

Catch The Vision

God is doing amazing things in our world. He's sending Navajo missionaries to the Laplanders and European Gypsy believers to Madagascar. He's shaking up Christian finances for His worldwide Cause, blasting open the Iron Curtain and riddling China with a searing spiritual hunger. God is raising up a movement of excited disciples ready to go anywhere and do anything.

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Followers of Jesus Christ are increasing by more than 90,000 every day. Eminent world watchers have documented an unprecedented initiative of God in this final decade of the 20th century, during these closing years of the second millennium.

Maybe your heart is restless to be a part of His big picture. Maybe you're restless to catch a new vision for your life.

What Are You Doing?

Think over the energy you're throwing into life now-trying to be the best you can be, trying to get ahead, to be a better Christian, a better family member, a better you.

Why work so hard?

Why ask so often for God's blessing on your life?

If it's to have a nicer, happier life, that's not a bad goal. Especially since that's what heaven will be-an easier, nicer existence. But if that were God's purpose for you right now, He would simply take you home to heaven, right? In the here-and-now, Biblical discipleship is never described as "nice" or "easy."

The Cause

God does want to bless you. But not to make your life easy. He'll bless you because He's got a demanding job for you-a specific task, one that lays down rails to guide your major life decisions, to keep you from spinning your wheels in Christian self-improvement.

Go ahead: Break out of the Christian-culture idea that to join God's family is to become part of a nice, privileged group. It's more like being born into a family business-everybody is naturally expected to take part in the Father's work. Do you know what the Father is doing these days?

How many times have you heard or given testimonies about God's wonderful plan for your life? Just how clear is that plan to you?

An Unchanging Purpose

Get a grip on your Bible. It spells out how to break through to the crystal-clear, specific task God has for you in His historic purpose-in His "family business." He does have a wonderful plan for your life!

Psalm 67 is a perfect overview of God's purpose:

*May God be gracious to us and bless us
And make His face shine upon us;
that Your ways may be known on the earth,
Your salvation among all nations.
... God will bless us, and all the ends of the earth
will fear Him.*

It's not too hard to figure out that God has blessed us for a specific purpose, right? Notice too, Jesus' summary of Scripture and His role in fulfilling messianic prophecy:

"This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" Luke 24:46-47.

What you'll see over and over in these passages about God's purpose on earth are terms such as peoples, nations, families, languages, tribes, the Gentiles or even Greeks-all signifying the idea of "people groups." A people group, according to Christian anthropologists and mission experts, is the largest ethnic group within which the

Gospel can spread without being stopped by barriers such as language or culture.

Peoples Power

The 70 people groups formed at the Tower of Babel had splintered into about 60,000 by the time of Christ-when He commanded us to make disciples of every "nation" or people group.

God is carrying out His unchanging purpose through His obedient servants around the globe.

Since then, these groups have merged through communication, trade and primarily the reconciling power of the Gospel, into about 24,000 distinct people groups.

To learn more of God's heart for the world as revealed in Scriptures, read through the following references. (If time allows, read the context of each verse as well). They summarize God's "unchanging purpose" on earth-to bless His

people, and through them, to bless every people group on earth.

Fourteen thousand people groups are currently being disciplined. The other 10,000-mostly among the Muslim, Han Chinese, Hindu, Buddhist and tribal cultures-have no church among them and little or no mission work.

Genesis 12:1-3, 18:18, 22:17-18, 26:4,5, 28:14;

2 Chronicles 6:32-33;

Psalms 67, 96, 105;

Isaiah 49:6, 51:4, 56:6-8;

Zechariah 2:11; Malachi 1:11;

Matthew 28:18-20;

Luke 2:30-32, 24:45-47;

Acts 1:8;

Romans 1:5, 10:13-15, 15:8-24, 16:25-27;

Galatians 3, verses 8, 14 & 29;

Ephesians 3:1-6;

Revelation 5:9; 7:9.

India, the Muslim/ Nomadic Fezara of Sudan, the Folk/ Religionist Manchu of China, the Shamanistic Ulchi of Russia and about 9,994 others.

Where are they?

In the remote jungles of Irian Jaya, in the ethnic neighborhoods of Berlin and nearly every major metropolitan city in the world, on Native American Indian reservations in the United States, in restricted-access countries, in India, in....

Your Vision

If you have a vision to share Christ in your neighborhood, your town or even all of your country, rejoice! Reaching your Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria is critical. But keep in mind that your country-no matter how large-represents only a very small part of our planet's total population-and a very small part of God's heart for the world.

It's also important to realize that God never expected or asked that we create a perfect society. If we get it in our minds that we must totally transform and "save" our city or country before we move on to other areas, we never will move on!

A "healthy" local church or body of believers walking in obedience to the Word of God will be active in two major areas:

Evangelism and discipleship in their local area and,

Assisting in the "whole Church" task of establishing a

church movement in every remaining unreached people group-a church movement which can effectively do in those peoples what their church does back home.

So clothe the needy and feed the hungry, witness across the street and stand up for righteousness in your society with an expanded vision of God's whole heart for the uttermost parts of the world!

And when you win your neighbors to Christ, equip them to join the Cause of reaching every people group with the Gospel. Make sure that you and your church are a part of God's historic purpose to add to the Body of Christ those purchased with His blood "from every tribe and tongue and people and nation."

