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Awakening One Hundred Sleeping Firemen

This edition of *EMQ* is devoted to the critical topic of mission mobilization, and for good reason. It is said that if one generation of believers fails to wholeheartedly engage in missions, the link to the next will be broken, and eventually the entire movement could collapse. However, the reality is more pressing than a missed generation. With the accelerated speed of changing interest in our information-laden world, if we miss just two to three years of rallying new workers, we could lose not just a generation, but the entire future of engagement in God’s global mission.

Thus, there is a pressing need for both the refinement of mission mobilization thinking, and for more mobilizers. Twenty years ago Dr. Ralph Winter (see Greg Parson’s article on page 58) sounded the clarion call for more mobilizers when he said,

> Mission mobilization activity is more crucial than field missionary activity. Wouldn’t it be better to awaken one hundred sleeping firemen than to hopelessly throw your own little bucket of water on a huge fire yourself?

That is the kind of thinking required to understand the broader mission picture. It also sheds light on our current predicament—a global shortage of workers to finish the task. Could it be that we need to aggressively enter “The Fourth (and Final?) Era of the Modern Mission Movement?”
But just what is mission mobilization? Several articles in this edition describe it, but how do we define it precisely? It is hard to improve on the definition posited by Larry Reesor eighteen years ago. He said that mobilization is,

Teaching believers in a local church to understand God’s global plan, motivating them to a loving response to God’s word, and providing opportunities for them to use their gifts, abilities and resources individually and corporately to accomplish His global plan.²

He also said, “Missions must be your church’s personality, not just a program. Missions must be the mission of the church!”³

For this edition we enlisted some of the best current thinkers on mobilization. You will find fresh thoughts and cutting-edge proposals. It is our hope that you will act on what you read and, as a combined result, we will see more than just one hundred sleeping firemen awakened.  

Marvin J. Newell, DMiss
Editorial Director

Notes
2. Reesor, “A Fresh Perspective.”
3. Reesor, “A Fresh Perspective.”
Hindsight is always 20/20 and peering into the rearview mirror of missions history, attempting to see it from God’s perspective, is a formidable, but exhilarating, endeavor. One modern thinker who has done a stellar job of helping us understand when, where, and how God has been at work over the centuries is missiologist Dr. Ralph Winter, founder of the U.S. Center for World Mission (now Frontier Ventures).

In his classic article, “Ten Epochs of Redemptive History,” Winter breaks the last four thousand years down into ten “super centuries,” four-hundred-year periods each characterized by a unique missions thrust. He labels the years 1600 to the present as the “Ends of the Earth” segment, believing we are in history’s tenth and final stage of God completing His mission to embed a gospel-sharing, national-led church in every remaining unreached people group on the planet. He shows how during the past 225 years there has been an ever-widening impact of the church and mission agencies identifying unreached groups and teaming up to take the name of Jesus to every corner of the globe.

The Four Men and Three Eras

Dr. Winter further expanded our thinking in his article, “Four Men and Three Eras,” highlighting the people and movements that spawned this final push to complete world evangelization. The three eras were the Coastlands, the Inlands, and People Groups. He listed four men who spearheaded each era. William Carey launched the First Era in 1792, sailing from England to spend forty years sharing the gospel along India’s coastlines. Hudson Taylor, a First Era missionary also from England, started the China Inland Mission in 1865 with a burden and plan to carry the good news from the coastal cities of China into the interior, thus inaugurating the Second Era.

Finally, Dr. Winter describes a Third Era, initiated in the 1930s by Wycliffe Bible Translators founder, Cameron Townsend, and missionary to India, Donald McGavran. They discovered the “peoples” of the world were not broken down into countries, but nations—which in Greek is ethne. These thousands of ethne across the planet were actually a myriad of complex and longstanding affinity groups, each with their own language, culture and religion. Consequently, Townsend, McGavran and other Third Era missionaries had to contextualize their message and approach to make the gospel most accessible and acceptable to each and every unique “unreached people group.”

So from 1792 to present day, shifting their focus from the Coastlands, to the Inlands, and finally to People Groups, mission leaders have been growing in their understanding of the most effective ways to finish the task of making “disciples of all nations.” Delving into the three eras, we can track how the Lord methodically expanded His kingdom. I have to admit, though, I felt sure this final era would be completed by now, wrapped up with a bow and presented to God like some kind of graduation gift. In fact, when I first met Dr.
Winter in 1985 while taking the impactful *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement* course, we all believed the Great Commission would be fulfilled by the year 2000; totally done, finished, turn out the lights and go home!

**Why Are We Still Here?**

Yet here we are many years later still praying, still working, and still raising up workers to penetrate the thousands of remaining unreached groups who have never had the opportunity to respond to the life-changing message of salvation in Christ alone. Why is that? What is God up to? What are we to make of this delay? Dr. Winter informed us people in each of the three eras thought they were in the final era, God’s instruments to conclude His purposes. But the Father works at His pace, not ours. He decides when the job is done, not us. Could it be that behind the scenes, the Lord of the Universe is gradually, quietly, brilliantly initiating a Fourth Era, building upon the first three, providing us new insights to multiplying the gospel into the remaining unengaged people groups of our planet?

So, what is in the mind of God? Let’s ask the Lord to take our blinders off, to help us discover new and wonderful things He is doing. What if in God’s history books, that article is actually, “Five Men and Four Eras”? What if Dr. Winter himself is the fifth man, being used by the Lord to usher in a Fourth Era? An era not based on locations or categories like Costalands, Inlands, or People Groups, but a fourth (and final?) era that’s simply a strategy—the missional, multiplying strategy of mobilization.

When Jesus said, “the harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few,” He let us know the solution is more cross-cultural workers. But who are these new workers, and where will they come from? The answer was born in the Third Era. In the past sixty years, evangelicals have grown globally from 140 million to over 600 million, the vast majority being in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. But before missionaries are sent, they are first mobilized. Consequently, to see a mission sending movement to the unreached, there first must be a mission mobilization movement among the unsent. I certainly include my own country, but the “unsent” are the hundreds of millions of us Bible-believing Jesus followers around the world who have little or no mission vision. As this sleeping giant is awakened, the Fourth Era is simply: the mobilization of the church worldwide to rise up and play its strategic role in finishing the Great Commission. Imagine the whole church mobilized to send missionaries to the whole world!

**What is Mobilization?**

What do we mean by “mobilization?” Webster’s definition: “to assemble and make ready for war duty.” This secular description can be applied to the eternal, invisible spiritual battle taking place between God and Satan over the souls of men. Jesus, our Commander, is assembling His troops, and providing us with the training and resources to defeat the enemy and win the war. Dr. Winter believed Satan’s primary ploy was to keep God’s people blinded to the spiritual lostness of large portions of our planet’s population, causing billions to be cut off from ever hearing the love of Christ. Accordingly, Winter constantly exhorted believers with a mobilization message of “reaching” the saved as key to ultimately reaching the lost.

I once heard Dr. Winter shock a group saying, “Suppose I had a thousand college students about to graduate in front of me who asked me where they ought to go to make a maximum contribution to Christ’s global cause. I would tell them to mobilize. All of them!” I was stunned. How in the world could this former missionary try to talk people into not becoming missionaries? Because the need to sound the alarm is so great. Yes, some need to go as pioneer missionaries. But others need to exercise an unusual faith to actually not go to the mission field, but to assist the entire mobilization process. Winter knew mobilization would result in a multiplication of missionaries sent, proclaiming, “Priority one: More mission mobilizers … Anyone who can help 100 missionaries to the field is more important than one missionary on the field.” “Wouldn’t it be better to awaken one hundred sleeping firemen than to hopelessly throw your own little bucket of water on a huge fire yourself?” According to Romans
10:14–15 we all have equally important roles in the body, but if Dr. Winters point has any validity, it certainly demands we think differently.

A New Paradigm?

Recalibrating our approach with some Fourth Era reasoning is past due. Jesus issued the Great Commission almost two thousand years ago, and we are to continue to make disciples of all nations. We’re never done in that regard. If the third Era is about taking the gospel to all ethne, then the fourth era is about all the reached ethne remaining faithful to press on to finish the job. The world population is approaching 8 billion, yet four out of ten people are still cut off from the gospel. Dr. Todd Johnson, Winter’s son-in-law and director of the Center for the Study of Global Christianity at Gordon-Conwell, released a disturbing statistic: “86% of all Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists will never meet a Christ follower.”

Since reading that, I’m not sleeping well. Life cannot go on as normal, knowing billions of these precious souls will live and die, never even having the chance to hear the gospel. With all our bravado, entrepreneurship, technology, and resources, you would think we would have made more progress. Certainly, we celebrate the significant gospel advances the past one hundred years. Praise God! It’s obvious, however, to truly address this overwhelming need, a new approach is required.

Evangelical churches have been sending out foreign mission teams for hundreds of years, and yet the remaining task can feel overwhelming. Business as usual will not cut it anymore. Various missiologists broadly estimate we need an additional 100,000 long-term cross-cultural missionaries to break through these final frontiers. Dr. Winter spent forty years thinking outside the box, identifying and studying all the unreached people groups. Maybe it’s time to turn our attention toward the incredibly neglected unsent people groups of our planet. This is where the mobilizers come in. If the global evangelical church were mobilized to send out just one missionary for every 1,000 evangelicals, that would flood the unreached with more than 450,000 goers! This is the potential of the Fourth Era.

Table 2.1 The Role of Westerners in Missions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Third Era</th>
<th>Fourth Era</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frontier Missions</td>
<td>Frontier Mobilization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional Mission Field</td>
<td>New Mission Force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church Planter</td>
<td>Mobilizer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winning the Lost</td>
<td>Mobilizing the Saved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addition</td>
<td>Multiplication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Targeting the Unreached</td>
<td>Targeting the Unsent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Dominance</td>
<td>Non-Western Dominance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pioneer</td>
<td>Participant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frontier Missionary</td>
<td>Frontier Mobilizer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cameron Townsend / Donald McGavran</td>
<td>Ralph Winter</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Jesus Is a Mobilizer

“A mobilizer is one who multiplies, disciples or mentors in missions. Jesus Christ was a mobilizer,” says Greg Parsons, Director of Global Connections for Frontier Ventures. Parsons highlights some of the things Jesus did not focus on. “He didn’t focus on planting churches, on evangelism, or theological
education. Rather, His ministry concentrated more on the big picture than anyone. In Matthew 9:36–38, Jesus exhorted us to pray earnestly for the Lord to send out laborers into His harvest. Why? Because His goal was to mobilize key individuals to carry on beyond Him; who would ultimately have a burden for the multitudes of lost people.

How about us? Have we overlooked the key Jesus was giving us in Matthew 9 to reaching the whole world? Could it be the Master was trying to show us focusing on the saved will ultimately result in winning the lost? Jesus first saw the great need (verse 36), but then concentrated His ministry on equipping more laborers. The Holy Spirit (the great Mobilizer) is seeking to enlist each of us to join God by investing our lives recruiting people and their resources to the person and purposes of Jesus Christ. If Dr. Winter really did unknowingly usher in a Fourth Era of the Modern Mission Movement, let’s understand and embrace it. He believed “the greatest mobilization effort in history is now gaining momentum, moving ahead with a quickening pace, with more goals … that are concrete, measurable, and feasible.” You may be ready to jump in, but beware: it will require you to think backwards, develop new prototypes, and operate differently than ever before.

Identifying the “Mobilization Gaps”

What are the critical components to making well-informed, prayer-saturated decisions regarding the most strategic way forward? Our organization, the Center for Mission Mobilization, has been working with respected missiologists and researchers from various countries to put together a Mobilization Index. It provides a wide range of demographics for 118 countries, including the fifty-seven countries that have 1 million or more evangelicals. One key statistic shows the gap between who could be mobilized and who actually is mobilized. These disparities are called “mobilization gaps.” Let’s look at Kenya, and the other twelve countries that make up English-speaking Africa, who have more than 130 million evangelicals. Our research shows there are less than 5,000 cross-cultural workers sent out from those thirteen countries. That’s one missionary for every 26,000 born-again believers; a huge mobilization gap! What if mobilization teams were placed throughout that region, seeking to raise up one cross-cultural worker for each 1,000 evangelicals? That would increase their missionary sending from 5,000 to 130,000 cross-cultural goers—the greatest missionary force in all of history!

**Table 2.2 Mobilization Gaps in the Mobilization Index**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country/Region</th>
<th>Number of Evangelicals</th>
<th>Number of Missionaries Sent Cross-Culturally</th>
<th>Ratio of Evangelicals to Cross-Cultural Missionaries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>South Korea</td>
<td>8,000,000</td>
<td>19,000</td>
<td>422:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>90,000,000</td>
<td>45,000</td>
<td>2,000:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anglophone Africa</td>
<td>130,000,000</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>26,000:1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mobilization Targets the “Unsent” in Order to Win the “Unreached”

So how can we see new mission movements ignited throughout the world? Will it be through sticking exclusively with our familiar roles of church planters, evangelists, student workers, or theological educators? Or will we acknowledge God is up to something new, and affirm a critical category of workers is emerging—the mission mobilizers? Since Dr. Winter’s watershed message at Lausanne in 1974, most mission agencies have placed a priority on unreached people groups, and missiologists have spent decades studying every country, language, and culture to break down the remaining task into bitesize pieces. The assignment is clearly set before us, so why isn’t the global Church finished with
world evangelization yet? It could be that God is handing us a new template He wants us to operate from to redirect many of our people and resources toward the “unsent” in order to mobilize national believers to reach the unreached.

Would you personally begin a journey to understand the powerful potential of mobilizing the unsent? What might this mean for your team, church or organization? It may take creative, even radical thinking to embrace this idea and intensely refocus your efforts to accomplish it, but the rewards could be seismic in their global impact. If you’re reading this and understand the purpose and power of mission mobilization, let’s ask ourselves a question: Do we have enough humility and dedication to embrace this indirect, yet supportive, role in this era of world evangelization? Will we be content to play our part in the global body of Christ, selflessly encouraging, investing in, and mobilizing the huge “unsent” portions of the body of Christ in our countries, helping many move past their self-perception as a mission field in order to fulfill their calling to become the greatest mission force this world has seen?

If you are considering missions, pray about the impact you could have by going to a “Christianized” nation to mobilize missionaries from there. This type of cross-cultural worker is called a frontier mobilizer. If you’re a missions pastor or give to missions, consider reevaluating your giving and sending strategies, pointing more of your people and resources toward mobilization. If you’re a mission agency, why not study our Mobilization Index to aid you in making strategic decisions regarding whether you should send missionaries or mobilizers to particular countries? If you’re already a mobilizer, but operating in the Global North, consider shifting your efforts to the Global South where 80% of evangelical Christians live. Yes, these brothers and sisters, who are now the majority of global evangelicals, are praying and working toward igniting mission movements. God could use you to help spur on spiritual tsunamis among the global church, where there are huge pockets of believers across the planet just waiting to be mobilized.

Know this for sure, this Fourth Era is not an ending, but an exciting new chapter of God’s great plan. It doesn’t disregard the past, but rather honors and builds upon it. If William Carey were alive, he would be thrilled to see a movement of 25,000 South Indians taking the gospel to their unreached countrymen in North India. Imagine the excitement of Hudson Taylor knowing 90,000 Chinese missionaries were saturating huge chunks of Asia with the name of Jesus. Cameron Townsend would wildly cheer on a flood of 130,000 missionaries sent from sub-Saharan Africa to North Africa and beyond. McGavran would express pure delight in 60,000 Latino missionaries launching to the Arab world. And without a doubt, Dr. Ralph Winter, a friend and mentor of mine, would find great pleasure in these nationalized, indigenous mobilization efforts. Why? Because this reserved and modest pioneer of the Fourth Era has always promoted a “we must decrease, they must increase” attitude toward the role of other nations to complete the task. It’s been a part of his DNA from the beginning, and it needs to work its way into our missional bloodstream as well.

What is the goal of the Fourth Era? A global mission mobilization movement in which the whole church rises up to powerfully advance Jesus’ Great Commission to the ends of the earth. Each of us has a strategic part to play. If not us, who? If not now, when?

Dr. Steve Shadrach is Executive Director of the Center for Mission Mobilization, headquartered in Fayetteville, Arizona. The CMM has frontier mobilization teams spread across five continents. For resources, training, opportunities, partnering, or more information go to www.mobilization.org. Steve and his wife Carol have five children and five grandchildren.

Notes


4. Perspectives is a ministry of Frontier Ventures (formerly US Center for World Mission). In 1974 Perspectives held its first missions training and education class called Perspectives on the World Christian Movement. Since then, over 200,000 people in 18 countries have taken this missions course. Perspectives continues to play a vital role globally in mobilizing individuals and groups to active participation in the Great Commission. For more information visit www.perspectives.org or www.frontierventures.org.


11. www.joshuaproject.net/people_groups/statistics. See the definition of “unreached.” Joshua Project, a ministry of Frontier Ventures.


13. A proposed initial benchmark for a “mobilized nation” is one which sends one missionary for every 1,000 evangelicals. If this initial benchmark were achieved on a global scale, the non-Western evangelicals who total approximately 450,000,000 (per Operation World, 7th ed.), would be sending 450,000 missionaries.


15. Parsons, “Why Stay Here?”


17. The Mobilization Index is a multicounty index compiling massive amounts of information from multiple reliable data sources measuring a variety of aspects of society in order to better determine the current status of missions activity from each country as well as indicate the countries with the largest untapped potential to send missionaries. The Mobilization Index attempts to use the latest and most trusted data sources available including Pew Research, Operation World, Joshua Project, Legatum Prosperity Index, and many more. However, we know that research must be updated and we welcome new data as it comes available. Currently, the Mobilization Index is in a Beta format, but it will soon be released to the public.

18. Total numbers for Anglophone Africa have to be added up, but they are all individually on the mobilization index, http://mobindex.mobilization.org/ as well as can be found in Operation World, 7th ed., by going country-by-country.


20. In this paragraph, the numbers of potential missionaries sent out follows the goal mentioned in an earlier endnote of one missionary for every 1,000 Evangelical believers in that country or region.
Information is powerful. We’ve all experienced moments where the discovery of a particular piece of information has radically shifted the direction of our lives. Many of us in the mission community had our lives transformed when we discovered the theme of God’s global mission that runs from Genesis to Revelation. The realization that God has always been a missionary God continues to challenge countless Christians to consider the direction and purpose of their lives. Or maybe it was the discovery of the unreached, that millions of souls lived beyond the reach of the local church and had little to no access to the gospel that was the watershed moment in your life. State of the World talks that educate and inspire Christians are a regular feature of mission conferences. Thankfully, God has raised up hard-working men and women who dedicate themselves to helping transform Christian worldviews through powerful and up-to-date information.

Since their first 32-page prayer guide in 1964, Operation World has been informing and inspiring Christians around the world to join God in praying for the nations. For more than twenty years, the Joshua Project has helped awaken the Church by defining the unfinished task of the Great Commission among the unreached. Both of these resources, and others like them, have contributed to mobilizing laborers, guided mission strategies, and awakened countless hearts to God’s global purpose. I know many Christians who became involved in global missions after using Operation World to pray for the nations. God used their prayers, guided and informed by Operation World, to stir their hearts to greater involvement among the nations. Similarly, the research into unreached and unengaged people groups done by the Joshua Project has guided the strategies of many mission agencies, directed the deployment of countless missionaries, and drawn the Church’s attention to those who have little to no access to the gospel message. The research done by these organizations and the information they provide the Global Church is powerful and has shaped twenty-first century missions.

The Global Church is seeing tremendous growth, and today there are tens of millions of evangelical believers spread throughout the world. We’ve seen the Church’s center of gravity shift from Western Europe and North America, south to Asia, Africa, and Latin America. And according to Operation World, the evangelical Church continues to grow the fastest in the Global South.

It should therefore not surprise us that missions sending has begun to shift as well. Gone are the days where mission work was primarily “from the West to the rest.” The WEA, in their publication Worth Keeping, calls this advancement in missions the “New Sending and Old Sending countries.” We are seeing mission movements of Brazilians going to the Arab world, Indonesians going throughout Southeast Asia and beyond, and many African nations are strategically sending workers across the continent to share Christ among some of the least reached peoples.

The Mobilization Index seeks to join Operation World, the Joshua Project, and other mission research initiatives and further the cause of Frontier Missions. Specifically, the Mobilization Index wants to identify the countries and locations around the world with greatest mission sending potential and thus locations where the Church is ripe for mobilization. By recognizing these strategic locations and profiling their unique...
potential, we hope to see new and renewed mission mobilization and sending movements. The goal of the Mobilization Index is simple: to see an increase in global mobilization that leads to more laborers being sent to the nations to proclaim Christ among the unreached.

