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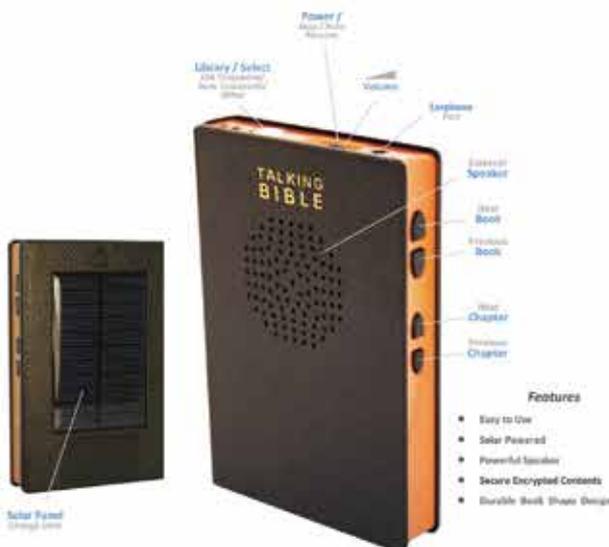
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Is The World Still A Waffle?

BY DAN SCRIBNER

Dan Scribner (dan@joshuaproject.net) has served as the Joshua Project Team Leader since its founding in 1995. Dan and his wife Mary have been on the staff of Frontier Ventures (formerly USCWM) since 1988. They live in Colorado and have four children and three grandchildren.

Mission mobilizers began describing the world as a waffle rather than a pancake.

I stared at the booklet on the desk in utter amazement. It was November 1991. I was sitting in the prayer room in Hudson Taylor Hall on the campus of the U.S. Center for World Mission. My prayer shift was from midnight to 4:00 A.M. It was now 2:30. As I turned the pages of the booklet, I struggled to comprehend what I was seeing.

The booklet was an early list of the largest ethnolinguistic people groups who apparently had little, if any, exposure or response to the gospel: page after page showed the distinct “nations” without any meaningful presence of Jesus Christ in their midst. How could it be that, after nearly 2,000 years, so many people groups were still unreached? Little did I know that booklet would change the next 30 years of my life.

Dr. Ralph Winter’s watershed address at Lausanne ’74 challenged the worldwide mission community to view the world, not primarily as geo-political nations, but as distinct ethnic peoples each needing a unique church-planting effort. A fresh paradigm was birthed.

Mission mobilizers began describing the world as a waffle rather than a pancake. Previously, the view that we could “pour enough syrup on the pancake to fully cover it” meant we simply needed to send enough missionaries, do enough evangelism, plant enough churches and eventually the Great Commission would be fulfilled. But the world really was a waffle with very significant barriers to the spread of the gospel; the sweetness of the gospel did not automatically go everywhere; many pockets of people were untouched after nearly 2,000 years. People group lists and information were needed if the Church were to fully understand the scope of “making disciples of all the nations.”

Since then, several people group lists have emerged, each with unique definitions, purposes and audiences. Except for South Asia, these people group lists are primarily ethnolinguistic, with language being the primary factor in defining a people group. These people group lists have had a significant impact on the missions world. Don’t miss the articles from Asian, African and Latin American voices sharing how people group thinking and information have impacted their ministries. Read how people group data motivated and transformed a mission agency. Another article highlights how people group data is being combined with

other datasets to produce a visual prioritization tool. The first half of this *Mission Frontiers* issue is only a small sampling of how the Lord has used people group information to advance His kingdom.

The world is a *very* different place than it was nearly 50 years ago when the people group paradigm was birthed. Should the missions community still view the world as a waffle? Is traditional ethnolinguistic people group thinking still relevant? There are definite challenges moving forward:

- Urbanization is blurring, if not eliminating, traditional people group boundaries. Is the traditional people group perspective relevant in a megacity?
- Globalization is allowing the free-flow and mixing of ethnicities, ideas, worldviews and cultures.
- There is a growing call for recognition of the greater granularity of dynamic, hybrid people groups in which groupings are not defined by language but by different “glue”. Can current tracking of people groups handle greater complexity?
- Mobility is creating new diaspora dynamics. Is it more helpful to view people groups globally than by country?

When does a diaspora group become a distinct people group from the homeland group?

- Language consolidation is reducing linguistic barriers and movements to Jesus are crossing traditional people group barriers.
- Accurate, updated information is difficult to obtain. How can crowdsourcing and collaboration be leveraged to refine and update people group data?
- Current people group lists and presentations may not be impacting younger generations.
- We see a need for much greater space for Global South researchers and people group data managers to not simply come alongside existing efforts, but also to take the lead and set the agenda, bringing fresh insight and vitality.

The second half of this issue of *Mission Frontiers* gives a glimpse into a few of these challenges. Space limits extensive exploration of all these topics, but hopefully some of these articles will stimulate further dialogue regarding people group information in a changing world.

Is the world still a waffle? Traditional people group lists are still very applicable in parts of the world dominated by formal and informal caste structures and in tribal and rural settings. This includes significant parts of Africa and Asia, where the great majority of Unreached People Groups reside.

At the same time, the traditional waffle barriers are changing. Global trends are creating new social dynamics and changing both the barriers and boundaries by which groups are defined. New hybrid, trans-national and dynamic groupings must be considered for evangelistic purposes, Disciple Making and Church Planting Movements.

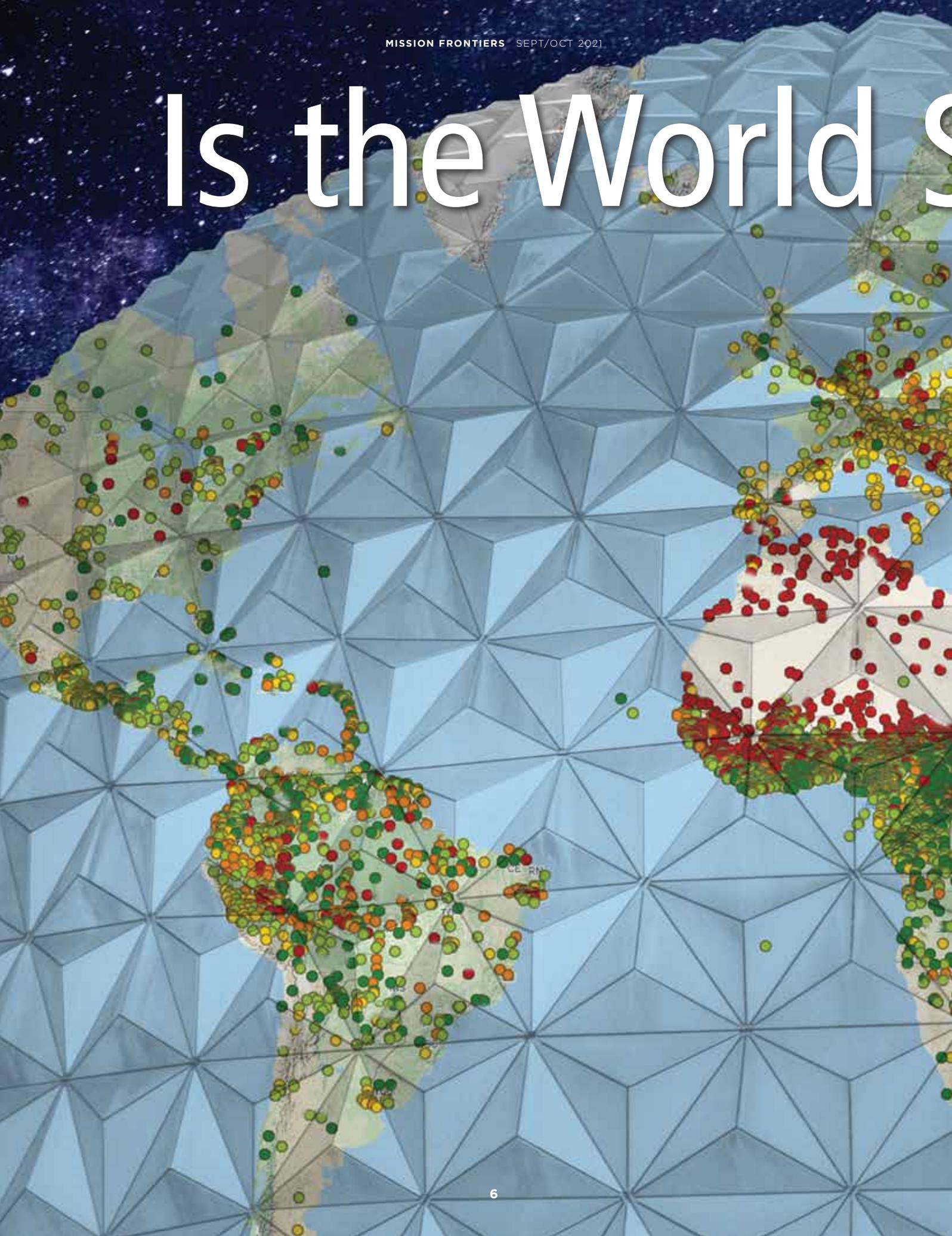
Most of the material in this issue is important in shaping our thinking. But be alert for *heart* knowledge as well as *head* knowledge; don't overlook the heart-engaging *Unreached of the Day* prayer section. It has been said that prayer is the "first domino" in reaching the unreached. The *Unreached of the Day* is a simple and practical way to be involved. It is available here

in print and by mobile app, email, podcast and printable PDF at unreachedoftheday.org.

May the Lord stir hearts in prayer rooms in Lagos, Rio de Janeiro and Mumbai, leading to a fresh wave of people group thinking and information-tracking. Regardless of how people groups are defined, the Lamb is worthy of worship from every tribe, tongue, nation and people. *Soli Deo Gloria.* 



Is the World S



Still a Waffle?



People Group Lists and the Challenge of Growing Complexity

BY **DAN SCRIBNER**

Dan Scribner (dan@joshuaproject.net) has served as the Joshua Project Team Leader since its founding in 1995. Dan and his wife Mary have been on the staff of Frontier Ventures (formerly USCWM) since 1988. They live in Colorado and have four children and three grandchildren.

A Brief History of Global People Group Lists

No comprehensive, global list of people groups existed when Dr. Ralph Winter gave his landmark presentation at Lausanne '74. Partial lists began to be developed in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Since then, three global people group lists have emerged:

- Center for the Study of Global Christianity's *World Christian Database* (WCD)
- International Mission Board SBC's *Church Planting Progress Indicators* (CPPI) database¹
- *Joshua Project* (JP) database

These three lists have different definitions, sources, purposes and audiences as outlined in the table below.

Three global people group lists have emerged.

	World Christian Database	CPPI (IMB)	Joshua Project
Start Date	1982	1991	1995
People Definition	Globally ethnolinguistic	Outside South Asia: ethnolinguistic South Asia: mixture of language and caste	Outside South Asia: ethnolinguistic South Asia: by caste, religion and language
Sources	Census and academic reports ² Denominational reports Ethnologue	IMB field staff Ministry partners Ethnologue	Census and academic reports ³ Regional and national researchers Networks, individuals, other data sets Ethnologue
Philosophy	Adds groups when documented in published research	Adds groups once verified by field staff	Assumes worst case, add all potential groups, remove if verified as not existing or extinct
Primary Audience	Secular media, academia	IMB field staff and leadership Global missions community	Global missions community
Measures	Exposure	Response	Response
Definition of Unreached	Less than 50% evangelized	Less than 2% Evangelical	Less than 2% Evangelical <u>and</u> less than 5% Christian Adherent
Approximate # Peoples by Country	13,000	12,000	17,400
Approximate # Unreached	4,400 (less than 50% evangelized)	7,300	7,400

1 An exciting revision of the CPPI framework called Gospel to All Peoples and Places (GAPP) is underway. See: gapp.taethni.com/about

2 Includes sources such as national government census, UN, CIA database, other state/government generated data.

3 Ibid.

Why Three Global Peoples Lists?

Looking at a picture from several angles often yields greater perspective. Using different definitions and criteria can help clarify a task and highlight areas needing further research. Global people group data compilers are confronted by questions such as: Is language always the primary definer of a people group? Should caste be considered when defining a people group? Should Christian adherents be considered when setting criteria for unreached? Should unreached be defined by exposure or response to the gospel? What are acceptable sources for input and edits?

A Growing Challenge

There is an increasing interest and call, particularly from on-site workers, to add further levels of refinement to people group data. This greater granularity can take two forms. One refinement would be increasingly finer slices of traditional people groups. This would involve tracking traditional people groups by province or district, subgroup, religious tradition and/or dialect.

A second, very different refinement being suggested is complete reconfiguring and mixing of traditional people

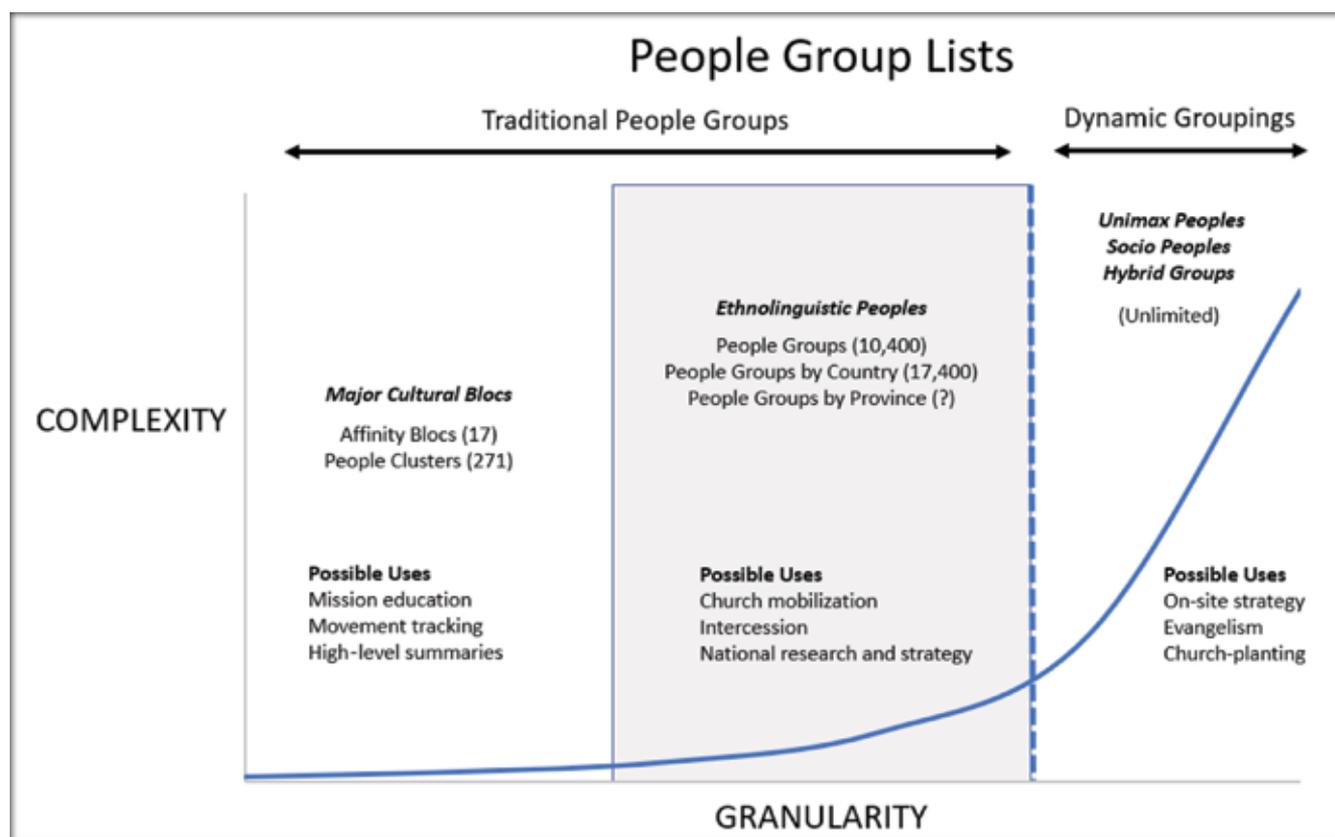
There is an increasing interest and call, particularly from on-site workers, to add further levels of refinement to people group data.

groups into dynamic or hybrid identities. Distinctives of these hybrid groups might be by occupation, shared interests, skills, education, networks and/or social status. This represents a quantum leap in complexity.

Granularity and Complexity

Graph 1 illustrates the relationship between people group list granularity and complexity. The chart is divided into three sections. Very general uses are suggested for each section. The numbers in parentheses are counts from the Joshua Project list as of June 2021. Current numbers may be slightly different. Groups to the left of the dotted line would be considered traditional people groups and groups to the right would be considered dynamic, hybrid groupings or “unimax” peoples.

Graph 1: Granularity vs Complexity in People Group Lists





There are over 40 million people in the Fulani People Cluster.

Photo: Linkup Africa.

Consider the Fulani of Central Africa. Moving from left to right across *Graph 1* on the previous page, the Fulani can be viewed as a single People Cluster⁴. This level does not distinguish specific Fulani people groups and combines 40 million individuals into one category. Typically, this is the level of granularity used by the

secular media and general missions education material. To protect believers, movements to Jesus among the Fulani are reported at this broader level. However, a church adopting a people group for prayer and engagement needs greater detail and a smaller size group to focus on. The church would likely adopt a specific Fulani people group such as the Pulaar Fulani, in Senegal⁵. As workers begin on-site ministry, they might focus on the Toucouleur dialect-speaking, millennial age, healthcare professional Pulaar Fulani living in Matam, Senegal. This would be a hybrid grouping. The “glue” that holds such a hybrid group together goes well beyond ethnicity and language.

⁴ See: joshuaproject.net/clusters/173

⁵ See: joshuaproject.net/people_groups/15622/SG

Changing Barriers and Shifting Boundaries

From a church-planting perspective, people group boundaries are defined by barriers to the spread of the gospel. The highest barriers define the extent of a people group. In some parts of the world, changing barriers are rapidly causing a shift from *traditional* people groups to *dynamic* or *hybrid* groupings. *Table 2* compares these perspectives.

A refinement being suggested is complete reconfiguring and mixing of traditional people groups into dynamic or hybrid identities.

Existing people group identities are being mixed and recombined, and new hybrid identities are being created. For example, language consolidation is reducing the language barrier that traditionally has defined many people groups. Speakers of smaller languages are rapidly learning one or more global languages, usually for education and job opportunities. These are often languages widely used on the internet. New mobile devices are allowing on-the-fly, real-time translation. A rise in linguistic nationalism results in merger of people

Table 2: Comparing Traditional and Dynamic Groupings

Traditional People Groups	Dynamic / Hybrid Groupings
Barriers are based on fairly well-defined linguistic, ethnic, political, religious or historical boundaries.	Barriers based on almost any kind of “glue” (occupation, hobbies, interests, social networks, relationships, economic status, affinity groups, etc.).
Permanent, durable, fixed.	Temporary, fluid, changing.
Individuals are only in one group and stay in that group for a lifetime.	Individuals can be and most likely are in several groups at the same time.
Have served reasonably well for the last 40+ years.	Not addressed by current people group lists.
While imperfect, it is possible to catalog globally as demonstrated by WCD, IMB and Joshua Project people group lists.	Virtually impossible to catalog globally. Lists may be feasible by on-site workers and researchers on a very local level.

groups together through governmental pressure. At the same time, some people groups are dividing over a desire to preserve language and its cultural contexts. Few boundaries are truly rigid; the edges have fluidity.

Urbanization and migration are reducing ethnicity barriers. Groupings of individuals in cities are increasingly being driven by occupation, shared interests, skills, education, networks, social status and activities rather than by ethnic background or language. Globalization is reducing the ethnic as well as religious barriers. An interconnected world allows exposure to and opportunity for exploring different worldviews, values and religions. Globalization allows connections and relationships with other likeminded individuals around the world, rather than only those in one's immediate physical area.

New Groupings Are Emerging

These forces are changing the barriers to the spread of the gospel and impacting how the *ethne* of the world are defined from a church-planting perspective. Growing reports of movements to Jesus crossing traditional people group boundaries demonstrate a shift in how the gospel flows. For example, some have suggested that Gen-Z youth of Riyadh have more in common with their peers in Chicago than with their own parents. That might be an exaggeration but it makes a useful point. Youth in many cases are not identifying as strongly with their traditional people group, based on ethnicity and language, as they are with others in their age group and social experience almost anywhere in the world.

Changing barriers are rapidly causing a shift from *traditional* people groups to *dynamic* or *hybrid* groupings.

For on-site workers, other ways of grouping are becoming more useful and needed than groupings by ethnicity and language. For example, classifying Saudi Arabian Gen-Z youth in a database using traditional people group definitions could potentially obscure their preferred identity and limit reaching them with the gospel. Identifying Saudi Gen-Z youth as a unique dynamic grouping might accelerate the flow of the gospel along pathways of relationships and common interests.

Complementary Perspectives

Traditional people group lists are still important and useful but need periodic revisiting and evaluation in changing times. Lists help to outline the unfinished task of the Great Commission and provide church leaders and mobilizers with motivating benchmarks. At the same time, new perspectives and dynamics are bringing other groupings into focus. The “glue” that binds these new groupings together may not be language or ethnicity, but rather occupation, education, shared interests, social networks, generational issues and worldviews. These dynamic groupings will be increasingly strategic and effective pathways for the spread of the gospel. Both the traditional and dynamic perspectives of people groups are useful and should not be viewed as old vs. new, but rather as complementary. 



Seeing the Unreached World As It Really Is

BY **PAUL HATTAWAY**

Paul Hattaway is an author, researcher and founder of Asia Harvest (www.asiaharvest.org).

The Lao government amusingly insists there are just three groups of people in the country, based on elevation!

People group research is not a fixed science. Rather, it is a constantly changing dynamo of motion as people groups move, assimilate into other cultures, regain and lose their languages, come to Christ and fall away from the faith.

As a result, a continually updated people group list is essential for decision-making in the mission world. Lists help believers gain a clearer picture of the remaining task of world evangelization that is so dear to the heart of God.

I have been engaged in mission research in Asia since the 1980s. For much of that time I have wrestled with the ethno-linguistic realities of what we found on the mission field vs. what governments and the Body of Christ have acknowledged. This disparity presents challenges for the cause of the gospel.

