BECOME A WORLD CHRISTIAN AND STAND IN THE GAP

FOREWORD BY LEIGHTON FORD

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To Robyne
My strong companion,
who walks with me
as one . . . in the Gap
Romans 15:6.
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Foreword

I knew a young man who was a “world Christian.” Though he did not plan to be a missionary, international studies were a priority for him. He was missions chairman for his InterVarsity chapter. A summer in France gave him cross-cultural evangelism exposure. Then when he was barely 21, he died. He was our son, Sandy.

Since then I have told every committed Christian young person I have met, “Sandy has finished his race. Please run yours for Christ—all the way!”

It heartens me to endorse this edition of David Bryant’s In the Gap—knowing that it will be used to summon young—and old—to invest their lives in Christ’s global cause.

I might summarize David’s fine book in three sentences.

**We are called to a greater view of Christ.** Our Redeemer is no tribal deity. He is the Lord of the nations! In the beginning through Him God created the heavens and the earth. In the end God will bring all things together in Christ. And the Great Creator and Consummator is the Sovereign Son who sends us to proclaim His good news to all peoples.

**We are called to a bigger vision of the world.** The old Mercator projection maps of the world are now outmoded. Drawn from a Western viewpoint they showed Scandinavia larger than India (though India is three times larger) and Alaska as three times larger than Mexico (even though Mexico is larger)! The new Peters Map shows the world in truer proportion. Our mental maps of the world may show our neighbourhood or nation as bigger, more important than the rest of humankind. Not so for those who know that “God so loved the world.” The billions yet unreached must be a bigger priority.

**We are called to stand “in the gap” as ambassadors** from a holy/loving God to a needy/lost world. With clear biblical teaching, a burning heart and practical advice, David Bryant helps us to know how to do that.

I commend In the Gap with the prayer that those who read may see more clearly the greatness of Christ, the bigness of the world and the urgency of their role.

Leighton Ford
Evangelist
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Introduction: From One Egg to Another

This Book Can Help Us Hatch!

It may be hard for an egg to turn into a bird: it would be a jolly sight harder for it to learn to fly while remaining an egg. We are like eggs at present. And you can not go on indefinitely being just an ordinary, decent egg. You must be hatched or go bad.

C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (p. 169)

Lewis is right. Hatch we must! The question is how? One answer is given in this book: get out of our shells and move forward with God’s Son into the “gap.” In a sense, world Christians are eggs who have hatched like that. I think Lewis would be satisfied.

To say that *In the Gap* hatches eggs is not subtle hype, because its impact is related not to its “literary genius” but to its focus. *In the Gap* takes basic biblical principles and gives them a contemporary context. Then it helps us lay foundations, both individual and corporate, that insures exciting experiences with Christ in His global cause.

Who wouldn’t like to end each day, putting our heads on our pillows confidently, saying: “I know this day my life has counted strategically for Christ’s global cause, especially for those currently beyond the reach of the gospel.” *Wouldn’t you?* That’s really getting hatched, isn’t it? Well, the bottom line impact of principles found in this book has potential for doing just that.

“Don’t I know you from somewhere?” interrupted an unfamiliar voice in the United Airline’s lounge. I stared back at a willowy-framed, blond-haired youth. “I remember now,” he continued. “You’re David Bryant, right?” (Believe me, I never get asked that in airport terminals.)

“How do you know me?” I responded in surprise, feeling rather uncomfortable with my newfound popularity.

John introduced me to his parents, standing at each elbow, and then preceded: “I recognized your picture from the back of *In the Gap*. I read it four years ago, and as a direct result I have driven up from Indiana to Chicago today so that I could catch a plane to Peru. I’m leaving in the next hour to begin my first four years in mission work. And here you are! This is no coincidence.”

I was sure it wasn’t, too. Standing there I felt warm all over. Here was another hatched egg, just like me.

And yet, he was “going” and I was “staying.” How could the author of the book that set him toward the plane justly return to a home in Madison, Wisconsin (not usually considered a mission field, in the technical sense)?

Simple. The issue is hatching eggs, not recruiting missionaries. Hatched eggs aren’t measured by whether they “go” or “stay,” but whether they live for Christ’s Kingdom in such a way that they end each day saying: “I know this day my life has counted strategically for Christ’s global cause, especially for those currently beyond the reach of the gospel.” They are freed to stand in the gap. They are growing as world Christians.

That’s what life had been for twenty-six-year-old John over the previous four years. That’s what finally got him to the plane.
A Life-style Priority

World Christians are day-to-day disciples for whom Christ and His global cause have become the integrating, overriding priority for all that He is to them, for them, over them, before them, in them, and through them. Like disciples should, they have actively investigated all that their Master’s Great Commission means, and then built a way of life that prepares them for action in it. Some may go, some may send. But all of them count strategically for the cause. And in doing so they have entered a freedom and dimension of life they wouldn’t trade for anything they experienced before.

It’s the life-style Paul speaks of in 1 Corinthians 10:31-11:1: “So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God—even as I try to please everybody in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved. Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ” (NIV).

What does it mean to live for God’s glory? Certainly all of us want to do this. Paul says it means bringing the most practical aspects of our schedule—even eating and drinking—to bear on the advancement of the gospel. We become concerned that Christ’s saving work penetrate not only more deeply into the heart of believers, the Church, but in turn our neighbours and families, so very much like us socially and culturally (like the Jews were for Paul).

But, in addition, we want to walk daily in such a way that how we live constantly contributes to the penetration of the gospel among those who are very different from us (as the Greeks were for a Hebrew like Paul), especially where those differences (cultural, linguistic, social, philosophical, religious, etc.), have effectively cut them off from both God’s message and His messenger.

To live like this, is to be a world Christian. It is also to imitate the apostolic life-style of Paul (though not necessarily his vocation). And this hatches us into imitators of Christ Himself. That’s living strategically for His global cause if anything is!

A Biblical Approach

Without the Bible world evangelization is impossible. For without the Bible we have no gospel to take to the nations, no warrant to take it to them, no idea of how to set about the task, and no hope of any success. It is the Bible that gives us the mandate, the message, the model, and the power we need for world evangelization.1

Some passages aren’t as concise on this as, for example, Acts 1:8. But key themes relating to that promise are found just about anywhere you open your Bible. Scores of words like “the nations,” “the peoples,” “sojourners,” or “the ends of the earth” can turn hundreds of passages into valuable commentaries on the world mission of the Church. Highlighting passages that record God’s interest in, plans for, and actions toward the nations convinced me that nearly half of my Bible addresses these issues.

For example, did you know the Great Commission is first issued in Genesis 1:26-28? Essentially, God’s assignment to Adam and Eve to populate the earth with covenant-keepers is captured by Christ’s directive in Matthew 28:18-20. It’s repeated in many other places, such as God’s promise to bless Abraham so he might be “a blessing to all the families on earth.” The New Testament simply explains the original mandate more fully, colours and expands it, detailing it in the light of Christ’s

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finished work. Throughout the whole of Scripture this basic commission is issued to every
generation, with binding authority.

Or, take Solomon, who “excelled all the kings of earth in riches and wisdom” so that “the whole
earth sought the presence of Solomon” (1 Kings 10:23-24). He became the Old Testament’s high
water mark. The prophets borrowed from his ideal reign to paint pictures of all God would yet do
with Israel. In New Testament times one “greater than Solomon” appeared, more gloriously global in
scope. The shadows of Israel’s golden age faded before the worldwide reign of the ultimate “Son of
David.” Have you ever followed this thread through the Scriptures? Have you discovered its amazing
implications for world missions today, and for your life right now?

The New Testament believers certainly did. They applied all of Scripture to their growing vision
of the breadth of Christ’s reign and His wider mission. For them, the ancient biblical records
assumed global dynamics. Raised, ascended, and present by His Spirit with power, Christ opened up
the whole world to them. He showed them His worldwide purpose in a way Abraham or Samuel or
Amos never saw it. They awoke to tremendous possibilities through Christ for completing the grand
design. Their vision stretched beyond their own kind, Israel, to a world full of people without Christ.
They thrilled at their world-sized part in God’s mission because of all Christ would do through them.

Becoming a world Christian insures consistency with commitments Scripture has already led us
to make. Our mission strategies can be justified only as they move us toward a more thorough
biblical life-style. But when this happens, we become “hatched” people!

After all, two things last forever: the Word of God and people. Our calling is to get God’s Word
about God’s Son into people. That is precisely what the world mission of the Church is all about:
getting God’s Word about God’s Son into people of every tongue, tribe, nation. Through it God will
erect a permanent temple out of living stones—biblical disciples—excavated from thousands of
languages and culture groups among Hindus, Muslims, Chinese, Buddhists, Animists and other major
blocks of the human race where that Word has not yet penetrated.

Christ Is Supreme as Lord of the Nations

You’ll soon discover that In the Gap knits Christ’s saving work in our own lives to His mission
among the nations. He is presented as supreme in at least two dimensions: Lord of our lives through
His Word; also, Lord of our lives through His cause. Our commitment is, first of all, not to a task but
to the Task Master. It’s impossible, however, to belong to one and not the other, to love Christ and
not obey His commission.

Actually, His mission to the world is the prelude and prototype of our own. The same
redemptive drama we find in the Gospels multiplies and intensifies at a world level through the
Church, which is His body; and we are members of His Body. So, the more we know of the cause of
Christ the more we know of Him. And, conversely, the more we learn of Him the more we’ll be led
directly into a mission like His for the whole earth.

Simply put, our union with Christ makes us fit for the mission of God, and His union with us
makes us fit into the mission of God. We can’t have one without the other. In the Gap keeps Christ
the focus of our lives by magnifying His supremacy by His Word and by His cause.

Taking Missions Seriously

In one sense In the Gap is not just about “world missions”. It’s about something much larger:
Christ’s global cause. Missions is only part of that wider movement, although a very critical part.
I define “missions” as “the intentional, sacrificial penetration of major human barriers by a global Church through specially sent cross-cultural messengers of the gospel, in order to plant communities of responsible disciples of Jesus Christ among groups of people where none have existed before.” But you’ll soon discover, “missions” is just one dimension of God’s worldwide purpose which is one of four major strokes in the overall picture which I call “Christ’s global cause.”

However, In the Gap emphasizes the world missions movement over other parts of the larger picture because for one thing, missions is an aspect of the cause most often neglected or misunderstood by the Church at large. And yet missionary outreach is so pivotal to the future of the larger Cause. Of course, every world Christian will be concerned with issues like world hunger, economic exploitation, political repressions, nuclear proliferation, terrorism, and more. That’s why I place Christ’s global cause, and not just the missionary enterprise, as an overriding factor for our life in Christ. But, our missions involvement remains key. Most other needs of the world can be more effectively met once responsible communities of disciples develop within cultural and geographical reach of everyone on the face of the earth.

You see, God isn’t taking a worldwide opinion poll on who wants to become a Christian. He’s at work creating communities of sons and daughters within every cultural womb of earth to populate His Kingdom and love Him forever. World evangelization creates possibilities for God’s Kingdom to break through in places where it has not yet come. It is sowing the gospel through new congregations of believers who grow into redemptive forces. In turn, they will overthrow the status quo of the world system and transform the human condition within their own situation.

In the second century, a world Christian named Justin Martyr recorded of the Roman world: “For there is not one single race of men, whether barbarians, or Greeks, or whatever they may be called, nomads, or vagrants, or herdsmen dwelling in tents, among whom prayers and giving of thanks are not offered through the name of the Crucified Jesus” (Dialogue with Tryphonomus). Seeing this drama realized on a grander scale throughout all nations in all parts of the earth is a driving dream for world Christians today. And, the more we’re pro-missions in our dreams, the freer will be our involvement in all aspects of Christ’s global cause.

Larger Dimensions in Practical Discipleship

Every missionary extension needs behind it a missionary movement of similar vision, commitment, and sacrifice. The early Church’s apostolic bands usually surfaced wherever there were missions-minded congregations to launch them. Faithfully engaged in a global cause, local bodies teamed up to do the most strategic thing they could find to do as senders and penetrators of unreached peoples. Spiritual growth was linked to serving an expanding mission for their generation. Ultimately theirs was discipleship that put no limits on how far God would go with them or whom He would touch through them.

More than ever we need, in the words of Carl F.H. Henry, “creative disciples who know the world outside and Christ inside and who can bring them together in an authentically Biblical, intellectually compelling and spiritually powerful way.” That means discipleship without limits. That means our disciple-making programs must be adjusted so that maximum finding of lost people occurs through each disciple who emerges.

The tragedy is that few trained Christians have been discipled with vision and strategy for reaching to the ends of the earth. How many of us are able to come to the end of each day and say: “I know this day my life has counted strategically for Christ and His global cause, especially for those currently beyond the reach of the gospel”?

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Now, admittedly, the primary thrust I suggest for discipleship entails only three major concerns: learning about, telling others about, and getting involved with those currently beyond the reach of the gospel. This is not to suggest that world Christians avoid other issues within the Church or society that affect God’s purposes for the whole earth. But for someone, somewhere, discipleship must lead into primary concern for those totally cut off from God’s good news. If not you and me, who?

One of the book’s primary objectives is to help each of us develop a personal strategy that involves us in a daily discipline of (initially) only fifteen minutes a day. I often call this the “5-4-3-2-1 Plan.” It goes something like this:

**Build Your World Vision**

5 Spend five minutes some time each day in personal devotions discovering something of what Scripture teaches about Christ’s global cause.

4 Spend an additional four minutes reading current world-related literature, such as a magazine article.

**Reach Out to the World in Love**

3 Every day take three minutes to carry out a mission to the world through intercessory prayer, using what God gave you in the previous nine minutes of building your vision.

**Give Your World Vision to Others**

2 Sometime each day in personal conversation with another Christian (such as your family at evening meal, or in a Bible study group, or in a letter) share for two minutes what God has given you in the previous twelve minutes of building your vision and reaching out in prayer.

**Invite Christ to Enable You**

1 Finally, before retiring at night give to the Lord Jesus one more minute of complete quiet when He can speak to you about who you’re becoming as a World Christian, based on the other aspects of your daily discipline.

Fifteen minutes a day. Anyone can do it! Is it a significant discipleship approach? Consider this: It means you average ninety hours a year! All other things being equal, what kind of increased impact will your life have on Christ’s global cause a year from now as a result of those additional ninety hours of world Christian discipleship?

Clearly, the closing years of the twentieth century demand a new dimension for Jesus’ followers. I’ve met so many evangelicals who are over-trained but under-employed and bored. In light of the tremendous needs, and since world Christians discover exciting adventures in life that won’t quit, we must move into discipleship without limits. To return to C.S. Lewis, the world Christian lifestyle allows us to hatch and fly before we (and the world) go bad. And that’s good. That’s essential.

**The Author Is Learning to Hatch**

This book surfaced (in 1979) out of almost twenty years of my own pilgrimage as a world Christian. It represents my attempts to understand where God has brought me in this adventure. Both for me and many I’ve met heading down the same road, it’s just the beginning.

It strikes me that my Christian metamorphosis has spiralled through three major cycles. The first six years I concentrated primarily on knowing Christ and His Word. Most of it was spent in college
and seminary. The second six were my time for understanding the importance and potential of the Body of Christ, as I pastored in a church in Ohio. These past years have focused more on the work of Christ in the world. Beginning with studies at Fuller School of World Mission, I’ve gone on to serve as a missions specialist with InterVarsity Christian Fellowship. Notice, if you will, that my three cycles form what some call the Christian’s “three priorities.” But it was only as I entered the third cycle that I “hatched” enough to soar into a world-sized vision for my life, and for Christ and His Church.

My experience is probably not much different from yours. Every Christian experiences a three-part conversion: (1) a conversion out of the world to Christ; (2) a conversion out of ourselves into the Body of Christ; all tied into (3) a conversion with Christ and others back into the world. Unfortunately, my conversion with Christ back into the world—the third cycle—came long after the other two. If I had known at the beginning what I know now, how much more fruitful my life could have been. (I’ve detailed this painful but welcomed process in chapter 7.)

The point is, the process is finally coming full circle for me. I’m still neither a missionary nor the son of a missionary. I’m just a day-to-day disciple, like you, called into God’s plan for the nations, to establish Christ’s pre-eminence among all peoples. My motivation for this is the same as yours: the Lordship of Christ; the reality of God’s yearning grace for a lost humanity; the right of everyone to know of Christ and have opportunity to come to Him; a biblical vision of Christ’s redemptive glory covering the earth as the waters cover the sea and the promise of God to bless me so that I become like Abraham, a blessing to the families of earth.

The questions I’ve wrestled with in writing this book aren’t peculiarly mine. I’ve met hundreds longing with me to dig for the answers. Maybe you’re one of them. For example, have you wondered:

- What is the scope and content of God’s purpose in Christ for history and the nations?
- How extensive should be the impact of that purpose as it moves forward?
- Why is the fulfilment of His purpose in Christ so essential?
- How has it progressed so far? How did progress happen?
- Where are we in that purpose right now?
- What is left to do?
- How will it get done?
- Who will be most affected?
- Where can I fit in most strategically as I follow His Son with all my heart?
- Of all earth’s Unreached, who are the people God wants me to give my life for?
- Of all the Christians, who are the people God wants me to give my life with, as I reach out?
- What kind of person does God want me to be as I give my life for others?

_In the Gap_ shows you how I faced such issues and reoriented my life accordingly. Prayerfully, it will help meet a growing demand of other world Christians across the nation to understand what’s happening to them, where to go with it, and how to share it with others.

_A Prayer for Those Ready to Hatch_

Let me conclude this introduction “from one egg to another” with a prayer that fits the ideas and opportunities this book offers. It’s a prayer of thanksgiving, of praise, and, most of all, of desire—desire to become a world Christian, to move with Christ in love and faith, to serve His redemptive purposes in this generation—to the very ends of the earth. It’s a prayer for those who want to hatch.
For all links in the chain,  
O Lord my God,  
that brought to me the story of the gospel—  
I thank you, Father, with all my heart.

For Christ himself,  
author and finisher of our faith;  
for Christ who is himself the good news for all mankind—  
I thank you, Father, with all my heart.

For saints and martyrs, teachers and evangelists;  
for that apostolic company;  
and for Paul, “unfit to be called an apostle” whose words I read today—  
I thank you, Father, with all my heart.

And so it goes on; and always at a price.  
In toil and labour, in pain and blood,  
the good news spreads from place to place,  
generation to generation.  
For all who shared in the missionary task—  
I thank you, Father, with all my heart.

And for my chance to be myself a link in this great chain,  
a bearer of good news of Christ to other men,  
I thank you, Father, with all my heart.

And may it be a heart of love,  
of joy and praise!  
For Jesus’ sake, Amen.²

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**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).

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PART ONE

ALIVE IN THE GAP

I looked for a man among them who would build up the wall and stand before me in the gap on behalf of the land.

Ezekiel 22:30 NIV
Chapter 1 – There is a Gap, You Know

The Gap Defined

It’s the Gap between God and men; between God and all that He is and man and all that he is, in every respect. “For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 2:5). A “mediator” implies a gap between two parties that cannot or will not accept each other.

It is also the Gap between God’s original intention for humankind—to be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth with people in His image and subdue it—and Jesus the Mediator’s final restoration wherein a new people will fill and subdue the earth, with Him (see Rev. 5:9-10).

For God, the Gap is a very personal issue. First of all, He is one of the two parties involved. Secondly, He has given the required Mediator to stand in the Gap forever, to close the distance between His own plan for world redemption and the consummation of that plan. He has given His own dear Son. He has “a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in [Christ], things in heaven and things on earth” (Eph. 1:10).

But more than that, the Mediator has actually sacrificed His own life in the Gap, falling like a seed into soil in order to bring forth fruit (John 12:23-26), to bring many people home from the other side of the Gap.

With that kind of personal investment in such a costly claim, God is deeply concerned for the billions of earth’s citizens who have yet to hear that there is a Mediator, let alone believe and walk across the Gap to home. Our God is as personally committed now to reaching these billions as He was the day Christ died for them.

And that’s why the Gap is a very personal issue for Christians as well. It lies between what God is doing in your life and mine—as people united forever to the Mediator—and what God still wants to do among all the nations.

Millions of us, for example, have asked the Saviour to quench their thirst with His water of life (John 7:37). But there remains a critical breakthrough in our lives if the living river that flows into the hearts of satisfied disciples like us is to ever lead toward the glorious day when that river flows out of us fully to complete Habakkuk’s vision: “For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea” (2:14). That’s why I say we Christians are right in the middle of the Gap. We have been born again for the sake of the Gap. Someday the waters of life are to cover the whole earth through us. God is committed to reaching earth’s unreached people in a very personal way: The Spirit of God extending Christ’s Kingdom through us who are united with the King (see 1 Cor. 6:9-11, 17).

How Wide is the Gap?

If you measure it by the basic reason for the Gap—sin—you could say it’s infinitely wide. Sin and rebellion against a just and holy Creator have set us all the same distance from Him. Jesus measured it as somewhere between darkness and light, between the power of Satan and the power of God (Acts 26:14-19). You can’t get much farther apart than that!
In this sense, then, the Gap is the same width for everybody. Either you’re an old creation in Adam or a new one in Christ; either you’re dead or alive; either you’re out of the family or you’re in it.

On one side of the Gap is a bundle of sins waiting for God’s forgiveness; scars waiting for God’s healing; needs waiting for God’s riches; and potential waiting for God’s power. From the other side has come the inexhaustible, yearning grace of God available in Jesus Christ to all nations, with all the forgiveness, healing, riches, and power the human race could ever want or need.

By this measurement the Gap is as wide as sin for everyone but as crossable for all as the Son who forms the bridge is available for all. In one way, the Gap has already been closed for all because Christ has permanently stretched Himself across its chasm. “While we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son” (Rom. 5:10). “For Christ also died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God” (1 Pet. 3:18).