Measuring Potential Not Ranking Importance

Currently, we have identified sixty locations that have more than one million evangelicals or are strategically situated. We believe that each of these locations has the unique potential to raise up and send out laborers for God’s Harvest. The Mobilization Index is not a ranking of which countries are most important for mobilization or who can send the most missionaries. Each of the sixty nations on the list has unique mission sending potential. Each of these sixty nations will face their own unique set of challenges and obstacles as they raise up and send out missionaries. And each of these sixty nations is worthy of our prayers. The Mobilization Index desires to be a tool that mobilizers and church leaders can use to fuel mission prayer, encourage greater commitment to the unreached from all believers, inform leaders about the current state of sending, and guide the placement of future missionaries.

History of the Mobilization Index

The concept for the Mobilization Index began a few years ago as a tool that the Center for Mission Mobilization (CMM) could use to help identify the most strategic locations for future mobilization efforts. As mission mobilizers, we were looking for places where the Church was large and growing and where we could join God and the national church in raising up more laborers. We started by going to Operation World and looking for countries with large numbers of evangelicals. Early on, we set a threshold of one-million as the minimum number of evangelicals needed to make the Mobilization Index. While this was somewhat of an arbitrary figure, it was felt that one-million evangelicals gave a national church sufficient numbers and resources to sustain an ongoing mission mobilization and sending movement. As this list of countries with great potential was developed, we began to realize that this could be a valuable resource for the Global Church. We wanted to create a resource that other mission agencies and mobilization movements could use that would lead to more laborers being sent to the unreached from every nation on the Mobilization Index.

In its original form, the Mobilization Index was a comprehensive Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. The CMM commissioned Chris Maynard with Transforming Information to gather the initial data. This information was presented by Chris in 2013 at the first Global Mobilization Consultation in Surabaya, Indonesia. Over the years, the project has evolved both in the countries on the list and in how we measure a nation’s unique mobilization and sending potential. Along the way, many excellent researchers and missiologists contributed to the development of the project. We partnered with Global Mapping International to create a series of missiographics called the “New Harvesters” (missionexus.org/new-harvesters). Currently, we have a number of data points or sub-indexes that we believe help paint a more accurate picture for each of the nations on the Mobilization Index. In profiling each nation, we wanted to move beyond merely the number of evangelicals in a country and look at a wide range of factors.

Our goal with the Mobilization Index is to capture as complete and accurate of a profile as possible for each of the nations on the list. To do this, we gathered data from a variety of sources highlighting a wide range of factors. The data used in the Mobilization Index comes from several reputable and trustworthy sources, so we feel confident that our conclusions are based on solid information. When looked at holistically, these sub-indexes bring to light the unique role that each nation has in seeing Christ proclaimed among all peoples.

Currently, the Mobilization Index is made up of the following sub-indexes:

- Numbers of evangelical Christians.
- A nation’s prosperity ranking.
- Access to Unreached People Groups, both in-country and regionally.
The Mobilization Index: Connecting the Global Church to the Unreached

- Cultural distance from nations with large populations of unreached peoples.
- Percentage of the population under the age of fifteen.
- Religious freedoms and persecution.
- A nation’s generosity ranking.
- Numbers of missionaries sent, both in-country and out of country.

Sub-Indexes

As mentioned, the Mobilization Index began by using Operation World to identify the locations around the world with large and growing evangelical populations. But we also understood that many factors, other than the size of the church, can impact mobilization and mission sending. The Mobilization Index has expanded to include elements we believe paint a more accurate and complete picture of each nation’s unique potential.

A nation’s prosperity should be considered when profiling mobilization and sending potential. But prosperity is more than just economic wealth. Therefore, we chose to use data from Legatum’s Prosperity Index. Legatum determines overall prosperity through what they call the “nine pillars” of prosperity that considers factors such as economic quality, education, health, and governance. Early on, we observed a correlation between a nation’s prosperity level and their mission sending. The more prosperous a nation, the more missionaries they were able to send. However, this only applied to external sending. Prosperity does not appear to be a factor when looking at internal mission sending.

Which leads us to our next sub-index, measuring a nation’s access to unreached peoples. To determine this, we turned to the Joshua Project for both in-country and regional access data. The goal of most frontier mobilization is to help all Christians find their most strategic role in seeing the gospel preached to all nations. Moreover, many of us who serve as mobilizers give particular attention to mobilizing towards the unreached. But once a believer has been mobilized, exactly how difficult will it be for them to build relationships with unreached peoples? Are there significant populations of UPGs near where they live or will they need to travel? A nation’s access, both in-country and regional, will play an important role in the mobilization tools and strategies employed. Furthermore, issues of prosperity become less significant if mobilized Christians have immediate UPG access. Interestingly, there are Mobilization Index countries located in every region of the world except for Central Asia. The Church has never been more strategically placed geographically to see the Great Commission fulfilled.

Cultural distance to the unreached was another factor we felt highlighted each nation’s mobilization and sending potential. To do this, we used Geert Hofstede’s research into the six dimensions of national culture. By comparing the cultural data from each nation on the Mobilization Index with a list of countries with large populations of UPGs, we were able to determine most nations overall cultural distance. Some locations, like Tanzania and Brazil, are very close culturally to the unreached. While other countries, Australia and the U.K., are further away culturally. We want to be clear that cultural distance should not be used to determine where a nation should send missionaries, nor does it determine who will be successful and who won’t. But cultural distance can be used as a way of opening the eyes of Christians by showing them that maybe the unreached are not so different after all. Perhaps, the way a Brazilian was raised and looks at the world is similar to that of an Arab Muslim, and these commonalities could be a bridge to a gospel friendship.

The Mobilization Index also uses population demographics. Looking at the percentage of the populations under the age of fifteen gives us an idea not only of who the potential mobilization audience is but also what mobilization strategies and resources are best employed. Nations with high percentage of youth might find it challenging to sustain a large sending movement. Perhaps children and family mobilization ministries should lead the way in these countries.

Religious restrictions can potentially play a significant role in a nation’s ability to mobilize and send out workers to the unreached. The Pew Forum has researched both government restrictions and social hostilities and how they interfere with religious beliefs and practices. Nations like South Africa and Brazil have virtually
no restrictions, while other countries, China and Indonesia being two examples, severely restrict their population’s religious freedoms. Using this data, we were able to determine to what degree the nations on the Mobilization Index are religiously restricted. This will no doubt influence the mobilization and sending methods the church employs.

The Mobilization Index also considers a nation’s overall generosity. The CAF World Giving Index measures a nation’s generosity in three areas: helping a stranger, donating money, and volunteering time. One might assume that the nations with the highest prosperity would be the most generous, but it does not appear to be the case. Myanmar, arguably one of the world’s poorest countries, has consistently been ranked as the world’s most generous nation. Kenya also ranks in the top fifteen on World Giving Index. Mobilization is more than just raising up new laborers for the harvest. Mission mobilization is about raising up believers who will also pray, send, welcome, and give towards missions. Looking at a nation’s overall Generosity score can provide mobilizers with insight into key areas that could impact long-term mission movements.

The last area the Mobilization Index considers is current numbers of missionaries sent, both in-country and internationally. As with the numbers of evangelicals, the Mobilization Index draws on data provided by Operation World. Today most would agree that the harvest is still plentiful and the workers are still too few. Looking at the sending numbers provides mobilizers with a snapshot into the current state of mission mobilization and sending. Some nations have very high internal mission sending but lower external sending. This makes sense when looking at nations with high numbers of unreached such as China and India. Other countries, like South Korea and the U.K., send many more missionaries externally than they do internally. One limitation of the current mission sending statistics is that we don’t know the breakdown numbers of workers serving among reached peoples and unreached peoples. It is possible that while a nation’s mission sending numbers might be high, many of the workers could be serving mainly in areas where the Church is firmly established.

Regardless of the current numbers, let’s work together to see each nation on the Mobilization Index raise up and send out more laborers into God’s harvest. Imagine if just one in 1,000 believers were to be mobilized to the unreached. That’s only 0.1% of the evangelical population. Even the countries with the lowest Prosperity could find ways to sustain one missionary for every 1,000 evangelicals. While this number might seem insignificant, it represents a massive increase in laborers. If one in 1,000 Indonesians was mobilized to the unreached, we would see a labor force of over 14,000 being sent out to proclaim Christ! If one in 1,000 Kenyan was mobilized to the unreached, over 20,000 new workers would be added to the harvest. At just 0.1% of the evangelical population mobilized, both Brazil and Nigeria would each send out 50,000 gospel messengers.

These numbers are mindboggling. Alone, each of these nations above has the potential to fuel a mission movement not seen since the days of William Carey and the Student Volunteer Movement. Together, these four countries have a combined sending potential of nearly 140,000 new goers! Now imagine the Church in every nation on the Mobilization Index raising up tens of thousands of believers, each participating in the Great Commission in their most strategic way. When Jesus and his disciples looked at the vast need in ministry, “He said to His disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore, beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest.’” We want every person to have the opportunity to hear the Gospel. The nations on the Mobilization Index are poised and ready to send those gospel messengers!

How You Can Help

Anyone who has been involved in mission research, whether conducting or using, knows that information quickly goes out of date. While we are confident that information we have gathered comes from reliable sources, there may be other groups unknown to us that have conducted more recent research. If you have access to updated statistics that we could use, specifically with regards to numbers of evangelicals and missionaries sent, you can email us at mobindex@mobilization.org. We desire the Mobilization Index to be as accurate and up-to-date as possible.

Things That Cannot Be Measured
There are many factors that the Mobilization Index cannot gauge. The chief of these is the God factor. God’s will supersedes every one of our strategies and long-term plans. The Mobilization Index is a tool to help guide our prayers and our ministry strategies, not dictate them. What we are attempting to accomplish with this research initiative is identify key factors that can impact mission sending movements. Each nation has unique potential, and each nation will face unique challenges. But as God opens the doors for mission sending, we must be ready to walk through. After all, our God has a history of using the unlikely to do the impossible.

Moving Forward

The Mobilization Index is currently in the process of building profiles for each of the regions and locations on the list. These profiles will be similar to what you see in Operation World, populated by the data being collected, a bit of analysis and discussion regarding the potential of each nation, and invitations to join in praying to the God of the harvest that He would raise up believers passionate about the lost.

We also want this information to be accessible and inspirational to those who use the Index. In the coming months, we plan to launch a dedicated Mobilization Index website that will be data-driven, interactive, and visually informative. The site will be a mix of narrative profiles, interactive infographics that communicate complex ideas, and the ability to sort and weigh the data based on your ministry’s priorities and needs. We are endeavoring to move the Mobilization Index from spreadsheets full of data and numbers, to stories and images that inspire Christians to greater involvement in God’s mission.

Information is powerful. Lord willing, the Mobilization Index will be a dynamic tool that guides and informs mission sending from the Global Church for God’s glory.

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Notes

3. https://joshuaproject.net/
In December 2015, more than two hundred forty leaders involved in mission mobilization from more than thirty countries gathered in Nairobi, Kenya for the second Global Mobilization Consultation (GMC). To better welcome many different kinds and styles of mobilization and mobilizers, this paper was written before the event in order to provide a simple but clear idea of mission, along with a broad, descriptive definition of mobilization emerging from scripture and practice. Leaders from several countries worked together to produce this paper, with some modifications made at the event. The lead author was Steven C. Hawthorne.

The Necessity of Mobilizing

We rightly confess with ancient creeds that the church is apostolic in nature. It has been said that the church exists by mission as a fire exists by burning. While it is the nature of the church to be on mission with God, it is rarely, if ever, natural and automatic that Christians venture into costly mission endeavor without the teaching, challenge, counsel and encouragement of other Christians. When Christians intentionally inspire, instruct, mentor or equip fellow Christians to become engaged and fruitful in His mission, they are doing the work of mobilizing.

The term mobilization is sometimes used in a narrow sense to describe the work of recruiting and training specialized, cross-cultural mission workers. Although this is common in some circles, we use the idea of mobilization in its broadest sense of helping God’s people to move with God in His mission.

God Himself Pursues His Mission

The phrase, “the mission of God,” refers to the purposive work of God Himself, initiating, enacting and fulfilling His mission. The Father sends His Son, giving His Spirit, impelling and empowering His people to co-work with His Son to fulfill His mission. The goal of mission is a relational consummation—that God Himself would be loved and served by a worshiping people drawn from all the peoples of the earth. God has purposed to call to Himself, by the power of the gospel, movements of loving obedience to Christ among all peoples. Through these movements He has promised to bring forth transforming blessing amidst all nations and places for His glory.

God Fulfills His Mission with His People

God involves His people in His mission in two ways: First, by His enabling, sending grace, Christ sends apostolic laborers to work with Him to bring forth Christ-following movements in every people. This part
of mission must be fulfilled so that the full family of humankind—some from every people—is gathered to
the Father.14

Second, by Christ’s life-giving power, God intends that Christ-following communities become His
long-promised blessing, bringing forth tangible realities of righteousness, peace and sustained evangelism
for His glory.15 As God’s people pursue this aspect of mission they seek to abound in good deeds in every
dimension of life, society and the created order.16

Accomplishing the task of establishing Christ-following movements in every people has a strategic pri-
ority since the inception of such movements is necessary to bring forth the ongoing blessing and fruit of
Christ’s Lordship.17 At the same time, encouraging God’s people to abound in good works of blessing has a
crucial primacy of glorifying God among all.

God Entrusts His Mission to His People

God calls His people to co-work with Him in mission. He has revealed His global purpose to His people
by the deeds, promises and commands recorded in the Scriptures.18 Christ’s commission is even more com-
pelling when it is seen as confirming God’s ancient promises. Since the initial formation of God’s people,
mission has always been an empowering gift from God to His people.19 His promise of blessing entrusts them
with responsibility and hope. God calls people, not merely to be utilized as tools for a task, but He calls them
to Himself in collaborative relationship20 so that they will bear fruit for their joy and His glory.21

God entrusts specific assignments, stewardships, visions and dreams, along with His enabling spiritual
power, to particular people and churches.22 God’s people in every generation have contributed toward the
fulfillment of God’s mission. God excludes no church or Christian from this apostolic, sending grace. God,
as Lord of the harvest, orchestrates collaboration among the diverse streams, traditions and generations of
mission workers.23

The Identity of Mobilizers

Who does the work of mobilization? Mobilizing takes place in numerous ways, often done by people who
may not recognize their work as mobilization. For example, mobilization for mission is part of the work of
any parent or pastor as they nurture and exhort Christians to fulfill their highest calling.24 Whenever elders,
deacons, teachers and other leaders serve their churches well, they are working, in part, to mobilize their
congregations for mission.25

Even though God desires everyone to encourage others to effective mission, He assigns specialized work
to particular leaders to mobilize God’s people for mission. Referring to them as “mobilizers” is a recent
designation for an ancient practice with rich biblical warrant.26

God endows each of His people with enabling, sending grace. “But to each one of us grace was given ac-
cording to the measure of Christ’s gift” (Ephesians 4:7). Christ enriches His church with servants who are
gifted to equip and to encourage every Christian to fulfill their work in His mission. Each of the five roles
mentioned in Ephesians 4:11–12—apostolic, prophetic, evangelistic, pastoral and teaching—are important
aspects of mission mobilization. Apostolic ministry in the Ephesians 4 context involves the enlisting and
equipping of other apostolic workers. Prophetic ministry can be understood in the biblical tradition of ser-
vants who call God’s people to return to their primary calling in God’s purpose.27 In similar ways, many who
specialize in evangelistic, pastoral or teaching ministries intentionally multiply their ministries to equip all
of God’s people to serve well in fulfilling God’s global purpose.

The Work of Mobilizing

Mobilizing is the process by which people become fruitfully engaged in the mission of God to the world.
Mobilizers find ways to encourage, challenge and equip Christians of every age and calling to be fruitful in
the part of global mission that God has given them.
Mobilizers always seek to develop a sustained and growing motivation that cultivates a passionate love for God as the source of compassionate care for people. Most mobilizers, however, understand the work of mobilization as a process that involves more than matters of motivation. The process of mobilization has been defined in several ways, with different suggested sequences of learning, maturity or preparation. Such schemes have been helpful to some mobilizers to analyze needs, to make plans, or to evaluate progress.

Since education, organization and mission practices vary widely in different cultures and countries, effective mobilizers are careful to find culturally appropriate ways to serve their churches. Within almost any scheme of the process of mobilization, and in the midst of diverse cultures, the work of mobilizing can usually be seen as flourishing in three broad categories:

**Mobilizers Build Vision: To Understand and to Embrace God’s Global Purpose**

Mobilizers help build awareness of God’s global purpose in a variety of ways: recounting the biblical mandate and the great story of God’s purpose, recounting the history of the advance of the global Christian movement and introducing believers to their fellow Christians of other cultures and countries. Mobilizers also work carefully to research trends, populations and realities of the world so that others will clearly articulate present-hour challenges and present the needs and opportunities of mission in creative and compelling ways. Mobilizers are often busy organizing informed, focused and sustained prayer. All of this work builds a visionary paradigm of seeing God’s work in the world that instills biblical hope. This is mobilization by education.

**Mobilizers Encourage Fruitfulness: To Develop Maturity and Effectiveness**

Some mobilizers specialize in helping people in practical ways to be effective, persistent and fruitful, whatever their role might be—as those who cross cultural barriers to serve others, or as those who prayerfully support those who do. Mobilizers recognize that disciplines of community, simplicity, generosity, learning, and prayer are necessary regardless of one’s role in the work of mission. Along with visionary knowledge must come cultivated zeal and practical wisdom. Mobilizers can be found coaching, challenging, guiding, mentoring or monitoring—whatever it takes to continue to press for excellence in the work of mission. This is mobilization by encouragement.

**Mobilizers Enlist Participation and Engender Partnership: To Engage and Train in Specific Mission Work**

Mobilizers often focus on inviting people to be involved with specific mission ventures, projects and agencies. Enlisting participation with specific mission efforts can open strategic connections, develop effective partnerships and help form needed mission structures. Mobilizers often highlight the most undone or difficult aspects of mission. Such recruiting is most effective if potential workers are also introduced to appropriate training and apprenticeship opportunities. This is why mobilizers are often involved in training and short-term ventures in specific mission endeavors. This is mobilization by practical equipping and engagement.

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**Notes**

1. Jesus Himself was the first to describe His people as apostolic, or sent: “As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world” (John 17:18). The church is sent by and with Jesus. One of the
first confessions of the church named Jesus, “the Apostle … of our confession” (Hebrews 3:1).


3. Paul could confidently say that “God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself,” and that He had committed to the church the ministry and the gospel of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18–19). But despite this gift of mission, described as “the grace of God,” and even though the church was “working together” with God, Paul knew that he needed to urge and challenge the Corinthian church “not to receive” God’s sending grace “in vain” (2 Corinthians 6:1–2).

4. In the scriptures we often see God’s people challenged to be active in praying, giving and engaging in gospel endeavor: 2 Corinthians 8:6–7, Philippians 4:2–3, Colossians 4:17, 2 Thessalonians 1:11, 1 Timothy 2:1–4, Titus 3:14, and 3 John 8.

5. The word “mobilize” (or British spelling “mobilise”) is derived from French/Latin terms, moveo, meaning “to move,” and mobilis, meaning “moveable.”

6. Jesus said of His mission activity, “My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working” (John 5:17).

7. Jesus said, “He who sent Me is with Me” (John 8:29).

8. Numerous texts declare God as initiating all that we now regard as mission, among them, “Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation” (2 Corinthians 5:18). Or, “For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things” (Romans 11:36).

9. “When the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son” (Galatians 4:4). See also 1 John 4:9, 14, and many more.

10. The Father seeks people to be “His worshipers” (John 4:23). Because the Son has purchased people from every tribe and tongue to become worshipers (Revelation 5:10–11), God will be served by some from every people (Revelation 7:9–15, 22:3–4).

11. Our Lord mandates that groups of disciples publically wear His name and be trained to obey Him (Matthew 28:18–20). Paul’s version of the commission is not greatly different: “to bring about the obedience of faith among all the peoples for His name’s sake” (Romans 1:5).


13. Paul often speaks of grace without any reference to salvation, but to apostolic sending. For example, the familiar text, “by the grace of God I am what I am” refers to God giving him a specific grace, which moved Paul to exert Himself all the more vigorously so that “His grace toward me” would “not prove vain” but instead bear fruit (1 Corinthians 15:9–10). See also, Romans 1:5, 15:15–16, Ephesians 3:2, 6–8, Galatians 2:9, Philippians 1:7, 2 Thessalonians 1:11–12, 1 Timothy 1:12–14, and 2 Timothy 1:8–9. The idea is not limited to Paul. See Acts 14:26, 15:40, and 1 Peter 4:10–11.

