

# THE MOST ABOMINABLE

“Word,”



## MIKE LATSKO

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The term “unengaged” is the most offensive in missionary terminology. It is a blatant acknowledgement of the missionary community’s refusal to fulfill the minimal apostolic prerequisite of being present among all peoples and beginning the work of gospel proclamation. It is offensive to the LORD of hosts, who is the creator of all, has provided a great salvation in Christ, and desires all men to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth. It is offensive to Christ himself, whose sacrifice is sufficient atonement for all men, whose mandate concerning all peoples is clear, and whose presence is promised to all who obey. It is offensive to the Holy Spirit, who convicts men and women of sin, righteousness and judgment, gifts God’s people with all that is required to accomplish all He commands, and intercedes for us in our weakness with groaning too deep for words. It is offensive to the Church, the pillar and support of the truth, through which the manifold wisdom of God is displayed to rulers and authorities in the heavenly realm, and whose onslaught upon the gates of hell cannot be withstood. And it is offensive to the global missionary community, called as apostles, carriers of the message which alone on earth is the power of God unto salvation for all who believe, and stewards of the mysteries of God. It is Satan’s favorite word and the foundation of all hell’s joy. It hangs on the tongues of angels and demons and is the core of the dialogue between their supreme leaders when the usurper is summoned to heaven’s court. It is a heinous word—the most loathesome of all. And it is time to be done with it.

As of this writing, 34% of all unreached Hindu peoples are also unengaged, as are 43% of all Buddhist unreached and 59% of all Muslim unreached. Enough. No more.

If churches, denominations and agencies, gripped by the Word of God, zealous for the glory of God, indignant over the mockery of His name, and heart-broken over not only lost people but also lost peoples living without hope and dying without God, were to determine, according to His guidance and enablement, to move toward the elimination of this horrible word from missionary conversation, then let them consider these warnings and this counsel.

## WARNINGS

1. **Do not underestimate the organizational will that is required to turn your ministry toward a new, long-term presence among currently unengaged peoples.** By definition, none of what you are now doing is being done there. None of what anyone in the global church is now doing is being done there. Giants taunt explorers of this land; are you sure you want in?

2. **Do not underestimate the strong pull of your church's/organization's own internal flow to merely strengthen and improve the work where you already are.** So much yet needs to be done! Are you ready in some real way to turn from the (in some cases severely) underserved in order to come alongside the entirely unserved?
3. **Do not underestimate the challenge of new creativity and daring.** Thirty-four percent of Hindu unreached, 43% of Buddhist unreached, and 59% of Muslim unreached are unengaged for good reason. The best efforts of our best people have not yet borne fruit. And we think we will? We must, we can, and we will, but it will require our most sanctified ambitions. And better than our best.
4. **Do not underestimate Satan's ferocity against any attempt to move these peoples from unengaged to engaged.** They cannot call upon Him of whom they have not heard, nor hear without believing, nor believe without preaching, nor preach without sending, nor send without first committing to the unengaged. Our ancient foe will aim proven artillery against those who first commit to engaging the unengaged.
5. **Do not underestimate the level of urgency required to keep pioneering efforts toward the unengaged a church/agency priority.** Many and varied will be the sincere cries of dear stakeholders who insist that we must continue to prioritize the severely underserved of Ephesus, Galatia, Corinth, and Thessalonica—these with so many lost among them and so much Christlikeness yet to cultivate. But that is exactly what Paul said in Romans 15—"there's plenty of work here for pastors, evangelists, teachers and everyone else, but not for me. These peoples are now engaged. I and my team will move on."

Caleb was of a different spirit, and surely there are churches and organizations which share his fire today. Surely God Himself would enable us to do what He has commanded if we would but hoist our sail to His breeze.

#### COUNSEL

1. **See clearly.** The unreached cannot be reached until they are first engaged, so engaging the unengaged must become the lead priority of the global apostolic community. Thirty-four percent of the Hindu unreached, 43% of the Buddhist unreached, and 59% of the Muslim unreached are beyond the reach

of the Church today. They are not only unreached because they are unengaged; they are also unreachable until they are engaged. Leaders lead. Sound the trumpet. Let us come back to our roots and do this in our day.