**Some Are Farther Away Than Others**

When you look at the Gap historically, in terms of human *experience* instead of human condition, you find the width varies greatly. Ephesians 2:17-18 notes this variance. Although the Gap is bridged in the same way for all—“through [Christ] we both have access in one Spirit to the Father”—some of us (like the Jews) may be “near” while others (like the Greeks) are “far away.” For those who have never clearly heard that the access is available (as most Greeks in Paul’s day), the Gap looms wide indeed. This is the disturbing *Gap of opportunity*.

In Acts 1:8 Jesus talked about this other measurement—the Gap of opportunity. When He commissioned His disciples to span the Gap, He promised them that the Spirit’s power would transform their lives so that they could contribute directly to peoples’ verdict about Him: “You shall be my witnesses.” And He drew a map of the Gap that outlined the various widths they would face. He spoke of “Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the ends of the earth.” In other words, the Gap would vary in at least three ways: geographically, culturally, and theologically.

The opportunity to come home would vary *geographically* for those on the other side of the Gap. Although Jerusalem and its surrounding territory, Judea, were important, the disciples would need to physically travel beyond there to Samaria in the north and eventually to the remotest areas of the Roman Empire lest these lands be forever isolated from the people of God and their witness.

Secondly, the opportunity to come home would also vary culturally for those on the other side of the Gap. Reaching those in Jerusalem and Judea would demand little in cross-cultural skills. Already Jesus had evangelized them as a Jew to Jews. Samaritans, on the other hand, had enough racial and cultural differences about them that the disciples would need to make special efforts to help them understand the message in a way that fit their own context.

When it came to the “ends of the earth”—the radically unfamiliar Gentile world—the early missionary movement faced major cultural challenges. A message given to Jews in Palestine could be transferred to Cretan, Macedonians, Asians, and Romans only as it came to these groups in relevant terms, using words and concepts that made sense to those the Jew considered “unclean and uncircumcised dogs.”

**Jesus sent the disciples forth to serve in the Gap, regardless of its geographical, cultural, or theological extremes.**
The gospel was universal. The Resurrection remained central to it, as did the Cross. But how Paul, for example, spelled out his message with peasants in Lystra or jailers in Philippi or private clubs in Athens differed noticeably from his preaching to Jewish enclaves in Antioch and Rome. Unless the message “fit” people and their felt needs as family-groups and as cultures their opportunity to genuinely respond to Christ would be very limited indeed.

For some the opportunity to come home would be “near” theologically while for others it would be “far away.” Jesus taught that “salvation is of the Jews.” His message tied directly into the Scriptures and ceremonies that marked the Covenant and its people. All that the Hebrews held so dear, revealed directly by God to His prophets, found its ultimate meaning in Christ Himself who transformed the Covenant and made it new.

The Samaritans, on the other hand, were not quite so “theologically aware.” Despite their reverence for the books of Moses and their worship of one God, they held prejudice toward many other covenant doctrines and had incorporated new ones of their own. Still the Gap wasn’t that great. At the well of Sychar with Jesus and in Philip’s preaching in Acts 8, we see a common ground of moral law and messianic expectations that allowed the good news to find spiritual affinity in the Samaritan soil.

For Gentiles, however, caught in the worship of Roman and Greek deities with little or no exposure to the Old Testament, for whom a covenant-keeping Creator was “unknown” (Acts 17:23), the gap between a biblical witness and the Gentiles’ own theological currency presented a major challenge. To give pagans and philosophers alike a just opportunity to cross this gap forced the early Church to face this complex need with clarity and relevance (as John does, for example, in writing his Gospel for a broader Greek audience).

Spanning the Gap

Yes. There is a Gap. Measured by the human condition of sin, it is the same for all of us. Measured by the divine provision of a Mediator, it could be closed for all of us. But measured by the human experience of opportunity to know that the sin problem has been bridged, and to respond with faith in the mediator, the Gap differs widely around the globe.

Yet Jesus sent the disciples forth to serve in the Gap, regardless of its geographical, cultural, or theological extremes, that they might reconcile lost sinners to God through faith in the Mediator.

Today the strategy remains the same. Over three billion people stand apart from the Mediator, blocked from an effective, loving witness by geographical or cultural or theological or other human barriers. It is for them Christ still calls and empowers Christians to stand in the Gap, especially at its widest end where there is little or no opportunity to believe and come home.

The harvesting of people for the Kingdom of God is accelerating on a scale never before witnessed in the history of the Church.

If we would try to close the widest end of the Gap by herding fifty thousand of its people into a great stadium every day, and if a team of African, Asian, Latin American, and North American evangelists were to preach with cultural and theological sensitivity to a totally different crowd every day, it still would take more than 165 years to let all those billions hear the gospel clearly just one time. In the meantime, billions more would be born. That’s a peek at how immense and complex the Gap is at its widest end.

It is in this Gap that the Church of Jesus Christ worldwide must stand with Him.
We must not run from it, especially from its widest end. Instead, we must stand in it to close it until all have had a chance to see, hear, believe, and come home. Especially for the 2.5 billion Hindus, Muslims, Chinese, Buddhists and Tribals—those farthest away in every respect from most witnessing Christians—for their sakes, we must span the widest end of the Gap.

**Sunrise over the Gap**

Fortunately this Gap need not remain the “valley of the shadow of death” that it is. Already shadows are dissipating at the dawn of what some mission strategists call the “sunrise of missions.”

Sunrise of missions does not mean that the world itself is getting better and better or that the sin-problem that created the Gap has ceased to plague us. Rather, it says that the harvesting of people for the Kingdom of God—the opening of opportunity to believe the gospel around the world—is accelerating on a scale never before witnessed in the history of the Church; that the impact of the gospel in the Gap today looks like the sun just breaking over the horizon of God’s purpose for all nations.

If this sunrise is complemented by renewal within the Church so that together our life-perspectives, life-decisions, and life-directions reflect a world dimension in discipleship and evangelism, we may see the fulfilment of the Great Commission in our lifetime. We may see the closing of the Gap at its widest end!

This sunrise over the Gap shines out in so many ways! The number of Christians in Asia and Africa, for example, are increasing four times faster than the population at large. Over 90 percent of the world’s nations are presently accessible to some type of Christian witness coming from the outside. (All of them are if you take into account various forms of media evangelism.) At least 200 million, for example, are accessible to direct missionary outreach in southeast Asia alone.

Yes, there is a Gap. But there is also a brilliant sunrise streaming into that Gap. It is shining down on a world where approximately one billion call themselves Christians. Of these possibly 200 million (according to the U.S. Center for World Missions) are committed to Christ enough that they want to share Him with others—they want to stand in the Gap. And what if one million of these “evangelicals” (one for each five thousand to be evangelized in the next twenty years) joined the present world missionary force, to cross over major geographical, cultural and theological barriers to reach those at the Gap’s widest end? What if the 199 million other evangelicals supported them by sharing the same intense concern for people with no opportunity to hear of Christ, while maintaining a clear witness to those who live nearby? What if a new movement of world Christians was born? What could God do in our generation if we would fully, unconditionally invest our lives for Christ’s sake and for His Gospel (Mark 8)?

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Chapter 2 – Problems with Pea-Sized Christianity

We Aren’t Keeping Pace

Fortunately, what happens with Western Christians doesn’t ultimately determine what happens with God’s plan for the nations; Christ’s Church is worldwide. But unfortunately, many Christians in the West are not keeping pace with the Kingdom’s worldwide expansion. Many of us are sleeping right through the sunrise of missions.

A 1980 Gallup survey indicated that though winning the world for Christ had priority for 50 percent of U.S. evangelicals (not a totally encouraging statistic itself), the sense of personal, meaningful involvement in world missions for almost all was negligible. Less than 10 percent of evangelical clergy could point to successful missions programs in their churches.

As I’ve travelled American campuses I’ve found similar trends among the Christian groups I’ve surveyed. Again and again the leaders of these groups have confessed to me that they and their members have little world vision and world outreach involvement; view missions as only a career option for a few, or as “threatening” or “foreign” or “something after college;” hear and read little about the global Christian cause; and are in touch with very few if any whom they feel can effectively lead them.

The single greatest gap among the nations is between God’s promise to fulfil world evangelization through Christ’s disciples and the faith of those disciples to claim that promise and act on it.

The Greatest of All Gaps

The problem with our pace is not a new issue, however. It has been with us a long time. Why, after two thousand years of countless possibilities for world evangelization by an international Church, are three billion people still unevangelized, most of whom have not even heard Christ’s name? Our answer is unavoidable. The single greatest gap among the nations is between God’s promise to fulfil world evangelization through Christ’s disciples and the faith of those disciples to claim that promise and act on it. I call it the Gap of Unbelief.

How does the gap of unbelief work? For one thing, we put limits on what we think Christ can do through us. (Can He really reach the ends of the earth through people like us at a time like this?) For another, our gap of unbelief makes us hesitate to take bold risks so that redemption might come to all peoples. (If we lose our lives for Christ’s worldwide mission, will we ever see any lasting returns worth our investment?) Our gap of unbelief turns us from the many possibilities to fulfil the world missionary movement and concentrates us instead on our own self-preservation. (How can we worry about billions of unreached people when we have so many personal needs that might go unmet in the process?) Our gap of unbelief blinds us to the dreams, resources and strategy God would give us to bridge the other Gap, especially at its widest end.

If once aroused by Christ’s mighty Spirit, what could hold us back? His presence and His mission would be so compelling that we might tend to overextend ourselves and so, periodically, need to seek times to reflect and regroup. If we had any problem, it would be that! Instead, down through history and in the Church today, the constant battle has remained to get Christians to push
forward—to stop resting, to wake up, stand together and take hold of the victorious cause Christ has given us for the world. This is the gap-of-unbelief. This explains why the other Gap remains.

Why has unbelief persisted to stifle the momentum of the Christian movement again and again? Underneath disinterest in world outreach, underneath small missions budgets or limited personnel and the scandal of billions yet unreached, hides a culprit I shall call “pea-sized Christianity.”

**Boxes of Pea-Sized Christianity**

When Peter opposed Christ’s expressed mission to the cross (see Matt. 16:21-23) he was told: “Get out of my way, Satan. You are a hindrance to me. You’re approaching this mission from a human perspective, not God’s.” Peter was still in his own box of pea-sized Christianity.

Pea-sized Christianity comes in boxes of many shapes and sizes, and at least one box can fit any Christian who allows it. These boxes keep us from a discipleship and an evangelism that’s big enough to fill a world-sized Gap. You don’t find very many sunrises in a box!

For example, there is a pea-sized box called convert Christianity—life in Christ gets no bigger than making it safely inside the Kingdom. Or there’s character Christianity—life in Christ gets no bigger than pulling one’s own spiritual act together. Not far behind this follows consumption Christianity—which boxes up life in Christ into meeting one’s own personal needs, and that’s all.

When life in Christ is no bigger than the warm, secure fellowship I have each week with my good Christian buddies, I’m in the box of cloister Christianity. Or, when life in Christ is no bigger for me than getting nicely settled in a good paying job after graduation, then I’m trapped in career Christianity. Many of us are groping around the box of church Christianity—our life in Christ has grown no bigger than the Sunday School picnic, the choir’s Christmas pageant, the monthly finance committee meetings, or scouting out who’s absent from midweek prayer service.

A form of pea-sized Christianity that affects all of us to some degree is culture Christianity. In this box our life in Christ grows no bigger than a North American, white, middle-class brand of worship and witness. We relish in our tried-and-true traditions, which we erroneously equate with the eternal ways of the Kingdom itself.

In summary, when my Christian experience expands no further than my salvation or small group, or church, or future, it’s pea-sized. When I compartmentalize my walk with Christ into neat packages of prayer, Bible study, worship, fellowship, evangelism and (somewhere off to the side) missions, it’s pea-sized. When my activities and interests don’t vitally link me to the reaching of earth’s unreached people, I’ve succumbed to pea-sized Christianity.

Of course, concentrating on missions to the neglect of our personal needs and the needs of the Christians around us, can also be a pea-sized affair. I’m not arguing that we leap from one box into another. Rather, I’m suggesting that we need a new context for praying, Bible study, employing spiritual gifts and even for our thinking about missions involvement. That context is the Gap. We need its world dimension for our discipleship.

**Reasons for the Boxes**

For one thing, we so easily succumb to the current mood of our own society. Daniel Yankelovich in *New Rules* terms the mood “a search for self-fulfilment in a world turned upside down,” though now the trend includes the growing conviction that deeper caring relationships toward others are a way to personal satisfaction.

The world political situation is partly responsible for our narcissistic tendency. More and more we Americans are less in control of world events. We can’t seem to manage developments either in
the explosive Third-World nations or among our own allies. Vietnam, Watergate, and Iran have disgraced us internationally. We no longer maintain supremacy in energy production and appear weaker to many in military superiority. We feel intimidated by the badgering of the strongly nationalistic emerging nations. And we feel impotent even to deal with many of our own domestic issues.

Many U.S. Christians have given up on personally attempting anything significant in the Gap. The mood of our culture—narcissism, and unpredictability coupled with impotence—has spawned fear and unbelief in the Church. Some U.S. church spokesmen and others paralyze us even further by heaping on Americans the major blame for the plight of the so-called Third World and then demanding we pull back altogether. “The theory has it that the advanced nations yanked primitive peoples out of a state of innocent bliss, pressed them into labour and gutted their resources,” writes syndicated columnist Jenkin Lloyd Jones. Despite some degree of truth, this charge does not justify the feeling of guilt that British professor P.T. Bauer calls “one of America’s few remaining surplus commodities.” Jones concludes, “It’s time we quit whipping ourselves.”

A mood for whipping prevails, however, and too often it is among evangelicals.

As a result of all this, we tend to opt for an undisturbed retreat into our boxes. We rationalize, “There’s no use trying to face the complex challenges of world missions today. It’s all so far beyond ordinary people like us. Let’s concentrate instead on loving each other, or those nearest us who are easiest to love. Maybe that’s all we have a right to do.”

Another reason we’ve settled for pea-sized Christianity is because the evangelical affluence of U.S. Christians smothers our faith for world missions. Frankly, most of us suffer from overindulgence in the variety of spiritual food around us. There are scores of organized discipleship programs in and out of the local church on which to feast, along with a wealth of Christian books, magazines, and cassettes on every conceivable issue or personal problem. Famous personalities entertain us at deeper-life concerts and seminars. We can sample an abundance of options for local Christian ministries with all the trimmings needed to pull them off with ease. And for dessert there’s a whole menu of charities and organizations ready to help us painlessly discharge any guilt over the distant pleas of the needy.

We act and look like we’re committed to evangelism but we are actually “nominal” when it comes to doing a lot about it.

We become spiritually obese when we saturate ourselves with such a scrumptious input but are devoid of sufficient exercise in a worldwide missionary output! Some have described this as “nominal evangelicalism.” We act and look like we’re committed to evangelism but we are actually “nominal” when it comes to doing a lot about it.

One expression of our affluence is what I term “smorgasborditis.” So often we’re encouraged to pick and choose from the delightful array, to nibble on those things that fit our schedules, our needs, or our interests. In the process, we pass right over God’s timetable for the nations who are starving physically and spiritually right now. Smorgasborditis makes us oblivious to needs that are much greater than our own. With so many blessings to choose from at home, we aren’t too motivated to choose a sacrificial involvement in the destiny of Chinese in Brazil or Hindus in crowded Calcutta, or a village of Muslim Wolof people in Africa’s Senegambia. In fact, we’re afraid of all we suspect it will cost us.
A third reason we have stayed in boxes of pea-sized Christianity is *our own basic ignorance of the facts*. This blindness may be our fundamental problem.

In tests administered to three thousand students in 185 campuses by the Council on Learning, it was discovered that more than one-third indicated they couldn’t care less about other nations and world affairs. Their lack of caring was matched by their lack of the facts. The 1981 report concluded: “America’s college students are ill-equipped to become national leaders because they are profoundly ignorant of international events, figures and relationships.” Council director George Bonham observed that our nation is still poorly equipped in its ability to deal with its innumerable global obligations.

Tragically, many Christians fall under indictment of the same disease, blindness. Only a small percentage is ready to take leadership as God’s redemptive agents, to face the global complexities of our generation for Christ’s sake.

In a promotional brochure for a conference in Florida on “The Challenge Before Us,” Sid McCollum made this honest evaluation:

> Let’s face it . . . 99% of us (maybe more) are scared silly of the word “missions.” We really like the idea of someone “forsaking all for Christ and the Gospel” . . . as long as that someone is someone else. “God, you can take my life and use me anywhere you want,” we might say. “Anywhere except Africa . . . and Asia . . . and South America . . . and Antarctica . . . and Australia. But Hawaii would be OK, God.”

What’s our problem? In a nutshell, it’s this: we see the world differently than God does. We haven’t quite caught His plan, His vision, His hope for this world. And until we do, we’ll never fully understand what our role can be in the challenge He’s set before us.

Honestly now, how many of us even know we’re living in the Gap? How often is our vision and courage for the world missionary movement ever stirred by what we’ve learned concerning its past or future?

Writing in *The Essential Components for World Evangelization: Goals for 1984*, Ralph Winter expresses his personal dismay at this situation:

> Students need a special education just to know the uncensored facts of our world today. The cause of missions is not a simple phenomenon. Common impressions are mainly wrong . . . He may be able to get a course on the history of jazz, but very few state universities or secular colleges (or even Christian liberal arts colleges) offer a course precisely on the history of the Christian mission . . . I am almost more concerned about what the schools do not teach rather than what they do teach. Attacks and criticisms we can grapple with, but the total absence of data is much more subtle and difficult to handle . . . . There is no way that evangelicalism in America has any serious future if 90% of its younger generation is being undermined on a wholesale basis year after year into the future.\(^1\)

In his opening address at the 1974 Lausanne International Congress on World Evangelization, Billy Graham noted this deficiency in our facts:

> Many sincere Christians around the world are concerned for evangelism. They are delighted at evangelizing in their own communities and even in their own countries. But they do not see God’s big picture of “world need” and the “global responsibility” that He has put upon

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the Church in His world. The Christians in Nigeria are not just to evangelize Nigeria, nor the Christians in Peru just the people in Peru. God’s heartbeat is for the world.

Lacking facts on what Graham calls the “big picture” allows Christians to form all kinds of justifications for not standing in the widest end of the Gap. We could call these justifications our myths about missions.

For example, some think the Gap is pretty well closed already (a sad lack of facts, to say the least). Others think the Gap is too wide to ever be closed, and so give up (equally sad). Some opt for the Second Coming as God’s way to close it (they only have part of the biblical facts). Others are concerned that too much attention on the Gap will disrupt good, solid spiritual growth right where we live (they need to know some historical facts). One myth says that when God is ready to close the Gap He will do it without much help from any of us. Another claims that some Christians stand in the Gap, while the rest of us “work for a living.” Of course, there’s always the myth that only super-spiritual people would even dare to stand there, and that these are few and far between.

He who gave His own Son to close the sin-gap yearns for a people who will effectively keep pace with the critical hour in which He has placed us. He’s looking right now for a global church with the courage to embrace the sunrise of missions and to stand by faith before Christ in its light until, by His sovereign reign among us advancing His Kingdom through us, the Gap of opportunity is closed throughout the earth.

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Chapter 3 – So Who Will Stand in the Gap?

Some Biblical Case Studies

God wanted someone to stand in the gap between a great society turned sour and the new beginning He intended for the human race. So God called Noah to preach righteousness to his generation and build a craft that would take a remnant into the post-Flood world. Later, God wanted someone to stand in the gap between His gracious resources for all nations and their fullest distribution everywhere. So He called Abraham and Sarah to leave their home, to go into a land of promise, to believe that God could give them children in their old age to receive the inheritance that would one day bless as many as the stars of heaven. When God wanted someone to stand in the gap between a nation of slaves and their deliverance, He called Moses to leave Egypt’s comforts. Moses, Aaron and others led Israel into God’s plan to make them a nation of priests, and as a result, directly changed the course of history for all peoples everywhere.

In one sense the entire Old Testament might be viewed as a series of case studies on different forms the Gap took through the centuries, and of those who responded to the call to stand in it, and what that stand meant for them.

But it wasn’t just others called to stand in the Gap. The mystery and majesty of our God is that ultimately He Himself stood there! Jesus forever became God’s way home across the Gap. He fulfilled all the efforts of those who stood there before Him. He became the foundation for all the new efforts of those whom He drew forth to stand in the Gap with Him, to finish the reaching of the Unreached in a way no Old Testament saint ever could or ever dreamed possible!

Here’s a major theme of the four Gospels: Jesus was progressively breaking His disciples out of the boxes that prevented them from believing they could effectively help close the Gap with Him.

In the last forty days following His resurrection, the parallel passages of Luke 24:36-53 and Acts 1:1-8 tell us that Jesus concentrated on three areas of the disciples’ faith: their faith in His person ("everything written about me;” “many proofs”); their faith in His purpose (“that . . . forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations;” “be my witnesses to the end of the earth”); and their faith in His promise (“you shall be my witnesses;” “you are clothed with power;” “you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you”). Jesus knew that if their faith focused on these three truths, they would be free to stand in the Gap with Him and to close it. In fact, that’s precisely what happened. Through them the gospel penetrated much of the first century world.

Some Christians have the mistaken notion that when we’re redeemed we cross over the Gap between us and God and out of it to live safely ever after on the other side. But that isn’t altogether accurate. Jesus, in bringing us back to the Father, calls us to lose our lives with Him in this world, stating that “if anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there shall my servant be also” John 12:26). Where is Jesus right now? In one sense, He is at the right hand of the Father’s
Christ. But He is also active in the Gap! The living Mediator remains the mediator! If He wants His people to be where He continues to work then we must serve Him in the Gap.

