

Chapter 12 – A Plan: Obey As You Reach Out Directly In Love

Dreamers: Awake!

It's OK to dream about all the ways you might reach out in love. World Christians make the best kind of dreamers. Their growing world vision drives them to dream of new ways to let their lives count for Christ's cause. Together they gather the big, world-sized dreams God gives to set them free in love to the ends of the earth!

There are two sides to a World Christian's dreams about reaching out. If we build our world vision on a regular basis we will easily dream about effective personal ways to reach out. But the second side is vital. We must act on our visions or eventually we will slumber off with a head full of interesting facts but not a world-sized dream to our names. Direct involvement is essential for the journey into World Christian discipleship.

If you were to boil down the popular suggestions for how World Christians can reach out in love, you would most likely end up with these six areas:

1. Reach out through prayer
2. Reach out to a Hidden People
3. Reach out nearby
4. Reach out through a missions project
5. Reach out through a Team-Extension Mission
6. Prepare for future outreach.

Most active groups of World Christians will eventually move out on all six fronts. But that may take time. Where should you begin?

In the first place, preparing for future outreach (the sixth area) runs concurrent with the other five involvements. World Christians are always preparing to do more and do it more effectively. So this area should be in our plans from the beginning.

Reach Out Through Prayer

Prayer is the one mission to the world that all Christians can share. Through prayer any of us can directly love the unreached, even to the ends of the earth. As far as God can go, prayer can go. Prayer can break through any part of the Gap and begin to close it so that lost sinners will find Christ and come home. Such a mission can be ours right now, right where we are sitting.

Prayer is action. By it we step out in advance of all other results. World Christian praying is an activity upon which all others depend. By prayer we establish a beachhead for the Kingdom among peoples where it has never been before. Prayer strikes the winning blow. All other missionary efforts simply gather up the fruits of our praying.

By prayer we do for people, especially those at the widest end of the Gap, what they cannot do for themselves. We stand in the Gap interceding that they might understand who Jesus is; while in prayer we also combat the forces of darkness pitted against their ever hearing the gospel.

The greatest impact any of us can have on Christ's global cause is to be involved in consistent prayer for the whole world and to teach other Christians how to pray this way. No wonder Paul calls it the highest priority!

In the process, however, prayer changes us too. It stretches us to love in a world-sized way. It intensifies our own longings to bless the families of earth through Christ's salvation. It makes us more willing and ready to receive all that God wants to give us to fulfil every world mission He calls us into. The scope of our praying will determine the scope of our concern and of all our other activities in the Gap.

Most praying for the world centres around the *fulfilment* of Christ's global cause, so that all things may be summed up in Him, and the *fullness* of the Body worldwide, so that we can effectively carry out our mission to the ends of the earth. Attempt to build your World Christian prayer life around these two major concerns. The Lord's Prayer, interestingly, divides this way.

One step to insure consistent outreach in prayer where you live is to establish a weekly World Christian Prayer Meeting. It might follow this pattern, with different people responsible for different parts:

- Discuss what you want to pray about (15 minutes)
- Praise and prayer for the world in general (10 minutes)
- Praise and prayer for one area of the world (5 minutes)
- Praise and prayer for one missionary enterprise or person (5 minutes)
- Prayer for one unreached people-group (5 minutes)
- Specific personal praise and prayer needs, expressed in the light of Christ's global cause (15 minutes)

Along similar lines there is currently a strong prayer mobilization effort, spearheaded by the National Prayer Committee (NPC) in consultation with leaders in church, student, and mission organizations to assist the formation of "Concerts of Prayer" in 250 major cities in the U.S. These monthly gatherings have a two-fold stress for united prayer: spiritual awakening and world evangelization. You may want to contact the NPC for information on a Concert of Prayer near you.

Reach Out to a Hidden People

As we learned earlier, "Hidden People" describes the two and a half billion among whom there is no vital witnessing community of Christians, and with whom there are little or no evangelizing efforts from the outside by any existing churches or missionary societies.

