

The Great Commission
Trends in Global Missions
Adult Sunday School - Spring 2021
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The Great Shift in Global Christianity

For every one new believer in North America and Europe there are nearly 16 new believers in developing countries such as Nigeria, Brazil, India, and China.

The largest demographic of Christians today is poor, dark-skinned, and a woman.

The receivers are becoming the senders

This shift in the make-up of global Christianity has necessitated an increase in Partnerships on a global level

There has been an overall plateauing in the number of missionaries overall

Global vs. U.S. Church Growth

Globally - Evangelicals are the fastest growing of all major religions

In the U.S. - All major religions are growing faster than Evangelicals

Islam is growing 2.5 times faster than Evangelicals in the U.S.

Buddhism is growing 4 times faster than Evangelicals in the U.S.

Unreached People Groups (UPG)

Resource: *Joshua Project*

There are approximately 16,500 total people groups in the world

Note: 2021 data may increase this number to 17,400 with 7,400 UPGs

6,700 of them are unreached = 3.5 billion people or 42% of the world's population

10-40 Window

97% of the world's unreached people are located geographically in the 10-40 Window

Giving to Missions

6.4% of Evangelical giving goes to missions

96.7% of all Evangelical giving goes to local church ministries

2.9% goes to “home missions” in the same nation

.3% goes to the Unevangelized Christian world

.1% goes to Unreached People Groups

The investment of laborers

- 450,000 cross-cultural, long-term missionaries in the world
- 77% of them work in the Reached World
- 20% of them work in the Unevangelized World
- Only 3% of them work in the Unreached World

Translation

The Jesus Film is currently available in 1,880 languages (www.jesusfilm.org)

The Bible is available in audio formats in 1,325 languages (www.bible.is)

The Scripture is available online in 1,372 languages (www.youversion.com)

Training

95% of pastors globally have no formal training

Notes:

Prayer and Missions

Luke 10:1-3 - *1 After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them on ahead of him, two by two, into every town and place where he himself was about to go. 2 And he said to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. 3 Go your way; behold, I am sending you out as lambs in the midst of wolves.*

Notes (World Christians):

- Many Christians are trapped in boxes of pea-sized Christianity full of myths about missions that rob them of incentive to care about the unreached
- Missions - Being broken and remolded by Christ to fit the "gap" wherever He chooses to place and use you - Growing to know Christ, obey Christ, and glorify Christ - To know Him and to Make Him Known
- Stunted by selfishness - Preoccupied with the petty - Loving only the closest and easiest
- The term "World Christian" is not in the Bible - First use of the term was in 1920's by Daniel Fleming, in a YMCA book entitled, *Marks of a World Christian* - Today it is a popular term used by many mission organizations
- World Christians (Missionaries in the broader sense) are not super spiritual Christians - Not the elite forces of Christ's army - World Christian is a term that seeks to recapture the biblical meaning of the word Missionary without the myth that has built up around the word
- World Christians are not better than other Christians - Mission is the calling of all Christians - Some pursue that calling by crossing a significant human barrier (border, culture, language, age, etc) - Across the street and around the world
- World Christians are day-to-day disciples for whom Christ's global purpose has become the integrating and overriding priority for all that life is for them
- Corrie Ten Boom - World Christians are "tramps for the Lord" - A person who travels from place to place with an open schedule for whatever comes their way - Heaven's expatriates - God's global dispersion - James 4:13-17 - *13 Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit"— 14 yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. 15 Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that." 16 As it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. 17 So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.*
- How does one become a World Christian?
 - Catch God's Global Vision - They see the world the way that God sees the world
 - Keep God's Global Vision - Vision leaks - Ex. A fire that needs stoking - They find ways to stay focused - Ex. A starting contest
 - Obey God's Global Vision - Always leaning forward into God's purposes - They plan and trust - Proverbs 3:5-6 Trusting God and moving down the path

- Ex. John R. Mott - Student Volunteer Movement - Sent out 20,000 new world Christians
- R - *In the Gap* by David Bryant - 1979

Future Notes:

Theological Basis for Missions

Hamartiology - Doctrine of Sin

- The Nature of Sin - No sin, no need for missions
- The Origin of Sin - Pollutes the whole stream of humanity and history
- The Result of Sin - Separation - Death - God will not allow it
- The Universality of Sin - All