The attitude that was in God’s Son when He entered the Gap for our salvation is the same He wants for all His disciples (see Phil. 2:5-10). We’re to stand with Him as He stood and stands there. According to 1 John 1:1 that means Christ’s approach, and ours like Him, is to be “heard” (speaking good news so that others understand it clearly), “seen” (available to people because we come to where they are), “looked upon” (visible to those we want to reach, being a living model by which they can discover God’s love for them), and “touched” (directly and personally involved in bridging the distance between God and specific unreached sinners somewhere in the world). That all adds up to standing in the Gap.

Paul understood this. He claims to be personally “appointed” to stand in the Gap (1 Tim. 2:7). According to his own testimony, that appointment came the very day He met Christ on the Damascus road. In that hour Jesus called him to “rise and stand” for a “purpose:” to “serve and bear witness” not only among his own people but “the Gentiles— to whom I send you” (Acts 26:12-23).

But then, Paul turns around and instructs all of us Christians to “be imitators of me, as I am of Christ . . . as I try to please all men in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, that they may be saved” (1 Cor. 11:1, 10:32). Of course, we’re not all called to be apostles. But like Paul, we should testify about the focus of our conversion: “But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and had called me through his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, [He did so] in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles” (Gal. 1:15-16). God desires the whole Church to imitate Paul’s sense of priority and purpose, each of us saying of our lifelong journey in the Gap: “I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision” (Acts 26:19).

**Two Important Questions**

Will I stand in the Gap? That is, will I fully assume the privilege the Lord Jesus has given me to serve His global cause? A second question is of equal concern: In what part of the Gap will I stand? That is, what will be the width of the Gap where I serve Christ and His grand mission? At what geographical, cultural, and theological distance from a clear witness to Christ are the ones I will reach with God's love? Who will have an opportunity to hear of Christ for the first time because I care?

God is looking for people to stand in the Gap. He's looking for people who believe the Gap exists, that Christ can close it and that they must be in it with Him. He’s looking for people to walk in it with Christ, making a strategic impact for His saving mission among all nations, especially among those at the widest end of the Gap.

God is looking for people to stand in the Gap not only because they love Christ but because with Christ they love those on the other side. Only the toughest love will take the kind of action that brings lost sinners home.

**To stand in the Gap means to place no limits on how fully Christ may use you, or for whose sake.**

God isn’t looking first of all for missionaries. No! He’s looking for Christians who are willing to be changed, wherever that may lead. He wants disciples who will stand in the Gap humbly, knowing that what is wrong with the world is also what is wrong with them, who are willing to be broken and remoulded until they fit strategically in some needy part of the Gap, as God chooses.
God is looking for the change I saw illustrated in India as I watched seven workmen rebuilding part of a collapsed stone wall, about fifty feet down the road. The wall had a hole in it that ran from top to bottom and about six feet wide. Their supply of stone to fill the hole came from some nearby boulders. First, they dynamited the boulders to break them down into chunks. Then they chiselled each chunk to form a stone that would fit perfectly in the next layer of the hole. Slowly the break was closed as one stone after another was fashioned and laid in its exact place.

Like a foundation stone Christ has been set in the Gap. No one else could ever be that rock. But God is looking now for “living stones” to be built on top of Him. He is preparing stones that He has broken and remoulded to close the Gap like a “royal priesthood” that “declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light” (1 Pet. 2:9). God has a place for disciples like us who will allow our plans, gifts and abilities, schooling and training, our most intimate relationships, and even our hopes for future Christian service to be broken and remoulded so that our lives can count most strategically for the reaching of earth’s unreached billions.

To stand in the Gap means to place no limits on how fully God may use you, or for whose sake. It means that, as God directs you, you’re willing to take on any role, any time, any place, by any means, with anyone, and at any cost that will help close the Gap, even at its widest end. After all, that’s precisely what it meant for Jesus to stand in the Gap.

So, who will stand in the Gap? And, where will they stand?

There’s nothing ho-hum in all of this! It truly is an adventure. To stand in the Gap means to discover all that we are meant to be in Jesus in this moment of history—to discover the cause for which God has placed us at this hour in His world and then called us to a decisive devotion to the reign of His Son.

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Chapter 4 – The Unifying Cause

Put on the Spot

“I’ve been a Christian for twenty years,” he said, “but I must admit that there’s something missing in my life. Can you tell me what it is? Can you tell me if there’s something more?” There I sat in his living room, only two months into my first pastorate, with a great chance to do the things I had been prepared for—and I really bombed!

“Have you tried a private devotion time, Bill—you know, fifteen minutes a day for Bible study and prayer?”

Yes, he did that regularly.

“Is there sin in your life? For instance, are you a kind husband and father? Maybe you harbour bitterness toward someone.”

He was clean on all counts.

“Well, have you discovered the Spirit-filled life? What role does the Holy Spirit play in your walk with Christ?” His two-minute response told me he had the facts down straight and was truly seeking all God had for him in this area. As his pastor, I knew he attended church faithfully and tithed, so I couldn’t offer that solution. He did admit he wasn’t the witness to his neighbours he ought to be, but he wanted to change this and was praying for them regularly.

So I read some Scripture with him, offered a brief prayer, promised I’d give it some more thought, and walked away . . . into many similar sessions with other frustrated Christians until I finally learned what my friend was searching for.

The cause belongs to Christ. Our mission in the Gap is because of Him, through Him, and about Him.

Quite simply, despite all the good points, Bill lacked a cause. He needed something bigger than the issues we discussed that day, to pull together everything else in his daily life and send it out to bless the ends of the earth. He needed to get beyond pea-sized Christianity, to put his Bible study, or prayer, or family life, or evangelism into a world dimension He needed to see His Saviour reigning victoriously in the midst of a global cause.

Christ’s Global Cause Defined

First, world missions springs from a cause: the reality of the Gap. To use the dictionary terms for a cause we could say the Gap is the “basis for motivation and action” in the Christian life. At this moment of history it is the “aim and purpose” for all we do as disciples. Until the unreached billions are reached it must have “highest priority” for the whole Church. World missions, then, is the activity of being so concerned with this cause that we actually stand in the Gap; that we persistently seek Jesus’ Kingdom, and His righteousness, wherever it has yet to break through.

Secondly, the cause belongs to Christ. Our mission in the Gap is because of Him, through Him, and all about Him. Our efforts depend on His concern and His provisions for each unreached person and for their societies. He is the One the Church proclaims to the nations, the One we invite them to trust and worship, and the One who will be eternally glorified by all who cross the Gap through Him.
Thirdly, since the Gap exists worldwide, the cause is global in scope. Many today pursue global activities that unify all their other concerns: communists, Muslims, oil cartels, IBM, the United Nations, and Coca-Cola. How much more should we think globally about Christ’s cause. After all, the scope of His mission encompasses all tongues, all cultures, all people-groups, all nations, and all places where humans dwell. It includes people like us, true. But it also includes people very different from us. God’s focus goes far beyond the minority who can make an intelligent verdict for or against Christ. He is targeted on earth’s majority who have too little information to reach any verdict. We should be so targeted as well.

Christ’s global cause. How can something of this magnitude not be the integrating factor for everything a Christian does. We must de-compartmentalize our discipleship by taking missions out of the closet where we’ve stored the bits and pieces picked up along the way, things which never seemed to relate to anything else we were in Christ. We must give the cause of missions’ grand sweep centre stage in the Church’s life and in our lives in this generation.

I should have asked Bill the crucial question for all of us in the Gap: “Bill, what is your cause? To what end are you dreaming what you dream, wanting what you want, and doing what you do? For example, to what end do you have Quiet Time, Bill? Is it to learn more about the glory of Christ, extent of His global reign and how to get better involved in His cause? Or is it merely for a temporary spiritual ‘fix’ to help you through today’s eight-hour grind at the office?

To what end does your small group from church meet? Do you discover more about Christ and His global cause in order to equip one another to get more effectively involved in it? To what end are you going to the Christian businessmen’s retreat this fall? Will it strengthen your commitment to Christ’s mission to the nations, and to nothing less? To what end do you care for your family’s needs day by day? Is it to build, encourage, and help them move out with a larger vision of God’s Son and a greater hope about God’s purposes for the ends of the earth?

Bill, that’s what’s missing! You need this kind of unifying cause or your life will continue to seem splintered and unfulfilled.”

Acts 1:8 Says It All

As past generations of disciples, we too have been given a global cause for our moment in history. I can see Bill sitting back, reflecting on his new understanding. Quietly I would study his face, enjoying his moment of discovery with him. Then, to help him nail it down with Scripture, I would pick up my Bible.

“Bill, from the day you and I entered the Kingdom we’ve had Christ’s cause as our high ceiling. In fact, from the day the Church was born it has been her grand inheritance. Listen to Jesus’ summary of the cause in Acts 1:8 (and I read to him): ‘You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.’”

“Let me tell you what this passage means to me.” I proceed to show Bill that the “you” and “upon you” are plural: the cause is given to the whole Body of Christ and is fulfilled through them together. I point out that the “Holy Spirit” refers to the living God indwelling His people in order to unite us to Christ and to one another, to transform us, and lead us forth as Christ’s ambassadors to all nations. Only the Spirit can take us beyond the security and comfort of our little groups into the overwhelming challenge of the Gap which He continues to close through those who stand there with God’s Son — and for His name, His fame and His reign.
“Power” designates the Spirit’s primary ministry in fulfilling the cause through us. He gives us ability, authority and effectiveness—all this is wrapped up in the word power. Even more, His power means love-without-limits, both in how far it reaches and how fully it meets others’ needs. Not just any love, either. Christ’s love! Nothing is more powerful than “fresh revelation” of the majesty and supremacy of God’s Son to God’s people by God’s Spirit.

“My witnesses,” I would explain to Bill, “describes the ultimate impact of the Church’s worldwide mission. As “witnesses” we bring other people to such a clear understanding of who Jesus really is that they can render an intelligent verdict for (or against) Him. What a courtroom witness does for a judge and jury we do for those who have never heard of Christ. Bill, what more strategic impact could any of us ever make for Christ’s cause?”

It would be foolhardy to unite all we are and have around a cause of this magnitude unless its triumph was sure.

Finally, I would show him how “the ends of the earth” defines the cause as nothing less than global. The disciples weren’t to stop with those near to them geographically, culturally, or theologically, nor with those relatively close at hand, like the Samaritans. There was “something more” for them! Christ wanted them (and us) to embrace a cause that would sweep to the ends of the earth before it finished. He wanted them to serve Him in the world dimension.

I can see Bill’s growing excitement. He sits up on the edge of his chair: “If this is so, then no cause the world has ever known should be more consuming or more satisfying!” Right, friend. And knowing this, the Lord Jesus put rock-bottom stability into His challenge with a two-fold promise: “You shall receive power” and “you shall be my witnesses.” In the swirl of such an overwhelming task, His Word of certitude secures us.

Frankly, it would be foolhardy for Bill, or me, or anyone else to unite all we are and have around a cause of this magnitude unless its triumph was sure. The One who paid the ultimate price for its fulfilment and reigns over the nations to lead it forward guarantees the victory in this two-fold assurance. His promise gives us the right, in the words of William Carey’s famous directive, not only to “expect great things from God” but also to “attempt great things for God.”

“Bill, this discovery of the cause can end your search. If your life seems incomplete because it is sectioned up like a Time magazine—if our church seems sluggish because it is fragmented into twelve equal but unrelated programs—then Acts 1:8 provides the new ‘cover’ to bind up all those themes into the adventure for which we were made. Christ only asks you to ‘staple’ the whole thing together with your faith—faith working through love.”

Actually, the apostle Paul sums it up in much simpler, more beautiful words: “Above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony” (Col. 3:14). Love—God’s love for those on the other side of the Gap. Faith working through that love. Faith and love that result in worldwide missionary activity. That is at the heart of Christ’s unifying cause.

The love we need is not only for those nearest to us and like us, but also for those at the widest end of the Gap. It’s love for those very much unlike us. Love for those who have never heard of Christ and have no one to tell them. Love for those far away from us and far from the good news we could give them about our Saviour. Love for those who will never know of us or listen to us unless you and I and other believers together love them enough to make those radical efforts that put us and the gospel into their part of the Gap. Love that acts especially on behalf of these. That is the unifying cause that gives wholeness and harmony to all the rest of life.
“It’s like this, Bill. God’s will for us can be put into a single word: CHRIST—the people for whom CHRIST wants us to give our lives and the people with whom CHRIST wants us to give our lives. By making the act of love called world missions our unifying cause we’re saying that the fame and reign of CHRIST is our all-consuming passion, which turns us toward the people for whom He came—this is a cause and focus that is world-sized because it is Kingdom-sized. Therefore in my love for God’s Son I also want to know who are the people are at the widest end of the Gap for whom God wants me to give my life for Jesus’ sake. And in order to effectively face that challenge, I must also seriously consider who are the other Christ-followers God wants me to give my life with in order to reach them.”

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).
Chapter 5 – Is the Cause Healthy For Us?

Nothing Could Be Healthier

Living in a world dimension—it all seems too big and hard and complex to manage. Couldn’t we collapse trying? Is this cause truly healthy, you may wonder, for practical day-to-day growth as Christ’s disciples? From my conversations with Bill you won’t be surprised if I tell you I believe nothing could be healthier for us!

Of course, it would be unhealthy for anyone to try to assimilate every fact on the world situation, or to respond to every impulse to be compassionate toward the world community, or to assume personal responsibility for all the world’s woes. Even contemplating a witness to all three billion unreached people could easily drive any of us insane unless there is a balanced strategy.

But despite such global-sized eruptions into our lives we can remain healthy if we have simplified the issues. For example, our great cause doesn’t depend on us going at it alone. We are part of a movement of disciples from many nations who have shouldered the cause together. We can relax. We can work on our own important roles in the complex picture knowing that God sees it all and will effectively coordinate the efforts of His international team.

Furthermore, we can keep our sanity if we concentrate on one major cause at a time: closing the Gap of opportunity, fulfilling God’s worldwide purpose. This is no Pollyanna cop-out on the world’s myriad needs.

Conscientious Christians are crying out for a style of discipleship that thrives on clarity and simplicity—and significance. The single-minded focus of standing in the Gap may be the healthiest answer of all.

What exactly is healthy discipleship anyway? It involves the gradual discipline of our characters until we become like the Saviour. It also involves the growing development of our potential to glorify the Saviour. For those standing in the Gap full discipline and full development occur the more we get fully involved in the basic cause for which Christ came—and even more, with Christ in that cause.

Didn’t Jesus encourage this single-minded discipline and development when He summoned the Twelve to follow Him and learn to fish for others as He took them with Him into His own mission? Wasn’t their quality of growth as disciples permanently affected as He helped them integrate and simplify their lives around the one cause of love in the Gap? So, eleven became healthy apostles (“sent ones”), sent out in His power to fish to the ends of the earth.

Practically speaking, healthy, quality discipleship involves learning to give away what we already have. We grow from point A to point B only as we first give away what we’ve received at A. And, the larger the giveaway the greater the growth. Discipleship is training someone to give better and farther. A mature Christian isn’t one who practices the rules more. He’s one whose disciplined living helps him love others better and farther. Is this the kind of discipleship you are experiencing?

This is why world evangelism is central to our health as disciples. The best we can give to others is God’s love through the gospel. And, while we should love everyone we meet this way, giving the
gospel to non-Christians at the wider end of the Gap provides us opportunities to discipline our characters and develop our potential to glorify God farther and farther. Paul Little observed that:

Obedience in evangelism is one of the keys to spiritual health . . . . When we evangelize, we pray specifically, laying hold on God for victory in the spiritual struggles within the soul of an individual we care about . . . . With anticipation we watch God answer prayer . . . . Meanwhile, the Bible becomes increasingly alive and relevant as we see others responding to its truth. Passages that once seemed dry and extraneous appear practical and pertinent. And, remarkably, when we’re concentrating on evangelism we don’t have time to pick at other Christians and their faults.2

What Paul Little claimed for local evangelism is doubly true for those involved in world evangelism. “Christianity does not remain healthy among those who are not actively trying to give it away to people at a cultural distance,” wrote Ralph Winter.

A Healthier Prayer Life

The cause provides a healthier perspective on what we pray about and the results we expect. This healthier dimension of prayer is illustrated by Psalm 67. Here we learn that our personal requests—bless my family; strengthen the love in my small group; heal me of this disease; help me make the right decisions about a job; give me shelter from the cold winter; bring my best friend to Christ—should contain one overriding provision “that thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving power among all nations” (v. 2). “Thy way” today means “that advancing of Christ’s fame and reign”.

When we articulate personal requests in keeping with our growing concern for revealing God’s name, Kingdom, and will among all earth’s people (the opening concerns of the Lord’s Prayer), we are praying about the things God wants to do most. As a result He will show us great answers! When His answers to our prayers make an impact on the reaching of unreached peoples, then our praying will be truly effective. We will have asked for and received the right things. And we will be motivated to pray even more.

As we learn to pray beyond our own little worlds, for people and nations where darkness reigns and the evangelistic task remains so critical, we’ll discover new vistas of faith for praying about our own needs as well. When we pray for Christ to be exalted at the widest end of the Gap, the challenges at the narrowest end won’t seem so impossible anymore.

When George reads the daily paper, he prays over the front page headlines. They remind him to pray for persecuted Christians in Asia, or for a Middle East summit meeting that might influence the future of missionary work, or for a missionary in Africa who may be the next victim of guerrilla raids, or for Indian Christians to have new opportunities to show Christ’s love in the midst of the century’s worst monsoon.

A church in the East gathers every Saturday evening for prayer. They pray about personal and congregational needs, of course. But they also discipline themselves to give equal amounts of time to pray for the Church in other nations and for missionary outreach. In fact, they actually divide their ninety minutes of prayer into two major segments. First, prayer for revival in the Church, locally and worldwide. Then forty-five minutes is given to issues touching the Great Commission, locally and worldwide. As a result, many believe these prayer meetings are some of the most stimulating and life-changing they’ve ever been a part of. No wonder they keep coming back!

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Healthier Bible Study

The cause changes what we look for and what we find in our Bibles. Among other things, healthy Bible study will uncover perspectives and principles that not only lead to see Christ in whole new ways but also with Him to move out to the world in whole new ways.

Clearly, Bible study that turns into a spiritual sedative isn’t healthy. Instead, the Bible should stir up our faith in Christ and about His global cause, build our vision for His world, anchor our decisions to get actively involved, and equip us to stand willingly wherever the Gap needs us.

For example, as Jack has his devotions in Joshua, he looks for principles that God gave Israel for possessing the land, then he applies these to his desire to help “possess” India for Christ through his ministry to Indian students on his campus. Mary is memorizing some of the great promises of Isaiah. As she meditates on each one, she tries to picture how they could be fulfilled not only in her own life but generally among the nations who are often the direct focus for the blessings described.

On Sunday evenings First Church is enjoying a series that scans Paul’s Epistles. Pastor White intends to help them see that these are also missionary letters written to churches Paul considered partners with him to reach the ends of the earth. Each week he illustrates this fact by suggesting ways the members can apply what they’re learning to their own involvement with the church’s missionaries.

Healthier Motives for Godliness

When we discover that each of us is personally vital to a global cause for world redemption, our motives for staying morally clean begin to change. We find ourselves wanting to flee sin and pursue righteousness for more compelling reasons than just to remain trophies of moral spotlessness. Bitterness, greed, lust, or pride can’t be tolerated any longer by those who want God to make their lives count significantly for reaching the unreached. Love does fulfil the Law—particularly love for those at the widest end of the Gap.

The more we accept the fact that we are part of the hope for three billion Unreached people, the more we crush our desire to sin. The more we understand that godliness gives support to the credibility and power of the gospel’s worldwide advance, the more we will flee the traps of sin. As we accept our solemn privilege to help tell all peoples that Christ can cleanse the world’s sin, we will want to be righteous like the Lamb of God who takes that sin away.

I observed these healthier motives with Paul and Sally. They thought they loved each other. But their Friday night dates, one of the few times they saw each other, had turned into a steady, exclusive relationship that sometimes left them with nothing better than to drive around in Paul’s car, trying to find something fun to do they hadn’t done before. In time their physical attraction to one another began to overshadow every other option. They both felt empty about it but they couldn’t find the strength to stop until Paul made friends with Kim, a student from Korea.

When Paul realized that Kim and many unreached people in Korea stood in the balance, he and Sally found something more compelling to fill their time than their romantic turmoils. They set their relationship into the thick of the Gap and it changed how they approached everything, including Friday night dates. They actually spent a few minutes each date praying for Kim’s salvation and learning about Korea. Some Fridays they would take Kim on an outing and eventually they were able to share Christ with him.
Peter found that the more concerned he became for world missions through his weekly missions study group at church, the more he really wanted to invest some of his earnings in a specific missions project. He chose to work among recent migrants from poverty-stricken rural villages in Mexico, forced into equally discouraging housing in a shanty town outside Mexico City. Peter also found that the more he sacrificially committed personal funds to this ministry, the less willing he was to pad reimbursements from his expense account at work. Somehow that kind of “taking” couldn’t coexist with his newfound “giving” in the Gap.

A Healthier Life Together—In Smaller Groups

Warren Webster, a missionary leader who has seen the cause’s healthy impact, observes: “The spiritual vitality of any fellowship of Christians should be measured not simply by the number of believers it attracts but by the number of disciples it sends out empowered for witness and service.”

Such vitality can be found in many kinds of smaller groups. Marriage, for example, should result in the sending forth of two disciples newly equipped to close the Gap as “one flesh.” A couple I know willingly put their engagement before the Lord, asking that He bring them together only if it would enrich their involvement in the Gap. In this way they risked all their dreams for the sake of those who’ve never heard the gospel, as they gave time to search out God’s answer.

