

# Perspectives: Mobilizing into the Future

by **James Mason**  
**USA National Director,**  
**Perspectives Study Program**

**T**he longevity and impact of the Perspectives Course is nothing short of miraculous. Who knew that a mobilization movement would still be going strong 40 years after Ralph Winter gathered a small number of Urbana Mission Conference students at Wheaton College in 1974? Today that movement continues to grow and thrive with over 180,000 Perspectives alumni in the US and over 40,000 in other countries. Our research shows that perhaps as many as 34,000 have begun to serve cross culturally and outside the US as a direct result of taking the Perspectives course. Many more have been awakened to pray and give to the work of God's mission. Others have adjusted their lifestyles to welcome and reach out to internationals at home. In short, God's people have been called forward. God, through the Perspectives course, has created a vast "fertile soil" from which he draws his people to join the work he is accomplishing among all peoples.

It's surprising that Perspectives is still growing and thriving today. Most ministries or education programs don't have such enduring value. In the early days, Perspectives wasn't laid out with a careful ministry development plan. It emerged out of Ralph Winter's passion to see young adults well oriented to live out and carry on God's mission. Good mission thinking and ideas were cobbled together in a collection of selected articles and book chapters. Over time, dedicated and compelling thinkers, most notably Steve Hawthorne, adjusted and tuned the curriculum. Eventually a powerful and timeless narrative emerged—a story that reveals that ultimately God must and will be glorified in all the Earth with God's people as key participants. Along the way, with a growing national staff, the delivery of the course was shaped into a sustainable mobilization movement, complete with a system of local class coordinators, class teams, instructors, area teams, and regional leaders.

Today, Perspectives continues with great strength. We're now averaging over 8,000 new students in the US each year and are anticipating many more as we mobilize new generations as well as new cultural and geographic niches. The Perspectives team is now working to lay a foundation for another great 40 years! In the spirit of our parent organization, Frontier Ventures, we will press beyond our boundaries and the boundaries of frontier mission mobilization. Just as we didn't understand in 1974 what Perspectives would become, we anticipate that God will surprise us with where he will lead us in the future. We anticipate the future in three ways:

## **The Course**

The curriculum and delivery of the Perspectives course continues to be developed and adjusted. Current developments in Perspectives USA include:

### **Online class**

As online learning becomes more mainstream in our culture, we have developed a team of workers to the growth and improvement of the online delivery of the Perspectives course. With a growing number of students now taking the course online each year (currently about 500 per year), our goals include accommodating many more students while providing the quality and personalized "class" experience we value so much in Perspectives.

### **New set of teaching videos**

We are working on a well produced, high quality set of new videos to deliver the 15 different Perspectives lessons for use in the online class. We believe the videos will also help us develop a smaller live class format for more remote, rural locations where it would be difficult to bring in 15 different live instructors. The video will also be used for ministry promotion, general mobilization, and to help other countries launch initial Perspectives teams started that will in turn launch new movements.

### **Kindle version**

We've now produced a combined electronic version of the both the Perspectives Reader and the Study Guide. Due to our complex referencing system in these resources, this took some creativity and innovation on the part of our partner and publisher, William Carey Library Publishers. We're happy to provide this practical tool which has been in such high demand.

### **Live class improvements**

The live class experience is the bread and butter of the Perspectives Course. We are recruiting and allocating more staff who can give attention to a variety of improvements. For example, we are moving to improve how we develop and resource our course instructors. Our instructor development team will provide training through online resources and live events as well as improve the way we communicate with and encourage our indispensable pool of instructors. Other developments for our live class include providing lesson plans for coordinators, online grading devices, prayer tools and resources for the blind and hearing impaired. We want all of our team members to be well resourced so we can continue to insure the quality we expect from the Perspectives experience.

### **Continue the narrative**

A key goal is to continue stewardship of the core Perspectives content or “story.” To do this we must mentor and empower new young thinkers to carry us into the future. Additionally, we’re constantly working to tell this story well and to utilize fresh voices in each new edition of our *Reader* and *Study Guide*. We’re regularly invited to add new material to address the latest activities and ideas in mission. Rather than make changes to what we believe is simply a timeless and biblical narrative, we can encourage and partner with other ministries and “new wineskin” type classes that address and mobilize for these important trends.

### **The Ministry**

Perspectives isn’t just a class experience, it’s a community of passionate workers. A few workers are paid, more raise their personal financial and prayer support, and many more are dedicated volunteers. Here are some of the ways this community continues to grow and improve together so that the ministry and movement move forward:

#### **Growing staff and local leaders**

Perspectives staff and volunteers are by far our most important resource. Currently in Perspectives USA we have 20 national staff workers, 14 regional directors, dozens of area mobilizers, and many hundreds of class coordinators, graders, and other class team members. We believe we need to multiply these workers to accommodate growth. We are adding national staff, especially in the areas of IT and Communications. We are also focused on growing regional teams. When these teams, under the leadership of Regional Directors, combine people with administrative skills with people who are gifted networkers and promoters, the result

is an increase in the quality of Perspectives and an increase in mission mobilization.