Teams of World Christians *can* make a difference, at least for the specific group to which God leads them. If only 5 percent of the churches in America (to say nothing of the churches around the globe) were to adopt and reach out to just one Hidden People per church, making themselves fully available to the Lord, then each people-group would have one community of Christians specifically concerned with planting the Church among them for the very first time. Your team could become the vanguard of such an outreach for your church or chapter, helping them discover the same mission with you.

Here's how it could work. For a period of time (one to three years?) adopt one of the thousands of Hidden People groups as your team's ongoing concern. Make the group you adopt as specific as possible, so that your efforts on their behalf will be as manageable as possible.

Stand in the Gap for your group—that's what it means to adopt them. Consider them "adopted" the way you would care for a Korean orphan through a child-sponsorship program, who would probably be otherwise abandoned and forgotten. As you do, follow this:

Hidden People Adoption Procedure

- Select one of the 16,700 groups (after some preliminary investigation) for whom your ultimate objective will be to plant the Church among them.
- Research and learn all you can about them, and about what is presently being done to reach them, and what it will yet take to plant a vital, evangelizing congregation.
- Pray regularly for them and for God to use your team, group, and church to help reach them.
- Inform others of your adopted group—who they are and how they can be reached. Ask God to raise up interest from others outside your team so that from this expanding base He can actually draw forth some who eventually go.
- Write to existing mission societies, both North American and Third World, which are reaching out near where your adopted Hidden People reside. Ask them what your team can do to help begin this new missions thrust. Offer yourselves to help in any way the society might recommend.
- Then, get ready to back up whatever God begins. God will take you seriously! Praise Him as you see Him at work.

How can you locate a Hidden People to adopt? Among the excellent resources: The Missions Advanced Research and Communications Center of World Vision International with hundreds of these groups on file. The U.S. Center for World Mission, with its research institutes on the Hidden People among Chinese, Hindus, Moslems, and Animists. The books *Unreached Peoples* (updated yearly) edited by Ed Dayton and Peter Wagner, published by David C. Cook Publishers and available through World Vision. Or, write to IVCF for its handbook, *How to Adopt a Hidden People*.

Reach Out Nearby

Some of the unreached who are culturally, socially and linguistically far from you may actually live *physically* near. They may be American, but still live at a wide end of the Gap. Any barriers that dull the gospel's impact on people around you must be penetrated by Christians with a missionary-style concern and strategy—by World Christians.

One thing does distinguish the local evangelism of a World Christian: his eyes will be on those who are most often missed or neglected in the evangelistic programs of other (usually white, middle-class) evangelicals. A World Christian actively looks for unpenetrated barriers and does something, despite all the difficulties, to cross those barriers in love.

For example, many in the U.S. are cut off from Christian outreach because of language barriers. Either they can't read or else English is not their native tongue. Unfortunately, most evangelism here is printed and spoken in English! Aware of this, some World Christians are taking college courses on teaching English as a second language. Others are enrolling in Laubach literacy workshops (usually four days) to gain skills for helping people with language problems.

With such skills they can provide a service that builds bridges of friendship. And they can open to those so often missed by normal evangelism new avenues of exposure to God's message of love. Urban teenagers with a fourth-grade reading level or international students with little prior exposure to English or newly resettled refugees from southeast Asia—all would qualify for such an important ministry.

For information on the Laubach program contact your local literacy council or Laubach Literacy International, Box 131, Syracuse, New York 13210.

Opportunities to Reach Out Nearby

Reach out on campus. In some sense the American university contains the world in microcosm. Significant human barriers keep many students from clearly understanding or intelligently responding to Christ. In many cases, no Christians anywhere are actively reaching them because of these barriers. Unless someone, somewhere, gives them high priority they will study and graduate, tragically underexposed to the gospel.

Some of these groups and subcultures include minority ethnic groups (Chinese-American, Black-American and others); the lonely, depressed or disillusioned; the handicapped and chronically ill; those with alternative life-styles like drugs or homosexuality; and international students (see below). We must learn to fit our campus witness to each kind of person or group if we are to communicate God's love to them. The very same principles that missionaries follow in cross-cultural evangelism will be valuable in campus outreach. World evangelism insights can unlock local evangelism barriers.