In the late 1990s I wrote a book profiling all the tribes, peoples and languages of Laos. The Lao government amusingly insists there are just three groups of people in the country, based on elevation(!)—those who live on the plains, in the hills and in the high mountains. Our book was revolutionary in that it profiled and mapped 117 distinct people groups in Laos. Today, the number has grown to 127 groups according to the latest Joshua Project data.

A few years later we released *Operation China*, which profiled and mapped 490 distinct ethno-linguistic groups in China. Joshua Project now lists 545 distinct people groups in China, as new research over the years has brought the existence of new groups and languages into the light.

The Chinese government to this day, however, recognizes only 56 ethnic groups within its borders, and most Christians I have met—both in China and overseas—prefer to use those broad artificial classifications because they are more manageable.

This approach is clearly flawed, however, as countless groups have been lumped together in these official categories, yet have little in common. Two groups may hardly speak a word of each other's language, refuse to intermarry and proudly possess their own unique histories, customs and identities.

For example, the official "Miao" nationality in China actually contains more than 50 distinct tribes, of which five or six are strongly Christian, and the remainder unreached. Many believers have assumed that the Christian Miao can reach the other groups, but for more than a century this assumption has largely proven false.

A believer from the A-Hmao tribe will struggle greatly if they try to reach the two million Hmu people, who live just a few hours away in the same province. I have been present when gospel audio recordings and the *Jesus* film in one Miao language were played to Miao in another group, leaving them with completely bemused looks on their faces.

The language differences between such groups are sometimes as broad as those between European languages like English, French, German and Spanish. The "Yi" nationality in China is even more complex, with 85 distinct tribes speaking their own distinct languages. At least 30 tribes have been combined together to form the official "Yao" nationality.

There are clearly hundreds more ethnic groups and languages than what some ministries acknowledge in India, Nepal, Myanmar, Pakistan and Bangladesh. The 1931 British census reported 37 distinct Kuki Chin tribes in Burma (now Myanmar) and another 13 in India.

Within those were strings of spoken languages, with some districts having as many as 20 distinct languages. These peoples and languages have not vanished, but some sources do not see any point in “slicing the pie” so thin, so they view the Kuki Chin as one cohesive group, which they are not.

There are clearly hundreds more ethnic groups and languages than what some ministries acknowledge in India, Nepal, Myanmar, Pakistan, and Bangladesh.

A Troubling Development

Most alarmingly, in recent years there appears to have been a push by some in the mission world to ignore reality and to imagine the task is simpler than it really is. The aim seems to be to try to reduce the size and complexity of what remains to be done. I fear the motive for this may often be a misguided bid to please some donors who have grown weary of hearing about thousands of Unreached People Groups in the world; our data contradict the mantra that we will soon complete the Great Commission.

Manipulating statistics, altering definitions and reducing the number of Unreached People Groups by pushing a “delete” button will never help reach lost people for Christ, and millions of people may go without the Word of God in their language because mission agencies don't have the courage to acknowledge the true situation.

I encourage every believer and ministry leader to put aside mission politics and funding pressures, and to realize that the Lord Jesus is *the* Truth. If we can't accept the reality of the situation facing us, we risk falling into the trap of deception.

On the field, many church leaders have grown confused and disengaged because of the games Western ministries play with data. This has led to some ludicrous situations. Last year a good friend from Nepal—who is doing outstanding ministry in more than two dozen totally unreached tribes in the high Himalayas—attended a mission conference in the United States, where he was told that Nepal no longer has any unreached groups! In effect, he was told that the job has been completed

in Nepal, and he should relax and live in the delusion that the tribes he has given his life to reach really aren't unreached!

Decades ago, God used Dr. Ralph Winter to change the discourse of mission work, when he explained that the world is not like a flat pancake, where the syrup flows easily over the whole surface. Rather, he described the world as being like a waffle, with walls between distinct sections that must be broken down before the syrup can flow into those areas.

The number of unreached ethnic groups and languages in the world will be reduced as Christians share the gospel with them and as communities of redeemed believers emerge, and not by covering our eyes and ears and imagining that hundreds of groups and languages don't exist as we squeeze them together for administrative convenience.

The Gospel is Advancing



Mosuo of China. Photo: Asia Harvest

Regardless of what men may do, God is still on the move among the unreached!

Over the years, we have been cheered by seeing amazing progress among many groups. The 57,000 Mosuo of southwest China were a completely unknown people group until they were mentioned

in a *National Geographic* article about 30 years ago. Believers visited and found them to be completely unevangelized and without a single known Christian in their midst. Today there are approximately 3,000 Mosuo believers, and at least one house church in every Mosuo village. Hallelujah!

One example of how people group research has helped reach the lost occurred in Laos. Beginning in the 1990s, thousands of Khmu people in northern Laos experienced a powerful turning to the Lord. Touched by the Spirit of



God, many Khmu believers desired to take the gospel to other tribes that had never heard of Jesus, but they were only aware of the ethnicities in their immediate areas, and they knew little about the ethnic composition of the rest of their country.

Most alarmingly, in recent years there appears to have been a push by some in the mission world to ignore reality and to imagine the task is simpler than it really is.

Today, partly thanks to the influence of people group lists, dozens of Khmu missionaries are serving in southern Laos and even in surrounding countries. As a result, a number of previously unevangelized groups have gradually made progress from unreached to the list of those who have embraced the gospel and now have a growing church.

Part of our call at Asia Harvest is to help local believers get the gospel moving among unreached groups. Today, it's humbling to look back and see how the Holy Spirit has enabled a small ministry to come alongside the Asian Church. Currently, we are privileged to support more than 1,500 Asian missionaries, who serve among 1,150 different ethnic groups. Hundreds more groups

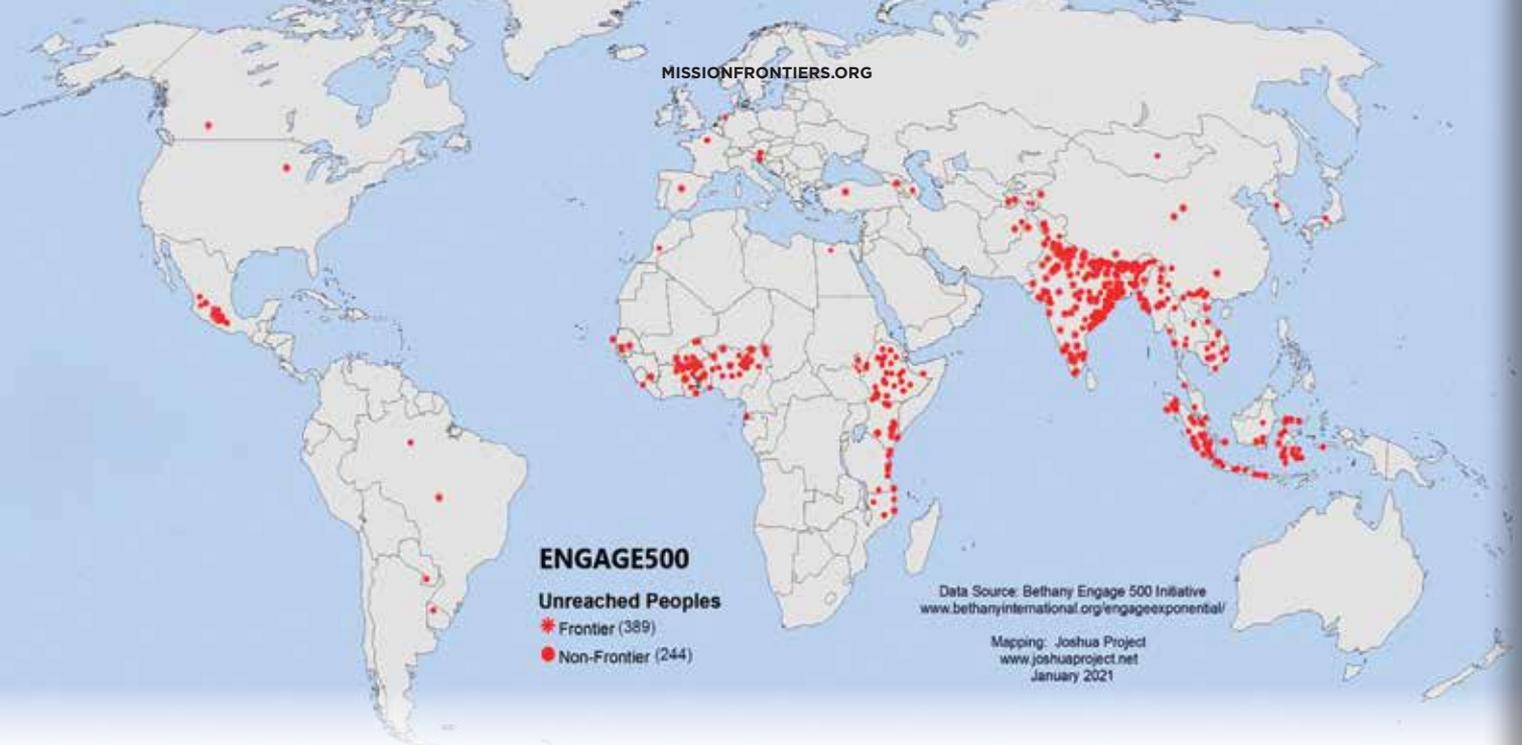
still need attention so that people will be transformed from the kingdom of darkness into God's light.

A Reminder of Who Owns the Harvest

In recent decades, the world has been rapidly changing via technological advances and the increase of information. As we continue to progress toward the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and the end of the Great Commission, let us remember that the salvation of people from every fragment of humanity is not our idea. Rather, it is the plan of the living God from before the foundations of the earth.

"Then I saw another angel flying in mid-air, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth—to every nation, tribe, language and people." —Revelation 14:6

Today, partly thanks to the influence of people group lists, dozens of Khmu missionaries are serving in southern Laos and even in surrounding countries. 



How People Group Information Impacted a Mission Agency

BY **TIM FREEMAN**

Tim Freeman is Bethany International's Executive Vice President. He coordinates partnerships in 70 countries focused on engaging UPGs with a goal of catalyzing movements. He and his wife Carol served for 15 years in the Philippines among the Ilokano people.

The world is choking on data, most of which has no eternal impact.

Today, we take data for granted. Forty years ago, it was a different story. One Bethany leader said, as he made his way to the mission field in 1981:

As a young missionary with Bethany International, I was starving for data. Who are the unreached, where are they, are they open to the gospel, how can we gain access to them? I had just graduated from what is now Bethany Global University and was a “wet-behind-the-ears” young leader of a new church-planting team. We read newsletters, read books, wrote letters and made phone calls, seeking information to help guide our direction. Our best data came from missionaries passing through on furlough. We eventually found our place in Asia among an under-reached people group. We may have been one of Bethany's first data-driven teams.

This article is a testimony of how God used data to challenge an organization to engage more than 500 Unreached People Groups with the transforming power of the gospel.

Bethany International was founded more than 75 years ago with the goal of “evangelizing the nations.” Missionaries were trained, sent out and supported. Passion for world evangelization was great. These workers arrived on the field but still needed to figure out what impact they could accomplish once arriving in a country. There was little information about the presence of specific Unreached People Groups.

The power of data regarding the unreached came to life when a new board member showed a map generated from people group data, with South Asia lit up like a Christmas tree. His challenge to us was to focus on the darkest places, what he called “the edges of the kingdom.” These discussions led Bethany to adopt a new mission statement: “take the Church to where it is not and help others do the same.”

The Engage500 Initiative

In 2015 Bethany, as a member of a global consortium of missionary training and sending ministries called GlobeServe, began tracking church-planting engagements

among the unreached. We were encouraged to see we were serving in 269 UPGs. People group information from Joshua Project helped create the initial list.

The goal of Engage500 was to place church-planting teams among 500 Unreached People Groups by 2020—in five years.

At the time this seemed impossible. How could we virtually double the number of UPG engagements in five years, when it had taken at least three decades to get to 269? We had spent much time in prayer and studying the pressing need of the unreached. We knew that God was challenging us to start this amazing journey.

Doubling the number of UPGs engagements required a dedicated team. We appointed Kerry, a missions mobilizer in Mexico, as Bethany's researcher. He combed through people group data sets for each of the 70 countries where GlobeServe schools and missionaries served. We crisscrossed the globe sharing the Engage500 vision. Each time we met with a Hub, we presented UPG data for their country and challenged them to adopt and then engage the unreached. They responded by committing to this Unreached People Group task.

The first two years of the Engage500 program were slow going. However, ministry members became more and more excited about the prospect of engaging the unreached. These unreached peoples were often in close proximity to them (though previously invisible to them). The first year we only added eight new engagements; the second year, 12 more; the third year we saw an amazing jump—83 new UPG engagements were added in just one year across the GlobeServe partner world!

As GlobeServe members began to field teams to the unreached, they fed new understanding from the front lines about Unreached People Groups. Sam, one of our researchers in India, embarked on a three-month journey to catalogue the Unreached People Groups where the graduates of their Hub schools were working. Working closely with a global people group list, we discerned the distinctions between castes, locations and people groups. Our Indian leaders used the resulting data for decision-making. Today a significant percentage of the GlobeServe

engaged people groups are from India.

On May 7, 2020, we confirmed the 503rd engagement among Unreached People Groups, a Muslim UPG in northern India. The number keeps growing—today we are engaging 529 UPGs with almost 100 more in the adoption stage.

The Scale for Effective Engagement

In 2017, we introduced an engagement scale to track and better understand progress towards transformational outcomes and Church Planting Movements. We track adoption, engagement, first disciples, first churches and replication, towards the Church Planting Movement stage in each of these Unreached People Groups. Bethany's work among GlobeServe partners—pursuing and tracking Engage500 and now Disciple Making and Church Planting Movements—is strengthening our own Bethany Global University and Bethany Gateways missionary training and sending. Now our goal is to see 100 movements by the year 2026: again, a God-sized goal where our understanding is consistently refined by good data.

Data is “just data” until it is used to spur God's people to prayer and action.

Data, used well, is transformative. Data is “just data” until it is used to spur God's people to prayer and action. Without data it would have been almost impossible to fulfill Engage500. God used verifiable and timely information to

burden our Bethany/GlobeServe members to pray. Prayer then moved them to action.

The lines between people groups are being blurred. The Engage500 lists at times include people groups found in different parts of the same country, or people groups across national boundaries. These can become hidden peoples, surrounded by believers who are unaware that no one is reaching them. In such a world we need data more than ever. Data about unreached peoples helped crystalize Bethany's mission statement to “take the Church to where it is not”. God used data and people group profiles to burden the hearts of our missionaries to take the difficult step of doing incarnational ministry among the unreached. Data led to burden, burden to prayer, prayer to faith and faith to steps of obedience. God brings the fruit—fruit that remains. 



People Group Information in an African Context

BY **GEORGE GUMAH**

George Gumah (georgegumah@gmail.com) is the Research Director of the Ghana Evangelical Mission Association (GEMA) and has served with Pioneers-Africa since 2011. George is married to Joanna, and they live in Accra, Ghana.

The African Church and the growing indigenous mission agencies are becoming more familiar with global people group lists published online. As we celebrate what God has been doing through data curators, there are still concerns about the accuracy of the lists and the accompanying information. It is worth exploring the various views because many churches and agencies depend on the information presented in people groups lists to inform strategies, prayer, and missionary training. Until the whole Church is mobilized to reach the whole world, our work as researchers is not done.

Why are People Group Lists Needed?

People group lists are needed for ministry tracking, measurement, assessment, and direction. Lists help us identify the people groups with the greatest need for the gospel. The lists bring clear categorization of people groups for focusing missionary work and provide perspective on the magnitude of the unfinished task. There is a need to draw people's attention to people groups that share similar lineage, language, and culture. Until we know what's unfinished, we will not be able to

achieve the purposes of God for all "nations" (Matthew 28:18-20; Revelation 5:9 and 7:9).

People group lists provide very important information which the Church in Africa has not been able to produce on its own, though Africans are needed to finish the task. Until we see the relevance of tracking all people groups, the African Church cannot focus on nor prioritize well which people groups are unreached with the gospel.

Using People Group Information in Ghana

The Ghana Evangelism Committee (GEC) and Ghana Evangelical Mission Association (GEMA) have helped many churches and mission agencies to understand people group lists through workshops, consultations and recently, the mission researchers forum. The outcome is amazing: many churches have adopted and are effectively engaging many unreached people groups (UPGs). Some student groups have also emerged from these initiatives and are earnestly praying for specific UPGs and forming resolute movements. Notable among them is the Chakali Movement, committed to praying for the Chakali people and sending

missionaries to serve among them. In addition, two young missionaries are dedicated to reaching the Fulani as they go throughout West Africa to engage them.

Accuracy of People Group Lists

It is worth noting that the effort and time involved in gathering people group information and the increasingly rapid movement of people, especially rural to urban migration, has a tendency to limit or reduce the accuracy of people group lists and information. Africans consider people group lists fairly accurate, even though there have been cases of differing on-the-ground realities. In some cases, information published is not as accurate as what on-site workers think. These differences are understandable, considering the large amount of data collected and the difficulty of frequent updates. If published figures are estimates or extrapolations, the information will tend to be less accurate. As much as possible, cross-checks and verification ought to be done before information is published.

Are Unreached People Group Lists a Western “Thing”?

People group lists may have started as a Western “thing,” but the Western Church is gradually stepping out of mainstream mission engagement.¹ The West has had the expertise, tools and funds for collecting and cataloguing people group lists which serve the global Church. In the past, people group lists were generated mainly for Western missionaries who were sent to serve the rest of the world. With the surge of the Church in the Global South as a growing mission force, people group lists become more critical for the Global South to fulfill its new sending role.

People group lists may have started as a Western “thing,” but the Western Church is gradually stepping out of mainstream mission engagement.

The challenge for many Africans is the source of published people group information. If the source is still Western, then we need to quickly rethink how to overcome that. The users of data ought to be the ones determining what

should be gathered.² Therefore, the Global South needs to be well heard and directly involved in developing people group lists so the results are relevant to the Global South context. Based on my conversations with mission leaders in Africa, when the source of information comes from the indigenous people, it is considered more credible and accurate. Curators of global people group lists have sometimes accepted information from sources not on the ground, which has raised eyebrows in some African mission circles. People group information must be validated locally through in-country assessments. The assumption is that you cannot give an accurate update if you are not present on the ground.

Perhaps the question we should ask is: Is the people group list and the accompanying information representative enough of reality? This is where African ministries and missionaries can be of great help. Curators of people group lists from the West are doing the best they can, but they need to work closely with African missionaries and information workers who understand people groups in their context—their cultural dynamics and complexities.

People Group Barriers in Africa

Ethnicity is an innate thing, and it is still very strong in identifying a people group. People groups who travel in-country or across-country rarely deny their ethnic background. For example, new believers in unreached African people groups are requesting literacy materials in their own languages and songs and stories portraying their own cultures. They prefer not to merge with other people groups. The tribal instincts in Africa are still strong among most people groups.

This does not deny the fact that the traditional barriers of some people groups are changing due to globalization, immigration, and urbanization. This change is subtle among some people groups, but rapid in others. The change is in two forms:

1. Movement from their original location: They have become the scattered harvest field. It is still important to look at culture, language and worldviews of people groups. We all agree that the mission field has arrived at our doorstep, and it is not always necessary to travel to their places of origin. They usually live in clusters in their new locations, and that should be tracked.

¹ Gina A. Zurlo, Todd M. Johnson, and Peter F. *Crossing. World Christianity and Mission 2020: Ongoing Shift to the Global South* (International Bulletin of Mission Research, 2020), Vol. 44(1), 9.

² Maurizio V. & Frances R. & Maria João V. R. *The Users of Statistics and their role in the European Society* (Brussels: ESAC, 2015), 2.

2. Changes in their culture and language as a result of intermarriages, trade and educational policies. In some instances, people acquire multiple identities, and others have their culture entirely replaced by another. This is especially true for the younger generation, who have sometimes lost their cultures and languages because of living in urban centers, acquiring new cultures and languages.

These changes do not rule out traditional people groups. But we must adjust to the new changes, find ways of tracking them and develop strategies to reach them. As native languages begin to disappear, people group lists must take into consideration languages that the majority of the people of a particular group speak, and not only their native language. For instance, the Challa may still refer to themselves as Challa, but very few of them can speak their language.

The Global South needs to be well heard and directly involved in developing people group lists so the results are relevant to the Global South context.

In the next several decades there will be a major shift. We are witnessing new strands of people groups who are not defined by the classical ethno-linguistic groupings, especially in urban centers. They are usually seen as sub-groups such as “head porters”, “prostitutes”, “transnational truck workers”, “scrap workers”, “money changers”, and “auto mechanics”. There are languages and lifestyles prevalent in these sub-cultures. Some of these groups have redefined the barriers of their culture and formed new ways of life, and they are usually closed to outside influence. Perhaps it might be too much information to handle at the global level, but national or local researchers should be able to identify and track such sub-groups and devise the necessary strategies to engage them. They need insiders to meaningfully make an impact with the gospel since these groups are often neglected. Though they are not ethno-linguistic, these groups have a strong affinity.

People groups lists are important, but we need global collaboration to produce credible, Spirit-led information for mission activities. 