God is carrying out His unchanging purpose (see Hebrews 6:17 and context) through His obedient servants around the globe. And the pace of completing that purpose is accelerating rapidly in this final decade of the century!

God has a job for you, and it has to do with reaching the remaining 10,000 unreached people groups on this planet.

Lessons From The Past

Historically, the modern Protestant movements to reach the ends of the earth with God's blessing have occurred in waves. The first era, championed by William Carey in the late 1700s, penetrated the coastlands of the globe's continents. The second, spearheaded by Hudson Taylor around 1865, penetrated the inland regions of many countries.

The third wave, responding to Cameron Townsend and Donald McGavran's call to go to all the remaining "hidden" or "unreached peoples," is nearing completion in this last decade before the year 2000.

Each wave has been characterized by student activism, revival and prayer movements. This last wave is no different.

We're living at a very interesting point in the history of the world, in the unfolding of God's unchanging purpose.

With unprecedented technological breakthroughs in cultural studies, communication and travel, we are better equipped than ever before to reach the whole world! And Christians worldwide are getting excited, realistic and specific about throwing themselves into the final era of God's unchanging.

The Remaining Task

While we're working so hard to improve our lives, to deepen our fellowships, to seek God's healing for our families and our land, let's simply face the fact: We haven't yet finished the missionary assignment that Jesus gave us.

Can we do it? It seems like an intimidating task. But God will accomplish His purpose. The gates of hell that lock in the unreached peoples of the world can't stand against His church. At the end of time Christ will be exalted with the song: "...you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation" (Revelation 5:9).

So the question isn't "Can we do it?" but rather "Will we do it?"

The fact is, the "Lord of the harvest" has showered His Church with more than enough resources to complete the task:

Participating in what God is doing will mean shifting our expectations from being blessed to becoming a blessing. Refusing to embrace the vision of being a blessing was a key problem in Old Testament Israel. (Haggai's even spoke of this.)

Missions is not popular is because active participation in the big picture of God's plan is also dangerous. It's the danger of signing on in wartime as a soldier who doesn't "entangle himself in the affairs of everyday life" (2 Timothy 2:4).

Battling the "powers and world forces" (Ephesians 6:12) that have bound these 10,000 groups for thousands of years means spiritual warfare. And warfare means casualties, body counts, blood, sweat and tears.

Think about it.

Is there any good reason you and your fellowship don't take seriously your part in God's unchanging purpose to disciple the nations? Have you (or will you) allow Christ and His perfect plan to be at the very center of your life?

Look What God Is Doing!

3,000 new churches are opening every week worldwide.

The Church in Africa is increasing by 20,000 per day on the average; the southern part of that continent was 3% Christian in 1900 and is nearly 60% Christian today.

Worldwide, Christianity is growing at the rate of 90,000 new believers every day.

More Muslims in Iran have come to Christ since 1980 than in the previous 1,000 years combined.

In 1900, Korea had no Protestant church; it was deemed "impossible to penetrate." Today Korea is 35% Christian with 7,000 churches in the city of Seoul alone.

In Islamic (Muslim) Indonesia, the percentage of Christians is so high the government won't print the statistic-which is probably nearing 15% of the population.

After 70 years of oppression in Russia, people who are officially Christians number about 85 million-56% of the population. In one Siberian city people are being baptized 24 hours a day!

God is creatively sending Chinese believers to reach Tibetans, Hondurans to reach North African Muslims and Navajos to reach Laplanders. There are currently more than 60,000 non-Western missionaries from over 1,000 non-Western mission agencies. Many of these are serving in places which are hostile to Western missionaries.

Where the church has been planted, it's growing like wildfire. The Good News is breaking loose worldwide: In AD 100, only one in every 360 people was an active believer. Today one in ten people is an active believer (9 to 1)

In AD 100 there were 12 unreached people groups per congregation of believers. Today, with six million churches worldwide, there are 600 congregations for every remaining unreached people group!

That's what your God is doing.

What will you do?

What will you do with your restlessness to be a part of God's exciting, dangerous plan?

○ I'll obey. I affirm my commitment to be part of God's work to disciple the "nations," the people groups of the world (Matthew 28:19) whether that means staying on the home front and serving as a "sender" or going and serving here or abroad as a missionary.

○ I'll pray specifically for His will to be done on earth-that every people group may hear and that laborers will be thrust forth into the harvest (Matthew 9:37-38).

○ I'll live according to God's purpose. I'll evaluate my priorities and begin to adjust my lifestyle according to God's purpose (Matthew 6:24-33; 10:37-39). I'll give to efforts to reach the unreached peoples.

○ I'll study. I'll learn everything I can about the big picture of God's purpose in Scripture (see Luke 24:45-47), current mission efforts, global events and research on unreached people groups.

○ I'll link up. I'll become accountable to other believers to pray, study, give, mobilize, send or go in my part of God's plan (Hebrews 10:24-25).

○ I'll share this vision. Right here in my region I'll help spread the news of what God is doing worldwide.

○ I'll give my time. I'll devote 5 or 10 hours every week helping my church or student fellowship reach out to the unreached peoples of the world.