

World Without Windows

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This phrase in Tchidjian's book, *Unfashionable*, caught my attention. We live in a world without windows. The secular world tells us this world is all there is. There is nothing beyond. There is nothing outside. There is no outside. There are no windows.

Scripture, however, paints a different picture. This world, this cosmos, is a created entity, created by Someone who is outside and above and beyond it. And Jesus has prepared a "place" for his disciples in another world that is totally beyond our ability to imagine or comprehend.

For many throughout history, life has been hard, brutish, and short. Their hope has been the future. Eternal life has been their hope, their inspiration, their joy, and their motivation to evangelize. The future life with Christ is so attractive and the alternative destiny of eternity without Christ is so horrible, that many believers have done all in their power to be sure that people everywhere have the opportunity to experience the former and avoid the latter.

In today's world, many of us have grown up in a bubble of prosperity. Life is pretty good. We're happy, content, and, as long as we have our health, complete. We have little incentive to hope for an unimaginable world with Christ. We believe in heaven but, realistically, we don't think about it very much. Our life here is pretty attractive. And being a Christian is an added bonus. If we have hopes for more, it may be for a bigger house, a nicer car, better relationships, and a few new toys. We are not driven by difficulty, frustration, discrimination, and drudgery to hope for heaven. In fact many Christians have begun to think Heaven will be a lot like now only perfect. Heaven will be our earth, only restored and renewed earth. And we should be working toward it now. That's appealing. And it doesn't stretch our imagination very much.

From our position of wealth and comfort, we can clearly see the contrast of the much different experience for many in the world. We see people who are discriminated against, who have little freedom, who have little opportunity, who suffer from pain and suffering, who are locked into systems that keep them in poverty, and who may be trafficked in slavery. We feel compassion for these people. We feel an appropriate anger over the people and systems who keep them in destitution, defeat and despair. We want to see things change. We want people to experience fairness and liberty and opportunity and health and a good life. And our mission efforts are being bent to effect these changes.

Christians living in difficult circumstances have often been desperate to see people come to the hope and joy of knowing God and anticipating being in his presence forever. Their love for people has also caused them to respond in compassion to their difficult physical circumstances

and to help relieve them when they could. Today, because of our American life experience and outlook, we tend more and more to be desperate to change the physical condition and circumstances of people so they can have a more whole, healthy, and happy life. And in the process, we hope that they may become connected with Jesus and inherit eternal life. Our emphasis is moving from a primary focus on eternal life with accompanying efforts to help people in their current circumstances to a primary focus on current circumstances with a hope that people may also connect with Jesus. It's called "both/and" ministry.

From	To
Primary: eternal life	Primary: physical life
Secondary: physical life	Secondary: eternal life

However, if we could stand outside this world and look in through the windows, it would appear much different. It would be looking through a microscope into a tiny, limited world. Life's cares and circumstances would seem relatively small compared to the stakes of eternity. From the perspective of eternity only what brings people into relationship to Christ will last.

Think with me.

- What do you think should be the primary emphasis of mission work?
- What emotions are involved in your priorities?
- How close, vital, real, alive, and important is your relationship with Christ?
- What biblical passages orient your conclusion?

