



SERMON ILLUSTRATIONS

Moved by the Need

Illustration 1: The scope of the task

As we look at the spread of the gospel in the New Testament, we note the believers foresaw a time when people from all nations, people groups and generations would bow before Jesus Christ and confess him as Lord. The gospel imperative is that all persons from every people group be introduced to Jesus (see Acts 1:8 and Revelation 7:9-10). **Every** people group! Just as Jesus went through all the towns and villages in the area so we, as a global community of Christians, must commit to the breadth of the task.

Give some information about where the task of reaching every nation with the gospel is currently at. There are plenty of good resources to use at www.joshuaproject.net - powerpoint presentations, maps, definitions and other information. A sample is here:

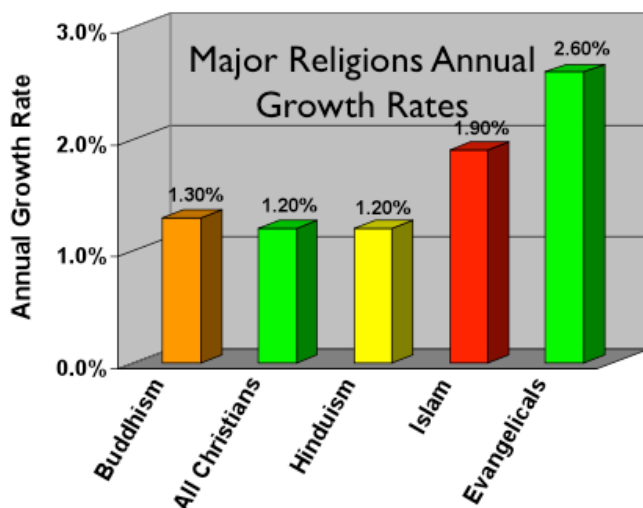
- 6,900 Least-Reached ethnic people groups out of 16,700 total groups in the world. (“Least-Reached” is defined as less than 2% evangelical individuals and less than 5% Christian adherents in the people group.)
- 3,800 of these Least-Reached groups are small, under 10,000 in population.
- Countries with the most least-reached ethnic people groups:

| <i>Country</i> | <i>Least-Reached Ethnic Groups</i> |
|----------------|------------------------------------|
| India | 2,218 |
| Pakistan | 461 |
| China | 426 |
| Bangladesh | 369 |
| Nepal | 348 |

- Bible translation: "About 82% of the world's population have New Testament Scriptures in their language. However, to complete the remaining 18% will require possibly as many as 2,200 new translation efforts."
- Christian radio broadcasting: Studies indicate Christian radio broadcasts are in the languages of about 91% of the world's population.
- Jesus film: There have been approximately 6.5 billion viewings of the *Jesus* film and it is available in over 1,100 languages covering 95% of the world's population.

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- Status of the gospel for every person: Approximately 70% (4.6 billion) of the world's population have heard the gospel in some form. 30% (2 billion) have had virtually no exposure to the gospel message.
- Spiritual challenge: More Christians were martyred in the 20th century than in the previous 19 centuries combined.
- People challenge: The remaining people groups and individuals tend to be in remote locations, have great language and cultural barriers, practice religious fundamentalism, and are the most resistant to the gospel.
- Political / national challenge: The countries with the most Least-Reached tend to be closed to Christianity.
- Church challenge: Only one out of ten cross-cultural missionaries labor among unreached people groups. Out of every US dollar of Christian giving to all causes less than one cent goes toward pioneer church planting among least-reached people groups.
- Annual growth rate of major world religions:



- The new face of Christianity (e.g. there are now more followers of Christ in China than in the United States)

| Year | % Christians in Europe and North America | % Christians in Latin America, Africa, Asia |
|------|--|---|
| 1800 | 99% | 1% |
| 1900 | 90% | 10% |
| 1985 | 50% | 50% |
| 2010 | 31% | 69% |



Challenges of the task:

- Post-Christian Europe and North America
- Rise of radical fundamentalist Islam
- Growing political resistance of many North African and Asian countries
- 86% of the world's Hindu, Muslims, and Buddhists do not know a Christian
- Still 6,900 unreached people groups

Illustration 2: People group case study

The Yawo are a people group living in Malawi, Mozambique and Tanzania in Southern Africa. When Arabs arrived on the east coast of Africa, they began trading with the Yao people. They traded mainly slaves and ivory, in exchange for clothes and guns. The Yao became one of the richest and most influential tribes in Southern Africa and were proud of their language and culture. They also embraced Islam, passed on to them by the Arab traders.

With the abolition of the slave trade the Yao people's livelihood, wealth and power was lost. They became desperately poor, socially ostracised and despised by their neighbours. They continue to practice folk Islam – a mix of traditional African beliefs and Islam.

The Christian church in Malawi and Mozambique is relatively strong. With colonisation and efforts of European missionaries, a vibrant church was planted and has grown. There are Bibles, Christian schools, hospitals and resources. However, the Yawo do not have access to these resources and they are considered a least-reached people group. They speak their own language, Chiyawo, and Bible translation projects have only begun recently by Global Interaction workers. Prejudice continues from their neighbours, and local Christians have done little to reach out to the Yawo. The heavily Western style church and expressions of faith that exist in the large towns are culturally foreign and physically not accessible to rural village-dwelling Yawo.

Global Interaction team members are working with the Yawo - learning their language and culture, pedaling their bicycles to their remote villages, investing in programs to improve their quality of life and sharing the message of Jesus in culturally appropriate ways.

To learn more, watch Friends of the Yao video clip in the Extras section of the Moved DVD and read profiles of team members on the Global Interaction website.

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Illustration 3: How could I not go?

Personal reflection from Lisa West Newman, Global Interaction cross-cultural worker, Cambodia.

Steve felt called to missions but my big dream was to move from Queensland and go to Sydney or Melbourne and make lots of money with my marketing degree. I really wrestled with God and I remember the point when I said “OK God I’ll do anything, I’ll go anywhere, I’ll even marry Steve!” It was a decision of my head. This decision didn’t move to my heart until I went on a short-term mission trip where I saw the need for myself. I was challenged by a cross-cultural worker there. She showed me that you can just be an ordinary person and do what God wants you to do. While I thought I wasn’t a particularly good choice on God’s behalf it showed me that he will use who he wants to, in his way. And, now I wanted to go and be a part of what God was doing in the world.

Fast forward a few years, we’d gone to Bible College, we’d done all our preparations, we’d even been to Cambodia to have a look at what it was like. But there was still one hurdle to get over. We asked ourselves “can we do it?” One of the Directors from Global Interaction came to our house to meet and talk with us. I remember him saying “I think you’re asking the wrong question. It’s not ‘can I go?’, but ‘can I not go?’. And with all that God had done in our lives so far, we couldn’t not go and feel like we were being obedient to God in our lives. It was up to him to equip us. The head thing, that became a heart thing, became a faith thing.

Fast forward a few more years, if you ask me if it’s worth it for me I’d say absolutely. It’s been an incredible journey. I would never have chosen this life for myself but I’m so glad God did. Being here in Cambodia makes me realise how incredibly privileged and blessed I am, how he had already equipped me. And with that, to me, comes a lot of responsibility. Privilege is not just for my own benefit. Blessing is not just for me to enjoy. It’s actually to be used by God for his glory. I’m passionate about that. I want whatever I’ve been given to be used and to be worthwhile. I’d hate to get to the end of life and think what a waste. That’s highly motivating for me. It’s real.