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Contact Dr. Don Heckman at hdonparis@gmail.com



More Lists, More Data, More Possibilities

BY **RODRIGO TINOCO**

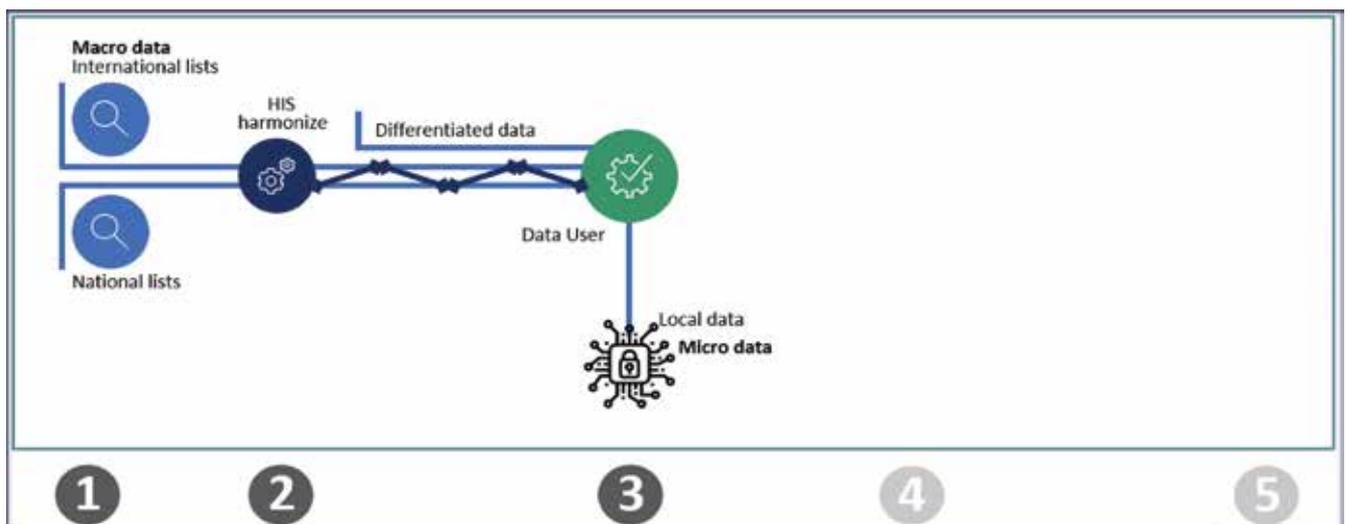
Rodrigo Tinoco (RodrigoTinocoBR@gmail.com) has served as Information Coordinator at Faith Comes by Hearing (FCBH) Brazil since 2019. He is a knowledge stewardship enthusiast. Rodrigo and his wife Sarah worked for 10 years in the USA and Asia with data tech to ministries. They live in Brasilia and have four children.

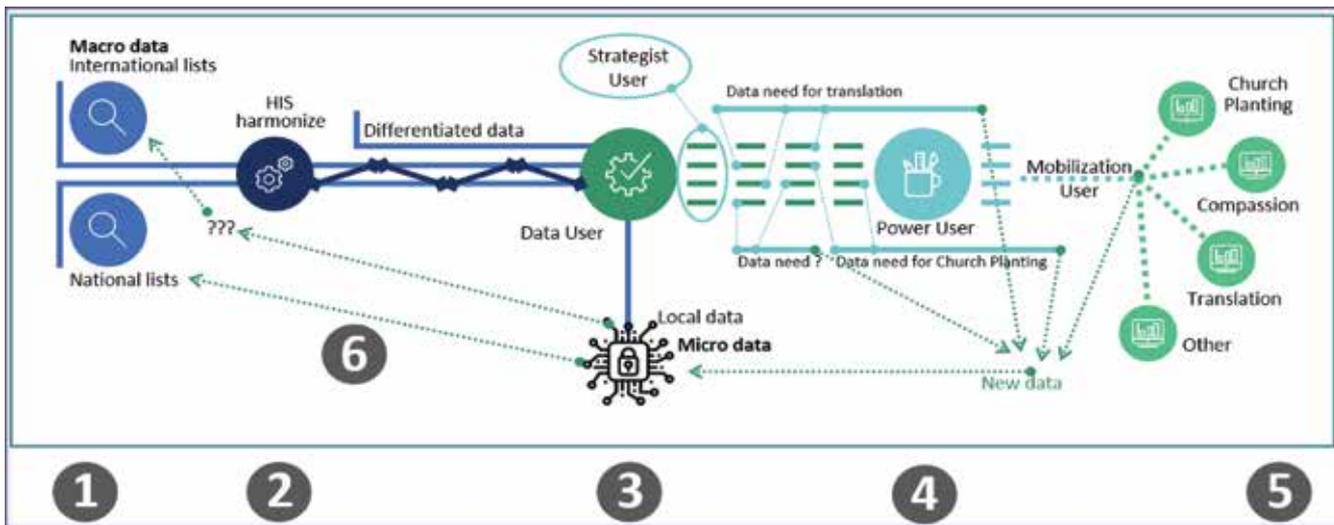
Brazil is a mosaic of people groups.

Refining of People Group Information

Latin America has been involved in the global movement of cross-cultural missions for decades. For quite some time we received missionaries from other nations and then by the grace of God, we became involved in sending. The Latin Church was impacted by the lists of people groups (UPGs and UUPGs) it was presented, and today we can identify numerous missionaries with years of cross-cultural field experience who were mobilized by these lists. Even now in 2021, mobilization efforts employ lists among their other varied resources. People group lists have been extremely useful in their roles of shaping understanding, motivating people to pray, challenging people to obey and causing people to go.

Many Latin American ministries are trying to use more data, working under the assumption that *more lists and more data give us more possibilities*. This assumption needs to be evaluated on the basis of three ideas: First, the design of any workflow is instructive only. Processes are not linear, and they are not circular; they are complex. Second, people groups present themselves differently depending upon who is asking, “Who are you?” There is one response for the government, another for the local church and yet another for other people groups. This should lead us to be creative as to how to represent them. Third, our big goal for “*lists or macro data*” must be to reveal “hidden people groups.”





People Group Data Workflow: Steps 1-3

Step 1: Lists as macro data

We understand that the international lists of people groups are more like “macro data.” On-site ministry is an environment of constant change. We know that urbanization and globalization are causing rapid change, and they directly impact the creation and implementation of post-arrival field strategies. They also require that new information be collected in the first months on the field. Perhaps ours is just a different planning model. However, while the international lists and the national lists have certainly been used in the preparation and individual decisions of each missionary project, I have no evidence that lists are being used widely in post-arrival strategies employed in Latin America.

People group lists have been extremely useful in their roles of shaping understanding, getting people to pray, getting people to obey and getting people to go.

Step 2: Lists and harmonization

We usually begin by comparing the internal people group lists of Brazil with international lists. On the one hand, there are discrepancies that, at first, distance the dialogue between the lists. However, after a careful appreciation of both, we manage to reach a good harmonious

relationship. Harvest Information Standards (HIS)¹ has been one of the tools employed to help harmonize the lists. When I say harmonize, it is not turning two lists into one. We understand that several lists can be helpful and useful, bringing different views and possessing features that allow dialogue between them.

Step 3: Lists and micro data

After achieving an initial harmonization, we then add different data. What we have learned is that the deeper the micro data, the greater the level of security concern. That has a direct relationship to partnerships; the deeper the data, the fewer organizations are willing to join or share. For this reason, we have invested more in macro data as partnerships, and more on micro data as a local organization.

People Group Data Workflow: Complete Process

Step 4: When lists turn into action

Now, with the lists (macro data) and the micro data from the local organization, we have a good place to begin. We look at our challenges and goals, and we choose which information best supports us.

Each challenge requires different extracts of the same information. Power Users are those who understand their ministry and define how to use the information. Power Users include not only the leaders, but also the people on the ground.

¹ HIS hisregistries.org

In our understanding, it is the Power Users who define to the mobilization ministries which information can be used in their work. For each type of mobilization—church-planting, Bible translation, compassion—we have parts of the data sets that can help. These ministries help refine existing data and provide new local data.

The international lists have followed people group definitions directed by ethnicity and language, and this has been useful. In fact, it is the main model that we, too, have used. However, we have recently been able to experiment with different views of the data (Dataviz²). This allows observing the data not only by ethnicity and language, but also with different variations that better serve the different audiences of organizations and their different ministries.

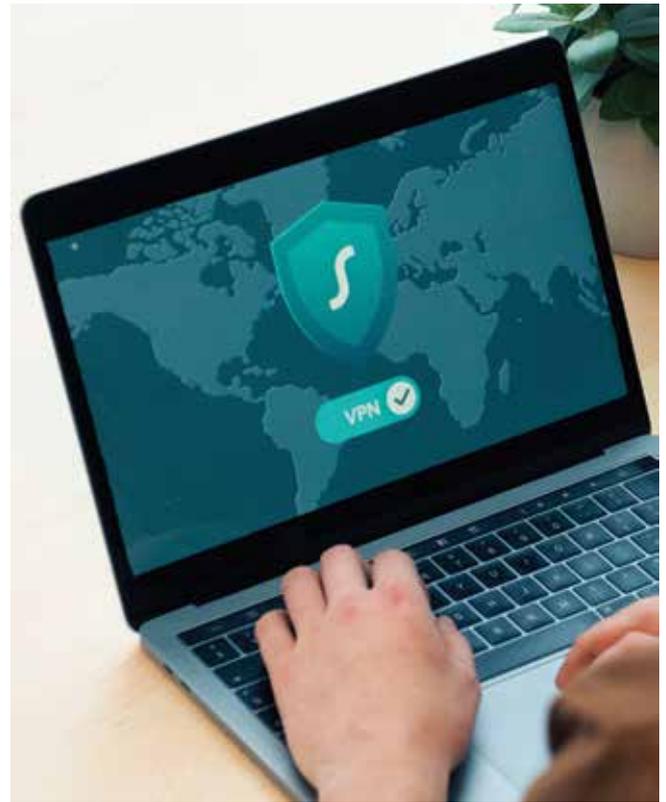
“Who are you?” There is one response for the government, another for the local church and yet another for other people groups.

We are migrating from the use of polygons to points in geography. We are doing some tests between languages in use and different domains. At times we look at clusters of peoples, and we also examine the relationship of the clans within a people group.

Step 5: Local data and security

Everyone participates in how to understand the data, and everyone can be a user of the data. Each ministry can produce new data that is potentially useful in a variety of arenas. Yet it is important when we collect new data from people who have their feet on the ground that their data be treated carefully, observing security requirements.

I have no evidence that lists are being used widely in post-arrival strategies employed in Latin America.



Step 6: Updating the national and international lists

After the data is carefully cataloged, we can update the lists in collaboration with the global Church. In the case of national lists, the update dialogues are easier. By contrast, for the international lists the update dialogues are still not very clear. A good example of international lists that add value to the local researcher is the Ethnologue. The “data collaborators program”³ provides an instrument that allows the sending of data, the visualization of other collaborators' data and proof of the support of the national research missionary.

In summary, we are using different techniques, strategies and models to try to meet two great objectives. First, we wish to assist the Church to make the most of data for its activities. Second, we want to bring hidden peoples into wider view. We give thanks to God for the servants He has raised up here in Latin America. May He increasingly empower those who are at work today, and may He bring more data missionaries to work for and with them. 

² Datviz en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Data_visualization

³ Ethnologue www.ethnologue.com/contributor-program



Fresh Vision for the Great Commission



BY **DANNY WEISS**

Danny Weiss (Dweiss324@gmail.com) serves with Radical and is the Stratus Index Director and website designer.



Never before has the Church

had as much access to missions-related information. Yet, despite this unprecedented access to information, the Church doesn't seem to be using its resources wisely and effectively.

Both the number of Unreached People Groups and the number of individuals in Unreached People Groups have increased since 2010. Population growth among the unreached and new discoveries in people group distinctions are outpacing the Church's ability to reach people with the gospel. There are now over 3.2 billion people in Unreached People Groups. Yet, it is estimated that only about 3% of missionaries and 1% of mission finances are being directed to the unreached, that is, those with little or no access to the gospel¹.

This vast discrepancy—between the number of people in Unreached People Groups and the allocation of the global Church's missional resources towards overcoming the barriers that keep them unreached—is what Stratus calls the *Great Imbalance*. Put simply, the vast majority of missions resources go to places and people that already have access to the gospel as well as some sort of church infrastructure. It is simply easier, often more compelling, more 'fruitful' (from the standpoint of return on investment) and more instinctual, to work where the barriers to the gospel are lowest.

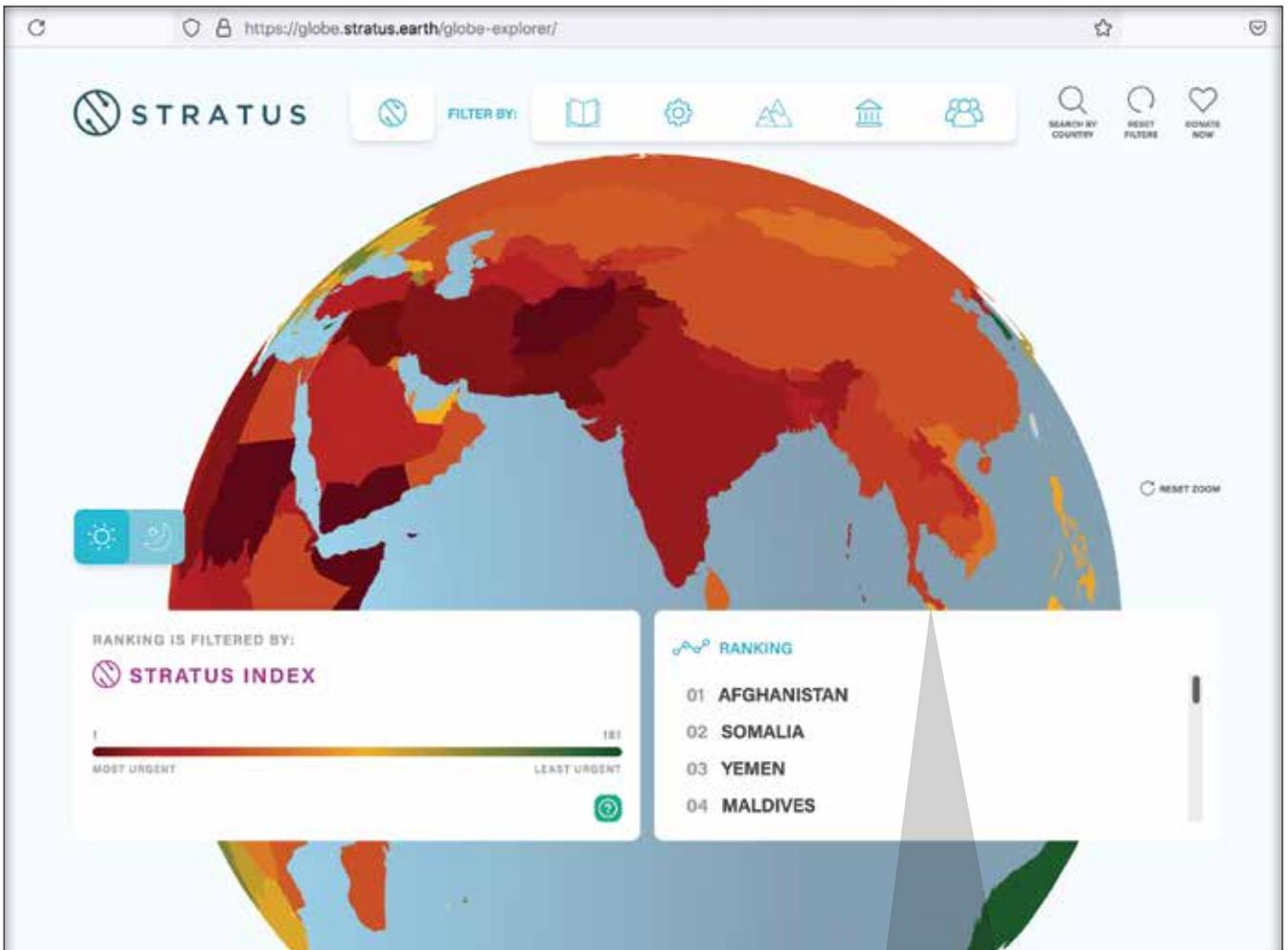
Fresh Vision

The Church doesn't need more knowledge—it needs fresh vision. This fresh vision requires understanding both the global scope of God's redeeming purposes and the barriers that are currently preventing the Church from carrying out its mission. It is essential that this missional vision affect missions strategy globally, as well as locally. Stratus (stratus.earth/) was created to help provide fresh vision. In a world where so much information is competing for our attention, Stratus seeks to bring clarity to the vast array of spiritual and physical needs around the world by synthesizing information from 38 disparate data sets (comprising over 200 different indicators) into one comprehensive index. In this way, Stratus promotes a unified vision of bringing the fullness of the gospel of the kingdom to bear on unmet physical and spiritual needs, especially when they go hand in hand.

Population growth among the unreached and new discoveries in people group distinctions are outpacing the Church's ability to reach people with the gospel.

While information on the spiritual needs (gospel access, people group and language data) and physical needs (systems of governance, developmental needs, social causes and natural barriers) exist separately, Stratus seeks to convey how these sets of needs are often closely related,

¹ *World Christian Encyclopedia*, 2020. Travelling Team (<http://www.thetravelingteam.org/stats>). "World Christian Trends", Johnson & Barrett, 2001, 2013.



Stratus seeks to bring clarity to the vast array of spiritual and physical needs around the world.

better equipping the Church to make sense of them within the broader context.

By combining various information sets at the country level, Stratus allows the user to make meaningful comparisons in terms of relative need. Status seeks to help the Church to see themselves as God’s means in overcoming those barriers and meeting those needs. Stratus also provides the ability to easily sort and filter the information according to the abilities, interests, resources and assets that individuals or churches might possess, bridging the gap between the Church’s vast resources and the specific needs of individual countries and people groups.



Where are the areas of gospel access, and where are the voids? Where are developmental needs, like access to education, healthcare or economic opportunities and where is relative strength? Where are high natural barriers, like rugged terrain or a lack of infrastructure, or where are political instability, oppression and war most preventing physical and spiritual needs from being met? What countries are most affected by the intersection of all of these needs?

Stratus seeks to provide concise, up-to-date and visually compelling answers to shift the conversation away from “What can I do?” to “What is it going to take?”

Stratus allows the user to make meaningful comparisons in terms of relative need.

Status seeks to help the Church to see themselves as God’s means in overcoming those barriers and meeting those needs.



Clarifying Presentation

We want the Church to be able to clearly see how countries rank according to each category and indicator, for example, to see how a country might be ranked seventh overall, 16th in spiritual needs, 66th in developmental needs and 105th in economic opportunity.

All of the data is taken from reputable, pre-existing and routinely updated sources, allowing the data to speak for itself. Even the prayer points listed for each country are derived directly from the country’s lowest-scoring data points.

Informed Strategy

We are hopeful that this tool will become a unifying platform for the Church to use in many capacities, from impacting the way individuals pray for the specific needs of certain countries, to the ways in which the global Church is able to more effectively leverage its assets and strengths to meet the most urgent needs and overcome the most insurmountable barriers. Our goal is to see the global Church better equipped, and ultimately, the Great Commission realized through the rectification of some of the systemic forces that perpetuate the *Great Imbalance*.

Stratus makes no claims that more data, in and of itself, will right the *Great Imbalance* or complete the Great Commission. But when data is well-synthesized and powerfully displayed, we fully believe the Church is better equipped to make more informed missional decisions. We echo the prophetic desire of Isaiah, that every valley will be raised up and every mountain made low, that the glory of the Lord will be revealed and all people together will see it (Isaiah 40:4-5).

Stratus promotes a unified vision of bringing the fullness of the gospel of the kingdom to bear on unmet physical and spiritual needs.

Explore more at [Stratus.earth](https://stratus.earth). 

People Groups

and the Nigeria Evangelical Missions Association

BY
**ADEOLUWA
OLANREWAJU**

Adeoluwa Olanrewaju (oadeoluwafelix@gmail.com) is a missionary based in Northern Nigeria and heads the Research and Strategy Department of the Nigeria Evangelical Missions Association (NEMA), the umbrella body of the Nigeria missions movement. He holds a PhD in Intercultural Studies. He is married to Adebukola and blessed with two children.

The Nigeria Evangelical Missions Association (NEMA) is the umbrella body of the Nigeria missions movement. It was established in 1982 to foster the work of world evangelization by providing a common platform through networking, empowering and mobilizing. At inception NEMA was comprised of six missions organizations but has since grown to a national network with 150 member agencies and 15,000 missionaries serving in 197 countries.

Beginnings

NEMA has always been keen about people group information. Six years after her establishment, the association published *The Final Harvest*, the proceedings of the International Consultation on Missions hosted in Jos, Nigeria August 11–15th, 1985. Included in that compendium is a list of identified unreached peoples in Nigeria. That marked a significant attempt at projecting the remaining task in Nigeria at that time, and it turned out to provide remarkable direction for missions engagement as well as focus for existing missions structures. A review of this research list in the first quarter of 2021 shows that 65% of the 72 identified unreached peoples in 1985 were no longer on the Nigerian UPG list. Moreover, 85% of the delisted UPGs have contributed to the sending force of the Nigerian missions movement.

Journeying through AD 2020 and Beyond

Thereafter, NEMA gave even more prominence to mobilizing the Nigerian Church to frontier missions. Coinciding with the countdown to AD 2000, another attempt was made at updating the people group list through the NEMA Searchlight Project, giving special attention to unreached and unengaged peoples. However, in 2005, the association's vision-casting took a new dimension in response to worldwide attention on the 10/40 Window. The leadership of NEMA took a

bold step by taking responsibility for 34 mostly Islamic countries in the left side of the Window, with the dream of meeting the Chinese missions effort coming on the Silk Road from the right side of the window.

This initiative became known as Vision 5015 – mobilizing 50,000 partners from the Nigerian Church and training, sending and supporting 15,000 workers to these 34 countries. At the end of the target year review conducted in 2020, 4,000 Nigerian missionaries had been placed in 31 of the 34 countries.

Delisting Nigeria from Unengaged Peoples List

As the Association pursued Vision 5015, a significant twist came into the process. The leadership became very concerned that Nigeria, with her evangelical strength of about 55 million and Christian populace of over 100 million, still had unengaged people groups. This led to another intensive effort of people group information in 2017. At the end of the exercise, seven unengaged peoples were discovered among 73 unreached peoples, all located in the north of Nigeria. This discovery culminated in another very strategic consultation, named “Go North”, in the same year. It would only take 11 months for Nigeria to be delisted from countries with unengaged groups, and four years later the number of unreached peoples was reduced to 45.

Impact and Lessons Learned

Mobilizing the Nigerian Church has been successful using people group information, for Nigerians (and other Africans) are sensitive to people group realities. A random sampling of 50 church leaders indicates that 87% were effectively mobilized for missions based on people group information available to them. Moreover, our mobilization drives have relied heavily on people group information for desirable responses.

