

# 24:14 Goal



Movement engagements in every unreached people and place by 2025 (74 months)

## Kingdom Movements: Are you “Out of Your Mind” or “Overjoyed”?

« What if God answered our prayers in such amazing ways they seemed unbelievable? »

What if God answered our prayers in such amazing ways they seemed unbelievable? Through the ages God’s people have grappled with the mystery of (apparently) unanswered prayer. But in Acts 12 we find Spirit-filled believers grappling with the mystery of *answered* prayer! As Luke reports it: “Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him.” (v. 5) Then, upon his release,

Peter came to himself and said, “Now I know without a doubt that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me...” When this had dawned on him, he went to the house of Mary the mother of John, also called Mark, where many people had gathered and were praying. Peter knocked at the outer entrance, and a servant named Rhoda came to answer the door. When she recognized Peter’s voice, she was so overjoyed she ran back without opening it and exclaimed, “Peter is at the door!”

“You’re out of your mind,” they told her. When she kept insisting that it was so, they said, “It must be his angel.”

But Peter kept on knocking, and when they opened the door and saw him, they were astonished. Peter motioned with his hand for them to be quiet and described how the Lord had brought him out of prison (verses 11a, 12-17a).

Their prayer had been gloriously answered! Peter himself knew it “without a doubt.” But these earnest intercessors remained determined to keep on praying – while the answer to their prayer was banging on the door to get their attention! Dear Rhoda, the servant girl, went to handle the interruption, maybe so others could focus on praying. Perhaps she was considered most expendable from the prayer meeting, so she was first to hear Peter’s voice and recognize the miracle God had wrought. She left Peter outside – not from lack of faith but from great joy and eagerness to share the wonderful news.

Her wonderful news, however, was skeptically received. We don’t know precisely what the believers had been praying. We only know they were “earnestly praying to God for him.” We can reasonably hypothesize that their prayers included requests for the sparing of Peter’s life. Less certain, but quite likely, they included prayers for his release. Yet the news of his arrival inspired at least two alternative explanations:

1. Rhoda, the servant girl, had gone “out of [her] mind.”

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It was easier to malign the messenger than believe the message. When that explanation failed to suffice (because “she kept insisting”), the group consensus shifted to...

2. an explanation neither you nor I would probably have considered: “It must be his angel.” Verse 15 informs us a plurality of the gathering (“they said...”) reached this interesting conclusion. This is probably in reference to a Jewish belief at that time that a person’s guardian angel took on their appearance. It probably signified that they thought Peter was dead and his guardian angel had come to deliver the news.

We have the advantage of knowing that the one at the door was Peter himself, not “his angel.” So we quickly skip past the angel hypothesis to savor this prayer meeting’s irony: the earnest prayers continued while the answer banged on the door, trying to get their attention.

How easily we smile condescendingly at our brothers and sisters described in the pages of Scripture. Yet how easy it can be to display the same doubts when our prayers are miraculously answered.

« The earnest prayers continued while the answer banged on the door, trying to get their attention. »

### Mobilizing earnest prayer for unreached peoples

Forty years ago, the hard core of the unreached world remained relatively unengaged and unresponsive. There were precious few examples of large numbers of Muslims coming to faith in Christ. More than 1400 years of world history since Muhammad’s time showed quite the opposite: millions of Christians becoming Muslims; almost never the reverse. Northern India was called the graveyard of modern missions and very few Hindus were being reached with the gospel. 200 years of mission efforts in Buddhist heartlands had produced little fruit. Some unreached pockets responded but both the total number and global percentage of the unreached continued to grow. Traditional approaches have failed to make disciples in a way that exceeds population growth.

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However, the late twentieth century saw a significant increase in God’s people praying for the unreached peoples of the world. All the items mentioned below fueled and informed prayer and action on behalf of the unreached. (Forgive us for not being able to list everyone in the paragraphs below.)