14. The decision of the council in Acts 15 was shaped by the confidence that God had begun “taking from among the peoples (Greek: ethne, as in ethnic peoples) a people (Greek: laos, a worshiping people) for His name” (Acts 15:14).

15. See Genesis 18:19, in which Abraham heard that the blessing of the nations had much to do with “his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice.” The promised blessing brings glory to God because the generosity and justice are God-wrought realities: “God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed” (2 Corinthians 9:8).

16. Such fruitfulness is not automatic. Note how Paul presumes unfruitfulness unless God’s people are trained and engaged to serve: “Our people must also learn to engage in good deeds to meet pressing needs, so that they will not be unfruitful” (Titus 3:14).

17. Those who place their faith in Christ become part of God’s family, but also become Abraham’s sons and daughters (Galatians 3:6–9). They inherit the promise and can become the fulfillment of the promise (Galatians 3:29) that all peoples will be blessed in both tangible and spiritual ways. Abraham’s descendants in our day must still be encouraged, challenged, and equipped, that is to say mobilized, to work with God to bring forth God’s intended blessing.
18. Paul refers to Isaiah's promise that God's people would become a "light for the nations" as more than a mere promise, but a clear imperative: "For so the Lord has commanded us" (Acts 13:47). In Romans 16:25–27, Paul says that God was able and willing to engage and strengthen people in the work of the gospel among all peoples in accord with the word of the prophets and "the command of the eternal God."

19. From the promise to Abraham that he would be blessed in order to be a blessing (Genesis 12:2–3), to the prayer of Jesus that He had accomplished the work that the Father had given to Him (John 17:4), to Peter writing about being "good stewards of the manifold grace of God" (1 Peter 4:10), mission is primarily a generous gift from God rather than a burdensome obligation or ethical duty. Effective mobilizers work in accord with God’s ways of entrusting mission.

20. Paul told the Corinthians, "you were called into fellowship with His Son" (1 Corinthians 1:9). God calls people to Himself more than He calls to a task. Jesus called the twelve "so that they would be with Him and that He could send them out" (Mark 3:14).

21. In John 15 Jesus shows that He regards His followers as beloved friends (John 13:1, 15:14-16), expected to bear fruit for their joy (15:11) and for His glory (15:8).

22. Paul speaks of a distinctive grace in the work of the gospel being given to the entire Philippian church (Philippians 1:7, 29). In the stewardship parables of Jesus (Matthew 25:14–30, Luke 12:41–48, 19:11–27) the master apportions investments and assignments according to ability, "to each one his task" (Mark 13:34).

23. Times and seasons vary throughout the generations. By God’s hand, history moves incessantly, but unevenly, toward fulfillment. The certainty of harvest means “that he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together” (John 4:36). Recognizing how God-given assignments may differ (Galatians 2:9), or may be shared (Philippians 1:7) means that fruitful collaboration in mission should be expected. “Others have labored and you have entered into their labor” (John 4:38).

24. Paul regarded Timothy as his “beloved son” (1 Timothy 1:2) who had become a fellow “soldier of Christ Jesus” in the gospel (2:3–4). But he also recognized how the faith of parents and grandparents had contributed to Timothy’s maturity as a mission leader (1 Timothy 1:5).

25. John writes to church leaders about the joy of beholding spiritual children “walking in the truth” (3 John 2–3). But he goes on to urge that they work to send missionaries “in a manner worthy of God” so that they would become “fellow workers with the truth” (3 John 5–8).

26. Without question Jesus gave us the best example of mobilizing. But Barnabas stands out as a mobilizer. Recognizing God at work drawing many Gentiles to Himself, Barnabas began exhorting them so that many more followed Christ (Acts 11:21–24). He brought Saul to Antioch (11:25–26) to help in the harvest. Barnabas helped form an environment of “prophets and teachers” and prayer, in which Paul matured as an apostle, and became clear about “the work to which” he was “called” (13:1–3).

27. There are several examples of prophetic servants calling God’s people back into His purpose, some with negative outcomes, as in Jeremiah’s case (see Jeremiah 7:25–26); and some advancing God’s purpose as in the case of Haggai (see Haggai 1:1–14).

28. Jesus recounted the story of God’s purpose in all the scriptures (Luke 24:26–27, 32, 44–47, and Acts 1:3). James at the Jerusalem council said that God’s work of forming a worshiping people from all the nations (Acts 15:14) was something that “the words of the Prophets agree [Greek: symphoneo, or “symphonize”]” (Acts 15:15). In Romans 15:9–12 Paul put together four statements from prophetic writings in a sequence that forms a narrative of God’s purpose being fulfilled among the nations.

29. Pauline letters show that there were messengers sent (2 Corinthians 8:23) to convey the latest developments, what Paul called the “progress of the gospel” (Philippians 1:12). Paul said that it was important for sending churches to “know about my circumstances, how I am doing” (Ephesians 6:21) by up-to-date reports. Paul wanted to inform churches “about the whole situation” of his mission work (Colossians 4:8).


31. Paul wrote his letter to the Romans in part to mobilize the churches there to be directly involved in the mission to Spain (Romans 15:20–24).

32. Jesus sent His followers more than once on short-term training ventures: The twelve were sent in Matthew 10. The seventy were sent in Luke 10.
The Global Mobilization Network (GMN) believes mobilization is essential to calling the whole Church to committed participation in reaching the whole world.

It has been said that the church exists by mission as a fire exists by burning. While it is the nature of the church to be on mission with God, it is rarely, if ever, natural and automatic that Christians venture into costly mission endeavor without the teaching, challenge, counsel and encouragement of other Christians. When Christians intentionally inspire, instruct, mentor or equip fellow Christians to become engaged and fruitful in His mission, they are doing the work of mobilizing.

We see mobilization then as a range of activities, involving a wealth of resources and we would contend that we need a more holistic view of mobilization. We are not introducing a formula as much as a framework for understanding mobilization as a whole. Our objective is to create a common language and a basic understanding of mobilization within all of its constituents. We then stress the importance of collaboration in order to see these parts function as a whole. This of course needs to be contextualized both culturally as well as organizationally.

Increasingly it is understood that mobilization is more than recruiting out of the local church. Mobilizers should work with the local Church to raise awareness of God’s heart for the nations, provide specific training as it relates to mission endeavors as well as facilitate ongoing engagement in God’s mission. This is more in keeping with the original definition of the word mobilization. Historically this word meant, “logistically and strategically and effectively recruiting, training and deploying resources in a manner producing maximum effort to accomplish the ultimate goal.” We have long understood the difficulty of moving people from awareness to equipping and finally engagement, but a failure to understand mobilization occurring on a continuum with defined dimensions has left us unable to diagnose where our mobilization efforts have broken down. Our tendency has been to attempt to fix mobilization at the point of our failure rather than addressing the problem in the process. We would suggest that there are actually multiple dimensions to mobilization. Each of these dimensions exists on a continuum and involves processes. When these are properly studied, understood and integrated, the end result should be movements of people on mission.

The Outcome

Far too often our missionary efforts keep us quite busy. We fill our schedules with more and more activity. But Mobilization is more than a call to be busy. We need to define our objectives then work backward, identifying the necessary steps to produce our desired outcomes. Without this any activity is seen as a success and any outcome, or even no outcome at all, remains acceptable. However we may define the task and whatever it means to finish the task we must acknowledge that God is sovereign over His mission. Nevertheless, He has
invited every believer to participate in the completion of His mission in some meaningful way. His mission needs, even requires, the active participation of all of His people, if for no other reason than for His glory. Rather than the missionary enterprise of God being relegated to a few, God is calling the whole of His Church. We see in Scripture this is God’s intent and, based upon the enormity of the task, we see the need. The outcome we are presented with in Scripture and which should be the objective of all mobilizers, is for God’s glory as the redeemed from all peoples are gathered before the throne worshiping Him, thus fulfilling the biblical promises and prophecies.

**The Movement**

As mobilizers our objective should be to facilitate the movement of people to God, with God on Mission. We should not merely recruit mission workers but catalyze mission movements though our mobilization efforts. A movement is defined as a group of people working together in order to accomplish a shared mission. A movement begins with connecting individuals and groups to God on mission. Then movement is facilitated by developing structures and systems that guide people into mission. Movements require the interconnectedness of our lives with God and with one another, as we are equipped and engage in God’s mission. Our objective should be to see these movements gaining momentum through consistent mobilization efforts.

**The Continuum**

Mobilization needs to be understood as a journey with God that occurs along a continuum. This means we can speak of people being fully mobilized, not mobilized, or somewhere along a continuum of mobilization. A church, church network, denomination, people, or even nation can be mobilized by degree.

- We cannot speak of people being mobilized until we have raised awareness, even passion among believers concerning God’s redemptive plan and the role they play in it.
- We cannot speak of them as mobilized if we fail to provide training and opportunities to engage in mission.
- We cannot speak of them being mobilized if we are not assisting in effectively deploying them where their skills are most needed.
- People cannot be said to be mobilized until they are personally, actively engaged with God on mission.

**The Dimensions**

Mobilization can be broadly broken down into three dimensions: discovery, development, and deployment. These three dimensions of mobilization represent a concatenation (a series of interconnected things or events). Each dimension needs to be developed holistically and needs to be practiced simultaneously. All three dimensions are necessary and all three must be in place before movements can develop momentum. It does no good to try and deploy new missionaries if we have not effectively trained and prepared them through a development process. We have no workers to train if we are not continually doing the work of helping believers discover God and His mission. If we have led believers through the discovery and development process but have no means of deploying them, we have not fully mobilized.

**The Discovery Stage**

It is the Holy Spirit who leads an individual into a deeper revelation of God and His divine purposes. Mobilizers work with God and His Spirit to draw people to God, as well as equip them for mission. Our objective is not to manipulate or use coercion to motivate God’s people into His service. We believe our role is one of guided discovery for both individuals and ministries. We work to encourage leaders to adjust their ministries to fulfill God’s mission and we hope to assist individuals in participation in that vision.
This sense of divine purpose leads believers to focus their lives on participating in the Mission of God. We believe this challenges individuals as well as ministries to focus their resources on the mission of God. Tim Dearborn states, “The Church’s involvement in mission is its privileged participation in the actions of the triune God.” Our objective is to help people connect their lives to eternal purpose. Our message needs to be one of opportunity.

There are four essential processes that occur during discovery and these same processes progress through development to deployment. They are: knowing, being, having, and doing. These processes are sequential in that each one is dependent upon the one prior to it. However, we are always learning, always growing in our understanding and experience, as well as always exercising our capabilities. In the discovery dimension each process is very personal and thus the language is correctly individualistic. Much of this may seem very elemental, however careful observation of the Church will prove that often when we work to raise awareness about God’s mission, people lack a basic understanding of these foundations.

Knowing—The greatest need of humankind both collectively and individually, is that we would know God intimately and personally as He reveals Himself in Scripture. This is not just talking about knowing information about God, but about knowing God on an experiential level. At the same time, experiential knowledge of God needs to be combined with knowing the truth about God. The Bible is given to us by the self revealing God, because He desires to be known; to be known among other things as the God who creates, the God who sustains and the God who saves. The knowledge that God has revealed to us about himself is essential for life in the way that He is essential for life. To lack knowledge of God is to lack what is essential for life and there will be a cost associated with that lack of knowledge.

Being—Knowing God provides the basis for understanding everything in creation, including ourselves. If we are to live out an identity, that identity must be established in God and who He created us to be. Without this knowledge, we could never hope to answer the question who we are, why we are here, what is our purpose on earth. Our identity is essential to identifying our central task. This includes our identity in creation as well as the “new creation.” This is important because identity shapes our core beliefs about ourselves and even in relationship to others around us. Those core beliefs in turn, drive what we think, our expectations and attitudes about ourselves and our lives. This in turn determines everything we say and do. So your identity drives your life. How we identify ourselves determines how we approach life.

Having—Every person needs to understand who they are and how God has uniquely gifted them. Directly related to our identity is how God has equipped us to carry out His purpose. We begin to understand how we are to steward to all that God has given individually and collectively, including: time, talents, and treasure in order to carry out God’s mission. We have a rich inheritance that has been restored to us through our identity in Christ and for the purpose of carrying out His mission. For this to occur a paradigm shift needs to happen. We need a realization that living life is more than acquisition of goods, satisfying desires, and pursuit of personal agendas.

Doing—Now that we know God as the saving God and we understand our identity as a new creation, as well as how God has uniquely gifted us, we know what to do with this life. This is true both generally and specifically. We can answer the questions: why were we born, why are we here, what are we supposed to do with our lives? We are each called to participate in the one redemptive mission of our God. To the extent we align our lives to this eternal purpose, we discover the true meaning of our lives individually.

People need to be exposed to God’s heart and love for all peoples. They need to be made to understand His redemptive purpose and the role every believer plays in fulfilling this purpose. They need assistance in discovering the unique ways in which God has gifted them to ensure every segment of society is reached around the world. Every individual, in every church, on the whole earth, should be mobilized for mission.

This discovery process should occur at the level of our day-to-day living: in homes, in the marketplace, at church, in prayer, in Bible study, and in fellowship. However, corporately the Church needs to be intentional about this process. Otherwise the Church will simply fall victim to materialism, endless self-improvement, programs, and projects. It is important to note that even in the discovery dimension, every believer is personally responsible for God’s Mission.
The Development Stage

During the discovery dimension every believer is on a very personal journey both toward God and toward His mission. But it is not enough that a people become sufficiently inspired concerning the message of redemption and God’s invitation to participate in that mission. Every believer needs to be equipped to serve on God’s mission in some capacity and this is largely accomplished in community. Development occurs as we impart knowledge by teaching, skill by guided experience, and character by modeling and mentoring. It is during this time that believers continue to grow personally as well as spiritually. People acquire practical skills, gain knowledge, and are active in God’s mission. They are developing as a believer, maturing spiritually, developing God given gifts and their own calling. It is important they find avenues to put into practice the things they are learning, and the local church provides the perfect incubator for this growth and development. Development occurs in community and community is necessary to produce the maturity of faith and formation of character, as well as skill acquisition.

Knowing—Knowing becomes a growing breadth and depth of knowledge of God and His mission. Marvin Newell writes that the understanding of Christ’s mission given to the Church is, “The method, the magnitude, the message, the model and the means necessary for carrying out God’s mission.” It includes: biblical literacy, mission education, mission strategy, and research about the nations.

Being—Understanding more deeply the realities of our new life in Christ especially as it relates to God’s purpose. This is personal and spiritual formation with character transformation to mature as a disciple of Jesus. This is learning to live in spiritual community and to rightly relate and function as a part of Christ’s body.

Having—Increasing our capacity to steward the gifts of time, treasure, and talent that God has blessed us with individually to serve His purpose collectively. Growth occurs on an individual level but is most often acquired and practiced within community.

Doing—Development in our calling through the acquisition of practical skills necessary to carry out His mission. Learning to serve together in a community of faith. There is no better setting than the local church in a local community, to both acquire skill as well as to utilize those skills while on mission.

The Deployment Stage

The word “deploy” is defined as moving into strategic position in order to better utilize or to bring into effective action. In mission this means the movement of people and necessary resources into strategic position to be best utilized and most effective on God’s mission. When we talk about deployment we are focusing on our outcomes. Therefore, we are addressing any number of activities the Church may participate in including prayer, sending, receiving, going, etc., as they actively engage the great commission both locally and globally. This requires the creation of new ministry opportunities, empowering new leaders and increased partnerships, all in an effort to provide multiple avenues for individuals to engage in the mission of God. Deployment needs to be practiced much more corporately. Language shifts from me to we. This is language of the body—the global Church—on global mission.

Knowing—Personal knowledge becomes shared knowledge including: resources, research, and strategy. Disciples become disciple-makers. We are drawing others into knowledge of God and His mission.

Being—Shared identity with Christ on mission. We fully relate our lives and orient our priorities around our lives abiding with Christ on mission. Embracing a corporate identity as individual members joined together to form one body with one mission.

Having—Individually contributing but collectively utilizing God’s gifts of time, treasure, and talent with maximum capacity to accomplish God’s ultimate goal. It is here we steward all that God has given in His kingdom for His kingdom.

Doing—Mission is no longer the few reaching the lost, but the whole Church reaching the world. Along with new ministries and paradigms for mission, we will need new sending models and identify new sending mechanisms in order to make mission participation possible. Our changing world and the increasing complexities we face in mission requires us to completely rethink what deployment looks like. We must embrace a new vision for the mission enterprise especially as it relates to engagement. It is essential we think collaboratively. We must work globally with God and others, empowered by His Spirit on His mission, calling others...
to discovery, development, and deployment. Deployment needs to be thought of in terms of partnership. This will of course present many new challenges. But whatever problems we face in deployment, ultimately, they can be solved in partnership.

**Envisioning Pathways**

Lastly, a very important concept to this mobilization framework is the idea of pathways. Individuals as well as organizations, churches, and denominations may have unique mission opportunities that need to be identified, and pathways need to be created to move people from discovery to specific development and finally to deployment. If we do not help believers envision pathways from discovering God’s mission to participating in God’s mission, they will seldom stumble upon them randomly. We need to envision these pathways and then be intentional about coaching individuals toward engagement. Pathways are established to provide ease of movement from where we are to where we want to be.

These pathways are not rigid but intentional. As we are leading people from discovery through development and to deployment, the question must always be what is next as we work to create unique pathways to the nations. This keeps us from turning mobilization into an end unto itself. Mission is the objective, mobilization is the means, and God’s glory is the outcome.

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**Notes**

Rites of passage is a foreign concept to most evangelical churches, literally and figuratively. Somewhere along the way, the local church has lost this important value. Rites of passage are still common among institutions like fraternities and sororities, military and civic organizations. A few church traditions have kept this concept of development for their youth and new converts. The Catholic Church has baptism, catechism, and first communion. The Jewish bar mitzvah and bat mitzvah still help young people move along the pathways of their faith. The Mormons (LDS) have elderships, Melchizedek priesthood, and the ever-present two-year mission after high school.

It seems like evangelicals have eliminated this concept, by not only separating from these faith traditions theologically, but also avoiding elements of their practice. We can disagree with their message, but maybe we can still learn from their methods. Perhaps these practices are what churches need in order to rediscover the Great Commission and mobilize missionaries.

As we develop this framework for mobilization in the local church, keep in mind that these are principles and not a program. Any church, of any size, can take these principles and apply them to their own context. All that is required is a commitment to the Great Commission and a desire to obey those final instructions given to the church by our Lord and Savior.

The Lord’s Mobilization Strategy—We Pray and He Sends

The first priority to becoming a Sending Church and developing these mobilization rites of passage is to pray. In Matthew 9:38 and Luke 10:2, Jesus compels us with an imperative verb, to “pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.” It is important for us to understand our different roles as we endeavor to build this missionary pipeline. According to Jesus, our role as believers is simply to pray. The Lord’s role is to send the laborers.

When we approach mobilization with this fundamental understanding, all the stress of evangelism, discipleship, recruitment, mentoring, and candidate preparation just melts away because we begin to realize that the results are in the Lord’s hands, not ours. Our job is to be faithful, and He will make us fruitful.

So, what if we pray and He sends, but now we have no idea what to do with all the people who are hearing his voice calling them to the nations? Hopefully, this article can help you begin the process of discovery and answer that question. We will be laying the fundamental groundwork for establishing an intentional and proactive ministry of church-based missionary mobilization.

Adapted from the author’s book, *Pipeline: Engaging the Church in Missionary Mobilization.*
Designing a Church-based Mobilization Team

In the beginning, the local church leadership should develop a ministry team with the specific purpose of mobilizing the next generation of missionaries. When the team is developed and fully functioning, they can establish rites of passage for their congregation that will serve as spiritual markers in the lives of disciples, future pastors, and missionaries. As in all areas of church life, if something is important we usually organize a committed group of people to get the job done. For example: children’s ministry. Most churches have a group of people who are formally organized to recruit teachers, purchase curriculum, and make sure the budget and calendar needs for the children’s ministry is being met. So, ask yourself, “Is the Great Commission as important as children’s ministry in your church?” If so, let’s get organized.

Recruiting the Team

After prayer and seeking the Lord’s direction, the priority should be recruiting people who are devoted to the task. The selection of team members is especially important when you consider the lives of those whom they will be nurturing to live a life of sacrifice in service to the Lord. Some on the team need to understand what it’s like to live cross-culturally. Others need to have a serious mind for studying and recommending resources to help people mature. The team also needs people with organizational skills to coordinate events as well as keep them on task.

