

REACHING BEYOND OUR BORDER

By Omeo Thao

“Reaching Beyond Our Border” has been a challenge and a struggle throughout our history. A good example of this is when the Samaritan woman said to Jesus, *“You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?”* (John 4:9). John made an insertion here saying, *“For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.”*

We, many times, are like the Jews and the Samaritans. We usually like to stay and associate with our own people even though we all are a part of God’s family. We may even have been told or taught to stay within our own border. We have built walls to keep others from coming to us and us from going to others. But in the story of the Samaritan woman, Jesus made it clear to us that we must reach out to others. One of the ways to conquer our unhealthy and harmful human tendency toward prejudice is to “reach beyond our border.”

In order to reach beyond our border, we must realize that it is not only a challenge or struggle, but ***it has been a serious problem in our lives.*** Recently a friend of mine sent me an e-mail titled *“One of these Days”*, which stated, *“We’ve been all the way to the moon and back, but have trouble crossing the street to meet our neighbors. We’ve conquered outer space, but not inner space.”* Since we have accomplished many big tasks, we ought to get out of our comfort zone and reach beyond our border to other believers in Christ who may be different from us.

Secondly, ***we must understand that “reaching beyond our border” is a biblical teaching.*** God first started with the first couple that they should *“fill the earth”* – not just to stay in the same place. God later spoke the same words, *“fill the earth”*, to Noah (Gen. 9:1). Jesus also commanded us to go beyond our border – *“make disciples of all nations”* (Mat. 28:19) by starting *“in Jerusalem, and in Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth”* (Acts 1:8). Jesus not only taught or commanded us, but He actually reached beyond His border to others while He was earth. He said to us, *“Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you”* (John 13:14-15). If Jesus, our Lord and Teacher, reached beyond His border, then so should we.

Third, ***we must know that “reaching beyond our border” will bring changes to others’ lives.*** We see that Jesus reached beyond His border from heaven to earth, and He changed our lives (Mat. 1:20-21). He reached beyond His Jewish border to the Samaritan woman at the well and her life was changed forever (John 4:29). Ananias reached beyond his border to Paul, and Paul’s life was changed from being a Christian persecutor to a great servant of the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 9:17-19). He understood this change well when he said that if anyone is in Christ he is a new creation (II Cor. 5:17). None of the above would have taken place without a willingness to reach beyond a border. So we must be willing to reach beyond our border so lives can be changed forever for our Lord Jesus Christ.

Lastly, *we must see that “reaching beyond our border” will bring growth into our lives.* We see that most of Jesus’ disciples were uneducated fishermen, but as they were willing to follow Jesus and reach beyond their border they grew in their faith. They became known as Jesus’ disciples or the apostles. Thomas was one of the twelve whom we know as “Thomas the doubter” because he denied the appearance of Jesus, but his life was changed when Jesus reappeared to the disciples. He confessed and said, “*My Lord and my God*” (John 20:28). John MacArthur, in his book *Twelve Ordinary Men*, said, “*And in that moment he was transformed into a great evangelist*” who took the gospel to India and his burial place can be seen to this day at “*a small hill near the airport in Chennai (Madras), India*” (pp. 191-192). Therefore, as we reach beyond our border to follow Jesus Christ and go beyond our own groups we will also grow in our spiritual life and in our service for the Lord.

I must confess that the concept of reaching beyond our border is still one of my struggles, but I also see that God has blessed the C&MA to be one of the richest denominations with a great multitude of ethnic groups. God has brought the experience of the apostle John to us when he said that he saw “*a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb*” (Rev. 7:9). We don’t have to travel to overseas to reach beyond our border. Now God has brought the people from many nations to us. He did this for a reason; so that we can receive God’s full blessings as we reach out to one another.