NEMA has always been keen about people group information.

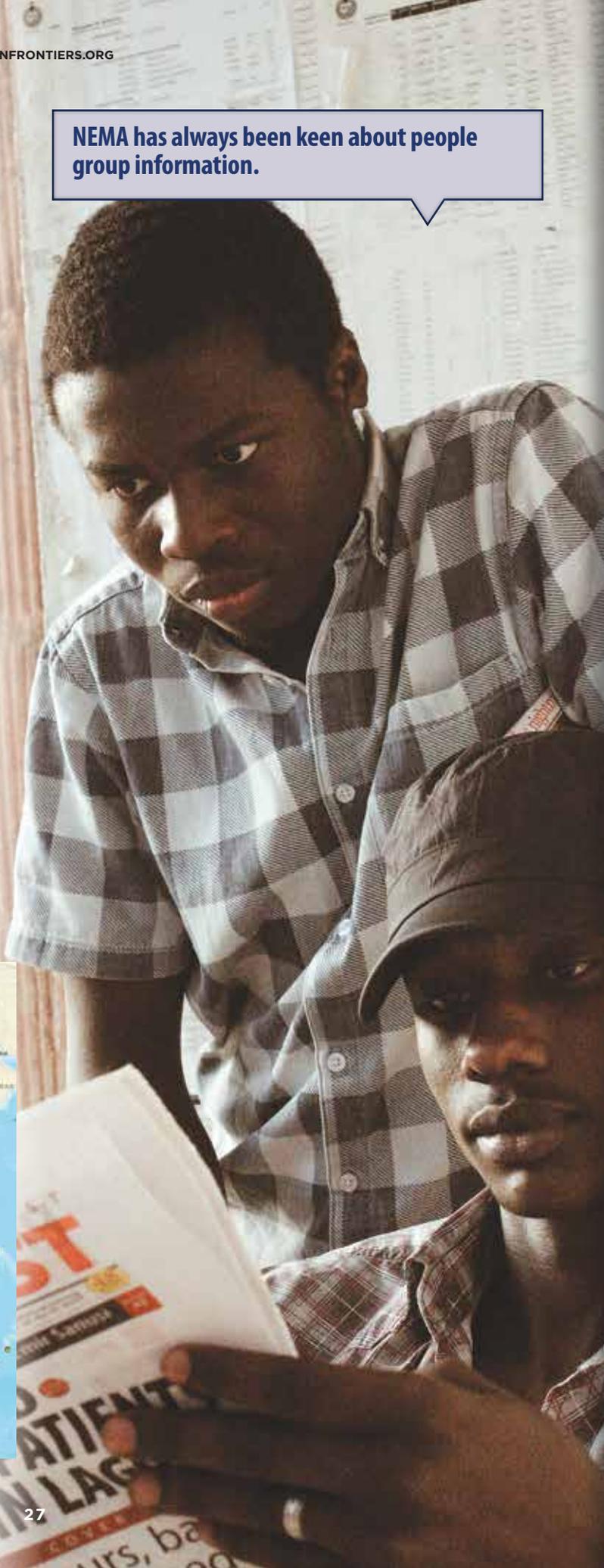
To date, there has been much dependence on Western efforts, and while these have been commendable, they have also revealed gaps and limitations. We have had to deal with issues of people group misrepresentation and insensitivity to cultural values and worldviews, leading to contention and occasional rejection of such data. The way forward will be a very healthy synergy among all research stakeholders, with deference given to the grassroots, national networks.

Moreover, in a polarized context such as ours, it may be helpful to present people group information from the perspective of the host peoples themselves. Furthermore, it is extremely difficult to rely on secondary sources for information gathering; we need a strict policy to ensure that primary sources receive priority. Where possible, respected and confirmed leaders of such people groups should be contacted to secure endorsement of whatever information is being released to the public domain.

People group information is a means to an end; therefore, strategy delineation should be kept clearly in view as data are gathered. In the same vein, training in information-gathering and equipping the Church and missions organizations in utilizing data is vital. Just as cultural sensitivity and intelligence is emphasized in cross-cultural mobilization, training and engagement, the same is required for gathering and utilizing people group information. 



There are over 3,700 people groups in Africa.



Why South Asia People Group Data Looks So Different

BY **BILL MORRISON**
AND **A SOUTH ASIAN**
RESEARCHER

Bill Morrison (bill@joshuaproject.net) has been instrumental in building the Joshua Project database of people groups since 1999, and lives in Colorado. He also served with Campus Crusade for Christ and The Navigators. Bill wrote this article with a researcher who has spent 30 years compiling extensive data on South Asian people groups/communities.

South Asia people groups are not ethnolinguistic

People group lists historically have used two factors to identify each people group: language spoken and ethnicity, where “ethnicity” is defined broadly. Such lists may be referred to as ethno-linguistic because both factors were used to form the lists.

However, in practice, language spoken has been given more, if not exclusive, emphasis than ethnicity as people groups were identified. This emphasis on language spoken has worked reasonably well in most parts of the world, but it does not work well in South Asia.

The South Asia people group data is not ethno-linguistic if by that term we mean a list of language groups and subdivisions of language groups. A very different approach is used for South Asia.

Language groups vs. people groups / communities

The classic definition of a people group is “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*.”

Outside South Asia the approach is to emphasize the *understandability* portion of the people group definition. This approach produces a list of people groups identified first and foremost by language spoken and may involve subdivisions of language groups.

However, in South Asia the approach is to define people groups consistent with the strongly held sense of “community” pervasive in that region. The term community does not refer to a physical location, but rather caste or social grouping within a structured hierarchy. The Indian term is *jati*. Barriers between communities/castes determine who one can associate with, share a meal with, marry, what homes one might enter, what occupation one might have, religious tradition and much more. This has profound impact on defining people groups and on church-planting. South Asian communities are the largest practical identity in which the gospel can take root and spread through relational pathways and means. The community perspective emphasizes *acceptance* barriers in the traditional definition of people group. Self-identification rather than language is the key determinate in defining South Asian people groups.

Relationship between South Asian people groups and languages spoken

In South Asia, individuals and people groups are typically multi-lingual. Quite often, languages spoken do not identify the community an individual or people group is part of. This many-to-many relationship between people groups and languages creates a highly complex situation. People group websites show only a very simplified presentation of this complexity. However, detailed South Asia district-level people group, language and religion data is available.

In South Asia the ap
people groups consi
strongly held sense

Importance of self-identification

A goal for South Asia researchers has been to consistently identify people groups by how individuals identify themselves. An illustration of this perspective can be seen in one definition for Aboriginal used in Australia: “An Aboriginal is one who identifies as an Aboriginal, and who is perceived as belonging to an Aboriginal community by the Aboriginal community”. In South Asia, individuals typically know the community they have been born into, and this is how they identify themselves to census and other government inquiries. This approach helps to identify the groupings through which the gospel message is most likely to flow without encountering significant barriers of acceptance. It is important to avoid identifications imposed from outside the communities themselves.

This self-identification produces a much more granular list with many more people group entries for South Asia. Outsiders may only see broad classifications such as Jat, Rajput, Brahmin or Pashtun and not see the distinctions and barriers between self-identified communities. It might take years of humble observation for an outsider to truly understand the difference between, for example, the Chetti Bania and Srimali Bania.

Toward a “unimax” list

Dave Datema and Kevin Higgins touch on the “unimax” view of people groups in their articles in this issue. A unimax people is “the **maximum**-sized group sufficiently **unified** to be the target of a single people movement to Christ”. South Asia people group data is based on self-identification and barriers beyond language which is a significant step toward a unimax view of South Asian peoples.

Long-term, on-site research is needed to fully identify unimax peoples. Current South Asia people group lists provide an excellent starting point for workers seeking to understand local realities. Certainly, there will be cases where two or more communities need to be merged on a list to better conform to what is discovered, or perhaps one community needs to be split to form several communities.

Current South Asia people group data is not perfect, but it has integrity and is faithful to the people who have collected, collated and published it over past decades. It is generally consistent with how individuals in South Asia identify their own communities. Caste cohesiveness may be diminishing, especially in urban areas, yet self-awareness of the community a person has been born into remains reasonably strong in most of South Asia.

The Joshua Project website is utilized by many more from India than any other country, including the United States. It is not unusual for an Indian to write saying such things as “my community is larger than that,” or “you should modify the name of my community.” However, very rarely have any users raised objections to the overall approach and presentation of the people groups of South Asia.

The non-ethnolinguistic, self-identification-based, granular, unimax nature of South Asian people group data makes it very different from the people group data in the rest of the world. Thankfully, the Lord has provided a remarkably rich dataset for the most complex people group situation in the world. May it be used to advance His kingdom in South Asia. 

Approach is to define
consistent with the
of “community”.

Urbanization and Measuring the Remaining Task

BY JUSTIN LONG

Justin Long is the Director of Global Research for Beyond. He has been a missionary researcher for over 25 years. Article originally posted at www.justinlong.org

For a very long time, many missiologists have tended to measure “progress in the Great Commission” (however that was defined) to some extent in the context of people groups, and how they are reached, evangelized and/or Christianized.

This thread has been pushed forward by the work of David Barrett, Patrick Johnstone and Ralph Winter, who each in his own way pushed thinking and activism related to unreached peoples.

“Reaching the unreached peoples,” in particular, has tended to replace the idea of “a church in every country” as the operative definition of *closure* or *fulfillment of the Great Commission*. Unreached People Groups better fit the Scriptural concepts of “every tribe, language, nation, tongue before the Throne” (Rev. 7:9).

The principal motivation behind the development of the unreached peoples concept was the idea of “gaps”—that there were languages and ethnic groups who had “no access” (defined as the reasonable access of individuals in the group to the gospel within their lifetime) principally because of barriers of language (they couldn’t understand the language of what was

being shared) or ethnicity (they couldn’t accept what was being shared by outsiders).

However, as we have refined our strategies for closure as “reach the unreached” strategies, two additional issues have emerged, and we’re struggling to address them.

The first is the danger of **under-engagement**. The principle is simple: we love lists, we want to check items off and so we did what is immediately required to put in a “good faith effort” to remove a people group from the list. We adopt a people group, mobilize a team, send them off to the group, and we remove this group from the “unreached” list.

This is exactly what would have to happen with a “sufficient” engagement, but it’s also what can happen with an “insufficient” engagement, and we don’t always take the time to ask whether an engagement is sufficient or not. A people group of 10 million, stretched over the geographic expanse of a country and spilling over into additional countries, will need more than a single team. To use an analogy, we can engage Moscow, while Vladivostok goes untouched within the lifetime of a single individual.

We may say “each missionary team can only do what it can,” and this is correct, but that represents only a tactical viewpoint. Strategy must think more broadly. If one

team can only engage one major area within a people group, then multiple teams must be mobilized, and more rapidly.

The second issue, however, is my primary focus here: **urbanization**. At the turn of the 20th century, the world was just 14.4% urban—232 million out of 1.6 billion people on the planet. The majority of these urbanites (69%) were Christians because most of these cities were in Christianized countries. Just five megacities (population over one million) were majority non-Christian.

In a century, the situation has vastly changed. People moved into cities, driven by all sorts of motivations. Shortly past 2000, the world became majority urban. Today, about 56% of the global population lives in a city: 4.4 billion out of 7.8 billion.

Furthermore, as far back as the 1960s and 1970s, we began to see a shift in the religious composition of urbanites: there were more non-Christian city-dwellers than Christians, as cities developed in the non-Christian world. Today, just one-third of the world's city dwellers are Christians. This doesn't mean cities make people into non-Christians; it means that non-Christians urbanized into their own cities. Today the world includes more than 593 majority non-Christian megacities.

An example of this trend can be seen in China's planned city clusters. They are planning to develop five regional cities, each with as many as 100 million people. In other words, there will be more people in these combined five cities than any other country in the world except India.

Cities present a specific challenge to the idea of "reaching Unreached People Groups": they are huge mixing grounds. Some cities are more "rural" in character—various languages are segmented in mini-villages. Some cities are more "urban" in character—with lots of different people all mixed together, using broadly spoken trade languages to communicate on the job and in the markets. Whichever is the case, focusing on a city raises different

strategic issues than focusing on a single people group or a language group largely spoken in a particular province or set of provinces. It brings the cross-cultural and cross-language dimensions of the task to bear in multiple ways earlier on. This means that including "cities" as segments to be listed, focused on, described, researched, documented, tracked, measured, and strategically engaged is probably just as important as "Unreached People Groups."

We don't want to lose the "unreached peoples" focus. But we must remember: the whole reason people have passionately advocated for the unreached is out of concern for *gaps*—collections of individuals who did not have gospel access. An exclusive focus on Unreached People Groups could, in fact, lead us to focus on, for example, Kazakhs, to the exclusion of very small groups (e.g., the thousand or so Avar in Kazakhstan) or diaspora groups in the same cities (e.g., Buryats).

Not every gap can be tracked at the global level. But global lists could continue to identify where gaps are potentially located. Different kinds of gaps can be found in cities than amongst unreached groups, and that means we need to give cities similar attention and effort. 



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Response to Urbanization and Measuring the Remaining Task

BY **DAVE EARL DATEMA**

Dave Earl Datema (dave.datema@frontierventures.org) serves as Missiology Catalyst for Frontier Ventures. He has served in various roles within Frontier Ventures since 1999. Dave is married with four children and lives in Pasadena, CA.

Justin has put his finger on what I believe is the number one problem related to current people group thinking. For decades numerous voices have cast doubt on whether the people group paradigm can adequately describe human grouping in urban contexts. As centers of amalgamation, assimilation and integration of ethnicities, languages, and cultures, cities create hybrid or hyphenated identities over time.

“Fusion cuisine” is one product of such blending, yet such fusion goes far beyond food. It takes place within people as distinct communities living side-by-side in densely populated areas interact with others daily. The traditional framework of people groups, in which peoples are seen as clearly distinct groups with clear lines of demarcation, does not work in cities in a similar way. So does urban reality doom the people group paradigm to irrelevance?

It depends on how you define people groups. Historically, there have been two primary ways of defining them, one narrow and simple, the other broad and complex. The simple definition is best known as the ethnolinguistic definition, meaning that the peoples of the world are categorized according to shared ethnicity and language. The advantage of the ethnolinguistic definition is that it is quantifiable. This is the standard way peoples have been categorized, not only by missionaries, but also by the United Nations, national governments, etc.¹

By contrast, the “official” definitions for people groups, hammered out by American, evangelical mission leaders, have been much more complex. These definitions of people groups did not neglect ethnolinguistic realities, but also recognized other factors. As early as 1978 Ralph Winter was defining “hidden peoples” more broadly: “Any linguistic, cultural or sociological group defined in terms of its primary affinity (not secondary or trivial affinities), which cannot be won by E-1 methods and

drawn into an existing fellowship.”² Here the word “sociological” broadens the types of grouping possible far beyond ethnicity and language. The emphasis is on “primary affinity” and is not necessarily ethnolinguistic.

Then in 1982 leaders gathered to agree on a standard definition of a people group,

A people group is a significantly large grouping of individuals who perceive themselves to have a common affinity for one another because of their shared language, religion, ethnicity, residence, occupation, class or caste, situation, etc. or combinations of these. For evangelistic purposes it is the largest group within which the gospel can spread as a Church Planting Movement without encountering barriers of understanding or acceptance.³

Notice that the first sentence includes much more than ethnicity and language as acceptable affinities. The second sentence, added at Winter’s impetus, puts the emphasis simply on “group” and emphasizes “barriers of understanding or acceptance.” In other words, a group is identified not only because it represents a new language (barrier of understanding) but also because it may represent other barriers created due to religion, class, caste, etc. (barrier of acceptance), perhaps even within one ethnolinguistic group. By this definition, people groups cannot be reduced to ethnicity and language.

² Winter, *Penetrating the Last Frontiers*, Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1978, 42.

³ Ralph D. Winter and Bruce Koch. "Finishing the Task: The Unreached Peoples Challenge." In *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement, 4th Ed.*, edited by Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne, 531-546. Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2009, 536.

¹ www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/

Does urban reality doom the people group paradigm to irrelevance?

Even after the establishment of the 1982 definition as an industry standard (which saw the demise of the phrase “hidden peoples”), and even though Winter helped create that newer definition, he felt that people groups were still being interpreted ethnolinguistically. So once again he attempted to change the focus with his description of “unimax peoples.” “A unimax people is the **maximum** sized group sufficiently **unified** to be the target of a single people movement to Christ, where ‘unified’ refers to the fact that there are no significant barriers of either understanding or acceptance to stop the spread of the gospel.”⁴ Again, there is no reference to the type of affinity. Winter was less concerned about *how* groups held together and more concerned with *why* the gospel wasn’t getting to them, less concerned about *affinity* and more concerned about *access*, less concerned about *bonding* and more concerned about *barriers*.

The differences in these views of what constitutes a people group are important. Winter and Koch rightly asked, “What if an ethnolinguistic people is actually a cluster of unimax peoples, and while one of them is experiencing a church-planting explosion, other groups in the cluster have little or nothing happening within them?”⁵ Not satisfied with identification of ethnolinguistic affinity, they have pushed us to discover where and why the spread of the gospel may be hindered *within* a given ethnolinguistic group.

With that history in view, let’s return to the question: does urban reality doom the people group paradigm to irrelevance?

If people groups are seen *exclusively* as ethnolinguistic groupings, then I believe they have indeed become somewhat irrelevant for urban contexts. I say “somewhat” because we need to remember that even with all the realities mentioned above, people in urban contexts can also remain very devoted to their home cultures. Not all people in urban environments mix in equal measure. Traditional norms often remain very strong, as illustrated by mother tongue transfer to younger generations and marriage within existing groups. It is not accurate to portray cities as bastions of indiscriminate and wholesale mixture.

⁴ Ibid., 534-535.

⁵ Ibid., 539.

However, given that caveat, it remains obvious that if we equate people groups with ethnolinguistic peoples, cities create problems too difficult to overcome. Rather than defending ethnolinguistic people groups in this way, I think we need to remind ourselves that the actual definitions hammered out decades ago allow for a more elastic, non-ethnolinguistic definition.

I believe that these classic people group definitions remain valid in urban settings. Under this paradigm, we are looking for groups (whatever their affinity) that appear to exist outside gospel witness. In most cases, this will be due to barriers of acceptance. Regardless of the fusion of peoples in urban settings, they are still forming into groups. That is what matters, not the particular and varied affinities they are grouped around. We don’t have to abandon people group thinking to understand urban life. But we do have to return to the earlier definitions to be reminded of the breadth of possibility human grouping takes.

Finally, this line of thinking can be taken too far. One of the weaknesses of the 1982 definition is that it allows for literally millions of human groupings encapsulated in “a common affinity for one another because of their shared language, religion, ethnicity, residence, occupation, class or caste, situation, etc. or combinations of these.” While a purely ethnolinguistic focus is too limiting, a focus on every conceivable human grouping in the world is far too broad. I believe the ethnolinguistic focus has served us well, but when an issue like urban contexts limit its effect, we need to delve deeper, but not too deep.

Our goal is not to describe every human grouping on this planet. It is to notice when the gospel is not getting somewhere, and then to prayerfully and humbly seek God for the wisdom needed to discern the barriers as well as the bridges to that group. The complex realities of human grouping will always frustrate simple definition and people group databases. They can only be discerned by workers embedded in urban centers over many years. Today’s urban missionary needs to become expert in new forms of research like social network analysis and become reacquainted with old forms of research like prayer. It is hard to imagine a more exciting vocation! 

Are Current People Group Presentations Engaging the Next Generation?

A *Mission Frontiers* interview with Andrew Feng and a group of NextGen believers.

BY **ANDREW FENG**

Andrew Feng (andrew@indigitous.org) worked at KPMG Corporation and then in the consulting industry for 10 years. He served with his wife in East Asia for five years and is currently the US Expansion Lead for Indigitous (www.indigitous.org). His passion is prototyping new pathways for digital missions via micro-projects to reach the next generation.

Why is engaging NextGen with people group information important?

Barna estimates that three out of four US churchgoers have either never heard of the Great Commission or do not know what it means. Yet, we are depending on the NextGen to be our missions sending force of the future. Something must change. It is critical to engage a younger generation of Christians with unreached peoples.

In your experience, what is a younger generation's view of people groups in general? Is it part of their grid?

Most of the younger generation is completely unaware of people groups being a strategic focus for missions. The concept of people groups with little to no access to the gospel is not part of their thinking. I don't believe NextGen is feeling challenged, and few have a burden to serve or engage with unreached peoples. More frequently, they feel God calling them to stay and be senders rather than goers.

Are other paradigms more important to a younger generation than traditional ethnolinguistic groupings?

With the advance of technology, interacting with people worldwide only depends on one's internet speed. For example, a quick search on Reddit will reveal how globalized everyone is, and the idea of a Third Culture individual is becoming more common. Traditional barriers to the gospel are being reduced, and young people tend to feel more connected based on social relationships than ethnicity.

Do traditional people group presentations motivate a younger generation?

From the people group presentations I have seen from sites like Joshua Project and Go31, I can say that traditional methods have not motivated the younger generation. I don't think NextGen relates to lists and statistics as much as previous generations. Stories and narrative seem more impactful today. As a younger person myself, the most motivation and engagement I have seen has been through personal sharing. I have found others are willing to listen and learn about people groups when I am in relationship with them.

How can people group information be better presented to impact a younger generation?

I strongly believe the presentation of people group information needs a younger voice and brand identity that understands the trends and desires of the younger generation. Fresh presentations need to be made by NextGen themselves. Instead of asking people to read an encyclopedia or look at a statistical website, we need to engage them on the platforms they are using such as Instagram, WhatsApp, TikTok and Quora. Video and discussion forums are key.

What is the greatest need you see in the people group information space?

Unfortunately, whenever I sit in mission consultations, I often notice that I am one of the few that does not fit the description of an older, Western, white male. A key need is creating space for younger Asian, African, and Latin American unreached peoples data managers, thinkers and leaders.

How can NextGen's skills be best used in unreached people efforts?

