith-based organizations and churches, closing down their places of worship - even going so far as to jail or execute pastors and leaders.

When the Global Mission board decides to travel to nations to meet with our pastors, missionaries, or field director, we get very little pushback when we say we will visit the Caribbean nations, Mexico, or Central America. It is expected we will visit nations that are assumed to be impoverished. However, when we said we were heading to France, people were shocked. The French are known for extravagance, wealth, and the finer things. They are known for incredible food, expensive clothing, and the best wine in the world. You wouldn't expect to see much of a need. But France is facing extinction as a different kind of Third World country - a spiritual extinction.

There was a time that France experienced a revival in their nation that increased the numbers of Christians from 1% of the population to over 35%. The Lord was moving mightily and the nation was changing. People were fleeing from drug addiction, sexual strongholds, generations of atheistic teaching, the stronghold of the legalistic Catholic Church, and running to Christ. This lasted for a few years until persecution came from the government, the Catholic Church, and non-Christian faith organizations. Within 10 years the revival silenced and Christians fled to other countries for their own safety. France became a nation with less than 1% Christians. They became a spiritual Third World.

In the years since that revival even the Catholic Churches have lost membership as the French population became disinterested in the legal and forceful practices of the Catholic Church. People became less interested in God and were drawn to all things that made them more and more spiritually impoverished.

But in the midst of it all there was a remnant burning. A group of believers, filled with the Holy Spirit, that KNEW God had a plan for the nation of France; a plan to prosper the nation with his FULL Gospel message. While they are facing a hyper-secularized and progressive nation, the remnant was holding onto the ancient hope of Jesus Christ.

In 1989, Pastor Michel Marvane and his wife moved to Dijon, France and planted a church. They trusted in the Word of the Lord and began to seek His face for their city and nation. But God had plans to use Pastor Michel to reach the world. In 1996 the Lord sent him to Madagascar where he established missionary work to reach that nation. That spread and he, along with other partners in ministry, developed the Antioch Network where he became president of the organization, based out of Dijon, France. Since then, this organization has planted multiple churches, schools, and higher education institutions in France and throughout Africa. Existing churches that were on their last leg joined the Antioch Network and have had a covering that has helped them thrive and grow.

There are 6 African nations in the network seeing God do amazing things: Central African Republic, Congo Brazzaville, Democratic Republic of Congo, Chad, Togo, Madagascar. Together there are 500 churches in the African Antioch Network. Each church has different goals and visions but one solid mission - to expand the Kingdom of God. Right now, they are actively working to plant new churches in Muslim strongholds in the nation of Togo, building a medical mission in Madagascar, and sending missionaries from France to work alongside those churches and ministries.

In the nation of France there are 23 churches in the Network. In 2010, Pastor Michel and his ministry partner Pastor Phillipe Montuire set a goal to have 50 new churches planted by 2037 and are off to a great start! Since 2010, 8 churches have been planted, 4 are currently in the beginning stages of planting, and 10 churches are seeking to join the Network.

The nation is on a slow incline in faith. For the first time in a couple of decades the percentage of active Evangelical Christians has surpassed 1% of the population, surpassing 745,000 people! While we rejoice in that number, we also know that we have a lot of work to do in the nation of France.

In March of this year the Global Missions board had the pleasure and honor of traveling to Dijon and Besancon, France to meet the leadership of Antioch Network and the pastors of Le Tabernacle, the largest evangelical church in France with 350 people representing 40 different nationalities. The board got to hear the heart of their leadership and see the fruit of their labor in the Kingdom. We attended church with them, preached in their churches, and prayed with the people there. In their churches there is a hunger and anticipation that I haven't experienced in the American church for quite some time. The only reason I can think of is because they came running desperately to the feet of Jesus and found freedom. They are hungry to be in HIS presence, feel HIS touch, and spread HIS hope. Weekly they are seeing more and more people come to church and find salvation - all because the people who are currently attending are experiencing life-changing revival in their own lives! Even though we couldn't read the words on the screen during worship, we couldn't help but get lost in worship - feeling the passion of those in the room as they worshiped the Lord. You could FEEL the fire of the Holy Spirit in the churches. They have reported testimonies of healing, deliverance, baptism in the Holy Spirit, and prayer with the evidence of the infilling of the Holy Spirit during their times of worship - all without an altar call. While we were there, a new family came and the church rejoiced in their decision to know Christ.

The reason we went... the Antioch Network has chosen to come under the covering of Open Bible Churches as ambassadors of Global Missions. They saw what God has done in Open Bible and asked us to partner with them and expand the Kingdom of God in France, Africa, and eventually across Europe! The board unanimously voted to bring the Antioch Network into the Open Bible Global Missions ministry.

France is a spiritual Third World country that needs the Open Bible organization to come alongside and offer spiritual and financial support. To plant a church in France, the start-up costs are close to \$30,000, excluding paying the pastor or staff.

Because we so fully believe in this mission, the Global Missions board chose the Antioch Network to be the focal point of our 2025 Global Harvest offering. We believe the churches in Open Bible US can help fund at least 5 churches at \$150,000, although we would love to see twice or three times that much come in. We firmly believe that the Lord wants to fully revive this nation through this remnant of believers and we want to see it aflame in revival!