

Is France a Mission Field?

What comes to your mind when you mention France ? The Eiffel Tower, French cuisine, bread and croissants, Perrier water, haute couture fashion designers, flower stalls and artists along the Seine, the Louvre art museum, châteaux and cathedrals, the world's fastest passenger jet, the Concorde, or the famous Tour de France bike race? Or maybe you remember that the Statue of Liberty was a gift to America from France . Or you have an older friend or relative who fought on the shores of Normandy on D-Day. Perhaps you were indelibly impressed by the countless graves at Omaha Beach , or were touched by Victor's Hugo's poignant novel, *Les Misérables* . Yes, France represents all these things, and many more. But seldom do people think of France as a mission field. The wealth and refinement of France 's history and culture tend to obscure her desperate spiritual condition.

To understand the spiritual condition of France we must consider that France is one of the most educated and sophisticated nations in the world, yet at the same time the French people are blinded by humanistic philosophy to the truth of the Gospel.

One can say that there is a real ignorance of the Gospel. Even though the statistics are difficult to establish, there is less than 0.6 % of the population (probably more like 0.2 %) in any type of evangelical church. In some regions there may be one evangelical church for every 35,000 to 40,000 people; in other areas, one for every 80,000 to 90,000 people, that is one Christian for 4000 unchurched people. These churches are generally very small: 20 to 30 people in the Sunday worship service. Then one can wonder, how many of those who go to church are truly born again?

France is presently at its lowest ebb spiritually. The number of conversions has dropped due to fear of the cults and spiritual blindness is growing with New Age and traditional occultism; churches split easily and Christians balk at the call to a consecrated life; heresies and extravagant behavior among evangelical Christians are multiplying and the ecumenical movement, which is far from the truth of the Scriptures, is gaining more and more churches.

Even though France is a difficult mission field, it offers an extraordinary opportunity to preach the Gospel. This is a real challenge that is given to those whose hearts will be touched by this great need. In the United States there would be dozens of churches in a medium-sized city, whereas in France there would be none or almost none.

You may now ask: but what do people believe then? Most people call themselves Catholic because they were "baptized" as babies and maybe attended catechism during the youth, but few (less than 8 %) attend any religious services. They have only a vague idea of the Catholic Church's doctrine. Most would be agnostic in reality, but few are actually atheist. Their religion is only a family or cultural

tradition that has little effect on their lives. It is socially acceptable to be a "non-practicing" catholic or to belong to the liberal "reformed church", but to be part of any other church group is considered in a negative light; one is quickly labeled as being in a cult. The media and the French government encourage this attitude.

When a Christian witnesses of his faith, he is generally met with suspicion or indifference by most of the French people. In fact, France has been called the cemetery of missionaries.

Other principle obstacles to the gospel are:

Materialism: especially in a rich country where people have "everything" they need. This draws them away from any consideration of eternal things.

Catholicism: gives a bad reputation to Christianity and proclaims a false gospel.

Skepticism: widespread and undermines all confidence in Scripture and in Jesus-Christ.

Occultism: blinds souls and binds them in sin and unbelief. Spiritual oppression in France is intense. Paris is a center of occultism, each year hosting several international conventions for astrologers, seers, witches and other related practices.

Nudity, perversion, mockery of God and of anything spiritual has become the basis of publicity and comedy. A new surge of anti-Semitism has recently erupted, and general racial tension is becoming a critical social preoccupation. The seduction of ecumenism and world peace have made tolerance the virtue par excellence and rendered the uncompromising nature of the Gospel unpopular. Without really knowing why, France seems to be a field of ferocious spiritual warfare in which the glory of God is at stake. Satan seems to have employed his complete artillery and all of his seductive strategies to hold this country in spiritual ignorance and error. The obscurantism of Catholicism, the skepticism of rationalism, the despair of existentialism and the emptiness of materialism have enslaved the French people in the past and up to this day. However, the Word of God and the "fervent prayer of a righteous man" are more powerful than the devil's weapons, provided we use them with perseverance. "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." (2 Cor. 10:4,5).

In every war there are enemy strongholds, strategic points that can only be taken through costly battles at the price of many precious lives. But the outcome of wars and the future of nations are determined by the victory or loss of such battles. They are not won by people setting out to forge a brilliant career or exercise a glorious ministry. They are won by obedient soldiers losing their lives

for the cause in which they whole-heartedly believe. The call of France is for workers who are willing to lose their lives for Christ, who are armed with the attitude that Paul expressed when he said (Acts 20:24) "But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God." The call is also for faithful, committed prayer warriors who will daily intercede for the French people and for the Christian workers ministering in this unreached land. There is great spiritual potential in the French people, if they could be brought to obey the truth (Ro m. 1:5). But the price is high.
So, Yes! France is a mission field.

Where did we get our information?

We would like to say thank you to Matt and Cristina Price for the information about France that is included on our website. Matt and Cristina are missionaries to Nantes, France. We do not know them personally, but we came across their website and found the information to be exactly what we were looking for. Please visit their website: www.heart4france.com