

# MISSION<sup>TM</sup> FRONTIERS

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A MAGAZINE OF FRONTIER VENTURES

A person stands on a snowy mountain peak, looking out over a vast, flat landscape under a dramatic sunset sky with hues of orange, red, and purple. The person is silhouetted against the bright horizon.

## GETTING TO NO PLACE LEFT



FOSTERING KINGDOM MOVEMENTS EVERYWHERE

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# GETTING TO NO PLACE LEFT: IT'S ALL ABOUT MOVEMENTS NOW



BY RICK WOOD  
EDITOR OF MF

**I WANT TO GIVE A** huge “Thank you” to Jeff Minard and Robby Butler for standing in for me over the last three issues. As they mentioned, I was busy rebuilding my house after a lightning strike and fire. At the same time I was recovering from a number of medical procedures. I became more familiar with the policies and procedures of insurance companies than I ever wanted to. I am very glad to be back with you again for this issue of *MF*.

## AN HISTORIC STEP FORWARD TOWARDS FINISHING THE TASK

There are times in the history of the Church when God enables his people to take a major step forward in their understanding of what Jesus has asked us to do. These are dramatic shifts in direction. I think of the Protestant Reformation that put the Bible and biblical faith into the hands of average Jesus followers. The modern missionary movement that started with William Carey is another major landmark.

Now in our day we are experiencing another major breakthrough in our understanding of how to pursue world evangelization so the gospel is widely available and understandable to every person within every people.

The key to finishing the task of world evangelization is the *fostering of movements* to Christ within every people and region on earth until there is No Place Left where the gospel is not available. See the article starting on page 9. It is not enough just to go to every people group and plant a Western style church that does not make disciples and does not establish new churches. We must learn how to cooperate with the Holy Spirit in order to see thousands of rapidly growing movements around the world. It is **the only way** that every person will be able to have access to the gospel.

Now researchers like Jim Haney of the Southern Baptist International Mission Board (IMB) are recognizing this reality and are creating the means to track and measure these movements. See the article, “Hitting the Mark,” starting on page 15. Jim confirms what I just said above, “**Donald McGavran pointed out in 1982 that the common Western approach to ‘planting a church’ inhibits movements rather than encourages them.** It is not enough

to plant a church and hope God will initiate a movement. To collaborate with the Holy Spirit in launching movements, **we must pursue God for generations of reproducing disciples and churches and teach them to reproduce by obeying all that Jesus commanded.**”<sup>1</sup>

Notice what Jim says here, “The common Western approach to ‘planting a church’ *inhibits movements*”—it actually stands in the way of completing world evangelization. This means our Western approach to growing the church is broken. We need a new approach in order to foster movements. Jim goes on to provide that new approach: “we must pursue God for **generations of reproducing disciples and churches.**” That is what makes a movement, a movement—rapidly reproducing disciples and churches, one generation after another. These disciples reproduce by means of “**obeying** all that Jesus commanded.” This includes Jesus’ command to “go and make disciples.” As Jim says in his article, “**Movements are how peoples both become and remain reached.**”

## THE OLD IS NEW AGAIN

This new understanding is actually a return to what God had revealed to the early church. Jesus modeled the

most effective way to make disciples and his disciples ran with this method until Paul was able to say in Romans 15:17 and onward, “from *Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum, I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ*. But now that there is *no more place for me to work in these regions...*” Paul could say that there was no place left for him to work because he had been pursuing a model of ministry where he equipped others to make disciples who went on to make more disciples until there was indeed *no place left* where the gospel was not available. Paul and the other apostles were *fostering movements* that penetrated every people, region and level of society.

Paul’s goal of complete saturation of gospel availability is now the goal of a growing movement of disciple makers and church planters appropriately titled, No Place Left. We introduce this new coalition starting on page 9. But No Place Left is not the only network that is seeking to complete world evangelization by fostering these movements of discipleship. The Every Ethne network and their Ephesus Vision seeks to foster cascading “Ephesus Movements” of disciple making among the most neglected unreached peoples. They refer to “cascading movements” because you can see from the book of Acts that movements “cascade” beyond the limits of a people group or region into other people groups and regions. They have also seen this reality play out in present day movements around the world.

This new understanding that movements of discipleship and church planting are the essential key component for the completion of world evangelization will require us to change the way we think about the way we do church and


its mission. Some attitudes and ideas about ministry will have to change. Here are a few.

1. Church is not about attracting growing numbers of people to an event once a week for a lecture/sermon, but rather about being a training center where followers of Jesus are equipped to share their faith and the gospel with their relational network of family and friends. Each person should be equipped to lead people to Jesus and train them to go and do likewise. We are all to be a kingdom of priests who are actively living on mission with God.
2. It has been all too common for churches and ministries from the West to go around the world to “teach” people how to do ministry. Given the fact that our western methods of church planting have inhibited movements rather than fostering them, I suggest that those of us from the West begin to go as humble learners to see how these discipleship movements are actually fostered and developed.
3. It is likewise common for believers in the West to think that their donations of money can speed the spread of the gospel around the world. When it comes to fostering movements of discipleship among unreached peoples, outside money is more of a hindrance than a help. David Garrison, who literally wrote the book on Church Planting Movements, has stated in *MF* before that there is nothing that will kill a growing CPM faster than outside funds. We must understand that these movements grow as individuals obey Jesus in every aspect of their lives including sacrificial giving. Outside

funds short circuit this giving and is not a reproducible means of ministry from one generation of disciples to the next.

As the Body of Christ worldwide, we have a choice to make. We either continue to do ministry as usual, which hinders the development of movements, or we make it our goal to foster movements of discipleship until there is no place left.

## A NEW LOOK FOR MISSION FRONTIERS

Some of our readers may be a little surprised at the new look and feel of our printed edition of *Mission Frontiers*. Yes, for the first time in our 38-year history *MF* is now being printed in full color throughout its 48 pages. We have also gone to a coated stock of paper that is a little lighter than in recent issues. We have decided to go this direction in order to improve the look and feel of the magazine for a wider potential audience. I do want to assure our subscribers that we are being good stewards of your subscription dollars as we make this change. This move to full color actually will cost us less than continuing with our previous format. Please let us know what you think of our new look. We hope you enjoy it. 

<sup>1</sup> Donald McGavran, 1997 *Mission Frontiers* Nov.-Dec., 13-16, “A Church for Every People: Plain Talk About a Difficult Subject.”

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# WHAT WILL IT TAKE



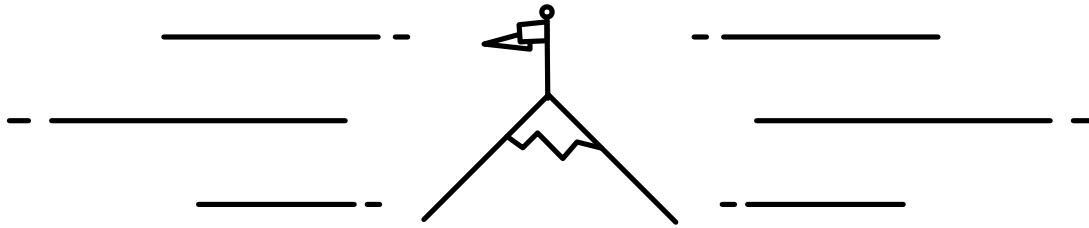
## TO SEE NO PLACE LEFT?

BY **STAN PARKS**

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Stan Parks is a disciple of Jesus helping to reach lost people globally as a CPM trainer and coach. He is VP of Global Strategies for Act Beyond (Beyond.org) and part of the Ephesus CPM Vision with Ethne (ethne.net).



**IN ROMANS 15:23 PAUL SAYS** there is “no place left” for him in the region. Why is that? Another translation quotes Paul as saying “I have finished my work in these regions” (NLT).

What can that mean? Surely there were millions of people in those regions that had still not heard the gospel.

Paul says:

“So from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum, I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ. It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known, so that I would not be building on someone else’s foundation.” Rather, as it is written: “Those who were not told about him will see, and those who have not heard will understand.” Romans 15:19b-21 (NIV)

The Message puts it this way:

“I have trailblazed a preaching of the Message of Jesus all the way from Jerusalem far into northwestern Greece. This has all been pioneer work, bringing the Message only into those places where Jesus was not yet known and worshiped.”

**The Vision of No Place Left is “a movement of movements aimed at getting to no place left where Christ is not made known in our generation—no people group, ethnic group, city or segment (Rom. 15:23).** We do that through reproducing disciples and churches among the lost until there is no place left.” (noplacelleft.net)

What would it take to see No Place Left in our generation? What will it take to accomplish the “pioneer” work of bringing the gospel into every place where Jesus is not yet known and worshipped?

Paul gives us a clue earlier in this Romans 15 passage:

I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me in leading the Gentiles to obey God by what I have said and done—by the power of signs and wonders, through the power of the Spirit of God. Romans 15:18-19a.

Here we see Paul’s goal: to lead the Gentiles to obey God. And we see his methods: words, deeds, power of signs and wonders all empowered by the Holy Spirit.

He goes on to say in verse 19 that he has “fully accomplished” proclaiming the gospel. Rather than focusing on words or deeds or miracles, he has done all three together and thus “fully” shared the gospel. Any effort to only share the “words” of the gospel will be a truncated gospel.

In 1 Corinthians 3:6 Paul describes his role as “planting the seed” which others water and God creates the growth.

So what will it take to “plant” the gospel seed in every place?

First, we will have to be empowered by the Spirit to fully proclaim the gospel through our words, deeds, and signs and wonders in every “place.”

Second, we will have to lead the unbelievers in these places to obey God. Obviously, Paul did not lead every Gentile to obey God, so how could he know if he had “accomplished” his job?

Jesus tells us to disciple every *ethne*. An *ethnos* is “a body of persons united by kinship, culture, and common traditions.”<sup>1</sup>

Revelation gives us a fuller understanding of *ethne*.

“From every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb.” (Revelation 7:9)

So we are looking at discipling tribes, peoples, languages – these groups with common identities. Acts 19:10 also shows a geographical example where all the Jews and Greeks in the province of Asia (15 million people) heard the word of the Lord in 2 years.

What does it mean to disciple a whole tribe, people, language and/or region? This does not mean we have to reach everyone in the group – because Jesus himself says that not everyone will follow him (The gate is narrow and only a few will find it (Matt 7:14)).

**It seems to mean that we fully proclaim the gospel through our words, deeds and miracles in order to disciple a critical mass of people within each tribe,**

# empowered by the Spirit to fully proclaim the gospel through our words, deeds, and signs and wonders

**people, language, region who can then reach their own people with the offer of becoming a disciple of Jesus.<sup>2</sup>**

What will it take to see No Place Left in our generation? How would that look in today's world? Rather than laying out strategies and methods, perhaps we need to be ready and committed to the same type of dynamics we see with the early church as the gospel spread until no place was left in those initial regions.

What will it take for our churches to return to this?

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.  
Acts 2:31-47 NIV

What will it take for us to respond like Peter and John before the authorities?

Which is right in God's eyes: to listen to you, or to him? You be the judges! As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.  
Acts 4:19b-20 NIV

What will it take for the church to be purified and have a great fear of the Lord as happened after the lies and deaths of Ananias and Sapphira?<sup>3</sup>

What will it take to see the Spirit move in power as He did at Pentecost and to show great signs and wonders like we see throughout Acts?

As a result, people brought the sick into the streets and laid them on beds and mats so that at least Peter's shadow might fall on some of them as he passed by. Crowds gathered

also from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing their sick and those tormented by impure spirits, and all of them were healed.  
Acts 5:15-16 NIV

What will it take for more of us to be willing to die for the gospel like Stephen did in Acts 7?

What will it take for us to be ready and willing to withstand great persecution such as the persecution we see in Acts 8 that resulted in the gospel spreading?

What will it take for us to bring the gospel to those who are "enemies" of our people like we see Philip doing as he brought the gospel to Samaria in Acts 8?

What will it take for us to pray for, go to and welcome the radical conversion of those who now persecute Christians but could become great missionaries for God the way Paul was?


What will it take for us to be freed of our selfishness, treat others as just as important as we are and realize like Peter said:

I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right.  
Acts 10: 34-35 NIV

What would it take to plant churches throughout our regions like the churches started in Jerusalem, Antioch, Arabia, Syria, Athens, Corinth, Philippi, Thessalonica, Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea, Colossae, and so on?

What will it take to see No Place Left?

What are you willing to do?

And more important than *what I can do* is *are we together willing to see God do what must be done?* 

<sup>1</sup> Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature

<sup>2</sup> The Lausanne 1982 people group definition says: "For evangelization purposes, a people group is the largest group within which the Gospel can spread as a church planting movement without encountering barriers of understanding or acceptance"

<sup>3</sup> More money is lost to ecclesiastical crime than we spend on missions to the





# A U.S. PERSPECTIVE ON THE NO PLACE LEFT COALITION

No Place Left is a global, relational coalition of disciples and churches who love the Lord, love the lost, and make disciples among all nations until the Great Commission is complete. Our only leader is the Holy Spirit. We do not have a staff, a budget, or a headquarters. There is no membership.



BY JAMES HARVEY

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<http://noplacelleftworld.com>

James maintains a Facebook group for testimonies and prayer requests among movement practitioners. The No Place Left Nashville team is pursuing the Father for streams of movements among all nations that have relocated to the city. James is also on a team that produces regional No Place Left logos for practitioners around the world.



## FROM VISION TO MOVEMENTS

**First, No Place Left is about vision: finish the Great Commission among every tribe.** The starting place for everyone making disciples is the Father's heart. What is the Father's heart? "He wants everyone to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth." (1 Timothy 2:4) If they ask, "What is No Place Left?" we answer, "A movement of the Father's heart." If they ask, "What is the Father's heart?" we answer, "To make disciples among all nations until there is No Place Left."

We love and worship the Lord, and we are committed to his kingdom coming to every tribe on earth in this generation. Everything starts with Vision (seeing the world and our lives through God's eyes) and Abiding in Christ (enjoying the Lord daily with no agenda). To grasp the convictions and core values of a coalition committed to engage and reach every global region and affinity group with the gospel of Jesus Christ, watch this seven-minute video: [issacharinitiative.org/videos/history-of-table-71/](http://issacharinitiative.org/videos/history-of-table-71/).

