



Why Mobilize

By **GREG H. PARSONS**

Greg H. Parsons and his wife have been on staff with Frontier Ventures since 1982. They live in southern California.

Because of the upcoming 50th Perspectives Study Program celebration, I've reflected on the growth of the course around the world. I'm reminded of a *Mission Frontiers* article I wrote called "Why Stay Here? Mobilizing the Home Front."¹ I described what was a novel idea to many in the church: the thought that "mobilization" could be a calling and a full-time, supportable role for a "missionary." My wife and I, along with most of our staff in the early days, caught the vision of mobilizing cross-cultural workers to the unreached. But it was often hard to explain why we were not "going to the field." It still is sometimes.

In the article, I described what happened through a regional staff member (a full-time mobilizer) and his region's impact. Notice how much things have changed since then.

... Bob has seen more than 1,200 students take this full-blown, college-level introduction to missions class in 95 locations all over the southeast.

Behind Bob, helping to make his work possible, is a home office staff of four to five here in Pasadena. That's what it takes to get the 65+ classes going each year (with between 2,000 and 2,500 enrolled nationwide.)

You might be asking (especially if you haven't taken the Perspectives class), what good is a class for mobilizing? What difference does it make?

At least two different times we have formally surveyed those who have taken the course. High percentages say they support missions financially and in prayer—usually attributing an increase to the course. Thirty-six percent of the students say they are preparing for cross-cultural missionary work. That means (if the percentages hold true throughout) that about 833 are planning to go as missionaries; 833 every year!

¹ Greg Parsons, "Why Stay Here? Mobilizing the Home Front," *Mission Frontiers* 17 (Jan–Feb 1995): 9–13.

Later independent surveys tell the same story. Perspectives

helps people have a sense of God's purposes, shown in Scripture, and begin learning how to spread his fame globally.

Ralph Winter wrote about the need for mobilization many times. In one article for *Urbana* in the 1980s, he outlined three different roles: (1) field missionary among unreached peoples, (2) field missionary among reached peoples, and (3) mobilizer.² Without mobilizers, he argued, the number of "field missionaries" would decrease. So, it was also important for those working cross-culturally *with the church* around the world (role 2), to be mobilizers of those "younger churches." Those experienced field workers were in the best place to mobilize national church leaders.

One time, he spoke about the need for more mobilizers who were called to go but willing to stay. A lady asked him how many mobilizers we needed. He said, "1,000!" with a twinkle in his eye since it was just a guess.

In the early years, we didn't have time or resources to serve the needs of mobilizers within *other* sending nations. In 2002, Tim Lewis, Steve Hawthorne, and I started what was first called "the Global Desk" to try responding to requests for help from around the globe. We had a lot of vision but I, for one, didn't have time to dream that, by 2024, Perspectives materials would be translated and modified into nine languages and that programs would be running in 40 nations. Now, there are more than 200,000 alumni, including many in the Middle East and a large country in Asia! In 2015–16, I traveled to that country to

² Ralph Winter, "Which Missionary Is More Important and Why?" rdwrc.wciw.edu (search for "which missionary").

help train coordinators and instructors after their translation was done. They are still running classes through the pandemic and beyond. What a joy!

One big reason that happened is that Perspectives is *not* an "intro to missions course," as many people thought in the early days. It is a *discipleship course with a global perspective*. That is why so many people who take the course help to pass it on. In Brazil, several thousand volunteers help run the course. They see it as something that gives them a sense of purpose and helps to fulfill what is, for many, a new-found faith as well. Be sure to visit the Perspectives Global website (perspectivesglobal.org) to find out more.



We are thrilled with what has happened. Yet, it is too soon to celebrate for those who have not experienced the fullness of Christ. We must remember *what* we are mobilizing people to do! The Perspectives course points out the peoples and places where, as best we can tell, there are no churches or fellowships able to evangelize their own people group. I exhort you to fully engage in prayer. Seek information and be ready to share the global vision, especially a vision for a subset of the unreached called "frontier people groups."³ These groups are less than 0.1% Christian and have no movements among them. Most are in South or Southeast Asia and are usually culturally distant from most believers around them. 📌

³ Learn more about frontier people groups in the March–April 2024 issue of *Mission Frontiers*: "Seeking Movements among Frontier Peoples," 46.2.

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