Another kind of small group is the family. Family life should also result in disciples empowered to stand in the Gap. I know a father who has given ten years of his life bridging the Gap as an artist-evangelist in the Hindu world. Every night he and his wife present their three young sons before the Lord in prayer, asking that God would someday call them to be missionaries to reach more Hindus. (How many Christian parents could be comfortable praying this way?) Other families pray faithfully each night at dinner on a rotating basis for different missionaries they know personally.

The cause can also make for healthier small support groups. In contrast, any support group that nurtures self-indulgence, vague commitments and isolation from a needy world isn’t healthy at all. In fact, it’s terminal. How many support groups are no more than “retirement centres,” where the members enjoy a weekly game of “Christian shuffleboard” as they shove a few Bible verses around and talk about their latest spiritual aches and pains. How few support groups are like “caravans”—companies of disciples on the move, travelling together for protection and encouragement as they journey from where they are to touch other parts of the Gap, to serve together wherever and however God asks.

With a global life-or-death cause before it, a support group won’t settle for being just a collection of individuals. It will be a team-on-a-mission that has integrated its caring and fellowship into the worldwide mission of Christ Himself. Fellowship will be more the by-product of such a team than its purpose!

Let me illustrate this with the support group to which Tom and Dick belong. Since they want to keep the cause at the centre of their life, they call it a “World Action Team.” All the benefits of small groups are theirs, plus they attempt to place everything in the world dimension.

For example, they pray together, and not just for the personal needs within the group. They also pray for the world. Dick has a copy of a handbook on prayer needs for all the countries. Each week a member of the group is responsible to prepare a three-minute report on one country, showing its location on a map, and then leading the group in the handbook’s prayer suggestions.

Their small group frequently studies the Bible’s great passages about Christ and God’s promises in Him for the nations. Tom prepares an inductive Bible study each time. They intend to cover key Scriptures in both Old and New Testaments before the year is over.
During their two-hour meetings the group spends time sharing personal burdens and needs. They encourage or counsel each one as they share. But they also try to build up one another’s faith in what God wants to do through them individually and as a team to reach the ends of the earth. They try to put all their needs into that perspective.

Let me tell you about one other support group that never stopped. It was made up of Fred, Joan, and Len (plus one or two others) who met together while they were at a university. Fred and Joan married and three years later took on a mission to an Eastern European country. The vision for that mission, however, came to the whole support group back on the campus. So a year later it was no surprise when Len joined them overseas. Two years later he also married. Now a small group lives in that country, reaching people at a much wider end of the Gap. The group is identical in many respects to what they were together in college. They’re still a healthy support group because at the very beginning they made the cause their overriding concern, and that commitment has never changed. God just took them in their love for Christ, for one another, and for the world and transplanted them six thousand miles away from where they started.

A Healthier Life Together—in Churches

Larger gatherings of Christians—in churches, weekend retreats, or conferences—will be even more healthy when we conduct them for the sake of the cause. Of course, some things like joint Bible studies or bearing one another’s burdens usually have their deepest value at a smaller group level. But a meeting of the whole congregation is the logical time for healthy instruction among support groups and families involved in the Gap. During these larger group meetings, Christians in the Gap cross paths to share one another’s missions and reinforce one another’s commitments to go on with them.

Fortunately for us, our Father led Robyne and me into a church in Madison actively pursuing this. In all honesty we all still have much to learn. But six years ago we rewrote our church objectives to incorporate three major thrusts, worship, build (discipleship), send (world ministry). Then we formed committees (we called them “components”) to guide us in each thrust.

When we looked at “sending” we meant this: we were certain that if we developed a congregation of people hungry to send some of our own number into the widest end of the Gap, God would have no trouble raising up those who were hungry to be sent.

We developed a statement of purpose on our sending thrust that reads, in part:

Our church is to be a mission training and sending centre as we grow together into a church of world Christians who are wholly focused on the supremacy of God’s Son. And, in all of our efforts we will give highest priority to those peoples, both locally and worldwide, currently beyond the reach of the gospel.

We seek to stress sending throughout by keeping the following four questions informally before us:

- Celebration: What has God recently accomplished for His Son through the world mission involvements of our people for which the congregation should praise God together this morning?
- Motivation: What will encourage our people in this worship time to move on with Christ and their world mission involvements for Him (through Bible messages, world event updates, singing about the cause, testimonials of how personal growth is taking place through a specific mission, etc.)?
• **Training:** How can our people help each other improve their effectiveness to carry out their missions-to-the-world (through up-front teaching, literature tables, reports on how others have done it, etc.)?

• **Intercession:** What are the specific needs and opportunities for our church and our missions-to-the-world that call for immediate prayer?

Results? One example. Recently some members insisted that once a month we set aside forty-five minutes after the worship service for any who could remain behind to join in additional intercession for expanded mission thrusts resulting from church renewal. In light of the increasing numbers of young and old alike volunteering for ministry among the unreached (locally and overseas) they sensed a desperate need for united prayer as part of our Sunday experience.

Anytime a local church’s corporate life produces that kind of response, wouldn’t you consider Christ’s global cause a very healthy focus?

**Enlarged Scope of Outreach**

No more obvious evidence of spiritual health occurs than when someone’s witness for Christ reaches to more and more people. Wherever you find people who make the Gap their life concern, you will find their outreach expanding, where they are and beyond.

If we live with a sense of urgency about worldwide evangelization, it will naturally overflow toward those around us.

It will expand at the local level for a number of reasons. First, the challenge of billions of unreached people demands that outreach in general be given highest priority in our lives. If we live with a sense of urgency about worldwide evangelization, it will naturally overflow toward those around us. Second, most of those yet to be reached are vastly different from us, culturally and in many other ways. Concern with reaching them will require of us an increased sensitivity to these differences. In turn, this will stretch us to be more sensitive to those around us who are like us. In the same vein, missionaries depend on cross-cultural communication skills. So, the more we learn from them about what it takes to clearly communicate the gospel across major human barriers, the more skillful we will be in relating to those where the barriers are minor. Finally, concern for the cause puts evangelism and the sovereignty of God into perspective. A global challenge demands that we learn to trust God’s grace and power in new ways. All of this can’t help but increase our confidence and boldness in evangelism right where we live.

Outreach will also expand beyond those around us to those at the widest end of the Gap. Look at some of the many examples of how the cause is so healthy in this way. David Wilkerson, a one-time rural preacher from Pennsylvania, began standing in the Gap for teenage gangs in New York City, and many teenagers since, even outside our nation, have been changed as a result. John Perkins not only stands in the Gap for poor blacks and whites in Pasadena, California, he also stood in the Gap for many years previously in Mississippi through his Voice of Calvary ministry where he established an International Study Centre to help reproduce his approach to evangelism in other parts of the world.

Mother Teresa, an Albanian, went to India to serve Christ in a convent and made the Gap between the gospel and the “poorest of the poor” (as she calls them) her life cause. She and her Missionaries of Charity have spent over twenty-five years revealing the love of Christ among the dis-
inherited on the crowded, dirty streets of Calcutta, and in major cities throughout India and around the globe, including New York City, Detroit, and Los Angeles.

Tom Brewster was paralyzed from the neck down in a swimming accident when he was eighteen, yet he refused to abandon the Gap. In time God gave him a skill in linguistics, and a wife with similar training and concerns. Tom became a language trainer for hundreds of missionaries. Sometimes Tom travels to over sixty countries a year to equip people serving at the widest end of the Gap. Keeping this cause central has been healthy for Tom. It has enlarged the scope of his outreach. What could be “healthier” than something that frees a paralytic’s abilities and his spirit to help glorify Christ around the world?

**Healthy World Christians**

What shall we call this distinct group of Christians who have taken a stand that says:

> We want to accept personal responsibility for reaching some of earth’s unreached, especially from among the billions at the widest end of the Gap who can only be reached through major new efforts by God’s people. Among every culture-group where there is no vital, evangelizing Christian community there should be one, there must be one, there shall be one. Together we want to help make this happen.

For a moment, let’s call them *World Christians*. The term “World Christian” may have been coined first by Daniel Fleming in a 1920 YMCA book entitled *Marks of a World Christian*. More recently the term has appeared in publications of such groups as Worldteam, Conservative Baptist Foreign Missionary Society, United Presbyterian Center for Mission Studies, Overseas Missionary Fellowship, National Prayer Committee, and United States Center for World Mission, as well as Campus Crusade for Christ and InterVarsity Christian Fellowship. Of course, we mustn’t forget the periodical, considered by many to be the *National Geographic* of missions magazines—*World Christian* magazine.

A World Christian isn’t better than other Christians. But by God’s grace, he has made a discovery so important that life can never be the same again. He has discovered the truth about the Gap, the fact that he is already in it, and the call of Christ to believe, think, plan, and act accordingly. By faith, he has chosen to stand in the Gap as a result.

Some World Christians are missionaries who stand in the Gap by physically crossing major human barriers (cultural, political, etc.) to bring the gospel to those who can hear no other way. But every Christian is meant to be a World Christian, whether you physically “go,” or “stay at home” to provide the sacrificial love, prayers, training, money, and quality of corporate life that backs the witness of those who “go.”

All of true Christians have been born-again into the Gap – united to Christ in order to live at the center of Who He is, where He is headed, what He is doing and how He gets blessed.

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Chapter 6 – An Idea Whose Time Has Come—Ages Ago!

Examples From the Past

World Christians have been around since the apostles preached on Pentecost to multitudes from most known nations under heaven; since Philip, a Jew, planted churches in Samaritan villages and then shared the gospel with an international visitor from Ethiopia; since Peter crossed the threshold between Jews and Gentiles to bring Christ to a Roman centurion and his family.

The New Testament is full of World Christians: the members of the Jerusalem church, scattered abroad by persecution, preaching the message to Jews and Greeks as well; Paul and Barnabas, sent out by the church at Antioch to establish other churches throughout Galatia; Aquila and Priscilla who formed the nucleus of a mission-minded church that evangelized all of Asia Minor in less than three years; the Thessalonian church, whose life together established a witness that reached far beyond them into Macedonia and Achaia; John, banished to an island dungeon because he proclaimed Christ in the face of great political and theological barriers, but given there a prophet's overview of the global climax of the Christian movement.

We have a whole Christ for our salvation; a whole Bible for our staff; a whole Church for our fellowship; and a whole world for our parish.

Thousands of other World Christians have preceded us in the Gap. A fourth-century World Christian, John Chrysostom, stood in the Gap for the Barbarian Goths of the Balkans, training and sending missionaries to reach them. He defined his world vision this way: “We have a whole Christ for our salvation; a whole Bible for our staff; a whole Church for our fellowship; and a whole world for our parish.”

In the thirteenth century, a youthful World Christian named Francis left his family’s wealth in Assisi, Italy, to stand in the Gap. Initially he and his wandering band worked in a narrower part of the Gap in Europe, but gradually the Franciscan Order became a World Christian movement that reached around the globe!

The “father of modern missions” was an ordinary cobbler who met monthly in the late 1700’s with a small group to pray for “the revival of religion and the expansion of Christ’s Kingdom around the world.” William Carey caught a world vision. His own research on the Gap, entitled An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathen is an explosive volume that describes his biblical focus on the supremacy of Christ as well as his findings on millions of unreached peoples who stood at its widest end. His book turned English Christians around and broke the logjam in Protestant missionary efforts that had blighted the cause since the Reformation. Eventually, Carey relocated to another part of the Gap to obey his world vision on behalf of India. He translated Scriptures into over thirty languages and planted churches around Calcutta.

Less than a century ago the Gap was flooded with thousands of World Christians issuing from the Student Volunteer Movement of the late 1800’s and early 1900’s. Twenty thousand college graduates sailed to most countries of the world to preach the gospel. Thousands more remained behind as the sending base, spreading the challenge of Christ’s global cause throughout the churches, leading many laypeople and church leaders into the experience of World Christian discipleship.
Examples from Today

The Gap continues to close as many today have made the same discovery. Over seventy thousand Protestant missionaries from North America and Europe, standing in the Gap worldwide, are joined by over fifteen thousand additional missionaries from Third World nations sent out by over four hundred Third World missionary societies.

For some in this vanguard, being a World Christian has required tremendous courage. In 1976, for example, a friend of mine visited missionaries working in the resistant parts of the Muslim world. As he travelled from country to country and missionary to missionary, he found that the spiritual battle was so great that only where missionaries laboured long hours each day bridging the Muslim gap through intercessory prayer was there any noticeable fruit.

In America we have many examples of World Christians on the move. A church in Arizona pledged as much to world missions as they would spend on themselves when they entered a five-million-dollar building program! A Southern California church puts world vision and challenge into all their teaching programs, from Sunday school to morning worship to Bible clubs. As a result God has raised up scores of missionaries within their own congregation and hundreds more to send them. Two hundred members of a church in the San Fernando Valley sold second cars, while others mortgaged their homes, in order to give full support to a team of five couples who became missionaries to the Tonga tribe in Zambia. That was in the mid 1970’s. Today that church of World Christians is responsible for bringing thousands of Tongans to Christ!

A recent development called the Episcopal Church Missionary Community is comprised of laypeople who want to help fellow Episcopalians “catch the vision.” They are seeking hundreds of missions prayer cells which may eventually send out their own missionaries. Across the country, World Christian pastors and missions committee members from churches in over fifty denominations have banded together to form, for the first time, an Association of Church Missions Committees in order to help maximize the impact of local churches in the Gap.

World Christian dynamics have also surfaced in major campus movements in North America. The Navigators, with field offices for every continent, are presently reproducing disciple-makers in over thirty-four countries while increasing their ministry to international students in the U.S. Campus Crusade for Christ has almost five hundred staff working in over one hundred countries outside North America.

Operation Mobilization and Youth with a Mission (YWAM) have trained tens of thousands of young adults to serve overseas on short-term and long-term mission assignments. Many are working in some of the most difficult parts of the Gap. And those who return to the States do so with renewed vision for the greatness of Jesus and for world evangelization that fires-up their local churches.

“We must be global Christians with a global vision because our God is a global God.”

In addition to inviting furloughing missionaries to meet with students in its over eight hundred-fifty groups, InterVarsity Christian Fellowship (the world’s oldest and largest interdenominational campus ministry) is developing a reservoir of staff specialists for various kinds of cross-cultural ministries. Within the mainstream of its discipling ministry there has emerged Overseas Training Camps in Latin America, Asia, Africa, and Europe, along with credit-bearing extension courses in
missions right on campus. Its Student Training in Missions program continues to gear toward six hundred or more abroad by 1985. And since 1976 the challenge of Christ’s global cause has received increased visibility through its World Christian Conferences conducted nationwide.

It needs to be said again—and all these examples bear it out—that most World Christians today are not missionaries. They are like any Christian, with the same struggles, fears, and potentials for Jesus. What marks them is their discovery of a world vision focus on a reigning Saviour for whom they’re reordering every facet of their lives. They've discovered the truth of John Stott’s words to the seventeen thousand students at InterVarsity’s triennial Urbana student mission’s convention: “We must be global Christians with a global vision because our God is a global God.”

**Here’s How It Happened to Me**

I was leading a three-day conference on World Christian discipleship. During Sunday lunch a student shared with me how she had been depressed the entire weekend. Finally she’d figured out why. As she caught a world vision that weekend, she realized she had spent the past two years as a new Christian without Christ’s cause as her highest priority, and she deeply regretted the lost time. But, I told her, nothing was lost. All of her growth as Jesus’ disciple would be valuable as she now took her stand with Him in the Gap. “Be grateful it was only two years,” I said. “Many have laboured ten to twenty years at Christian discipleship without making this great discovery.”

I was one of those. When I became a Christian my freshman year in college, I thrived on Bible study, sang my heart out with newly found hymns, drank in the fresh warmth of Christian fellowship for the first time, but ran scared from the missions study group on campus. And I kept on running! Right through undergraduate studies in religion and graduate studies in theology, successfully avoiding every missions course that was offered along the way. There was something about the whole topic that seemed dull, peculiar, and above all, threatening in my own plans for Christian service.

But the Lord Jesus wanted for me exactly what He wanted for His first disciples: that I catch a world vision and move out on it. My discovery of this began when, during my years of graduate study, He put me into an inner-city Bible club ministry in the black neighbourhoods of south Chicago. There Christ gave me His vision for people where the Gap was much wider than I had experienced before.

Next, He led me into the pastorate, where He really cracked open my pea-sized boxes. For six years He helped me discover the potential of a local congregation to make a worldwide impact on His cause. Let me tell you the story.

It so happened that our church was located near Ohio’s Kent State University. Many students from Christian campus organizations attended our services. To hook up these students with our church families we began what we called our “adoption program.” As the years passed God sent many of our “adopted” students into other parts of the U.S. and into the world. We woke up to this fact the year we placed a map on the wall of our educational wing and marked with flags the places our student friends came from and the places they were going.

Truly God had placed our church right in the middle of a mission-training, mission-sending ministry. The possibilities were unlimited. And, the vital link between the church as a base and the students in its worldwide extension were the families who adopted them. As students and young couples from our midst went forth in many capacities, our whole church could make a lasting contribution to the cause. The training we gave them, the quality of community life we showed
them, and the deep support of individual family units would go with them. We could become a church of World Christians.

Standing on the Commons as National Guard bullets struck down four Kent State students in May of 1970 I saw these possibilities even more clearly. For some time after the shootings people travelled from everywhere to declare their solidarity with those who died, with a life-and-death cause of international proportions. I thought: Could not a local group of World Christians have a similarly far-reaching impact on Christ’s global cause?

All this created in me a longing to expand my own world vision in order to lead in our church’s mission. My hunger grew as I met with concerned laymen to pray eight hours each week for six weeks about our church’s future. One evidence of what God taught us those days was the motto He gave us for our church: “Applying the gospel of Christ to the world of Kent—and the world beyond.”

My hunger increased in 1970 when my wife Robyne and I attended InterVarsity’s Urbana Student Missions Convention. There we met with many mission agencies, heard great sermons on the world mission of the Church, and discovered through a computer printout where we could serve Christ in other parts of the world. In 1973 my hunger took a more personal turn through a loving relationship God gave me with a Buddhist Japanese student doing graduate work in the Kent State physics department.

Finally it happened. Gaining a whole new perspective about the on-going reign of Christ among the nations, turning me into a World Christian, took me out of the pastorate. The situation had created in me such a craving to know more about Christ and His global cause that I knew I wouldn’t be satisfied until I found out.

Robyne and I ventured to Southern California to spend a year at Fuller Seminary’s School of World Mission. God built us the world vision we longed for. For nine months of classes I sat at the feet of leading mission strategists, furloughed missionaries, and church leaders from the Third World.

I was hit hard by statistical studies and multimedia presentations describing the one billion people who were starving physically and the two billion who had never heard the name of Christ. Why should this be? And, why wasn’t I told before? Then the harder questions: Was I willing to open up to these people? What changes would this make in my life? What would it mean for me to stand in the Gap? And for Robyne and our marriage?

Our prayer life continues to grow in its focus on missionaries, unreached people-groups, and current international events.

Fortunately, during this time God put us with other Christians who had caught the same vision and were working through the same questions. We laboured together to build our vision, learn how to put it into practice in very practical ways, and how to pass it along to others. Many kinds of world-sized ministries sprang from that fellowship of World Christians, not the least being the U.S. Center for World Mission with its many new frontline ministries.

Since then, the global cause of the living Christ has continued to transform my life; not only in terms of occupation and ministry but even in marriage Robyne and I have seen the effects of this grand discovery. The broad sweep of world missions has become the unifying cause—the context—for our relationship.

For example, our prayer life continues to grow in its focus on missionaries, unreached people-groups, and current international events. Our new priorities have changed everything from what
Christians

magazines we take, to the kinds of social events we attend. We want to save our time and money for those things that will help us obey our world vision.

Being World Christians has influenced our hospitality ministry. Often we invite in fellow World Christians to work at building our vision together, or potential World Christians so that we can help them catch the vision. Our guests include missionaries from the front lines so that we can refresh them and learn from them, to non-Christian international students so we can love a few at the Gap’s widest end, who just “happen” to live nearby. Recently three other “guests” joined us permanently: an abandoned infant from Kerala, South India named Adam; beautiful two-year-old Bethany from an orphanage near Bombay; and spunky 15 month old Benjamin from the same facility. Robyne and I adopted all three because, first of all, God set them before us, filled us with Christ’s love for them and called us to embrace them as our own flesh and blood. (We were delighted to comply!)

Some people don’t understand all this, or us. But stretching back two thousand years stands a great company of Jesus’ disciples who do. And that’s enough for now.

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).
Chapter 7 – Needed: A Great Awakening in the Gap

For two thousand years the knowledge of God’s glory in the face of Jesus Christ has spread like ocean waves over sands of peoples, languages and cultures (compare Habbakuk 2:14 with 2 Cor. 2:5-6). Some day Christ will be adored in every part of the earth. Throughout past centuries, however, the gospel’s advance along this beach has fluctuated. But, currently we see God’s Spirit stirring up fresh waves of global outreach thundering farther up the shore than ever before. Church historians call some of these seasons of Spirit-unleashed missionary activity “Great Awakenings.” During the past two hundred years, concurrent with the greatest missionary advance in two millennia, there have been at least three such mighty Kingdom surges. A host of mission strategists today believe we’re on the crest of another Great Awakening, called by some the “sunrise of missions.” C. Peter Wagner’s On the Crest of the Wave puts hard facts behind this claim.

What Does a Great Awakening Look Like?

One of the foremost authorities on these waves of awakening, J. Edwin Orr, described them in three distinct phases: (1) A spontaneous outpouring of the Holy Spirit revives Christians to the point that they band together in fervent prayer. (2) Out of united prayer meetings spring cooperative evangelism, increased lay leadership in the churches and a new zeal for present missions activity, both at home and abroad. (3) Rising from the first two phases the church mobilizes the talents and energies of its best trained men and women to carry forward the missionary advance with unparalleled results.

