

Not Just Churches

The Great Commission involves both evangelization and discipleship: both preaching and church planting. Finishing the task is more than “a church for every people.” Closure requires “a mission for every people” as well.

Justin Long

In the 1980s and 1990s, the AD 2000 & Beyond Movement had a great slogan: *A Church for every people and the Gospel for every person by the year 2000 and beyond.* This was a masterful way of both stating the goal while keeping the rallying point somewhat flexible. The problem was, most workers rarely stopped to think deeply about either the goal or what was required to reach it. We just gave a cursory glance at the goal and thought we understood it by our “first impression” – much as we give a cursory glance at Bible scriptures and think we understand them.

If we are going to finish the Great Commission, churches will be a natural part of the process, however, we are going to need more than just a church for every people. Here are some other things that are needed:

We are going to need more than a church for every people.

A prayer for every people.

Prayer is the foundation for mission. Yet we lack organized prayer for most of the least reached peoples. There are global prayer strategies – *Operation World*, *Praying through the Window*, Ethne’s Global Prayer campaign, and so forth – but each people group needs a small, globalized core of consistent intercessors praying for God to raise up workers and resources for the group. We don’t know all prayer does in Heaven, but we know those who pray for specific people groups are more likely to become involved in specific ways.

A strategy coordinator for every people group. The term may be somewhat dated, and the role may be filled now more by a network than a single individual person. Yet the fact remains that we need to have at least one point person for each unreached people group: someone who is passionate about the people and is actively seeking ways to bring the blessing of the Good News to the group.

A gateway for every people. There is a “route” to every people group: a path that can be walked. Perhaps it is another people group, or perhaps it is a city or an industry. Some good work has already been done in the past (*Praying through the Window II: Gateway Cities*), but these focused on larger urban areas. We need to do more to identify specific gateway peoples and cities for each unreached people group.

A preacher for every people. Many groups, even to this

day, have little or no Gospel proclamation amongst them. In [recent] issues of *Mission Frontiers*, different research teams have printed their list of “priority peoples” – many of these have no one among them proclaiming the Good News. This is substantially different from peoples in, say, Latin America or Europe, who have a significant amount of proclamation effort. An important thing to remember: although the preacher has to cross cultural boundaries, he or she doesn’t necessarily need to come from the West. More on this in a moment.

A church for every people. We certainly don’t want to minimize this goal. A congregation in which believers fellowship together is a key part of Christian life. At the same time, we also want to be careful that when we say “church” we don’t carry our own baggage with us. It might be better to say “a fellowship for every people” or some other phrase that makes us really think about what we mean.

A business for every people. The unreached peoples of the world are among the poorest of the poor. By helping establish businesses we make it possible for a newly reached group to improve their quality of life, sustain local churches and reach out in turn to other cultures nearby. Helping groups develop economic resources can lead to the proclamation of the Gospel.

A school for every people. Teaching new believers about their missionary responsibility will lead to the formation of new mission agencies and the deployment of new workers. I have recently learned of several small, quick schools for believers and leaders that specifically mobilize workers who will focus on unreached peoples. For 5,000 unreached peoples, perhaps we need 5,000 such schools.

A mission for every people. The final goal is for each people group, as it is reached, to join in the task. This will open up new resources and spread the remaining task among more workers. At this stage we see new intercessors, researchers, preachers, church planters, businessmen and teachers for every people. 🌐

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