

Our Journey to a Missions Commitment to Iceland

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by Dave Ross

In 2010, Iceland experienced volcanic eruptions at Eyjafjallajökull that spewed dark clouds of ash into the atmosphere, which spread into Europe and resulted in 20 nations closing their airspace to commercial jet traffic. The dark ash clouds have long since dissipated, yet a more ominous darkness envelopes Iceland that tragically shows no signs of dissipating – spiritual darkness.

If asked to describe the most godless nations on our planet, few Americans would respond by naming Iceland. The nation has advanced technology and education, and a long history of “Christian” influence. The Icelandic Constitution required churches every 20 miles, and the nation even has a state sponsored church – the Icelandic Lutheran Church. Churches throughout the nation sit empty, the equivalent of architectural (albeit typically unimpressive) museums. Over time, Christianity in Iceland became disconnected from Jesus Christ and the Bible is read far less than menus at local establishments. Churches are perceived as building relics, not bodies of believers.

Biblical illiteracy is rampant. Harkening to the time of the Judges (think Judges 2:10), a generation of Icelanders has grown which does not know the Lord or the works He has done. The Icelandic Lutheran Church, under the tutelage of a socialistic Icelandic government, performs same-sex marriages and does so under the banner of the Gospel of Christ’s “kindness and love.” (For some insights, look at this article - [Gospel of Christ’s kindness trumps “religious freedom”: The Icelandic Lutheran Church to perform same-sex marriages](#), Iceland Magazine). These “churches” are divorced from biblical truth. It is God who defines love, and Jesus equates love with obedience to His commands. Endorsement of sin is the opposite of love and kindness as it points one away from Christ rather than towards Him (peruse John 14, Ephesians 2, and 1 John 3-4). The unbiblical conduct of the Icelandic Lutheran Church receives little challenge.

Recent polling showed that among younger Icelanders, less than half even consider themselves religious believers, and virtually none of those polled believe God created the Earth. (For reporting on the polls, take a look at [In this country, literally no young Christians believe that God created the Earth](#), Washington Post, and [0.0% of Icelanders 25 years or younger believe God created the world, new poll reveals](#), Iceland Magazine). If any see a parallel to the path the United States is on, you are not alone.

In the Washington Post article, a professor explained that “scientific progress had changed religious attitudes.” Given the similar disposition of the Washington Post to the spiritual condition in Iceland, it is unsurprising that the Post article simply accepts the premise that advanced knowledge of science inherently results in a reduced perceived need for Christ. Students of scripture know, however, that Biblical truth is reinforced, and not contradicted by scientific principles. Scripture can explain that which science is unable to, and fill in gaps that

science cannot. Unfortunately, Biblical truths are rarely welcomed in Iceland, a nation of rocky and weed infested hearts (ala Matthew 18) that do not embrace these truths.

Does this paint a bleak picture? Yes. Hence the decision by the elders of OBC to join with other local churches and partner with church planter Gunnar Ingi Gunnarsson, who is the preaching pastor at Loftstofan Baptist Church in Reykjavik, Iceland. In recent polling, inhabitants of Reykjavik were found as the least religious Icelanders. In their midst is Loftstofan. This church is one of only a handful of non-state churches in Iceland, and a rare church committed to teaching Biblical truths undiluted by cultural tides. OBC is committed to stand beside Loftstofan financially, prayerfully, and physically. One aspect of our commitment is to help equip the Loftstofan family to better understand and teach the Bible (take a look at Acts 8:31, Romans 10:14, and Ephesians 4:21). Our zeal is not to see a set number of additional seats occupied, or a threshold level of increase in Loftstofan's finances. Our prayer is to see God glorified, and to commit ourselves to assist Loftstofan as it strives to shine through the spiritual darkness of Iceland as a lighthouse for Jesus Christ.

The darkness pervading Iceland is great, but our God is greater. And He is the light Iceland so desperately needs.

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