Companies such as Airbnb, Uber, and Fiverr have leveraged the younger generations skills with the gig economy model. Similarly, an idea is to offer missional micro-projects that are centered around community and creating impact among unreached peoples. How might we help people redeem their skills beyond the four church walls? Imagine a world where we can innovate ways to bring first-world skills to the ends of the earth.

From the people group presentations I have seen from sites like Joshua Project and Go31, I can say that traditional methods have not motivated the younger generation" or some condensed version. 

A Small Shift with Potential Significant Impact: Viewing Peoples Globally

BY **DAN SCRIBNER**

Dan Scribner (dan@joshuaproject.net) has served as the Joshua Project Team Leader since its founding in 1995. Dan and his wife Mary have been on the staff of Frontier Ventures (formerly USCWM) since 1988. They live in Colorado and have four children and three grandchildren.

Traditional People Group Data Structure

It was in the 1960s and 1970s that Christian researchers began in earnest to identify the people groups of the world. When the original lists were made, there was limited communication and very little movement of peoples. At that time, an international flight may have cost 10 times what it does currently and taken much longer. An international telephone call typically cost several dollars per minute. The common way to stay in touch with people in other countries was often by hand-written postal letter.

Geographic distance was a significant barrier to the spread of the gospel. Diaspora groups had minimal contact with homeland populations; the homeland and diaspora peoples of the same ethnicity were considered distinct entities. People group populations were structured accordingly, and people groups were defined by including country boundaries as shown in Figure 1 below. That data structure has served the mission community well for the last 50 years. Figure 2 illustrates the traditional people group data structure and counts as presented on the Joshua Project website.

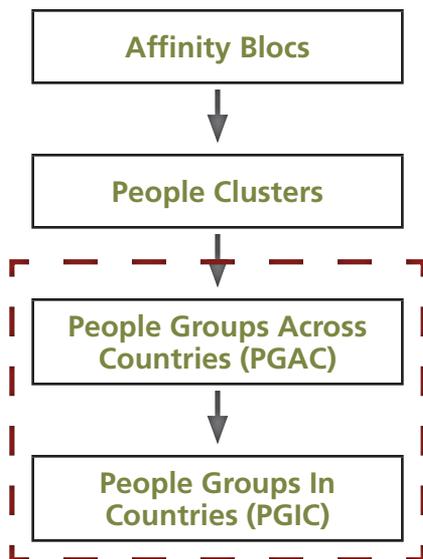


Figure 1. An example of traditional people group data and counts.

A Different World

However, the world is a very different place than when people group lists began. Travel is relatively inexpensive and rapid... we have virtually free and instant video connection... money can be sent with a few taps on a phone... family or associates can Facetime or Zoom anytime... business or ministry can be conducted remotely from another continent.

The world is a very different place than when people group lists began.

Globalization means anyone can essentially contact anyone, anywhere, anytime. The geographic barriers and “distance” between the homeland and the diaspora have significantly blurred. Migration means people are on the move with unimagined mobility. New people-groups-in-countries (PGICs) are formed whenever a homeland group moves to a new country. All this raises challenges and concerns related to the current people group terminology, data structures and presentation.

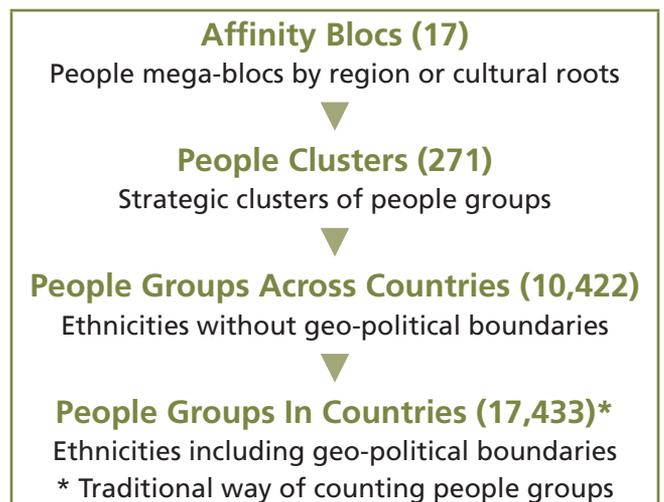


Figure 2. An example of traditional people group data and counts.

Challenges and Concerns

1. *Multiple meanings of “people group”*—Both entities in the dotted box in Figure 1. are currently called “people groups”. Sometimes the term “people group” means geopolitical boundaries are not considered, e.g., the Kurmanji Kurd everywhere in the world. Other times “people group” means country borders are considered, e.g., the Kurmanji Kurds in Turkey, the Kurmanji Kurds in Iraq, etc. Without context, it is unclear whether the reference is to a people-group-across-countries (PGAC) or a people-group-in-country (PGIC). This has caused substantial confusion.
2. *Ever expanding list of “people groups”*—The widely recognized count of “people groups” is the number of people-groups-in-country (PGICs) in Figure 1. However, the number of PGICs is essentially unlimited. Therefore, the traditional PGIC way of counting “people groups” is a continually increasing number. In turn, this causes the number of Unreached People Groups to appear to be growing. Again, confusion has resulted.
3. *PGICs are weighted the same*—The largest homeland groups and the smallest diaspora groups are considered at the same level when viewed at a PGIC level. They have equal weight as database entries. Each is considered a unique “people group.” For example, the nine million homeland Kurmanji Kurds in Turkey are counted the same as a few thousand diaspora Kurmanji Kurds in Norway.
4. *Mixes geography into the hierarchy*—Traditional geographic barriers to the spread of the gospel are diminishing. Fifty years ago, geography was considered in the hierarchy of people groups, but this may have contributed to “silos” of ministry focus at the country level and may be less helpful in today’s world.

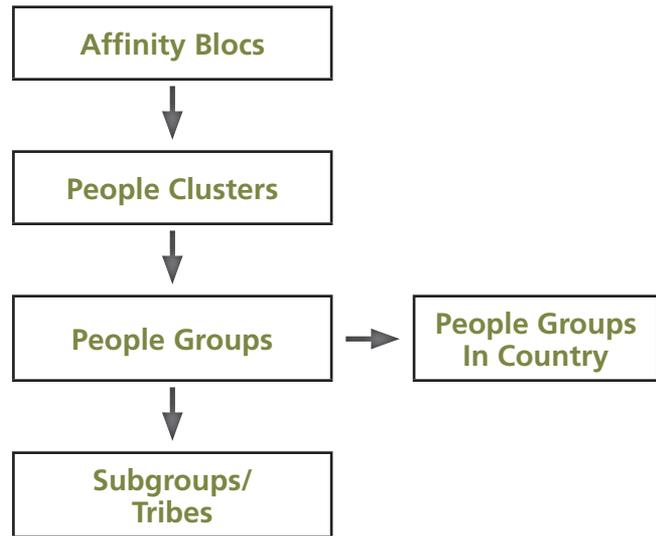


Figure 3. *Modified people group data structure*

Data modeling suggests the elements in a hierarchy ought to all be of the same “stuff”. Separating geography from the people group hierarchy may be helpful. Figure 3 shows a slightly modified people group data structure.

- Only PGACs are called “people groups”.
- All PGICs are no longer called “people groups” but rather “people group in country”.
- The count of PGACs becomes the emphasized number.
- PGICs are not part of the hierarchy but are still fully available.

Fortunately, people group data is currently coded such that Figure 3 is already available. PGACs already have a unique identifier, and the data presently can be viewed by PGAC. The change would mainly be in the presentation of the data and which count is emphasized as “the number of people groups in the world”. Using the Joshua Project numbers from Figure 2, there would be 10,422 people groups and 17,433 people groups in country.

New people groups are formed whenever a homeland group moves to a new country.

Potential Benefits and Opportunities

The perspective change in Figure 3 is relatively small, but addresses the four concerns above:

1. Has the benefit of different names for PGACs “people groups” and PGICs “people groups in country”.
2. The count of PGACs is a reasonably stable number. The goalposts are not continually moving. Also, there is likely a much higher degree of agreement between various people group lists at the PGAC level.
3. Allows users to differentiate between homeland and diaspora people groups in country, in any way desired. Considering an ethnicity as a global whole might help foster strategy and best practices across the entire PGAC.
4. Removes geography from the hierarchy but keeps PGIC counts available. The PGIC people-group-in-country perspective probably will continue to be the initial way

users approach people group data as most users start from a country mindset. This modified structure also allows for further refining to people-group-in-states/provinces without adding to the hierarchy and further disrupting terminology and counts.

Recommendations

- A. Present a biblical basis for the PGAC “people group” perspective. Current geo-political boundaries did not exist when Jesus gave the Great Commission.
- B. Begin highlighting and emphasizing the PGAC perspective. Show the PGIC and PGAC total and unreached counts side-by-side. Compare and explain the counts: Why two sets of numbers? What do they mean? How do they compare to the past?
- C. Encourage other people group list keepers, mobilizers and stakeholders to begin using the revised terminology and numbers. 



People Groups 50 Years Later?

BY KEVIN HIGGINS

Kevin Higgins is General Director of Frontier Ventures (FV) and the President of William Carey International University (WCUI). He has a PhD from Fuller in Intercultural Studies with a focus on Translation Studies. He is married to Susan and is the grateful father of Rachel, Sarah and Emma and the proud grandfather of Henry.

Dear Reader,

In 1974, when Ralph Winter introduced the concept of what would become known as “unreached peoples” (he used “hidden people”), it would have been impossible to gauge the impact this concept would have on mission thinking and strategy.

Almost 50 years later we can look back and see how profoundly a few simple insights can shape a whole movement.

Today most Christian mission organizations and most missiologists wrestle with Winter’s insight: that there are “peoples” in which there are churches planted and growing and multiplying in sufficient capacity to continue to reach more of “their own”, and there are peoples for which that is not the case.

That insight catalyzed shifts in where organizations sought to place personnel, whole movements to pray for unreached peoples, and also shifts in strategies for planting and multiplying churches.

The thinking began to dig into all sorts of themes and topics related to how to define what is meant by a “people group”. Most (not all) will accept readily that in the phrase “all the nations,” (e.g., in Matthew 28), Jesus was not referring to *countries*. Many would then add that Jesus meant the ethnicities and languages which constitute the peoples of the earth. Later, questions about other types of “identity” which shape how people determine “who are we” and “who are they” have added to the complexity of the understanding of reached and unreached in the way I phrased it above. Religion in all its varieties (whether religion is even the right word), social identities, the impact of location and thus migration and immigration, and so on, all raise questions about the boundaries of what we mean when we say “this is a people group”.

One of the eventual definitions posited by Ralph Winter was what he termed the “unimax” definition, namely, the largest group within which the Good News can flow as a Church Planting Movement before encountering significant barriers of acceptance or understanding. Thus, a Uni (“unified”) Max (“largest”) People Group is what he suggested be the strategic focus of frontier mission.

Simply stated: identify the barriers, innovate ways to overcome the barriers, and thus reach all unimax peoples.

Of course, the unimax definition is entirely based on the reality that those barriers will only be reliably discovered by a movement itself as it grows to the point where it reaches a “wall” that cannot be explained only by willful rejection of the good news, but which appears on close inspection to be due to barriers that are *not* intrinsic to the message itself.

This edition of *Mission Frontiers* is a product of, and a contribution to, a conversation about all these issues that stretch back to multiple writings and multiple intentional conferences and working groups.

May you benefit from these pages.

Kevin Higgins
General Director
Frontier Ventures



24:14 Goal

Movement engagements in every unreached people and place by 2025 (52 months)

Translation Quality and Scripture Impact for 'Last Mile' Bible Translations

BY **STAN PARKS**

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Stan Parks, Ph.D. was a trainer and coach for a wide variety of CPMs around the world. He currently co-leads a global 2414 Coalition to start Church Planting Movement engagements in every Unreached People Group and place by 2025 (2414now.net). As part of the Ethne leadership team he helped various Ephesus teams seeking to start cascading CPMs in large UPG clusters. He is the VP of Global Strategies with Beyond (beyond.org). stan@beyond.org

Everyone deserves to have the Word of God in their heart language. Today, we are closer to seeing the Bible translated into every language than ever before, but significant barriers remain. Over 20% of the world's people are still waiting for the Bible in their own language (6,600+ languages).

“Last mile” is used to describe the short final segment of delivery of services or items to customers. Last-mile logistics are usually the most complicated and expensive aspects of completing the service or delivery. This same dynamic occurs in completing the task of translating the Bible into every language.

There are reasons for the lack of the Bible in the remaining “last-mile” Bible-less languages. Many of these do not yet have the Bible in their own language because they live in

areas hostile to the gospel. Unlike traditional translations of the past and present where translation teams locate in a place and work together for years, outside translators seeking to do translation in politically restricted and/or hostile regions often cannot gain access to these areas. Translators who do have access are often faced with working in secret, moving from one location to another and keeping their work secret from friends, family and the community. Often due to death threats and persecution, translators wait until the work is completed, secretly taking the finished product to partners to print and share with others. In recent years, there have been numerous incidents of translators in these types of areas being kidnapped and/or killed.

One challenge faced in these circumstances is to ensure the translators receive the appropriate mentoring,

assistance and funding they need. However, traditional patterns of translation assistance and measurement are not possible. Those of us assisting from the outside must adjust to the new realities and recognize that these men and women risking their lives deserve our best efforts and servant-hearted support instead of asking them to fit into our previous patterns and paradigms of translation.

However, no one involved wants a haphazard and poor-quality translation of the Word of God. How then can we assure quality and accountability for the outside supporters while not risking the lives of those who are at the last mile translating in these restricted areas?

The Antioch Family of Churches alliance of Church Planting Movements (CPMs) has pioneered a seven-step process that has produced quality translations while also giving the measurements and outcomes that meet the needs of the outside supporters. Leaders of 24:14 have endorsed this process and are exploring how to help other CPMs follow this model. A CPM has four plus generations of churches planting churches (parent churches planting children, grand-children and great-grandchildren churches with multiple branches of the family-tree)—this usually means a minimum of 100+ churches and 1500+ baptized disciples. The broader 24:14 Coalition of Church Planting Movements represents 1053 CPMs with over 74 million disciples, primarily in hostile areas formerly unreached with the gospel.

The Translation Quality and Scripture Impact Assurance Seven-Step Process for hostile areas is:

Translation Quality

- 1) Language Selection: The leadership of a Bible-less CPM discerns through prayer and counsel with other 24:14 members that a translation of the Bible in a certain language(s) is warranted. After extensive prayer and discussion, the language(s) is selected based on the following criteria:
 - commitment of the leaders to complete the translation process and make the best possible use of distributing and using the translated Scriptures;
 - the current capacity of the CPM and outside partners able to assist the process;
 - security for the translators is also a consideration, which is more feasible with a larger group of believers such as we see in CPMs;
 - other language-related movements in different countries;
 - available trainings, translation tools and resource texts;
 - the need and possibility of translation into two or more closely related languages or major dialects of

a mega-language.

- 2) Translation Team Qualification and Recruitment: In each language, an initial group of 25-30 full-time mother-tongue bilingual literate speakers are pre-qualified by their local church leaders.
- 3) Translation Team Training/Preparation: A 24:14 Translation Mentor(s) begins training the translation team. Self-learning tools and other helpful resources are also provided to help teams address gaps and find opportunities for further learning.
- 4) Initial Translation Drafting Begins: Once qualified by their local church leaders and the 24:14 Translation Mentors, these teams work full-time collaboratively to define key words and produce quality drafts of Scripture. Each initial draft is reviewed by the Translation Mentor according to the 24:14 Translation Guidelines.
- 5) Checking/Editing of Texts: Scripture portions are peer-checked, local church checked and then sent to the Translation Mentors for review. Once approved as an initial draft, the text is community tested through a approved set of questions to help determine clarity, naturalness, accuracy and acceptability. Adjustments are made and tested again. In total in each language, an average of 500 people are expected to be involved in this process.
- 6) Ongoing Coaching from Translation Quality Advisor: A series of web-based and offline tools are used to help insure the accuracy, clarity, naturalness and acceptability of Scripture. Throughout the checking process each language coordinator that leads a translation team has frequent access to full-time Translation Mentors who, in turn, have remote access to translation quality advisors.
- 7) Movement Church Leadership Evaluation: Once the texts have been assessed, evaluated, edited and checked by the local church network, the community and approved by the Translation Mentors, the drafts are forwarded for final evaluation by the larger church leadership in the CPM.

**Everyone deserves to have the Word of God
in their heart language.**

Scripture Impact

- A) **Commitment** to completion, distribution and use of the Scriptures is critical.
- B) **Capacity:** Priority is given to CPMs because they have greater maturity and capacity to complete the translation and effectively use it.
- C) **Bridging:** Obviously, producing a translation that can be a bridge to help translation in other related languages or major dialects will increase potential Scripture Impact.
- D) **Translation Team Discipleship:** The initial Scripture impact begins to happen with those on the translation team as they learn and apply God's Word more deeply in their lives.
- E) **Discipleship:** A second avenue of Scripture impact is in the lives of the believers helping at this stage who are deepened in their understanding and application of Scripture by testing and using biblical passages in discipleship processes.
- F) **Evangelism:** A third avenue of Scripture impact comes by asking local nonbelievers to help in checking whether these translated passages are understandable. This is an effective way of sharing the gospel with family and friends. Often it is during this time of asking nonbelievers to participate (with caution) that the heart of the nonbeliever is softened and turned toward the gospel. Some come to faith just reading the Word of God.
- G) **Distribution:** The next phase is to distribute the Word of God for ongoing discipleship and evangelism. Dependent on the circumstance of the local churches, distribution may be through print-on-demand and/or digitally through microSD cards, audio devices, Bluetooth, off-internet local Wifi devices such as Lightstream, etc.
- H) **Fruit Measurement:** We know the Word of God will not return void, so measuring the impact in lives is a critical and often overlooked aspect of Scripture translation and use. Measurement of the increase in both quantity (number of new churches and disciples) and quality (discipleship metrics of transformed lives and communities) are the necessary final piece in measuring Scripture Impact.
- I) **Ownership:** By involving at least several hundred people in translating and checking the translation, the community has a strong sense of ownership which will only increase their respect for and use of the Bible.

In conclusion, many of the languages included in the “Last Mile” in Bible translation involve some difficulties and dangers that we cannot overcome with the traditional translation processes that God has used so effectively in the past and continues to use today. The inability of outside translators to gain access and the persecution and dangers faced from opponents of the gospel mean that the Bible will not be translated into these languages unless we find new pathways.

It is exactly these high-persecution areas that most desperately need the Bible in their own language. Church history tells us that the Bible in a heart language is not necessary for initial evangelism and discipleship. However, the Bible in a heart language is one crucial factor for surviving and enduring persecution. One example is the longstanding survival of the church in Egypt and Ethiopia compared to the rapid demise of the Church in North Africa after the assault of Islam. A primary reason for this is that Egypt and Ethiopia had the Bible in local languages, while the church of North Africa had the Bible in Latin spoken only by the elites.



God is not surprised by these challenges. God in His wisdom has used existing trade language Bible translations to begin multiplying disciples and churches in many of these “last mile” Bible-less languages. These disciples are positioned inside these language communities and are willing to face life-threatening risks in translation because they deeply yearn to provide the Bible to both the believers and the lost in their own heart language. Additionally, God has allowed us to live in a day where we can strengthen and support those who risk so much by training and using the latest technological breakthrough for translation.

As has been seen, this seven-step translation process not only assures a quality translation but also assures Scriptural impact during and after the translation process. As we observe how the Holy Spirit has already used this process, we can trust and work and pray to see many more translations done until in our generation there are no more Bible-less languages. God is giving us the opportunity to see the world full of God’s glory, but it is a day that challenges us to trust and rely on Him as never before! 



Quechua Bibles being distributed to remote villages in the Andes mountains of Peru, followed by mandatory Bible reading classes designed to help readers navigate their new Bibles and to identify individuals who might need additional literacy training.



How Possible Is It to Multiply Rapidly and Still Make Healthy Disciples?

BY C. ANDERSON

website: Dmmsfrontiermissions.com

C. Anderson is an experienced field practitioner and leader. The past 27 years, she served in Asia with YWAM Frontier Missions. Anderson trains and coaches both international and indigenous church planters toward the launching of Disciple Making Movements. She blogs weekly about DMM related issues at Dmmsfrontiermissions.com. Other articles on member care, language learning, visa stress, etc. are available at missionarylife.org. Her 30-day devotional for church-planters, *Faith to Move Mountains*, can be purchased on amazon.com.

Is it possible to be both deeply committed to healthy, deeply transformational discipleship, and *also* to the rapid multiplication of disciples? Opponents of the trend in missions toward DMMs (Disciple Making Movements) and CPMs (Church Planting Movements) often express concern about the rapid growth. Are they truly being grounded in God's Word? Is allegiance shifting to Jesus over Mohammed or other religious philosophies?

It doesn't hurt to listen to our well-intentioned critics (Ps. 15:31). Some who criticize do so out of ignorance of what DMMs/CPMs are trying to do. Others have had personal negative experiences that cause them to raise eyebrows. There are those, however, who truly want to see God's kingdom grow on this earth. Some of our critics raise valid points.

Is it possible to be both deeply committed to healthy, deeply transformational discipleship and also to the rapid multiplication of disciples?

The issue of deep-level life transformation as it relates to disciple-making is something we must be concerned about. It's something movements should regularly evaluate as they grow. We do not want shallow, superficial movements easily hijacked by false doctrine. Unless movements go both broad and deep, they will not be sustainable. Nor will they bring about the transformational kingdom impact we hope for.

Let's explore the issue of transformational discipleship further. The question this article will address is whether or not it is possible to see *both* the rapid multiplication of disciples and churches, *while also* seeing the deep-level transformation of lives. We will attempt to answer the questions: Can disciples multiply quickly, but also be solidly grounded in the Word of God, its core doctrines and deeply shaped by the life and ways of Jesus? Can we rapidly multiply emotionally and spiritually healthy disciples through movement strategies?

In this kind of magazine, I assume I am writing to those who are already on board with the idea of DMMs/CPMs. I won't take time to explain here why DMMs and CPMs are necessary to fulfill the Great Commission. Let's begin from that starting point. If you aren't there in your thinking, please take a look at the *Why DMMs?* article on the Dmmsfrontiermissions.com website.