- Beginning their processes in Africa in the 1960s, David Barrett and the team of *The World Christian Encyclopedia* opened the eyes of many to the existence of Unreached People Groups. Their data sharing with Patrick Johnstone and the *Operation World* team mobilized specific prayer for these unreached nations and people groups.
- Ralph Winter gave a clarion call in his 1974 Lausanne address on “Hidden Peoples,” and he and many others at the US Center for World Mission became ongoing advocates for reaching them. In 1978, Winter published a pie chart entitled “Penetrating the Last Frontiers.” Among other salient data, the chart showed the minuscule number of Christian workers among Muslims and Hindus in contrast to the number of Christian workers in the US.
- In 1981, Perspectives on the World Christian Movement began promoting and popularizing a clear focus on contextual strategies for bringing the gospel to unreached groups. In the decades since then, the course and its derivatives have been completed by over 100,000 believers, inspiring them to become mobilizers, goers, senders, and intercessors for world evangelization.
- In 1982, the *Global Prayer Digest* began as a ministry of the US Center for World Mission, focusing prayer on different unreached groups in each edition.
- 1988 brought publication of David Bryant’s book *Concerts of Prayer: For Spiritual Awakening and World Evangelization*. The book’s pattern began guiding and encouraging major prayer initiatives for gospel advance among the unreached.

- Beginning in 1991, the “Praying Through the Window” initiative has since focused the prayers of over 40 million intercessors from 120 countries and facilitated prayer journeys into all 67 countries of the 10/40 Window.
- In 1993, the first edition of “30 Days Muslim World Prayer Guide” began mobilizing prayer for Muslims during the month of Ramadan each year. This guide is now used by millions of Christians worldwide and has inspired other similar guides for prayer for the unreached.
- Prayer spurred by geo-political events also played a part. The Iranian Revolution (1979), the Gulf War (1990-91) the Algerian Civil Wars (1990s), the Asian Financial Crisis (1997), 9/11 (2001) and other events inspired many prayers from Christians around the world as well as prayers of disillusioned and desperate lost people seeking another path.
- Another significant element was the growing emphasis on adopting UPGs for prayer and outreach. This was championed by the Joshua Project, the AD2000 and Beyond movement, Ethne, Adopt-a-People Clearinghouse, Call2All, Finishing the Task and others.
- Numerous regional mission networks have significant prayer and engagement strategies including COMIBAM (Ibero-America), MANI (Africa), SEALink (SEAsia), IMA (India), SEANet (Buddhist World), Central Asia Consultation and Vision 5:9 (Muslim World).
- UPG Prayer profiles, websites, and guidebooks were produced by on-the-ground teams in many countries and written and translated in many languages.
- The International Prayer Council, the Global Prayer Resource network, the ETHNE Fellowship of Prayer Strategists, and too many other prayer networks to name have mobilized prayer for the UPGs of their nation or region. A new wave of UPG-focused prayer has spread through God’s people all around the world.

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## Apparent answers to prayer

We can never claim direct cause and effect between our prayers and God’s actions on a global scale. Yet we know God works through our prayers and undoubtedly something unique began happening in the 1990s. Reports surfaced in written form when David Garrison described this phenomenon in January 2000, in a booklet entitled “Church Planting Movements.” This 60-page booklet compiled field reports by Church Planting Movement practitioners in various parts of the world. Garrison followed this in 2004 with the book *Church Planting Movements, How God Is Redeeming a Lost World*, describing in greater depth the common dynamics found among numerous Church Planting Movements.

In 2011, Steve Smith and Ying Kai described one movement that reached 1.7 million new believers in ten years in *T4T: A Discipleship Re-Revolution: The Story Behind the World’s Fastest Growing Church Planting Movement and How it Can Happen in Your Community!* In 2012 Jerry Trousdale published reports of movements across Africa in *Miraculous Movements: How Hundreds of Thousands of Muslims Are Falling in Love with Jesus*. Then in 2014 Garrison added fresh insights in *A Wind in the House of Islam: How God is Drawing Muslims around the World to Faith in Jesus Christ*. In the years since then, the number of reported Church Planting Movements has increased from vague and unpublished estimates of 100+ to a more confidently asserted 1006. These movements are now reported in every major religious bloc and every region of the world. Missions researcher Justin Long describes this number as “the floor, not the ceiling.” (See below.)