**Second, No Place Left is about fruitful, biblical practices.** We are committed to researching and learning what God is doing to reconcile the world to himself right now. We connect to one another through every kind of communication you can imagine: prayer, social media, email, letters, conferences, trainings, short-term mission trips, and even moving to other cities and regions of the world to join existing teams or catalyze new ones.

We try to find the very best missionary tools in the world, and then adapt them locally through the study of the word of God and the trial and error of other practitioners with the Holy Spirit's guidance. We are a coalition that values and pursues the wisdom of Christ's kingdom through his Word, his Spirit, missions history, experienced leaders, and personal commitment to obey the Lord's commands every week where we live.

**Third, No Place Left is about diversity. One reason communication is so critical to our approach to missions is that each of us have learned from experience that we cannot reach the world alone.** We depend upon Yahweh's Holy Spirit to shepherd us moment by moment, and we depend upon our brothers and sisters to teach us and hold us accountable to what God has clearly revealed we must do. From Nashville to Nairobi, we have adopted the most unreached and unengaged peoples and places on earth, which means that we are often laboring for the Lord in very hard-soil harvest fields. The work is difficult, and the fruit takes time to cultivate.

Our desire may be the end of this age, but our environment is spiritual warfare, and the attacks are relentless and intense. To survive spiritual warfare, we are committed to pray for each other, support one another, encourage each other, and believe the best about one another. The enemy is always trying to twist the truth and divide us, and the Bible is clear that the Father desires unity and unconditional love for his

Jeff Sundell sent me to north India to learn from Nathan Shank. I don't know if he got it from someone else or if it started with him, but he and his team had vision for completing the Great Commission in their region by 2025. When Nathan wrote, "No Place Left" on the white board and explained it, my years of searching for a vision that covered reaching every people group and region on earth with the gospel

of Jesus Christ were over. I received Nathan's blessing to cast the No Place Left vision back here in the United States, and the Holy Spirit has caught the body of Christ on fire with what He began on the slopes of the tallest mountain range on earth. Hear Nathan describe the No Place Left vision in a 30 minute podcast: [Movements.net/2015/07/27/pauls-no-place-left-visionnathan-shank-podcast.html](http://Movements.net/2015/07/27/pauls-no-place-left-visionnathan-shank-podcast.html).

# NO PLACE LEFT VISION VERSES

We feed the No Place Left vision fire with these key verses:

Habakkuk 2:14—Hosea prophesied, “For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of Yahweh’s glory, as the waters cover the sea.”

Romans 15:23—Paul wrote, “But now I no longer have any work to do in these regions...”

Acts 19:10—Luke recorded: “...all the inhabitants of Asia, both Jews and Greeks, heard the message about the Lord.”

And Jesus told his followers:

Matthew 28:18–20—“All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Matthew 13:37–38—“The One who sows the good seed is the Son of Man; the field is the world; and the good seed—these are the sons of the kingdom.”

bride. There is a beautiful, refreshing freedom in our coalition to experiment with movement principles and tools as the Lord leads each of us as his kingdom of ambassadorial priests (1 Peter 2:9).

#### **Fourth, No Place Left is about sustainable movements.**

When we pursue the Father for reproducing disciple and church networks in homes, apartments, trailer parks, government housing, and businesses, He takes that kingdom fruit production network and births new movements out of our labor. Once a movement is going, no one can attribute the work to any one man or woman. It is clearly of the Lord, and that is what we are after: His glory and His renown. Jesus promises in Matthew 24:14 is that He will not return until He has followers reproducing disciples among all people groups. This promise leads us to pursue God for movements to reach the lost in every city and region on earth.

**Our commitment to the Lord is both to jumpstart and sustain movements.** We are committed to enter his harvest, search for people of peace, baptize them and their families, and assist them as they receive the same mantle of leadership we have to obey the Lord and make their own disciples. We are also committed to shepherd and cultivate movements so that the people we have reached understand that they are our family, our brothers and sisters, and we are committed to them for

life. We are convinced that God has an inheritance of a healthy kingdom family tree for every disciple through their obedience to him—the Lord of the harvest.

#### **A SIMPLE FOCUS**

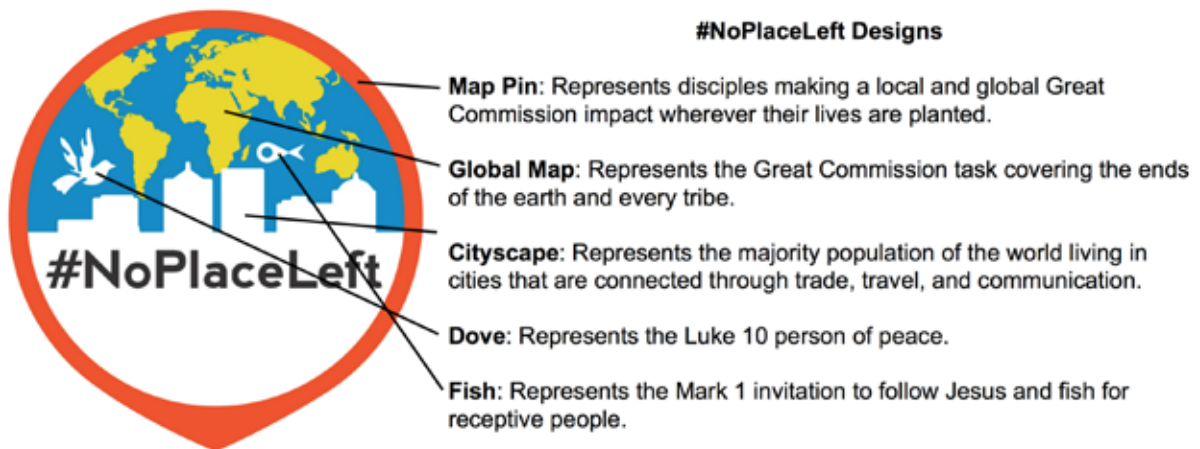
To complete the Great Commission, Jesus’ followers need an Acts 1:8 vision along with simple strategy, skills, and tools that multiply movements through networks of new disciples.

The No Place Left coalition unites followers of Jesus Christ around the world whose hearts have been set ablaze by the Holy Spirit to focus our time, treasures, and talents toward pursuing God for movements that fulfill the Lord’s command in the Great Commission. In collaboration on sharing and learning fruitful, biblical practices from one another, each of us is seeking the Lord to raise us and other laborers up in pursuit of movements until there is No Place Left where Jesus is not yet preached.

#### **NO PLACE LEFT LOGOS**

I am working with a volunteer team to help provide free logos for Great Commission practitioners representing any Jesus-follower network around the world. These “kingdom banners” provide a simple, consistent way for people to identify themselves with what the Holy

# Your researching days are over. The perfect time is right now to pursue God with others for movements where the Lord has planted your life.



Spirit is doing in their region. These logos are open-source, and most of them are created by the practitioner pursuing God for movements in their own city or region. See Chuck Wood's 15-minute video about the No Place Left vision and how to create your own logo: [youtu.be/F7YgZuTmWDo](https://youtu.be/F7YgZuTmWDo).

Following is the basic layout of each logo. See all the current logos at <http://noplacelleftworld.com/logos>.


## GET STARTED

No Place Left is a global coalition of practitioners learning fruitful, biblical practices from movements birthed by the Holy Spirit. We adapt these practices locally under the Holy Spirit's guidance, and we prioritize mutual accountability to refine our pursuit of God for movements in each of our unique contexts.

**Your researching days are over. The perfect time is right now to pursue God with others for movements where the Lord has planted your life.** Leave your home and go into your local community to share the gospel with your family, friends and neighbors.

Visit [noplacelleft.net/start-here](http://noplacelleft.net/start-here) for a simple toolkit for leading your family and friends to follow Jesus, and for prayer-walking and sharing Christ in your local community this week.

## GET CONNECTED

To connect with U.S. trainings within the No Place Left coalition visit [4Fields.net](http://4Fields.net) or [JUIO.net](http://JUIO.net). 



# NO PLACE LEFT

## FINISH LINE METRICS SOURCED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

### *Acts 20:3 – “where he stayed for three months...”*

Mark it down. Acts 20:3 may be the most significant verse in Acts for building New Testament mission strategy. Granted, on the surface it deserves only a passing glance, but with a little digging it blossoms as a finish line, serves us a menu for key results in mission, and provides a bookend in the provincial Pauline odyssey recorded in three journeys across the book of Acts. That is quite a punch for a passing reference!

The importance of Acts 20:3 becomes clear in Romans 15 and 16 when we consider the evidence that Romans was written from Corinth near the completion of Paul’s “third missionary journey”:

- Romans 16:1-2: Paul gave his letter (Romans) to Phoebe, ‘a servant of the church in Cenchreae.’ Cenchreae was a town on the coast just 15 kilometers from Corinth.<sup>1</sup>
- Romans 15:25-26: Paul had the Jerusalem offering in hand, perhaps the one he had admonished the Corinthians to make ready (2 Cor. 8:1-15).<sup>2</sup>
- Romans 16:23: Gaius and Erastus were from the city of Corinth.<sup>3</sup>

Identifying the writing of Romans in the timeline of Acts may seem only an academic exercise, but linking Acts 20 with Romans provides the context for Paul’s incredible statement in Romans 15 that there was no place left for him to work:

“I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me in leading the

Gentiles to obey God by what I have said and done—by the power of signs and wonders, through the power of the Spirit of God. So from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum, I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ. It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ is not known, so that I would not be building on someone else’s foundation... But now that there is no more place for me to work in these regions, and since I have been longing for many years to visit you, I plan to do so when I go to Spain...” (Romans 15:18-24).

These remarkable statements led us to ask several crucial questions:

- How could Paul claim there was “no place left” to work?
- What had Paul accomplished by Acts 20:3?
- Could Acts 20 and Romans 15 provide clues for when to exit fields?

### AN INVITATION TO SELF DISCOVERY

The following studies shape our understanding and vision casting for “No Place Left.”

Encourage your church planting team or partners to gather around these studies.

From Jerusalem to Illyricum in 15 years, is this possible?

Why would the Holy Spirit record this case study if it were not?

We, today’s readers of the New Testament, can find confidence in pursuing the same agenda—a life spent

BY **NATHAN SHANK**

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Nathan Shank has been living and working in South Asia since 2000. He and his wife have dedicated themselves to the multiplication of God’s kingdom through church planting. Nathan and his team are currently tracking more than 75 church planting networks around the world with fourth generation churches. He is a regular contributor to David Garrison’s [ChurchPlantingMovements.com](http://ChurchPlantingMovements.com) and Steve Addison’s [Movements.net](http://Movements.net).




engaging new fields, sowing the gospel message, nurturing new growth through a commitment to discipleship and bundling the harvest through church formation. This scriptural process, resulting in local “elder/overseers,” carries potential for multiplication.

Final questions for your team to consider:

1. How do Paul’s priorities compare with the vision and focus of your team?
2. What priorities of Paul are you considering for the first time?
3. How does Paul’s claim that “now there is no place left” fit with the key results you are pursuing?
4. Are you able to trust the Spirit of God for similar results today?

5. Can the book of Acts and the Epistles guide mission strategy today?

6. How will your ministry focus, vision or key results need to be adjusted based on Paul’s testimony?

What fields has the Lord assigned to you? May there be “no place left!” 

<sup>1</sup> Paul, Apostle of the Heart Set Free, by F.F. Bruce. (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1977) pp. 338-384.

<sup>2</sup> The Message of Acts, by John Stott. (Leicester, InterVarsity Press, 1990) pp. 316-319.

<sup>3</sup> Paul, His Life and Teaching, by John McRay. (Grand Rapids, Baker, 2003). p. 77

<sup>4</sup> These studies are further developed in The Four Fields of Kingdom Growth, by Nathan and Kari Shank, 2014. pp. 143-151. [movements.net/4\\_fields\\_manual\\_shank](http://movements.net/4_fields_manual_shank)

## SELF-DISCOVERY STUDIES

### WHAT HAD BEEN ACCOMPLISHED BY ACTS 20:3?

Discuss these questions for each of the following passages:

- What was the Spirit’s role?
- What fields had been engaged?
- Was the gospel shared? If so, to what effect?
- Were disciples made? Were churches formed?
- Where did leaders emerge?
- Was there evidence of reproduction?

Acts 8:1–12:25: Post-Jerusalem scattering—Pre-Antioch sending

Acts 13:1–14:28: 1st journey

Acts 15:36–18:22: 2nd Journey

Acts 18:23–21:16: 3rd journey

### CONSTRUCTING PAUL’S TIMELINE

What can be discerned from Acts and the Epistles concerning Paul’s timeline?

AD 35

AD 64



Discuss the following passages to re-create Paul’s timeline: Acts 9, Gal. 1–2, Acts 13–20, 24:27, 28:30.

Note: We used AD 35 for Paul’s conversion as the beginning of our timeline, and AD 64—the start of Nero’s persecution (not recorded in Acts 28:31)—as the end. Try working forward

### NOW, THEN, THERE IS NO PLACE LEFT!

Consider Romans 15:18–23. What evidence does Paul give that his role is finished? Based on your own study of Paul’s journeys and timeline, what had been accomplished by Acts 20:3?

1. Had the fields been engaged? (Rom. 15:19)
2. Had the gospel been proclaimed with integrity? (Rom. 15:19)
3. Had disciples demonstrated obedience? (Rom. 15:18)
4. Had churches been formed by Acts 20:3? What evidence did you find?
5. Had leaders emerged from the provincial harvest fields? (Acts 20:4-5)
6. What evidence of reproduction existed in each province?

Acts 13:49, 14:6, 16:4–5, 18:23, 1 Thess. 1:6–8, 2 Cor. 1:1, Acts 19:10.

# HITTING THE MARK



**“INDIGENOUS MOVEMENTS EVERYWHERE”**

BY **JIM HANEY**

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Jim Haney serves as Director of Global Research for IMB. Before moving to IMB staff in 1999, Jim served in various capacities with IMB in West Africa as a church planter, and national director of evangelism for the Ghana Baptist Convention. Jim serves the evangelical community as a research consultant, particularly related to people groups, and has served with IMB for 35 years.



