

Is Covert Mission Activity Biblical?

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I want to begin this article by asking a question, "Is it every right to lie, even to do good?" Yes, you just read correctly the question! Is it every right to lie and be deceptive in the name of Jesus Christ? Do we totally disregard the sinfulness of lying in order to get the Gospel out to a lost world? These questions have been burning in my heart for a very long time. I have never seen a day when so many professing believers in our churches and denominations are going underground wearing the disguise of business people, educators, medical teams, and a plethora of other professions claiming that they are going to hundreds of closed countries just to preach the Gospel, but doing so in clandestine ways by using other secular methods to slip up on the blind side of Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims, and even communist peoples. And, while they are using these methods to try to win people to Christ, millions of church and denominational dollars are being spent to force open doors to reach a few people every year while masses of people are dying and going to hell annually in countries where Jesus has opened wide the doors for Great Commission participants. But, instead of sending a massive force of soul-winners, evangelists, and resources to these countries where people are begging for the Gospel, we are wasting God's forces and money trying to hasten the return of Christ by trying to help Him out with the project of getting the Gospel to every people group so that the end can come. Well, to risk being considered a little too conservative and literal, I believe that the Biblical passage in Matthew 24:14, will be fulfilled during the tribulation period after the Rapture of the Church. Let's look at this verse. "And this Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." So, unless I have totally misjudged the motives of scores of people, it would seem that we are trying determinedly to hasten the return of Jesus by forcing open doors which are closed.

In Matthew 10:11-15, as Jesus was sending out His disciples two by two to preach the Gospel, He said these words, "And into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, enquire who in it is worthy; and there abide till ye go thence. And when ye come into an house, salute it. And if that house be worthy, let your peace come upon it: but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you. And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of the house or city, shake the dust of your feet. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrhah in the day of judgment than for that city." The word that is used here for worthy is the Greek word, "axios" which probably comes from the root word ag'o which literally means suitable or to be open. In other words, Jesus said to His disciples that if they went into a city and preached the Gospel and people received the truth of the Gospel as suitable or they were open to it, then the disciples were to stay there. But, if the people rejected the message, the disciples were to leave and go to the outskirts of the city and shake the dust from their feet and move on to a city where the message would be gladly received. Not once did Jesus encourage the disciples to stay in the city that rejected the message and go underground and try to slip up on their blind side and get them saved. Therefore, I must ask, "What in the world are we doing letting masses of people in open countries die and go to hell while we are spending millions of dollars on mission activity which is trying to force open doors?" And, while literally millions of people could be coming to Christ if these missionaries in closed countries would be working diligently in open countries, we have multitudes of missionaries spending their time selling books, teaching English, doing a little medical work, hiding away in high rise apartment buildings, playing tennis and golf, and taking the hard earned money of thousands of brainwashed believers in American churches who have never been shown where the money is going except possibly through a percentage pie! May God help us to go after the masses that are perishing by the thousands every day. Why are we not concentrating on the fields where millions are begging for the Gospel? Why are we wasting so much money in countries trying to do medicine and education where the standard of living in those countries is even higher than the USA? This is especially true in oil producing countries. It is a wrong concept that we must help Jesus out by hastening His return by getting the Gospel to all

of these so called unreached people groups, many of which at sometime in the past had their doors open, but because they flatly rejected the Gospel, Jesus closed their doors! Why are we not taking the Gospel with a full force army to some of the countries in the former Soviet Union that are now open to the Gospel? Why does Gateway International Missions, Inc. and other mission organizations have to beg and plead with believers and churches to just give a little money to help take the message of Christ to open regions of Africa where millions of people are begging for the message of hope found only in Jesus? What about South and Central Americas where in many countries, even the Catholics are opening their arms and hearts wide to the truth of the Gospel? And, what about even the Philippines where thousands and thousands have been coming to Christ, and now churches and denominations are redirecting their funds toward a few hardened radical Muslims away from winning the masses? We would not be having the problems we are having today with radical Islam if we would have taken the Gospel to the millions of people that were once open and waiting for the truth! Yet, we see high officials in mission boards of some denominations who are living in opulent luxury while the multitudes of lost sinners are dying and going to hell! Will someone please, please cry out and say that enough is enough! We must redirect our efforts and our money at winning the masses to Jesus, yes one life at a time, but with priorities on the huge numbers of people that are begging to hear about Jesus.

