

Chapter 13 – A Plan: Obey As You Give Your Vision to Other Christians

External barriers aren't the only ones hindering the fulfillment of the Great Commission. Barriers within the Church may be just as critical. Along with cultural, linguistic, and political barriers, we face internal barriers of provincialism and self-centeredness that afflict so many. When *any* Christian's perspective and life-directions revolve around pea-sized concerns, less will happen for Christ's global cause than might have otherwise. Christians must be alerted to the thousands of mission opportunities awaiting, their personal involvement right now. Only then can we hope to close the Gap in our generation.

Your team can awaken others who are sleeping through the greatest missionary advance of all times and help get the whole Body of Christ behind His cause. As you pass along discoveries from your own journey into World Christian discipleship, you can close the gap of unbelief and increase the total force involved in God's worldwide harvest.

A Model; A Catalyst; A Resource

Think of your team as a model of what every Christian and every small group should desire to be. You are not a specialized "missions fringe" within your group or church. Avoid this image at all costs. Instead, help others recognize you as a vanguard, setting an exciting pace in Christian living that everyone should want to follow.

**The more a group becomes pro-missions,
the more it needs "mission pros"!**

Once you are providing a good model you will have the right to take a more direct role in motivating fellow Christians to get into the mainstream of the cause. As catalysts, you create an environment in which others can also catch a world vision as you make it inescapable and desirable for them.

In this second role your team resembles a time-release capsule. Slowly you release into the bloodstream of your group or church facts and challenges concerning world missions. Along with the information, you also seek to persuade them to act in practical ways, to get a "feel" of what a World Christian is all about.

The more a group becomes pro-missions, the more it needs "mission pros"! So in time, your team assumes a third role: resource. You make the World Christian experience workable and manageable for others.

A good resource needs to stay a few steps ahead of the pack. Your faithfulness to build your vision and to reach out in love will naturally equip you to serve in this capacity. As a resource your team should help others see the ways God is already touching the ends of the earth through them, so they can move out from there. Then help them develop new directions and plans for even further impact in the Gap. Train them to obey the vision through building it, reaching out, and giving it to others.

Specific Ways to Be a Catalyst

The question remains: How can you be a catalyst? How can you alert fellow Christians to the Gap and to Christ's cause, and help them catch and keep the same vision that has changed your life?

1. Sponsor a World Christian Focus

A World Christian Focus is a "spot" (perhaps ten minutes long) included in every large group meeting. In my own church we do this on an average of twenty minutes a Sunday. During this spot, members are informed, stimulated, challenged, or trained on issues relating to the World Christian theme. The Focus keeps the world "out there" alive and real when people are buried under office deadlines and Visa bills, or personal struggles, or plain middle-class provincialism. A regular, creative, consciousness-raising approach like this will provide facts and attitudes by which God can lead them into deeper involvement in the Gap.

Consider the following suggestions for a Focus and then create new ideas of your own:

- a. *Present a series on a particular unreached culture-group*, focusing one week on the country where they reside, the culture group itself the next, a typical family the third. Follow this on the fourth week with information on present opportunities for reaching them, the fifth week with information on outreach ministries available to your group or church, and the sixth week with a time of prayer for their evangelization.
- b. *Maintain one missionary's visibility* before the group or church by presenting their prayer letter every time it comes. Ask the missionary to add some details for your group beyond what they might relate in a general letter. Prepare a fact sheet with separate columns on the missionary family, the culture group they are serving, the strategy they are now attempting, and their future plans. Then in each column list previous prayer requests, how they were answered, and the new requests for next month.
- c. *Prepare discussion sheets* with some of the questions most often raised about missions or on some of the misconceptions people hold about missions. Introduce these issues through creative skits or with a panel; then open for discussion.
- d. *Have an international student share* about his own culture group, his home life, and his needs as a visitor to the U.S. If possible, have him return the next week to share about his religion or philosophy of life and what it means to him.
- e. *Add some new missions-related books* to your group or church library. During the Focus, review one of the newest selections, urging members to borrow and read it. Make your book review creative, using pictures or skits or provocative statements.

2. Infiltrate the Prayer Life of Your Bible Study Group or Church

This can happen either in large-group settings or in regularly scheduled prayer meetings. Your suggestions to pray for an unfamiliar part of the world may surprise some at first. Others will find world-sized praying awkward. But as you lead the way with information and personal example, you will change attitudes toward praying for the world beyond your group and may even change their attitudes toward personally reaching that world. Prayer with a world dimension could happen during family devotions, in a table grace, or at the end of a one-to-one discipling session with a new Christian.

3. Sponsor Special World-related Events

It might be a World Awareness Breakfast every other Saturday morning. Or you might teach a Sunday school elective on the World Christian theme using a book like *In The Gap* as a guide. You could sponsor a weekend seminar or retreat, using one of Gospel Light's World Christian Video Training packages. You might set up regular prayer cells for specific parts of the world. Try taking some friends along with you for an urban experience, visiting people in a specific cultural enclave. You might sponsor an International Dinner once a month where you gather friends from your group and church to eat with you and some of your international student friends, letting the Internationals cook the meal while you provide the supplies.

4. Invite Missionaries on Board

Make missionaries available to church meetings, to lead small-group Bible studies, to visit with families over dinner, or to give counsel in a one-to-one setting. Have them relate to your friends their own insights into spiritual growth and victory learned in active missionary involvement. Have them share as well about issues that pertain to world missions in general and to their field of work specifically. Be sure your team takes active responsibility to set up the schedule and appointments before your missionary guest arrives.

5. Work Directly with Existing Small Group Structures

Prepare inductive Bible studies on key world mission passages that the small groups can use during a special month of emphasis. Write for InterVarsity's *How To Create World Christian Bible Studies*. Or give a taste of involvement in world missions by having each small group suggest one kind of missions project for six months. If someone from your church or group is going into a cross-cultural ministry, ask a small group to take interest in that person through prayer and encouragement.

6. Operate a World Christian Book Table

Once a month set up a table where your group or Sunday school class meets. Make it attractive. Creatively spotlight some of the best books during announcements.

7. Coordinate with Other Teams of World Christians

As you discover other groups involved in the same issues you are, trade ideas around or actually share with each other's group or church. This will help other Christians learn there are many concerned with being World Christians, and it will provide you new approaches to giving the vision. Send a team from one group to lead the weekly large-group meeting in a nearby church, for example.

See how easy it can be to say at the end of each day, "I know *this* day my life has counted strategically for Christ's global cause, especially for those currently beyond the reach of the gospel"? Where would you like to begin?



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).