**THERE ARE AT LEAST TWO** ways in which I think the mission community has strayed from adequately evaluating our essential goal of reaching people groups and seeing indigenous movements everywhere.

First, we have treated engagement as an end goal rather than an essential step toward such movements.

Second, we have used metrics that do not clearly reveal where such movements are lacking.

IMB is in the process of refining critical success factors to evaluate our efforts to multiply disciples and churches within unreached peoples and places. We want to see movements! However, our desire for movements has not been clear in our engagement definition, and we have relied too heavily on metrics to evaluate whether a people group is reached. We have inherited and reinforced the metrics referred to in the second point as if metrics alone could determine whether or not a people group is reached. Additionally, we say that a people group is engaged when there is a church planting strategy (consistent with evangelical faith and practice) underway, but we have not been clear that the goal of engagement is a movement. For the record, *the goal of engagement is reaching a people group through indigenous teams of capable leaders multiplying generations of disciples and churches in a sustained movement to Christ.*

Movements are the work of the Holy Spirit, often in cooperation with human catalysts, flowing through relational networks that lead to a rapid succession of generations of households following Jesus. The rate of rapid succession varies, but it exceeds population growth and incremental Church Planting. *Movements are how peoples both become and remain reached.*

Where the fruit of past movements remains, such as in “post-Christian” peoples in Europe, the potential for

the spread of the gospel today is greater than in peoples who have never been reached. After all, these people groups have Christian resources available to them. The Protestant Reformation, the Great Awakening and other historic revivals illustrate this potential for Europe today. The “Jesus Movement” of the late ’60s and early ’70s gives those of us old enough to recall it a basis for understanding the potential for such renewal movements in peoples once considered reached.

We have to be clear in our definition of engagement that church planters are not sent to plant a single church or even churches in succession. *Donald McGavran pointed out in 1982<sup>1</sup> that the common Western approach to “planting a church” inhibits movements rather than encourages them.* It is not enough to plant a church and hope God will initiate a movement. To collaborate with the Holy Spirit in launching movements, *we must pursue God for generations of reproducing disciples and churches and teach them to reproduce by obeying all that Jesus commanded.*

Additionally, some people groups have only one team among millions of people. These teams must raise up capable indigenous leaders who can engage substantial population segments of their own people group in order for a movement to occur.

What is the minimum size of a community of believing Christians able to pursue God for a movement? In Acts 2 we see the Holy Spirit initiate a movement through just 120 believers obeying Jesus’ command to wait for the Father’s promised gift. So an indigenous community of obedient Christians does not have to reach even 1% for a movement to be birthed. However it can take a few years for the start of a movement to mature through multiple generations resulting in what Luke recorded in Acts 19:10: “all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord.” Essential

**...the common Western approach to “planting a church” inhibits movements rather than encourages them.**

to such growth was the obedience of Paul and others to Jesus' model, with baptism, acknowledging personal faith in Jesus Christ as the sole provision for salvation and with the Holy Spirit providing conversion and regeneration.

While engagement is a necessary step in reaching people groups, I think our focus on engaging every people group with one or two teams has contributed to the difficulty that these same teams have in securing additional teams. Think about it—once a UUPG is engaged, it is no longer on the UUPG list.

Let's take a look at a breakdown of the world's peoples by separating them into three categories: No Longer Unreached, Engaged Unreached, and Unengaged Unreached. We will look at two snapshots from IMB statistics—one from 2005 and one from 2015.

The two graphs below show that during the last ten years, the number of UUPGs has decreased from 32%

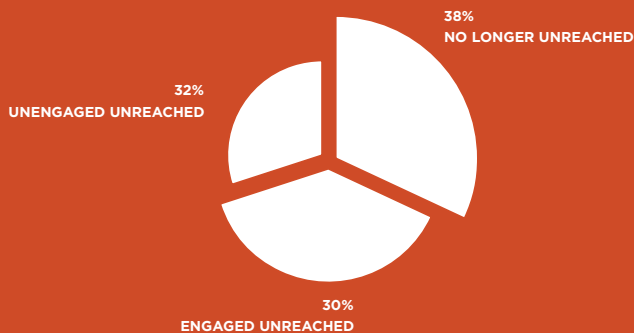
to 27% of the world's people groups. Great! Our engagement strategy is working.

Now, let's take a look at a breakdown of populations for these same three categories.

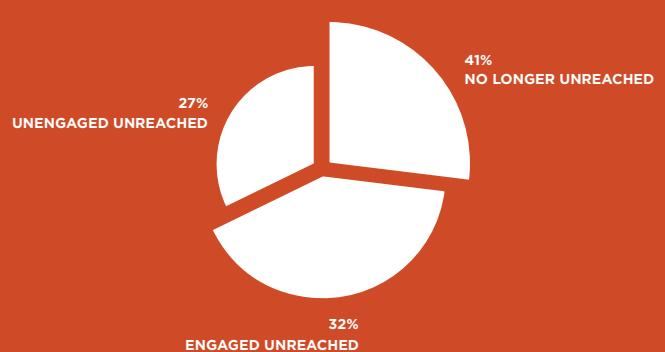
When we look at populations, we see that the population of UUPGs has decreased from 9% of the world's population in 2005 to 3% of the world's population in 2015, even more than the percentage decrease in the number of UUPGs. This is because those engaging UUPGs in the last ten years have focused on engaging the larger UUPGs. This means that the remaining UUPGs are significantly smaller than they were in 2005.

While the population of UUPGs has decreased from 9% in 2005 to 3% in 2015, the percentage of the world's population living in engaged UPGs has increased from 50% to 55% and the average size of engaged UPGs is larger. We can infer from

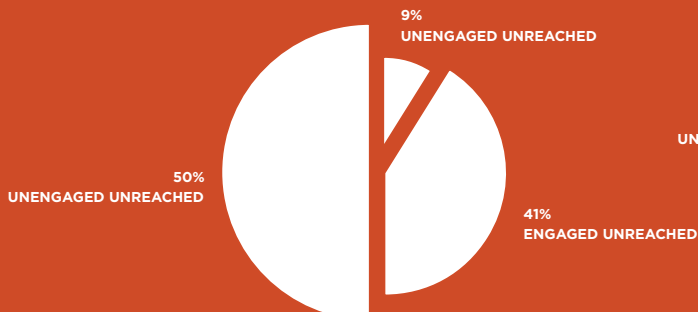
**NOV 2005 PEOPLE GROUPS**



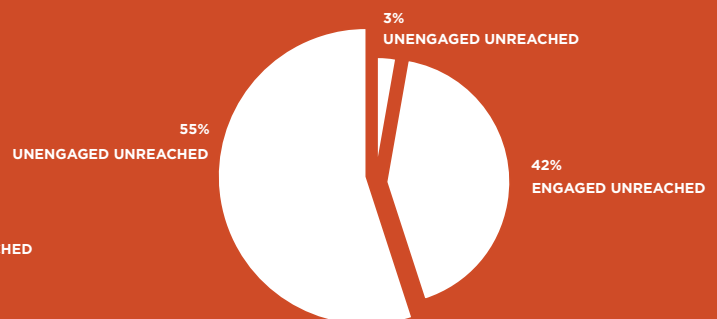
**NOV 2015 PEOPLE GROUPS**



**NOV 2005 POPULATIONS**



**NOV 2015 POPULATIONS**







this trend that if we continue to pursue smaller and smaller UUPGs, we will do so at the expense of vast unengaged population segments of minimally engaged UPGs—consider India, for example, where many huge people groups have only one or two teams.

Finally, during the last 10 years the percentage of the world's population living in people groups no longer unreached has increased by only one percent (from 41% to 42%).

There can be only one conclusion—we are far more successful in engaging than reaching. We need teams that will engage effectively—pioneering teams, engaging in the local language for the long-haul—with methodologies consistent with seeing movements occur.<sup>2</sup> Without this, we will continue to engage but seldom reach.<sup>3</sup>

There is a second way that I think we've strayed from the ultimate goal of establishing indigenous communities of reproducing churches and followers in every people group. I think we have relied too heavily on metrics to evaluate whether people groups are reached, and in this, we have set metrics above the essentials of reaching people groups.

How is “Unreached People Group” defined today?

According to Joshua Project, an unreached or least-reached people is a people group among which there

is no indigenous community of believing Christians with adequate numbers and resources to evangelize this people group.<sup>4</sup> The original Joshua Project editorial committee selected the criteria as less than or equal to 2% Evangelical Christian and less than or equal to 5% Professing Christians.<sup>5</sup>

Alternately, according to IMB, an unreached people group is a people group with no indigenous community of believing Christians able to engage this people group with church planting. Technically speaking, the percentage of Evangelical Christians in this people group is less than 2 percent.<sup>6</sup>

While both definitions share certain essentials necessary for reaching people groups, the various metrics they produce are what are actually used by Joshua Project and IMB to determine whether a people group is unreached. For example, IMB shows the French in France as less than 2% evangelical (unreached), but there are reports of new house churches planted each week. IMB's website, [peoplegroups.org](http://peoplegroups.org), shows that there is widespread church planting among this people group. Metrics alone should not be used to evaluate whether a people group is reached. It's time to embrace a model which considers the qualitative essentials of what it means to reach a people group.



## HOW WAS “UNREACHED PEOPLE GROUP” DEFINED IN THE PAST?

I recommend to the reader two important chapters in *Reaching the Unreached—The Old-New Challenge*, edited by Harvie M. Conn, Professor of Missions at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia in 1984. In the book, Ralph Winter offers an insightful perspective on the development and increasing momentum of the concept of “unreached people groups” in the early days of the Lausanne Movement. Let’s look at a few definitions from milestone meetings cited by Winter in Conn’s book. In these, the reader will see the struggle for both the quantitative and qualitative measures within the developing concept of “unreached.”

1974, Lausanne—“In the explanatory introduction of the Unreached Peoples Directory passed out at the congress, the definition of ‘unreached people,’ is not firmly established. Mentioned are both the 20-percent figure and the phrase, ‘[where] there is no appreciable [recognized] church body effectively communicating the message within the unit itself.’”

1977, following Lausanne—“An unreached people group is a group that is less than 20% practicing Christian.”<sup>8</sup>

1978—Coleman and Winter introduced the concept of Hidden Peoples. “Hidden” is used because of our blindness to people groups. The concept as Winter defined it suggested that a Hidden People Group be defined as “any linguistic, cultural or sociological group defined in terms of its preliminary affinity (no secondary or trivial affinities), which cannot be won by E-1<sup>9</sup> methods and drawn into an existing fellowship.”

1988—A great deal of confusion remained and the 20% benchmark continued to be reinforced in Edinburgh and Pattaya. However, people using percentages in the definition began to admit that *the best percentages could offer was a predictive approach to assessing whether a people group was likely to be reached*. I salute Coleman and Winter because their concept defined “hidden” (unreached) by something other than a number or percentage—rather, an indigenous effort bringing new believers into existing fellowships.

1982, Chicago—At this meeting Unreached People was defined as “a group among which there is no indigenous community of believing Christians able to evangelize this people group.” It was in Chicago that the 20% practicing Christian benchmark was


dropped in favor of the qualitative description of an unreached people group.

I can’t go further here to explore the history of the term or why we returned to metrics for predicting “unreached” status after 1980, but it is important to note that with the number of teams in our networks today, we have a new opportunity to return to qualitative measures important to establishing indigenous movements.

## HOW WILL WE MEASURE WHAT WE WANT TO SEE IN THE FUTURE?

First, let’s measure what we want to see happen. Look back over the words I have highlighted in bold print. These important concepts need to shape what we are after when it comes to reaching people groups.

Second, to make sure we get beyond engagement to actually reaching people groups, let’s join together in suggesting essentials for classifying a people group as no longer unreached.

Third, to make sure we critically monitor progress among people groups and other entities we engage, let’s create a continuum, similar to the Engel Scale<sup>10</sup> that helps us track progress from no awareness of the gospel to indigenous movements and partners in the Great Commission. 

<sup>1</sup> Donald McGavran, *Mission Frontiers*, (Nov/Dec 1997), “A Church for Every People: Plain Talk About a Difficult Subject,” pp. 13-16

<sup>2</sup> See Article by Jeff Liverman in *Mission Frontiers*, (Nov/Dec 2006), “What Does It Mean to Effectively ‘Engage’ a People?”

<sup>3</sup> See Editorial by Robby Butler in *Mission Frontiers*, (Jan/Feb 2016), “Winning or Losing?”

<sup>4</sup> All bold characters are writer’s emphases.

<sup>5</sup> [joshuaproject.net/help/definitions](http://joshuaproject.net/help/definitions). Note: Joshua Project uses the terms “unreached” and “least-reached” to mean the same thing. The terms are used interchangeably on this website.

<sup>6</sup> [www.peoplegroups.org/](http://www.peoplegroups.org/). Note: Engagement means that a church planting strategy, consistent with evangelical faith and practice, is under implementation.

<sup>7</sup> In other words, the first hint of a definition was that an “unreached people group” is one that is less than 20% Christian. According to Winter, Ed Pentecost brought the 20% into the light while working with MARC as the research coordinator for the unreached peoples study presented at Lausanne in 1974. (Conn, p. 30)

<sup>8</sup> In 1977 the 20% criterion suggested in the *MARC Directory* was changed to this definition substituting practicing Christian for appreciable church body. However, the 20% criteria was too high because it meant that almost every people group was unreached. (Conn, p. 31)

<sup>9</sup> E-1 methods refer to a people group which has the capacity to win those of their own people group to Christ. (Conn, p. 32)

<sup>10</sup> Engel, J. F., & Norton, H. W. (1975). *What’s gone wrong with the harvest?: a communication strategy for the church and world evangelization*. Grand Rapids, Zondervan Pub. House, page 45.

# THE “EPHESUS VISION” FOR EVERY ETHNĚ

**IN MATTHEW 28, JESUS** gives the parameters of making disciples of every ethne – every one of the thousands of ethno-linguistic groups in the world. ETHNĚ ([www.ethne.net](http://www.ethne.net)) is a global network or “family” of mission leaders on every continent, intensely focused on unreached peoples. ETHNĚ is built on trusted relationships; many non-Western participants say this is the first global network where they feel like equal partners.