If rapid multiplication rather than addition growth is necessary to address the issue of lostness, particularly among the unreached, how can we be sure we do it in such a way that we see genuine transformation of lives as people encounter Christ?

It is possible to be committed to both transformation and rapid growth. How do I know this? Because Jesus was. His movement and ministry are our models for all we do. He showed us how to make and multiply disciples rapidly and in healthy, sustainable ways.

Four Failures in Disciple-Making

Peter Scazzero has had a significant impact on my life. If you've never read his books, I recommend them. Shortly after going through a season of marital conflict and depression, I came across *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality*. Many of the lessons he referred to in the book mirrored my learning during that season.

Later, I read *Emotionally Healthy Church*, and *Emotionally Healthy Leader*. I am in the middle of reading *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship*, Scazzero's newest book. He doesn't directly attack DMMs or CPMs, I'm not even sure he is familiar with them. As I was reading, though, my mind was filtering his content through my disciple-making grid. I want to draw from some of what he said in the early chapters of this book.

In chapter one of *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship*, Scazzero writes about four key failures in discipleship.

1. We tolerate emotional immaturity.
2. We emphasize doing for God over being with God.
3. We ignore the treasures of church history.
4. We define success wrongly.

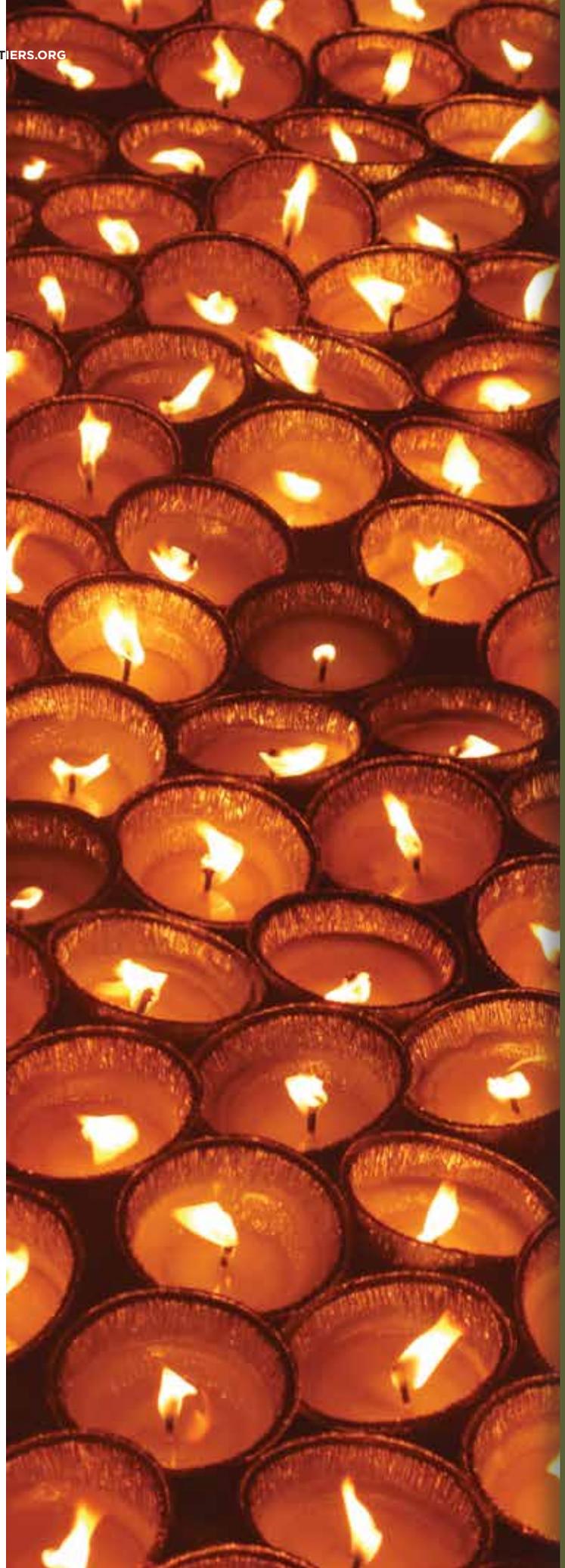
These four failures are worth considering as we pursue rapid multiplication. Let's consider them together.

Tolerating Emotional Immaturity

Do we tolerate emotional immaturity, or do we address it in our disciple-making and leadership training in movements? What does the word emotional immaturity mean?

Scazzero describes emotional maturity as loving others well. Those who are emotionally mature can have healthy conflicts, talk through misunderstandings and disagreements in godly ways and reflect Jesus in their behavior toward others. Those closest to them and those they lead (including their families), feel valued and cared for. Emotionally healthy disciples are not "triggered" easily. Past woundings have been healed and worked through.

Let's admit that in DMMs and CPMs sometimes we are so desperate to find the extremely fruitful movement apostle, we tolerate things in their lives we wouldn't in others. When we find someone who is a "super-sower," starting many new groups, we at times overlook how they treat their wife or husband or their lack of relationship with their children.



This is a danger. What should we do about it? Keep reading. But first, let's look at Scazzero's other points.

Doing Over Being

Movement leaders and catalysts are do-ers. Again, let's just admit that. It's a strength. It can also be a weakness. Unless we live a life of deep abiding with Jesus, we will not be able to reproduce an abiding lifestyle in those we train, lead and coach. Obedience-based discipleship asks the question: what will you do to obey? This is vitally important, and part of what drives movements forward. Jesus said if we love Him, we would obey His commands (John 14:15). He spoke of wise and foolish builders and said that the person who fails to put His word into practice is like the man who built on sand (Matt. 7:24-27). This is well established. We recognize it as a major weakness in legacy, or traditional, church practice.

We must be careful not to swing too far in the other direction. Avoid multiplying "Martha" disciples who do a lot, but don't sit at Jesus' feet. Model and encourage disciples to love Jesus, worship Him and be changed by His love. How can we be more intentional about modeling being as well as doing in our disciple-making?

Ignoring History

Again, it is worth considering this potential discipleship failure. There is much to be learned from the history of Christianity. Some traditions were developed for valid reasons in particular contexts and may be worth retaining. Others have impeded the growth of disciple-making and evangelism through ordinary believers. We don't need to "throw out the baby with the bathwater," to use an American idiom. We need to be discerning, running things through the reproducibility test. If church traditions are hindering the multiplication of disciples, they should be carefully reconsidered.

Healthy disciple-making helps people find healing from their past.

Scazzero is referring not only to church history, however. He is also speaking of our personal histories. Healthy disciple-making helps people find healing from their past. As Scriptures about forgiveness are studied, wounds from parents, siblings, enemies and oppressors need to be worked through.

How We Define Success

Once more, let us examine ourselves with raw honesty. There are times when we (DMM/CPM practitioners and trainers) define success by something extra-biblical. The commonly held definition of what is a movement (see my blog article *What is a DMM?*) is not directly from Scripture, nor did Jesus ever tell us to make it a landmark of great accomplishment to hit fourth-generation, multi-stream growth.

What does it communicate when you are always measuring according to having hit the fourth generation or not?

Yet, when we finally get to that fourth generation, wow... we've accomplished something! Most movement trainers and coaches would not say they define success in strictly numeric ways. I wouldn't. Of course not. But it is something we need to be careful about. What does it communicate when you are always measuring according to having hit the fourth generation or not?

Some years ago, we had a speaker come and talk to us about tracking in our organization's annual gathering. He emphasized the gathering of stories, not only the reporting of numbers. The kinds of stories we report say a lot about what we value.

I hope you have been tracking with me and can see that DMM/CPM strategies could potentially lead to emotionally and spiritually immature discipleship. It doesn't need to be that way, however. Not if we are aware of this, honest about it, and continually evaluating our fruit. Good farmers don't just aim for fruit, they want healthy fruit. If the orchard's apples are full of bugs, that's a problem, even if there are thousands and thousands of apples falling to the ground.

5 Healthy Discipleship Keys

Here are some areas to keep in mind as we apply DMM/CPM principles in our ministry. They are at the core of appropriately using the DMM/CPM practices. Without them, multiplicative efforts may not lead to healthy, sustained fruit.

Make disciples, not converts.

Many leading DMM/CPM trainers have emphasized this. It should be part of our mantra as disciple-makers. At the same time, our old tendencies can rise to the surface in the rush of a ripe harvest of souls. Simply getting people baptized is not enough. Train them to obey, Jesus said. This is much more than someone getting wet! It takes time, love and investment to make disciples. It can happen rapidly, but it's a process, not an event.

Focus on people, not meetings.

We need to disciple people, not just multiply meetings. I say this continually when I train. "Disciple-making is not a meeting." You may have 13 disciple-making groups or Discovery Bible studies happening each week. Without genuine loving relationships and community in those groups, life transformation will not happen.

Disciple Making Movement practitioners must learn to be multi-relational, while still going deep with a few. How did Jesus do this? He had an inner circle of people He invested heavily in. He ate with them, walked with them and took them with Him everywhere. It was far more than a weekly one-hour Bible study. It was those men through whom He multiplied Himself. Jesus both went broad and deep. So must we.

Track growth, but never prioritize it over abiding in Jesus.

Scazzerro says in the section of his book on wrongly defining success, "I'm not saying that it's inherently wrong that we measure our progress by the numbers. The problem comes when numbers are the only thing we measure, and so become our ultimate marker of success... All numerical markers—increased attendance, bigger and better programs, a larger budget—must take a backseat to listening to Jesus. Jesus calls us to abide and abound in Him (John 15:1–8)." A big amen to this!

I am an advocate for carefully tracking growth. Why? Because it's part of good stewardship.

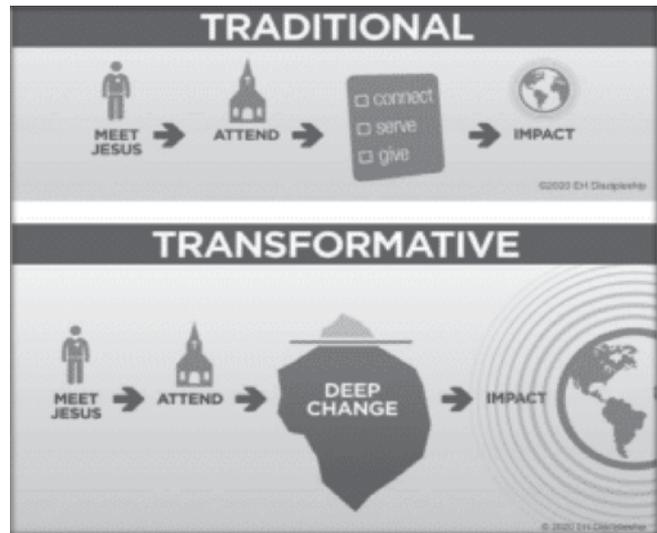
If, however, we begin to focus more on our numbers than on abiding in Jesus, we're in trouble! If we start to define our success by whether or not we've reached fourth-generation growth, red flags should be waving.

Hold both the urgency of the lost and the transformation of the saved as values.

Steve Smith highlighted this when he wrote about following Jesus and fishing for men—the twin callings (T4T book). They go together. Both matter.

Jesus loved the lost. He was deeply concerned about reaching them. It is not God's will that any perish (2 Pet. 3:9). The gospel has not spread rapidly because we have not been as concerned about the lost as Jesus is. We've failed to adequately fulfill His command to go and make disciples who obey. If we don't embrace changes, a more multiplicative model, millions and millions will continue to go into eternity having never had a chance to hear of the Savior's love and desire to save. This is not acceptable.

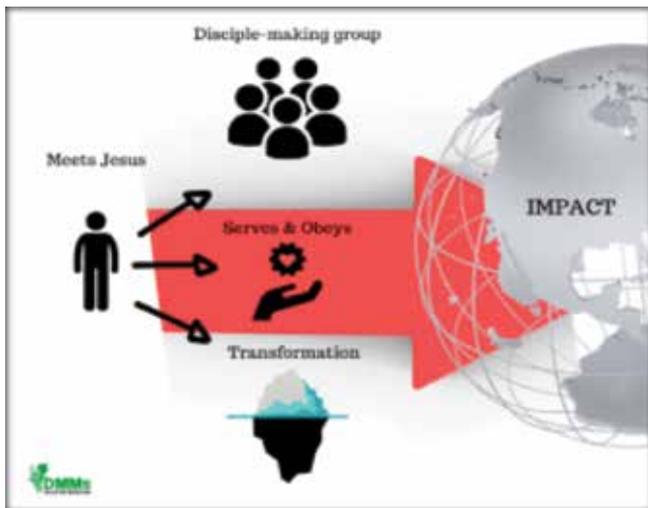
Nor is it acceptable to be so focused on our inner life that we delay obedience to Christ's command to make disciples. Abiding in Jesus, practicing solitude, silence, lives of prayer and sharing our testimony with neighbors, friends and relatives are *equally* part of obeying Him.



What's wrong with this picture?

This graphic from Scazzerro's book caught my attention. It seems to say we must have deep change *before* we can have an impact. This was not the way Jesus disciplined. Deep change and transformation happened simultaneously.

Instead, as we look at how Jesus made disciples, we learn that they immediately served and obeyed. He sent them out in Luke 9 and 10. Life transformation was an ongoing process.



Emotionally Healthy Discipleship with DMM Principles at work

I've consistently seen that those who pass on whatever I've been teaching them to others mature more rapidly. They immediately begin to have an impact on their *oikos*, even before they are mature or have been fully transformed. It would be a mistake to think we have to wait until we have all our issues worked through before we can begin to impact the world.

Keep Scripture central.

I have a lot of hope for DMMs and CPMs because the Word of God is foundational to every DMM/CPM practice. In multiplicative disciple-making, those discipled through

a participatory, obedience-based study of Scripture have a stronger foundational understanding of Scripture than the average church adherent. With Sunday Schools and Wednesday night gatherings becoming a thing of the past, grounding church attendees in the Word of God is rapidly slipping away. DMM/CPM praxis gets people into the word in community. It forces the issue of application to our own lives. Scripture is orally repeated and then immediately shared with others. This is a huge strength in the goal of reproducing healthy disciples who make healthy disciples.

New believers may not immediately be protected from false doctrine any more than a new believer in a traditional church would be. Over time though, within a few years, their understanding of God's word will grow far stronger than the average Christian's.

In conclusion, let me point us back to our Lord. He made disciples, who had some major issues. But they grew and were transformed into men and women who turned the world upside down (Acts 17:6). Within a short amount of time, they multiplied and spread His message across Asia. Thousands became His disciples through them and those they discipled in His ways. It is possible to rapidly multiply healthy disciples...more than possible. It's happening in movements across the globe. And it will happen more! 



What if...

BY GREG PARSONS

Greg Parsons has been on the staff of Frontier Ventures (formerly USCWM) since 1982, and currently serves as Director of Global Connections. He and his wife Kathleen have two children and three grandchildren.

Thinking about the theme of this *MF*, I wondered: *What if Lausanne '74 hadn't happened?*

Without Lausanne '74, what might or might not have happened on the global level? With no Lausanne Covenant, would there be even *less* unity in the Church? Even *less* progress on social and justice issues for the poor? *Less* cooperation and understanding across cultures?

On a personal level, if Ralph Winter had not presented the vision for reaching the unreached at Lausanne, my life would have been very different.

I first heard Winter share that same vision at a weekend event for students, two years after he and Roberta returned from Lausanne. The Winters were days away from founding the U.S. Center for World Mission¹—in part, because of Lausanne. A good friend (Doug) and I mobilized 25 college students to this event. We had a growing conviction that the task of reaching people with the gospel was something every Christian must be engaged in. We wrote a mission-focused newsletter for the church's quarterly mailing. We read books and attended anything that might help us learn more about what was happening around the world. We were thrilled when we got our hands on the first U.S. edition of *Operation World* that same year—which detailed every country of the world and gave praises and prayer requests. We prayed.

But we had not heard or understood the concept of distinct cultural groups who were beyond the scope of the existing church mission efforts. Most alert Christians at the time knew there were Christians in every *country* of the world. But that did not solve the problem Winter spoke about. Doug and I learned, that *even if every church in the world were to reach out as far as it could in every direction, more than one half of the world would remain untouched.* Winter talked about Muslim, Hindu and Buddhist peoples and showed—on overhead transparencies—how few people were trying to reach them. He talked about “people groups” where there were no churches.

¹ Now Frontier Ventures, see www.frontierventures.org

LAUSANNE '74
Ralph D. Winter's Writings, with Responses
GREG H. PARSONS, EDITOR

Lausanne '74 chronicles Ralph D. Winter's impact on North American mission efforts. Some would expand that globally. Many see his presentation at the Lausanne Congress as the starting point—or tipping point—of that impact. Certainly, the Lausanne stage helped catapult the idea of the “unreached” into mission planning and board rooms around the world.

Doug and I just sat there stunned. Why hadn't we heard this? Leaving that weekend event, we were even more motivated to get involved because the “task” Winter portrayed seemed doable. Doug became one of the earliest Perspectives coordinators. I joined Winter at the USCWM and have been there since.

So... *What if Lausanne hadn't happened?* Humanly speaking, I would suggest we would have less hope.

When Doug and I first heard Ralph Winter, we knew enough about the world to see *massive* needs, but we didn't understand the complexity. It was just a HUGE task. Lausanne helped us to *see* and gave the evangelical church mission world *hope*. “Bite-sized groups” of people seem more reachable, even if many of them are still radically different from us, and the task will require sacrifice. 



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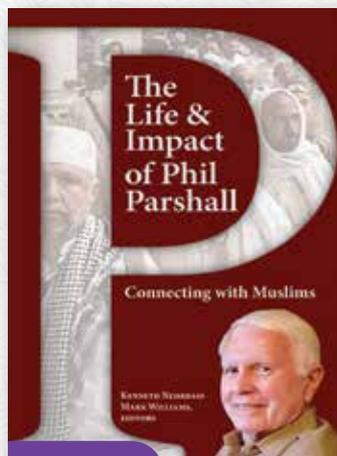
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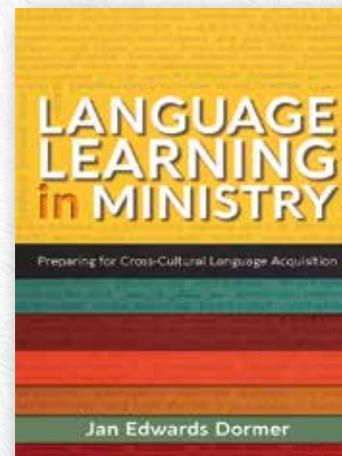
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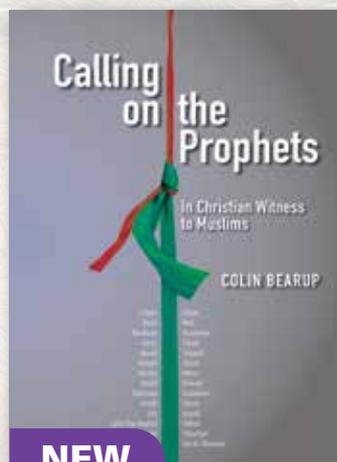
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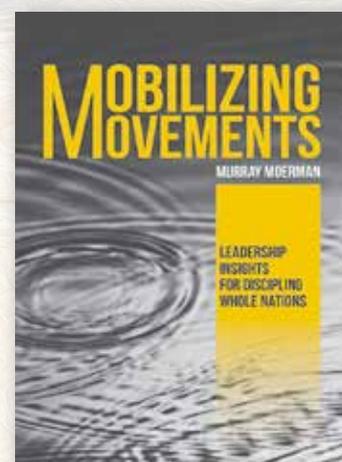
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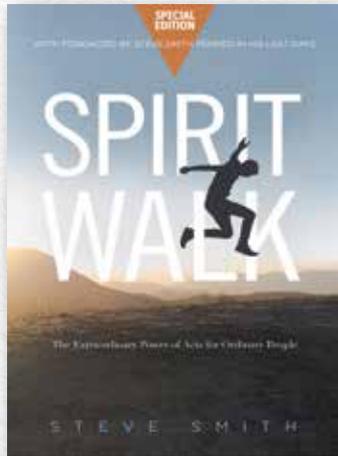
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Steve Smith (Author)

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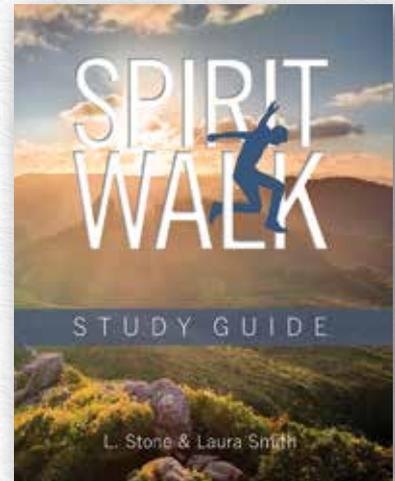
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L. Stone
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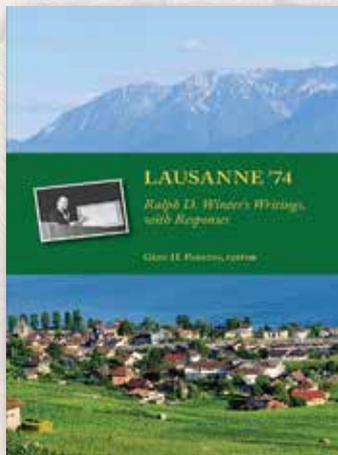
Lausanne '74

Ralph D. Winter's
Writings, with Responses

Greg H. Parsons (Editor)

Lausanne '74 chronicles Ralph D. Winter's impact on global mission efforts. This book puts together Winter's thinking leading up to and including that July day in Lausanne Switzerland and seeks to show how Winter's own presentation impacted his work and future. It also attempts to demonstrate how the ideas were and are understood, and how they impacted our strategy for Kingdom service today. This book is a foundational reference for understanding strategic mission considerations, now and in the future.

