

# Perspectives: Mobilizing into the Future

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**F**orty years ago Ralph Winter gathered a small number of Urbana Mission Conference students at Wheaton College. Who knew that what started there would turn into a mobilization movement that would still be going strong today? The longevity and impact of the Perspectives Course is nothing short of miraculous. Today it's grown into a thriving movement with over 180,000 Perspectives alumni in the US and over 40,000 globally. As many as 34,000 have begun to serve cross culturally and internationally as a direct result of taking the Perspectives course. Many more have been awakened to intercede and give to the work of God's mission or have adjusted their lifestyles to welcome and reach out to internationals at home. God, through the Perspectives course, has created a vast "fertile soil" from which he draws his people to join the work he is accomplishing among all peoples.

Perspectives emerged out of Ralph Winter's passion to see young adults well oriented to live out and carry on God's mission. Insightful mission thinking and ideas were cobbled together in a collection of selected articles and book chapters. Over time, dedicated and compelling thinkers, most notably Steve Hawthorne, adjusted and fine-tuned the curriculum. Eventually a powerful and timeless narrative emerged—a story revealing that ultimately God must and will be glorified in all the Earth with his people as key participants. This became the sustainable mobilization movement—complete with a system of local class coordinators and teams, instructors, area teams, and regional leaders—that we see today.

We're now averaging over 8,000 new students in the US each year and are anticipating many more as we mobilize new generations and new cultural and geographic niches. The Perspectives team is working to lay the foundation for another great 40 years! In the spirit of our parent organization, Frontier

Ventures, we will press beyond our boundaries and the boundaries of frontier mission mobilization. Just as we didn't understand in 1974 what Perspectives would become, we know that God will surprise us with where he will lead us in the future. We are anticipating the future in three ways:

## 1. The Course

The curriculum and delivery of the Perspectives course continues to be developed and adjusted. Current developments in Perspectives USA include:

### Online class

As online learning becomes more mainstream in our culture, we have dedicated a team of workers to the growth and improvement of the online delivery of the Perspectives course. With a growing number of students now taking the course online each year (currently about 500 per year), our goals include accommodating many more students while providing the quality and personalized "class" experience we value so much in Perspectives.

### New set of teaching videos

We are working on a well-produced, high-quality set of new videos to deliver the 15 different Perspectives lessons for use in the online class. We believe the videos will also help us develop a smaller live class format for more remote, rural locations where it would be difficult to bring in 15 different live instructors. They will also be used for ministry promotion, general mobilization, and to help other countries launch initial Perspectives teams that will in turn launch new movements.

### Kindle version

We've now produced a combined electronic version of the *Perspectives Reader and Study Guide*. Due to the complexity of our referencing system in these resources, this took some creativity and innovation by our partner and publisher, William Carey Library Publishers. We're happy to provide this practical tool which has been in such high demand.

### Live class improvements

The live class experience is the bread and butter of the Perspectives Course. We're recruiting and allocating more staff to give attention to a variety of improvements. For example, we are working on how we develop and resource our course instructors. Our instructor development team will provide training through online resources and live events as well as

improve the way we communicate with and encourage our indispensable pool of instructors. Other developments for our live classes include providing lesson plans for coordinators, online grading devices, and prayer tools and resources for the blind and hearing impaired.

### **Continuing the narrative**

A key goal is to continue stewardship of the core Perspectives content or “story.” To do this we must mentor and empower new young thinkers to carry us into the future. Additionally, we’re constantly working to tell this story well and to utilize fresh voices in each new edition of our *Reader* and *Study Guide*. We’re regularly invited to add new material to address the latest activities and ideas in mission. Rather than make changes to what we believe is a timeless and biblical narrative, we can encourage and partner with other ministries and “new wineskin” type classes that address and mobilize for these important trends.

## **2. The Ministry**

Perspectives isn’t just a class experience, it’s a community of passionate workers. Here are some of the ways this community continues to grow and improve together:

### **Growing staff and local leaders**

Perspectives staff and volunteers are by far our most important resource. Currently in Perspectives USA we have 20 national staff workers, 14 regional directors, dozens of area mobilizers, and many hundreds of class coordinators, graders, and other class team members. We believe we need to multiply these workers to accommodate growth. We are adding staff in our national office, especially in the areas of IT and communications. We are also focused on growing regional teams. When these teams, under the leadership of regional directors, take people with administrative skills and combine them with people who are gifted networkers and promoters, this results in an increase in the quality of Perspectives as a whole and mission mobilization in general.