P.O.E.M. (Philosophy of Effective Ministry)

Once the team is assembled, they can begin developing policies, practices, and priorities in the form of a P.O.E.M. Here is a sample that was put together by a local church:

The purpose of the Mobilization Team is to prepare missionaries with the skills, knowledge, and character required for effective cross-cultural service, so that we can affirm the Holy Spirit’s calling on their lives, and fulfill our responsibility as their “Sender” when we match them with a compatible global partner agency.

When evaluating missionary candidates, there are three desired outcomes in the quality of the person that will be sent:

1. Spiritually Mature—Able to sustain and nourish a close relationship with the Lord
2. Relationally Healthy—Development of skills in conflict resolution and maintaining appropriate interpersonal relationships
3. Culturally Adaptable—Experience with building bridges in another culture to become more incarnational as a servant of the Lord

This well-conceived P.O.E.M. is a good starting place for your newly formed mobilization team to begin meaningful discussions. Take your time and give lots of thought to the future mission field as well as the present. This may seem theoretical or even impractical, but over time you will continue coming back to your original ideals as a point of reference when you face difficult decisions.

Once you have recruited a mobilization team, and established your priorities in the form of policy and practice, then you should begin looking for potential candidates that the Lord is calling out for you to build up and invest in. You may not have any candidates in the pipeline now, so it may be helpful to study those whom Jesus recruited and how he engaged them in ministry.
The Steps of Jesus

During his earthly ministry, Jesus gave us a great example of leadership and organization. He didn’t do ministry alone, but he mentored his disciples by using progressive steps of development. Consider these examples as recorded in Luke’s Gospel when he engaged his followers in four different ways: First Step, Next Step, Step Up, and Step Out.

First Step
Follow Me—Walking alongside the Teacher (Luke 5:1-11)

Though it was simple for Jesus to invite these fishermen to follow him, it had profound impact and consequences. The rabbi-disciple relationship was common, and the disciples of Christ knew that they were being recruited to learn from a teacher by walking, talking, and serving together on the dusty road “classrooms” of Palestine. Though Jesus knew that the cross was coming, his disciples weren’t aware of that. When Jesus was selecting men to be by his side, he knew that he was recruiting them for more than just learning. He was preparing them for a life of sacrifice and service to a heavenly kingdom on a resistant earth. As David Platt says in his book *Follow Me: A Call to Die. A Call to Live*, “The road that leads to heaven is risky, lonely, and costly in this world, and few are willing to pay the price.”

Within the local church, our primary role as leaders is to equip people to follow Jesus and to be his disciples. There are numerous pathways for discipleship to happen: Bible study, fellowship, home groups, special events, etc. The pressing need however, is for a mentoring/teaching emphasis, so wise church leaders would do well to make that a priority.

Next Step
3+ Christians—Teaching Them to Obey (Luke 6–8)

The teaching ministry of the pastor is central in most evangelical churches, but sometimes it leads to head-knowledge only, instead of producing the desired result of the Great Commission. The final instructions of Jesus to his followers, after his resurrection and before his ascension, was to make disciples and to teach “… them to obey all that I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19–20, emphasis mine). This is quite different from just teaching them about the Lord. For three chapters in Luke, Jesus is teaching in a variety of places and methods. He performs miracles with purpose, tells parables with and without explanation, and then prepares his followers to be sent out to do the same in chapter 9.

As a pastor on a church staff, we would sometimes identify people from the congregation who were “3+ Christians.” These were members who gave the church more than three hours per week (the minimum time allotted for worship, Bible study, and fellowship). The task for mission leaders is to find ways of engaging these 3+ Christians in meaningful service either in the church or in the community. They can greet at the front door, help in the nursery, volunteer at a local after-school center or homeless shelter. This is an intentional next step of service that meets a need in the church, builds confidence in the individual, and also gives pastors and leaders the opportunity to observe the person to see if they have an even greater potential for deeper ministry.

Step Up
The Lord will Provide—Getting Organized and Waiting for the Blessing (Luke 9:12–17)

During the feeding of the five thousand, Jesus helped the disciples understand their role in his ministry while at the same time he distinguished his own role. He engaged his followers in an extraordinary demonstration of provision. They started out with only a few loaves and fish, but when the disciples got organized Jesus began to perform a miracle. Sure, Jesus could have done this on his own, but he intentionally chose to use the disciples and to make them a part of his ministry. He does the same with us today.

Jesus will provide, but it is our job to organize and get ready for the blessing to come. In every church, large or small, there are people whom God has given the gift of organization. They can catch the vision, see the task ahead of them, and implement the strategy—just like the disciples did during the miracle of feeding the five...
thousand. Every pastor/mission pastor would benefit from identifying those people and engaging them in ministry such as serving on the mission committee, deacon board, or an outreach team.

**Step Out**

*Sending Out the Seventy-two—Training: Spiritually, Relationally, Cross-Culturally (Luke 10:1-12, 17-20)*

Jesus sets the stage for sending out seventy-two of his followers to go out and share the good news of God’s kingdom. He trains them spiritually, relationally, and cross-culturally. He gives them instructions, vision, and encouragement. He also entrusts them with his message, his power, and even his kingdom.

There will come a time when your mobilization team has to release people into a very dangerous world, and you may question if they are ready. The best part of this story is that Jesus didn’t just send out the twelve, but he sent out the seventy-two to be “lambs in the midst of wolves.” They were sent intentionally underprepared (no moneybag, knapsack, or sandals). They were even equipped to be rejected, “Even the dust … we wipe off against you.”

Missionary mobilization is not about designing the perfect missionary, but about sending people whom God has chosen to represent His kingdom. We are preparing people who are faithful, prepared, and resilient for a lifetime of service to the Lord. If we are going to send people to reach the unreached, we need to understand that they are unreached for a reason. They are in hard places, and our people need to have some experience with hardships and suffering. A theology of mission would be incomplete without a proper theology of suffering. Perhaps establishing rites of passage will help equip people to suffer well, and not just perpetuate our culture’s obsession of avoiding suffering.

**Rite of Passage**

*Rite of Passage* n. *(from anthropology):* A significant event or a transition period in someone’s life that marks a change.

A changed life for the kingdom of God is a beautiful thing. And that is our business as mission leaders. Through interviewing successful church mission leaders to discovering their best practices, we noticed that most all of them were doing some of the same things. They spoke the same lingo, read the same books, attended the same conferences, and consulted with the same leaders. The ways they lead their churches were different, but many of the same principles were employed as they sought to mobilize missionaries from within their church. They were all focused, intentional, and proactive in developing their people for a lifetime of faithful service.

We discovered these six categories of ministry planning: education, events, exposure, expectations, experiences, and excursions.

**Education**

There are many educational opportunities and curriculum to choose from. Some require major investments of time and money, and others are very affordable and easy to set up. Your mobilization team may need to start small and build up your capacity over time. Here are just a few resources to get you started:

- *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement* (www.perspectives.org)
- *Experiencing God* by Henry Blackaby
- *Follow Me* by David Platt
- *Skills, Knowledge, Character: A Church-Based Approach to Missionary Candidate Preparation* by Greg Carter
- *Operation World*
- *When Helping Hurts* by Corbett and Fikkert
Consider studying biographies of missionaries, church planting principles, missionary methods, etc. The list is endless, but the idea is to make mission education a priority and a part of the regular routine of the church calendar.

Events
Similar to educational resources, mission focused events abound, and with just a little research, you will find many in your area:

- Urbana Conference (www.urbana.org)
- Missio Nexus (www.missionexus.org)
- Denominational annual meeting
- Missions-focused summer camp
- Church partner gathering at most missionary sending agencies
- Annual local church mission conference

Exposure
During our interviews with current missionaries, we heard stories that described pivotal moments in their early childhood when they had an encounter with a real-life missionary. It appears that having a personal relationship with a missionary is a significant indicator for future mission involvement. Not every person who knows a missionary personally will become a missionary themselves, but most every missionary remembered meeting someone who served the Lord in some far-off place in the world.

- If your church already supports missionaries, pay for them to come to the church regularly and speak to the congregation.
- If your church doesn’t currently support missionaries, contact a local mission agency and schedule a speaker. (North American Mission Handbook by Peggy Newell, 2017)

Expectations
In today’s world, we can begin to understand rites of passage in terms of prerequisites. In order for you to advance from one stage of personal development to another, you should prove yourself at each level of challenge and responsibility. For example, if someone wants to be supported as a missionary from your church, they need to go through training. To go through training, they need to go on a short-term trip. To go on a short-term trip, they need to go through the Perspectives class, etc.

- Customize expectations based on your church’s specific values and mission
- Design rites of passage so that they build upon one another
- Have young people earn opportunities by participating in local projects, reading books, attending classes and training programs
- Create excitement so they will look forward to doing the next thing

Experiences
Some of the best experiences for the development of future missionaries happen away from the safety and security of the church building. You could just educate young people about the problems of our world, but until they walk the halls of a homeless shelter, prepare meals for low-income families, and shake hands with someone from another culture, these issues will never be real for them.

- Consider taking a road trip to visit missionary sending agencies and training centers
- Take families to meet a local church planter
- Arrange a visit to a Bible school and meet with the Professor of Intercultural Studies
Excursions

Perhaps the most significant rite of passage a church can provide is a short-term mission trip. As evangelicals, we may not agree with the message of the Mormons (LDS), but we cannot deny the impact of their infamous two-year mission. The best trip for church-based mobilization purposes is the one in which participants survey a destination and meet people whom they may be sensing God’s call to serve long-term. There are many additional options, depending on what agency you partner with, but here are just a few industry standards:

- Short-term trips (weekend to two weeks)
- Mid-term trips (two weeks to three months)
- Semester mission trips (three to six months)
- Gap year for students (six to twelve months)
- Stint for potential missionary candidates (twelve to twenty-four months)

Church-based Mobilization is Not Just for the Youth

If we really want to make an impact in hard places, we need to focus our efforts on recruiting and mobilizing people who already have a college degree and workplace experience so that they can get work visas. Another group of people to seriously consider is retirees (Bob Buford’s book *Half Time*, and Hans Finzel and Rick Hick’s book *Launch Your Encore*). Retirees have a retirement income, they qualify for special retirement visa programs, and gray hair is frequently an asset in most developing countries around the globe, so retirement could be one of the most strategic rites of passage to highlight in the church.

Rites of passage can be powerful tools to motivate people in the church and bring excitement and enthusiasm to a congregation. If you are intentional and proactive about discipling people to consider the nations, your church can be the solution to the missionary pipeline supply shortages that we are experiencing. When Jesus commanded us to pray for the Lord to send laborers (Matt 9:38 and Luke 10:2), your church may just be the answer to that prayer.

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Notes

In 1900, Andrew Murray tackled the key question to the missionary problem as to why there were so few missionaries. In his report to the ecumenical missionary conference held in New York in April, he thought the answer was simple; it was the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Though I totally agree, I think there is much more to it than simply a Lordship question. I believe it is in how we, the church, view the cross.

When I speak to audiences I try to communicate this by asking the following question. "Why did Jesus primarily die on the cross?" When I ask that question, there is always a curious look. They are concerned about one word, primarily. "Primarily ..." (I can almost hear their thinking.) "Primarily! What do you mean primarily? He died for our sins—that's the only reason He came."

Why Christ Died

It is at this point that I begin to help them see that Christ died for more than simply getting us to heaven. I begin this journey by looking at a few verses in the first chapter of Colossians:

For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross. (Colossians 1:19–20 ESV, emphasis mine)

I was teaching this to a young professionals group, and when one of them read this text, I said, "Wait, what did it say He reconciled?"

The young entrepreneur answered, "all things."

"Things?" I said astonishingly. "That should say people. Christ reconciled people. What version do you have?"

He quickly checked his phone. "This is the ESV."

"Anybody got another version?"

"Yeah, I've got the NASB," the dentist said.

"What does it say?"

"Um, 'all things' as well," he said with a look of query on his face.

"Anybody else got another version?"

The young professionals found that version after version said, "all things." They caught on I wasn’t surprised; rather I was trying to emphasize the text. So I helped them see the significance of it.

"Name things on the earth."

Words came out like “trees, mountains, birds, grass, flowers, clouds, insects, animals ...” The list went...
on and on.

“Why would Christ need to reconcile those?” I let the words hang. Eventually they had no answer. They were dumbfounded—and they also knew I was going somewhere.

“Turn to Genesis chapter 3,” I said. “When Eve and Adam ate from the fruit, there were four curses. First, the snake would crawl. Secondly, women would have pain in childbirth. Thirdly, the men would have hard labor. And what was the fourth?” More hesitation. I decided not to stall any longer. “Look at verse 17.”

“Cursed is the ground,” the woman in marketing said.

“Right, the ground that we now see, the trees that we now see, the animals that we now see, the flowers that we now see, are in a state of being cursed. They do not as brilliantly radiate the glory of God as they used to. This means that what Adam and Eve saw before they tasted the fruit is not what we see now. It was far more glorious then.”

I wanted to drive home the point. “Turn to Romans chapter 8 and hear what Paul has to say about this.”

Their fingers flew on their cell phones and they read the following:

> For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. (Romans 8:19–23 ESV, emphasis mine)

They had never seen the words “futility” and “bondage to corruption” and “groaning”—and it was creation that was doing it. Creation knows that something is wrong. Creation knows it is in a cursed state.

“Yes, Christ died for our sins, but He also died to reconcile all things on earth. The word ‘reconcile’ from the Greek can be accurately translated as, ‘bring back a former state of harmony.’ Things on earth are not in harmony. There is decay. There is destruction. And because our bodies are made out of the dust of the earth, our bodies are decaying. We get old. Muscles don’t work like they used to. There are aches and pains.” (Being in their twenties, they were clueless to what I was talking about. They still thought they’d live forever!)

“Creation knows this because creation knew what state it was in before the fall. It knows the change that has taken place. That’s why it is groaning.”

Then I helped them see the rest of Colossians 1:20. Christ did not only come to reconcile things on earth, but He also came to reconcile all things in heaven. All things in heaven means stars, asteroids, other planets, other solar systems, galaxies—in fact, the entire universe.

Here’s the point: when we get the new heavens and the new earth (Revelation 21:1), our bodies won’t wear out. The grass will be greener. The flowers will be more beautiful—radiating God’s glory in a more magnificent way. And the new Heaven will perfectly reflect God’s glory the way it was originally designed to do so. There won’t be any more black holes. Nor will there be stars that are dying. (Both, I believe, are a reflection of the curse.) Everything on earth and in the universe will be restored back to its original state because of what Christ did on the cross. The curse will be broken.

Which is Primary?

Okay, so now we see that Christ came to take away our sin, reconcile things on earth and reconcile things in heaven. We now have three reasons why He came to die. With this knowledge, we need to ask two key questions. First, is there anything else He died for? And secondly, which one is primary? Paul gives us another reason why Christ came. It is found in Romans:

> For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God’s truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. (Romans 15:8–9 ESV)
The words, “in order that” means there’s a purpose clause coming. In other words, Paul is trying to tell us why Christ came. Note what Paul does not say. He does not say, “in order that the Gentiles might not go to hell.” Now he could have said that, and it would have been a perfect place to say it. But he doesn’t. Why? Christianity is not primarily about avoiding hell—though you’d never know from many of the Sunday morning services here in the U.S. What does Paul say? “… In order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy.”

You and I are saved for a purpose; that we might bring God glory. That was our original purpose (Isaiah 43:6–7). It is still our purpose today. We are here to glorify God. But our sin keeps us from doing that. Christ came to take away our sin so that we could be restored (reconciled) back to that original purpose—glorifying God.

So, now we know that Christ died for our sins, for all things on earth, for all things in heaven, and for the glory of God. Now we have four reasons why Christ died. Is there anything else, and if so, which one is primary?

John Piper’s excellent book, Fifty Reasons Why Christ Came to Die, gives us forty-nine other reasons. But in all of those, we still have to ask the question, “Which one is primary? That answer can be found in hearing the words of Jesus. After all, He’s the one who died. His key words that give us an answer are found in John chapter 12. Here, Jesus is one day away from going to the cross. He knew it was imminent. He also knew it was going to be painful. And in this passage, we find a rare glimpse of Him opening us His heart to His disciples. He says to them,

Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? “Father, save me from this hour? But for this purpose I have come to this hour.” (John 12:27 ESV)

He’s basically saying, “I don’t want to do this guys. But I have to. It’s the very reason that I came.”

Now the very next word is verse 28 speaks volumes for those who know what they are looking for. That next word is “Father.” What does it tell you? It tells you that He is done talking to His disciples and is now addressing His heavenly Father. Now, keep in mind the context.

He is about to die one of the worst deaths any human can endure. Not death because of three nails, but death due to muscles becoming paralyzed and then a slow suffocation. It is one of the worst deaths any human can endure; that is why it was internationally banned. This death is imminent, and He is about to address His heavenly Father. Here is the key question: Do you think He is going to talk to His heavenly Father about the primary reason He is going to the cross or a secondary reason? Just about every audience I speak to says, “Primary,” and I would agree. I hope you do as well.

With that in mind, note what He does not say. He does not say, “Father, save these kind wonderful worthy people from hell, they don’t deserve it.” In fact, He doesn’t even mention us in His answer. “What? I thought it was all about us,” you may be thinking. Well, no, I’m sorry, it’s not. And that’s the greatest message we need to hear. What does the text say? “Father, glorify your name” (John 12:28 ESV). This tells us that the glory of God was first and foremost on His mind when He went to the cross.

Think about this, and think about it hard. When each crack of the whip split the skin on His back wide open, He was primarily thinking of His Father’s glory. When the thorns of His crown were forced on His head pouring forth blood, it was primarily for His Father’s glory. When the final nail went into His feet causing excruciating pain, it was primarily for His Father’s glory. No wonder He could say about the very ones killing Him, “Father, forgive them for they know not what they are doing.” He knew in saying this that it would glorify His Father.

Christ died primarily to glorify His Father. Under the “umbrella” of glory, is you, me, the Muslims, the Buddhists, the Hindus—all of humanity, but also the all things on earth and all things in heaven. They, too, need to be restored back to their original state and purpose—but they are secondary. This is why Luke penned these words:

Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy
prophets long ago. (Acts 3:19-21 ESV)

Did you catch those words in italics? Jesus is restoring all things. The Greek word for “restore” is defined as, “restoration of the perfect state.” Jesus came to this earth to restore everything back to the way it was before the fall—humanity and all things. He wanted God’s glory to perfectly reflect the Creator who made all things.

**Cat and Dog Theology**

So, how does this deal with “the key to the missionary problem,” as Andrew Murray talked about over one hundred years ago? If you think that Christ died only for our sins, you’ve got one type of Christianity. If you think that Christ died primarily for the glory of God and secondarily for everything else, you’ve got a second type of Christianity.

Personally, I call these two different Christianities, Cat and Dog Theology. It is based on a very simple joke about the differences between a cat and a dog. A dog says, “You pet me, you feed me, you shelter me, you love me, you must be God.” A cat says, “You pet me, you feed me, you shelter me, you love me, I must be God.”

That joke characterizes most of Christianity today. There are those in the church who think, “I live for God.” And there are those in the church who think, “God lives for me.” How does a cat believer come to the conclusion that God lives for them? It is simple. Since their view of the cross is about Christ dying only for their sins, here is how they think:

“Okay now, let’s think through this realistically. Jesus left the Father’s glory for me. He suffered for me. He died for me. He’s gone back to heaven to build a mansion for me. He’s up there interceding for me. And he’s coming back a second time for me. Gee,” ponders the cat, “I wonder who God lives for? He must live for me. And if God lives for me, and Ephesians 5:1 says I’m supposed to imitate God, then I should live for me too! But now I get it! He wants me to do it in a Christian context. I’m not supposed to do drugs, or drink or smoke, or do all those bad things. I’m supposed to go to church, help out in a Sunday school—the good things for me. And if I do these things, God will bless me! I do it for the blessings.”

A dog shakes his head in disbelief. He responds by saying, “No Cat, you’ve got it all wrong. Jesus left the Father’s glory to glorify the Father. He suffered to glorify His Father. He died to glorify His Father. He’s gone back to heaven to build us mansions to glorify His Father. He’s up there interceding to glorify His Father. And He’s coming back a second time to glorify His Father. God lives to glorify His name. And since Ephesians 5:1 says we’re to imitate God, then we, too, should live to glorify God.”

Now there are many differences between Cat Christians and Dog Christians. But let’s get to the root issue when it comes to taking God’s glory to the nations. A cat looks at the cross and thinks, “Wow, Jesus suffered for me. And since there won’t be any suffering in heaven, He must not want that for me here on this earth—He did it all for me. Thank you, Jesus. You don’t want me to suffer!”