2. **Dream boldly.** We do not despise the day of small beginnings, but neither are we content with it. Our sin, not in part but the whole, was nailed to the cross on that day, and we, not in part but wholly, commit ourselves to what He has assigned us. We do not summon one another to partial completion. We are not satisfied with mere progress. We do not rejoice in incremental change. Our eye is fixed, our instruction clear, and our enablement sure. In dependence upon Him, we intend on the elimination of unengaged vocabulary in our generation. Let Pathways and Perspectives hereafter include it in their history sections, but not strategy!
3. **Restructure ruthlessly.** If it takes two months for a person to change a habit, then it takes 10 years for an organization. Why do we not have the luxury of a decade? Because in addition to the outrage we feel over the continued besmirching of God's name until all the currently unengaged are engaged is the reality that scores of millions of individuals will stand unallied before God during the time it would normally take us to re-point our bows and actually move in the direction of the unengaged. Engaging

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them does not save them; reaching them does. But we cannot reach in order to save until we first engage in order to reach. So let us rip, tear, and destroy whatever encumbers in order to build, plant, and reap. And let us begin today.

4. **Communicate incessantly.** Unengaged and unreached are synonymous terms, right? No they are not. God is doing stunning things among the nations today, right? Yes and no. We're seeing some fruit over here including that of faithful perseverance over there; we should be content, right? Yes, maybe, and no. Listen, this is not for the faint of heart. Satan is well fortified in this ground, and it will take all our violent love to unseat him. We're going to have to stay on task. It will take many tellings. The board meetings will last a little longer and have an even sharper edge. But it will be worth it all. The unengaged will be engaged and have opportunity to be reached.
5. **Oversee vigilantly.** We don't do what is expected but what is inspected. It's one thing to announce a fresh vision; it's another altogether to do the hard work of

determining how to reach it, first unleashing energy to launch it, changing operations to facilitate it, evaluating progress to sustain it, and making further changes down the road to assure it. The ship may be celebrated at its launch (and it should be), but its builders are thought successful only after multiple voyages.

In the summer of 1806, five students at Williams College escaped the rain by gathering under a haystack to pray and otherwise consider God's purposes among the nations. One of them said, "We can do this if we will."

We can do this if we will. His Word is sufficient. His Spirit convicts and empowers. His presence is sure. We have the money. We have the workers. We have the know-how. The unengaged have been the new hidden, but they are hidden no more. We can do this if we will. So let us do it in our day, in full dependence upon Him, and in collaboration with one another. Let us do it in our day, and give honor to His Name. Let us do it in our day, and hasten the day when many others will sing with us, "Great is the LORD and greatly to be praised." Amen. 

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## TOWARD A BIBLICAL FOUNDATION FOR UNAPOLOGETICALLY PRIORITIZING THE UNENGAGED OVER EVEN THE UNREACHED MIKE LATSKO

*"and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you"*  
(Gen 12:3)

But, by definition, this is not so for the unengaged—if we hold out for anything resembling a solid, biblically informed understanding of "blessing." The unreached have at least some blessing among them and the reasonable hope of more.

*"that your ways may be known. . . your salvation among all nations"*  
(Ps 67:2)

But, by definition, the unengaged are not hearing that today is the day of salvation. The unreached have someone incarnate among them saying so.

*"Praise the LORD, all you nations" (Ps 117:1)*

But, by definition, the unengaged are not praising, while the unreached do have worshipers among them and, in most cases, from among that very people.

*"there is no more place for me to work in these regions"*  
(Ro 15:23)

Such a statement can only be said from a reached or engaged unreached area but never from an unengaged, unreached area. Paul's regions were engaged and, we assume, unreached, but because they were engaged, he was leaving.

*"from every tribe and language and people and nation"*  
(Rev 5:9)

But, by definition, this is not so among the unengaged. We know it will be so in that day. But it is not so in this day. So today we point our bow in the direction of promise and obedience.

It is true that some engaged, unreached peoples are woefully underengaged. We do need to send more teams to them.

But we need to send first teams before we can send more teams.

May God Himself help us to effectively engage and reach all peoples!