### **Home Office remodel**

Frontier Ventures, together with Perspectives USA, invested in a significant remodel of the Perspectives staff offices in Pasadena. We are already feeling the positive effects of a professional and welcoming headquarters. Now as the Venture Center surges forward with a new vibrancy

and posture in the missions community, the Perspectives home office is well situated to benefit from and add to this experience. Please come by for a visit.

### **A National Conference**

We are excited to announce a Perspectives USA National Conference. In July, 2016 our national staff, regional directors, and key volunteers (class coordinators, instructors, mobilizers, etc.) will meet together in Baltimore to cast vision, celebrate God’s work through this ministry, give updates and provide practical training.

## **3. The Movement**

A core message of Perspectives is that all of God’s people can participate in all he is doing among all peoples. In keeping with this message we are a global movement. More specifically, we are a group of national movements. We are experiencing and looking forward to the growth of Perspectives in many new places and many new groups.

### **New audiences**

The future of Perspectives, even in the US, needs to include more participation from communities other than our traditional English-speaking, “white” communities. We look to local leaders to increase mobilization among African American, Native American, Hispanic/Latino, Asian, and other cultural communities. Our staff and teams are working to build bridges that will serve these communities. We’re also learning to be sensitive to why different Christian communities have not truly co-labored on mobilization work in the past. Our awareness and strategies are also being directed towards other “niche”

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groups such as the military and college students, as well as various “streams” of evangelicalism like Charismatic/Pentecostal and denominations or church networks. Going forward we will innovate both relationally and structurally to see Perspectives become a staple of mobilization in all communities where Christ is followed so his global purposes can be lived out.

### **More Agency Partnership**

We, like Frontier Ventures, realize that in many ways our place has been to serve and partner with the many agencies and mission structures that labor to see the gospel

established and expanded among all people groups. We are seeking ways for Perspectives to partner with other agencies and to give our alumni the opportunity to connect with resources to help them live out their newly discovered world-Christian commitments. In one current example, Perspectives USA is now involved in a strategic partnership with Urbana making it possible for many of the Urbana '15 attendees to begin taking a Perspectives class directly following the conference. Both Perspectives and Urbana are investing significant resources and energy to see this happen. Our faith goal is that 1000 Urbana students will take Perspectives in 2016.

### **Perspectives Global**

Perspectives USA is just one national program in a collection of movements. Currently there are established programs in eight other countries. There are emerging programs in nearly a dozen countries like Costa Rica, Indonesia, Ethiopia, China, Mexico, Peru, and Kenya. It's exciting to see Perspectives

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content now in several different languages—Korean, Portuguese, Spanish, Chinese, and Arabic. A new project is underway to translate the Perspectives materials into French. Imagine the millions of faithful French-speaking Christians in Europe and West Africa who could be mobilized by this material. Perspectives' leaders throughout the world have the challenge and responsibility of helping culturally relevant mobilization emerge and thrive as God calls forth participation in his global movement. We've come to believe strongly in "mobilization through education." The innovation and creativity of God's people is emerging as we train new leaders and multiply the frontier mission movement. The nations aren't fully disciplined until they are mobilized! We are excited to see our USA staff, regional directors, and veteran team members come alongside the Global team to help with teaching and training events as

Perspectives expands in other countries and contexts.

Hudson Taylor once wrote that "grace can make a few feeble instruments the means of accomplishing great things—things greater than we can conceive."<sup>1</sup> The Perspectives movement and the resulting world evangelization that has come from this movement must be solidly attributed to God's grace being alive and on display in his workers. Donald McGavran said that people movements to Christ among the unreached "are the outcome of the mysterious movement of the Spirit of God."<sup>2</sup> Likewise, mobilization movements which awaken God's people to live for the eternal purposes of God are an outcome of his mysterious activity of grace. Praise God that we who labor in Perspectives are both recipients and agents of that grace.

Perspectives rests firmly on the foundation of mission giants like Ralph Winter. We've moved beyond this foundation to build a sturdy framework of both people and programs. We continue to be encouraged and supported by an enduring sodality now called Frontier Ventures. We have top-notch thinkers and leaders rebuilding and retooling broader our movement. As we move into the future, we innovate on the edges. That is, we trust thousands of passionate mobilizers to pray for their local church and local community to join God in his global mission. We trust them to gather God's people in life-changing class experiences and expose them to God's great Story. They will do this with quality, with passion, with sacrifice, and with the love and passion of Christ burning in their hearts. And, if God allows his people another 40 years of ministry, the hope and anticipation of the arrival of the kingdom, in its fullness, will keep us in the game. 

<sup>1</sup> Newell, Marvin. *Expect Great Things: Mission Quotes that Inform and Inspire*. p150.

<sup>2</sup> McGavran, Donald. *The Bridges of God: A Study in the Strategy of Missions*. p68.