As a result, cats avoid suffering at all costs. And if a cat hears a general challenge to go to the nations, it doesn’t even register on their radar screen. Why? Because Jesus loves them, He died for them. He would never want them to suffer. And going to the nations definitely means suffering, so there’s no way it could ever be God’s will for them. It must be for someone else. They won’t waste a minute thinking about it.

Taking a risky step in “Lordship” for a cat means maybe helping out with a Sunday school or helping in the men’s or women’s Bible study. But going overseas is not even an option. Hence, for a cat, it’s not really about Lordship. Going to the nations is simply totally out of the question. And they think this way because they thought that Jesus died only for their sins.

A dog looks at the cross and sees something completely different. A dog thinks, “Wow, Jesus suffered to reveal His Father’s glory. Because He did that, He’s left me an example. I should be willing to suffer for the Father’s glory as well.” Whereas cats avoid suffering, dogs are willing to embrace it. So when a dog hears about the need for laborers to go to the nations, they think, “Wow, this would be tough, and I might suffer. But I
need to pray about it because this is the example that Jesus left for me to follow." Dogs think this way because they believe that Christ died primarily for the Father’s glory, secondarily for them and the things on earth and in heaven. ONLY versus Primary and Secondary, differentiating between these two can change your entire understanding of Christianity—in fact, your entire purpose on earth.

**Key to the Missionary Motivation Problem**

Now, let’s be honest. Most churches around the globe preach a gospel that says that Christ died for our sins—implying only for our sins. There’s no secondary to even be considered. And this self-centered Christianity can be found in our greetings, our music, our announcements, and our sermons. And that limited view of the cross is like a silent cancer killing our churches.

The key to the missionary motivation problem is not so much because of a lack of Lordship, it is because most of the church views the cross incorrectly. The majority of Christians think Jesus died only for them. Take another look at why Christ came to the earth. Realize that it wasn’t only for us. Discover that it was primarily for the glory of His Father. When we start preaching this message, we’ll see more laborers.

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A few years ago, my daughter texted me while she and her husband were traveling and praying about their future. She asked, "Dad, why does Christar require one hundred daily prayer partners for those who are serving long term?"

I was pleased with her question on several levels. First, they were prayerfully considering what future life and ministry options were available to them. Second, they were not just accepting an organizational requirement without seeking to understand it first.

My response was two-fold. First, I did not (and still do not) know the origin of the number of one hundred daily prayer partners. Why not fifty? Why not seventy-five? There is nothing magical about the number one hundred. Second, I told her what I consider to be one of the most important biblical reasons for seeking daily prayer partners.

In Exodus 17:8–13, we read that the Amalekites came to fight against the Israelites at Rephidim. Moses told Joshua to choose men and go out to fight them. Instead of going into battle with the men, Moses went on the top of the hill (along with Aaron and Hur) with the staff of God in his hand. In verse 11 we read that “whenever Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed, and whenever he lowered his hand, Amalek prevailed.”

Holding your arms up for an extended period of time is tiresome for anyone and holding up the staff of the Lord did not make it lighter. Moses’ arms grew weary. Aaron and Hur, being the proactive aides that they were, found a stone for Moses to sit on and they held up his arms—until the setting of the sun. The conclusion? “Joshua overwhelmed Amalek and his people with the sword” (v. 13).

I have heard this passage referred to on numerous occasions in reference to the importance of supporting leaders. I agree with this principle and have experienced it many times personally when colleagues and friends have been supportive when my strength was exhausted.

However, in this passage there is another principle that I believe is even more important: the battle was won that day, not because Joshua and the soldiers were strong in fighting the Amalekites in the valley, but because there was someone standing before God, on their behalf, on the mountain.

That is why we call on and mobilize people to pray! We recognize that the work to which God has called us is one that is not achievable in our own strength. We recognize that we are not sufficient. We understand that the spiritual nature of our work requires an army of believers who stand before God on our behalf, trusting Him to accomplish His work in us and through us.

We join with Paul in boldly inviting men and women to join in the work of calling men and women to faith in Jesus.

- Paul asked the believers in Rome to strive together with him in prayer for his deliverance from unbelievers and service to the believers in Jerusalem (Romans 15:30–31)
Paul instructed the believers in Corinth to help him ‘by prayer’ which would provoke thanksgiving for many because of the blessings that came through their prayers (2 Corinthians 1:10–11)

Paul asked the believers at Ephesus to pray for boldness and wisdom in his preaching (Ephesians 6:19–20)

Paul asked the believers at Colossae to pray for open doors to preach (Colossians 4:3–4)

The response to such an appeal is varied. There are those who would rather give financially than to commit to praying daily. There are others who gladly accept such a call to join in the work through persevering intercession. We praise God for the tens of thousands of people who do, in fact, pray daily for Christar workers around the world.

Some have asked, “Do people keep their commitment to pray daily?” That is a valid question; prompted no doubt by our own prayer practices. I would not suggest that every person who makes such a commitment keeps it perfectly. That said, I could recount numerous stories to the contrary.

On our second furlough trip to the U.S., we sat at the table for a Sunday lunch after sharing in a supporting church in Rhode Island. The lady of the house began asking about, by name, various people that we were privileged to serve in France. I responded in surprise that she knew the names of our friends. She said, “Of course I do. I pray for you every day, and I was so thrilled to receive your letter last May about ‘Fatima.’” I asked her what we had said in that letter. She recounted how during the month of April God had impressed on her to pray every day for fruit in our ministry. She then described her joy in reading our May prayer letter that recounted how Fatima had placed her faith in Jesus in April!

A couple years ago we visited a prayer partner in Pennsylvania. During the conversation he went to his office and came back out with a picture he had printed from one of our emails and asked, “How is little Maggie? I pray for every day.” My wife and I almost began crying on the spot—Maggie is our granddaughter. Not only are we privileged to benefit from the daily prayers of others, so are our children and now our grandchildren!

So how do we mobilize one hundred daily prayer partners?

• Pray God will raise them up.
• Continually seek opportunities to communicate the vision and burden that God has put in our heart. What did God do to bring me to this time and place? What are we trusting Him to do through us? With whom? Where? Doing what?
• Invite those who are interested in this ministry to share this with their friends who may have a similar burden.
• Communicate. Communicate. Communicate. Communicate. Did I say Communicate? One of the most painful things I have been told (one time is too many, but it has not been only one time) is: “I used to pray for ______ but I got tired of praying the same generic ‘God bless ____ and ____ today, in whatever they are doing’ because I never heard from them.” We are in a spiritual battle and God is prompting others to join us in this battle through prayer. We have a spiritual obligation to communicate with them about the things that we are doing and what we are asking God to do.
• Provide ways to remind people to pray. One person provided prayer points to put onto a mirror when his prayer partners are getting ready for the day. Another provided a toothbrush to every daily prayer partner—we all brush our teeth daily (don’t we?). One of my co-workers says, “We give our partners fifteen requests that will be prayed for four times in two months. It is also opportunity to update them on answers to prayer.”

When we moved to Dallas a few years ago, I began participating in the “Cross-Cultural Partners” team in our local church. It was my joy to be asked to connect with a couple that the church supports who serve in the Far East (not with Christar). When they returned to visit on furlough, I was privileged to have a meal with them and to find out the motivation behind their weekly emails. They shared how they had learned of Christar’s requirement of one hundred daily prayer partners when he was in seminary and liked it so much that they committed to raising up the same. They did so and communicate each Monday with fresh updates. Praise God!
Friends, the task is too big, the obstacles are too large, the opportunities are too abundant, and the consequences are too important, to not invest as eagerly and deliberately in mobilizing prayer support as we do in financial support. Let us seek out a host of people who, like Epaphras, “is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured” (Colossians 4:12).

Dr. Steve Coffey is the U.S. Director of Christar, an international network of ministries that cultivate Christ-honoring transformation in communities where He is yet to be worshiped. Steve and his wife Beth reside in Dallas, Texas, where they are privileged to communicate the treasure of Christ to co-workers serving around the world and friends God has brought from around the world to our doorstep.

If you are interested in a list of creative ideas for encouraging daily prayer support, write Steve via email: steve@imi.org.
Innovations in Mobilization Collaboration

Mark Stebbins

Uber, iPhones, Airbnb, Netflix, and Amazon. The list goes on. Disruptive innovations are taking over traditional North American industries. The missions realm also needs consistent creative effective new ways for how we activate, recruit, and onboard new workers. The environment is ripe for unprecedented breakthroughs in mobilization collaborations in the North American missions’ enterprise.

This article will explore what is already trending in new mobilization collaborations, peek into what the future holds for creative new designs in mobilization collaboration, and offer practical ideas to help us get there. As we look to the Lord, our Chief Innovation Officer, his timeless promise is, “See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland” Isaiah 43:19.

Recent Research

The twenty-second edition of the North American Mission Handbook, released by Missio Nexus in late 2017, screams at us with data calling for a new day in mobilization collaboration. Results from a 2016 Mission Agency CEO survey asking for areas of needed agency innovation over the next three to five years, are captured in a chart. A desire for mobilization innovation is ranked fourth highest, reflecting a priority for thirty-seven percent of respondents.

The following editorial corresponds to the innovation findings, “A world of rapid change requires the ability of organizations to think innovatively when it comes to operations that have existed in a similar fashion for many decades. Time are resources spent on innovation, research, and testing ideas is rarely a wasted endeavor.”

In another chart from the Mission Handbook, the complexity for North American mobilization is cast by the sheer numbers of diverse organizations involved in the North American missions’ domain. 922 separate organizations represent denominational, non-denominational, and inter-denominational bodies. 778 are from the U.S., and 144 in Canada. Surely more profound and beneficial collaborations among these bodies must be explored and attempted. Those who fail to collaborate and innovate will most likely become marginalized and increasingly irrelevant.

Add to this complex landscape the reality that fewer long-term mission candidates from North America are headed to serve internationally, and that those who go are taking longer to get there and with more interruptions in their service. The Mission Handbook points at new trends in non-resident missions, part-time missions, and non-North Americans serving with North American missions’ organizations. It is incumbent upon us observers, participants, and leaders to not only perceive the new things God is doing or wanting to do in missions’ mobilization, but to also see that the old things have already shifted!
Game changing innovation does not happen in a vacuum. One of the axioms from the innovation consulting firm, IDEO, speaks to the need for collaboration by a team of designers, “Enlightened trial and error succeeds over the planning of the lone genius.” Their motto is “Fail faster to succeed sooner.” The stakes at risk for North American missions’ mobilization are too high for us to remain cloistered in our silos.

Many mobilization practitioners articulate declines in North American mission candidate traffic, and even in mission vision and interest. Table 4.2 in the North American Missions Handbook shows a 7.5% decrease in North American long-term worker numbers serving between 2008 and 2016. Is it an inevitable erosion for the North American missions’ movement, relegating mobilizers to a role of bailing water on the Titanic? Or is this moment an opportunity for more adventurous, even risky, collaborations in mission mobilization leading to profound new growth? I would assert and choose the latter based, if for no other reason, upon the stated heart of God that none should perish, but all come to be saved.

A timely reminder for navigating such turbulence is Peter’s walk on the water, interrupted by wind and waves. Since the Lord has unchangeably bid us come to him and to go for him, our first and greatest need is a laser focus on him as we walk through uncertainties. His clear commission to go and keep on going both stabilizes our footing and takes us beyond the shifting elements of current trends.

### Collaboration in Mobilization

How then should we go? Perhaps in God’s sovereignty a new day in mobilization collaborations will take us there. We may be in for a season of wobbling and repositioning at first, but based on the expressed promises and purposes of God, there is still much global work for North Americans to contribute! Our mindset should be one of just getting started.

Mission mobilizers, whether volunteers or professionals, need a growing understanding of candidate culture to be effective. North American goers, especially millennials, are presenting themselves as wanting to be inspired by compelling causes that offer a platform for tangible, high-impact contributions. They expect a high level of professional competency by mission organizations, offering clear pathways that include a developmental bias. They want to be a part of an authentically collaborative community, with low emphasis on hierarchy and traditions as motivation for action. They hope to be joined to organizational cultures that are relevant and growing (i.e., innovative).

Organizations without the distinctive qualities just listed may predictably be experiencing low candidate enthusiasm and numbers. But can organizations add these characteristics on their own? Or is it even possible for one organization to add all of them? I think not. Rather than aiming for omni-competence, would it not be more attainable to reach for a shared competency?

Mission mobilization can be accurately compared to an iceberg, with an often small, publicly visible section that is complemented by a much larger, invisible foundation. God uses a plethora of resources to get the attention and bring about the preparation of his workers, building into their lives over time. And mobilizers are often links in a long chain that includes peers, family members, mission trip veterans, pastors, or even those calling out with needs to “Come help us!”

### Mobilization Accelerants

Those who consistently mobilize articulate a common set of accelerants that help them in their efforts. First, connections and networking with others who mobilize is of great benefit. The opportunity to “talk shop” with other practitioners is of immense value and encouragement to them.

Second, the discovery of helpful content is a great boost to their efforts. The testimony of other mobilizers about helpful books, web resources, events, partners, etc., provide invaluable tools to enhance mobilization efforts.

Third, collaborations enable mobilizers to not have to re-invent the wheel in their working with others toward global engagement. Finding real assistance in inspiring, coaching, counseling, equipping, tracking, funding, logistically assisting, and leading others makes mobilizing a joy and much more cost-effective in
time and money. Such ad hoc or sustained teaming is of immeasurable encouragement and help.

**Mobilization Innovation**

Lest we yield to melancholy about current realities and needed changes, there are emerging trends in collaborative innovation within the North American mission mobilization community. Progress is moving forward. New initiatives are not in decline nor at a standstill. Significant momentum is building.

Innovation in connected networking among mobilizers has been catalyzed by increasing forums for learning and engaging. Missio Nexus has been at the fore in their offerings of relevant events, webinars, publications, and online cohorts. Regional and city mobilization affinity groups are on the uptick. Local and remote prayer groups for mobilization are being birthed. An increase in professional friendships, mentorships, and consultations among mobilizers has resulted from the relevance and consistency of these multiplying networks under the umbrella of mobilization.

As connections increase for mobilization, content is being more readily shared. Mobilization Facebook pages, Mobilization Ideation events, mobilization conferences, and mobilization resources are circulating to a growing number of mobilization participants. Books related specifically to mobilization have come to market, such as *Well Sent* by Steve Beirn, *Mission in Motion* by Matenga and Gould, and *Pipeline: Engaging the Church in Missionary Mobilization*, David Wilson, Editor.

Websites that focus on mobilization and mobilization resources include www.frontierventures.org, www.equip2go.org, www.1615.org, www.mobilization.org, www.joshuaproject.org and www.missionscatalyst.net. The strengthening of mobilization networking and content sharing are creating new opportunities for innovative collaboration in mobilization. Specialty agencies are helping more organizations succeed in their mobilization efforts such as MissionNext, Café 1040, and Frontier Ventures.

One startling and very encouraging innovation in mobilization collaboration is taking place at the Toronto Missions Hub in Canada. A number of mission agencies have partnered with Knox Presbyterian Church in downtown Toronto to set up a missions’ space called "The Missions Hub," literally across the street from the fifty-eight thousand students at the University of Toronto St. George.

Activities at the space include a missions’ week, mobilizer’s day of prayer, mobilizer’s roundtable discussion, Urbana follow-up events, missions’ speakers, social media training, a mission’s job fair, and missions’ discussion panels. Increasingly, students gather at the space to pray, talk, study, and have fun.

Five agencies (Avant, SIM, TEAM, Wycliffe, and OMF) decided to collaborate more deeply so together with Knox Church hired a full time, shared missions’ mobilizer. The mobilizer is based at the Missions Hub, and spends 60% of her time with students on campus, 30% coordinating events at the Hub, and 10% raising Missions Hub awareness.

More and more agencies are co-hosting training events, mission orientations, immersion experiences, and recruiting events as the benefits visible from collaborations are growing. In a collaboration experiment, TEAM, SEND, and SAM have tried mobilization personnel sharing. In this arrangement mobilizers from some are being supervised by others. Similar new inter-agency configurations may breathe fresh life and fruitfulness into missions’ recruiting.

In my own experience, I was involved in the merger of Mission Moving Mountains with The Navigators a decade ago. The profound competencies of MMM joined with the unique capacities of The Navigators to bring about a wonderfully blessed new configuration. None of these experiments with innovation in mobilization collaboration is without stress and challenges, but they are well worth the strategic outcomes.

After serving as a leader in the mobilization arena the past twenty-one years, I dream of more courageous efforts to build effective innovations in mobilization collaboration. I wonder if we may one day have a shared North American training center or network of centers for mobilization with a strong biblical and practical curriculum. Perhaps degree-granting programs could be crafted. I see foundations being strengthened for a North American network of mobilization focused organizations, serving as hubs or “nodes” in a network giving momentum to a mobilization movement. Might there be a time when a trans-national mobilization network would agree upon common goals and form a united campaign to send a new one hundred thousand
North Americans, for example, to unreached, unengaged peoples? I hope so!

I see a North American mobilization future that has robust data sharing among mobilization bodies. Repositories of mission job openings and mission candidate pools would be of immense strategic value. Cross-agency trainings in various areas of expertise would be a wonderful addition to the mission mobilization landscape. The possibilities are exponential for equipping broadly from the remarkable skill sets of various agencies such as church-planting, evangelism, community development, discipleship, working with the poor, business as mission, education, Bible translation, orphan outreach, etc. The list would be nearly inexhaustible.

Already upon us, opportunities for innovative mobilization collaboration are begging for more attention as we seek to relevantly mobilize ethnic communities and diaspora peoples. Much greater collaboration is needed to assist in mobilizing churches, denominations, secular campus ministries, military personnel, young professionals, and seniors. New opportunities for new approaches are in exceeding abundance. Who will step up to collaborate for the innovation of new goer platforms?

Looking to the Future

So where do we go from here? Innovation and collaboration, like mobilization, do not just suddenly appear. Solid, strategic innovations in mobilization collaboration will have to be built over time. It will be a process. The on-ramp for this process begins with each of us taking initiative to get into the mix. We need to right now explore and join existing networks, make an effort to connect, and be part of the mainstream of what’s happening in missions’ mobilization.

Once engaged, we need to dialogue with others in two directions. First, find out what our peers in the mobilization domain are identifying and prioritizing that needs collaborative innovation. Turn relational connection points into focused talking points. Next, we need to go to our own churches, organizations, and potential sending fellowships with these new ideas to find possible integration points. We must keep squeaking, asserting ourselves into these conversations. And we will need a strong sense of humble teach-ability as we move ahead.

We will also need to assess our risk tolerance. Will we need new God-confidence that he desires to do this new thing? How can we boost our faith, our budgets, our manpower to design and test collaborative innovations? How can we keep the direction arrows pointing outward to potential partners and beyond to the ends of the earth? Inertia, tradition, and spiritual opposition will work against us, tempting us to settle for working inwardly, and to remain in our silos.

To realistically and practically bring about innovations in mobilization collaboration we will have to stay the course, maintaining steady and wholehearted commitment to it. Leaders will need to buy-in and give their permissions, endorsements, counsel, feedback, and ongoing access to resources.

Possibly the most critical success factor for effective innovation teamwork is in finding strategic partners for collaboration that share our vision for strategic outcomes. Time and resources are wasted if collaborations are agreed upon without due diligence to establish a vision for shared outcomes.

We will need to carefully agree on desired outcomes that are clearly defined in as much detail as possible. Getting the right people into these conversations, especially those affected by any agreements, is crucial. Sustaining communications until all parties are satisfied that God is clearly leading, and then documenting any agreements is vital in following the way of wisdom.

Finally, utilizing beta tests and well-evaluated trial run periods adds great probability for success. To turbo charge our efforts, especially for jump-starting collaborations, www.visionsynergy.net and www.linking-globalvoices.com are outstanding sites for stimulating ideas and real help.

Conclusion

The ultimate goal of glory to God among the nations can be achieved by collaboratively applying new forms to the biblical functions of missions’ mobilization. A summary for this effort is captured well in Isaiah
62:10, “Pass through, pass through the gates! Prepare the way for the people. Build up, build up the highway! Remove the stones. Raise a banner for the nations.” Mobilizers, let’s get moving!

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Notes
6. 2 Peter 3:9; 1 Timothy 2:4.
Ultimately it is the church on the ground, the local community of believers, that is the critical expression of Christ’s love and power in the world. Made up of individuals who have personally placed their faith in Him, this bride of Christ must be the final basis for evaluating our efforts in evangelism. Scripture, early church history, examples of explosive growth of the church elsewhere, and often neglected media case histories all point to the fact that it is the local body of believers—living, working, and testifying together—that has been critical to the growth and multiplication of the Church.