Personally, I’ve settled on the phrase “a Christ-awakening movement” to define the phenomenon—defining it this way: “When God’s Spirit uses God’s Word to re-convert God’s people back to God’s Son for ALL that He is.” Every legitimate Christ-awakening accelerates Christ’s global cause and extends His rule among peoples where it has never been embraced before.

Can it be that awakenings similar to those in the days of William Carey and the Student Volunteer Movement are upon us again? Since World War II, a new crest of spiritual ferment has erupted worldwide. Much of this is seen in the formation of 250 new North American Protestant missionary societies since 1945 and of 400 more in the Third World. Consultations on world evangelization at the national and international levels, including Lausanne’s 1980 worldwide consultation in Thailand, Amsterdam ‘83 for itinerant evangelists, and the Korea ‘84 International Prayer Assembly are also evidence of the crest.

As in past awakenings, people of many denominations are coming together in the Gap to seek all God wants to do through them, to throw off all disbelief, and to commit themselves to serve the cause. In the past thirty-five years many in the church have moved through phases one and two as described by Dr. Orr. What remains is the explosion of this spiritual ferment into an awakening of all God’s people in the Gap, so that we mobilize every resource to fill the widest end of the Gap in this generation.

Missionary and seminary professor J. Christy Wilson remarked to me one morning on our way to breakfast: “I believe we’ve entered the fourth Great Awakening—it has already started—and it may be the last one. Because in this awakening, God can complete His plan for the nations.” I, too, we have entered its early phases.
What will another awakening mean for Christians like you and me? Primarily, we’ll experience a world-sized answer to Paul’s prayer in Ephesians 1:18-23:

[I pray that you may have] the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power in us who believe, according to the working of his great might which he accomplished in Christ when he raised him from the dead and made him sit at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come; . . . and has made him head over all things.

What is the world-sized awakening Paul expects God to do for every believer?

Prior to this, in verses 1-17 we learn who Paul prays for: the Church. He describes it as “destined and appointed to live for the praise of [God’s] glory . . . according to the counsel of his will” (v. 12, 11). The counsel of His will is “a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in [Christ] things in heaven and things on earth” (v. 10). To put it another way, Paul is praying for a Christ-awakening among those destined and appointed by Him to stand in the Gap with Him.

When the hearts of such people are able to really see, they will make an extraordinary discovery in three important areas, and awakening will happen! Paul asks God to awaken us to (1) the hope of our calling in Christ (v. 18)—the contemporary as well as the eternal victories awaiting those “destined” to stand in the Gap; (2) God’s resources in the saints (v. 18)—Christ’s global Body, adequately equipped by Him as the Head to bring praise to God’s grace among all the nations; (3) God’s power at work in us (v. 19-23)—the very power that raised Christ from death and is right now summing up all things under Him as Lord, doing so through His people around the world.

Today’s Christian students are key to helping the whole American church break through the logjam of pea-sized Christianity.

Paul carefully notes in his prayer that only the Holy Spirit can bring this awakening to pass. He alone can give us new eyes for the world. As Paul prays further in Ephesians 3, the Spirit strengthens God’s people in their inner being with the mighty love of Christ, which, in turn, can fill the height, depth, width, and length of the whole Gap through them (v. 14-19).

Could we desire any more than that God would give His people such an experience? What if this prayer were answered in your Bible study group or your church—and in groups like yours around the whole world?

Watch It Surface in the Student World

If such an awakening is imminent, look for it to surface dramatically among those usually more open and more mobile—the student world. From the campus can come a movement that renews the Church and provides the thrust for fulfilling the Great Commission. As so often in the past, today’s Christian students are key to helping the whole American church break through the logjam of pea-sized Christianity. They could set a new pace for all of us in aggressive concern for the world’s unevangelized.

In his book Student Power in World Missions, David Howard reviews a number of student movements for missions, including the one begun at the rainy afternoon “haystack meeting” in Massachusetts in 1806 when Williams College students prayed about the world and their place in
reaching it. Those students helped found the first American Protestant foreign missionary society. Similar campus awakenings lead Howard to this observation:

"God's concern is world-wide. How the Church has responded to that mandate is also clear in the light of history. All too frequently the Church has fallen into lethargy in relation to its world-wide obligations. But God does not leave Himself without a witness. Whether it be a Nicolas Von Zinzendorf, a Samuel J. Mills, a C.T. Studd, a Robert Wilder, a John R. Mott, a Jim Elliot or a hundred others who could be named, God singles out a man to prophecy to His Church. And with remarkable frequency that man has been a student."  

The Student Volunteer Movement

The coming awakening could well follow the pattern of the Student Volunteer Movement (SVM). It began when one hundred students volunteered for missionary service in 1886 at a Bible conference led by evangelist Dwight Moody, himself a product of the Great Awakening of 1858. The movement experienced growth for the next forty years. It placed twenty thousand new missionaries overseas and tens of thousands more missions-minded laymen in the Church around the world. By 1920 about 70 percent of the total North American missionary force came from the SVM.

Although they called themselves "Volunteers," not World Christians, they gladly took the same kind of stand in the Gap. By signing a pledge that read, "It is my purpose, if God permit, to become a foreign missionary," a student became a Volunteer. Even those who never travelled overseas maintained a strong commitment to their world vision by supporting those who went. Many full-time Christian workers at home, both on campuses and with ministries in the church and society, first found their calling as Volunteers and continued to obey that vision where they were.

The SVM had dramatic repercussions on the Church at large. It mobilized the vision of laypeople through extensive study programs on world missions and directly through the Laymen's Missions Movement. It disseminated literature on missions and influenced Christian periodicals to feature missions in a fresh and vital way. It convinced many Christians that such a stupendous enterprise as world evangelization was feasible through the resources available to them. Local churches found a new faith for missions through their personal interactions with enthused Volunteers. Whole denominations were inspired to increase the efforts of their own missions boards. Giving to missions increased sharply.

Nominal Christians were renewed and unbelievers won to Christ as society became aware that Christianity was a present-day, vital, worldwide, world-changing movement, sufficient for the needs of people everywhere. Christians were moved to aggressive evangelism at home by their growing commitment to it abroad.

Is the Time Ripe?

Can it happen again? Are Christian students today looking for a cause this big, this compelling, this life-changing? Or has the campus mood changed significantly enough from the SVM days to make such a movement unlikely?

Noted campus watcher and UCLA psychologist, Alexander Astin, says today's students have given up on campus demonstrations and protests, but they are still firmly anti-establishment and anti-regulation. They want to move and act freely. He claims that "activism" could be easily revived if

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the right cause came along. Students might get involved in things that change the world, but only in a people-to-people context; and they want something that works.

Best-seller Megatrends by futurologist John Naisbitt, describes one fascinating trend for American society over the next two decades: the revolutionary change of outlook from thinking nationally and acting selfishly to thinking globally while acting on it locally. In other words, having a world vision will lead to corporate and very interpersonal action within local communities. Certainly such widespread volunteerism can, therefore, be anticipated not only among churches, and especially in society at large, but even more in local campus fellowships. In fact, it may be the young, as emerging leadership for the twenty-first century, who set the pace for all of us. This has happened repeatedly in former generations.

Christ’s great desire is to awaken students to the world-sized vision of Acts 1:8 and its fulfilment in this generation.

One strong indication that the Spirit of God may be challenging today’s student with a new vision for Christ’s global cause is the tremendous response to world missions at the InterVarsity Urbana Student Missions Conventions, held every three years during the Christmas holidays at the University of Illinois. Students who indicated in writing their willingness to seriously explore how they might volunteer to stand in the Gap rose from 8 percent of twelve thousand delegates in 1970, to 28 percent of fifteen thousand in 1973, to 55 percent of seventeen thousand at Urbana 79. Time magazine correctly predicted Urbana’s statistics: “The U.S. Protestant missionary movement has depended on collegiate enthusiasm, and that enthusiasm is increasing at a remarkable rate . . . The Evangelical movement clearly treats overseas missions as a growth industry.”

Christ’s great desire is to awaken our students to the world-sized vision of Acts 1:8 and its fulfilment in this generation through them, and through the churches who obey that vision with them.

None of this emphasis on students is intended to lessen the significance of the local church in missions. As someone has said, “It’s the local church that changes the world.” Illustrations of local churches mobilized for mission action abound today as never before.

But the fact remains, the commitment and godly zeal of young people is the future of the local church. And further, history proves that when God has mobilized the youth as World Christians, local churches themselves find renewed determination to be the discipling, sending base of operations for the new mission surge at their doorstep. We might call a revived student mission movement the “firstfruits” of the mighty mission revival God is preparing for the whole Church.

Clearly, today God is reviving a new movement of student involvement in world missions. This new movement will not exactly duplicate previous ones. The issues are broader and the possibilities far greater than before. But the fact and the spirit of this movement will be consistent with God’s ways through students in the past.

Look with me as the “sunrise of missions” hits our campuses:

• As the past ten years witnesses the largest student missions conventions of their kind in the history of the Church, followed by scores of local missions training weekends involving as many as five thousand at key locations around the nation.

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4 *Time Magazine*, January 10, 1977, p. 56.
• In a small action group of six men in the Midwest that justifies its existence by their regular ministry to international students on their campus.

• As InterVarsity, Campus Crusade, Navigators, and International Students Incorporated jointly sponsor “Operation Prayer” to mobilize all their students in a common effort of prayer, to intercede together each day for the same country of the world, using a “prayer diary.”

• As a New England black student is commissioned by his white friends to begin an evangelistic Bible study in the black fraternity among students who are cut off from the witness of most white Christians by cultural and prejudicial barriers.

• As over 250 students, after four weekends of intensive cross-cultural training, go to serve with missionaries in sixty foreign countries through Student Training in Missions (STIM) program, and return to share expanded world visions with their own groups.

• As a group at a southern California school organizes its own conferences on world evangelization and accommodates hundreds of other students who share the weekend with them.

• As 185 students and student workers, representing various campus Christian movements in twenty-six nations, meet in Scotland for consultation on mobilizing students and churches in their various countries to reach the two and one-half billion people at the widest end of the Gap.

That’s the stuff Great Awakenings are made of! It can be dramatically multiplied in the near future, by God’s grace, if we will seek it, ask for it, and receive it; then let it flow through us, through the campus, through the church, and out to the ends of the earth. That’s precisely what the Christian movement needs at this critical hour!

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).
PART TWO
A JOURNEY INTO WORLD CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP

And the Lord said to me: “Rise and stand . . . I am sending you to the nations to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they might be forgiven and stand with those who have bridged the Gap through me.” Wherefore, I have not been disobedient to that heavenly vision.

Acts 26:16, 18-19

author paraphrase
Chapter 8 - Catch the Vision! See God’s Worldwide Purpose in Christ

Fact: There Is a Worldwide Purpose

God’s worldwide purpose is working its way out through history and among the nations. From Adam to Abraham to Israel to the exiles who returned to rebuild the Temple, that purpose was active but often channelled through one family, one clan, or one tribe. But from Christ to the Twelve to the early Church to Paul’s missionary band and through the two-thousand year impact of the Christian movement, it has flowed widely in a global direction that might be outlined as follows:

- **Penetrate** all human cultures with the reconciling gospel and power of Jesus Christ so as to
- **Persuade** all kinds of peoples to become obedient disciples of Christ and responsible members of His Church where they live, so as to
- **Project** into every society the redemptive alternatives of God’s Kingdom against the destructive forces of evil, so as to
- **Press** the course of history toward the climactic return of the Lord Jesus to reign visibly over His victorious Kingdom, so as to
- **Permeate** the whole earth with the knowledge of the glory of God as the waters cover the seas.

It is a purpose marked by love. In one sense world missions is the extension of the love shared eternally among the three Persons of the Godhead. That same love reaches out toward His lost children at the widest end of the Gap. As we face a world of over three billion who have never clearly heard the good news of God’s purpose, we must never forget that ultimately the fulfilment of all that is in God’s heart does not depend on the limitations of their faith or ours, but on the boundlessness of His eternal love and justice (see Isa. 45:22-25).

Christ: The Centre of the Purpose

Christ’s coming isn’t one in a series of equally significant events in God’s worldwide purpose. Rather it is the fulfilment event. He came in the fullness of times, giving ultimate meaning and direction to everything else God is doing among the nations. As Abraham’s nobler heir, Christ receives God’s purpose to bless all earth’s families and is Himself its guarantee. Through Him who takes away the sin of the whole world, God’s purpose extends once and for all beyond one nation to the ends of the earth; beyond any one cultural form of the Kingdom (Israel) to break through to people everywhere. His blood will ransom sinners from every tongue, tribe, and nation.

And, since Jesus rose and lives, He continues to lead God’s worldwide purpose to its ultimate triumph: when all things are finally summed up in Him, all His enemies destroyed, and all glory given to His Father. The kingdoms of the world will become the Kingdom of our God and of His Messiah. Then, He will shine like the sun for that cosmopolitan city the Bible calls His Bride and Wife. From beginning to end—from before the foundation of the world until the New Heaven and Earth—Christ remains the centre of God’s worldwide purpose (see Col. 1:18-20).

Therefore, He is also central to our own involvement in God’s worldwide purpose. Since He gave the Great Commission, its priority has not been diminished by two thousand years of the Church’s historical ebb and flow. The fundamental basis of the Christian world missionary movement is
Christ’s universal authority. As John Stott observes, His authority on earth allows us to dare to go to all the nations. His authority in heaven gives us our only hope of success. And, His presence with us (“Look! I am with you always to the climax of this age!”) leaves us no other choice.

The Nations: The Target of the Purpose

Christ’s Body has become the most international society in the history of mankind. This should not surprise us. Almost every book of the Bible records something of God’s intentions for and actions toward the nations. Whether we look at the table of nations in Genesis 10 or the citizenship of the New Jerusalem in Revelation 21, we find that God’s purpose has maintained one great target throughout: the world of the nations.

Even early on, when God summoned Abraham to come out from his kindred and be a part of His purpose, it wasn’t for Abraham’s sake alone. All the nations were summoned with him. “I will bless you so that you can bless the families of the earth.” All along God has intended to include people from every family and race in the inheritance of His dear Son.

When the Spirit came at Pentecost He hurled the Church toward God’s global target, across the national, cultural, and racial boundaries, all the way to the ends of the earth.

In some cases the phrase itself—“the nations”—refers to those outside the people of God: that is, mankind in general, separated by sin from their Creator-Redeemer and His Covenant. But in a majority of cases, and often in the New Testament’s use of ta ethne (Greek for “the nations” or “the peoples”) the meaning becomes more specific. It refers to the thousands of cultural groupings around the world that make up the grand, creative, diverse community of humankind.

God desires to declare His glory in the face of Jesus Christ within every one of these societies. He desires to reach them in ways expressive of who they are and in keeping with their own unique ways of experiencing His salvation (see Eph. 3:4-11).

When the Spirit came at Pentecost He hurled the Church toward God’s global target, across the national, cultural, and racial boundaries, all the way to the ends of the earth. Today, as a result, Christianity is the only world religion without a cultural home base or headquarters, a constant reminder that God is on target. The world missionary movement is both international and intercultural, from, to, and within all six continents. No doubt about it: a day will come when people from every tongue and tribe will be gathered before the throne in praise, to reflect like a grand mosaic the Father’s glory through Christ Jesus, their Saviour. And every piece of that human mosaic once it has been penetrated and purified by the fire of the gospel, will make essential contributions in creating that spectacular display.

The Gospel: The Power of the Purpose

In this moment of history, God’s Kingdom demonstrates its presence and power through the impact of His Good News in Jesus Christ, proclaimed by word and deed. God’s great redemptive purpose expands throughout the earth—His Kingdom breaks through into individual lives and into whole societies—as the gospel is properly understood, believed, and obeyed. Do you want to see evidence that God’s Kingdom is near? Look at the spread of the gospel for almost two thousand years across numerous human barriers around the globe to create a truly worldwide community of
faith. This is more than human ingenuity or historical accident. The best explanation for all of this is the power of the message in the hands of faithful witness.

Of course, the gospel never works in a spiritual vacuum. Wherever missionary feet have trod God has prepared the way. Creation has set the stage for the message by testifying God’s presence and glory and goodness (see Rom. 1). Conscience has set the mood for this message by testifying to man’s sin and guilt, and his coming judgment (see Rom. 2). Both creation and conscience press mankind toward all that the gospel offers.

Furthermore, the gospel’s power is inseparable from the convicting and convincing power of the Holy Spirit (see John 16). The Spirit works with the messengers, driving their witness deep into the hearers’ hearts. After all of our cross-cultural skills have been plied, the Spirit translates it at the heart level, so that anyone, anywhere can believe and be saved.

But there is more. The gospel’s power lies not only in its call to trust Christ for salvation, but also in its summons to believers to fulfill their destiny in Christ—it is good news about their direct involvement in His global cause. It is good news not only about what Jesus is for us and in us, but what He will be through us. The gospel invites us to both faith in Christ and a new life of concern for other unreached peoples for whom Christ died.

Submission to His Commission is a response totally consistent with submission to His Lordship. He saves us not only for Himself but for His saving mission. Properly understood, the gospel should ignite a radical obedience that thrusts us out together to follow our Saviour to the ends of the earth. The gospel is God’s power to save and send (see Luke 24: 45-48).

*The Church: The Agent of the Purpose*

World missions cannot happen without a vital, growing, global community of disciples who burn with the fire of a world vision. Christians aren’t meant to be a collection of spectators whom God asks to watch as He puts on a global extravaganza. We’re not to sit by passively waiting for the Kingdom to suddenly materialize before our eyes. The Church is the agent of God’s worldwide purpose. We’re to be more like a caravan of ambassadors, going forth to bless the families of the earth, than a royal entourage basking in the sunlight of God’s love for us.

It is just as proper, maybe even more so, to say Christ’s global cause has a Church as to say Christ’s Church has a global cause. Because the Church exists more for the benefit of the unreached world outside her own community than for those who are already safely inside. Citizens of Christ’s unshakeable Kingdom are empowered by Him with exclusive authority to be co-workers with Him in fulfilling His global cause.

We could characterize this community as both a family and an army (See 1 Tim. 3:15-16). Married to Christ the Church has an implanted desire from God’s Spirit to lovingly reproduce new children for Him within every cultural womb on earth. She wants to be the “household of God.” And yet, wherever this household is found it is always a colony of settlers from another land, planted among earth’s families as God’s agent of Kingdom-life in their midst.

But as an army—a “bulwark”—she is equipped with grace and truth to march through the Gap, overthrowing the rule of sin in human hearts, as she carries out her role as the great change agent for the Kingdom in this world. “When we say with Paul, ‘O Death, where is thy sting? O Grave, where is thy victory?’ we are shouting out our battle cry as God’s liberation front in the world, moving through the world freeing the captives” (John Perkins).
Missions: The Process of the Purpose

The world missionary movement is the longest sustained human enterprise in history, and today it is touching the world with unparalleled impact. What exactly is missions? Certainly it is more than the Protestant missionary machinery developed over the last two hundred years. Missions could be defined as “the intentional, sacrificial penetration of major human barriers by a global church through specially sent cross-cultural messengers of the gospel, in order to plant communities of responsible disciples of Jesus Christ among groups of people where none have existed before.” Missions focuses on the billions of unreached peoples without culturally-near neighbours to whom they can turn for spiritual reality. The process of missions in our generation must make expansion its goal and then move faithfully toward planting churches among the 16,700 culture-groups and in the hundreds of thousands of geographical locations where no church presently exists.

Of course, the process of missions requires more than just preaching the gospel at people. The missionary enterprise confronts all levels of human need. But top priority must be given to the undiminished tragedy of billions of people unreconciled to the Father and also unaware of how this could happen.

Today five out of six non-Christians in our world have no hope unless missionaries come to them and plant the church among them. Every day eighty thousand of these die without having any contact with a church of their kind that could make the gospel intelligible in their language and within their culture. That’s why missionary strategy must concentrate on cross-cultural evangelism and church-planting. All other Christian ministries and good deeds should be balanced with this great effort, so that maximum finding of lost sinners takes place.

And who are “missionaries”? They are the specialists who fulfil the task of missions by actually working with people at wider parts of the Gap. “Missionary” is less an adjective (like “missionary doctor”) and more a noun to indicate one who penetrates major frontiers in order to plant the church where none previously existed (see Acts 11:19-21, 13:1-3).

But these specialists can never stand alone. Every missions extension (through societies and teams) must have a mission movement behind it, through local churches and Christians who pray and sacrifice. Although this process can happen by the spontaneous response of God’s people to opportunities God lays directly before us, it often rises from the planned efforts of experienced, mobile missionary groups sent out by the Body of Christ in response to His clear command, and to the pressing challenge of specific people isolated from the gospel.

Multiplied Congregations: The Strategy of the Purpose

God’s worldwide purpose has a more specific strategy than just the vague objective of “reaching the unreached.” His strategy is to multiply congregations—living models of the Kingdom of God—among all the cultural, linguistic, and ethnic groupings of the world, which in turn will carry out the reaching of their own people around them. In fact, in most places of the world, each congregation must not only be culturally like those they desire to reach around them, but must also be geographically accessible, within walking distance. Ultimately the world won’t be evangelized by multiplying the number of times evangelistic invitations are given or evangelistic activities and programs conducted, nor even by multiplying individual disciples. Ultimately the purpose will be fulfilled by multiplying obedient, evangelizing congregations of disciples, who can invite those around them to Christ and to a taste of His Kingdom in their midst.