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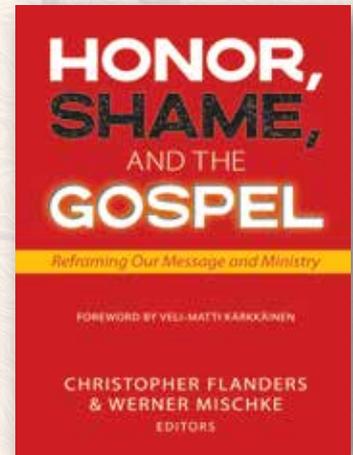
Honor, Shame, and the Gospel

Reframing Our Message
and Ministry

Christopher Flanders
& Werner Mischke
(Editors)

In Honor, Shame, and the Gospel, over a dozen practitioners and scholars from diverse contexts and fields add to the ongoing conversation around the theological and missiological implications of an honorific gospel. Eight illuminating case studies explore ways to make disciples in a diversity of social contexts—for example, East Asian rural, Middle Eastern refugee, African tribal, and Western secular urban.

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Note: Scripture references are from the *English Standard Version* (ESV). Images in this guide (marked with an asterisk *) come from the International Mission Board (IMB). We thank the IMB for their exquisite images, taken by workers in the field.

SEPTEMBER



■ 1 Malayo in Colombia

Who are these men, all dressed in white with long black hair? They are the Malayo, also known as Wiwa people, who live in the valleys of the Sierra Nevada Mountains of Colombia. They have a very democratic way of governing; every few weeks, the men gather all night to discuss and vote on how to resolve conflicts, and village shamans are in charge of carrying out their decisions. Currently, they are struggling to maintain their identity.

Malachi
4:2

But for you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings. You shall go out leaping like calves from the stall.

- Pray that this people group would fear the name of the Lord and experience His healing.
- Pray for God to send workers to the Malayo with the means to not only improve their physical health, but also to share the good news about Christ. Pray for an unstoppable movement to Christ among them.

■ 2 Pajonal Asheninka in Peru

The Pajonal Asheninka people have suffered from enslavement and devastating epidemics during the 20th century and from terrorist groups in the early 1990s. The good news is that there are now four or five indigenous evangelical churches in the early stages of development, but animism still has a strong grip on their lives.

Matthew
4:4

But he answered, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.

- Pray for today's people group to learn and understand that the Bible comes from the mouth and mind of the one, true God.
- Pray for the Lord to improve their lives physically, economically and spiritually. Pray for the Lord to protect them from the spirit world and for them to understand the power of the Lord.

■ 3 South Ucayali Asheninka in Peru

The South Ucayali Asheninka in Peru have suffered greatly at the hands of outsiders and terrorist groups. They are subsistence farmers and work mostly in the morning and rest during the heat of the afternoon. Often the men go hunting and fishing in the evenings. They have an animistic worldview, and they use shamans to look for the causes of life problems and appease wicked spirits.

Matthew
4:16

The people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, on them a light has dawned.

- Pray for this people group to see the light of Jesus Christ.
- Pray for those trying to improve the lifestyle of the Asheninka group to make great strides in the 2020s. Pray for spiritual receptivity coming from many visitations of the Holy Spirit. Pray for a movement to Christ.

■ 4 Urdu in Guyana

Would you ever expect to find Urdu-speaking Muslims in Guyana? The Urdu are not just one ethnic group, but a collection of groups linked by the Urdu language. They have emigrated to Guyana and other countries in search of economic opportunities. Urdu speakers are found in every level of society.

Matthew
5:3

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

- Pray for this people group to recognize their own spiritual bankruptcy and come to Christ for the riches of His forgiveness.
- Pray for loving ambassadors of Christ to go to the Urdu speakers in Guyana. Pray for the Holy Spirit to move among their leaders and open the door for the King of kings.



■ 5 Saramaccan in Suriname

The Saramaccan in Suriname were sold as African slaves but escaped in the 17th and 18th centuries. They speak Saramaccan, which includes a mix of West African languages, English and Portuguese. Many Saramaccan live along rivers, and much of Saramaccan culture is influenced by ancestors, forest spirits and snake gods. These gods and spirits influence decisions regarding practical things, which can be a blockade from believing in and serving Jesus Christ.

Matthew 5:14 | *You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.*

- Pray for this people group to become a light to the world reflecting the goodness and grace of Jesus Christ.
- Pray that God would soften their hearts to Christ, especially among their elders. Pray for Saramaccan believers to have a movement to Christ started among their people.

■ 6 Spanish-speaking Jews in Uruguay

Over 10,000 Uruguayan Jews have immigrated to Israel since 1973. This, combined with an aging population and intermarriage, has decreased the Jewish population. The Jewish cultural connection that once tied the community together has basically been replaced with secularism and nominal adherence to Torah Judaism. Christian leaders meeting with Uruguayan rabbis could open new sources of discussing the Old Testament prophecies.

Matthew 7:15–16 | *Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles?*

- Pray that the Lord would give this people group the discernment to recognize false prophets and the grace to know the true Prophet, Priest and King, Jesus Christ.
- Pray that Uruguayan Jewish believers would be open to hearing, accepting, and knowing that they can have a life in Jesus, which will give them eternal peace. Pray for a movement to Christ among Uruguayan Jewish people this decade.

■ 7 Portuguese-speaking Jews in Brazil

During the 14th and 15th century, Sephardi Jews in Portugal were forced to convert to Catholicism, and a small number of them immigrated to Brazil as "Christians." Most abandoned their Jewish traditions over the centuries, and others rejected all forms of religious practice. Some have returned to the Jewish roots in Brazil.

Matthew 10:28 | *And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.*

- Pray for believers in today's people group to be courageous in their witness for Christ and fear God, not men.
- Pray that as these Portuguese Jewish people come to know the truth of their Jewish identity, they would turn to God's Word, accept Jesus as their Messiah, and rejoice in their salvation. Pray for them to share Christ and extend His grace into a movement that will affect Jewish people all over Latin America.

■ 8 Israeli Jews in Israel

The prophet Ezekiel predicted that God would re-gather the Jewish people and give them their "promised land." God kept his promise, and in 1948, the nation of Israel was reborn. In 1948, there were an estimated 23 Jewish Messianic believers and no congregations. Currently there are over 150 congregations and a conservative estimate of 30,000 believers in the Messiah. Almost 50 percent of Israeli Jews are very secular with no acceptance of God's Word.

Matthew 11:25 | *At that time Jesus declared, I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children.*

- Pray for this people group to humble themselves and come to trust in Christ as little children.
- Pray for a movement among the Orthodox and Hasidic Jewish populations, both of whom rarely give Jesus a chance to offer them a full life.



■ 9 Cochin Jews in Israel

Did you know there are Jewish people in Israel who speak Malayalam, a south Indian language? Today the Cochin Jews have been incorporated into the Israeli population, and many retain their Malayalam language and spicy cuisine. Their lifestyles are no different from other Jewish people in Israel.

Matthew 13:8 | *Other seeds fell on good soil and produced grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.*

- Pray that today's people group would become fertile soil and produces much fruit for God and His kingdom.
- Pray for the spiritual lives of the Cochin people to become fruitful as they follow Christ. Pray that the spiritual eyes of the Cochin Jews would be opened to see their Messiah.

■ 10 Romanian Jews in Israel

Following WWII, thousands of Romanian Jewish families emigrated to Israel. Though there are some elderly Romanian Jewish people still in Romania, most emigrated to Israel where they are now making a positive difference in the educational, business and cultural spheres.

Matthew 22:9-10 | *Go therefore to the main roads and invite to the wedding feast as many as you find.' And those servants went out into the roads and gathered all whom they found, both bad and good. So the wedding hall was filled with guests.*

- Pray for many in today's people group to accept the Lord's invitation to become part of His kingdom and join His great feast at the end of the age.
- Pray that God would open the eyes and hearts of Romanian Jewish people in Israel, so they will have a full revelation of His saving glory in Jesus. Pray that this revelation would result in them forming their own Disciple Making Movement.

■ 11 French Jews in France

Because of anti-Semitism in France, some have discretely decided to leave Paris and move into the suburbs; many have chosen to hide their Jewishness. Over 85% of Jewish people have experienced anti-Semitic incidents, which mainly have occurred through verbal abuse, physical attacks, and shootings. Synagogues have been vandalized and Jewish cemeteries defaced.

Matthew 25:21

His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.'

- Pray that many in this people group become good and faithful servants of the Master and celebrate with Him in the coming kingdom.
- Pray for the Lord to be the protector of the Jewish people in France.
- Pray that God would open the minds, hearts and souls of the Jewish non-believers to accept Jesus as their Messiah, who desires them to know His grace and give them eternal peace.
- Pray for a movement to Christ among French Jews this decade.

■ 12 Polish Jews in Israel

Two thousand years ago, Jews arrived in Europe and spread throughout the continent. Through time, they have generally split into various groups based on whether they held to Jewish traditions and values. The traditional Hasidic movement was born in Poland. Many of these Polish Hasidic Jewish people are now in Israel.

Mark 1:14-15

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.

- Pray for this people group to get the opportunity to hear a clear presentation of the good news. Pray for God's Spirit to move them to repent and believe in Christ.
- Pray that the few Jewish believers in Israel would be so filled with the fruit of the Holy Spirit that they will help start movements to Christ among the Hasidic Jews. Ask the Holy Spirit to send workers in the harvest field and grant believers courage to evangelize.

■ 13 Yahudic Jews in Israel

The Yahudic Jews of Israel were originally part of the Jewish Diaspora (the destruction of the Jewish homeland by the Babylonians in what is now Iraq). These Jews had to perfect and rely on their oral traditions. Almost all have returned to Israel, though a few remain in Iraq.

Mark
1:40–41

And a leper came to him, imploring him, and kneeling said to him, If you will, you can make me clean. Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand and touched him and said to him, I will; be clean.

- Pray for this people group to feel the healing touch of Christ and be cleansed from their sins.
- Pray that God would heal the broken Yahudic families and tie them together again. Pray that through this, God would show his grace ever more, leading Yahudic Jewish people into a movement to Himself. Pray that God would stir the hearts of Christ followers to share the good news of the perfect Jew.

■ 14 English-speaking Jews in the US

New York City is known for having the highest Jewish population in North America, many of whom are doctors, lawyers and businessmen. Although influenced by surrounding culture, the religiously committed Jews have not lost their beloved traditions. Religious Jews believe in the supreme being of the Old Testament, creator of the universe, and ultimate judge. Reformed Jews, on the other hand, do not abide by any traditions, so they can easily be secularized.

Mark
4:39

And he awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, Peace! Be still! And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.

- Pray that the Lord would bring His peace that passes all understanding into the hearts of this people group.
- Pray that God would give wisdom to mission agencies to take Christ to America's Jewish population. Pray for a strong movement to Christ among every Orthodox Jewish community in the U.S.

■ 15 Eastern Yiddish-speaking Jews in Israel

Yiddish, derived from Medieval High German, is a common language among northern European Jews as well as Jewish people in Israel. Within Israel, Jews may speak fluent Yiddish, Russian, Ladino, or any number of other languages learned in their countries of origin or from their immigrant parents. Those who speak Eastern Yiddish in Israel usually live in cities like the other Israelis and also speak Hebrew, the primary language.

Mark
5:19

And he did not permit him but said to him, Go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you.

- Pray for those who have been blessed among today's people group to boldly and lovingly tell others of God's abundant mercy.
- Pray that God would prepare the Yiddish-speaking Jews to be open to a gospel witness and that there will be a massive movement to their loving Messiah in the 2020s.

■ 16 Spanish-speaking Jews in Puerto Rico

The Sephardim, Ladino-speaking Jews, arrived in what was then colonial Spanish New Mexico as early as the 15th century. Some settled in Puerto Rico. Many were conversos: Iberian Jews, who were forced to convert to Catholicism. Ladino, based on Spanish with strong influences from other languages, was their trade language. Through the generations, they have switched to Spanish, the language of Puerto Rico where they have developed their own arts and synagogues.

Mark
7:37

And they were astonished beyond measure, saying, He has done all things well. He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak.

- Pray that this people group would come to understand that the wisdom, power and goodness of God are found only in Jesus Christ.
- Pray that the Church would find ways to develop culturally meaningful ways of reaching them. Pray for a powerful movement to Christ among the Spanish speaking Jews in Puerto Rico.

■ 17 Kaman in Myanmar

Muslim Kaman people are between a rock and a hard place in their Buddhist Myanmar homeland. As a Muslim people group in a hostile Buddhist land, they are persecuted to the point where many live in internally displaced persons camps (IDPC). Because Kaman are Muslim, some in Myanmar's parliament are calling for their destruction.

Mark
8:29

And he asked them, But who do you say that I am? Peter answered him, You are the Christ.

- Pray that this people would believe and proclaim, like Peter, that Jesus Christ is their Savior and Lord.
- Pray for the Lord to bring peace and justice to this situation. Pray that the stress of living in IDP camps would cause the Kaman to seek and find answers in Christ. Pray that God's Spirit would use these situations to bring about a people movement to Christ.

■ 18 Gujarati in Myanmar

There were many Gujarati Hindus in Myanmar starting in 1865 until they were ousted by nationalistic Burmese in 1962. They were called “British colonialists” by irrational Burmese, who harmed their own fragile economy by driving out the business savvy Gujaratis. Today some Gujaratis remain. There is a potential mission force of believers from minority ethnic groups in Myanmar and northeastern India. Pray that the church in Myanmar would overcome its own nationalism to reach out to the Gujaratis within their communities.

Mark 8:36–37 *For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? For what can a man give in return for his soul?*

- Pray for today’s people group to come to realize that all the spiritual riches of life and true wisdom are found in Jesus Christ alone.
- Pray the Holy Spirit would prepare Gujaratis to be open to that witness and to be open to acknowledging their sinfulness before God.

■ 19 Manyuki in Myanmar

What might it be like to live in constant fear of evil spirits and to make regular sacrifices to hopefully appease the fickle and treacherous demons of the unseen realm? This is life for the Manyuki people of Myanmar.

Mark 9:31 *For he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him. And when he is killed, after three days he will rise.*

- Pray that today’s people group would comprehend that Jesus died for their sins and rose again demonstrating His power over sin and death.
- Pray that Manyuki families, villages and communities would know the freedom of following the King of kings, the one who holds all authority in heaven and on earth. Pray that they would meet Jesus in dreams and visions and that they would pursue him eagerly. Pray that they would experience a Disciple Making Movement.



■ 20 Taungyo in Myanmar

One way to pick out the Taungyo is by the distinctive apparel of the women—lots of silver on their jewelry and heavy brass rings on their necks that are used to signify their marital status. The Taungyo are fishermen and agriculturalists. They are almost entirely Buddhist.

Mark 10:14–15 *But when Jesus saw it, he was indignant and said to them, Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.*

- Pray that this people group would humble themselves and come to God with child-like trust and thereby enter into His kingdom.
- Pray for a mass awakening among the Taungyo and deep movements of discipleship as they pursue God’s true righteousness and holiness. Pray for dreams and visions that will allow Jesus to make Himself known.

■ 21 Afar in Eritrea

The Afar who live in the desert inhabit one of the most rugged regions in the world. Most are nomads who herd livestock. To follow Jesus among the Afar is to risk losing status in the community as well as possibly losing family and friends, which are serious losses.

Mark 10:51 *And Jesus said to him, What do you want me to do for you? And the blind man said to him, Rabbi, let me recover my sight.*

- Pray for the Lord to heal the spiritual blindness of today’s people group. Pray that these people would see and recognize Jesus for who He truly is, the Light and Savior of the world.
- Pray that the few followers of Jesus among the Afar would find each other, faithfully fellowship together, and begin a movement to Christ. Pray they would be excellent witnesses for the Lord’s goodness. Pray that the Afar community would be able to prepare their children for the rapidly changing conditions of the 21st century.

■ 22 Southern Pashtun in Afghanistan

The Southern Pashtun people are said to love and hate with equal intensity, displaying fierce loyalty to friends, yet defending the right of badal -- revenge or blood feuds -- where enemies are concerned. Tribal traditions, state and social opposition, conservative Islam, and the hostility of family all combine to stunt any growth of the Christian faith among the Pashtun people.

Mark
12:24

Jesus said to them, Is this not the reason you are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God?

- Pray that this people group would hunger for and would learn the Scriptures. Pray that these people begin to experience the miraculous power of God.
- Pray for spiritual and physical peace in Afghanistan. Though there are believers scattered among them, pray for a powerful Disciple Making Movement to take root and spread.



■ 23 Northern Pashtun in Afghanistan

The Pashtuns are dedicated to Sunni Islam, and they strongly reject Western values, especially anything they view as anti-Islamic. Pashtun families believe that any member of their family who embraces the Savior brings them dishonor, and there are almost always severe repercussions.

Luke
10:2

And he said to them, The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.

- Pray for an abundance of Holy Spirit-led workers to disciple this people group.
- Pray they would have open hearts to tools like the internet, radio, JESUS Films, etc. This needs to be undergirded with worldwide prayer. Pray that this would be the decade when an unstoppable movement to Christ would begin among the Northern Pashtuns.



■ 24 Maliar Pashtun in Pakistan

Life has become increasingly difficult for the Maliar Pashtuns of Pakistan. Deforestation, overgrazing and extensive agriculture have made soil resources more vulnerable to floods, which make the soil less fertile. A number have moved into Pakistani cities. The need for assistance in the area of soil conservation could be an opening for trained Christ followers to enter the Maliar rural regions as God's messengers.

Luke
24:45

Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures.

- Pray that the minds of this people group would be opened to understand God's word by the Spirit Himself.
- Pray that God would uphold faithful and committed long term Christ followers in the areas of development, to work among the Malians to help them thrive economically and spiritually. Pray for a Disciple Making Movement among the Maliar people this decade.

■ 25 Northern Pashtun in the United States

The Pashtun have been called the largest Muslim tribal society in the world. They are found in India, Pakistan and Afghanistan, and now many are living in the United States. There is a large Afghan diaspora in Fremont, CA, where they are very famous for their restaurants and exotic markets. Other US states where they have settled include Virginia, New York and some of the northeastern states.

John
15:5

I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

- Pray for the Lord to help today's people group to understand that apart from Him they can do nothing of spiritual and eternal value.
- Pray for spiritual hunger among the Pashtuns in America.
- Pray for a people movement among the Pashtun diaspora that will spread far and wide. Pray for the American church to reach the Muslim Pashtun for the Lord.

■ 26 Ir in Laos

The Ir people group live in the highlands of Laos. They are usually included in other people groups, but they are distinct, and our heavenly Father wants them to be His children. During the Vietnam War, U.S. warplanes dropped cluster bomblets over this region. Many of these bomblets remain and can explode when touched by farmers or children.

John 1:29 | *The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!*

- Pray that today's people group would look to the Lamb of God, Jesus, to have their sins taken away.
- Pray for the Lord to call forth medical missionary teams to work with the Ir people and for protection from the bomblets. Pray for spiritual understanding that will turn their hearts to the Light of the World.

■ 27 Jeng in Laos

In 1936, the Jeng fled Vietnam for Laos, where they lost some of their cultural uniqueness. Today they live in six villages where they engage in rice farming along main highways. One thing they did not lose is their traditional animism. Indeed, they resisted Buddhist efforts to convert them.

John 3:3 | *Jesus answered him, Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.*

- Pray that many in this people group would be born again and enter into the Kingdom of God.
- Pray that the small Brau and Oy churches would take advantage of the communication routes to evangelize the Jeng through word, deed and power encounters.
- Pray that God would lead the Jeng people to embrace the ways of Jesus Christ for all of their families and villages.

■ 28 Bisaya in Malaysia

The Bisaya of Western Sabah and Brunei Bay, Malaysia live along the "middle" stretches of the Limbang River, hence known as "people of the middle" or "people of the river." They live in stilt long houses on the river front where they fish. This indigenous people group is overwhelmingly Muslim, but they mix orthodox Islamic beliefs with animistic and shamanistic practices.

John 4:23 | *But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him.*

- Pray that this people group would begin to worship the Father in spirit and in truth.
- Pray that Christian doctors and clinics would take root among the Bisaya of Malaysia. Pray that the Middle People would become open to the gospel and Christian witness. Pray for a mighty movement to Christ among them this decade.

■ 29 Bawean in Malaysia

The Bawean people are majority Sunni Muslims with some influence from traditional local beliefs. Many grow rice, maize and coconuts for a living. Many Bawean people live in Singapore, where there is freedom of religion. Perhaps Christ followers can reach out to the Bawean in Singapore first, and new Bawean believers can take Christ to their people in Malaysia and Indonesia.

John 5:24 | *Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.*

- Pray that today's people group would listen to the God's message and believe in the good news of their salvation.
- Pray for believers in Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore to shine Christ's light to those around them. Pray that there would be a movement to Christ among the Bawean.

■ 30 Hanunoo in the Philippines

How can the Hanunoo people, living in poverty and worshipping nature spirits, be reached with Jesus' love? They reside in the far south of Mindoro, one of the Philippine islands. Their villages are autonomous, with no chiefs. They are isolated from medicine and education, along with other aspects of modern life.

John 6:35 | *Jesus said to them, I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.*

- Pray that this people group would hunger for God and begin to feed spiritually on the bread of life, Jesus Christ.
- Pray the Lord would send prepared witnesses to Hanunoo families and villages. Ask for Disciple Making Movements that spread to the many Hanunoo communities, bringing great blessings to these precious people.



OCTOBER

■ 1 Muslim Baghban in Pakistan

When those from the Indian subcontinent hear the word “Baghban,” most think of the Bollywood film with that title. But when a farmer from the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Province of Pakistan hears that word, he thinks of himself, his family, and community. The Baghban people are a community of gardeners, and *Baghban* is the literal definition of their trade: gardening. Others engage in selling fruits.

John
7:37–38

On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.

- Pray for this people group to experience the fullness of the Holy Spirit and the overflowing, gracious love of God.
- Pray that God would open Baghban hearts to the gospel and would raise up His ambassadors to tell them of Jesus. Pray for a Disciple Making Movement among the Baghban people in Pakistan and India this decade.

■ 2 Muslim Rahmani in India

The Rahmani work mainly as farmers. Many do not read, so the gospel will need to be given in oral forms. They are Muslims, and there is much social stigma about becoming a Christian in their families and communities. They need to find a way to embrace Christ without alienating the people they hold dear.

