

Is Radio Old Fashioned?

Audio Blog by Gregg Harris, President – FEBC

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For many decades, missionary-broadcasting organizations such as Far East Broadcasting Company, HCJB Global, and Trans World Radio have been using the medium of radio to touch millions of lives with the hope found only in Jesus Christ. And, while many people find their imaginations fired by the idea of radio waves reaching millions in remote parts of the world. One of the most common questions we hear about our work is this: isn't radio an old fashioned way to reach people? Well, as the president of one of those organizations I just mentioned, my response may surprise you. My answer is this: sometimes radio is an old fashioned medium and sometimes it's not.

Well, lest I sound like a politician, please allow me to explain. For those of us in the missionary broadcasting community, radio is like a tool you have in your toolbox. There are certain jobs it is very useful for and other jobs where you might choose another tool.

But overall, radio is an incredibly effective way to bring the gospel to people around the world. Consider if you would the following facts:

First, according to the U.S. government, the world population stands at approximately 6.8 billion people. Second, according to the International Center for Media Studies, half of the world's population have never made or received a telephone call. This means that more than 3 billion people live in such simple conditions that they don't even have regular access to a technology as basic as a telephone. And the third fact is this, according to the International Orality Network, 70 percent of the world's population are what they term "Oral Learners." In other words, almost ¾ of the world's population, or 4.8 billion people do not assimilate information by reading, but rather by hearing. This also implies that 70% of the world could not read a bible if they were given one.

Now, does this mean that those of us in the missionary broadcasting community are against the wonderful work of Christian literature and Bible distribution ministries? As the apostle Paul would say, "may it never be." Or as I would say, absolutely not! We are thrilled to see God's Word disseminated in any and every way, and there are still hundreds of millions who need that type of ministry. However, as we look around the world, we have to recognize that any serious attempt to bring the Gospel to the whole world must be through a medium that allows people to hear the Good News.

This is why in Romans 10:17 it says, "Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ." Verse 18 of Romans 7 continues: "But I ask: Did they not hear? Of course they did: Their voice has gone out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world."

In light of all of this, it would appear that radio remains a very valuable and viable tool to reach the world with the Gospel. It also fits the biblical description of God's chosen way for his creation to find faith. In a world where access to technology is still greatly limited in many areas and where literacy is not a reality for billions, it would seem that faith still comes by hearing, and that God wants his voice to go out into all the earth.

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