Eschatology - Doctrine of Last Things

- The final judgment will be universal - Ex. Flood - 1 Peter 3
- The Ark - There was only one ark - Acts 4:12 - And there was a time limit
- Today is the Day of Salvation ... Tomorrow is not guaranteed

Redemptive Analogies in almost all primitive religions - Shared factors

- Fact of God's Existence
- Creation
- Rebellion and Fall
- Need for Sacrifice to Appease God
- Great Flood
- Appearance of Many Languages Dispersing Mankind
- Acknowledgement of Revelation Needed to Restore Man to God

Future Notes:

5 Ways We Get the Great Commission Wrong

TREVIN WAX | MARCH 22, 2018

But it's easy for us to take some wrong turns in our understanding of Jesus's instruction. Here are five ways we sometimes get the Great Commission wrong.

1. When We See 'Teaching' as Exclusively or Primarily Informational

The first pitfall is seeing the "teaching" component of disciple-making as exclusively or primarily informational rather than holistic.

Instead, Christian missionaries should see the goal of discipleship as more than the transferring of information. The goal is to develop a heart for God, to know Him and love Him. Prioritizing the head over the heart stems from an anachronistic reading of a classroom educational model back into the first century, as if this kind of teaching is what Jesus had in mind.

Likewise, we should recognize the kind of teaching that takes place through modeling the Christian life before others. More than simply drilling information into young believers, Christians should serve as mentors, coming alongside others and showing them what it means to walk as a disciple of Jesus. This emphasis on guidance coincides with the ancient Israelite concept of teaching, where, as Wendy Widder explains:

"... the task of a teacher was to create the conditions in which learning could occur—and those conditions would be most effective when the learner had direct contact with relevant 'on the job' experience."

2. When We Weigh Christ's Imperatives

Another way we can misinterpret the Great Commission is by divorcing this command unintentionally from other commands of Jesus, as if the imperatives of Jesus are weighted, with some being more valuable than others. John Stott urged Christians to consider this danger.

"... the Great Commission neither explains, nor exhausts, nor supersedes the Great Commandment. What it does is to add to the requirement of neighbor-love and neighbor-service a new and urgent Christian dimension. If we truly love our neighbor we shall without doubt share with him the good news of Jesus."

Loving one's neighbor includes sharing the gospel. Proclaiming the gospel includes tangible demonstrations of loving one's neighbor.

3. When We See Its Application as Primarily Individualistic

A third way the Great Commission can be misconstrued is by picturing this command of Jesus as primarily individualistic rather than communal. Individual Christians are envisioned leaving home for foreign fields in order to share the Gospel.

Of course, this kind of cross-cultural ministry is, indeed, a part of what it means for the Great Commission to be fulfilled. But we do well to remember that this Commission is given for all the disciples. In fact, each of the gospel-commissioning texts (Matt 28:16–20; Luke 24:45–49; Acts 1:4–8; John 20:19–23) is given to the disciples as a group. The followers of Jesus constitute a new people, and this people's identity is constituted by this disciple-making agenda.

Michael Goheen is right. The Great Commission “. . . is not a task assigned to isolated individuals; it is an identity given to a community.” The corporate aspect of the Great Commission is important for eschatological discipleship, because it grounds all disciple-making efforts in the community of faith, not in individuals alone.

5. When We Isolate the Commission from the Gospels' Vision of Discipleship

A final misunderstanding of the Great Commission is the tendency to interpret the command to “make disciples” apart from the vision of discipleship put forth in Matthew's Gospel. Failure to consider the primary thrust of Jesus's command in light of the gospel in which these words find their fullest meaning leads to a reduced and shriveled view of discipleship. Isolating the commission from the Gospels' vision of discipleship is detrimental to eschatological discipleship, because it fails to present a clear portrait of what it looks like to “make disciples.” David Bosch offers this warning,

“It is inadmissible to lift these words out of Matthew's gospel, as it were, allow them a life of their own, and understand them without any reference to the context in which they first appeared. . . . No exegesis of the ‘Great Commission’ divorced from its moorings in the gospel can be valid.”

To avoid this pitfall, one should note the multiple threads woven throughout the Gospel that draw together in Matthew's conclusion. That's something I try to do in Eschatological Discipleship, as part of my efforts to show how we can be Great Commission Christians with a holistic, God-glorifying way of life that leads others to Christ.