For simplicity, this article limits the term MENA to the Arabic, Turkic-Turkey, and Farsi-Iran portions of the Middle East and North Africa. In this region, the historic church is being decimated for many reasons, and the emerging fellowships of Muslim background believers (MBBs) are under intense persecution and mostly led by committed, yet often untrained, lay leaders.

The MENA region is where all history began and where it will end. The region’s socio/political climate gives it the highest “front page index” of any region in the world (how frequently news stories are on the front page and how long they remain there). Each month, hundreds of hours of evangelical media/communications and dozens of digitally-based strategies focus on evangelism in the area. If evangelism is the “First Mile,” then the emerging and existing church’s capacity to develop leadership, grow, and multiply is the “Last Mile.” Over the next three to five years the Last Mile initiative seeks to see a growing number of media producers, distributors, funders, and on-the-ground leaders consciously working together to greatly strengthen the new generation of believers in MENA’s emerging church. (See figure 10.1)

The MENA Culture and Its Implications

The region has been a zone of constant conflict: 135 wars since 1919, in which over 3 million Middle Easterners have died. Youth as a percentage of the total population is the highest in the world; unemployment is high, educational options are few, and tribalism and sectarian conflict provide a breeding ground for radical fundamentalism.

The MENA region is marked by a range of forms of government, economies, and national identities. Three thousand years of tribal culture makes it a region in which a person’s decisions and actions reflect on the entire family, and the family is interwoven with others in the community—whether in a small village high in the mountains of Morocco or a teeming Egyptian city.

Syria and Iraq, so tragically visible in the world’s media, are classic examples. In Iraq, thirty or so tribes are considered most influential, but anthropologists suggest there are one hundred fifty identifiable tribes in the country. In Syria, an estimated 70% of the population identifies with one of the more than forty identifiable tribes.

In this traditional setting, community and relationships are everything. The classic Western approach to
individual, if not individualistic, decision and action regarding salvation is a foreign idea. In the MENA region there is a fundamental fear of relationship rejection and shame. Anthropologists, cultural specialists, and Christian missiologists suggest the Arab world is a shame-based culture.

The hopes embodied by the Arab Spring quickly turned to disappointment and have now become despair. Despite, and possibly because of, all of these factors across the region, there is currently a very special context for sharing the Good News.

State of the Church

The Church in the Middle East is the oldest, most durable church in the world, having survived isolation and persecution for more than one thousand nine hundred years. However, over the last one hundred years the size of the traditional, visible church (those self-identifying as Christian) has been in steady decline. In the early 1900s it was estimated that there were roughly 20 million Christians in the region. Current estimates are at about 12 million, and projections suggest that by 2025 that number may be as low as 6 million. A range of forces has created this trend. Among them are persecution, economic pressure, educational and employment discrimination, and migration. And of course, war has been a huge factor.

Ten years ago, Iraq’s Christian population was about 1.5 million. Today it’s estimated at 500,000. In neighboring Syria it’s estimated that about 500,000 Christians remain of the 1.1 million that existed prior to the current war. Where are the rest? In refugee camps somewhere, killed, or fled.

Hopelessness Breeds New Levels of Openness

Only a person with an intense sense of need seriously considers radical alternatives to traditional norms. Other than taking up a gun with ISIS, the only other truly radical alternative to the hopelessness of the MENA region’s despair is Jesus.

That despair is reflected in media response. Collective feedback from dozens of media ministries serving the greater MENA region indicate a staggering number of contacts are being made by Muslims every
month. (These are not necessarily “unique” contacts, as the same individual may contact multiple ministries, through different channels, more than once in a single month.) They are asking questions, wanting to talk, or requesting materials about Jesus and Christianity. “Openness” appears to be the highest it has been in recent history.

**Media Perspective on the Church**

Christian/evangelical media presence in the Middle East has grown in parallel with the explosion of available media channels and the dramatic drop in cost of many digital forms of communication (as contrasted with terrestrial or satellite broadcasting, for example). There has also been a growing, active media engagement by Western and non-Western believers.

Many godly, deeply committed individuals continue to produce high-value media content for the MENA region—frequently at considerable risk and sacrifice. The challenge is not positive outcomes in the First Mile. The challenge is how to re-orient these remarkable Kingdom assets—focusing 30%–40% of total output on the Last Mile—and how to produce the most favorable climate for this new direction. The primary focus of evangelical media has been evangelism rather than discipleship and strengthening the existing/emerging church.

One result, many suggest, is that a kind of “phantom” church has developed, not just in the Middle East, but around the world. It is made up of individuals who, because of media content and the work of the Holy Spirit, have made a commitment to Christ despite a socially hostile setting. Due to family and/or wider community pressure, countless media responders have not declared their faith publicly. They are the likely reason for the gap between what is being seen in media response and what is being experienced on the ground.

Those suggesting this phenomenon indicate that, in many cases, there is no viable local fellowship in which the new believer can find safety, encouragement, and identity. Going it alone is not only lonely, but in many cases dangerous!

**On the Ground—What are the Outcomes of Current Media Efforts?**

The fact is that media ministries are experiencing huge levels of activity. Digital analytics of these ministries and occasional “secular” research attests to this fact.

Yet the gap between media response and what happens on the ground presents a serious challenge. Consider the following statistics reported by a respected evangelistic website in the region:*

- 1,579,664 unique visitors in a 12-month period
- 13,860 individuals “requesting info”
- 112,471 “indicated decisions” by individuals

However, in the primary region of the website’s influence there was little change in the scale or vitality of the local church. So, what is happening in this and similar cases across the region?

It is helpful to reflect on the Biblical model of the process of evangelism—sowing, watering, reaping, and discipling.¹ Consider a media user (radio listener, TV program viewer, evangelistic website visitor, etc.) saying, “I want to follow Jesus,” as the First Mile of the spiritual journey.

The Last Mile is what it takes to go from that initial step to personal discipleship and engaging in healthy fellowship with other believers. Then there is the strengthening of leadership of local fellowships, becoming with others a community witness to Christ, and eventually the replicating or multiplying of the fellowship of believers.

First Mile metrics, such as initial or even sustained response by enquirers, while important, are not the most critical indicators of success. The Last Mile is where the real outcomes must be measured. Developing a means of effectively evaluating the Last Mile will be challenging—far more difficult than generating relevant metrics in the First Mile.
A candid assessment of the state of the church (historic and evangelical) in the MENA region suggests that despite a massive investment/deployment of resources in media and follow-up for the last forty years, there has been, at best, modest (if any) real change. With possibly the exception of Yemen, Algeria, Iran, and northern Iraq—each with very special, heavily influential collateral factors—the state of the visible church in the MENA region is little different. There is considerable, though rarely discussed, documentation to support this uncomfortable conclusion.

Why Are We Where We Are?

I would suggest four reasons for this disconnect between inputs and outcomes.

1. There is a misunderstanding of the essential nature of Gospel in both individual and community witness. The highly individualistic West has become a place where “community” is hardly known, much less valued and regularly experienced. Western Christianity reflects this culture in our largely individualistic approach to salvation. Consider how most Western churches, when asked to describe their local fellowship, speak primarily about quantitative numbers: staff size, budget, members/attendees, number of baptisms, etc. Sadly, you rarely find talk about the quality of the fellowship: levels of serious discipleship (“apprentices to Jesus” to use the Dallas Willard expression), sense of real Kingdom engagement in each other’s lives, engagement in the community, etc. Means for evaluating these critical indicators are almost non-existent—and even more so in a region like MENA.

2. There is strong evidence that the extraordinary spread of the Gospel in the first three hundred years following Christ’s death and resurrection was due, in significant part, to the community witness of believers in their very hostile, polytheistic settings. This was reflected not only in the strength and maturity of individual believers and their local fellowship but was critical to the replication of local fellowships (church growth, etc.).

3. Virtually all Islamic communities, from West Africa to Southeast Asia, are traditional, community-based cultures. A quote from a leader of an on-line fellowship is worth noting: “We rejoice when family members come to faith. It’s good for us to hear that, and it encourages us to share with our families” (emphasis mine).

4. There is a well-intentioned yet misguided understanding of the role and power of media in a hostile social setting. Dozens of studies on a wide range of efforts affirm the media’s strengths and weaknesses. While this topic deserves detailed, prayerful consideration by MENA related media leadership, let me summarize.

Studies consistently show that when calling for change in a socially hostile context, media are most effective at the early stages of information and awareness. Later, once a positive decision is considered, the media can provide educational support and affirmation for the new convert. But, at the critical points of motivation, conviction, and action, media have, at best, modest influence. (See figure 10.2 for a simple diagram illustrating this.)

In suggesting this line of thinking I am in no way devaluing the unique work of the Holy Spirit in individual hearts to both consider and follow Christ. Yet individuals must walk out into hostile communities—their family, friends, employers, and powerful traditional religious community leadership.

The majority of media in the MENA region for the last fifty years have been sponsored and/or guided by western agencies and their staff. Recent years have seen a welcome increase in the number of MENA nationals as both initiators and as the face and voice of media, able to influence policy.
However, despite the growing number of national personnel, leaders are often influenced by the western, highly individualistic understanding of conversion, spiritual maturity, and the nature and role of the local church in society. With that understanding comes a natural emphasis on the First Mile. Western sponsors (media ministry “home offices” or funders) continue to have a disproportionate influence on strategy. Having little or no experience with a community-demonstrated Christianity, their own individualized understanding of the Gospel message focuses heavily on the First Mile—reported decisions for Christ.

Hard-pressed for solid data (metrics) on media impact, many sponsors were thrilled with the dawn of the digital age and resources such as Google Analytics. But it only took a few years for sponsors to realize that, as the different media reported metrics differently and there was no common vocabulary, things were pretty much as they had been. Funders want numbers, yet the Last Mile will call for a sharply different approach to evaluation.

In the West, family and wider social implications of the Gospel in an individual’s decisions are rarely considered significant barriers to a personal faith in Christ. Possibly later considerations, of course, but not immediately relevant. Yet no one in a typical MENA social setting can possibly consider Christ without those social implications being at the forefront.

All of this, I believe, points to one thing: the inescapable reality that evangelical communications must consider the community of believers on the ground as the most credible and effective witness to the winsome power and attractiveness of Jesus. Individual stories from around the world testify to the power of local fellowships’ ability to, as a collective body, serve, influence, and affect the nature of the society in which they exist. They do this while being an explicit witness to the essential message of the saving power of Christ in the individual life.

**Initiative Progress to Date**

Responding to this large, complex challenge is clearly far beyond the capacity of any single ministry. Acknowledging this, conversations begun regarding a shift in approach across the wider community of media
ministries and their funders. In consideration is an active but informal coalition to address the challenge of the Last Mile.

Media-based ministries are highly visibility (through their output) yet operate in a region that calls for high security. For this reason, an informal network is most appropriate. Sharing research, case histories of new approaches, encouragement, and more active communication all have the potential to increase commitment to the Last Mile.

Over the last eighteen months there has been greater interest than ever before to experiment with a collaborative effort.

• More than twenty media ministry leaders have participated in active discussions about the vision.
• More than a dozen major funding sources in the West have participated in similar active discussions on the topic. (Not surprisingly both media leaders and funders have said, “Yes, we’ve been concerned about this for some time. But, what to do hasn’t been clear.”)
• Possibly the greatest footprint of influence of any single agency is the Strategic Resource Group (SRG), which researches, invests in, and evaluates dozens of MENA media ministries. SRG’s recent bi-annual Summit focused on the Last Mile. Further, they have made an organization-wide commitment to encourage their partner media ministries to focus on Last Mile priorities over the next decade.
• On-the-ground leaders have identified over eighty content topics in eight categories that are relevant to the Last Mile. Among the topics are discipleship, leadership development, family relations, community development, and church multiplication.
• A short, clear definition of the Last Mile is being developed to ensure all understand what is meant and what they are committing to.
• A survey is being planned to give a more complete picture of what is going on now. The diversity and sheer number of initiatives, and the critical nature of the topic, calls for solid information.
• Work is underway to get practical case histories/examples of where, in Islamic settings, local fellowships have grown and have come to be seen as credible and positive influences.
• A working consultation is being considered to bring together media leaders, funders, and on-the ground national leaders to focus on the initiative and prioritize next steps.

Conclusion

God help us to have the insight, commitment to prayer, real leadership, and courage to take the next steps. If we are serious about the nature of Christ’s witness and impact in the Middle East, we must acknowledge that current approaches are having limited impact. Kingdom stewardship compels us to seriously consider these issues and actively explore what they suggest for the future.

Phill Butler started his professional life in broadcasting; first as a journalist and later as a consultant. Over the last forty years he has worked in over seventy countries as founder and leader, first, of Intercristo then Interdev. He has written extensively in the field of communications and missions and is author of the book, Well Connected: Releasing Power, Restoring Hope Through Kingdom Partnerships. He now serves as Senior Strategy Advisor at visionSynergy, which he founded in 2004.

Notes

1. The implications of SAT-7, whose consistently-stated primary mission is to be a voice for and provide support/encouragement of the life, witness, and service of the church in the MENA region deserves specific consideration and analysis.
2. As reported in Lausanne Media Plenary: Missiology and Strategic Alliances for Global Outreach through the Media, 20 Nov 2013 https://www.lausanne.org/content/missiology-and-strategic-alliances-for-global-outreach-through-the-media.

3. See Matthew 13:1–23, John 4:35–38, 1 Corinthians 3:4–9, etc.


5. As reported in visionSynergy UPDATE 09-2016.

6. I have written extensively on this topic. A sample of these papers exploring key elements in this discussion is Media & The Evangelism Process https://goo.gl/dWNFCs.

7. Sample quotes:
   “Media influence is greatest in informing people and creating initial attitudes; it is least effective in changing attitudes and ingrained behaviors.”
   “Persuasive mass media functions far more frequently as an agent of reinforcement than as an agent of change.”
   “The social aegis under which the message comes, the receiver’s social relationship to the sender, the perceived social consequences of accepting it or acting upon it must be put together with an understanding of the symbolic and structural nature of the message, the conditions under which it is received, the abilities of the receiver and his innate and learned responses.” (emphasis mine)

Most people who know something about the late missiologist Ralph Winter, know about his Lausanne 1974 plenary address on unreached peoples (Winter 1975). Some know him from his reinvigorating the discussion about church and mission structures—which he called Sodalities and Modalities (Winter 1974). Still others know him because of his foundational work on Theological Education by Extension (TEE) in the 1960s (Winter 1969).

I am aware of dozens, if not hundreds, of other things that could be on that list—some of which may be even more significant. Winter was a “serial” inventor—ever the engineer. And, he was always a professor—ever the teacher, be it one person or thousands. As a young man, he realized he would need to motivate people and organizations toward deeper involvement in missions. So early in life he began challenging people toward the Lord and His Word. As his opportunities and experience grew, his passion to motivate others to involvement grew. The global mission “industry”—as he liked to call it—were the ones most interested in what he had to say.

This article describes a few of the ways he approached motivating people. As Steve Hawthorne describes it, “When Christians intentionally inspire, instruct, mentor, or equip fellow Christians to become engaged and fruitful in His mission, they are doing the work of mobilizing.”

Influencing Family and Friends

Winter was very focused on whatever task was on his mind at any time—always passing on vision and ideas to draw people to important things small or huge. He applied this in his interaction with people when he was young, before he was well known.

His younger brother David Winter, himself an accomplished educator and President of Westmont College, recalled how Ralph had challenged his life direction:

When I was just starting college… I was just sort of drifting and he [Ralph] saw that and… said, ‘Dave you are just messing around you need to get away from here you need to leave family and friends and have an adventure, an experience, and I know just what you should do,’ as he usually did. … He said, ‘You need to go to Prairie Bible Institute.’ … I didn’t even hesitate, he was very persuasive, and I was also intimidated by his vision, his ideas—I just went. It absolutely changed my life. I came back from that year a different person. I would have never done that except for Ralph.3

Another well-known person Ralph Winter influenced was his close friend, Dan Fuller, son of the radio
evangelist Charles E. Fuller. After graduating from Caltech and Navy flight training, Ralph decided he wanted to go to Princeton to study Inductive Bible Study. Dan described the influence of Winter’s on his life. In reflecting back to a time when their two families were at a picnic together, Dan said:

He was this person who liked to be doing as useful and wonderful things as he could with his time. And had an unusual intelligence. … I really enjoyed being around Ralph. He always had something interesting to say, some new idea. … I said, “I would like to be with that kind of person at seminary.” I think that eighty percent of the direction that my life has taken comes from that picnic at the Winter’s house when I decided to send my application to Princeton. … He felt the importance of learning the Inductive Bible Study. And that’s the thing that I gave my whole life to…. and I owe it to Ralph.⁴

Growing Global Engagement

While at Princeton, Winter met J. Christy Wilson, who was the InterVarsity representative in the area. In December 1946, Winter and J. Christy recruited students to drive to Toronto to join more than five hundred fifty others for the first InterVarsity Christian Fellowship student convention⁵ (Klein 1947, 5–6).

About the same time, Winter heard about the need for English and other subject teachers in Afghanistan. This seemed like a great way both to serve the society for the good and to be “light and salt” in the world. Over the next several years, he recruited more than 100 to go Afghanistan and serve. (Winter 2000, 6–7) He also traveled up and down the East Coast getting medical and other equipment donated to Afghanistan, to help start the Afghan Institute of Technology, modeled after CalTech. His older brother Paul, also an engineer, served there for over a year.

Ralph was mobilizing when he met his wife Roberta. He had been asked to speak to student nurses at the LA General Hospital chapel. At the conclusion of his message, Ralph asked the young women if any of them wanted to go hear a missionary speak. He had room in his car for five girls and took them to hear Frank Charles Laubach (1884–1970), well known around the world for his literacy methods. On the way back from Laubach’s talk, some of the girls, who were very conservative, expressed doubt as to whether Laubach was “a real Christian” or not. The questions arose less from what Laubach had to say, and more due to the fact that they considered the church where he had spoken to be liberal. Ralph asked the girls directly whether they thought Laubach was a real Christian and only one was willing to say so: Roberta Helm. He was also impressed that, though she was from a narrow Christian background, she was willing to buck peer pressure in the car rather than side with the other girls who disagreed with her. Less than six months later, they were married.⁶

On the “Field” in Guatemala

Ralph was always attempting to encourage people see the world a little differently. To motivate prayer for his and Roberta’s work in the mountainous, indigenous area of Guatemala, Ralph produced slideshows for supporters and a newsletter describing a number of different aspects of their work and vision.

Our fundamental purpose is to make the world mission more real to the people back home. This means that we must strive constantly to wean the people away from mere interest in us and fasten their gaze upon the people to whom we are going. Travelogues and family details will not enter at all except where … the general role of the missionary can be helpfully explained to folks whose concept is out of date.⁷

While serving in the rural area of Guatemala, Ralph and co-missionary James Emery saw the need for local pastors and leaders to finish their elementary education. This would allow them to continue training for the ministry. They put together a team, which Ralph helped recruit from several mission organizations, which created primers in the core subjects: science, math, social studies, and history. If the students learned this material, they would know all they needed to finish their schooling and pass the final test. Then they could
go to seminary and get a seminary degree, and then be ordained (Winter 2000, 28–9).

Theological Education by Extension (TEE)

But, those men and women couldn’t go anywhere! They were subsistence farmers—in addition to any church/pastoral ministry they had. So, Winter and Emery developed a way to take the training to the pastors and leader rather than making them go far away to the city for training. TEE was born. As it grew, they sought to mobilize interest and involvement beyond their area or even merely Latin America.

Ralph saw an opportunity to increase the impact of TEE when he met James F. Hopewell, who headed the Theological Education Fund (TEF) under the WCC. At the time, the TEF was seeking to persuade seminaries around the world to merge in order to train ministers more effectively from one base, combining buildings, libraries, and dormitories.

During the conference where they met, Winter had lunch with Hopewell and explained to him what they were doing in Guatemala. Later, TEF gave a $14,000 grant to purchase books for twelve regional extension sites in Guatemala and Mexico (Winter 1967, 10).

In 1965, Hopewell was the most experienced “outsider” to observe the activities of the Guatemala “experiment.” In the book Ralph edited on TEE, he wrote in his introduction to a chapter by Hopewell, “This document in early 1965 represents the first time an eminent person was willing in a large group to go out on a limb to this extent for the extension concept and to give his words added force by accompanying them with a critique, a serious critique, of traditional methodology” (Hopewell 1969, 36).

