

THE GOD-GIVEN RIGHT TO “ACCESS”



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They are some of the most eloquent and profound words ever put to paper. “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.” These familiar words, taken from the United States Declaration of Independence written in July 1776, have changed the lives of hundreds of millions of people around the world.

But with all due honor, appreciation and respect to the epic contribution of Thomas Jefferson and the others who penned these immortal words, they did not include the most important of Rights¹ with which our Creator has endowed us. Perhaps it was assumed, but inherent in the existence of the Creator are *the Right to know Him* and to follow Him in obedience. Every person is created equal before the throne of God with the Right to know the gospel and what God has done for each person through Jesus Christ and His death on the cross. I recognize that not all will choose to believe and not all are the elect of God, but everyone at least has the Right to know the gospel and to choose freely whether to act upon that knowledge in faith. It is all about access. Every person has the God-given Right to have access to the gospel.

Even when a Right is declared, as in the Declaration of Independence, it must be worked for and pursued. We must give everything we have to the struggle in order for the God-given Right to become a reality in the lives of people. Likewise the Right to have access to the gospel must be worked for and diligently pursued in order for it to be realized.

God has called us, those who claim Jesus as their Savior, to make sure that this Right is secured for every person, tribe and tongue. This calling is at the heart of the missionary task. As followers of Jesus, all of us have been called to be on mission with God to overcome every barrier that keeps people from having access to the

gospel. That is what this issue of *Mission Frontiers* is all about—overcoming all the barriers that are keeping the Church from engaging every people so that every person may have access to the gospel. We call those peoples whom no agency is working to reach the unengaged. And as Paul Eshleman says in his lead article starting on page 6, “*it’s time to act*” to make sure that every people has someone working to reach them. It is up to us, the Church, who have access to the gospel, to decide whether we will obey what God has commanded and provide others with the same Right of access we have enjoyed.

GETTING THERE IS THE FIRST STEP

There are two basic stages to the expansion of the gospel into any people. The first is to establish a “beachhead” for the gospel in every people where agencies engage these unengaged groups and missionary efforts are initiated. In this day, there is no reason to compete for disciples where other agencies are already working. There are plenty of unengaged peoples to go around.

We must move as quickly as possible to mobilize the resources needed to get workers into all of the peoples who remain unengaged, peoples with no one working to establish a Church-Planting Movement in their midst. The lists of unengaged peoples are being refined so we have a better idea than ever before which peoples are being neglected and need a missionary outreach by some agency. Starting on page 26, Phill Butler gives us an overview of the barriers that are keeping us from reaching these unengaged peoples.

THE SECOND STEP: CATALYZE A MOVEMENT


Once a “beachhead” for the gospel has been initiated, the goal is to establish a self-replicating Church-Planting Movement within that people so they can eventually reach their own without outside help. Typically mission workers have stayed too long and done too much, thereby creating dependency. Instead, the missionary task is to initiate and to catalyze movements of multigenerational discipleship and church planting by working with the people to establish the foundational

DNA of biblical truth that a Church-Planting Movement uses to replicate generation after generation in the lives of new disciples and churches.


The type of church we establish when we get to these peoples is critical. Instead of following the failed Western model of doing church, we need to train new believers to make disciples who are able to make disciples and plant churches that rapidly replicate themselves. This must be our ministry focus, not growing the attendance at church services, as so many are prone to do.

The simple fact is that providing access to the gospel for every person, tribe and tongue is a pipe dream unless our goal is to equip and deploy every believer in every people group to be a disciple-maker or church-planter. It is simply not possible to mobilize and deploy enough professional

missionaries and pastors to replace the enormous exponential power of the average believer who is trained to make disciples who then go on to make more disciples who are likewise equipped. So if the development of a Church-Planting Movement is our goal within every people, then we need to make it our highest priority and focus to learn how to create these movements of multigenerational discipleship. We have presented a number of methods for developing CPMs in the pages of recent issues of *MF*. But these methods need to be continually applied and refined in various contexts around the world so that a critical mass of skilled practitioners will emerge who are capable of catalyzing these movements in every people. Every church must become an “equipping center” for multigenerational discipleship, not just a worship center.

The question we have to ask ourselves is whether we believe that the goal of providing access to the gospel for every person, tribe and tongue is worthy of our supreme efforts and sacrifices. Thomas Jefferson and the other signers of the Declaration of Independence concluded by saying, “with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor.” They were willing to sacrifice everything they had and to trust God for His provision to realize the earthly goal of establishing a new nation. Are we as followers of Jesus likewise committed to the more important mission of providing access to the gospel for every person, tribe and tongue? 

1. The words Right and Rights are capitalized in this column for emphasis and in accordance with the style of the original Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1776.



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