Every congregation is potentially like a time-bomb within its own culture-group, ready to explode with Kingdom-style changes as new Christians grow and reach out to their friends and
neighbours. No matter how poor or talentless a local church may appear it is still God’s base of operation within its locality. In that congregation dwells the living Christ in all His fullness. And out of His fullness they can penetrate their society with His grace and truth until the ultimate transformations emerge.

The Scriptures continue to emphasize that numerical growth—the winning of many peoples to Christ—is one key evidence that God’s worldwide purpose is being fulfilled.

But our strategy goes one step further. God desires to multiply not only sensitive, evangelizing, transforming congregations, but also missions-minded ones. They are to become the new sending bases who commission their own people to cross other cultural frontiers into wider parts of the Gap. For God’s strategy to have its fullest expression, missions must spring from the concern of thousands of new churches worldwide, committed to fulfilling Christ’s global cause.

**Numerical Growth: A Measure of the Purpose**

To Abraham God gave the promise of descendants as numerous as the stars in heaven. As the Bible ends we are confronted with an international throng that can’t be numbered, gathered from every people-group of earth to praise the Lamb forever (see Rev. 7:9-10). And between the beginning and the end of time the Scriptures continue to emphasize that numerical growth—the winning of many peoples to Christ—is one key evidence that God’s worldwide purpose is being fulfilled.

Growth in quality must be matched by growth in quantity. Without numerical growth no one will be around through whom the purpose can be fulfilled any qualitative way. Christ works among the nations through countable people saved to obey and serve Him. Note that numbers are not an end in themselves. This emphasis on quantity is not an encouragement to pad our personal tally of converts. The numbers are people, redeemed people who in turn can love other people. If the billions unreached today are to hear of Christ there must be a visible swelling of responsible disciples and congregations of disciples throughout the world.

This measurement gives us a whole new set of questions to ask about God’s purpose. In Nigeria, for example, our question isn’t just: Is the Nigerian church healthy? We must also ask: How many churches are in Nigeria? How many people in each church? Are Nigerians coming to Christ within a few tribal groups or within each of the almost five hundred tribes? And, what percentage of the total population are the Christians within each tribal group?

God is not willing to settle for a “token presence” in each of over two hundred countries, satisfied with a few sheaves of gathered wheat, while ignoring the massive harvest still standing in the fields. If large numerical growth is possible anywhere it should be aimed for everywhere. Wherever culture-groups are accessible and ready to hear and respond, missionaries must be immediately deployed. One measure of the Kingdom’s advance and of the faithfulness of us its citizens is the growth of the Church by conversions, conserved within vital, evangelizing congregations.

**Compassion: The Pulse of the Purpose**

Compassion is caring deeply enough about people’s needs to meet those needs. The world missionary movement has been driven with compassion—caring not only about other peoples’
discontents (which can often be unholy), but about their deepest longings and their real need for Christ and His Kingdom (whether they realize it or not). Compassion sees people as whole people, and cares about everything that truly concerns them. Compassion acts! God’s compassion moves the Church to proclaim the gospel, and plant congregations where none presently exist, so that a base of operations can be established within specific groups from which all other needs can be met.

A missionary isn’t sent to direct a social revolution. But his work will lay a foundation for one.

Considering the plight of billions of unreached people today, most of whom are in the Third World, compassion morally obligates us to speak out and live out what we know to be the source of life and liberation for all peoples. It must lead us into acts of love and justice that help ease the unreached out from under the heavy loads (whether physical, psychological, social, economic, political, or demonic) that strangle the joyful reality of the message we bring them. Acts of compassion become major steps in establishing trust, so that the people we desire to reach will trust us enough to investigate who we are, what we stand for, and what we offer in Christ. Not that our compassion is conditional, depending on how favourably they respond. But as we touch people who are hurting, we will naturally build bridges over which the supreme act of compassion can reach them: reconciliation to the Father by faith in Christ Jesus (see Isa. 61:1, 4, 11).

Cultural Transformation: The Impact of the Purpose

God’s worldwide purpose will create an impact on both individuals and the community to which they belong. This will spring from the influence of faithful disciples whose living faith leads them to active, daily obedience where they are. Through the gospel, God incorporates new believers into local congregations where they learn obedience, experience personal liberation, and engage in creative evangelism that liberates others. World missions and a biblical transformation of earth’s approximately twenty-five thousand cultural groups go together.

A missionary isn’t sent to direct a social revolution. But his work will lay a foundation for one. By bringing God’s message of reconciliation and new life, he creates the opportunity for the Kingdom to break through in concrete ways, and for lives and societies to be transformed. As he teaches the implications of the Kingdom and invites new Christians to live out their allegiance to Christ, he creates the conditions for righteousness, justice, and love to eventually permeate the whole society. Since sin touches all aspects of who people are and of their cultures, God’s redeeming work in Christ should not be expected to do less on either level. A new allegiance to Christ as Lord through the gospel becomes the standard by which the believers can interpret everything else in the culture and then accept or reject or transform what they find.

One example of this impact can be seen in Nigeria. Through 140 years of missionary outreach, the Bible’s transforming work has brought forth over thirty million Christians with a government that is asking right now for thousands of expatriates to come to their country as Bible-knowledge teachers in government schools. There religious instruction is a compulsory subject at the secondary and teacher-training levels. Not only has past cultural transformation opened the door, but this biblical moulding of Nigeria’s future leaders holds promise of even greater changes ahead. A ripe opportunity awaits evangelicals, even from the U.S., to share in the impact of God’s purpose there, if we act now.


*Satan: The Enemy of the Purpose*

God has not abandoned our age to the powers of evil. But the Old Age is still hostile to any world missions activity, and its citizens won’t allow us unalloyed success. We are engaged in constant spiritual warfare with Satan’s hosts, who oppose and attempt to frustrate the world missionary advance. Those willing to follow Christ into the widest part of the Gap can’t avoid the conflict of this age-long battle.

There is no neutral territory. Among the nations God is at work calling citizens in the kingdom of darkness to a verdict about His dear Son through the gospel. Every advance in missions, especially where the Church has never been planted before, will be marked by a “fight” with the Enemy of our souls. When a person or a people-group gives allegiance to Christ as Lord, enemy held territory (see Luke 4:5-6) is “captured.” Accordingly, Satan’s only alternative is to set himself against those most deeply involved in the sending-going process of missions. The temptations, oppressions, and persecutions that these Christians experience often come from aggressively operating in the whirlpool created by the convergence of two diametrically opposed spiritual powers, one of which knows his time is very short and one of which is assured of ultimate victory (see Rev. 12:9, 11).

Of course we need to be careful not to label every resistance to the gospel as satanic. Whenever the missionary movement is rejected or opposed we must first ask: Are they really opposed to Christ Himself? Or, do they, misunderstand my communication about Him? Is my nationality or my culture suspect? Are they reacting to my insensitivity or lack of evident love? In other words, is the problem with the hearer or the speaker? Should I assume part of the responsibility for the problem rather than blame/ the devil?

But when we’re faced with Satan’s most threatening activities we can always have hope. Actually, growth of the opposition forces remains a clear indication of the even stronger growth of God’s kingdom, not of its retreat. Scripture teaches that evil is to grow concurrently with good as God’s purpose reaches its climax. Many believe the book of Revelation details this final global clash between both Kingdoms over a global missionary movement. As Satan is threatened with an accelerated worldwide harvesting he will have no choice but to deploy his forces in one last onslaught against the Church that has brought it to pass.

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).
Chapter 9 – Catch the Vision! See a World Full of Possibilities Through Christ!

Fact: There Is a World Full of Possibilities

Almost three billion people have no opportunity to make an intelligent decision for Jesus Christ. But the World Christian doesn’t despair. We know that God is not finished yet. The Kingdom still comes! Throughout the earth God’s purpose presses on, full and overflowing with possibilities for closing the Gap through His humble, obedient servants among the nations. The possibilities are as infinite as the God who gives them.

We must be careful here. A vision of possibilities—including past victories, present world trends, available personnel, money, and resources—should never overshadow the clear biblical principle that when we are weak then we are really strong because God’s power is allowed full expression through our weakness (see 2 Cor. 12:9-10). The task before us should drive the Church daily to the Master in a sense of utter dependence. Our greatest “possibility” lies in our helplessness before Him. But we also need eyes to see all the ways He has prepared to release His power once we rise from our knees to go forth.

Why is it so hard for us to see the possibilities? Often we look at the persecuted church (as in Uganda in the seventies) or at the more resistant peoples of the world (like North African Muslims) and not at data on the tremendous harvestings (as in Brazil or Nigeria or Korea). Sometimes we’re simply overwhelmed by the numbers to be reached, unaware of bold new strategies being developed right now to meet this challenge. On the other hand, a pessimistic outlook provides some Christians a smoke screen for non-involvement: for their unwillingness to seek what God has promised to do, for their lack of compassion, or for their fear of the sacrifices they might need to make.

Marked by its spiritual vitality, global diversity, and available options, the Church has never been better equipped to close the Gap. The time has come to double our efforts. We stand on the threshold of a new era if we but believe and obey. Together we must mobilize to meet the “sunrise of missions” before us.

Spiritual Renewal Points to the Possibilities

The Holy Spirit is a missionary Spirit. Whenever He stirs up His Church He always has one historical end in view: her mission to the ends of the earth. The world waits to see what God’s Spirit will do through a global Church that is renewed, surrendered, and empowered together for that mission. Today this dream may become a reality. Many believe Christians are entering a time of unequalled spiritual ferment through which God will finally complete His worldwide purpose. As revival comes to His people on a global scale, He will sweep us past the renewing changes and into the missionary impact for which He has given that renewal (see Acts 4:29-31).

We have the best news whether for tribal animists, materialistic capitalists, fervent Muslims or revolutionary Marxists.
Such revival has flamed hot in Korea for decades, with thousands joining in 5:00 A.M. prayer meetings every day. In 1980 a World Evangelization Crusade brought together one million Korean Christians for each of six evenings of challenge to worldwide outreach. On the last night thousands stood to offer themselves to go anywhere God would send them.

World Trends Point to the Possibilities

As surely as God’s hand is upon His people in their global mission, even so He is at work within the great forces that are making our world what it is today. Nothing escapes His sovereign purpose to prepare the way for fulfilling the Great Commission among all nations. Just as the New Testament world was prepared for the new beginnings in Christ’s global cause—Christ came “when the time had fully come” (Gal. 4:4)—so today God is preparing our world to allow the gospel its greatest opportunity for total saturation.

One trend in our modern world is rapid change, a change which produces more change; a trend that leads to more trends. In the upheaval of change, people around the earth are searching for meaning for their past, an identity for their present, and a foundation on which to build their future. At such an hour the gospel comes offering them that meaning, a new self-image, and the only sure foundation. People in the midst of change will listen as never before.

Another example is the growing cry for caring servants to identify with the poor and oppressed, to bring them to their feet with lasting, personal, and social deliverance. In Christ’s love we can step forth to offer ourselves and our message of hope for a hurting world as no other human community can. What a day to win a hearing if Christians, particularly in the West, assume the radical lifestyle shifts that make us available to them and involved with their cries.

We’ve never had a greater hour through Christ. We have the best news whether for tribal animists, materialistic capitalists, fervent Muslims or revolutionary Marxists. So often their search is for the right things but in the wrong places. The gospel points them to the living Christ—the right place!

The Evangelistic Acceleration Points to the Possibilities

Increasingly Christianity is a force the world must reckon with. In 1790 William Carey estimated that only one-third of the countries had any gospel witness. Today all do with one or two exceptions. More people have become Christians and more churches have been planted in this century than in all the rest of Church history combined. There are almost twice as many Christians (one billion) as adherents of any other religion, except Islam (750 million). The gospel’s impact is accelerating at sixty thousand new people a day claiming the name of Christ and sixteen hundred new churches opening their doors for the first time every Sunday. In 1900 most Christians were found in Europe and North America. By the end of this century projections indicate that 60 percent of all Christians will be found in the Third World.

One example of this is sub-Saharan Africa. In the past twenty years Christians there have increased by thirty million. It took a thousand years for the gospel to do that in Europe! There were four million African Christians in 1900 (3 percent of the population). The projection for A.D. 2000 is 351 million (46 percent of the population). The church in Africa is growing four times faster than the population at large—by sixteen thousand every day—making it the largest Christian community on any continent. The story of the Maguzawa people, in northern Nigeria, is typical. There the numbers of converts are responding so fast that church leaders claim they have lost all count!
In many parts of the earth there is an unprecedented receptivity to the Lord Jesus. More individuals and more segments of population may be open to Him than at any other time in history. In it all we can trace the sovereign hand of our God on the hearts of the nations as well as on the revived remnant who boldly serve Christ’s cause at any cost to reach them.

Of course, not every response can be measured as a legitimate new birth into the Kingdom; nor does every newly planted church truly seek to follow Christ. But statistics indicate an acceleration in the evangelistic penetration of the ends of the earth. More people are able to render an intelligent verdict for Christ than ever before. The number of churches planted worldwide speaks of new beachheads within which God’s Spirit can work to renew and mobilize Christ's witnesses among all nations, to close the Gap as never before.

Available Personnel Point to the Possibilities

Ours is not a post-missionary era. As never before the Spirit is multiplying potential labourers for the harvest. If they would all suddenly decide to become cross-cultural missionaries, for example, there might be enough evangelical Christians in South Korea alone to close the Gap within the next twenty years!

Some mission strategists have estimated that over a fifteen-year period one missionary couple can effectively learn the language and culture, share the gospel and plant a vital, witnessing church among a group of 5,000 people. If this is so, we would need 600,000 more missionaries to complete the task of total world evangelization in this century. It is further estimated that evangelical Protestants alone field a worldwide body of over 75 million able, Spirit-filled witnesses committed to sharing Jesus Christ with the unreached. Certainly, out of that Body God's Spirit can raise up the needed 600,000 cross-cultural witnesses for the other 74.4 million evangelicals to send out!

This potential can be seen in the North American church where World Vision International estimates that out of the current evangelical ferment over 200,000 new missionaries could be mobilized within the next two decades, with a little more planning and effort.

It can also be seen in the increase of Third World missionaries. More than four hundred Third World mission societies in forty-four countries have sent out over 15,000. By 1979 India had 2,208. Mowed by Nigeria’s 850, 600 from Brazil, 450 from Third World ethnic groups in the U.S., 300 from the Philippines, 140 from Japan and 100 from Korea. Missionaries have gone from Singaporean churches to the Philippines, Thailand, New Zealand, and Africa. Japanese missionaries (sent out by eleven societies) are witnessing in South America and Indonesia. Koreans are helping reach India. Africans are sending missionaries within their own continent, from one tribal or language group to another. The Aymara Indians of Bolivia (who themselves were reached only recently with the gospel) have formed a missionary association to send their own workers to Navajo Indians in the U.S.!

The Church throbs worldwide with a creative potential that’s intrinsic to her very life in the Spirit.

As never before, Christians who learn to serve one another internationally can join together under the Lordship of Christ to reach an unreached world. The human resources within His worldwide Church are immeasurable. World missionary strategy, effort, and personnel should spring from an internationally shouldered enterprise, consisting of hundreds of thousands of local churches that develop an army of mobile missionaries, mission societies, and mission teams, sent from all nations to all nations.
**Modern Resources Point to the Possibilities**

The Church throbs worldwide with a creative potential that’s intrinsic to her very life in the Spirit. This fact alone should spur us on to be creative, responsible stewards of all the modern technical advances within our world community. Twentieth-century tools have extended our voices, our time, our minds, and our bodies. Of course, evangelism is basically a meeting of persons. And, world missions is the meeting of persons across major human barriers. But many contemporary resources, tools, and methodologies provide new ways of creating more opportunities under the Lordship of Christ to make this meeting of persons happen more quickly and more effectively.

Take, for example, the tool of radio. Over sixty-five radio stations are owned and operated by Christian missions in the Third World. The first missionary radio station in Africa, ELWA, was founded more than thirty years ago. Beginning with only four-and-a-half broadcast hours a day, it now carries programming in forty-five languages, with forty-three transmission hours a day covering most of west, north and central Africa. HCJB in Quito, Ecuador, is one of the most listened to shortwave stations in the world. Rated by International Shortwave Club of London as one of the top ten, its correspondence in 1978 showed a total of 170,000 letters and reports from 131 different countries. Their Japanese department received the most—63,000 pieces of mail.

Another example of modern resources is the growing international discipline called “missiology,” the science of the strategy of the Christian mission. Knowledge from many other disciplines—anthropology, sociology, geography, linguistics, computer technology, statistical analysis, ethno-history, ethno-theology, ethno-psychology, management theory—has provided immeasurable insights to increase our effectiveness at communications, evangelistic strategy and church planting. Joining these modern resources to the recorded lessons gleaned from two millennia of composite missionary experience gives us renewed hope, under Christ, for fulfilling the Great Commission.

**“Closed Doors” and a Vision of the Possibilities**

Right now there are enough open doors to claim the attention of tens of thousands of new missionaries around the world. We must fight with hard facts the inaccurate picture that missionaries are not wanted or needed. Close to 90 percent of the nations are presently open to some form of cross-cultural evangelism—generally more so than in any previous era of the Christian movement.

Open countries are our responsibility. These we must never neglect. There are hundreds of millions of unreached people to whom missionaries can be sent. For example, over 200 million unreached peoples are still accessible throughout East Asia to direct missionary outreach. As the Church moves on these waiting fields, fervently praying for God to open new fields and new channels for outreach, He will not fail to respond.

Present missionary outreach from the U.S. is alive and well and planting churches all around the globe.

Actually, what we sometimes interpret as “closed” may be better understood as people and places we have neglected. More concentrated effort on a closed area, in faith, could turn the tide. For example, in the U.S. we have one pastor for every six hundred people. In Central America there is one missionary or strong national leader for every fifteen thousand. But in the supposedly closed or resistant Muslim world there is less than one missionary for every 500 thousand! What if the
worldwide Church attempted to pour the same intensity of prayer, manpower, research, money and literature into reaching Turkey or the seventy-one million Muslims in India as we put into reaching North or Central America? What doors might God open?

Of course, there are legitimate illustrations of “closed doors.” Often that means no more, however, than that a particular nation doesn’t grant visas to Western missionaries. Even so, there are many “back doors” which any Christian can use to reach people in such a country, if we have eyes to see those doors. For example, there are alternative approaches through literature and Scripture distribution, radio, and through self-supporting missionary personnel like businessmen, teachers, tourists, and exchange students.

Closed doors have always been temporary. The dramatic and unexpected change in attitude of the People’s Republic of China verifies that any door can suddenly open to us. Today, China is permitting Bibles to be brought in by visitors. And, she is asking for 500 thousand teachers of English, German, French and Spanish, the greatest emphasis being on English. The need for native speakers of English to do the teaching is apparent. How many English-speaking Christians are ready to walk through the open door?

The American Church’s Involvement in the Possibilities

The American missions movement has worked its way out of many jobs but certainly never out of the main job: persuading unreached peoples to become disciples of Christ and responsible members of His church where they live. Even so, present missionary outreach from the U.S. is alive and well and planting churches all around the globe.

The positive contributions of the American missionary movement suggest God’s willingness to continue to use us if we are faithful and obedient to Christ alone. As African mission leader, Patrick Johnstone, notes: “Much of the burden for world evangelization rests on believers in the U.S.A.—about 63 percent of all missionaries, and 90 percent of all funds.” Campus Crusade for Christ estimates that 80 percent of the world’s trained Christians and 70 percent of the evangelical church’s material resources can be found in our country. The fact of this reservoir holds great promise for worldwide evangelization wherever its supply is released through humble, responsible World Christians.

Surveying this reservoir, Gordon-Conwell church historian Richard Lovelace has caught a vision of the possibilities spiritual renewal could give the American church. It demands serious reflection:

While the broad mass of the laity in American churches continue to be exhaustingly absorbed in the rat race of business life, at least a portion of their finances is being diverted to furnish a substantial economic foundation for a remarkable missionary program abroad. One cannot help but wonder what the result would be if this mass of lay people could be spiritually released from their servitude in the American success system and reoriented to channel their major energies toward building the kingdom of God. Foreign missions would be enriched with a new flow of personnel and resources . . . .

If America were . . . to be “born again” for a generation as England was “born again” during the Second Awakening: if America were to become a showcase of justice as well as liberty; if Christian opinion were visibly to compel the sharing of America’s resources to feed and train the whole human community; if the network of multi-national corporations were tanned and brought into service as a rail service for the gospel, as the Clapham leaders tamed the British
empire and used it for world mission; then “the Great Century” of missionary expansion, the nineteenth, would in all likelihood yield to an even greater successor.1

Of course, America’s involvement in the possibilities must not permit a disguised resurgence of the nineteenth century’s “manifest destiny.” The new reality is partnership: missionaries from all nations to all nations; and missionaries within a nation in partnership with the Christians already involved there in the total evangelization for their countrymen.

We need to maintain a right balance in this picture. As one Third World missionary views this partnership: “World outreach must marry the missions experience of the West and the suffering experience of the East to effectively evangelize the world.”

Wherever they come from, there is one kind of missionary everyone wants: one who will identify with the people, love them, and serve them for Christ’s sake. This possibility belongs as much to missionaries from the American church as it does to all of God’s people.

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1 Richard Lovelace, Dynamics of Spiritual Life: An Evangelical Theology of Renewal (InterVarsity Press, 1979), pp. 151, 425.
Chapter 10 – Catch the Vision! See a World Full of People Without Christ!

**Fact: There Is a World Full of People**

God’s vision of the world goes beyond land mass or political boundaries. He sees a mosaic of billions of people and thousands of culture-groups.

This mosaic is not a global curio shop full of curiosity pieces nor a global warehouse full of machinery with various degrees of usefulness. Unfortunately, we humans tend to regard those who are “different” from us as either one or the other. Even our concern for people can be more with hunger than the hungry, or more with poverty than the poor, or more with evangelism than the unevangelized.