Ralph realized that for TEE to be accepted, they would have to mobilize basic awareness among Christian leaders in the U.S. So, in 1966, he wrote several popular level articles for World Vision Magazine (which was a generic, missions periodical that dealt with a broad range of issues). The first was, “This Seminary Goes to the Student,” focused in Guatemala and on getting training to the “rural man” (Winter 1966, 12). It mentioned those being trained using TEE methods in Guatemala, Bolivia, and Colombia, as well as other organizations using TEE. The list included The West Indies Mission, George Allen Theological Seminary, Evangelism-in-Depth, and United Biblical Seminary. In a later article he mentions the Conservative Baptist Foreign Mission Society and the joint efforts of the two major North American mission associations (IFMA/EFMA) expressed through the Committee to Assist Missionary Education Overseas (Winter 1970, 16).

The California Friends Mission was also using TEE in Guatemala and Honduras, with thirteen regional centers and eighty-five students. In Guatemala, the Presbyterians had one hundred students and eleven regional centers where students gathered in their own localities, at least once a week. By mid-1969, he wrote that the seminary in Guatemala had “220 students and has become the catalyst of a whole movement involving more than 50 other schools in Latin America, and there is serious interest around the world” (Winter 1969, 8).

As TEE spread in Latin America, Ralph along with Ralph Covell, who was training missionaries at what became Denver Seminary, traveled through Asia sharing with all would listen about the values core to TEE: Getting training to the existing leaders, rather than training younger, unproven leaders who are moved away from their churches for training.

TEE continued to spread, though not as deeply as Ralph had hoped and dreamed. The World Directory of Theological Education by Extension (Weld 1973) reported various aspects of TEE programs, including where training had occurred, materials produced, and locations of programs. He lists the following forty-two countries, many with programs in multiple cities.

In India, the program was still strong in 2009. The Association for Theological Education by Extension there, runs the largest Christian training entity in the country, with thirteen thousand active students. OMF reported that in Cambodia, “Theological Education by Extension (TEE) is an interdenominational group committed to educating and training church leaders, wherever they may be. TEE provides this training through a mixture of home study, group learning and ministry application”.

The 2010 edition of Operation World lists sixty-four different countries as having or needing an increase in TEE ministry—including thousands of students. Many of these are in places you would expect—areas where poverty or security are major issues—such as: Algeria, where, “The establishment of strong indigenous groups
and church leaders. The rapid growth and sensitive context makes leadership development a constant challenge. TEE is developing quickly in order to help raise up a new generation of leaders” (Mandryk 2010, 99).

Mobilization that Continues

When I first met Ralph Winter at a student meeting in 1976, I did not know anything about unreached people groups. I was interested in reaching the whole world but did not understand what that might take to accomplish. What I learned that evening changed my life, setting a trajectory for the rest of my life. I could not get out of my mind both the man and his message. As I processed what I learned about the lack of the gospel witness among thousands of people groups, the mobilization task became clear that ever. Later, I realized that if every church in the world were to reach out as far as it could in every direction, more than one half of the world would remain untouched.

What Ralph shared that night was, in essence, what he had said to the Lausanne Congress in 1974. At the time, Ralph and Roberta (who worked with him side-by-side) didn’t believe that presentation impacted many people at the time. But, thirty-six years later, at the third Lausanne Congress in Cape Town in October 2010, three major points were emphasized from the platform as the core impact of Lausanne ‘74:

1. The Lausanne Covenant.
2. The clear recognition and need for evangelicals to focus on social issues.
3. The massive need to take the gospel to unreached people groups, as presented by Winter and illustrated by Donald McGavran.

Since Ralph Winter died in 2009, I have recorded more than sixty interview testimonies of his impact on the lives of women and men. One of them is from a brother who trained in Pasadena under Winter—who coached this man and his wife to go to one of the largest people groups in Southeast Asia. Each time this man visited the U.S., he would check in with Ralph share the progress of the gospel and exchange ideas with him. He testified how much this helped them in their front-line work. They started from scratch and, as of 2016, there are none thousand Muslims followers of Christ. It has been in the hands of local leadership for several years and continues to grow.

These are only a few examples of the lasting influence of Ralph Winter’s unashamed, enthusiastic, and innovative efforts to mobilize believers to spread the Gospel in more effective ways. As he did with his brother, Dan Fuller, James Hopewell and hundreds of others, he was continually seeking to draw people into whatever idea was on his mind and heart at the time.

What is your story? Who is the “Ralph Winter” in your life? As we look to the future, and what God might want to do through us in our generation, you should also ask who are we mobilizing?

Greg Parsons joined the U.S. Center for World Mission (now Frontier Ventures) in 1982—working twenty-seven years with Ralph Winter. Greg served from 1990–2010 as the director and he now serves by learning form and connect with missions and church leaders globally. He also serves as the Chancellor and Associate Professor of Intercultural Studies at WCIU.edu, writes a regular column in Mission Frontiers magazine and serves on the boards of Missio Nexus and Christar.

References


Notes

1. I list a number of these in my dissertation on Ralph D. Winter. (Parsons 2012)
2. Steve Hawthorne is the author of Perspectives on the World Christian Movement Study Guide, and co-author, with Ralph Winter, of the Perspectives on the World Christian Movement Reader, (Hawthorne 2015, 1)
3. Comments made by David Winter at Ralph Winter’s memorial, June 28, 2009.
5. This was the first of IV’s every three-year convention now called: Urbana.
6. Interview with Ralph Winter by the author on August 7, 2006, 7 and (Winter 2000, 14). For more on Ralph and Roberta’s meeting and engagement, see: (Winter 2001)
7. September 28, 1957 letter from Ralph D. Winter to one of his mission leaders, Dr. Rycroft, 2.
8. Hopewell had been with TEF since it started in 1958, which was before it had any connection with the WCC. Winter wrote, “He had visited more theological institutions on the face of the earth than any other man who has ever lived.” (Winter 1969, 37)
10. CAMEO’s sought to bring together “educators and mission leaders as to the responsibilities educators and evangelical institutes on in the homeland have for their counterparts on the mission field.” (Editorial 1967, 115)
11. Email from the director of TAFTEE, David Samuel to Greg H. Parsons, February 11, 2009. I was not able to get updated statistics in time for this article.
14. Both Winter and McGavran gave plenary talks about the need for cross-cultural evangelism.
Partnership is something we long for but often have a difficult time defining. North American churches and organizations are seeking to partner with the global community in ever increasing degrees, yet partnership is often a broad elusive term that can be defined very differently depending on the context.

In this new Missiographic, we have sought to clarify one model for examining and defining our partnerships from North America with the global church. For the purposes of this Missiographic, partnership is defined as “co-operative scaling-relationships focused on creating, maintaining, or strengthening active ministry initiatives.”

We hope that the words, the definitions, and the illustration will help you analyze your current partnerships, and it will lead you to intentionality in developing future partnerships. May your partnerships be focused on the expansion of the Kingdom for the Glory of God among all the nations!

Engaging through Prayer

Father, we are so thankful for how you demonstrate your love for relationship and partnership. We praise you Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as you represent absolute harmony and unity. In perfect partnership, you seek to redeem and sanctify the nations so that you may be worshipped and delighted in—by every tribe and people. Father, please enable us to partner together deeply for the sake of the lost. Help us Almighty God to put aside division and selfish desires. Clothe us, we ask, with humility and service as Christ so clearly demonstrated incarnationally among us. O Lord, may you be glorified as your Church works, serves, and ministers together for those who are yet to be included among your people. Thank you that you allow us to partner with you in that effort. Amen.

Reflection for Churches and Organizations

Intentionality in relationship can never be underrated. Intentionality is essential. We need intentionality in our communication with those we may partner with and those with whom we are partnering. Relationships will change over time and that is okay! Don’t feel limited where a relationship is currently but through ongoing communication and definition, ensure that everyone is aware of what your partnership is and what it is not. Undefined partnership leads to confusion and eventually disunity.

Walk slowly. Walk together. Seek to serve a purpose greater than yourself. Utilize your partnerships for God’s name to be glorified and his fame spread to the darkest and farthest corners of the world. Utilize partnerships to demonstrate the power of God to break down barriers and bring his people together for his purposes.

As we state in the Missiographic, “Ongoing, clear communication from both parties will build trust, agreement, and openness that will allow the relationship to be defined differently over time while still...
maintaining strong unity in Kingdom purpose. You can feel comfortable with where you are. Each degree can be a great place! Each partnership type should be future focused yet moving forward at an appropriate speed to maintain strong, enduring relationships that are sustainable and reproducible.”

How beautiful is a unified church fulfilling its purpose! One Body, One Church, One Mission—in partnership together for God’s glory so that His gospel can be proclaimed among the nations.
Some time ago I read in the pages of a mission magazine that came to my desk an amazing statement. The writer was emphasizing his “conviction that the church, not the mission board, is the sending agency.” He added that according to the book of Acts, “the church at Antioch accepted responsibility for the Apostle Paul.” Then he went on to say that “in the 11th chapter of Acts Barnabas heard of Paul, sought him out, brought him to Antioch and helped him serve an internship in that church of not less than one year.”

“In the 13th chapter,” he claims, “the church exercised its proper place as the local body of Christ by recognizing and assessing the gifts of Paul (and others). It then was informed about the needs of other areas. Because of this it enlisted men who could meet the need; it authorized, then commissioned them to go, identifying itself with them, and then sent them out to the work.”

A simple reading of the account in the Acts will reveal that he didn’t get all of this from that account. Yet, his statements merit serious consideration because they represent a trend in current evangelical thinking about missions.

Another writer insists that “the local assembly becomes the mediating and authoritative sending body of the New Testament missionary.” A third writer says, “For all his apostolic authority, Paul was sent forth by the church (God’s people in local, visible congregational life and in associational relationship with other congregations) and, equally important, he felt himself answerable to the church.”

These men are deeply concerned that the local church assume a more active role in the carrying out of the church’s mission. But this hardly justifies reading into the New Testament text what is not actually there. Nor does it justify treating a New Testament church as if it were structurally similar to one of our free churches of the twentieth century.

The whole argument is based on the example of one New Testament church, that of Antioch. No other church fits that pattern. Almost the only Scripture passage used is Acts 13:1–4, followed by Acts 14:27. Let us look first at Acts 13:1–4 and see what Luke actually says. He tells us that there were prophets and teachers ministering in the church at Antioch and gives their names, including Barnabas and Saul. While they were worshiping and fasting, the Holy Spirit told them he had called two of their number for a special task. They were to set them apart for that task. So after the five had fasted and prayed, the other three laid hand on Barnabas and Saul and sent them on their mission.

Note first that the church as such was not involved in this action. It was only these prophets and teachers who were involved. Some would contend that the church was involved by implication, since these were the leaders in the church. But this is pure presumption. There is absolutely no indication in the text that these men were acting on behalf of the church. Nor did their ministry in the church...
necessarily qualify them to act for the church. They are not named as elders or bishops of the church. Even
the later tradition recorded by Eusebius that lists Peter as the first bishop of Antioch passes over these men as
officials of the church. They are more like the prophet Agabus mentioned in Acts 11:28, who ministered tem-
porarily in Antioch. So any proof that the men represented the church in their action is completely lacking.

Their laying on of hands, in view of our current practice in the commissioning of missionaries, does look
something like an official action. So it deserves attention. What did the laying on of hands signify in the New
Testament?

Basically, of course, as in the case of the sacrifices in the Old Testament, it bears the idea of identification.
But this is quite broad. We need something more precise. Actually we can distinguish four meanings of the

First and most commonly, through the laying on of hands vital force is communicated from one person
to another, especially for healing. We find this particularly in the Gospels, in the accounts of the ministry of
Christ. He laid hands on the sick and they recovered. He prophesied that his followers would do the same
thing (Mark 16:18), and there are examples of this happening in the Acts.

Closely related to this is the communication of the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands, as in the
case of the Samaritan believers in Acts 9.

Of course, neither of these could apply to the situation in Acts 13:3. But there are two other meanings to
the action in the New Testament. In Matthew 19:13–15 we have the account of Christ laying his hands on the
little children by way of blessing them. Then, in Acts 6:6, we see the apostles laying hands on the seven when
they were appointed. In 1 Timothy 5:22, Paul warns Timothy not to lay hands suddenly on any man. Both of
these refer to the appointment of men for a ministry in the church. Which of these two meanings, blessing
or appointment, is in view in Acts 13:3?

It seems to me that the first is by far the more likely. Appointment presupposes superior authority to
make the appointment. But the three certainly did not have any authority other than that which Barnabas
and Saul also enjoyed. In fact, when the believers in Antioch had wanted to send relief to the brethren in
Jerusalem, they did it through Barnabas and Saul (Acts 11:29, 30).

Some will object, “Doesn’t the fact that ‘they sent them away’ (Acts 13:3) imply authority?” Yes, it would, if
the Greek verb translated “they sent them away” actually meant just what the English words seem to mean.
But it doesn’t.

There are three basic verbs in Greek that are most commonly translated “send” in English. Two of them
are almost synonymous: *pempo* and *apostello*. The first means simply “send”—any sort of sending. The second
means “send forth” and is the verb from which the noun “apostle” comes. *Apostello* is used in Acts 11:30 for the
sending of Barnabas and Saul to Jerusalem with the contributions from the Antioch brethren. *Pempo* is used
in Acts 13:4, where Luke says that they were “sent forth by the Holy Spirit” on their first missionary journey.

But the verb in verse 3 is neither of these. It is a different verb, *apoluō*, which means literally “release” or
“dismiss.” This verb is never once used in the sense of an authoritative sending of individuals on a mission,
or with a task to perform. So it really should be translated, “they let them go,” or more freely, “they wished
them Godspeed.”

There is a very good reason why different verbs are used in verses 3 and 4. It is abundantly clear in the
whole passage that it was the Holy Spirit who called the two men and on his own authority was sending them
forth on their mission. The only responsibility of the others in Antioch was to go along with the Holy Spirit,
setting Barnabas and Paul apart for this new task and letting them go with their blessing. They neither chose
them nor sent them, and certainly they had nothing to say about what they were to do, nor how. But some
will insist, “Didn’t Paul and Barnabas feel themselves answerable to the church at Antioch, when they made
a report to it about their missionary work?”

The answer depends on what one implies by that phrase, “answerable to the church.” If it means simply
that the missionaries still felt themselves to be a part of that company of believers and so ought to recount to
them how the Lord had blessed and used them on their trip, well and good. It is the same thing that today’s
missionary does when he returns to his home church after a term on the field.

But if the phrase means that the Antioch church, as a sending agency, exercised its right to require that the
men report to it on their missionary activities, that is another matter. In fact, it involves another distortion of the Scripture record. There isn’t the slightest hint that such a requirement was ever made. On the contrary, the initiative for the gathering mentioned in Acts 14:27 came not from the church but from the missionaries. It was they who wanted to encourage the hearts of the believers by telling them how the Lord had blessed their ministry, and particularly how Gentiles had responded to the gospel. The text says specifically, “they… gathered the church together.”

One further note. If the Antioch church had constituted itself a missionary sending agency, surely there would be some further evidence of its missionary activity after this one trip. But this is completely lacking. Luke tells us that Paul himself decided on his second missionary tour. And when he and Barnabas had a falling out, he chose his own companion and set forth. At the end of this second tour he reported first, not to the church in Antioch but to the one in Jerusalem. Antioch was still in a sense its home base, so the Scripture says briefly that “he went down to Antioch” afterwards and “spent some time there” (Acts 18:22, 23). Only once in his epistles did Paul make a reference to Antioch. That was in Galatians 2:11, where he told how he had reproved Peter for compromising with the Judaizers.

So the one New Testament passage that many adduce to support their claim that the organized church is the scripturally authorized missionary sending agency offers no such support. The church itself did not claim that authority, nor was its authority recognized. Moreover, apart from this one incident there is not even another hint in the New Testament that the church ever acted as a missionary sending agency.

In the first five centuries of the Christian era I have been unable to find any instance where the church, as a church, ever officially designated and sent out missionaries. Adolf Harnack says something very similar: “During the first centuries there is no evidence whatever for organized missions by individual churches; such were not on the horizon.”

There is another basic reason why the church at Antioch could not have acted as a missionary sending agency. It was not equipped to do so.

As already mentioned, we do have a tendency to look at the Antioch church as if it were like one of our churches today. It is a common failing to look at historical situations and events in the light of our accumulated knowledge and experience, our present attitudes and understandings. It takes real effort to recapture in some degree the thinking of an earlier day, to understand the situation that prevailed.

Note first that the church in Antioch was not an organized body. Nowhere in the New Testament is it even hinted that it had a pastor, bishop, elders, deacons, or any other church officials. It did have “certain prophets and teachers” who carried on a voluntary ministry with no special authorization other than the leading of the Spirit. They preached and taught, but did not attempt to govern.

Second, there is a great probability that the church was not a single congregation. In a huge city of possibly five hundred thousand people the refugees from Jerusalem would have to find homes and employment where they could. They had no common meeting place such as the temple in Jerusalem. Rather, they would have to meet in private homes, as they did in other cities, including Rome (Romans 16:5).

This explains several things. One is the ministry of the five prophets and teachers, none of whom seems to have had the preeminence. They could circulate among the congregations. Then there is the fact that when Barnabas and Paul returned from their trip, they had to call the church together to tell their story. If the church had been in the habit of meeting together, there would have been no need for this special gathering. Finally, how could Peter withdraw from fellowship with Gentile believers in a single congregation without causing a big uproar (Galatians 2:11–14)? But with several groups meeting in different places, some predominantly Jewish, he could get away with his pretense for a time.

Actually, every reference to Antioch in the New Testament speaks of “the disciples,” “the brethren,” “the multitude” and never of an organized church. So the idea that the local church is the divinely ordained missionary sending agency finds absolutely no support in the Scriptures.


It is strange that we have so little confidence in the Holy Spirit. Stranger still that we do not read our
history carefully and realize that when the church has brought things under control, it has tended to stifle rather than stimulate the work. At best, as in the council at Jerusalem, it tags along behind and grudgingly acknowledges what the Spirit is doing.

Missionary work in the early days was far from regimented. Instead of a well-planned enterprise manned by personnel specially selected, appointed and sent out officially by the churches, we see two things. First, a large part of the work was carried on by the voluntary witness of ordinary Christians who shared their faith with others. Second, there were many who believed they were led by the Holy Spirit to go from place to place spreading the gospel at their own expense. The Didache, one of our earliest extra-biblical documents, calls these itinerant teachers “apostles” and gives instruction how to distinguish the true from the false. In the third century Origen wrote how some “make it the business of their life to wander not only from city to city but from town to town and village to village in order to win fresh converts for the Lord.”

What shall we conclude? Is it then wrong for the church to send out missionaries? Far from it! Our only contention in this article is that it is wrong to claim that the organized church is the one agency prescribed in the New Testament for the sending of missionaries. On the contrary, the one indispensable is the sending by the Holy Spirit. If the church acts in accord with the Holy Spirit, well and good. But if not, the Spirit will still send forth his missionaries, whether individually, as in the early centuries, or through independent societies, as in more recent years. These societies are not an aberration, as some would have us believe. Rather, they are modern attempts (often faulty, to be sure) to follow the scriptural principle of letting the Spirit do the sending as in the early days.

Harold R. Cook was Professor of Missions at Moody Bible Institute for over twenty-five years (1950s–1970s). Before that he served as a pioneer missionary to Venezuela with the Oronoco River Mission. Among other writings, he is the author of An Introduction to the Study of Christian Missions (1954) and Missionary Life and Work (1959).

Notes

Engaging Muslims & Islam: Lessons for 21st-Century American Evangelicals

By Amit A. Bhatia

Engaging Muslims & Islam. It’s all in the “&.”

Amit Bhatia has undertaken an important research project regarding the views of American evangelicals toward Muslims & Islam. Bhatia recognizes this could be two separate inquiries because of the potential “mismatch” in the views towards Muslims and Islam by American Evangelicals, of whom he states: “They may have a fairly positive perspective toward Islam but a negative attitude toward Muslims, or vice versa” (25).

Bhatia’s research is well-balanced and has many instructive elements. First, Bhatia shares the heart-warming story of how his Hindu grandparents were spared from the violence of the bloody partition of India by the bravery of a Muslim servant (177–178).

Second, the author selected Chicago for his field research, which is an area featuring a large and diverse Muslim population. Bhatia interviewed members of four Chicago evangelical congregations for their views on Muslims and Islam. Eight of the interview questions were specifically about Islam, five about Muslims, and four about both. These congregants demonstrated varying levels of engagement with Islam as a religion and local Muslims as neighbors. Bhatia also interviewed staff from a local ministry center, pseudonymously named “COMM.”