ETHNĚ has three main components.

1. Celebrate God’s continuing work and progress among the unreached.
2. Assess the status of the unreached world.
3. Accelerate gospel progress among the unreached.

One of the outgrowths of this 3-fold ETHNĚ process is the Ephesus Vision (see video and explanation at [www.ethne.net/Ephesus](http://www.ethne.net/Ephesus)). The Ephesus Vision has its roots in the account of Acts 19:9-10, in which Paul and his co-laborers worked in Ephesus for two years, and “...all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord.” This was approximately 15 million people evangelized in just two years!

We see God starting modern “Ephesus Movements” as we are tracking 100+ “Church Planting Movements” (CPMs) around the world. As exciting as it is to celebrate these CPMs, there are still 6700+ Unreached People Groups (UPGs) and many more overlapping unreached cities, nations, and language groups. The number of unevangelized has grown from 1.1 billion

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Stan Parks is a disciple of Jesus helping to reach lost people globally as a CPM trainer and coach. He is VP of Global Strategies for Act Beyond (Beyond.org) and part of the Ephesus CPM Vision with Ethne ([ethne.net](http://ethne.net)).

# Not only are we seeing disciples make disciples and churches birth churches, we are also seeing movements catalyze movements.

in 1980 to 2.2 billion today.<sup>1</sup> What will it take to truly see “no place left?”

The Ephesus Vision is cascading “Ephesus Movements” in this generation throughout the most-neglected families of the unreached. In the book of Acts, we see movements “cascade” beyond the limits of a people group or region into other people groups and regions. Modern movements in places like China, India, SE Asia and Africa are similarly not stopping in their own group, but cascading over into related “cousin” groups. For example, the Bhojpuri CPM leaders were not willing to limit their efforts to the 90-100 million Bhojpuri speakers. Instead God has used this movement to catalyze CPMs in four neighboring UPGs and 5 major cities in North India. Not only are we seeing disciples make disciples and churches birth churches, we are also seeing movements catalyze movements.

God has already put together several “Ephesus” teams in Africa and Asia from which we are learning, such as the Bhojpuri mentioned above or the Horn of Africa family of movements. ETHNĚ has also formed several new Ephesus teams focused on large unreached families of 100+ UPGs and 100+ million people.


ETHNĚ is pursuing God for Ephesus movements in every unreached group, nation, tribe and city. Then as God chooses the times and places to start movements, the Ephesus team can effectively partner to help these new movements cascade into nearby and related unreached groups.

The Ephesus Vision recognizes several key strategy elements.

1. **The Kingdom as the goal of missions:** Missions exist to birth the church where it is not present. As the indigenous church is birthed they are to live out all the kingdom aspects of God’s community in their own culture.
2. **Recognize Holy Spirit driven CPMs as a key to changing the unreached percentages:** The unevangelized 30% of the world will only be reached by indigenous disciples making disciples

that make disciples, churches birthing churches that birth churches, leaders developing and empowering leaders that develop more leaders, and movements that catalyze more movements.

3. Focus on multiple unreached groups rather than just working one-at-a-time: Past attention has been given to the inter-relatedness of groups; now we are strategically serving unreached groups in such a way that they can serve and be served by other related “cousin” groups.
4. **Work together more effectively as the Body of Christ:** All too often we follow the “Golden Rule”—he who has the gold makes the rules. A revolution is coming as we emphasize learning from and submitting to the strategies of existing movement leaders and put more resources in their hands (keeping less for ourselves) so they can better lead the way in reaching the unreached.
5. **Train new movement catalysts from around the world:** God is revolutionizing training as we learn how to better prepare laborers for birthing the church among the unreached. Much of this is happening organically, and various people around the world are dialoguing about how to best link existing efforts and design new processes in an “open-source” way that can bless many trainees. See “Training Movement Catalysts” in the Mar/Apr MF.<sup>2</sup>

Various movements and organizations are pursuing efforts described by the Ephesus vision, whether or not they are connected to ETHNĚ. The main question is how to best serve existing Ephesus efforts and catalyze new ones. If you are already involved in these types of Ephesus CPM efforts and/or would like to be part of building these processes, please contact [ephesus@ethne.net](mailto:ephesus@ethne.net). 

<sup>1</sup> [MissionFrontiers.org/issue/article/women-engaged-in-church-planting-movements-among-upgs](http://MissionFrontiers.org/issue/article/women-engaged-in-church-planting-movements-among-upgs)

<sup>2</sup> [Missionfrontiers.org/issue/article/training-movement-catalysts](http://Missionfrontiers.org/issue/article/training-movement-catalysts)



# THE THREE PHASES OF MOVEMENTS



**“I DIDN’T KNOW YOU WANTED** to hear about new churches that started in other countries, too.” We had been working alongside Raj for the last five years. In that time, we had seen the Lord grow 8 churches into a network of 167 multiplying churches. Along with that, Raj was reporting an additional 200 new church starts that he was moving toward church health and well over 1000 baptisms per year. Now, late one evening, Raj blurts out that they have seen churches start in 13 other nations that he hadn’t bothered to mention before.

I was struck with awe and wonder. I was in the midst of packing up my home after unforeseen medical needs in my family had led us back to the US for a season—and God chose that moment to use Raj to blow my mind on what He has been doing. He had some sense of humor! I’m leaving and His kingdom was advancing far beyond what I thought was possible.

Our part of Raj’s story started in 2007, when some IMB workers trained in one of his original 8 churches. Raj, along with dozens of other nationals, learned basic church planting (4 Fields) and began to put it into practice. However, in the next year, his network only started one church so the IMB workers focused their attention to other more fruitful men.

Over the next 3 years, Raj attended some additional trainings but little happened. Then, in 2009, IMB workers noticed that Raj’s network started 5 churches—a 45% growth in a single year! We began to spend more time with both Raj and his key leaders and the Lord began to quickly multiply churches. In 2011 and 2012, the network grew by more nearly 100% each year. God was moving!

By early 2012, Raj knew everything we did about church planting. In fact, he was doing more and going beyond what we had planned—I once phrased it as he’s better at my job than I am! There was little that we could do to help him start additional churches. Instead, we were now focusing all our attention on church health, trying to keep up with how fast the Holy Spirit was moving. We gathered the local leaders together and trained them in simple tools that focused on pastoral development and doctrinal integrity.

Then, the unthinkable happened. In the midst of God starting multiple movements, my oldest son was diagnosed with epilepsy and the Lord removed us from Raj’s network. After dealing with my own identity issues, we began to notice how much healthier the network was becoming. Through the coaching of another missionary, Raj’s network began to train their own pastors and develop more tools. Additionally, they began to send out their own missionaries to other places, both in their nation and beyond.

As the Lord gave us a larger perspective, we began to ask other movement-minded missionaries what they were seeing. In places that were seeing churches multiply, grow healthy, and send to the nations, we saw similar phases emerge.

## PHASE 1—CHURCH MULTIPLICATION

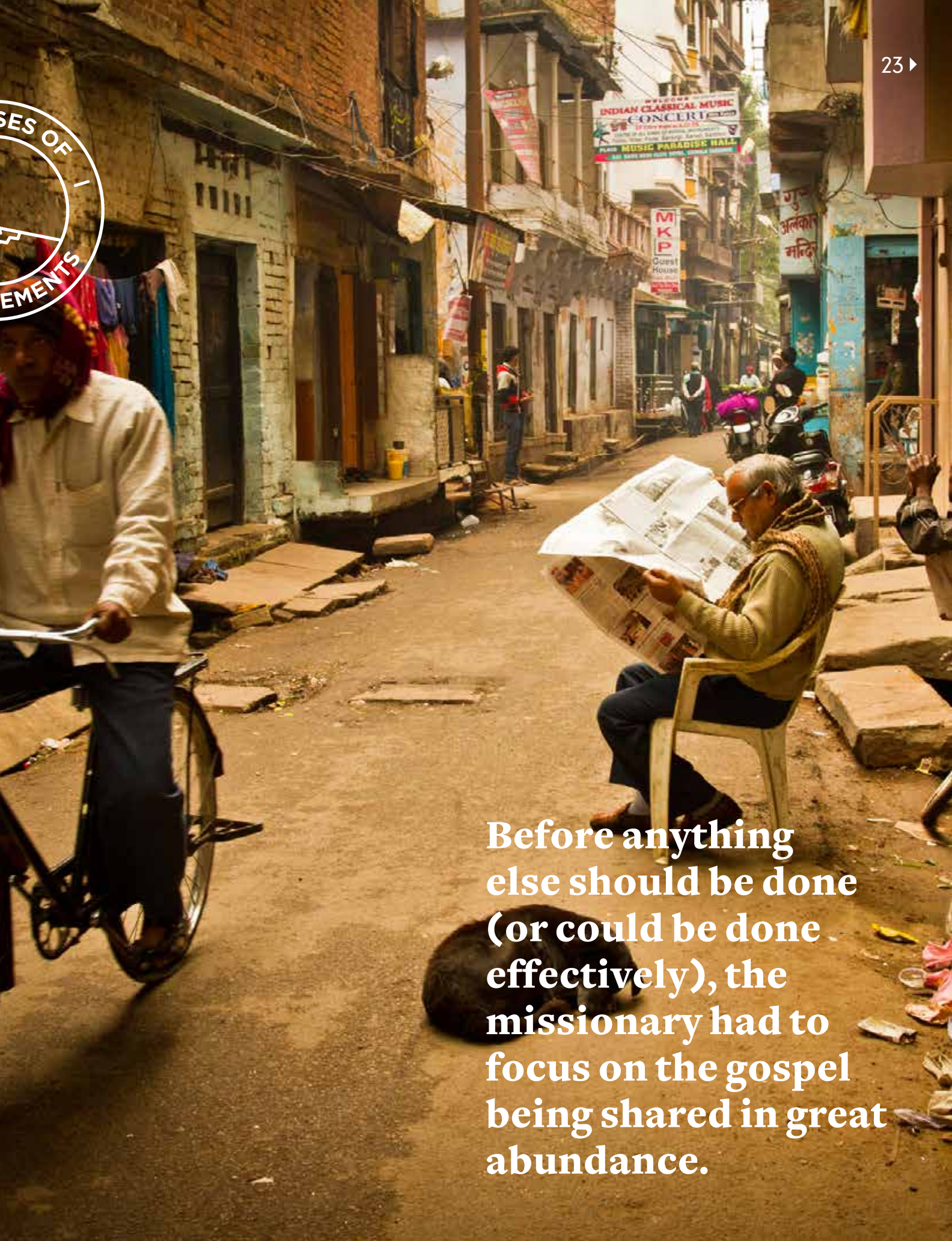
Before anything else should be done (or could be done effectively), the missionary had to focus on the gospel being shared in great abundance. This responsibility was not just the missionary’s burden, but it needed to become an identity of every believer in the area. In

BY **CHASE TOZER**

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For the last 10 years, Chase and his wife, Rita, have served with the IMB in South Asia, starting churches among unengaged unreached people groups (UUPGs). Initially focusing on one micro people group located high in the Himalayas and seeing a single church start in two years, the Tozers realized that they would never be the solution for the gospel going to literally hundreds of UUPGs in South Asia. They began equipping, modeling, and mentoring effective local national believers to go to these groups and multiply movements. The Lord has worked through these brothers and others resulting in multiple streams of multiple generations of churches among many people groups across South Asia.





**Before anything else should be done (or could be done effectively), the missionary had to focus on the gospel being shared in great abundance.**





short, people needed to hear the gospel, respond to it, be taught to obey simple discipleship lessons, and form churches. If churches weren't starting, foreign missionaries shouldn't be spending their time focused on other things yet.

In South Asia, many of our missionaries are rightfully focused on this. Churches multiplying is the needed prerequisite to any other phase of a movement. In this phase, missionaries' responsibilities include either being the catalyst that starts a movement or equipping national catalysts, campaigning simple reproducing church planting tools, and continuing to provide space for national leaders to emerge.

## PHASE 2—PASTORAL EDUCATION /DOCTRINAL DEVELOPMENT

As churches multiply, the missionary must begin to give attention to the gaps, namely the health of new churches as they start. For us, we tried many things and many traditional ideas but they kept falling short. Most of them were too advanced for our new leaders and often required travel to some distant place for training. Instead, we took our short-term discipleship method, 7 Commands of Christ, and simply added on to it. What emerged was a basic OT/NT survey, simple hermeneutics, and lots of practice. We call it Foundations.

Next, we took the verses of the Baptist Faith and Message and wrestled through them with key leaders. Instead of teaching what we believed, we simply taught these emerging theologians to search the Scriptures for answers to their church's questions, discuss it in community with other leaders, and then write their own statement of faith. What emerged was healthy contextualized doctrine and a healthy network of churches that were convinced by the Word of God as to what they believed. We just helped them write their own contextualized theology through a process we call Confessing the Faith.


In this phase, the missionaries' responsibilities include a healthy focus on self-discovery from the Word of God, a consistent guard against extra-biblical traditions, and campaigning for simple tools for pastor/teachers. Very often the missionary must ask if what he is doing is really reproducing. If not, he must change what he is teaching.

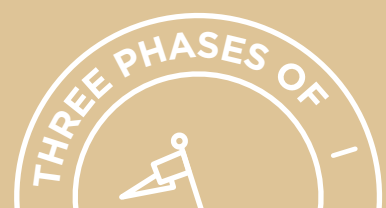
## PHASE 3—GREAT COMMISSION SENDING

As churches multiply and as a healthy network emerges, ownership of the Great Commission is the needed next step. Historically, it often took decades for a group of churches from one people group to see that the Gospel was also meant for others around them. What we found is that healthy churches that are part of healthy networks simply need a little guidance from outsiders as to where the gaps are. We simply took government maps and put them together with yearly reports from the network using paper and markers. It was simple and crude, but highly effective. Through this simple process, the network saw just how much more work was needed in their areas. They could see the gaps and committed to fill them.

Missionaries' responsibilities in this phase include providing research and gap analysis, equipping the network for cross cultural missions, and coaching on healthy church/missionary relationships. One key area is helping local believers find local funding for their own missionaries. Sometimes that's through bi-vocational work and sometimes it's through pooling their resources.