In recent years, numerous additional books, articles and trainings have described these Church Planting Movements (sometimes labeled “Disciple Making Movements” or “Kingdom Movements”) and have begun to quantify the numbers of disciples and churches in these movements. At the same time, other articles and some church and mission leaders have questioned the veracity and/or helpfulness of these movement reports.

## Some concerns

Admittedly, a few movement reports have misrepresented or exaggerated the reality on the ground. A few others have turned out to be bogus reports fueled by a desire for money from outside wealthy donors. And some movements have collapsed or been absorbed by pre-existing churches. These cases have been acknowledged and appropriately

removed from lists of active movements. The 24:14 database, which at this writing lists 1006 movements, also lists 19 movements that have ended. Note two aspects of this statistic: (1) care is being taken to only count credibly reported and currently active movements; (2) the number of movements that have ended constitutes less than two percent of movements currently ongoing. The 24:14 leadership recognizes the significant difficulty of this research and shares this information with openness and a willingness to correct any wrong information.

Some critics, either on a local or global scale, boggle at the number and size of reported movements. 1006 CPMs with over 4.3 million churches and over 70 million disciples feels to them like wishful thinking. Neither they nor people they know personally have ever seen similar fruit, which makes these amazing reports hard to believe. Sometimes Westerners who live in or visit areas where movements have been reported say, “If this were happening I would know about it.” We could describe this attitude as closer to “Seeing is believing,” than “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed” (John 20:29b, NIV).

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Yet most of us don't even know all that goes on inside the homes of neighbors on our own block, much less in a city of millions of people. Small churches meeting in homes, using local music and local terminology and patterns of interaction, would not be obvious. As they live in ways that minimize unnecessary persecution by those *within* their context, how much less noticeable would they be to any outsiders?

Some in the global missions world have heard or experienced cases of an exaggerated report and in response have chosen general caution (or skepticism) as the better course of wisdom. They prefer to believe only assessments done by teams of outsiders who have paid personal visits to a broad cross-section of any given movement.

This attitude overlooks a number of factors. First, the vast majority of these movements are occurring among

unreached groups where those becoming followers of Christ often face great persecution. Foreigners visiting widely to ask about people coming to faith in Christ would hinder or possibly even destroy a movement. Security for Christ-followers remaining culturally among their own people makes thorough outside assessment untenable in many cases.

Second, those wishing for thorough and wide-ranging assessments have neither the human resources nor the funds needed to go visit 4.3 million churches. Some have suggested that reports of institutional churches are easier to confirm because “you can go and see the physical churches.” However this conflates “church” with “building.” Many of those church buildings have few in attendance. The churches in many movements multiply rapidly precisely because they *don't* have a building.

Third, this attitude sometimes seems built on the assumption that established denominations' reports of numbers of churches and church members are sufficiently trustworthy (despite many examples of overstated or misleading membership numbers for individuals, churches and denominations), yet reports from new movements of the same information are inherently suspect. We would do well to ask ourselves if any hint of paternalism might be implicit in our suspicion of reports coming from brothers and sisters in these new movements.

Fourth, the claim (implicit or explicit) that very fruitful reports are fabricated (or exaggerated) in hopes of receiving Western money does not stand up to scrutiny. Most of these movements are rapidly reproducing partially *due to* the fact that they receive little or no outside money which causes dependency. Any ministry dependent on outside funds (whether for pastors' or evangelists' salaries, buildings, or other resources) could not sustain rapid reproduction and multigenerational growth. No source has enough money to supply the exponential growth God is bringing through these movements.