And, while I am sharing my heart, let me cry out again and say, “Why are we taking mission teams to foreign fields where they can do no open work?” But instead, they take a two week vacation and prayer walk around the closed villages and cities, when they could be on the front lines winning people to Jesus with preaching, teaching, personal evangelism, Bible and literature distribution, medical, eye, and dental evangelism clinics, and working in the planting of churches for follow up. And if they did these things and came home to give passionate testimonies about the souls that were saved on their mission trips, then our home churches would catch the passion that they have. Of course, if we no longer believe that the church is a local living body with a pastor as its New Testament leader, but instead we believe that the church of this generation is a bunch of cell group blobs with a new convert leading the cell group in Bible study, there is no use in doing much evangelism. By the way, is it true that cells eventually die when they are removed from the body? I believe I have heard this somewhere, and if this is true than it is no wonder that we have so many churches dying today. And to contribute to this slow death, we have canceled our church Bible studies and worship services and in their place have promoted cell groups which never come together as a body. Therefore, if the church of this generation is not a growing group of born again believers led by a trained pastor, then we can save money and give away our seminaries on the mission fields and we can enlarge our church plant numbers by counting every little Bible study cell group meeting covertly in towns and cities where we can no longer even call the names of these towns and cities in prayer! We can impress our congregations within our denominations with large numbers of church plants, but we never tell how many of these unbiblical cell groups dissolve and go away next year just because a leader moves away or gets discouraged. And, as long as we can give the impression that we are really doing great mission work covertly in closed countries, the intrigue and mystique of this work can keep our church members and mission organizations brainwashed so that they will just keep sending their money and asking no questions! As I used to hear it said many years ago when I was a young pastor, “Just send us your money and trust us!” May God help us to get back to doing overt missions in open countries where people are begging for the Gospel. Then, when our missionaries go to the fields to serve, we can pray for them and their countries by name, send them uncoded messages to encourage them, and we can open up our financial records to complete accountability. And, if the time ever comes that God closes the doors in one country, then we can move on to another country where He has Sovereignly chosen to open. And, doesn’t it sound so ironic, that in this day when there are so many hyper-calvinist believers, that we are trying to use the free will of men to force open doors in closed countries? Dr. Adrian Rogers, who is now in heaven, once said while preaching from Romans 1:17, “If a man in the darkest jungle anywhere in the world will respond by faith to what light God has given him, if need be, God will crash a missionary’s plane in that jungle and let the missionary survive so that that lost man can get the message of Jesus Christ and be saved.” Do you get it folks? If Jesus has prepared the hearts of men for the Gospel, He will open the doors and send us through them! We won’t have to be hiding in the shadows trying to figure out a man made scheme to reach people with the Gospel. And before I conclude this provocative article, let me say that I am truly amazed today how so many people who say that they believe in the infallibility of God’s Word and that It and the Holy Spirit are the only way for a man to come to Christ are now teaching and preaching that we need to pray that God will give

dreams and visions in these closed countries so that men will be saved. Well, I don't deny that God can do anything He wants to in order to bring men to Himself, but friends, the revelation of God is complete. We don't need and neither will we receive any more Divine revelation in order to bring men to Christ. God's Word is totally sufficient to get the job done, even in closed countries. The problem is that we have a generation of so called Bible scholars who are so shallow that they need personal experience to bring proof to the hearts of men. So, now, we have conservative believers dabbling in mysterious mysticism trying to use this as a tool to bring men to Christ. We must never base what we believe upon personal experiences, but we must measure every personal experience by the inerrant Word of God. What complete heresy it is for us to go around praying for God to send dreams and visions when we have His complete revelation in our hands. And, I assure you that if we would be working as Henry Blackaby said in "Experiencing God", where God is already working and get it on it, we would not be in closed countries praying for God to send dreams and visions to open the hearts of men. But instead, we would be in the open countries sharing the precious Word of God with spiritually hungry souls so that the masses could come to Jesus one soul at a time.

In closing, let me mention that not long ago, I saw a man on television interview Dr. Franklin Graham about his work in North Korea which is a closed country. During the interview, the man asked Dr. Graham how he shared the Gospel in this closed communist country. Franklin responded by simply saying that I am totally open and upfront about why I came to North Korea. He said, "I tell officials that when I go anywhere, I always share the message of Jesus Christ openly. If they don't want me to do this, then I will not go to their country." This is the gist of what Dr. Graham said and I agree with him 1,000 percent! Last October I had this same challenge in Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania when I met with 14 government officials as I was trying to gain permission to work in their prisons. They wanted me to be politically correct and water down the message of Jesus Christ. But, I told them that if I had to compromise the message, we would not come to their country's prisons. We are not yet in those prisons, but I pray that sometime soon we will be. However, If we are never allowed in the prisons of Tanzania, I will not go there on a pretense of just trying to help them physically with humanitarian assistance without being allowed to openly share the message of Jesus Christ! Why? Because there are scores of African countries that are open to sharing Jesus and they are waiting for us to come. We don't have to be covert missionaries if we are working where God has opened the doors! May God help us to stop lying like Abraham did to protect his own hide when he told Pharaoh that Sarah was his sister instead of his wife. You see, in Africa, I often hear this story found in Genesis twelve used as an excuse to lie or steal. If the cause is good enough, it is okay to lie! I don't know about you, but lying is a lie no matter how you excuse it because of your intended goals. Therefore, I believe that covert mission activity is not only unbiblical, it is sin! And just maybe this is why our annual evangelism numbers are down. God has never blessed sin, and He never will! Does God want these closed nations to receive the Gospel? You bet He does, and just like China in the past, He opened the doors when He wanted them open! He will do it again until He comes! May we quit trying to force open the doors and just follow Him where He leads! And I believe, He will send us to the fields that are white already to harvest! Reapers are not yet needed when the crops are green and when the fields are fenced and the gates are closed!