Let me also offer a couple of insights with these phases. First, the lines are really blurred. I have drawn out clear-cut phases, but realize that if you wait until one is finished before starting the next phase, you're too late. Second, there is no timetable. For some networks, all three phase can happen over the course of a few years. For others (like Protestants), it takes hundreds of years. Finally, the big insight that we have seen play out time after time is if you get the phases out of order, the likelihood of a movement decreases dramatically.

Within Raj's movement, these three phases have played out and are all continuing to grow. Now, no longer are his leaders talking about multiplying churches, but they are expecting God to multiply movements to other people groups both near and far. They are seeing it happen! This network is now a missionary force, joining with other like-minded brothers and sisters across the world, seeking the fulfillment of Romans 15:23—No Place Left. 





# OUR ROLE IN HASTENING “NO PLACE LEFT”

EXCERPTED FROM HASTENING

USED BY PERMISSION OF 2414 VENTURES.

BY **STEVE SMITH**

[kingdomkernels.com](http://kingdomkernels.com)

Steve Smith (Th.D.) was part of a church planting movement in Asia. He currently works globally to catalyze biblical Church Planting Movements to finish the Matt. 24:14 quest. He is the author of *T4T: A Discipleship Re-Revolution with Ying Kai* (WigTake Resources, 2011) and *Hastening* and *Rebirth* in the “No Place Left” saga (2414 Ventures, 2015 & 2016).

*A few years ago Mission Frontiers featured David Platt's Radical, a strategic book for mobilizing the church. We are delighted now to feature Steve Smith's thriller "No Place Left" saga, designed to carry the Church further in the same direction. This excerpt is from Hastening (Book One).*



**“CONGRATULATIONS, MY** imperturbable accomplice,” John said. “We made the *Washington Post*.”

Christopher sighed as he scanned the headline: L.A. Pastor Speeds Up the Return of Jesus. “Really, bro, you shouldn’t pay attention to these things.”

“They’re saying we think we can dictate when Jesus returns. They’re saying we’re taking Matthew 24:14 and 2 Peter 3:12 too far, as if the moment the last unreached people group is reached, Jesus has to return,” John said.

Christopher studied his longtime friend. “There’s more to it, though, isn’t there, bro?”

“Well,” John admitted, “I’ve had similar questions, lingering questions. We’re gaining a lot of momentum, so I haven’t wanted to rock the boat—especially since I often appear critical.”

“I’m not! I support you and this mission unreservedly! But, Christopher, what if they’re right? Are we trying to dictate when Jesus will return? How can we actually hasten Jesus’ return? This is the question that plagues me. Isn’t God sovereign? Hasn’t He set the date for Jesus’ return? How can we speed up the coming of that day?”

“Bro, I wish you had said something sooner,” Christopher commented. “Actually, I wish that I had said something. We’re getting a lot of kickback on this, so I’ve been studying it more deeply—making sure we’re not off base. And here’s the thing. Of course God is sovereign. And at the same time, we play a role in bringing about His sovereign plans. Think about it this way. Remember when you came to faith?”

“I was quite the rabid dog, wasn’t I?” John said, smiling. “Couldn’t shut up about my new life.”

“Well, not exactly. You were also really, really nervous about talking to your dad about it, remember?”

“Well, who wouldn’t be?” John said. “He was a Rhodes scholar. Tenured faculty. Twice the intellectual—and cynic—I am. And always finding fault with born-again Christians.”

Christopher nodded. “You kept praying, ‘Lord, send someone to witness to my dad, someone with the intellectual faculties to back him into a corner.’ Remember?”

John winced. “Yes, until that fateful day when I realized my dad was my responsibility. It was up to me to share the gospel with him.”

Christopher leaned back in his chair. “Now, think about it, bro. How long did you wait to open your mouth? Six months?”

“Yeah, but I finally got convicted to do something about it. Otherwise I probably would have waited six years, or perhaps even sixteen.”

John paused. “One of the hardest things I’ve ever done was buying that plane ticket to Boston. But you know, after we had spent a little time together and I shared my story, he just melted. I was speechless.”

“Bro, the testimony of your changed life and your love for him was more powerful than any apologetics someone else might have debated with him,” Christopher said, smiling.

“I—I guess so. I’m still amazed my dad’s a Jesus-follower. The cynic now an evangelist!”

Christopher leaned forward. “Now think about this, bro. You were the instrument God used to lead your dad to faith. You wanted to wait years and very well might have if God hadn’t convicted you to speed up the process.

“You and I know the date of your dad’s salvation was set in heaven before the earth was formed. But, in a way, you hastened that day by buying that plane ticket and

## Not only are we seeing disciples make disciples and churches birth churches, we are also seeing movements catalyze movements.

witnessing to your dad. Perhaps if you had waited six years, he would have believed later, but you didn't wait. You hastened the day, though from heaven's viewpoint that had been God's plan all along. Your motivation fit within God's plans."

"God destined my father's day of salvation, but I became His instrument," John repeated to himself. "From my vantage point, I speeded up that day by acting in faith sooner rather than later. Someone was going to win him. Why not me, and why not then? How was I to know it wasn't to be his day of salvation?"

"It was the same when Church in the City sent our first short-term team to China," Christopher said. "Remember the medical clinics we did in the villages? There were people there who might not have heard the gospel for many more years if we had not come. God knew when He created them when they would believe, but from our perspective, we hastened the day of their salvation.

"Look, bro. Fatalism drove those who opposed William Carey. They told him, 'Sit down, young man. ... When God pleases to convert the heathen, He'll do it without your help or ours.'"

John chuckled. "Uh, yeah, I could have been one of them."

Christopher continued, "All I know is that someday God will raise up a generation with the motivation, the wherewithal, and the perseverance to finish the task—the last generation. From earth's vantage point—whether or not we become that generation—we are hastening that day by focusing on finishing the task. From God's vantage point, He has chosen someone to finish the task and appointed the times and seasons of their final work. If we are the ones He has chosen, we're not speeding God up; God is speeding us up to usher in the day He prepared long ago.

"Bro, we're on solid biblical ground. Solid not just according to me but also respected theologians. Listen to Marvin Vincent's hundred-year-old comments on 2 Peter 3:12."


Christopher picked up an ancient tome, gently leafed to the appropriate page, and read:

I am inclined to adopt, with Alford, Huther, Salmond, and Trench, the transitive meaning, hastening on; i.e., "causing the day of the Lord to come more quickly by helping to fulfil those conditions without which it cannot come; that day being no day inexorably fixed, but one the arrival of which it is free to the church to hasten on by faith and by prayer."

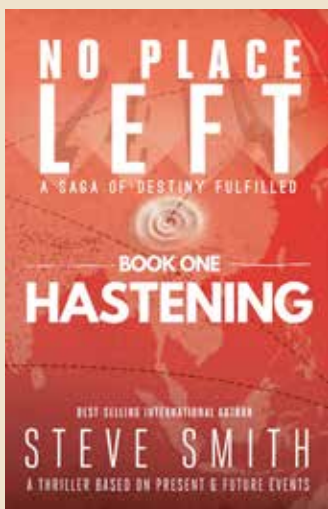
John contemplated these words.

"Will Jesus come back the moment the last UPG is reached?" Christopher asked. He glanced once more at the headline as he grabbed the paper again. "I don't know. I just know that this is the mission He left us with, and that He said we would finish before His return. I want to finish the task He has given us.

He tossed it back down again and said, "He's not waiting for permission from us to come back. Rather He is patiently waiting for us to do what He commanded, and He'll come back when the time is right. ...

"There will be a last generation. Why not us? Carey suggested his generation speed up the Great Commission by going. I ask why we can't hasten finishing this task. By God's grace I will lay down my life to see it completed. Perhaps God's plan all along has been to raise up this generation as His vehicle for finishing the task before He sends Jesus on the day appointed from the foundation of this world." 





# HASTENING

## BOOK ONE OF NO PLACE LEFT A SAGA OF DESTINY FULFILLED

**I RECEIVED AN** advance copy of Steve Smith's *Hastening* and read it with great anticipation. I was captivated by the thought of a novel focused on finishing the task among the peoples of our world, as I have taught "The Task Remaining" (Chapter 9 of *Perspectives*) and spent much of my life researching what God is doing among His peoples. Knowing Steve and loving his former book, *T4T: A Discipleship Re-Revolution*,<sup>1</sup> I was eager to read my IMB colleague's first novel.

*Hastening* is a page-turner. It explicitly and unapologetically voices the longing many of us feel for the day when there is no place left where the gospel has not been preached (Romans 15:23). For that day to come, followers of Christ must awaken to our part in Christ's mandate for us to disciple all nations. This is the awakening

for which *Hastening* strives.

*Hastening* is the first book in the "No Place Left" saga. The second—*Rebirth*—will be available in early 2016. Steve hopes the popularity of this series will parallel Peretti's *This Present Darkness*, Young's *The Shack*, Lahaye's "Left Behind" series, or even Platt's non-fiction title *Radical*. And with God's blessing *Hastening* may do just this. The story offers readers a fresh urgency and purpose to identify with unfolding events in a time where sacrificial service is the new norm.

So how does *Hastening* awaken believers to God's purpose?

Have you ever imagined you were destined for something greater? The protagonists in *Hastening* do. Others come alongside them to fan the Spirit's flame, and soon they are co-laboring on a life-changing quest.

The novel carries us along with excerpts from one character's journal, and her weakness culminates in a forged strength many of us hope for in our spiritual life. In short, she "commits" and calls readers to answer the ultimate question for every disciple—"Are you 'all in'?"

*Hastening* makes the goal clear—we work with anticipation for the day when the good news of God's Kingdom is being preached in all the world as a testimony to every nation. *Hastening* fuels the desire to see this happen in our own day. And, this is a compelling mission objective for believers and churches.

As one protagonist notes, those who pursue Christ in whole-hearted obedience challenge the status quo and may be labeled fanatics or quacks. Yet Steve doesn't back down in calling for a new breed of believer—one with Bible-based

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faith committed to the possibility of Christ coming in our generation.

One character in *Hastening* acknowledges that “it’s a challenge for pastors to send their members out to the nations, and it’s hard for church members to develop the confidence and skills to actually go.” However, Steve’s experience-based confidence in God’s provision for teams leads him to illustrate that the resources for the unfinished task are already present in the harvest field, awaiting only a harvest force willing to believe God and activate those provisions trusting God for movements.

*Hastening* will stir bold expectancy in your faith as you read how this emerging cadre of dedicated recruits wades through torrents of spiritual opposition to find “persons of peace” among lost men and women in unengaged peoples living in hard places.

*Hastening* will also challenge mission leaders and pastors to mobilize teams beyond their capacity and to send out sheep among wolves. Are you ready for such leadership challenges?

With this said, I was concerned in the early stages of the book with two things.

First, I was concerned with the use of a militaristic theme as a mobilization and training strategy for churches seeking to be engaged in missions.

“... the only way to complete the mission was full-scale ‘military’ mobilization of the whole global Church, fueled again by an expectation of the imminent return of Jesus Christ.”<sup>2</sup>

This was troubling for me because the missions community has

recognized that “certain words and images long employed to call the church to mission have increasingly caused offense to the very people with whom we are seeking to share the Good News.”<sup>3</sup>

On the other hand, in the New Testament we see Paul referring to his missionary band and co-laborers as fellow soldiers<sup>4</sup>, and he used wartime motifs in his call to godly living. Like soldiers, followers of Christ must lay down their lives for a different warfare—a warfare motivated by love for Christ and sacrificial love for the lost.

Second, I was concerned with the hermeneutic of Matthew 24:14<sup>5</sup> presented early in the book:

“If we can get the gospel to all the remaining unengaged, unreached people groups, the task Jesus described in Matthew 24:14 could be finished! Finished!”<sup>6</sup>

Engagement is a critical step, but engagement with a team or two still leaves many places and people lost. We must be very careful not to imagine that initial engagement alone will characterize the final generation. Our goal must be disciples marked by “holiness and godliness” who are themselves seeking to “hasten the day” (2 Peter 3:11–12).

As the characters in the book grow, their understanding of engagement grows. They come to understand through their experiences that kingdom movements are the way to engage a people group so that the gospel of the kingdom saturates an entire people group—every geographical area and every segment. Likewise, the characters grow in their commitment to the gospel of the kingdom even though they face stiff resistance. Like them,

we must grow “from faith to faith” (Romans 1:17), “working out our salvation with fear and trembling” (Philippians 2:12).

In *Hastening*, the characters are severely tested, and they come to a point where they realize the difficulty of the unfinished task. They realize that they may not be the ones who bring about the last generation. But as they decide how they will live out their faith and calling, they affirm, as the author calls for us to affirm, that “[God] has chosen someone to finish the task and appointed the times and seasons of their final work. If we are the ones He has chosen, we’re not speeding God up; God is speeding us up to usher in the day He prepared long ago.”<sup>7</sup>

Read *Hastening*; grow through what you experience in the pages. Act on what you learn. If enough pray and give their lives, we could be the generation that is able to say “there’s no place left.” MF

<sup>1</sup> Smith, S., & Kai, Y. (2011). *T4T: a discipleship re-revolution*. Monument, CO, WIGTake Resources.

<sup>2</sup> *Hastening*, Page 63.

<sup>3</sup> Consultation on Mission Language and Metaphors, School of World Mission, Fuller Theological Seminary, June 13, 2000. Those taking part in the consultation acknowledged that “warfare” metaphors and terminology are increasingly counterproductive to mission work and can risk the lives of local believers.

<sup>4</sup> 2 Timothy 2:3ff, Philippians 2:25, 1 Corinthians 9:7, and Philemon 1:2

<sup>5</sup> “And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.” (Matthew 24:14, ESV), <http://biblehub.com/matthew/24-14.htm>

<sup>6</sup> *Hastening*, Page 14.

<sup>7</sup> *Hastening*, Page 253.

# THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF THE GREAT COMMISSION



**TURN THE WORLD UPSIDE DOWN:  
BECOME A “FISHER OF MEN”**

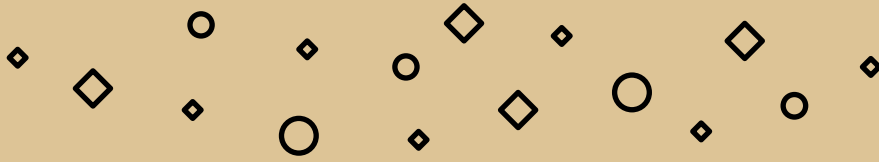
*Commencing Sunday - May 15th 2016 – The Day of the Pentecost*

BY **VICTOR CHOUDHRIE**

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Dr. Victor Choudhrie is a cancer surgeon by profession. He is a Senior Fellow of the American and British Colleges of Surgeons. In 1992 he left his position as Director and CEO of the Christian Medical college, Ludhiana, Punjab, India to pursue a full-time Church planting ministry in central India. In the year from Pentecost 2009 to Pentecost 2010, tens of thousands underwent a 'holy dip' through their ministry partners.



**“GO MAKE DISCIPLES OF** all nations, baptize and teach them to obey my commands.” (Matt. 28:18,20)

“You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth.” (Acts 1:8)

The Great Commission is the Last and the Supreme command of Yeshua Messiah, given to all his followers to finish the task of discipling all the 16,300 nations, 6,500 tongues and thousands of tribes of the earth. It is the core mandate of the church. Until this assignment is completed, Messiah the King, cannot come in his glory and establish his glorious millennial kingdom, here on earth.

The Day of the Pentecost is the birthday of the Ecclesia: Peter, in the power of the Holy Spirit, opened his account with 3000 souls who repented, were baptized and received the gift of the Holy Spirit that rapidly multiplied into myriads (tens of thousands) of new believers. (Acts 2:41, 21:20)

Explosive growth and multiplication of the New Testament Ecclesia: Acts 2:47 – And the Lord added to their numbers daily; Acts 4:4– 5000 new believers added; Acts 5:28– City saturation of Jerusalem, “You have filled the whole city with your teachings”; Acts 6:1,7 – Exponential multiplication of disciples; Acts 8:12 – Samaria evangelized by Philip, the table cleaner; Acts 16:5 – Daily multiplication of quality churches, “And the churches were strengthened in faith and multiplied in numbers daily”; Acts 19:8-10 – All Asia heard the Gospel; Romans 15:19,20 – Gospel fully preached from Jerusalem to Illyricum, a distance of over 2000 KM; Romans 15:23 – “No more places left.”

What was their magic mantra? The 3000 souls, instead of meeting under one roof, chose to meet under thousands of roofs. They focused on 1. (Acts 42) Apostolic teaching (message with two legs); 2. Strategized during purpose oriented koinonia (fellowship); 3. Prayed tafilla (prayer of self-evaluation to see they are obeying the mandate); 4. (Vs. 43) Signs and miracles which no none could deny; 5. (Vs 44-45) Practiced generous giving for the poor and laid it at the apostles’ feet to make them mobile for mission; 6. (Vs 46) Went fishing to catch two legged fish; 7. (Vs. 46) They cleaned (repentance & baptism) the fish while ‘meaning’ (breaking bread), exorcising and chit-chatting the Gospel. (Vs 47) And the Lord added to their numbers daily. Wow!

So what is causing the logjam from reaching the finish line? We looked around for the culprit and found it is *us*, the church. For centuries we got mired into property, pulpit, programs, politics and budgets, losing the mandate and the momentum. Our churches are not the “House of Prayer for all nations.” (Mark 11:17) Our leaders are like the aquarium keepers, busy taking care of fish that do not reproduce. Our missionaries plant mission stations and stay on, while Paul raised local leadership, planted DMM (Disciple Multiplying Movement) and moved on. Our prayer cells and Bible study groups produce prayer warriors and scholars that do not metamorphose into fishers of men.

So Yahweh is now doing a new thing. From Myanmar to Mongolia, and from Indonesia to Ethiopia, all nations are in turmoil. However, in spite of all the bad news that we hear every day, new believers from all nations, tongues and tribes, are entering the Kingdom in numbers unprecedented. And guess who is doing it? Interestingly it is not the telesuperstar evangelists but

**We know God’s End Vision is to have all nations, tongues and tribes standing before his throne and worshipping him.**



the anointed first generation humble believers who are engaging neighbors, friends and colleagues and breaking religious, societal and cultural barriers by sharing bread and the whole wisdom of God from house to house and igniting explosive growth and multiplication. It is Christ-centered, sinner-focussed and relational. Again, it is just like the first century House Ecclesia (Matt. 11:12; Acts 20:20).


The mandate: Yeshua had a dual assignment. The first was to be sacrificed as the Passover Lamb for our redemption. And the second was, “I will build my church and the Gates of Hell shall not prevail...I will give her the keys of the Kingdom [authority] and power over all the power of the enemy and send her on to seek and save that [Garden of Eden], which was lost.” (Matt. 16:18,19; Luke 10:19; 19:10) But he did not build any church building; instead he made disciples who went and demolished religious, societal and cultural Gates of Hell, and turned the world upside down. Thus, the mandate of the whole church is to take the whole Gospel to the whole world, until the last rascal is sought, found and saved. Like the Samaritan woman, the best way to worship in spirit and in truth is to bring them to his feet, so he can give them a new heart and a new spirit. (John 4:23,24; Acts 17:6; Ezekiel 36:26)

Yeshua did not just *command* us to do the Great Commission, he *modeled* it:

- **GO:** He was on the road every day preaching the Kingdom and seeking the lost, like Zacchaeus the tax collector and the demonic Gadarene, to transform them into Persons of Peace and send them to their oikos (extended household) to plant the kingdom. (Mark 1:38; 6:7)
- **MAKE DISCIPLES:** He made twelve disciples and sent them two-by-two to multiply more disciples. Disciples are those who replicate disciples. (Luke 10:1,2; John 15:8)
- **BAPTIZE:** Through His disciples, He baptized even more people than He did through John the Baptist. The Great Commission ordains every believer to be a baptizer. (John 4:1,2; 15:16)
- **TEACH THEM TO OBEY:** He obeyed the Father unto death. He taught obedience: “If you love me, you will obey my commands.” All his disciples became martyrs. (Philp. 2:8; John 14:15)

International Year of the Great Commission is meant to be a time when Christians throughout the world are to set aside their differences and make a fresh commitment to honour, obey and fulfil the Great Commission of our Lord—to pray, proclaim and possess our “promised land,” and transform it into the kingdom of God, even if there may be giants in the land. (Eph. 4:11-13; Numbers 13:33)

We know God’s End Vision is to have all nations, tongues and tribes standing before his throne and worshiping him. We shouldn’t just sit down on the pews and look up to heaven as our destination, but also look out of the window and see all the lost people in our own oikos: family, friends, neighbors, colleagues at our workplaces, schoolmates, strangers in the market place, etc. We must look at them as a swimming coach looks at a drowning person. We must pray for them, rescue them and turn them into the disciple-makers. For this we need coaches to equip their “tool belts” with the discipling tools they need and the knowledge of how to use them. It is not enough to be a Follower of Yeshua, but every follower must graduate with the highest qualification as a prolific Fisher of Men. (Matt. 4:19)

The objective is to make this a global movement and not just an event. Individuals, families, and women as well as youth groups, churches, missions and grant-makers, need to adopt and take ownership of their God-given domains: neighbourhoods, streets, cities, workplaces, regions and ethnos (people groups). They need to initiate Jesus planting movements through gospel saturation blitz—simultaneously we must, viralize this message through personal contacts, print, electronic and social media, organized events and training seminars .etc. There is so much unengaged talent stagnating on the pews that needs to be mentored, mobilized and launched as champion Great Commissioners to reach the lost, who are sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death. After all, we are accountable for them. The best way to have our sins forgiven and shine like stars and have our names written in the Book of the Lamb, is to catalyse the DNA of the Great Commission Movement, and in so doing, change the world until there is no place left where Christ has not been named. (Matt. 4:16; Eze. 3:18; Daniel 12:1-3; Luke 10:20; James 5:20; Rom. 15:23) 



# PURSUING THE VISION OF BRINGING EVERY FAMILY HOME



BY **STEVEN HAWTHORNE**

Steve Hawthorne co-edited, with Ralph Winter, the *Perspectives Reader* and authored the *Perspectives Study Guide*. He works with WayMakers, a mission and prayer mobilization ministry. He travels widely, helping the Perspectives course get underway in strategic settings.





**WHY SHOULD UNREACHED** peoples have a higher priority than other sets of people? Over the years I've often heard people plead the cause of unreached peoples by claiming that they are the peoples where missionaries are needed most.

By designating them as unreached peoples we should not be thinking of them as the *neediest* peoples. Instead, they are among the *remaining* peoples—the peoples who at this time remain unevangelized. What drives the prioritization is the biblical visionary conviction that eventually every people must and will be evangelized. Involvement in evangelizing *any* unreached people is actually a commitment to evangelize *all* peoples.

Most Christians consider mission to be an overflow of compassion for others who are in greater need.

That's fine and good, but feelings of compassion usually can't sustain work among unevangelized peoples. Work among unreached peoples usually calls for a comprehensive hope that Christ will be served by some from every people. There are two common approaches to envisioning the global task: what I call countdown and fulfillment. Both are biblical and practical.

### THE COUNTDOWN VIEW

Calls to finish the task of world evangelization often feature a list of peoples that are not yet evangelized. The peoples are usually categorized with some word beginning with the negative prefix “un-” (unreached, unengaged, unevangelized, etc.). However “reachedness” or peoplehood may be defined, the basic idea is that as

# MOVEMENT INSIGHTS

## THE HOUSE CHURCH: EAT, MEET, GOSSIP THE GOSPEL AND MULTIPLY

BY **VICTOR CHOUDHRIE**

House church (a church without a dedicated building) is where the original *ekklesia* (church) met, as those “called out” by Jesus gathered to break bread, gossip the Gospel, and multiply.

- Pentecost is the birthday of *ekklesia*, when 3000 souls were baptized. They broke bread from house to house and the Lord added to their numbers daily. Acts 2:41; 46,47
- When Peter was in jail, the *ekklesia* gathered in the house of Mary, the mother of Mark, and prayed with one accord until he was released. Acts 12:12

- Cornelius the Centurion and his colleagues were baptized both in the Holy Spirit and with water in the army barracks.
- Lydia, Phoebe, Priscilla, Apphia, Nympha were all house church facilitators.
- The Holy Spirit fell on all the disciples when they were in an upper room.
- Jesus ate the last supper in a house.
- Paul shared the whole wisdom of God from house to house. Acts 20:2

Current News:

- Global–Mongolia had less than 500 followers of Jesus until the last decade; now its house church movement claims to involve over 70,000.

From his extensive writings, Indian CPM leader Victor Choudhrie offers this syndicated column for use in your existing periodical: 150-250 words/month, plus optional movement news of 50-100 words. For more information, email him directly at [vchoudhrie@gmail.com](mailto:vchoudhrie@gmail.com)

Learn about Victor at:

[MissionFrontiers.org/issue/article/church-planting-movements-from-one-indian-perspective](http://MissionFrontiers.org/issue/article/church-planting-movements-from-one-indian-perspective)

# Each of the peoples has destiny, worth and value. Paul's prayer is essentially that the Father would have His full family gathered back to Him as one household

progress is made, the list will get shorter. The yet-undone parts will become fewer and fewer. Eventually, only handfuls will remain, until finally, the last few will be finished. When our list says “none,” then we are done. This approach is what we could call a “countdown” way of viewing the task.

The countdown view helps us gauge progress on world evangelization as a great shared project. It's proven useful for sustained collaboration of diverse missions and churches doing different things in far-flung places over lengthy periods of time. As valuable as the countdown approach has been and will be for finishing this global project, I think we also need to lift our vision and ambitions to the fulfillment of God's purpose.

## FULFILLMENT VISION

Another way to mobilize, pray and collaborate for world evangelization is to focus on the outcome. Using the countdown vantage point, we list every undone part to complete a project. By contrast, what we could call “fulfillment vision” focuses attention on the splendid worth and certainty of the accomplished purpose. These two vantage points are simply different ways to describe and pursue the same endeavor.

## THE LAST LOST AND THE FULL FLOCK

Let's use the biblical imagery of sheep and shepherd to compare the two ways of seeing our mission. In a countdown view we focus on the remaining lost sheep. A fulfillment vision helps us anticipate and work toward a fully gathered flock.

In Matthew 18:12-14, Jesus presents a parable of sheep. If nothing else this story should tell us that a countdown mentality is appropriate. There are 100 sheep, but the focus is on the one who “has gone astray.” The shepherd rejoices more over finding the lost one than the 99. The shepherd's joy is obviously relief that the lost has been

found. But perhaps there is also gladness that the full flock has been restored.

Jesus used the image of a shepherd's work with sheep on another occasion to describe His mission a bit differently: “I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd” (John 10:16). In this picture, the “other sheep” are not described as lost. They are not enumerated with any kind of countdown. Instead, Jesus' focus is on the goal, the outcome, the purpose of the mission: There must be a full flock. Every part of the flock must be brought in. The language of “one flock with one shepherd” suggests a consummation of relationship between God and His people.

## PAUL FULFILLING THE GOSPEL

These two ways of seeing our task are common throughout the Bible. For example, Paul says that he aspires to evangelize “not where Christ was named” (Romans 15:20). It would appear that Paul is focused on a list of the last remaining settings, such as Spain, where there is still “no news of Him” and where “they who have not heard” (15:21) dwell. Paul seems to do some countdown thinking: seeing “no further place... in these regions,” he resolves to “go to Spain” (15:23-24) where there had not yet been gospel proclamation.

Paul makes a strategic decision with a kind of countdown thinking, but he also shows that he is resolutely fixated on the fulfillment of the task. To see this, it's important to realize the magnitude of biblical allusion that is behind the idea of Christ being “named” (15:20). This expression does not refer to simply preaching about Jesus. Christ being “named” meant that the renown, honor and reputation of Jesus had become established throughout a region or people for God's abiding glory.<sup>1</sup>

Paul had earlier described the outcome of his mission as “the obedience of faith among all the peoples for

His name's sake" (1:5). He states that this "obedience of the peoples" was the fulfillment of the mission, or "what Christ has accomplished through me" (15:18). Christ had worked through Paul in "word and deed" with the power of signs and the persuasive "power of the Spirit" (15:19). But Paul's main point was that he could claim to have "fulfilled the gospel"<sup>2</sup> in specific geographic settings (15:18-19). Paul was focused on the outcome of mission.

