

Rediscovering the Hidden Peoples



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What will it take to complete world evangelization—to provide every person on earth with access to the Gospel so that all may respond to God’s love and salvation—and to do so in our generation? *MF* has been addressing related questions for the last 44 years: what is the nature, size and scope of the remaining missionary task? What resources need to be mobilized and deployed to accomplish this task? What strategies need to be employed to reach the thousands of different people groups still without access to the Gospel? This latest issue of *Mission Frontiers* continues to address these urgent questions.

In 1976, Dr. Ralph Winter founded the U.S. Center for World Mission (now Frontier Ventures) to raise awareness in the global Church of thousands of “hidden” people groups that had no access to the Gospel and had been overlooked by the Church and its mission workers. Winter mobilized the global Church with a vision to reach these hidden peoples. Frontier Ventures continues to focus on identifying those peoples with the least access to the Gospel and to advocate effective strategies for birthing movements to Jesus in each one of them.

This issue of *MF* continues that rich tradition—focusing on those hidden/unreached peoples which—forty-six years later—still have virtually no followers of Jesus and no known movements to Jesus. Much progress has been made over the last five decades in other groups, but the best available research indicates that about 5,000 people groups remain isolated from the Gospel—the least reached of the Unreached.

In Romans 15:20 Paul summarized his call **to go where Christ was not known**: *It has always been my ambition to preach the Gospel where Christ was not known, so that I would not be building on someone else’s foundation.* Currently, twenty-five percent of humanity still fits this category of *where Christ is*

not known—two billion people within 5,000 distinct people groups, still with no access to the Gospel. Within these people groups there are still virtually no followers of Jesus from whom others can learn how to have a saving relationship with God through Jesus.

Four years ago (Nov/Dec 2018) *MF* joined the *International Journal of Frontier Missiology (IJFM)* in introducing the new term *Frontier People Groups (FPGs)* to sharpen our global focus on the two thirds of all UPGs (Unreached People Groups) where the foundation still needs to be laid. This latest issue of *MF* presents an updated understanding of FPGs (p. 14), the growing variety of new resources— websites, videos, podcasts, prayer guides, etc.— focused on FPGs (p. 33) and the variety of part and full-time roles in which believers can collaborate to multiply God’s blessing through Jesus Christ among FPGs.

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Why a New Name for Some UPGs?

Many church mission policies today take pride in sending workers only to partner with existing local churches. Where the vision of the worker and local church is limited to building up the existing national church—even among a UPG—this continues to isolate FPGs from the prayer and workers they need and perpetuates the problem Winter set out to solve.

However, collaboration between the international worker and local churches in a movement to Jesus can become highly strategic as both come to share a vision for multiplying movements among neighboring FPGs (see *Movement Servants*, p. 20). FPGs need *pioneering cross-cultural* work to lay the foundation for movements to Jesus, while other UPGs have enough same-culture, followers of Jesus for outside workers to *partner* with upon arrival. These UPGs may still need outside help to reach their own people, yet movements among UPGs may also become strategic sending bases to near-culture and nearby FPGs.

HELP WANTED: All Applicants Accepted

At the Lausanne Congress 50 years ago, participants dedicated themselves to “the whole Church taking the whole Gospel to the whole world.” Winter introduced there the concept of hidden peoples, yet there were few opportunities then for significant involvement without relocating.

Today however, advances in technology make effective and strategic collaboration possible from almost any anywhere. Has God stirred your heart with Paul’s passion for the people groups still waiting in darkness? What roles is He calling and equipping you to play?

Pray:

- Personal intercession
- Local prayer group
- On-line prayer group
- **Prayer Champions** (p. 23)

Mobilize (Educate/Enlist):

- Yourself (keep learning)
- Your family/sphere of influence
- Your congregation
- Believers near FPGs (culturally/linguistically/geographically)

Serve a Collaborative Effort:

- With your prayers
- With your skills, time and resources
- As a **Movement Servant** (p. 20)
- As a **Strategy Coordinator** (p. 17)

Go (cross-culturally):

- To an FPG community near your home
- To lead or join a team in an FPG
- As a **Family-Blessing Advocate** (p. 24)

However, we cannot just sit back and expect movements in every remaining FPG without focused, well-informed, thoughtful action.

The Final Push to Get Started in All Peoples?

Many mission leaders and strategists sense that we are within reach of establishing the foundation of the Gospel among all peoples, as the initial step toward discipling them to obey Jesus in everything. New and old strategies for Bible translation are advancing at such a rapid pace that it appears likely every language still needing a translation will have one in process within the next ten years.

The number of movements to Jesus tracked on our cover has more than doubled in the last three years, toward the 24:14 Coalition goal to have “movement engagements in every unreached people and place by the end of 2025.” The growth potential of these movements is enormous.

However, we cannot just sit back and expect movements in every remaining FPG without focused, well-informed, thoughtful action. We need to clearly identify these people groups still without any evident fruit and make ourselves and our resources available to the Holy Spirit toward birthing movements to Jesus in every one of them.

In God we have all we need to succeed at this task. May we re-dedicate ourselves—with the guidance and empowering of the Holy Spirit—to ensuring that no people group remains “hidden.” 