

24:14 Goal

Movement engagements in every unreached people and place by 2025 (60 months)

Security in Intercession for the Unreached: Secret or Wise?

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Chuck Baker has trained church-planters and missionary candidates for over 35 years in Asia and California. He has edited prayer guides and led many concerts of prayer for Unreached People Groups. This article developed out of recent correspondence with a team who has adopted an Unreached People Group in a sensitive region where new believers have been martyred.

The worldwide Body of Christ wants to know how God's kingdom is advancing among the nations. Gospel workers in the field want other believers to be well-informed—for effectual prayer, for encouragement, and for finding partners. Sometimes these good goals can only be *partially* met, due to the very real risks of damaging ministries or bringing harm to local believers by sharing too many details. **Information we share must be thoughtfully limited on a need to know basis**, not to hoard secrets but to serve others wisely. Countless ministries among the unreached have been damaged by published accounts trumpeting great numbers of conversions in a less-reached area or people group. Others have been harmed by sharing specific names and details with a trusted partner, who then shared it with someone else, who then shared it in a forum accessed by enemies of the gospel. So we need to be wise as serpents in considering what information to share with whom.

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At the same time, we don't want our limits on information sharing to block cooperation and partnership. Field ministries would do well to establish trusted channels of communication – both technically (such as secure email or messaging) but more importantly with trusted people who know how to appropriately share information. Intercessors can stick close to the biblical patterns of prayer (for example as found in the Psalms, Eph. 1:15-23; 3:14-21; Phil. 1:9-11 and Col.1:9-12). These express timeless prayer material not dependent on specific details of various situations.

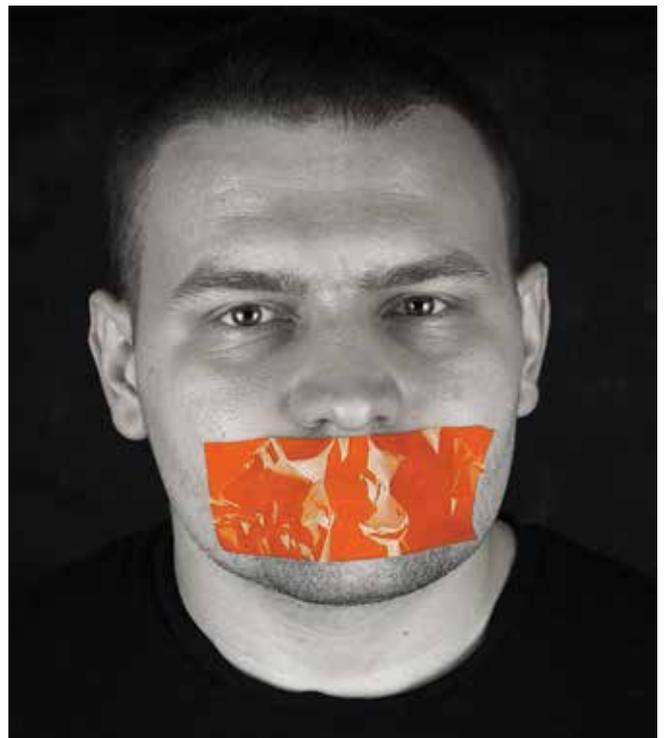
Effective intercession doesn't require knowing everything possible about ministries and situations. A good question for us all to consider would be: **“How much do I really need to know or to share, in order to obey Christ and serve His disciples living in danger?”** Our goal in guarding information is not perfect security but reducing *unnecessary* risks. We want to leave room for the very *necessary* risks willingly taken to bring a witness in dangerous areas not yet reached with the Good News of Christ.

We see value in circulating people groups' information such as is readily available on the Joshua Project website and other public sources. Including some basic information about movements and how to pray for movements is also very helpful. At the same time, we recommend thinking ahead five or 10 years, to a time when movements actually happen in a specific region and

we start to wonder if we had previously said too much about specific places or called attention to a specific method of outreach. We recommend that some of God's children become more careful in the details we mention in prayer guides and to those on our mailing lists.

Here are some thoughts to help frame material we share for mobilizing prayer:

1. It may not hurt to mention the numbers of believers but in some cases it can ignite problems. If opponents of the gospel know the numbers of believers in a certain people and/or place, could it lead to specific action against those believers? This is especially true if a large number inspires an effort to find and stamp out this "dangerous" new group. How essential is it for the intended audience? And what is our motive for mentioning numbers? Is it to make a particular organization look good? Raise funds? We should ask ourselves, "Does this publication bring attention to God's work or my organization?" And then be willing to keep the focus on God's glory among the nations.
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2. Consider how the material would look if read by someone in authority among the focus group. If this were read by a policeman in the area, what would he think of it? As much as possible, we want to convey a *winsome* perspective: not opposing people of the majority religion, but phrasing things as seeking the blessings and guidance of God for people we care about. Knowing that our material might eventually be read by such people, we want to come across as seeking their highest good: personal health and wholeness, joyful families, living at peace with people even from other religions.
 3. We want all believers everywhere to have those sorts of winsome conversations with and around unreached friends. Consider writing as if you were going to share your message with unreached friends. Convey that we long for a real change and breakthrough, that we want all of God's great promises in Christ to be theirs!
 4. Assume that any written material could be read by people strongly opposed to any spread of the gospel among unreached peoples. Ask yourself: "Would someone using Google and this prayer information be able to more easily find the workers and new believers in these places?" Have you mentioned specific ports, mountains, mosques, holy sites, etc., in an "unnamed" people group, which could easily be located on Google maps as within a certain district? Could an inquiry to that district tip off local people looking to discover "newcomers" or "strangers" or "foreigners" living in the area? We recommend written materials drop all references to numbers of believers and baptisms among groups smaller than 100,000 in population. We can instead say something like, "There are very few known believers, but we are asking God to multiply them and their witness."
 5. You might be sharing information only with a group of people you trust, but you never know when some of them will share things they learn with less secure people or in non-secure ways. For high-security areas, it is better for most of us to *not* know the details of what is happening and where. Better to not even say: "Something is happening in [a specific location]"; rather, "As far as we know, *that is an especially needy area/people group.*"



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6. A simple rule is: if you share specific details, avoid sharing the people group or place or any identifying specifics. If you share about the people group or place, communicate only readily available information. One way to share specifics is to use code names for peoples, places, and other details. You can also describe the efforts in a coded way such as using business language instead of evangelism and church-planting language (a new client group was started in XYZ people) but even here you should probably use code names. Crucially, the code names must never be associated with the real names even in what is thought of as a secure data location (which all too often is not secure forever).
7. When you can, include actual Scripture texts for people to pray over. Choose texts that express dimensions of God's heart for these peoples in ways that would be attractive to someone from that people group who reads them. In this way, you help intercessors listen more closely to God, and help local people to know the blessings of God which we are seeking for them.
8. Describe people's felt needs, as though you were trying to find a way to meet them. Empathize with local pain, as you prepare material for intercessors, apostolic agents, and supportive alongsiders who call on God to bring real movements!
9. As movements grow, persecution and backlash against contextual ministry in general, and movements in particular, tends to rise. We can say something like, "Pray for the few believers among these peoples who meet in simple discipleship groups to share a relevant witness, display the love and power of God, and multiply new simple groups among their friends. Some disciples have paid a very high price for their obedience, and some have even been martyred. Pray for the martyrs' families, and pray for their persecutors to be saved."
10. Because God is releasing Church Planting Movements in many peoples and places, our role in mobilizing the whole church to disciple all UPGs is also changing. The many thousands of new believers in these movements are *also* the Lord's church. And they are the portion of the church actually *winning thousands* of new believers from the UPGs. So we must ask ourselves: "What is our best contribution? To try to send more Christian-background workers from distant cultures? To help teams in the field as they begin to see movements – to enable them to stay the course and help movements develop? Or to put more effort into praying for, supporting and *not killing* the movements that are already happening?" While the global Church still needs to do the first two, especially in areas with no movements, we need to put far more priority on the third approach, which may well be the most fruitful one in a growing number of areas.
11. How to *help* and *not harm* movements and movement leaders needs to be a new priority area of learning for us. Much direct and indirect opposition to movements comes not from governments or other religions, but from existing denominations and church leaders. We need to help churches understand how to help movements grow and stay healthy, and how *not* to harm them. This will take some new levels of cultural sensitivity, spiritual discernment and concerted prayer.
12. We recommend some changes to prayer and mobilization publications associated with various UPGs. We especially want to exercise wisdom in mobilizing prayer for the many thousands of new believers in low-profile house church movements. We believe the time *has passed* for publishing specifics about UPGs, especially those under 100,000 in population. Whereas 20 years ago, mobilizing *anyone* to do *anything* for UPGs was the priority, the highest priorities today are: a) for the new believers in movements to reach more of their friends and neighbors through prayer and love, and b) for those movements to catalyze new movements in near-neighbor unreached groups.
13. In light of these things, we are rewriting some prayer guides, giving more emphasis to *how to pray* and *what Scriptures* to pray, and less specific information on peoples and numbers of believers. This quieter mode

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of involvement is unpopular with some, but we need to prioritize the salvation of real people, discipling them into maturity, with prayerful advance of God's kingdom. This higher goal means adjusting some mobilization efforts to put less spotlight on sensitive locations and groups. In some cases it might mean less funding or shifting funding to more strategic and less flashy projects and ministries. We follow in the spirit of John the Baptist: "He must increase: I must decrease." Our goal is not to feel good about ourselves and our activities, but to do whatever will really tend toward major advance of God's kingdom.

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Teaching people *how* to pray, and especially key Scriptures to pray over the lost and over the witnesses among them is *so valuable!* Our not knowing specific details does not hinder God from hearing and working through our prayers. Surely non-detailed prayers like those of the psalmist and Paul can accomplish great things before

the throne of grace. We need to grow in maturity to not let a shortage of information sap our enthusiasm and dedication to prayer for the unreached. Let's keep up and even accelerate the good work of **praying to the Lord of the harvest... but share specific information very selectively.**

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