Reach out in your neighbourhood. Outside the university world live many types of unreached peoples who need our concerned witness. The 120 ethnic groupings in America provide many examples. So do the struggling families locked away in our often dehumanizing ghetto jungles. To these could be added the forgotten in our prisons, the isolated worlds of the deaf and blind, and the refugees from southeast Asia, Cuba, Mexico, El Salvador, and Russia arriving monthly. Did you know, for example, that in 1983 we caught and sent back one million illegal aliens from Mexico alone? But hundreds of thousands made it. Who will care for them?

Eventually, most outreach to the neighbourhoods nearby will require a strategy for urban evangelism. To Roger Greenway, missionary to urban centres in Latin America, there could be no more important challenge for any of us:

As the cities go, our world goes, intellectually, politically, economically, morally, religiously, and ecclesiastically. For this reason, cities must be regarded as the modern frontiers of Christian missions and they must be given high priority in terms of strategy and the assignment of resources. If we fail to win the cities, we shall have failed indeed.¹

One resource to help you in urban ministry is World Impact, Inc. A resource for ministry to refugees is the World Relief Commission of the National Association of Evangelicals. A disciplining work begun by former White House advisor Chuck Colson can help you reach out to prison inmates: Prison Fellowship, Box 40562, Washington, D.C. 20016.

Reach out to international visitors. One way to fulfil Christ's global cause with results that reach around the earth awaits those who enter into friendship evangelism with international visitors, of which there are five million total. Almost three hundred thousand are foreign students. Many will occupy top positions of government and industry in their homelands, making major decisions that will affect both world affairs and missionary activity within their country.

International Students, Inc., reminds us:

Never in the history of the Christian church has a generation of Christians had a greater opportunity to reach the nations of the world than we in America have today. Can we consistently claim that we are concerned about world evangelism when we are largely ignoring the transplanted foreign mission field which God has brought to us?

Often the International represents a people-group for whom the Gap is still very wide or where missionaries are presently not allowed to enter. To love that International for Christ's sake is to also

¹ Roger Greenway, *Guidelines for Urban Church Planning* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1976), p. 6.

love the families and villages to which he will return. Since the friendship could last a lifetime, you can continue to span the Gap for your new friend, long after he or she returns home, through letters and even by personal visits.

For more information on principles and resources in this ministry write to the Association of Christian Ministries to Internationals, 233 Langdon, Madison, WI 53703, or contact International Students, Inc. for a list of their staff and training materials.

When those who know us best observe how willing we are to love people quite different from us and more difficult to approach, our friends may take a second look at the message they have treated so lightly.

Reach out to the nations through evangelism and discipleship among your own kind of people. Every time we share Christ with those most like ourselves, who may very well be familiar with the gospel, we again open the opportunity for God's Spirit to call out more labourers for the harvest at the ends of the earth. When people come to Christ within a climate of concern for Christ's global cause, they will be more willing to move out immediately as World Christians.

Furthermore, when those who know us best observe how willing we are to love people quite different from us and more difficult to approach, our friends may take a second look at the message they have treated so lightly. World evangelism can unlock new understandings of the gospel locally.

The same perspective must be present in our *discipling* of a new Christian. Help that person to see the end of all you're teaching him, which is to stand more effectively in the Gap, especially at its widest part. Right now teach him how to study Scriptures and pray with a world dimension. Right now begin to sensitize her to the Hidden People around her and those in other nations.

As you teach them how to discover God's will for their lives, disciple them into a vision of their own world-sized part in Christ and help them to weigh all other decisions in that light. By doing such things, you will provide God's Spirit receptive hearts to hear His call to stand in the Gap. You will be reaching out in love to the unreached *through* those you win to Christ and disciple into World Christians.

Reach Out Through a Project for Missions

There is no end to opportunities to financially support specific missions projects. Some projects might originate with a particular missions organization. For example, Africa Inland Mission might need a Land Rover for a ministry in Kenya. Other projects may result from the individual efforts of Christians who take the initiative. For example, a church may decide to send relief supplies to a disaster area in India and contact a sister church in Andhra Pradesh to distribute the goods.