Fifth, we also have the testimony of a great cloud of witnesses from a vast number of *unconnected* cultural and religious contexts around the globe. While each movement is unique in certain ways, the striking similarities of hundreds of different movements testifies to something far beyond what indigenous believers could have invented as money-making tales. The similar

dynamics and growth, often reflecting the vitality and rapidity described in the book of Acts, offer reasonable corroboration, from one continent to another. As mentioned above, a few misreports have happened and been acknowledged. But our best research concludes those are a very small minority.

### How do we prove movements?

A key question is, “To whom does the reality of Church Planting Movements need to be proven?” Who can claim they are entitled to have these movements proven to their satisfaction? Whose “imprimatur” do we need before we acknowledge these movements as valid works of God?

A related question is “How *can* these movements be proven?” For instance, outside assessments of the Bhojpuri movement in North India occurred in 1996, 2000, 2008, and 2016 including at different times researchers from the IMB, OM, City Team, ASSI, and Beyond. Some of these researchers admit they went thinking they would prove the movement was not happening.

All of these well-respected research teams concluded there are millions of new disciples as a result of God working through this movement. Yet some people serving in that region remain adamant that this movement is not happening. It appears impossible to verify movements to everyone’s satisfaction.

In reality, we will not know for certain until we get to heaven. So grace befits us all in discussing these matters. We invite those dubious of movements to suggest what type of movement research would be both realistic and credible. And we invite advocates of movements to be gracious in considering valid critiques, to see how our movement efforts could be improved.

At the 2010 Lausanne meeting in Capetown, one of the Bhojpuri movement leaders, Victor John, gave a report of what God has done in that movement. A former leader of the IMB stood up and essentially said, “I want to tell you that I used to reject that the Bhojpuri movement had happened and I concluded that Victor and other leaders were not being truthful. I want to say in front of this whole group that I was wrong and I ask Victor for forgiveness.”

### Whose count can we trust?

Despite the disagreements, many of God’s children have a healthy and rightful interest in knowing about and rejoicing in the mighty works of God. One group having an arguably good reason for wanting to verify the presence or absence of movements is the 24:14 Coalition. Data on global movement engagement plays a key role in this coalition’s priority of finishing the task: “bringing the gospel of the kingdom fully to every unreached people and place.” By knowing where movements *are*, we can identify where *they are not*, and thus mobilize to the gaps yet to be filled.

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Justin Long, Director of Research with Beyond and Research Team Leader for the 24:14 Coalition, clarifies the criteria used to accept a movement report as credible:

1. We only accept data reports from established and trusted movement practitioners, many of whom have been working for 10 to 30 years. There are approximately 30 movement families (networks of multiple movements) with significant interrelationships of trust, training and accountability inside the family and sometimes between families. Most fellowship reports are cross-referenced between at least five generations of churches and leaders within the movement.
2. The leaders from this network must be vouched for by a trusted movement practitioner or coach who is not a part of the network before they are counted in the global and regional totals.
3. For larger movements, we as the global 24:14 movement generally round to the nearest order of magnitude, and often the movements themselves will intentionally undercount or reduce by certain percentages if they feel caution is warranted. Some outside assessments conclude that the reports are significantly *undercounting* what is happening. Thus, we feel confident what we report is a “floor” not a “ceiling.”

4. Most movements report numbers on a semi-annual basis to the 24:14 research team via secure email.
5. Occasionally, as warranted, movements will invite practitioners or researchers in to do an external audit. The main goal is to analyze the health and dynamics of the movement to help them improve, but it can also help verify the numbers.

If you have information that could increase the accuracy of these global assessments, please send it to [data@2414now.net](mailto:data@2414now.net).


In our day, the Lord is providing abundant and ever-increasing evidence that our prayers for gospel breakthroughs in major religious blocs are being answered. As the 24:14 Coalition reflects, this is not a time for triumphalism, but a time for pressing in with all earnestness toward completion of the Great Commission. It is amazing that people in these movements represent 1% of the world's population, but that is still just 1%. In light of the abundant evidence of Church Planting Movements reaching large numbers of people, could we move past a response of disbelief?