The Bible is full of expressions of the fulfillment of God's purpose among all peoples, far beyond the limits of these paragraphs to explore. Perhaps the most poignant is the reality of God as Father. Paul was moved, physically to his knees it appears, to bow before "the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name" (Ephesians 3:14-15). He is not merely the "one God and Father of all" individuals (Ephesians 4:6). The family of this great Father consists of "every family." The word that he uses for "family" describes a lineage of people with generational depth, which probably should be seen as the core biblical reality of people groups. Each of these peoples is "named," as if they were His children. Each of the peoples has destiny, worth and value. Paul's prayer is essentially that the Father would have His full family gathered back to Him as one household before Him (Ephesians 2:18-22, 3:28-29).


## THE PRACTICAL VALUE OF FULFILLMENT VISION

There is practical value in reminding workers and supporters of the worth and certainty of world evangelization being fulfilled in every people. I see at least three ways:

- 1. Define unreached peoples with helpful ambiguity.** The countdown view calls for impossible exactitude in delineating ethnicities. It also demands a binary distinction (reached or not?) to track progress of evangelization. But since biblical fulfillment vision is usually oriented toward peoples serving God in the unique glories of their cultures, we can allow (and even celebrate) some holy ambiguity in identifying whether particular peoples can be considered "reached."
- 2. Guard against mission creep.** Frontier mission is notoriously difficult. It is easy to be distracted by the openness of receptive people who already have Bibles, churches and missions. Cam Townsend, the founder of Wycliffe Bible Translators, said this

about Jesus' parable of the shepherd leaving 99 sheep behind to go after the one lost sheep: "That verse guided me." Townsend was often questioned about focusing so much effort to translate the Bible for such small tribes. But the joy of the shepherd in recovering one sheep reminded Townsend of the worth of every tribe. The parable probably informed one of the most effective uses of countdown thinking ever in Townsend's rallying cry, "Two thousand languages to go!"

- 3. Motivate with lasting passion.** In almost every fulfillment vision the spectacle is the consummation of relationship of the peoples toward their God. Jesus said that the Father seeks true worshipers. He did not say "worship." He said that He seeks "worshipers" (John 4:23). And that means relationship. He deserves and He desires to be served, worshiped, obeyed and loved by every people. He has purchased some from every people to be priestly, worshiping servants unto Him (Revelation 5:9-10). Moravians proved the value of such full-hearted motive, that "the Lamb that was slain [would] receive the reward of His suffering."

Mission can be impelled by love for Christ (2 Corinthians 5:14-15).<sup>3</sup> The vision of God's fulfilled purpose sees love flowing the other way: from the peoples, clans and tribes back to God. God's great love will be requited. Some from every people will love him. Our overriding, integrating passion can become love for Christ that labors to see Him loved by the peoples. 

<sup>1</sup> A few sentences before this in the epistle, Paul had reveled in the fulfillment of Christ's work among the Gentiles (Greek: *ethne* or peoples) with a litany of scriptures that he wanted the Christians at Rome to see as being fulfilled. In this string of now-being-fulfilled prophecies, God's name is being established in the open praise of Jews and Gentiles together (Romans 15:9-12). Abounding hope in the fulfillment of global purpose could be encouraged through this kind of "encouragement of the Scriptures" (15:4-13).

<sup>2</sup> "I have fulfilled the gospel" is a straightforward translation. There is no reference to preaching. Paul sometimes uses the word *angelion* as a movement of the gospel and not merely the message itself. Other examples of this usage: Mark 1:1, 1 Corinthians 9:12, 23, Philippians 1:5, 12, 2:22, 4:3. The phrase "fulfilled the gospel," means that the process of evangelization was in some way completed. Most likely Paul is saying that the work of evangelization had advanced to the point that gospel proclamation would continue without his apostolic presence.

<sup>3</sup> This text can be understood either as Christ's love for us, or our love for Christ. I think the latter is more likely because of the intended outcome of Christ's death and resurrection, that people would "no longer live for themselves, but for Him" (2 Corinthians 5:14-15).

# “FINISHING THE TASK” HELPS PARTICIPANTS VIEW NEW MOVEMENTS WITH CLARITY



*A report on the impact of the Finishing the Task gathering in Los Angeles, December, 2015*

**GOD SPOKE TO** Habakkuk and said, “Look at the nations and watch—and be utterly amazed. For I am going to do something in your days that you would not believe, even if you were told.” (Hab 1:5) Certainly, researcher Dr. David Garrison’s plenary address at the 2015 “Finishing the Task” (FTT) conference suggested that God is still doing amazing things, maybe now more than ever. Garrison reported to the 500 FTT delegates gathered at Saddleback Church in Los Angeles that during the first 13 centuries of Muslim-Christian interaction, tens of millions of Christians had converted to Islam. During this same time period, Dr. Garrison found only three possible movements of at least 1000 Muslims from an Islamic community being baptized into any expression of Christian faith. But between the years 1970 to 2000, there were 11 such movements

—more than the combined total of the previous 1300 years. And during the ramp-up of the new century, from 2000 to 2013, there were already 69 such movements. Certainly it would appear Garrison is justified in his conclusion that we are now living in the midst of the greatest turning of Muslims to Christ in history. By implication—if God can do this among Muslims (previously thought to be among the world’s most resistant peoples) He can do it among any tribe, nation, or religion. And if FTT has anything to do with it, that’s exactly what will happen.

Finishing the Task is an association of churches and mission agencies who want to see reproducing churches planted among every single people group in the world. Learn more about the vision of Finishing the Task by watching the video at [vimeo.com/29620997](http://vimeo.com/29620997). In 2006,

BY **DOUG LUCAS**

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<http://www.finishingthetask.com>

Doug has served as both missionary and president of Team Expansion, a global mission, prayer, and disciple making organization active in over 40 countries. Based in Louisville, Kentucky, he longs to see more people come to Jesus, and is passionate about disciple making. Toward that end, he and a colleague have launched the website [www.MoreDisciples.com](http://www.MoreDisciples.com).



## Finishing the Task is an association of churches and mission agencies who want to see reproducing churches planted among every single people group in the world.


FTT identified 639 unreached, unengaged people groups (UUPG's) with populations above 100,000. Since then, church planting has now reported in over 568 of those people groups. Every year, FTT stages a gathering to inform, network, challenge, and inspire. In addition to Garrison, the 2015 gathering featured Paul Eshleman, Director of the network, along with Francis Chan and Rick Warren. (Watch the complete keynote speakers—all of them—by watching the video at [www.finishingthetask.com/videos.html](http://www.finishingthetask.com/videos.html).)

The 2015 FTT event was radically different than any previous gathering. Attendance at the first 8 gatherings had averaged 30 or 40 participants. In 2014, attendance doubled. But over 500 individuals gathered at the 2015 event, signaling a sharp increase in interest and participation. Many of these new attenders were leaders and lay members of local churches, a change that seemed very welcome by everyone participating in the FTT network.

Of course, of major value each year at FTT are the resource materials, including spreadsheets and resource listings for FTT's listings of remaining unreached and unengaged people groups. (You can find and download free copies of every handout and PowerPoint at [tinyurl.com/FTT2015](http://tinyurl.com/FTT2015).)

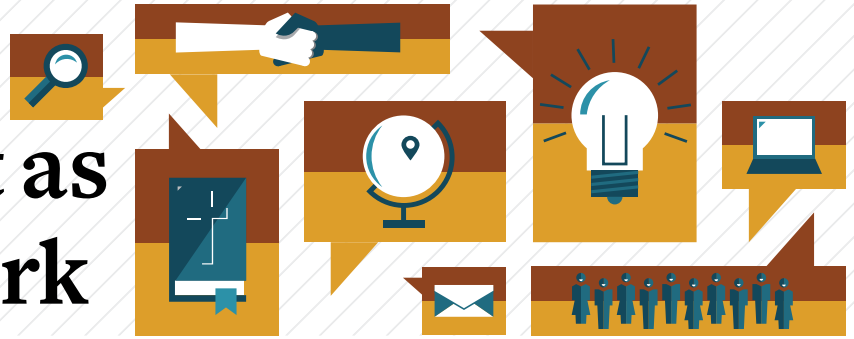
Still, one highlight of the 2015 event will be tough to capture in downloadable reports. There was definitely a pronounced “buzz” about the exciting upswing of Kingdom movements springing up around the planet. You could catch it in the plenaries, the workshops, the tracks, and even during the mealtimes and breaks. I'm sure my own application is representative of many who are catching the “FTT vision.” Like many, I had grappled with the challenge of understanding and communicating the remaining task. In my own case, the agency I lead, Team Expansion, had volunteered to create a “Wall of Unengaged Peoples” in hopes of

articulating the vision. When FTT leaders learned of the 75-foot exhibit, they decided to integrate it with the stage in the auditorium where the plenary sessions took place at Saddleback. (See accompanying picture.) Throughout the conference, delegates could write prayers on sticky notes, then affix them in squares associated with each of the remaining groups. Many said the wall helped them see that the task remaining is indeed reachable. Let us join with Finishing the Task in finishing the task of the Great Commission. Let's pray, plan, and commit to act—to expand Christ's kingdom through rapidly growing kingdom movements toward heaven. May He be blessed and worshiped among all peoples in all places... and then may the end bring His lasting peace.

Note: The dates for this year's FTT Conference is December 6-8, 2016. To participate, simply send an email to [info@finishingthetask.com](mailto:info@finishingthetask.com). Learn more about Finishing the Task at [www.finishingthetask.com](http://www.finishingthetask.com). To book the Wall of Unreached Peoples at your church or event, go to [www.u4theu.com/book-the-wall](http://www.u4theu.com/book-the-wall). 



# No Place Left as the Benchmark



BY **STEVE SMITH**

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Steve Smith (Th.D.) was part of a church planting movement in Asia. He currently works globally to catalyze biblical church planting movements to finish the Matt. 24:14 quest. He is the author of *T4T: A Discipleship Re-Revolution* with Ying Kai (WigTake Resources, 2011) and *Hastening and Rebirth* in the “No Place Left saga” (2414 Ventures, 2015 & 2016).

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**I** was walking with a group of Church Planting Movement initiators during an outing at a CPM conference. One of the most fruitful ones sidled up to me as we strolled along. He asked, “Steve, would you say we are experiencing a CPM in our city?”

He was experiencing second- and third-generation churches, and perhaps even some were fourth-generation at the time, but they weren’t yet consistently reaching to fourth generation and beyond in multiple locales.

I replied, “I’m not sure. But probably not yet.”

He paused then asked the real question. “Is CPM all there is?”

The kingdom was growing by leaps and bounds in this city over the course of two years. People were coming to Christ and being discipled. New reproducible churches were being formed. And this

was happening generation by generation. My friend was rapidly becoming a poster child of CPM breakthrough in the Western world.

I said, “No, a movement is just the beginning. The movement is not the goal. The real goal is what Paul declared in Romans 15—no place left for the gospel to be proclaimed. Every people group, every neighborhood and every ethnic segment with multiplying disciples and churches among them.”

A look of relief spread across his brow. “Whew! I’m glad to hear it. I knew there must be something more.”

What registered with my friend that evening was critical in whether or not the movement in his city would move toward the end-vision of the whole city being reached or plateau out with satisfaction at having achieved a certain kingdom status. He realized that day that a movement is not the end; it’s just the beginning!

## RAISING THE BENCHMARK FOR MOVEMENTS

Paul’s statement in Romans 15 is one of those precious moments when the missionary raises his head above the spiritual fray, surveys the battle and offers an assessment.

Therefore I glory in Christ Jesus in my service to God. I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me in leading the Gentiles to obey God by what I have said and done—by the power of signs and wonders, through the power of the Spirit of God. So from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum, I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ. It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known [or “named”—NASB], so that I would not be building on someone else’s foundation.... But now that there is no more place

for me to work in these regions...  
(Rom. 15 :17-20, 23 NIV).

Paul's work was an apostolic work; thus it was a foundation-laying work (v.20; see also 1 Cor. 3:6ff). Paul's role was to enter a place where Christ was not being "named" or "known" (v.20), share the gospel, make disciples and plant churches that could multiply to reach that region.

Paul declares that from Jerusalem all the way to Illyricum (northwest of Macedonia), he had fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ (v.19). At first glance this appears to contradict the record of Acts. Personally, Paul probably started churches in only 10-15 places in the midst of his mission tours.<sup>1</sup> This appears to be a far cry from a full proclamation from "Jerusalem to Illyricum."

To add an exclamation mark to this assessment, he states in verse 23 that there is "no more place for me to work in these regions." Clearly, in Paul's mind, the role of the apostle is to get to the point where there is no place left to lay the foundation for the gospel of the kingdom. Paul had accomplished this end-vision and was moving on to Spain in his plans to reach the Gentiles.

### SEEDS OF MOVEMENTS

In all likelihood, Paul's mind was ringing with Jesus' parables of the mustard seed and leaven (or that spiritual concept found in Matthew 13:31-33). That handful of churches he and his partners planted were the mustard seed planted in each region. As they began to multiply

and reach other neighborhoods, towns and village Paul felt free to move on. Movements of the kingdom were starting in each region with sufficient life and momentum embedded in them to carry the proclamation of the gospel to every nook and cranny.<sup>2</sup>

Paul didn't have to plant every church—just a few church-planting churches with a vision for their region and beyond.

### RECOVERING THE REAL END-VISION

The danger my friend faced that evening was succumbing to the wrong end-vision: movements, rather than no place left. Paul could have stayed to build upon the foundations of these movements, as others behind him would, but that was not the role of an apostle. The eyes of an apostle are on the horizon, where Christ has not yet been named.

**The danger my friend faced was succumbing to the wrong end-vision—movements rather than no place left.**

I believe that what followed were something akin to Church Planting Movements or disciple-making movements in these Roman provinces. However, movements were never the goal. Giving every ethnic group, every city, every village and every family the chance to become disciples of Christ was the goal. Movements were just the most biblically complete, rapid, deep and transformative way to get there.