### **Home Office remodel**

Frontier Ventures, together with Perspectives USA, invested in a significant remodel of the Perspectives staff offices. We are already feeling the positive effects of a professional and welcoming headquarters. Now as the Venture Center surges forward with a new vibrancy and posture in the missions community, the Perspectives home office is well situated to benefit from and add to this experience. Please come by for a visit.

### **A National Conference**

We are excited to announce a Perspectives USA National Conference to be held in Baltimore in July, 2016. This conference will host and gather our national staff, regional directors, and key volunteers (class coordinators, instructors, mobilizers, etc.) who are part of the US Perspectives movement. We will be casting vision, celebrating God’s work through this ministry, giving updates, encouraging the base, and providing practical training.

More specifically, we are also a group of national movements. We are experiencing and looking forward to the growth of Perspectives in many new places and among many new groups.

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### **New audiences**

The future of Perspectives, even in the US, must and will include more participation from communities other than our traditional English language and “white” communities. We are dependent on and look to local leaders to lead in mobilization among African American, Native American, Hispanic/Latino, Asian, and other cultural communities. Our staff and teams are working to build bridges and serve these communities. We’re also learning to be sensitive to why the different Christian communities may not have been truly co-laboring in mobilization work in the past.

Going forward we will innovate both relationally and structurally to see Perspectives become a staple of mobilization in all communities where Christ is followed and his global purposes can be lived out. Our awareness and strategies are also being directed towards other “niche” groups such as the military and college students, as well as various “streams” of evangelicalism like Charismatic/Pentecostal and various denominations or church networks.

### **More Agency Partnership**

Perspectives is a movement but even more significantly it is a part of a much bigger movement. We, like our parent organization, Frontier Ventures, realize that in many ways our place has been to serve and partner with the many agencies and mission structures that labor to see the gospel established and expanded among all people groups. We are studying the best ways for Perspectives to partner with other agencies and give our alumni the needed opportunities to connect with the best opportunities to live out their newly discovered world-Christian commitments. In one current example, Perspectives USA is now involved in a strategic partnership with Urbana to see as many of the Urbana ‘15 attendees move right into a Perspectives class after the conference. Both Perspectives and Urbana are investing significant resources and energy to see this happen. Our faith goal is that 1000 Urbana students take Perspectives in 2016.

### **Perspectives Global**

Perspectives USA is just one national program in a collection of movements. Currently there are established programs in eight other countries. There are emerging programs in nearly a dozen other countries like Costa Rica, Indonesia, Ethiopia, China, Mexico, Peru, and Kenya. It’s exciting to see Perspectives content now in several different languages—Korean, Portuguese, Spanish, Chinese, and Arabic. A new project is underway to translate the Perspectives materials into French. Imagine the millions of faithful French speaking Christians in Europe, and especially in West Africa, who could be mobilized by this material. Perspectives’ leaders throughout the world have the challenge and responsibility of helping culturally relevant mobilization emerge and thrive as God calls forth participation in his global movement. We’ve come to believe strongly in “mobilization through education.”

Now it’s time to see the innovation and creativity of God’s people as we train many new leaders and multiply the frontier mission movement. The nations aren’t fully disciplined until they are mobilized! To this end, we are excited to see our USA staff, Regional Directors, and other veteran team members come alongside the Global team to help with teaching and training events as Perspectives emerges in other countries and contexts.

Hudson Taylor once wrote that “grace can make a few feeble instruments the means of accomplishing great things—things greater than we can conceive.” The Perspectives movement, and the world evangelizing results that have come from this movement, must be solidly attributed to God’s grace, alive and on display in his workers. Our success in mobilization is no different than how God works throughout all aspects of his great mission. Donald McGavran said that people movements to Christ among the unreached “are the outcome of the mysterious movement of the Spirit of God.” Likewise, mobilization movements which awaken God’s people to live for the eternal purposes of God are an outcome of his mysterious activity of grace. Praise God that we who labor in Perspectives are both recipients and agents of that grace.

Perspectives rests firmly in the concrete of mission giants like Ralph Winter. We’ve moved beyond this foundation to build a sturdy framework of both people and program. We continue to be encouraged and supported by an enduring sodality now called Frontier Ventures. We have top notch thinkers and leaders rebuilding and retooling our movement. As we move into the future, we innovate on the edges. That is, we trust thousands of passionate mobilizers to pray for their local church and local community to join God in his global mission. We trust them to gather God’s people in life changing class experiences and expose them to God’s great Story. They will do this with quality, with passion, with sacrifice, and with the love and passion of Christ burning in their hearts. And, if God allows his people another 40 years of ministry, the hope and anticipation of the arrival of the kingdom, in its fullness, will keep us in the game.



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