Whatever your project, ask some tough-minded questions:

- Will the organization use your funds *responsibly* and efficiently?
- Will your funds be used in an effective way?
- What is the real (total) cost of reaching these people, beyond the cost of this one project?
- How will you and your team raise the funds you give to this project?
- What are the long-term financial commitments this project may require of you?

Samples of Possible Projects

1. Help fund the missionary work of a Third-World church organization or missionary society (although some want to avoid outside funds). Write directly to those listed in World Vision

International's *World Christianity Profiles* or in their book *Asian Missionary Societies*. Also, contact Christian Nationals Evangelism Commission.

2. Get involved in hunger relief programs, especially those that combine Christ's saving love for the body and the soul. Among those that do this: Bread for the World, Food for the Hungry, World Relief Commission of the National Association of Evangelicals, World Concern, Inc., MAP International, and World Vision, International.
3. Work with a local church to fund the resettlement of a refugee family in your city. These programs usually last a full year demanding a large financial commitment from an entire congregation. But every dollar helps. And, with the program come opportunities to help the families on many other levels.
4. Support a homeless or destitute child in another part of the world through an evangelical child-sponsorship program such as those of World Vision or Compassion, Inc., and provide them food, clothing, shelter, education. You can also exchange letters and send gifts for special occasions.
5. Help support Christians living under oppression or deprivation, and thus strengthen their witness where they live. One example of this would be support of Ugandan Christians through African Enterprise, 200 North Lake Avenue, Pasadena, CA 91101.

Reach Out Through a Team-Extension Mission

A team of World Christians can relocate their witness by sending out one or more of their members across geographical, cultural, and national barriers. By such a mission your team will become more accountable for the real needs of people, as well as find opportunities to get meaningfully involved at the heart of missionary outreach.

Normally the whole team won't be able to "go over there" together, although this has happened before and is always a possibility. But in another sense, whenever some of your members go out the whole team goes with them. You share together in your faith, dreams, plans, preparations, sacrifices and prayers. For a time your team becomes a "*here-there community*." Although you are still one team, certain members are "there" while the base of sending members are "here." In some ways a Team-Extension Mission concept parallels the dynamics of a family. Even when the children leave home they are still a vital part of the family unit and an extension of what that family is all about.

Team-Extension Mission differs in some significant ways from the missionary-sending process of most local churches:

- The whole group is equally called into a particular mission, not just those who physically go as "missionaries."
- Much of what the "sent ones" are able to give in another culture comes directly out of the shared life and love that the team has found together in Christ.
- The "senders" have a vested interest in the entire mission that goes far beyond financial support. Sending holds equal importance to going, and requires equal amounts of commitment, faithfulness, and personal sacrifice.

How Might a Team-Extension Mission Develop?

It may start when one of your team relocates in some other part of the Gap through a Junior Year Abroad study program, a summer job or temporary employment overseas; a short-term missionary experience; a long-term missionary assignment; the purchase of a house within an ethnic or urban centre in the U.S. Or you could invite a new member onto your team, such as a career

missionary home on furlough or a Christian international visitor. In both cases the mission work or country to which they return as Christ's witness can become the concern of the whole team.

To move out on any of these possibilities, consider some of the resources:

- *You Can So Get There from Here*, a workbook and catalogue of many Christian and secular organizations to help you get among the unreached. Available through World Vision International.
- Arthur Fromer's *Whole World Handbook* on summer employment overseas, published by Simon and Schuster.
- *The Overseas List: Opportunities for Living and Working in Developing Countries*, by Beckmann and Donnelly. Augsburg Publishers, 1979.
- *Overseas Counselling Service*, a computer service on longer-term secular employment overseas, 1605 Elizabeth St., Pasadena, CA 91104.
- Inter-Cristo Inter-Match, with thirty thousand full-time Christian job openings, thirteen thousand of them in other countries. Call toll-free 1-800-426-0507.
- InterVarsity's short-term missionary opportunities such as Overseas Training Camp and Student Training in Missions. Also Campus Crusade for Christ's Agape Movement and International Summer Projects.
- The short-term training and sending ministries of Operation Mobilization, Box 148, Midland Park, NJ 07432; and Youth with a Mission (YWAM), P.O. Box 4600, Tyler, TX 75712.

