



“Go Where?”

By CHRIS MAYNARD

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Mission Mobilizers Give Direction

Mobilization at its simplest means getting people ready to move. If you mobilize a country for war, you take people from civilian life and put them in uniform, ready to move. Later, the generals can decide where to send them. That's called "deployment." Mobilization comes first, the deployment message comes next. But once God commissions us to be mission mobilizers then, in my view, a deployment message is a vital part of our toolkit. If we inspire people to action without direction, then our implicit message is they don't need to deploy. They can just stay where they are. On the other hand, any convincing deployment message inspires its own motivation.

God Gives Deployment Messages

As mobilizers, the Spirit of God is already speaking through us. We take it on ourselves to communicate where we believe God wants significant numbers of believers to deploy their attention, prayers, money, and maybe their very selves.

When Jesus mobilized His disciples, He included a clear deployment message. To begin, the simple "follow me" was enough. But as they got used to following Him, and as fame threatened His mission, He gave them an idea of His own deployment instructions. *Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so that I can preach there also. That is why I have come* (Mark 1:38). Then He sent the Twelve with the words, *Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel...* (Matt 10:5–6). Then Luke tells us that *the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go* (Luke 10:1). Finally, and most famously, there is the "Go" of the Great Commission which in different versions include the deployment instructions "all the world," "all creation," "all nations," "beginning at Jerusalem," and "in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."¹

Good Deployment Messages Are Informed by Data

In modern times, good deployment messages have always been informed and supported by data. At the heart of William Carey's 87-page *Enquiry* of 1792 is a

¹ See Mark 16:15, Matt. 28:19, Luke 24:47, Acts 1:8

24–page data table “containing a survey of the present state of the world.”² Intrinsic to Hudson Taylor’s 1865 *China’s Spiritual Need and Claims* are several tables, charts and a map of China.³ Yet the data is not in itself the message. Both Carey and Taylor were careful to spell out the deployment message in words—with spiritual, rational, and emotional appeals to their readers. Some researchers and data people make the mistake of thinking that they can just present data. “It’s obvious!” they may say. But relatively few people can look at some data and understand what it means, still less what God is saying through it. Even those with skill and spirit may take months or years to craft a good deployment message. I believe that development of a good deployment message usually requires input in three areas: divine revelation, logical data processing, and some sort of “gut feeling” or “common sense.” We can see all three factors at work in William Carey’s *Enquiry*—his careful Bible exposition, the detailed data he had gathered about the world over years, and his passionate sense of what could be accomplished despite all objections.

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As a data person, trained by God for 23 years in corporate data, and now sent into global Church information, I have used data to help craft several global and international deployment messages. I have some strong convictions about this area. One is that we should no longer expect to give the same deployment message to every Christian around the world. When most of us were bottled up in North America and Europe, it made sense to have messages which are today characterized as “from the West to the rest,” but no longer.

² Carey, William. 1792, “An Enquiry into the Obligation of Christians to use means for the Conversion of the Heathens: in which the religious state of the different nations of the world, the success of former undertakings, and the practicability of further undertakings, are considered.” Leicester: Ann Ireland, 38.

³ Taylor, J. Hudson. 1887, *China’s Spiritual Need and Claims*. 7th edition, London: Morgan and Scott.

The Data Screams Out the Need for Deployment

Some say that mission is now “everywhere to everywhere,” but that statement is of limited use. It is indeed very useful to help break that old mindset of “from the West to the rest.” And that surely still needs to be fully broken among us. But as a deployment message, it is completely useless. Telling everyone to go everywhere, gives no real direction at all. It will soon be taken as a suggestion that we may as well stay where we are. We can only accept “everywhere to everywhere” or “leave all mission in the hands of nationals” when faith is evenly spread around the world, but it is not. The data continues to scream out that this is far from the case.

Yes, it is true that the Church is now established in every country of the world. Yet more than half of all Christians live in a country where more than 70% of people are Christians. Many of those countries now are non-Western. Praise God! But meanwhile, more than half of all non-Christians live in a country where more than 90% of people are non-Christians.⁴ If we look at people groups, the situation is even more stark. More than half of all Christians are part of a people group where more than 88% are Christian, and more than half of non-Christians live in people groups where more than 98% are non-Christian.⁵

We Need a Message from Beyond

This means that most Christians, whether Western or non-Western, intuitively feel the world to be largely Christian—because *their* world is indeed largely Christian. Only information from beyond their nation and people group can open their eyes to the real state of the world. We still need international mission, and even more, we need intercultural mission.

We can assume that life was quite comfortable for Nehemiah in Susa. It was a shock for him to learn that, *Those who survived the exile and are back in the province are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall*

⁴ Interpretation mine from data in Country_Regions_Book_Equivalent.xls from “Operation World Professional Edition DVD-ROM” Jason Mandryk, 7th Edition, 2010, GMI.

⁵ Interpretation mine using PGAC (People Group Across Country) from Joshua Project data, joshuaproject.net/resources/datasets.

of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been burned with fire (Neh. 1:3). That information about the situation beyond his locality is what triggered all his fasting, prayer, planning, and action. Deployment messages are still needed and can be a powerful tool in the hand of mobilizers. Mobilizers should think, “What deployment message am I giving (whether explicit or implied)? How is it justified? Is it appropriate for my audience?”

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Deployment Messages Must Be Primarily Informed by Relative Need

Our deployment messages should be strongly informed by need. Who are the unreached or the unengaged? Where is there no church? Where is the Bible not available? Where do people have no Christian friends? William Carey spoke of those who do not have “the means of grace,” and Hudson Taylor of China’s “spiritual needs.” Based on relative need, we will not encourage the Central Asian Church to build capacity to evangelize North America. Now, the Spirit of God may well direct an individual to go from Afghanistan to the USA. We do well not to stand in their way. And nor should we despise those who follow Jesus’ command, *When you are persecuted in one place, flee to another* (Matt. 10:23). Yet as mobilizers, mobilizing North Americans to be part of God’s mission to Central Asia makes more sense because of the relative need in Central Asia for faith in Jesus Christ.

Note that, even based solely on relative need, appropriate deployment messages in today’s world will not be the same in all nations. As I said above, we should no longer expect to give the same deployment message to every Christian around the world. And there is a new opportunity that we have now that the Church is established in so many places and cultures.

Deployment Messages Can Increasingly Be Informed by Affinity

The opportunity is to leverage connections or affinities between the workers and the harvest. Because the Church is spread out, and because we are culturally diverse, different ones of us are suited to tackle different parts of the whole. The current call to sub-Saharan Africa to “Go north!” takes them to North African countries that they can relate to as Africans, and often through a shared experience of Islam. I hear some in Ibero-America stressing their cultural and historical affinity to the Arab World. Affinities can exist for many reasons—physical proximity, historical links, shared language, trading blocs. Any of these and more can be a reason to adjust a deployment message and bring the task closer.

But Globally We Must Keep an Eye on the Whole

However, we cannot allow affinity thinking to dominate all our deployment messages worldwide. If we go all out for “national workers” or “near neighbors,” we will miss the very neediest unbelievers who are unreached exactly because they are not very “near” to any of us.

Those who have the greatest riches of the kingdom may have an obligation to play down the idea of affinity for themselves and gear up to tackle the most remote fields. The statistics suggest countries like this may be USA, Brazil, Chile, and some highly Christian, island nations in the Caribbean or Pacific. Maybe churches in these nations still need to have their sights set on the least Christian people groups in the least Christian countries, regardless of proximity or affinity.

We need to ensure that our research and our global data are always ready to support us as we craft kingdom deployment messages to the churches. 📊