Such a response was evident when data about the many hundreds of known CPMs was being shared with a group of UPG-focused mission strategists at a recent meeting. Kent Parks (long-time UPG worker in the Muslim world and now CEO of Beyond) added to the presentation by sharing some of the key factors for such movements. After answering numerous skeptical responses, he said: "Many of us in this room have been championing and praying for 40 years or more for 'people movements' among UPGs. Now God is answering these prayers but you don't believe it is true or even possible?!" He later reflected, "In this moment, I was startlingly reminded of how many of God's people have joined in decades of UPG-focused prayer – and the astonishing ways God is launching movements around the world. The contrast between the great joy of movement leaders with whom I serve and the somewhat disbelieving questions in this meeting was overwhelming."

### How shall we respond?

Lord, we pray in concert from Ephesians 3 and ask that you *do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to your power that is within us, and to you be all glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever!*

In Paul's message to the Jews and Gentiles in the synagogue at Pisidian Antioch, he applied Habakkuk 1:5 to the wonderful news of forgiveness and justification through Jesus. He challenged them not to miss out on the astonishing work of God in their day:

*Take care that what the prophets have said does not happen to you: "Look, you scoffers, wonder and perish, for I am going to do something in your days that you would never believe, even if someone told you."* (Acts 13:40-41, NIV). How many of us are following the footsteps of those who heard Rhoda's news: earnestly praying yet refusing to believe the report that our answer is knocking at the door? While we need to be wise and careful stewards of information, may we also be among those who respond with delight to the mighty works of God in our day. May we welcome the answers to our prayers for great movements among the unreached. And may we do everything we can to invite such works of God to increase, and bring salvation to all the peoples of the earth! 

#### Endnotes

1. See Mikeal C. Parsons, *Acts* (Paideia: Commentaries on the New Testament), Baker Academic, 2008, p. 171.
2. This chart has been reproduced as the first page of an article by Rebecca Lewis, entitled "Clarifying the Remaining Frontier Mission Task" in *International Journal of Frontier Missiology* 35:4, Winter 2018, p. 154. [https://static1.squarespace.com/static/4f661fde24ac1097e013deea/t/5bcfe6b18165f5c-c5f820e58/1540351671087/IJFM\\_35\\_4-Lewis.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/4f661fde24ac1097e013deea/t/5bcfe6b18165f5c-c5f820e58/1540351671087/IJFM_35_4-Lewis.pdf)
3. The Perspectives reader and study guide were released at Urbana '81. Since 1981 the Perspectives course has been offered throughout the year at extension sites around the world. Over 80,000 people have taken this course in English, with thousands more taking it in other languages and through simplified "Perspectives Family" courses. For more details, see [http://perspectives.in/?page\\_id=63](http://perspectives.in/?page_id=63).
4. See <https://www.win1040.org/about-win>
5. As of this (November/December 2019) issue of *Mission Frontiers*.
6. In this article, as in 24:14 Coalition usage, we use the term "Kingdom Movements" as equivalent to "Church Planting Movements." See, for example, in the article "24:14 Goal" in the September-October 2018 issue of *Mission Frontiers*, pp. 8-40: "A Church Planting Movement (CPM) is defined as the multiplication of disciples making disciples and leaders developing leaders, resulting in indigenous churches planting churches which begin to spread rapidly through a people group or population segment. These new disciples and churches begin to transform their communities as the new Body of Christ lives out kingdom values. When consistent (multiple-stream) 4th generation reproduction of churches occurs, church planting has crossed a threshold to becoming a sustainable movement."
7. 24:14 is a global coalition of movement leaders focused on seeing movements among all unreached peoples and every place. For more information, see <https://www.2414now.net>.
8. *Ibid.*
9. Referencing a term popularized by Donald McGavran.