Prepare for Future Outreach as an Act of Love

Right now we should be preparing ourselves for a lifetime in the Gap. Such preparation should be going on during all our other attempts to reach out. Preparation for the future is as much an act of love now as anything else we do. Here are some examples.

All we do now to *grow as disciples* can prepare us to count more significantly as parts of a sending/going team in the coming decades of missionary outreach. Fortunately the evangelical Church in America is abundantly blessed with opportunities for such preparation through local churches, campus movements, literature, large numbers of training events. The question is not, Should we take advantage of these? Rather, it is, Can we justify all our group and church activities by their influence on our growth and preparation as Christ's disciples for future involvement in the cause? For example, if you are in a Sunday school class or Bible study, ask yourself: "How do our weekly training programs help me catch, keep, or obey a world vision? How could I modify my approach to the training so that it helps me grow as a World Christian and prepares me for future outreach in wider parts of the Gap?"

Life-style is also involved in preparing for the future. We must learn how to simplify our patterns of consumption and spending so that we release more and more of our material resources into the cause. At the same time this will strengthen the credibility of our love before a watching world. God is calling us to begin to love Him and the nations enough to put people above possessions. We need a lifestyle conducive to His worldwide intentions. This will prepare us for significant involvement in the Gap for years to come.

To improve your outreach in the future you might consider how you answer these lifestyle questions right now:

- What most determines my sense of "needs?" TV? Career? Status? Peers? Or Christ's global cause and the needs of unreached people?

- Is my life-style shaped by a desire for more—more possessions, more happiness, more power? Or is it shaped by a desire for increased personal freedom and availability of resources in order to serve the world’s unreached?
- Out of my 168 hours a week, can I justify the overall allotment of my time in light of Christ’s global cause? What specific time commitments need to be cut back in order to prepare me for increased future outreach? Are there places my investments of time should be re-channelled right now?

One group developing a life-style for the future is the Order for World Evangelization, 1605 E. Elizabeth St., Pasadena, CA 91104. They offer a course that helps you build your world vision while guiding your efforts to scale down spending patterns. Another group, the Bethany Fellowship, is a missionary community of families and students-in-training. They have supported missionaries from their own midst by their simplified life-style, community sharing, and by community-run industries since 1947. Over the years they have been directly responsible for reaching thousands of unreached people around the globe. To learn about their story and how it can help you, write them at 6820 Auto Club Road, Minneapolis, MN 55438.

Finally, prepare for future outreach as you *explore the possibility of a longer-term cross-cultural involvement for yourself.*

Ruth Siemens of the Overseas Counselling Service has discovered there’s not a career or a college major that can’t, with some adjustments, be used in another culture. And, as already noted, thousands of openings for career missionary work wait to be filled around the world right now, with new openings every day. If you are serious about loving the “ends of the earth” you must love them enough to investigate whether you should live and minister among them. How do you do this?

Remain an active member of a team of World Christians. Depend on people like them, who are closest to you and share your vision, to give you counsel and to stand with you in your praying and searching. Continue to survey the world’s needs and to work in the Gap with an eye to how you might fit in by serving the cause in another culture.

Of course, at some point you should test-drive your present cross-cultural skills through a short-term experience, either nearby or in another country. Twenty-five percent of all short-term missionaries actually become career missionaries. View this experience both for what you can give through it and for what it can teach you about God's future intention for your life.



Update Note: To explore how my thinking has expanded the past thirty years – in terms of how I see Christ, His global cause, the hope He sets before the nations, what it means to be a World Christian in today’s world, how to mobilize a renewed missions movement – be sure to look at my most recent book (by visiting www.ProclaimHope.com): **CHRIST IS ALL! A Joyful Manifesto On The Supremacy of God’s Son** (New Providence Publishers).