An all too present temptation in kingdom movements is for the movement catalyst(s) to pull out before there is sufficient momentum to get to no place left. The astounding numbers within a movement so thrill us that we lose sight of the bigger vision: every community and segment reached with the gospel and embraced by life-giving, multiplying churches.

A frequent admonition I give to colleagues in the beginning stages of CPMs is to stay in the fray until they can see that the movement will get to no place left. What that means is that they need to track the movement's progress toward all people having a chance to hear the gospel.

The temptation to slow down and not finish the task is great amidst an explosive movement within a city or people group, but greater still is the same temptation globally.

### **GETTING TO NO PLACE LEFT GLOBALLY**

Like his Lord, who had to get through all the towns and villages of Israel during his three years,<sup>3</sup> so Paul sensed a divine urgency associated with his apostolic stewardship.<sup>4</sup> He seemed compelled to bring in all the Gentiles as an acceptable offering to His Lord (Rom. 15:15-16).

He and the other first century believers vigorously gave themselves to Jesus' mandate to proclaim fully the gospel of the kingdom to all of the ethne in their generation (Matt. 24:14, 28:19-20). Whether the breadth of ethnic diversity was understood at that time is not certain, but they pushed the

frontiers of the gospel from province to province and from district to district within those provinces.

Movements were not the vision. Completing the Great Commission was. No place left.

The question for our generation is whether we will take up the baton to finish the race that others before us have started and have run so faithfully. With over 3,000 people groups, both unengaged and unreached with the gospel (UUPGs), it is easy for us to become complacent and stop running. Instead, we have the opportunity to increase our pace and run the final lap. We have the resources but do we have the resolve?

The finish line is in sight. Sacrificial effort on the part of the global church could result in the completion of the original mandate Jesus gave His followers. In two thousand years, a multitude of people groups have been reached with the gospel. We are in that number. But the benchmark is no place left. Will we take up the baton to get there?

### **SET AN URGENT DEADLINE**

In getting to no place left in people groups, cities and regions, setting a

deadline seems to galvanize believers toward a sense of urgency to finish what Jesus started. It is as though we wake up to realize that time is running short and faith-filled efforts must be employed.

Jesus imbued the early disciples with a sense of urgency.

We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work. (John 9:4, ESV)

Several of His parables also highlighted the urgency.<sup>5</sup> Perhaps the most piercing is the Parable of the Faithful and Unfaithful Servants:

Stay dressed for action and keep your lamps burning, and be like men who are waiting for their master to come home from the wedding feast, so that they may open the door to him at once when he comes and knocks.... If he comes in the second watch, or in the third, and finds them awake, blessed are those servants.... And that servant who knew his master's will but did not get ready or act according to his will, will receive a severe beating. But the one who did not know, and did what deserved a beating, will receive a light beating. Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more. (Luke 12:25-36, 38, 47-48, ESV, emphasis added)

These parables compelled the early disciples to finish what the Master commanded before He returned.

# **We have the resources but do we have the resolve?**



# Throughout the history of the church, great pushes toward finishing the task have been matched by great sacrifices.

Will our generation rise up with a new sense of urgency? If we resolved to bring the gospel fully to the remaining 3,000+ UUPGs by a date such as 2025, what effect would that have on our efforts? Would great sacrifice match a great effort? Would it move us toward a spiritual wartime footing in which we called every believer to be part of a global effort to eradicate areas devoid of the gospel?<sup>6</sup>

## A COSTLY DEADLINE

The remaining UUPGs are in the most difficult-to-reach and most overlooked places. Getting to no place left in any generation—ours or another—will come with a great price. Jesus declared and demonstrated the path toward fruitfulness. It requires death—death to self and, not infrequently, physical death.

Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. (John 12:24, ESV)

The disciples of Jesus pursued the salvation of the *ethne* with a similar level of sacrifice:

Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. (2 Tim. 2:10, ESV)

Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. (Phil. 2:17)

## HE IS WORTH IT

A clue to Paul's motivation in settling for nothing less than no place left (Rom. 15:23) is found in the same chapter:

But on some points I have written to you very boldly by way of reminder, because of the grace given me by God to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. (Rom. 15:15-16, ESV, emphasis added)

Paul is so filled with gratitude for his salvation and calling that he longs to bring every one of the *ethne* back to his Lord as an acceptable offering. In this way he could declare the Son's unique worthiness.

Throughout the history of the church, great pushes toward finishing the task have been matched by great sacrifices. We cannot have one without the other.

Moravians sold themselves into slavery to have the chance to preach the gospel in the neglected slave populations of the West Indies. Moravian missionaries

lived by the rallying cry, "To win for the Lamb who was slain the just reward of His suffering." Many of them died in faith knowing that they were an integral part of finishing the task and hastening the Day of Christ (2 Peter 3:12).

The end is in sight in individual Church Planting Movements, but let us not rest until we reach no place left.

The end is in sight in bringing the gospel to the remaining 3,000+ UUPGs, but let us not rest until there is no place left.

The commission is worth it.

He is worth it. 

<sup>1</sup> Cilicia (?), Cyprus (perhaps Salamis & Paphos), Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, Derbe, Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Corinth, Ephesus; add to this record a visit to Crete (Titus 1) and perhaps Illyricum at some point.

<sup>2</sup> Roland Allen was one of the first in the modern missionary era to propose that view of Paul's mission. Roland Allen. *Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours*. 1927.

<sup>3</sup> See Mark 1:38-39; Matt. 9:35

<sup>4</sup> E.g. Gal. 2:7-8, 1 Cor. 4:1ff, 9:15ff

<sup>5</sup> E.g. The Parables of the Banquet (Luke 14), Ten Virgins (Matt. 25) and the Shut Door (Luke 13)

<sup>6</sup> Steve's new books *Hastening* and *Rebirth* explore such a scenario and what it might require of us to be that last generation.

# Equal Opportunity

## *A Local Resource that Works for Everyone*

BY **JEAN JOHNSON**

[jean@wmausa.org](mailto:jean@wmausa.org)

Jean Johnson is the author of *We Are Not The Hero: A Missionary's Guide for Sharing Christ, Not a Culture of Dependency*. Jean served as a missionary with the Assemblies of God in Cambodia for 16 years in the areas of pioneer church planting, on-the-job leadership training, and oral strategies. She is currently a co-director of World Mission Associates and teaches and coaches on church sustainability and multiplication.

**AFTER SPENDING TIME** with his disciples and knowing he would be departing the earth soon, Jesus spent some serious moments with his disciples. He needed to pass them the baton of making disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:18-20). In light of this astounding responsibility, what kind of resources did Jesus provide the disciples? He left them with only one resource — the Holy Spirit.

Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4-5).


But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight (Acts 1:8-9).

That is all! Jesus left them with the Holy Spirit. He didn't supply them with funds, donor lists, buildings, property, equipment, and projects. Rather, Jesus gave the disciples the one resource that would never fail them and always produced results. The book of Acts is an account of such amazing impacts.

You see, together the Holy Spirit and his work are the only resource that is local and accessible for everyone. Whether rich or poor, male or female, young or old, businessperson or farmer, city dweller or country dweller,

college graduate or apprentice, all have equal access to the Holy Spirit and His power.

When Christians depart from their home countries and implement their cross-cultural work with heaps of foreign funding and material goods, they introduce resources that are not readily available for everyone, thus placing the Great Commission work in the hands of a few instead of in the hands of all. In the USA, we emphatically promote equal opportunity, but then proceed to implement a model of missions that is not reproducible for everyone. The Holy Spirit and His power fulfills "equal opportunity" because the Holy Spirit gives power to everyone without creating economic barriers.

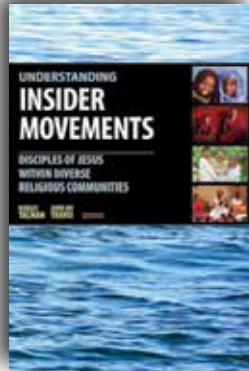
Maybe like you, I have been taught to rely more on scientific and materialistic resources than on the Holy Spirit. It is those resources that we then tend to knowingly or unknowingly encourage the rest of the world to rely on for the Great Commission assignment. Jesus believed the Holy Spirit was adequate for the disciples and their mission work to the ends of the earth, and so it should be with us in the 21st century, as well. I believe it would benefit us greatly to evaluate our mission strategies and ensure that we are not overshadowing the one resource that is equal and available to all — the Holy Spirit and his work. Remember, the Holy Spirit is a local resource, because anyone can draw upon Him in any setting. 



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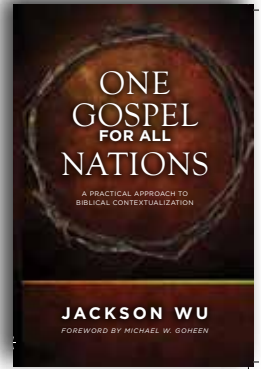
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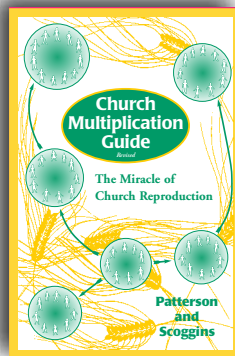
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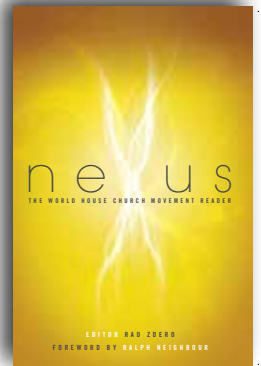
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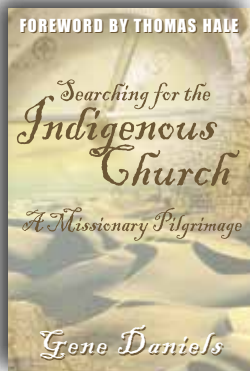
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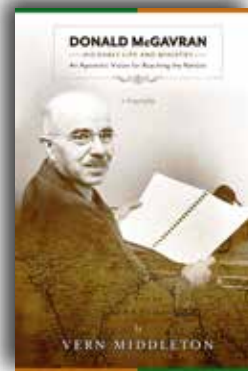
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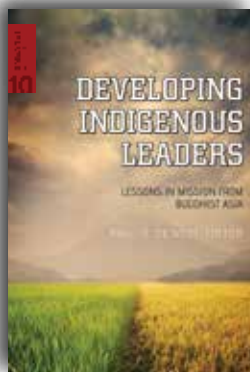
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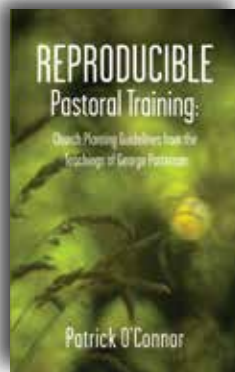
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by Greg Parsons

Director of Global Connections

Frontier Ventures

**ONE OF THE MOST** significant changes in our world has been related to refugees and displaced people. Unless you have been on an information fast, you realize that we are in the largest refugee crisis since the end of WW2. Most of us don't remember how huge the shifts of population were in Europe in the early 1940s. The churches of that day banded together to meet the massive needs of displaced people whose cities had been destroyed. Today in Syria alone, 7.6 million people have been displaced and 3.8 million have sought refuge in other countries. And many are responding to the truth of the gospel.

For years, we have wanted to see Muslims come to Christ in places like Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan. Before the first gulf war in the early 1990s, it was rare to gain access to these places. There were some workers who did—often serving in areas of medicine or development, though some were focused on establishing a church. Very quickly, however, Iraq opened up, at least in the north. Then it “closed” and more refugees came. Afghanistan has a similar story. But even as recent as five years ago, there were no wide “open doors” with the Syrian people. It was the last of the countries to “fall” to the so called “Arab Spring.”

Many prayed, and while no one would have wanted people to suffer, as millions have, many Syrians are open and coming to the truth. Two mission leaders I know visited Albania recently. They were meeting with workers who

serve the Albania church and do church planting. Naturally, their work has been “interrupted” by Syrian (and other) refugees coming through their country. One day, while visiting a group of refugees, one of the leaders began to speak in Arabic to them. The other leader knows Farsi and spoke that to another group. All those nearby “perked up” and gathered to listened.

*Please note:* Local UN leaders told them there they were the only ones in the area who could speak the language of these refugees other than drug dealers and those involved in human and sex trafficking.

In the last year, I have shared with any believers who will listen—and especially challenged those who know Arabic—to get over to Europe as soon as possible. We have heard of plans by the governments of Europe to help settle these refugees in ways that will help them to adjust well and be contributing members of society. They are looking for those with language experience for help to do this with excellence! *Please pray these doors of opportunity will be opened by believers with the right language skills.*

Unfortunately, some Western Christians have called for our border to be closed to Syrian or any Muslim refugees. It doesn't matter to them that the U.S. has a 2-year detailed government vetting process for any refugee. They still say, “if one slips through...”

**Is that how believing followers of Jesus should respond?** We should have

a healthy concern for living in peace. But if we fear for our own lives or how people coming into our nation might change the way we live, our self-centered response does not ring true to the word of God. Paul commands us not to fear. Fear is a sin that demonstrates a lack of trust in God.

This is a time for true believers to unify, not bicker. The opportunities are unprecedented. I encourage you to go to places around the world where refugees are, even if you only speak English. Frontier Ventures is sending a team this summer.

Be sure to work through an established agency and your church. If you can't go, or you are mobilizing or sending others to go, work through your church to help settle refugees where you live. There are many tools and resources available to help you, your pastor and your church do this well. Agencies like Christar ([www.christar.org](http://www.christar.org)) have been working in refugee work for years and has been expanding that work to meet this special opportunity.

The best evangelical organization I know, especially in the U.S., is World Relief. Here, they work in conjunction with the government to help in resettlement efforts. They also work around the globe. See: [www.worldrelief.org](http://www.worldrelief.org)

You also can get practical suggestions for what you can do right where you are by visiting: [wewelcomerefugees.com](http://wewelcomerefugees.com), a joint ministry of several Christian relief and refugee organizations. MF

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