Nor may Christians rightly think of people as merely “souls,” attaching little value to their bodies or their communities. Rather, we should see a world full of “body-soul-in-community” people (to use John Stott’s phrase) with their own unique personal and cultural strengths, qualities, and contributions, as well as their weaknesses, felt needs, and sin.

World Christians, if they have God’s vision, will never become “cultural imperialists” believing that the ways of any one group of people make them more valuable than another. We maintain that the Kingdom of God is actually incomplete without those “other” people who seem so different from us, simply because they are people—people with tremendous capacity to glorify God with us through Jesus Christ, in their own culturally unique ways. That’s the great reason we want them to learn about Him and put their faith in Him.

Whenever you feel your heart beating, remember: by your seventy-third birthday it will beat, not 100 million times or even a billion, but almost three billion beats. That’s also how many people remain to be evangelized in today’s world. Three billion. That isn’t just a statistic. It is a world full of real people who suffer and die without hope and without God. This isn’t because they are more evil than you or I, or because they are less deserving of the gospel. They are people just like us, just as needy and just as special in God’s sight except, in most cases, they lack the opportunity to hear and believe.

And that’s why our hearts go on beating, isn’t it? Our physical life in Christ is interwoven with all of earth’s unreached—one heartbeat for each person. That’s a people-to-people world vision!

**Problems with Visibility**

Many are the reasons we struggle to see and care for people as God does. Among them are: the overwhelming numbers of people for us to see (over four billion); the multitude of complex human boundaries that separate us from one another (geographical, social, cultural, racial, linguistic, religious); and our own lack of information about what comprises the many thousands of culture-groups around the world.

American Christians, particularly, have problems with their vision because we master only one language, English. Many of the world’s peoples learn three or four and think nothing of it. To know someone’s language is to know their heart. As linguist Dr. Tom Brewster observes: “Americans suffer from mono-lingual myopia—a disease of the tongue that affects the vision.”
All of this can foster in us that universal human malady called “ethnocentrism.” When our whole life revolves around people who are ethnically just like us we are ethnocentric. When we avoid strangers simply because we can’t predict how their group works or figure out why they operate the way we do, we’re ethnocentric. When we quickly critique and judge others by our own cultural assumptions and values, instead of attempting to understand their behaviour within their own worldview, we display ethnocentrism.

We have a problem with visibility because we haven’t taken time to learn about people. Having a vision for people means learning to actually appreciate their rich potential to glorify Christ. We must cease being armchair tourists of the world. We must become its students, even before we become its servants. We must let people very different from us teach us how they see themselves, until we can see through their eyes. Then, and only then, can we build a strategy that loves them for Christ’s sake in ways they understand, trust, and to which they can intelligently respond.

A Vision of How We’re Similar

Human beings, wherever they are found, are similar in so many ways. Cultures differ widely but not wildly. We are similar, for example, in the symbol systems we use for verbal and nonverbal communication (words, graphics, sound, motion, spacing, timing); in our basic survival needs as human beings (food, drink, elimination, sex, security, belonging, love); in the need to adjust to major global forces around us (technological advances, energy shortages, rapid urbanization, nuclear threat); down to the built-in capacity in each of us to hear the gospel, believe in Christ, and follow Him.

People also hold in common a basic centre to their lives—what the Bible calls “heart.” It is an allegiance to something or someone or some purpose that makes sense out of life. The diversity of the human race can be uncovered by asking: “What do you think the meaning of your existence is?” There are many answers, often contradictory. But our unity is uncovered by the need of all humans to answer that question. Every person needs a way to explain, validate, and harmonize everything that goes on in their own thoughts, in their daily living and in their society.

Furthermore, all people have a heart problem. We experience evil from within our hearts and in our relationships with others. Separated from our Creator by sin, all of us suffer physical, psychological, social, and eternal consequences of evil. Therefore, we all share the same spiritual need: that our hearts be changed. The world’s universal sickness, called by E. Stanley Jones “homesickness,” demands the very same remedy: reconciliation to the Father through Christ.

Though we’re all sinful, we’re also all redeemable. God hasn’t declared anyone anywhere impossible of new birth. We all have a common capacity and ability to change and be changed, especially when the gospel comes with clarity.

One example of similarity important for missions is that of religious outlook. So many societies in the world hold to the following basic religious categories: a supreme being or high god, belief in an afterlife which gives meaning to the present life, a sense of moral evil, a struggle between powers of good and evil with man caught in the middle, expectations that a special deliverer will come, prayer as an act of communication and submission, and a reverence for creation with some sense of a divine purpose in it all. The gospel can speak directly to seven key issues on which all people reflect.

Because we are so similar, cross-cultural communications is not nearly so difficult. From the outset we should always have a sense of oneness with any of the earth’s unreached peoples. Humanity’s solidarity assures us that God’s grace can surmount any human barrier as it breaks through any of His people to fulfil His worldwide purpose among any other group of people.

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A Vision of How We’re Different

Mankind is also a large assortment of thousands of varied perspectives, experiences, and needs clothed in a great variety of cultural, racial, economic, political, and religious forms. With over nineteen thousand different cultural units worldwide (some with as few as three thousand members, others as large as 30 million), the picture is very complex. Like thousands of fingerprints these cultures differ widely. For example, there is no typical African individual or African culture. Africa’s 330 million people break down into one thousand languages and dialects, with six major ethnic categories that break down into hundreds of ethnic groups or tribes. When a single country like Nigeria incorporates scores of languages and five hundred tribal groups we begin to see that human differences are far greater than a United Nation’s list of 210 political boundaries.

There are many worlds in our one world. By Bishop Stephen Neill’s count, we could number seven major blocks: the communist-dominated world; Eastern and Southern Asia; the Muslim world; Africa; Latin America, including the Caribbean; the Pacific world; and the free world of northwestern Europe and North America. But the earth is also diversified into various age categories, climates, class structures, and standards of living. The illiterate, the dispossessed, and the hungry each live in worlds most North Americans know nothing about. Of course, the tongue divides the human race into almost six thousand worlds or languages. And, language differences are directly tied into worldview differences, too. Finally, we might distinguish the various religious worlds: Judaism, Shintoism, Hinduism, Animism, Buddhism, and Islam, to name a few. But even within Islam, for example, there are at least five major (and sometimes internally explosive) sects.

Don’t let the differences discourage you. These differences have provided God with thousands of audiovisual aids by which His eternal truths can be illustrated, visualized, comprehended, encoded, and transferred to people everywhere. Furthermore, the diversity of needs and even tragedies within the human community provides multiplied opportunities for the Body of Christ to show the world His love and convince people of their need for a Saviour. As the Church moves out to plant churches and meet those needs among such a diverse humanity, God’s grace receives a multitude of new ways to demonstrate how rich and how unlimited it can be. It is within this diversity that the missionary movement and the Kingdom of God can thrive, if we’re willing to expand on all fronts!

A Vision of the Many Worlds in America

Since Acts 1:8 focuses our evangelistic activity as much on the cultural as the geographical widths of the Gap, the “ends of the earth” may often be found living right next door to American Christians. The unique U.S. ethno-cultural panorama includes 120 ethnic groupings speaking over a hundred different languages. In the last census 75 million Americans classified themselves as members of ethnic subcultures. Many of these groups can only be reached when lay Christians, not merely professional missionaries, make conscious, planned, missionary-style efforts to cross major barriers to give them the gospel and plant the church among them—here—in America.

The “ends of the earth” may often be found living right next door to American Christians.

In fact, Conservative Baptist urban missionary Mark Marchak suggests that New York City may be America’s biggest missionary challenge. More people (eight million) live there than in forty-four of the fifty states, but the evangelical population is no more than 3 percent—probably much less.
And there is no strong evangelical base in the suburbs trying to plant churches within the Big Apple. Overall, the world of America’s urban underclass, incorporating forty million people in all, is as needy, as difficult to reach, and as dangerous to penetrate as few foreign mission fields anywhere today.

World religions, some Eastern in origin and some strongly Muslim, are successfully recruiting followers in America. They present a unique cross-cultural opportunity right next door. Muslims in America, for example, estimated to be three million with eighty-four mosques, grew as much as 400 percent in the past ten years. This makes Islam the third major religion in the U.S., and it is finding converts, often among black Americans. Further, a University of Chicago study claims that twenty million Americans belong to “fringe religious cults” like Hare Krishna and Rev. Moon’s Korean-based mixture of Bible and Eastern mysticism.

Admittedly, the predicament of most people in America is vastly different from the billions outside the U.S. who have yet to hear the gospel once, and who have absolutely no culturally-near neighbours or missionaries to tell them. Only 2 percent of the people in our country live at the widest end of the Gap. In most ways those in the Third World are much farther removed from the Christian witness than anyone here.

Still, we must not lose a vision for those next door that demand special communication efforts from American Christians if they are ever to be reached. Often they have little opportunity to hear of Christ from the tens of millions of evangelicals here, because so few of us are trying to share God’s love with them in a way that makes sense within their own unique, separate worlds.

*The Crucial Vision of the Hidden People*

The number of those to be won to Christ in Africa and Asia has more than doubled since 1900 and will more than triple by the year 2000. Almost three billion people today have little or no knowledge about Christ and His salvation. Never has the challenge been greater for total, global missionary advance.

Most of those to be reached are often called the “Hidden People.” Why? Because major cultural, racial, linguistic, social and other barriers “hide” them from the eyes and the concerned efforts of most evangelizing Christians.

About 300 million of the world’s unreached people can be reached by their Christian neighbours. But 400 million can only be reached by missionaries prepared to bridge medium cultural differences. And more than two billion can only be reached by significant new efforts to cross complex cultural and other human barriers. The latter two groups—the two and a half billion Hidden People—consist of the Hindus of Southeast Asia (656 million); the Muslims, primarily in the Middle East, North Africa and Indonesia (750 million); the Buddhist and Confucian peoples of south and southeast Asia, including almost one billion mainland Chinese; and the almost 265 million unreached animists or tribal peoples, scattered around the globe, but very evident in Africa.

Where can some of these Hidden People be found?

Consider just a few illustrations:

- In Japan the total Christian population is only 1 percent, most of whom live in the cities. But in the thousands of towns and fishing villages there is absolutely no Christian witness, and no missionaries to reach them. They are hidden.
• The Baptist church in Burma is very strong, but its membership is entirely tribes people. The 28 million Burmese who are Buddhists are practically untouched after 160 years of Christian witness.
• For every 10,000 villages in India, 9,950 have no Christian community whatsoever. Furthermore, less than 10 of its 3,000 castes and tribes have any Christians in them. And who is reaching the 490 thousand Indians living and working in the Arab Gulf states?
• In the Soviet Union only 60 percent of the people are Russians. The rest are minority groups, scattered throughout. Bibles in the Russian language are scarce, but they are nonexistent for the fifty million who belong to these ethnic and linguistic minorities.

We must not be misled by the statement that in many countries “the church has been planted.” The Christian movement in a nation may hold only a token presence. Within many countries we find numerous cultural and linguistic groups in which no church or missionary is at work. Often, as it turns out, the “planted” churches within a country exist within small ethnic pockets, like ethnic islands surrounded by oceans of men and women who, as yet, have heard nothing of God’s love—the Hidden People.

The gospel message itself remains forever the same, but the keys to unlock each piece of the human mosaic to the gospel differ vastly.

“Oceans of Hidden People” expresses both an extent of need and a depth of need. These billions (the extent) have little sense of their lostness unless the Light of the World Himself penetrates their darkness with the gospel in the hands of cross-cultural messengers. Truly they dwell at the widest end of the gap of opportunity. And unless major new efforts are made immediately to cross the barriers that separate them from the gospel, they will die in their darkness (the depth of their need).

A Vision of Strategies that Fit the Mosaic

A strategy for total world evangelization must be sensitive to earth’s beautiful mosaic of peoples. We must keep the uniqueness of individuals and their culture-groups in clear focus and learn to love them in their own contexts. People are lost within their own socio-cultural context. They are lost as members of a particular group, and this is also how they must be reached. Therefore, every piece of the world’s mosaic—every single one of the twenty-five thousand culture groups—requires uniquely designed strategies, methods and emphases that clearly fit that piece if the message is to make sense to them. This is especially true of the groups among the two and a half billion Hidden People where no church has yet been planted and where our witness, in many ways, must begin from scratch.

The gospel message itself remains forever the same, but the keys to unlock each piece of the human mosaic to the gospel differ vastly. The challenge before the world missionary movement today is to design keys that fit thousands of different locks, especially within the diversities of Asia.

We need sharp insight into the special ways each culture approaches its own language, art, technology, education, economic system, marriage, and family patterns, definitions of status and roles, laws and taboos, and its religious beliefs and rituals. True, what we learn in designing a key for one culture-group may help us with another. But in many ways, cultures do not duplicate one another. Each lock demands special attention. This is the challenge of cross-cultural communication.

For example, the mosaic in Taiwan consists of nine million Taiwanese-speaking peoples, both urban and rural, three million Mandarin-speaking, one million Hakka-speaking, plus two hundred
thousand aboriginal highlanders in six main tribes, speaking six major dialects. Each piece of the Taiwanese mosaic demands a specially-built key or evangelistic strategy to unlock it for Christ.

Our missionary objective is to make our message understandable and accessible among all peoples. The witness-bearer, therefore, is as important a link in the strategy as the one who receives that witness. If we want our gospel to get through we must look seriously at ourselves as the communicators.

Like two mountains, two cultures may never meet, but people who live on those mountains—who belong to separate cultures—can meet. One person can make himself and the good things he has to share fit into the world of the other. As Christians, we are called off our mountains to become bridges which others confidently use to come to Christ. Our effectiveness in this will determine whether or not strategies of communication are built in our generation to span the gulf for cultures at the widest end of the Gap, where over half the human race waits to hear of Christ for the first time.


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).
Chapter 11 – A Plan: Obey As You Regularly Build Your Vision

To keep a world vision warm we need to band together like coals gathered in a hearth. But World Christian groups can only burn hot when they are regularly fired-up with combustible world-sized facts! We need to study Christ’s global cause.

An informed world vision will ignite us to make significant strides as we reach out in the Gap and as we share our world vision with other believers. In all of our other studies and reading the building of a world vision must remain central. One of the most important subjects we can ever tackle concerns what God is doing throughout the earth, and how to be co-workers in it with Him.

What percentage of your efforts at Christian discipleship in the next year will be spent just educating yourself for more effective involvement in the Gap? How will you move beyond just accumulating missions facts and start building them into a framework for strategic action?

Let me illustrate why this is so vital. We’ve all tried a connect-the-dots picture puzzle. Scattered around the page the numbered dots make little sense until they’re drawn together by individual lines. Then a picture emerges. Even so, you can’t clearly see the big picture of world missions until you connect together, in manageable and meaningful ways, the grand themes that comprise a genuine world vision.

The world you care about will be no bigger than the “tribal deity” you’ve made out of Christ.

The “Catch the Vision!” chapters (8-10) provide the “dots” that help form this big picture. You’ll discover that what you read these days on world missions will either sharpen your understanding of one or more of those dots or draw lines for you that connect some of the dots together. Only those disciples actively doing this—who regularly build the world vision they’ve already caught—will be able to move out creatively and intelligently to fulfil that vision and give it to others.

There is another supreme benefit from these efforts, however. J.B. Phillips once cautioned: “Your God is too small!” But an equally important warning is: “Your world is too small!” The world you care about will be no bigger than the “tribal deity” you’ve made out of God. But if your world is too small then you’ll never fully appreciate how big your God is nor desire to glorify Him the way He deserves to be glorified: worldwide. All efforts to build your vision are really efforts at getting to know God better, as well as make Him better known throughout the gap.

Resources and ways to develop a plan to regularly build your vision are abundant. Certainly the place to begin is through Bible study with a world dimension. It’s important that you learn all you can about the key biblical passages on Christ’s global cause. And there are hundreds of them!

How to Create a World Christian Bible Study

Focus your Bible study on four basic questions:


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2. What does it mean? What is God trying to say through this passage? What are its implications for other biblical truths? What warnings does He give? What promises? What principles for daily living? What should be the impact of the passage on God’s people anywhere?

3. What does it mean to me? Apply the passage in a very personal way: What does it mean to my walk with Christ? To my dreams? My needs? My life-style? My daily responsibilities? My priorities? My relationships to other people? To my church? My family?

4. What does it mean to me as a World Christian? What aspects of my world vision does it help me build? Purpose? Possibilities? People? Part? How could it help equip me, train me, direct me, and challenge me in the specific ways I’m seeking to reach out in love right now? How could it help me give a world vision to someone else? What have I found here that I could share with another Christian to help them grow as a World Christian?

For a group Bible study you may want to wrap up with this question:

5. What does it mean to us as a team of World Christians? How do the discoveries we’ve made in the study apply to our ongoing plans to follow Christ together into the Gap? How does it stimulate, reinforce, or reshape all we’re trying to do together with Him?

Finally, here’s a bonus project in World Christian Bible study. Purchase an inexpensive edition of the Scriptures. Then use a coloured marker to highlight every verse that refers to God’s concern for, evaluations of, intentions toward, actions toward, or involvement with the nations. You might go book by book from Genesis to Revelation. Look for references to specific nations outside of Israel (small and large) as well as references to “the nations” in general. For example, a passage on Edom, or the sojourner, or worshiping Baal or other gods and idols, or foreign kings or “the peoples,” or the ends of the earth, or Creation (the heavens, the earth)—all would be eligible for your pen.

Determine what all these highlighted verses mean to your understanding of the passages that remain uncoloured. After completing one book, go back and read the colour passages only. What do you learn in them about God’s worldwide purpose in Christ? Or about the possibilities today for closing the Gap? Or about reaching unreached people? Or about your own world-sized part in it all? How should the discoveries change your life?

Other Ways to Build a World Vision

1. Keep a map of the world handy. Write to Operation Mobilization for a special “prayer map:” P.O. Box 444, Tyrone, GA 30290. Use your map to locate missionary reports, news events, places you read about, places your friends go. Let the world become your friend!

2. Study key books on world missions. Write to Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship for their listing of the best: The World Christian Book Shelf. The list indicates which books help to build the four aspects of a world vision. Or you might want to join the Global Church Growth Book Club of William Carey Library, which qualifies you to order, at a discount, books covering the whole spectrum of world missions.

3. Subscribe to key missions periodicals from the leading evangelical mission societies. Or take the Evangelical Missions Information Service, offering up-to-date news of world missions events and monthly study papers on key issues in missions today. Write: Box 794, Wheaton, Illinois 60189. (See Appendix for more ideas.)
4. Subscribe to key secular periodicals with international perspectives. They can keep you informed of world events, personalities, and needs that might relate directly to missions strategies and activities you learn about from Christian literature.

5. Take world-related and missions-related courses as part of an ongoing education project. Linguistics, world history, cultural anthropology, and international politics are a few possibilities. You may want to study the correspondence course called “Perspectives on the World Christian Movement” available through the U.S. Center for World Missions. Another option is to spend a summer or a semester studying the big picture of God’s global purpose at the Institute of International Studies at the U.S. Center for World Missions in Pasadena, California.

6. Attend missions conferences in local churches. Consider attending IVCF’s Urbana Student Missions Convention. Or, bring a World Christian Conference to your church via video through the World Christian Video Training Curriculum (see Appendix).

7. Sit at the feet of missionaries who have been involved at the front lines of world missions. For help in developing profitable discussions with a missionary visitor, write for InterVarsity’s “How to Interview a Real Live Missionary!”

8. Also, learn from Christian international students, asking them the same questions you would ask a missionary.

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).
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!

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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.2

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

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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.


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.
- **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:

• 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 invest in investigating 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).
Chapter 13 – A Plan: Obey As You Give Your Vision to Other Christians

External barriers aren’t the only ones hindering the fulfilment 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.

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?

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Conclusion – A Parable: Smog

Once upon a time there stood a startling geographical wonder. The San Gabriel Mountains, they called it. As much as the football game itself, these mountains impressed millions of sports fans everywhere during the New Year’s Day telecasts of the Rose Bowl from Pasadena, California. How gorgeous they were! So royal!

The San Gabriel Mountains ruled over the San Gabriel Valley. Here thousands of local natives went about their daily tasks—watering lawns, driving trucks, writing term papers, eating Big Macs, selling shoes—and planning future Rose Bowl games.

Every once in a while, however, the natives just had to look up and draw in a glimpse of those towering rulers. How it made their spirits soar! In a moment, living itself seemed more grand, more majestic, even during their everyday routines.

But a mysterious spell hung over the Valley. Periodically, a brownish mist, evidently some witches’ brew, shrouded it unmercifully. This mist had the power to actually make the mountains disappear! In September, for example, they might vanish for a week at a time. Down in the valley, no one’s vision rose higher than the tallest office building. And the mountain climbers in the foothills simply got lost. Nothing seemed to go right without that refreshing, exhilarating vision of the peerless peaks. Truly a sad state of affairs.

But lo! The spell worked another ghastly ill. The trucker, the student, the shoeman, the climber—everyone, in fact, was forced to cough and wheeze as they trudged through their routines. Many people cowered indoors, barely daring to breathe.

The valley natives cursed the potion, calling it “smog.” It blinded. It suffocated. There seemed to be no relief, except to cry out, “Curses on that wicked witch!”

And so it is that in every generation the world mission of Christ’s disciples faces the threat of a similarly blinding, suffocating haze. Whenever Christians turn away from the world, things soon end up like the air trapped in the Los Angeles basin. We become small-minded, self-centred, picky, schismatic, obese, lost. History bears us witness: boxed up spirituality turns stale fast. No outlet means no uplift!

Under this spell Christians eventually go blind: blind to God’s worldwide purpose in Christ; blind to the world full of possibilities for serving it right now; blind to the world full of people without any knowledge of Christ; blind to the Church’s world-sized part in reaching the world for Christ.