John
8:29

And he who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to him.

- Pray for today's people group to begin to please God by trusting in and obeying His Son.
- Pray for a spiritual hunger that will draw the Rahmani people to the only one who can save them from sin and death. Pray for workers to go to them. Pray for a Disciple Making Movement to Christ among the Rahmani people in this decade.

■ 3 Afshari in Afghanistan

Most Afghan Afshari believe that Ali, Muhammad's cousin, was ordained by Allah to follow Mohammad, and after him came 11 more imams selected by Allah. The 12th one, Hujjat-Allah, is recognized as the promised Mahdi, their messiah, whom they say has been living in seclusion since 874. They believe that in God's time, he will return with Jesus to establish Islam in the world. This is called the Twelver Shia doctrine of Islam. Afsharis mainly live through farming, herding and carpet weaving.

John
8:58

Jesus said to them, Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.

- Pray for this people group to understand that Jesus is not just another human prophet but is the eternal God.
- Pray for a movement to Christ among the Afshari people this decade.

■ 4 Darwazi in Afghanistan

How would you like to visit a land of snowcapped mountains and rushing streams of water? This is the beautiful geography that both surrounds and isolates the small towns of the Darwazi people of northeastern Afghanistan. Although a few radios have connected them to the outside world, they are still mostly isolated, so medical assistance and medicine are a major need. They have a high mortality rate among their women and children due to difficulties in childbirth.

John
9:25

He answered, Whether he is a sinner I do not know. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see.

- Pray that the Lord would remove the spiritual blindness of today's people group and they would begin to see God's truth revealed in Jesus Christ.
- Pray that God would thrust out Afghan believers in reaching these people with much needed medical supplies and anointed prayer for the sick.



■ 5 Mussali in Afghanistan

Indigenous Hindus were forcibly converted to Islam and given the derisive name "Mussali." Today, they have low status wherever they live in South Asia, including Afghanistan.

Acts 1:8 | *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.*

- Pray that today's people group would receive God's Spirit and become empowered to tell others about the grace of God in Jesus Christ.
- There are no followers of Christ among the Mussali people, so pray for this to soon change. Pray that the Mussali people would have the blessings of spiritual hunger that will lead them to Jesus Christ. Pray for the Lord to thrust out workers to this untended field. Pray for the Lord to raise up the Mussali communities with both physical and spiritual blessings that will show other communities what He can do for any people who submit to His ways.

■ 6 Ormuri in Afghanistan

The Nuristani people groups are unique amid others living in Afghanistan - so unique they cannot be viewed through a single lens. As early inhabitants of the Nuristani region in northeast Afghanistan, most still reside there in two groups, the Malakhel and Ormuri.

Acts 2:4 | *And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.*

- Pray for this people group to be filled with the Holy Spirit and to proclaim the greatness of God.
- Pray the Lord would even now be stirring the hearts of many in this tribe to seek forgiveness for their sin, forgiveness that comes only by placing faith in Christ. Pray for peace throughout Afghanistan and for a national government that is competent and just. Pray for a major movement to Christ among each Nuristani people group.

■ 7 Parachi in Afghanistan

The Parachi people live in five villages of Afghanistan. With no Christ followers in their Muslim villages it is seemingly impossible for any movement to spread. These communities are tightly knit and any change in spiritual beliefs is rare because it is viewed as a threat to all of them.

Acts 2:28 | *You have made known to me the paths of life; you will make me full of gladness with your presence.'*

- Pray the Lord would make known to today's people group the true path of life. Pray they would learn to rejoice in God's presence.
- Pray for the protection and spiritual growth of any followers of Christ living among the Parachi. Pray for them to be strong and share what the Holy Spirit is teaching them. Pray that the Parachi's physical and spiritual needs would be met. Pray for a Disciple Making Movement to Christ in the Parachi community.

■ 8 Qizilbash in Afghanistan

The word *Qizilbash* is an Ottoman Turkish word referring to red headgear, which was associated with the "twelver" Shi'ite Muslims. The Qizilbash were a coalition of many different tribes of predominantly Turkic-speaking Azerbaijani peoples united in their adherence to Shia Islam and can be traced back to the 15th century. They have a reputation for being skilled warriors and have long been associated with sources of power.

Acts 3:9 | *And all the people saw him walking and praising God.*

- Pray for the Lord to do signs and wonders among today's people group. Pray they would trust in God and give Him the glory.
- Pray for a spiritual hunger that will lead the Qizilbash people to the cross. Pray for a clear presentation of the gospel message among the Qizilbash that will lead to a movement to Christ.

■ 9 Narisati Nuristanis in Afghanistan

Most Nuristani subsist as farmers and herders. However, in this remote and difficult-to-access region, steep, narrow paths challenge even mules, and transport is mostly on foot. Therefore, some of the men are employed by logging or illicit gem mining enterprises. There are several Nuristani peoples, one of which is the Narisati.

Acts 4:12 | *And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.*

- Pray for today's people group to come to understand that salvation is found only in Jesus Christ and in no other religion.
- Pray for the Lord to reveal Himself to Narisati leaders through dreams and visions. Pray for a spiritual hunger that will not be satisfied by anything other than Jesus Christ. Pray for a movement to Christ among the Narisati Nuristanis.

■ 10 Sudanese Arabs in Saudi Arabia

Sudanese Arabs are Sunni Muslims whose faith focuses on pilgrimage to saints' tombs as well as the pilgrimage to Mecca. It is also tinged with mysticism, thanks to Sufism, a form of Islam that emphasizes mysticism and emotions. Their unique music is rooted in their pre-Islamic past. Urban Sudanese Arabs have migrated to Saudi Arabia to work in oil fields.

Acts 4:19–20 | *But Peter and John answered them, Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.*

- Pray for this people group to listen to and to obey God. Pray that they would hear God's message and tell others about His marvelous works.
- Pray for the Lord to reach these people through modern media such as Facebook, YouTube and the Internet, in addition to television and radio, as God prepares them through dreams and visions. Pray for a strong underground movement to Christ among Sudanese Arabs that will spread far and wide.

■ 11 Tihami Arabs in Saudi Arabia

The Tihami people are easily recognized by their colorful clothing, flowers in their hair, and their large families since they love children. Although most live in Yemen, some live in Saudi Arabia as nomads and some as farmers. The main obstacle to reaching them is that they are in Saudi Arabia, Yemen and Oman, where all are closed to mission efforts. Their other obstacle is nomadism, which makes it very difficult for outsiders to contact them. However, we must remember that someone took that effort to bring Islam to their communities.

Acts 4:29–30 | *And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness, while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus.*

- Pray for boldness and love among the workers who go to today's people group.
- Pray for a Disciple Making Movement among the Tihami people that cannot be stopped by man's best efforts.

■ 12 Javanese in Saudi Arabia

The Javanese are among the largest, most powerful, and most highly reached people group in Indonesia. However, the majority of them are Sunni Muslim, and they are able to migrate to Saudi Arabia to work.

Acts 5:41 | *With joy you will drink deeply from the fountain of salvation!*

Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name.

- Pray that believers in this people group would be willing to endure persecution for the name of Christ.
- Pray for the Lord to send Holy Spirit-driven workers to the Javanese in Saudi Arabia. Pray that while they are in Saudi Arabia, the Javanese would find the Islamic religious system wanting and seek to find true spiritual nourishment in Jesus Christ.

■ 13 Mahra in Saudi Arabia

The Mahra people are scattered in three countries, including southeastern Saudi Arabia. They speak their own dialect of Arabic, but they are not Arabs. They are semi-nomadic pastoralists who engage in some agriculture part of the year. The men have only one wife, and they are Sunni Muslims although they are probably not as devout as Saudi Arabs. As a society, they have social ranking and are led by a sheikh.

Acts 8:30 | *So Philip ran to him and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and asked, Do you understand what you are reading?*

- Pray that the Lord would give today's people group a desire to hear and to understand God's words.
- Pray for Holy Spirit-driven dreams and visions of Jesus that will lead them into a movement to Christ.

■ 14 Shahari in Saudi Arabia

The story of wise men bearing gifts for the infant Jesus is a familiar story to all Christians. One of those gifts was the precious and costly frankincense. Where does it come from? It comes from Oman, specifically the region near the border of Yemen and Oman, where the Shahari live. Some Shaharis live in neighboring Saudi Arabia, and their lives are difficult in this extremely dry, hot part of the Arabian Peninsula.

Acts 13:12 | *Then the proconsul believed, when he saw what had occurred, for he was astonished at the teaching of the Lord.*

- Pray for this people group to be amazed at what Christ can do to bless their families and communities.
- Pray for mission groups to specifically reach out to Shahari people in cities and start Disciple Making Movements among them, with the hope that new believers will return to their nomadic communities and share Christ.



■ 15 Somali in Saudi Arabia

Somalis originated in the horn of Africa, so they are very close to the Arabian Peninsula. Today, many live in Saudi Arabia, and most of those in Saudi Arabia live in urban centers. The Somali men consider themselves “warriors,” often leaving the women in charge of the herds so that they can train to become more effective fighters since fights are common, especially between clans. They are Muslims, and they believe in evil spirits that bring sickness by possessing their victims.

Acts
13:47

For so the Lord has commanded us, saying, I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.

- Pray that the believers in today’s people group become God’s light to their own group and to the nations of the world.
- Pray that this would be the decade when there is a massive spiritual breakthrough among Somalis in Saudi Arabia.

■ 16 Kabardian in Saudi Arabia

The Kabardians have been nearly exterminated many times over. They believe that hospitality must be extended to strangers and that they must demonstrate honor to their family elders. On the other hand, blood revenge is a deeply ingrained cultural value.

Acts
16:9

And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing there, urging him and saying, Come over to Macedonia and help us.

- Pray that the Lord would send messengers to this people group to tell them the good news about Jesus.
- Pray for a Disciple Making Movement to take place with the Kabardians during the next ten years and for church planting movements to spring up, giving depth and spiritual maturity to all Kabardian believers. Pray for their elders and decision makers to have dreams and visions of the victorious Christ that will turn their hearts to Him.

■ 17 Emirati Arabs in the UAE

Saudi Arabia is the home of the Gulf Arabs, who are nomads and villagers and live in the harsh desert environment. The Gulf Arabs are often associated with Saudi Arabia, though many live in the nearby United Arab Emirates. Muslims have a strong bias against the validity of Christianity, including those from the United Arab Emirates.

Acts
17:30–31

The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.

- Pray for today’s people group to repent of their sins and to believe in the God of the Bible.
- Pray for Christ followers to adopt and pray for Emirati Arabs. Pray for a people movement to Christ during this decade among Emirati Arabs.

■ 18 Hazara in the United Arab Emirates

The Hazaras in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) are originally from central Afghanistan, and their Asian facial features and Shi’ite form of Islam make them stand out in both countries. Persecution has shaped and defined the Hazaras in Afghanistan. Under these circumstances, many have fled to places like the UAE. Most of the people of the UAE are non-citizens, including the Hazaras, and Hazaras in the UAE are from many walks of life.

Acts
19:20

So the word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily.

- Pray that the word of the Lord would spread and prevail in this people group.
- Pray for the Hazaras to find safe refuge and good jobs in the UAE. Pray for a church planting movement among the Hazaras in the UAE.



■ 19 Malay in the UAE

Though Malaysia hosts many non-Malay peoples, some Malay are hosted by the United Arab Emirates (UAE) as they work there. They tend to take high status positions in engineering, banking and education.

Acts
20:24

But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

- Pray that today's people group would experience God's wonderful grace and begin to tell others about Him.
- Pray for a spiritual hunger that will give the Malays in the UAE a willingness to question institutionalized Islam. Pray for workers to go to them. Pray for a movement to Christ among the Malay in the UAE that will spread back to Malaysia.

■ 20 Domari Romani in the UAE

The Domari Romani (Gypsies) of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) often camp outside of urban locations where they attempt to earn a living through manual jobs, begging or selling trinkets. A few provide street entertainment through their music and dancing. They face discrimination and rarely manage to advance out of poverty.

Acts
26:18

To open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.'

- Pray for God to send spiritual light and truth to this people group.
- Pray for the Domari Romani to be blessed physically and spiritually in the UAE. Pray for a powerful movement to Christ among them that will spread far and wide.

■ 21 Hijazi Arabs in the UAE

The Arabic desert voices of the Saudi Hijazi tell much about their lives and culture as they roam the harsh deserts of the UAE with their livestock, their main source of livelihood. Sitting around open fires outside their tents, they often recite poems or sing songs accompanied by a lute (oud), flute, or drum while relating stories about their history or lives.

Acts
28:28

Therefore let it be known to you that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen.

- Pray for this people group to hear and to accept the message of God's salvation.
- Pray for them to have a spiritual hunger that will lead them to the cross. Pray for serious, long term efforts by caring followers of Christ to reach the Hijazi, so they can have the opportunity to allow Christ to bless their families and communities.

■ 22 Socotran in the UAE

The inhabitants of Socotra Island off the coast of Yemen differ from mainland Arabs and are believed to be a mixture of Greek, Portuguese, African and Arab. Their language is a version of the ancient Himyarite language, which was spoken in pre-Islamic Arabia for many centuries. Most live on this island but a small number work in the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

2 Cor
10:3-5

For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ.

- Pray for the Holy Spirit to give new believers among today's people group victory their spiritual battles.
- Pray for workers to reach the Socotran people in the UAE this decade. Pray for a movement to Christ that will bless their community. Pray for their elders to become open to the claims of Christ and allow their people to listen.

■ 23 Iraqi Arabs in the UAE

What makes an Arab an Arab? They populate most of the Middle East and 22 countries. The two most common traits that all Arabs have are their language, Arabic, and their shared cultural values. Iraqi Arabs began to migrate to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) because of instability at home. Students make up a large portion of the immigration to the UAE in light of its reputable institutions across the Middle East.

Ephesians 1:3 *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly place.*

- Thank the Lord that He is giving His spiritual blessings to this people group.
- Pray that the Holy Spirit would soften their hearts. Pray for a Christ-ward movement among Iraqi Arabs, not only in the UAE but also in Iraq.

■ 24 Bahraini Arabs in Oman

The Bahraini Arabs believe their ancestry goes back to Ishmael, the son of Abraham and Hagar, his wife's maid. They are the largest people group in Bahrain. Bahraini Arabs have seen the excesses of Western "Christian" culture, and they want to distance themselves from it.

Ephesians 1:17-18 *That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saint.*

- Pray for spiritual wisdom and light for the leaders of today's people group.
- Pray for the Bahraini Arabs to have open hearts to the teachings of Christ and easy access to the JESUS Film. Pray for them to live fulfilling lives and to have all physical and spiritual needs met. Pray that Oman would be an incubator for a Bahraini Arab movement to Christ.



■ 25 Dhofari Arabs in Oman

Residing in Salalah and nearby coastal regions of Oman, these Arabs speak their own variety of Arabic. Even though Oman is a modern country, western influences are quite restricted. A very important part of Omani culture is hospitality. If invited into an Omani house, a visitor is likely to be greeted with a bowl of dates, qahwa (coffee with cardamom), and fruit. Omanis practice a unique brand of Islam: Ibadhism.

Ephesians 3:16-17 *That according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love.*

- Make this verse your prayer for today's people group.
- Pray for the Dhofari Arabs to be drawn to Jesus (whom Muslims call Isa al-Masih) and begin discovery Bible studies. Pray the Spirit of Jesus would open their minds to see Jesus as He is.

■ 26 Shihuh in Oman

The Shihuh are fishermen and herdsman and are probably descended from the original inhabitants of northern Oman, pushed into the mountains by successive Muslim and Portuguese invasions. The land in which they live is rocky and arid, with very little vegetation.

Ephesians 5:26-27 *That he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.*

- Pray for an emerging, spotless and pure church among this people group.
- Pray for sufficient rainfall to provide for livestock and to grow grain needed for food. Pray that God's provision would lead the Shihuh to seek and find the Savior.

■ 27 Arabized Harasi in Oman

Are they Arabs or Bedouins? The Harasis have a Bedouin background but like many other Bedouins, they tend to become more like the dominant Arabic speaking culture around them. They live in a culture where Islam, as a religious and political force, is seldom challenged.

Ephesians 6:11 | *Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.*

- Pray for the Holy Spirit to give His armor to the believers among today's people group.
- Pray for faithful intercessors for the Arabized Harasi people until there is a strong movement to Christ among them. Pray for a spiritual hunger that will lead them into a Disciple Making Movement. Pray for their elders and community leaders to welcome those who come in the name of the Lord.

■ 28 Kumzari in Oman

The Kumzari are entirely Muslim, but they have their own type of folk Islam which combines Islam with their pre-Islamic practices. They believe in a she-devil who casts shadows and walks around in rags, carrying a basket. She is believed to cause miscarriages in pregnant women. They also are said to believe in monstrous creatures of various kinds.

Philippians 1:11 | *...filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.*

- Pray for righteous character for those who find the Lord among this people group.
- Pray the Lord would remember this small people group living in an isolated part of Muslim Oman. They need to hear of Jesus and respond with a movement to Him.

■ 29 Luwathiya in Oman

The Luwathiya people worship in their own Shia mosques and meet regularly to study and discuss elements of theology, history and law. An important function in their society is the selection of committees to take care of issues such as marriages, divorces, selection of imams, building mosques, charities, and other community affairs. The Luwathiya people are friendly but reserved among outsiders. One thing they will not discuss with outsiders is religion.

Colossians 1:11–12 | *Being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy.*

- May new believers among this people group walk in joy and love in the Holy Spirit.
- Pray for spiritual openness and an awareness of their spiritual needs. Pray for Christ's ambassadors to take His glory to the Luwathiya people of Oman. Pray for a Disciple Making Movement among the Luwathiya people this decade.

■ 30 Persian in Oman

Iranians in Oman have a patrilineal society where men dominate the lives and decisions of their families. Marriages are still arranged but only after the negotiations and approval of both sets of parents. The Lord is growing His church in Iran; pray He would do the same in Oman.

Colossians 4:5–6 | *Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.*

- Pray for new believers in this people group to have Holy Spirit-led words to say to their elders as they explain their new faith.
- Pray that God would raise up faithful intercessors for Persians in Oman and ask God to encourage former Persian Muslims who have come to Christ. Ask God to raise up a church planting movement among the Persians in Oman.

■ 31 Zanzibari Swahili in Oman

On the surface, Swahili-Arabs seem like regular Omanis. However, when one sits with them at a meal, the African roots come out. Much of the time Swahili is spoken instead of Arabic, which is considered the trade language, and the food is much more African. They are Muslim.

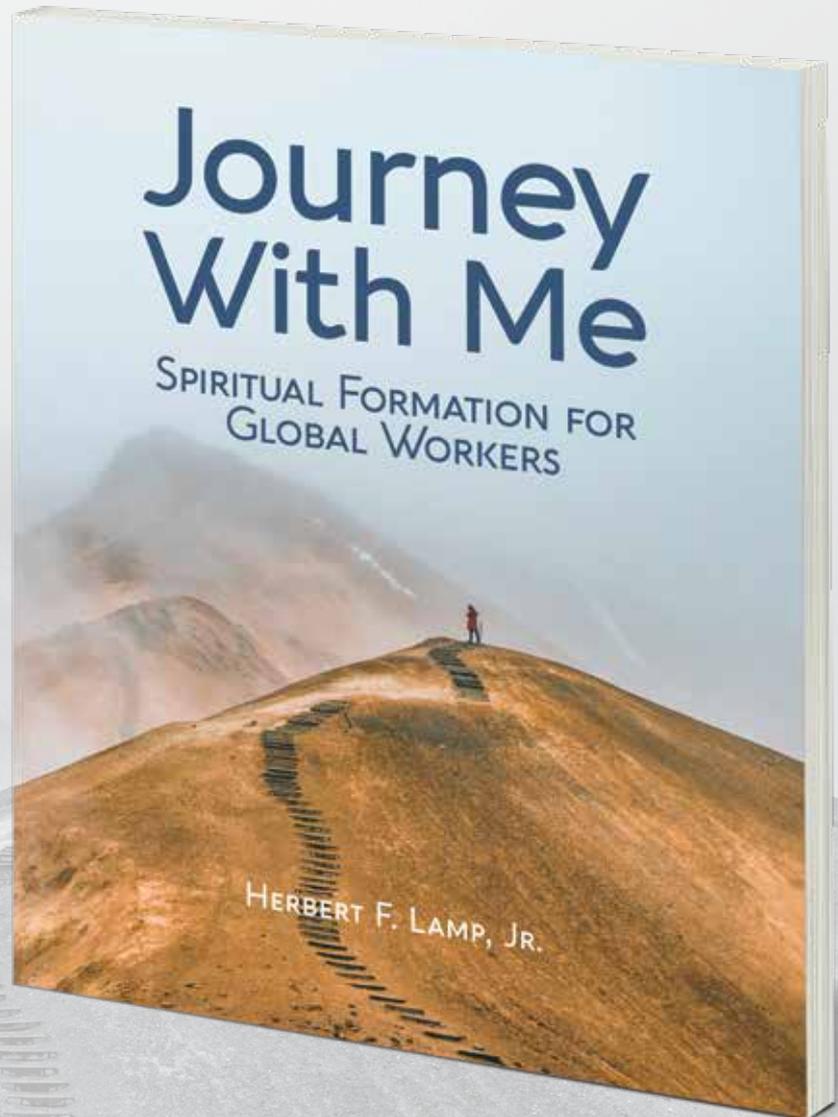
2 Thessalonians 1:12 | *So that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

- Make this verse your prayer for today's people group.
- There may be no followers of Jesus today among the Swahili of Oman so pray for those who will soon believe in Him. They will need mature believers to help them become well established in the faith. Pray that Jesus would be revealed to them with power at the proper time.

Find Pathways to Renewal

Have you ever wondered, “Is this all there is to life and ministry with the Lord?” “Why am I so tired all the time?” “How can I grow in my intimacy with God in practical ways?” “Am I so busy doing that I have forgotten how to be with God?” As ministry workers, we too often face these questions because we too often expect a thriving personal relationship with God to be an outcome of our ministry.

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