While the length of the book—376 pages—may appear daunting, Part II (of three) is comprised of eminently readable interview responses. One interviewee recognized the diversity which exists within Islam, calling it a “big tent” (126). Another respondent described local Muslims as “lovely people, they are gentle, they are kind, they are very hospitable” (126). Others elicited negative impressions. Several stated that Islam was satanic. One mentioned the “dark side” of militant Islam (106). Another stated “female infanticide is okay” (124) in Islam, though Muhammad is recorded in Islamic history to have abolished the practice in Arabia.

There are encouraging signs. One pastor invited his Muslim friend to an eight-week Bible study on “The Life of Jesus.” After the series ended, the Muslim friend stated, “If you ever do anything like this again, I want to be in it” (207).

Bhatia rightly encourages “engagement at a deeper level” (339). He emphasizes that pastors should present information about Islam in a way that Muslims themselves could attest as accurate. Yet he may have fallen short of his own recommendation on one point: “Their training must include … that Islam is not what it was in the 7th century when it was first established but has changed and continues to change as it engages other religions and cultures …” (343). Who is to say the extent to which this is true?

Doctoral projects require a theoretical component and Bhatia meets his by developing a “theology of religions” based both on a literature review and the field research. He addresses religious pluralism, tolerance/intolerance and the topic of “Islamophobia.”

In conclusion, Bhatia emphasizes the importance of prayer as the foundation for outreach (345), and
that Muslims share the same nature as others—sinners needing salvation. Bhatia proves a worthy match for
the mismatch he has tackled. His thorough research which will enlighten many readers.

For Further Reading
Miller, Duane A. Two Stories of Everything: The Competing Metanarratives of Islam and Christianity. Grand
Durie, Mark. Liberty to the Captives: Freedom from Islam and Dhimmitude through the Cross, 2nd ed.
Protestants Abroad: How Missionaries Tried to Change the World but Changed America
By David A Hollinger

David Hollinger, emeritus professor from Berkeley, began, in the 1990s, to appreciate the impact missions had on the United States. Hollinger lays out a simple thesis “The Protestant foreign missionary project expected to make the world look more like the United States. Instead, it made the United States look more like the world” (1). He argues that missionaries, after being exposed to numerous cultures around the world, returned home making America become less narrow-minded and more pluralistic. Based on a massive amount of research, Hollinger tells the stories of missionaries and missionary children.

Chapter 1 presents the idea of a “Protestant Boomerang.” Protestant missionaries left the United States with the intent to change the world, were changed themselves, and returned to the United States with insights and skills that made them successful at changing the United States. Chapter 2 discusses three of the key individuals that profoundly shaped popular culture in the twentieth century: Henry Luce, publisher of Time Magazine; Pearl Buck, author of the award-winning novel The Good Earth; and John Hersey, author of The Call.

Chapter 7, “Telling the Truth about the Two Chinas” Hollinger provides fascinating profiles of several political actors on both the left and the right in the volatile 1950s who were missionary kids. Hollinger notes that his argument is not that missions led to a particular worldview, but rather missions-related people were involved.

Chapter 9, “Against Orientalism: Universities and Modern Asia,” examines the growth of area studies in the American universities. In Chapters 10 and 11, Hollinger concludes by suggesting that the missionary impulse of the early and middle twentieth century transformed into the Peace Corps and the civil rights movement.

Protestants Abroad is a dazzling book, presenting valuable material and a persuasive case for the role of missions in making the US more liberal and pluralistic. Nonetheless, Evangelical scholars of missions may find the book sometimes frustrating. Missions scholars might object to Hollinger’s assertion that missions “expected to make the world look more like the United States.” Hollinger focuses on liberal missions, apparently simply assuming that the liberal missionaries were more multi-cultural than the conservatives. A more nuanced study, however, might show that conservative missionaries were more pluralistic and less influenced by the growing racism and social Darwinism popular in the universities starting in the late nineteenth century.

When I first saw the book, I hoped it would be groundbreaking. Unfortunately, the book is more like a brilliant “Who’s who” compendium of important people who had missionary connections. I suspect a similar book might be written about, for instance, Yale University alumni. Rather than introducing fresh insights, the contribution of the book among academic historians may be little more than persuading a handful of them that many famous people had missionary connections and that not all the missionaries were as bad as they thought.
Shaping Christianity in Greater China:
Indigenous Christians in Focus

By Paul Woods

We have heard the spellbinding stories of missionaries in China—currently on track to become the world’s largest Christian nation—but what about the contribution of Chinese Christians to the development of their own church? This is the focus of Shaping Christianity in Greater China, a collection of seventeen essays which provide a diverse portrait of the development of the indigenous Chinese church. The book emerged from a conference marking the one hundred fiftieth anniversary of the OMF (previously China Inland Mission) on the contributions of indigenous Christians in China. The authors are representative of this book’s variety: both Chinese and non-Chinese experts and educators from around the world as well as a variety of faith traditions (Anglican, Baptist, Charismatic, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic, etc.). Their task is not easy given the inadequate, historical information on native Chinese Christians, in contrast to the archives of western missionaries to China. Nevertheless, editor Paul Woods succeeds in providing a captivating snapshot of the multi-faceted, lesser-known story of the Christian faith in China.

Shaping Christianity in Greater China covers a time period of almost four hundred years, from the Fujian literati’s Christian poetry in the sixteenth century to the role of a Christian NGO in the aftermath of the 2008 Sichuan earthquake. Pains are also taken to represent the body of Christ throughout the vast, geographical region of China, from the church in northern Shanxi during the Boxer Rebellion to the development of an indigenous church amongst the Lysu in the south; from portraits of great, native church leaders in Hong Kong and Taiwan to Dr. Kao’s medical church-planting ministry in the western Gansu province. Further, an impressive array of subjects is discussed, including Catholic and Protestant Bible translation, the contribution of Chinese, Christian women, Chinese theology in contrast with western theology, Christianity’s role in Chinese education, the Taiwanese self-determination movement, and more. The paradoxical relationship between the indigenous church and the West is often discussed, as Chinese Christians were both thankful for the western missionaries as well as critical of their methods and their governments’ policies. Several authors demonstrate how the anti-foreign sentiment ironically furthered the indigenization of Christianity in China.

Shaping Christianity in Greater China is not, nor does it claim to be, a definitive history of the indigenous, Chinese church. It should be viewed rather as a conversation-starter, an invitation to further research the remarkable contribution of native Chinese to the development of their own church. The attempt to cover such a vast array of content keeps this book from treating any one subject in depth. Naturally, some articles are more well-written and valuable than others, the first chapter being irrelevant and the final chapters on contemporary history having the advantage of a larger research body. In conclusion, this book is an essential resource for anyone interested in the history of Christianity in China and the people of China’s role in that fascinating story which continues today.

For Further Reading


Spirituality in Mission: Embracing the Lifelong Journey
John Amalraj, Geoffrey W. Hahn, and William D. Taylor, eds.

This book focuses on Christian spirituality on the mission field, specifically in regards to “Christian spirituality in the real context of cross-cultural mission”, and how this relates to “intercessors and mobilizers, missionaries and senders, pastors and teachers, churches and agencies, training programs and schools, networks and pastoral care resources” (xix). The subject of the book is intriguing, as this is not a topic that has been written on extensively. The book, compiled by the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) Mission Commission (MC), is a part of the Globalization in Mission series. Most of the contributors have connections to the WEA Mission Commission or to other large mission agencies.

The authors, from eighteen countries, share their unique cultural perspectives on biblical principles of Christian spirituality, and how this spirituality affects how the church engages in God's mission. Here are some of the highlights. Rose Dowsett (Chapter 1) aims to analyze spirituality from a biblical perspective. She mentions how true biblical spirituality must exist in the context of a church community, rather than in isolation (7). Geoffrey Hahn (Chapter 4) writes, “The ministry team’s ability to witness is inescapably connected to the depth and quality of the team’s relationships and fellowship” (32). I have found Hahn’s words to be entirely true in my own ministry in China. Another chapter of note (Chapter 6) written by Reuben E. Ezemadu is about spiritual warfare. Particularly insightful was when Ezemadu convincingly gave biblical proof for how spiritual warfare advances the kingdom agenda (51) by showing how many stories in the Bible are related to spiritual warfare.

David Tai-Woong Lee writes about “Discerning the Will of God” (Chapter 15), and explains in detail his experiences in discerning God’s will for his life over the years. Similarly practical is Rodolfo Giron’s “The Walk by Faith Continuum” section (147-149) in chapter 17 titled “Spirituality and Planning”. Giron describes the need to balance intentional planning, relying on God’s guidance, and having flexibility in making plans. William D. Taylor (Chapter 22) explains models and applications of the stages of spiritual development. This chapter provides a good look at various periods in our lives. Doing this helps the reader see the somewhat larger picture of life, and consider what phase the reader currently is in and what often happens down the road. And later in the book, Hahn writes a helpful chapter (Chapter 28) related to risk taking and missions. Included is the reality of the physical and psychological toll that can come on the mission field, but that we must push through our fears, as our faith in Jesus involves taking our cross and following Him wherever He leads us (275-285).

Most parts of the book are relevant to the Christian audience in general, and not just for those in missions. The book overall has been worthwhile to read, though it is a bit long with thirty-nine chapters. It seemed the case studies in chapters 23 and 24 were superfluous and could have been taken out without missing anything.

For Further Reading
By 1913, the British Empire ruled over 412 million people, a quarter of the then world’s population. I come from one of the countries they ruled—India. The British came up with a system of education for Africans and Indians, which suited their rule. The people groups they deemed higher classes were allowed to remain as high classes. However, they were trained to be middlemen, so the British could control the large majority of the population through them. In India, these were the high caste priests or Brahmins. Hinduism already had a practice of enslaving the low castes and the outcastes. The British system of education gave them further tools to enslave the masses, and thus benefit themselves. In African countries like Kenya, Zambia, and Nigeria, the British system of education was inimical to economic growth and caused much tribal animosity. Years after the British left these countries the colonial stamp remains, with British education and English ideas as the gold standard.

Jim Harries, in his crucial book *The Godless Delusion*, does a great job in delineating the dire consequences of thoughts produced in the West that impact the thinking elite in Africa. Richard Dawkins is one of Oxford University’s most important thinkers and scientists. When he states in his magnum opus, *The God Delusion*, that God does not exist, and that all religion is a delusion, thinkers in India and Africa listen. After all, he is from the Mecca of learning—Oxford. Africa, pays careful attention, because Dawkins was born in Nairobi, Kenya. His father, John Dawkins, was an agricultural scientist there.

In the first chapter, Harries suggests that Dawkins and other western thinkers have continued to impose on Africa the artificial divide between the head and the heart; the mind and the emotion; and the secular and the spiritual. The African person does not know this kind of division. In the second chapter, Harries shows that religion is a vibrant, active and live experience; the realm of the supernatural is very real in Africa. In chapter 3, Harries writes, “God has an essential role to play in many, if not all, African ways of life … What Dawkins is really saying is that God is not in a ‘real’ category, … he belongs in the ‘delusion’ or ‘non-real’ category” (44). Harries urges that this mindset is foreign to Africa, and must not become the basis of African theology, or church life. In fact, he suggests that the very use of a western language like English, takes away from deep African Christianity, which is a lot deeper than an intellectual exercise. It is prayer for healing of cancer. It is a spiritual battle against supernatural evil, which takes on all kinds of social, economic, and complex forms in society. African languages can understand this complexity. This is vibrant Christianity and is so different from the western godless delusion.

I highly recommend this book to anyone seeking to know how to think outside the narrow box of the western dualistic world.
The New Odyssey: The Story of the Twenty-First-Century Refugee Crisis

By Patrick Kingsley

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, twenty-four people are displaced every minute. In fact, the modern-day refugee crisis has created the largest population of displaced persons, estimated at 65.3 million people in 2015, since World War II (See Edwards 2016 article, “Global forced displacement hits record high,” on the UNHCR website). Governments, NGO’s, religious organizations, churches, and concerned individuals throughout the world are grappling with the overwhelming numbers of displaced persons and those impacted by them.

Patrick Kingsley, who is The Guardian’s first-ever migration correspondent, has written a fascinating account of one man, Hashem al-Souki, and his journey from Syria throughout Europe in an attempt to get asylum. Through Hashem’s story (he is referred to by his first name throughout the book) Kingsley alerts the reader of the horrifying details of what a modern refugee must endure on the long trek to possible settlement.

The book is organized into ten chapters and all except one highlight a different location along Hashem’s journey. Chapter Five focuses on the worst shipwreck in modern history in which nine hundred people drowned (119). Kingsley places this chapter just after Hashem steps on a boat and just before the reader learns he has made it safely to Italy, to highlight the arbitrariness of a refugee’s journey in which so many different factors are involved. The book ends with Hashem’s arrival in Sweden awaiting asylum and permanent residency.

Kingsley’s inclusion of refugee stories and voices is what makes this book stand out. Much of what is currently available about refugees is historical, statistical, or anecdotal. Throughout his book, Kingsley vacillates between reporting the story in journalistic fashion and including the voices of those involved in the refugee story. For example, in addition to Hashem, the reader meets Hans, a Jewish Austrian man who smuggles Syrians into Hungary. The humanization of the impersonal label “refugee,” invites the reader into a story, into pain, and into the struggle thrust upon people, turned refugee, due to war, famine, and natural disasters. It also invites the reader into a space of contemplation where one is left to wonder, “What would I do if I were in Hashem’s situation? Would there be a Hans there to help?”

The modern-day refugee crisis is a heart-wrenching reality that demands both compassion and action from the Christian Church. In just about every region of the world, there are, unfortunately, growing populations of displaced people in need of help. This book is a great tool to begin learning the details, barriers, and tragedies involved in resettlement. But, it should also spur reader on to ask themselves, “How can I be a part of a refugee story?”

For Further Reading


The Spirit Over the Earth: Pneumatology in the Majority World
Gener L. Green, Stephen T. Pardue, and K.K. Yeo, eds.

The Spirit over the Earth is part of the Majority World Theology series in which scholars from around the globe engage theological topics in dialogue with Western tradition, Scripture and their cultural context. This timely anthology of essays intersects two major current trends in global Christianity: the shift of the centers of Christianity from Europe and North America to the majority world, and the rapid spread of Pentecostalism. The writers of the book’s essays provide refreshing theological and Biblical reflections on pneumatology from the center of this intersect.

The contributors to this volume include both theologians and Biblical scholars engaging Asian, Latin American and African contexts. Gene Green’s excellent introduction to the anthology provides a helpful synopsis of the context of each contributor, their unique perspective and the contribution of their chapter to the discussion on pneumatology. This synopsis provides a useful framework to guide the reader through the book or as Green muses it provides a ‘helping hand’ that enables the reader to “read along the grain of their concerns and questions that are related to their context of their reading and reflection” (6). His ‘helping hand’ makes the book assessable to a wide range of audiences including those who have just entered the conversation.

Although written from different contexts, common themes run through the essays. In the theological essays there is dialectic between the historical theological tradition and the contextual theological tradition. These essays do not discount their theological heritage but rather provide new perspectives, questions and insights into pneumatology from their context. A common thread is the rejection of the dichotomies that are reflected in the theologies coming out of the Enlightenment: spirit/matter, general revelation/special revelation, individual/relational.

The four essays from the Biblical scholars reflect on the meaning of the Spirit in their context. Their essays bring a refreshing perspective of the relationships and community formed by the Spirit. Like many Pentecostal theologians these essays emphasize the power of the Spirit for witness. However, for these writers, that witness is also relational. The power of the Spirit not only transforms individuals but brings reconciliation and holistic transformation to the Christian community and to the society in which the church is located. Rene Padilla summarizes this in his essay, “It becomes evident that the same Spirit who empowers the church for mission is also the Spirit who empowers the church to confess Jesus Christ as the Lord of the totality of life and experience the Kingdom of God as a present reality” (183).

While the coverage of countries is not extensive, the volume provides a kaleidoscope of insights and questions about the meaning of the Spirit in different contexts. This sampler provides examples of key issues, questions and insights as Majority World authors reflect on how the Spirit is experienced in their context. What I appreciated most about these essays was being able to listen to the voices that were different than my own and see the work and power of the Spirit with fresh lenses.

For Further Reading
Third Culture Kids: Growing Up Among Worlds, 3rd Edition
By David C. Pollock, Ruth E. Van Reken, and Michael V. Pollock

Third Culture Kids: Growing Up Among Worlds is the “bible” for understanding the positives and negatives of growing up in multiple cultures (cover). As part of a family with four generations of missionary kids (MKs), the first edition of Third Culture Kids (1999) came to me as revelation and reassurance. Our family belonged to a community, a culture, and a tribe that had a name and an identity. Authors David C. Pollock and Ruth E. Van Reken had diagnosed our need, detailing and normalizing our experience, with sensitivity and accuracy. Missionary kids were part of the larger Third Culture Kid (TCK) world that included military, diplomatic, and business kids who grew up between multiple cultures because of their parent’s international work. We were understood and now had concepts for the differences and commonalities we had sensed but did not have words to explain.

Yet even as the first edition was being published, Van Reken explains, the increasing cultural complexity of the world, and the stories that quickly surfaced, ensured the necessity of regularly updating the book (xiii). Children of migrants and immigrants, international school students, and minority children, among others, resonated with the descriptions of the lifelong impact of a multicultural childhood. Thus, following the untimely death of David Pollock in 2004, in the second edition of Third Culture Kids (2009) Van Reken added the term Cross-cultural Kids (CCKs) to identify this growing diversity of experience (xv).

With the 2017 publication of the third edition of Third Culture Kids, Michael V. Pollock, David Pollock’s son and an international educator, joins Van Reken to expand and update the previous editions in important ways. In Part 1 the common themes of a multicultural childhood are explored with more stories of nontraditional TCKs (e.g. non-western, multicultural parentage, adoptees, etc.). A discussion of the diversity of CCK experience and how the TCK and CCK worlds intersect highlights the need for more study and research to distinguish both the shared and divergent aspects of the various types of childhoods. Part 2 takes an updated look at the TCK Profile to see how it fits today’s TCKs. Each chapter concludes with suggestions of ways the lessons learned about TCKs might inform the experience of CCKs. Parts 3 and 4 offer additional resources for understanding transition and the care of TCKs. Added or updated chapters include care strategies for parents and organizations, ways adult TCKs can heal the traumas of multiple transitions, and suggestions for the future of this topic.

The clarity of language, riveting stories, conceptual flow, wealth of experience, and something that can only be called “heart” make reading Third Cultures Kids (2017) a journey of joy and growth. For these reasons and more, the third edition is indeed a “bible,” a guide, a road map, for all types of TCKs and CCKs and those who love and care for them.

For Further Reading
Toward Global Missional Leadership: A Journey Through Paradigm Shift in the Mission of God
By Kirk J. Franklin

Why are there less “missionaries” today? Maybe they are just called something else. Many denominations no longer use the term “missionary” which can be viewed as a superior on a mission to convert people who are ignorant. Also, some world governments do not allow people with the title “missionary” to obtain visas to enter their countries. However, Franklin also critiques a newer term of “international worker.” He demonstrates his linguistic prowess when he reports that “the word ‘international’ is semantically tied to a Western concept of territorial expansion” (Kindle location 219). I was not aware of this connotation as I understood the term to be simply a broad term about one’s location. This is just one example of how Franklin’s book is thought-provoking.

There are few books which address partnering with people from other cultures from the beginning stages to join them in missional endeavors which do not begin from the West. Franklin’s purpose in writing this book was “to bring increased awareness to the developing concept-to-reality of global missional leadership, and leadership-in-community” (Kindle locations 200–201). He does this by presenting “seven factors affecting and influencing the early stages of the paradigm shift” (Kindle location 225). One example of those factors is that “models are needed that appreciate and support courageous missional leadership, providing change that builds consensus in complex cross-cultural, multi-cultural and inter-cultural contexts” (Kindle locations 245–247). Although Franklin deduces these principles, he admits that “there is no formula or new methodology, there are no defined next steps showing those in leadership how to cope with increasingly interconnected global issues” (Kindle locations 292–293).

Franklin’s book is chocked full of pedagogical helps for professors to use in a classroom. He provided discussion questions at the end of each chapter for small groups to grapple with the issues or even for individual student reflections (Kindle locations 248–249). Those questions are open-ended, have adequate background information to get to the heart of the issue and are focused on important learning objectives. Franklin also added relevant topics in the form of short essays by his friends and colleagues. These add credibility, application of theory and personal experiences to the subject matter (Kindle locations 250–251). If you are looking for a book as a professor that introduces missional thought from everywhere to everywhere, then I would recommend this book. It introduces most of the major players and important issues and challenges students’ thinking.

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