What’s more, under this spell Christians eventually suffocate: unable to build a clear vision of all that Christ’s global cause should mean to them; unable to become rescue teams sent out into the canyons of the world with a life-giving mission to those trapped and dying there, especially those whom most other Christians have forgotten; unable to resuscitate asphyxiated disciples, giving them a fresh vision of where Christ is going and of how they can go forth with Him.

One day the ancient Santa Ana winds rose up. Boundless! Breaking the spell, flushing the smog from the valley, restoring sparkle to the mountains and oxygen to the natives.

Again the stars studded the night sky. Again the robins returned to sing. The natives rejoiced. And throughout the mountain ravines the trapped and dying were rescued. What a glad, glad ending!
Similarly, Christians can escape the sorcery of self-centeredness. Like a mighty wind the Spirit of God can reverse the introverted patterns in our discipleship. He can uncover for us a crystal view of God’s majestic horizons—Christ’s global cause. He can inject the grandeur of the eternal mountains into all our efforts down in the valley, wherever God places us and whatever He assigns us to do. He can fill the lungs of our souls with His Breath, so that we’ll have the strength and vitality to rescue the perishing everywhere.

God’s Holy Wind can free us to move out, breathing deeply and seeing clearly. No blindness. No gasping. Released to be all we were meant to be. Free to be World Christians.

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).
2009 Disclaimer

Some of the ministries and resources in the Appendix may no longer exist, while others may have modified their names or (in many cases) be located at different addresses or identified with new publishers. Therefore, I recommend you regard the Appendix, first of all, as a testimony to all that God was raising up for Christ’s global cause thirty years ago. It surely holds historical importance. In addition, I suggest you turn to Google to hunt down those resources that interest you, to see how you might get in touch. To start you on this adventure, we’ve provided a few updates at the beginning of Appendix for the eBook edition.

* To help get you started, we have updated some of the mission information to include websites available in 2009.

Appendix: Sources and Resources

Nondenominational Mission Society Websites

African Enterprise, Inc.
http://www.africanenterprise.org/

AIM (Africa Inland Mission)
http://www.aimint.org/

Ambassadors for Christ, Inc.
http://www.afcinc.org/

American Society of Missiology
http://www.asmweb.org/

Andes Evangelical Mission
(Merged with SIM International)
http://www.sim.org/

Arab World Ministries
(formerly) North Africa Mission
http://www.awm.org/

Asian Access
(Formerly) Language Institute for Evangelism
http://www.asianaccess.org

Asian Outreach
http://www.asianoutreach.org

Association of Church Missions Committees (ACMC)
http://www.acmc.org/
Baptist Mid-Missions
http://www.bmm.org/

Bethany International Ministries
(formerly) Bethany Fellowship Missions
http://www.bethanyinternational.org/

Bread for the World Newsletter
http://www.bread.org/

Campus Crusade for Christ
http://www.ccci.org

Child Evangelism Fellowship, Inc.
http://cefonline.com/

China Ministries International, Inc.
http://www.cmius.org/

Christian Mission for the Deaf
(formerly) Christian Mission for Deaf Africans
http://www.cmdeaf.org/

CLC International
(formerly) Christian Literature Crusade, Inc
http://www.clcus.org

Compassion, Inc.
http://www.compassion.com/

Daystar International
http://daystarint.org/

Every Home for Christ
(formerly) World Literature Crusade
http://www.ehc.org/

Far East Broadcasting Company
http://www.febc.org/

Fellowship of Faith for the Muslims
http://www.ffmna.org/site/home.php

Food for the Hungry, Inc.
http://www.fh.org/

Frontiers
http://frontiers.org/

Greater Europe Mission
http://www.gemission.org/
IFES (International Fellowship of Evangelical Students)
http://www.ifesworld.org/

International Service Fellowship, known as Interserve
(formerly) Bible and Medical Missionary Fellowship
http://www.interserveusa.org/

International Students, Inc.
http://www.isionline.org/

JEMS (Japan Evangelical Missionary Society)
http://www.jems.org/

Latin America Mission
http://www.lam.org/

The Lausanne Movement
http://www.lausanne.org/

Map International
http://www.map.org/

Mission Aviation Fellowship
http://www.maf.org/

Missionary Internship, Inc
http://www.mti.org/

New Tribes Mission
http://www.ntm.org/

O.M.S. International, Inc.
http://www.omsinternational.org/

OMF International
(formerly) Overseas Missionary Fellowship
http://www.omf.org/

Operation Mobilization
http://www.om.org/

Overseas Crusades, Inc.
http://www oci.org/

Overseas Ministries Study Center
http://www.omsc.org/

Pocket Testament League
http://www.pocketpower.org/
**SIM International** (formerly)
Sudan Interior Mission, Inc
http://www.sim.org/

**Slavic Gospel Association, Inc.**
http://www.sga.org/

**The Evangelical Alliance Mission**
http://www.teamworld.org/

**TWR**
(formerly) TransWorld Radio
http://www.twr.org/

**U.S. Center for World Mission**
http://www.uscwm.org/

**UFM Worldwide (Unevangelized Fields Mission)**
http://www.ufm.org.uk/

**World Concern**
http://www.worldconcern.org

**World Evangelical Fellowship**
http://www.worldevangelicalfellowship.org/

**World Relief Commission, Inc.**
http://worldrelief.org/

**World Team**
(merger of Worldteam with RBMU International in 1995)
http://www.worldteam.org/

**World Vision International**
http://www.wvi.org/

**Worldwide Evangelization Crusade**
http://www.wec-int.org

**Wycliffe Bible Translators**
http://www.wycliffe.org/

**Youth With A Mission, Inc.**
http://www.ywam.org/

**Zwemer Center for Muslim Studies**
http://www.ciu.edu/muslimstudies/
Books

Much of the formative thinking for In the Gap sprang from the excellent insights gleaned from the following books. Some are now out of print, but most are available in the libraries of Christian colleges and seminaries.


Nondenominational Mission Society Magazines

ACMC Newsletter
Association of Church Missions Committees
1021 E. Walnut, Suite 202, Pasadena, CA 91106

Action Report
Language Institute for Evangelism
P.O. Box 200, Alhambra, CA 91802

Africa Now
Sudan Interior Mission, Inc.
P.O. Box C, Cedar Grove, NJ 07009

The Andean Outlook
Andes Evangelical Mission
508 Central Ave., Plainfield, NJ 07060

Asian Report
Asian Outreach
G.P.O. Box 13448, HONG KONG

Bread for the World Newsletter
207 East 16th Street, New York, NY 10003

Broadcaster
Far East Broadcasting Company
P.O. Box 1, Whittier, CA 90608

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Brown Gold
New Tribes Mission, Woodworth, WI 53194

China and the Church Today
Chinese Church Research Center
1564 Edge Hill Rd., Abington, PA 19001

Church Growth Bulletin
Overseas Crusades, Inc.
P.O. Box 66, Santa Clara, CA 95050

CMF Record
Carver Foreign Missions, Inc.
Morris Brown Sta., Box 92091, Atlanta, GA 30314

Communique and Ambassadors
Ambassadors for Christ, Inc.
P.O. Box AFC, Paradise, PA 17562

Compassion Magazine
Compassion, Inc.
7774 W. Irving Park Rd., Chicago, IL 60634

The Cross and the Crescent
North Africa Mission
239 Fairfield Ave., Upper Darby, PA 19082

Deaf Witness
Christian Mission for Deaf Africans
P.O. Box 1452, Detroit, MI 48231

Doorways (quarterly)
International Students
P.O. Box C, Colorado Springs, CO 80906

East Asia Millions
Overseas Missionary Fellowship
404 S. Church St, Robesonia, PA 19551

Evangelizing Today’s Child
Child Evangelism Fellowship, Inc.
P.O. Box 348, Warrenton, MO 63383

Everybody
World Literature Crusade
20232 Sunburst St, Chatsworth, CA 91311
**FAX**
Food for the Hungry, Inc.
P.O. Box 200, Los Angeles, CA 90041

**Floodtide** (quarterly)
Christian Literature Crusade, Inc.
P.O. Box C, Fort Washington, PA 19034

**Focus**
Missionary Internship, Inc.
P.O. Box 457, Farmington, MI 48024

**Focus News**
International Students, Inc.
P.O. Box C, Colorado Springs, CO 80906

**Global Church Growth Bulletin**
Overseas Crusades
3033 Scott Blvd., Santa Clara, CA 95050

**Global Report**
World Evangelical Fellowship
P.O. Box 670, Colorado Springs, CO 80401

**GO and LINK**
Bible and Medical Missionary Fellowship
P.O. Box 418, Upper Darby, PA 19082

**Gospel in Context: A Focus on the Contextualization of the Gospel in the Six Continents**
1564 Edge Hill Road, Abington, PA 19001

**Greater Europe Report**
Greater Europe Mission
P.O. Box 668, Wheaton, IL 60187

**Harvest Today**
World Team
Box 343038, Coral Gables, FL 33134

**Harvest**
Baptist Mid-Missions
4205 Chester Ave., Cleveland, OH 44103

**In Other Words**
Wycliffe Bible Translators
19891 Beach Blvd., Huntington Beach, CA 92648
In Touch
IFES
10 College Rd., Harrow, Middlesex HA1 1BE, ENGLAND

Inland Africa
Africa Inland Mission
P.O. Box 178, Pearl River, NY 10965

Intercessor (monthly prayer bulletin)
Mission Aviation Fellowship
P.O. Box 2828, Fullerton, CA 92633

International Viewpoint (monthly)
Christian Literature Crusade, Inc.
P.O. Box C, Fort Washington, PA 19034

Inter-Seminary Student Missions Newsletter
P.O. Box 13053, Portland, OR 97213

JEMS
Japan Evangelical Mission
P.O. Box 640, Three Hills, Alberta, CANADA

Latin America Evangelist
Latin America Mission
285 Orchard Terrace, Bogota, NJ 07603

Lifeline
Unevangelized Fields Mission
P.O. Box 306, Bala-Cynwyd, PA 19004

Link
Interlink
Box 832, Wheaton, IL 60187

Map Miniature Magazine (quarterly)
Map Progress (quarterly)
Map International
P.O. Box 50, Wheaton, IL 60187

Message of the Cross
Bethany Fellowship Missions
6820 Auto Club Rd., Minneapolis, MN 55438

Missiology: An International Review American Society of Missiologists
1605 E. Elizabeth, Pasadena, CA 91104

© 2009, David Bryant / www.ProclaimHope.com
Mission Aviation (quarterly)
Mission Aviation Fellowship P.O. Box 2828, Fullerton, CA 92633

Mission Frontiers
U.S. Center for World Mission
1605 E. Elizabeth St., Pasadena, CA 91106

Missions Advance Research and Communication Newsletter
World Vision/MARC
919 W. Huntington Dr., Monrovia, CA 91109

Newsletter
Daystar Communications, Inc.
P.O. Box 10123, Eugene, OR 97401

Newsletter
TransWorld Radio
560 Main St., Chatham, NJ 07928

Occasional Bulletin
Overseas Ministries Study Center
P.O. Box 443, Fort Lee, NJ 07024

O.M. News (quarterly)
Operation Mobilization
P.O. Box 148, Midland Park, NJ 07432

QMS Outreach
O.M.S. International, Inc.
P.O. Box A, Greenwood, IN 46142

The Other Side: A Magazine of Christian Discipleship
(Not actually a mission society, but good perspectives on world trends and needs.)
Box 12236, Philadelphia, PA 19144

Outlook
African Enterprise, Inc.
P.O. Box 988, Pasadena, CA 91102

Pray for China Prayer Bulletin
Pray for China Fellowship
1423 Grant St., Berkeley, CA 94703

Prayer Fellowship Bulletin (monthly)
Regions Beyond Missionary Union
8102 Elberon Ave., Philadelphia, PA 19111
Prayer Letters (weekly)
Operation Mobilization
P.O. Box 148, Midland Park, NJ 07432

Prayer News Bulletin
Fellowship of Faith for the Muslims
205 Yonge St., Rm. 25, Toronto, Ontario, MSB 1N2 CANADA

Regions Beyond (quarterly)
Regions Beyond Missionary Union
8102 Elberon Ave., Philadelphia, PA 19111

Reporter
World Relief Commission, Inc.
P.O. Box 44, Valley Forge, PA 19481

SCAN: A Six Continent Reading Service for the Renewal of Church and Mission
1564 Edge Hill Rd., Abington, PA 19001

Slavic Gospel News
Slavic Gospel Association, Inc.
P.O. Box 1122, Wheaton, IL 60187

Student World Report
IFES
233 Langdon St., Madison, WI 53703

Student and World Connection
Inter-Varsity Missions
233 Langdon Madison, WI 53703

Themelios
Theological Students Fellowship
233 Langdon St., Madison, WI 53703

Today’s Christian
Fuller Evangelistic Assoc.
Box 989, Pasadena, CA 91102

20th Century Disciple
Youth With A Mission, Inc.
P.O. Box 1099, Sunland, CA 91040

Update
Presbyterian Center for Missions Studies
1605 E. Elizabeth, Pasadena, CA 91104
Update
(World Concern) Box 33000, Seattle, WA 98133

Wherever
The Evangelical Alliance Mission
P.O. Box 969, Wheaton, IL 60187

World Christian (an independent, evangelical magazine created to challenge,
encourage and equip Christians who have a heart for the world)
P.O. Box 40010, Pasadena, CA 91104

World Evangelization
Lausanne Committee on World Evangelization
P.O. Box 1100
Wheaton, IL 60189

World Vision Magazine and International Intercessor
World Vision International
919 W. Huntington Dr., Monrovia, CA 91109

World Wide Challenge
Campus Crusade for Christ
Arrowhead Springs, San Bernardino, CA 92401

Worldwide News
Pocket Testament League
117 Main St, Lincoln Park, NJ 07035

Worldwide Thrust
Worldwide Evangelization Crusade
P.O. Box A, Fort Washington, PA 19034

The Zwemer Institute Newsletter (to reach unreached Muslims for Christ)
Zwemer Institute, Box 365, Altadena, CA 91001

NOTE: For $32.50 a year the Evangelical Missions Information Service
provides the following vision-building materials:

Missions News Service—a bi-monthly update on current activities
in the whole world of missions
Pulse—a periodical in-depth study of missions in key regions of the world,
such as Asia, Latin America, Africa, Europe, etc.
Evangelical Missions Quarterly—news and hard-hitting articles
on mission trends and challenges today.
To subscribe, write to: Evangelical Missions Information Services
Box 794, Wheaton, IL 60187
Magazines from Some Denominations with Large Missionary Forces

Alliance Witness
Christian Missionary Alliance
Overseas Ministries, P.O. Box C, Nyack, NY 10960

Call to Prayer (monthly)
Assemblies of God
Division of Foreign Missions
1445 Boonville Avenue, Springfield, MO 65802

Commission
Southern Baptist Convention
Foreign Mission Board, Box 6597, Richmond, VA 23230

Firm Foundations (weekly)
Churches of Christ Firm Foundation Publishing House
Box 610, Austin, TX 78767

Good News Crusades (bimonthly)
Assemblies of God
Division of Foreign Missions
1445 Boonville Avenue, Springfield, MO 65802

Gospel Advocate (weekly)
Churches of Christ
Firm Foundation Publishing House
Box 610, Austin, TX 78767

Impact
Conservative Baptist Foreign Missions Society
Wheaton, IL 60187

Mission Films

The following are just a few of the resources available to you for slide/tape and film presentations on world missions. Contact each organization for full information on what they offer and their rental fees (if any). When you write, be sure to specify your audience and request information on the charges to you.

Africa Inland Mission
Box 178
Pearl River, NY 10965

Conservative Baptist Foreign Missions Society
Box 5
Wheaton, IL 60187

Gospel Films
Box 455
Muskegon, MI 49443
Organizations

Association of Christian Ministries to Internationals
233 Langdon
Madison, Wisconsin 53703

A cooperative effort of more than 20 groups seeking to reach international visitors to the U.S.

Association of Church Missions Committees
1620 S. Myrtle Ave. PO Box ACMC
Monrovia, CA 91016 Wheaton, Illinois 60187

Their motto is “Churches Helping Churches in Missions”

Offers:

- Training conferences for churches at the local level
- National conferences
- Missions Resource Center
- Missions Policy Handbook
- Missions Education Handbook
- Plus other helpful literature and consulting services for the local church
Campus Crusade for Christ  
Arrowhead Springs  
San Bernardino, California 92404

Offers:
- International Resources Office  
- Agape Movement (vocational witness overseas)  
- STOP OUT! Program (1 year overseas)  
- International Summer Projects  
- *World Wide Challenge* magazine  
- Here’s Life World! campaign  
- Specialists on international student ministry  
- Staff openings in over 100 countries outside USA

Christian Nationals Evangelism Commission  
1470 N. Fourth St.  
San Jose, California 95112  
Opportunities to give support ministry to established indigenous evangelistic work in 35 nations.

Evangelicals for Social Action  
PO Box 76560  
Washington, D.C. 20013

Offers:
- World Peace Projects  
- Workshops on Discipleship and International Justice  
- Public Policy Task Forces (such as urban concerns)  
- Updates on a variety of issues that directly or indirectly impinge on world evangelization

Evangelical Foreign Missions Association (EFMA)  
1430 K Street N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20005

Involving both denominational and nondenominational societies,  
it is the mission affiliate of the National Association of Evangelicals.

Offers:
- *Missionary News Service* (semi-monthly)  
- *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*

Evangelical Missions Information Service  
Box 794  
Wheaton, Illinois 60187

Offers:
- *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*  
- *Missionary News Service*  
- Pulses (Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, Chinese World, Muslim World)
Global Church Growth Book Club
1705 Sierra Bonita Ave.
Pasadena, California 91104

Offers: A special selection of books (discounted) suited to those exploring the World Christian theme. Also, the major outlet for hundreds of titles published by William Carey Library. Many books recommended in *In the Gap* are available through them.

Gospel Light Publications
2300 Knoll Dr.
Ventura, California 93003

Offers:
- World Christian Video Training Curriculum
- Regal Books (ask for their catalogue and a listing of their titles on world missions)

Interdenominational Foreign Missions Association (IFMA)
Box 395
Wheaton, Illinois 60187

An association of evangelical foreign mission societies without denominational affiliation.

Offers:
- *Missionary News Service* (semi-monthly)
- *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*

International Fellowship of Evangelical Students
PO Box 270
Madison, Wisconsin 53701

International Students Incorporated
Box C
Colorado Springs, Colorado 80901

Offers:
- Literature both for training and evangelism with foreign students
- Training conferences
- Staff nationwide

InterVarsity Missions
233 Langdon St.
Madison, Wisconsin 53703

Offers:
- World Christian Handbooks Series
- World Christian Conferences
- World Christian Video Training Curriculum
- Student Training in Missions
- Overseas Training Camps
- World Missions Training Camp, USA
- URBANA Student Missions Convention
- Mission Specialists nationwide
- Christmas House Parties for international students
- Student Foreign Missions Fellowship
InterVarsity Press  
Downers Grove, Illinois 60515  
Ask for their latest catalogue and a listing of their titles on world missions.

Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization  
Whitefield House  
186 Kennington Park Rd.  
London SE11 4 BT, England  
An international network to alert Christians to the needs and opportunities in world evangelization and to foster cooperative efforts to that end among the worldwide evangelical community. Publishes monthly the *World Evangelization Information News Service*, free upon request.

National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A.  
Division of Overseas Ministries  
475 Riverside Drive  
New York, New York 10027  

National Prayer Committee  
PO Box 6826  
San Bernardino, California 92412  
An interdenominational effort of recognized prayer leaders to mobilize prayer in the church, nationally and locally, for spiritual awakening and world evangelization.

Offers:

- Training materials
- Conferences
- Consultations and other services

Navigators  
PO Box 1659  
Colorado Springs, Colorado 80901  
Involved in 34 countries, the Navs offer opportunities to students who have been helped first in their specialized training programs. *Nav Log* highlights their work around the world.

U.S. Center for World Mission  
1605 E. Elizabeth St.  
Pasadena, California 91104  

Includes:

- Institute for Chinese Studies
- Institute for Muslim Studies
- Institute for Hindu Studies
- Institute for Tribal Studies
- Order for World Evangelization
- Fellowship of World Christians
- Oversees Counseling Service
- Frontier Fellowship
- United Presbyterian Center for Mission Studies
- Episcopal Church Missions Community
• Fellowship of Artists in Cultural Evangelism
• Institute of International Studies
• Plus many other organizations

It also offers a correspondence course for World Christians entitled Perspectives on the World Christian Movement, a periodical Mission Frontiers, and a daily prayer guide, Global Prayer Digest.

World Evangelical Fellowship
Wheaton, Illinois 60187

An association of national evangelical fellowships, committed to mutual support and exchange in fulfilling the task of world evangelization. Publishes a quarterly bulletin Global Report, free on request.

World Relief Commission
P.O. Box WRC
Wheaton, Illinois 60187

One of many fine organizations that provides meaningful ways to minister to physical needs in Christ’s name.

World Vision International/Missions Advanced Research and Communication Center (MARC)
919 West Huntington Dr.
Monrovia, California 91016

Includes:
• Ministry to the hungry
• Community development projects
• Training for national pastors
• Child sponsorship programs
• Plus many excellent materials developed through their MARC Division, particularly from their research into the Hidden Peoples. Write for a listing.

There are many other fine organizations to which you can turn as you obey your world vision. Write to InterVarsity Missions for a listing of the many that sponsor displays at the URBANA Student Missions Convention. Or, you may want to consult the resource tool: Mission Handbook: North American Protestant Ministries Overseas, listing 700 such agencies. It is available through World Vision/ MARC Division.