

JERUSALEM  
COUNCIL 

---

*Third Millennium  
Church<sup>®</sup>*

---

**LEADERSHIP GUIDE**

# THE DAWN OF

# *Third Millennium Church*

DR. JAMES O. DAVIS  
FOUNDER/PRESIDENT, GLOBAL CHURCH NETWORK

According to Webster, a movement is “an organized effort to promote or attain an end.” There are cycles to movements and usually movements overtime become the opposite of what they started out to be. The first cycle generates, the second motivates, the third speculates and the fourth dissipates. If one’s movement is not moving, then it is, in effect, more like a monument. Dr. Leonard Sweet says, “The Church must return to the original operating system,” The Missional Church, Global Church Divinity School (GCDS.tv).

History is replete with conservatism giving way to liberalism and light giving way to dark. It is not that the darkness has become stronger, but rather the light became weaker, which is one of the major reasons why the Great Commission has not been completed. Instead of the Church remaining as a thermostat regulating temperature, over time it became a thermometer that only reflects temperature. The goal should be to win souls for Christ so that the spiritual temperature will rise and the world will be transformed. The only way out of decline is an upward vision to lift the Church.

## THE OLD-WORLD VIEW

When we launched the Global Church Network ([www.GCNW.tv](http://www.GCNW.tv)) in 2002, I shared with Dr. Bill Bright, founder of Campus Crusade, our vision for



online training vision based on the innovative technology platform our team was building. He immediately replied, “In the future, more students will be trained online than all of the current universities and seminaries in the world.” Together, Dr. Bright and I launched the Billion Soul® Harvest and gratefully achieved this goal in November 2019.

When Dr. Bright and I launched the Global Church Divinity School ([www.GCDS.tv](http://www.GCDS.tv)) not long after, we predicted, “In the years to come, online training will be the major way that leaders are taught for ministry and professional work.” I remember several leaders saying, “That will never work. We will never see the Internet in our lifetime in every place on earth.”

When I get an email from my friends from Oceania or now Zoom with them, I still think of the early conversations with leaders who at that point did not see the tidal wave of technology coming their way.

As the Church approaches the Third Millennium, we have been afforded another opportunity to get out front and on the cutting edge

of evangelism, discipleship and vision-casting. The Lord is not calling us to live in the “was” but in the “is.” He is not pushing us from the back but pulling us forward into the now. Old maps will not work in the new land. How do we read the map now?

With respect to training, while the world has been moving toward a “go and teach” paradigm for more than 20 years, the Church has largely remained in the old attraction model “come and hear.” One of the main reasons that Church attendance is down, is because most of the Saints have stopped bringing the lost to the House of God. Nowhere in the New Testament are lost people commanded to “go to church.” However, time and again the saved are commanded to go, share and compel the lost to come so that “My house might be full.”

Jesus said, “If I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Myself...” (John 12:23, ASV). He is the greatest magnetic force of all time. We have not been commissioned to make our local churches more attractive, but instead to lift Jesus higher. He is the attraction; He draws all peoples unto Himself. Instead of being more seeker sensitive, I suggest we become more Savior sensitive. Of course, we need excellent lighting, great sound systems and friendly ushers in the local church. Yet, we live in a time when it is going to take a lot more than a state-of-the-art building to attract the lost to walk inside. If leadership does not grasp and take ownership of this fundamental, biblical principle, then then as we enter the Third Millennium, the Church will be further behind the curve.

## **BETWEEN TWO WORLDS**

As we move from the Second Millennium to the Third Millennium Church, it is imperative that we realize that the world is now our campus.

When the previous generation went to college, they went to a “where” for their education. Today, the important question is not, “Where did you study?” but “who taught you when you studied?” In time, the old scholastic system will collapse due to cost and complexity. I am willing to predict by 2030 to 2035, the old models will be gone. Just think about it: a private Christian college education today averages \$120,000 or more. Ten years from now, a faith-based higher learning degree will cost in excess of \$200,000. Do we really think that parents and students are going to continue to pay those enormous sums?



For the last twenty years, the old Gutenberg model (print, cement classrooms, and professors) has been giving way to the new Google model (digital papers and books, access to information without authority figures). Today, students need authority figures to process, rather than merely access information.

Instead of adopting the accreditation model, the world is gradually moving to a credentialing model. In the past a recognized organization trusted institutions by making them “legitimate” to give degrees to students. Yet, distance died with the birth and expansion of the Internet. We live in a whole new world.

## THE NEW WORLD VISION



As the Church enters into this new reality, we are going to have let go of old world paradigms. When the COVID pandemic hit technology did not slow down but rather sped it up. For example, I know pastors who had intentionally chosen not to ramp up their technology in support of their website, online streaming, etc. Yet, the coronavirus disruption forced them to do so or to close their doors permanently – adapt, or die. What is amazing is that they knew the Internet was increasing every year, but they chose to do nothing to get ready, until the tsunami hit.

As we move into the future, **third-millennium-church-evangelism** will be extremely important. Pastors will have to make fundamental decisions as to how the technology is utilized in the Church. The temptation will be, “What got us through the pandemic is now the new model.”

First, strategies should be deployed to reach the lost. It is imperative that believers utilize this new world vision to build bridges to their friends who do not know Christ. Creative approaches should be developed and vetted regarding how bring the unsaved to the local church, and ultimately to Christ. Simply streaming a worship service is not a strategy. Every pastor should give careful thought as to how to protect their Christ-centered preaching, so that it cannot be ripped from the Internet simply because Big Tech does not approve it.

Secondly, as we step into this new world, **third-millennium-church-education** is a must for success. Since distance is no longer a factor, the world is our campus, and the local church now has a renewed in-house opportunity to train and disciple both young and seasoned believers. Insourcing will replace outsourcing and become common place. Every local church can become a training campus, where members are trained onsite by the best minds in Christendom. The Global Church Divinity School ([www.GCDS.tv](http://www.GCDS.tv)) was built to empower the local church to open its own campus, establish a low-cost threshold and multiply their leaders like never before. We live in time when students don't have to be sent away to learn; but can learn by the best leaders, where they live today.

Currently, there is a cataclysmic battle between Big Tech and cable companies, and the tech giants are winning. A recent Forbes article stated that the number of people who cut the cord from cable television in 2021 has more than tripled since



2014, going from going from 15.6 million to a projected 50.4 million. Except for certain special events, for the most part, viewers do not watch programmed television but rather consume media they want to watch, when they want to watch it. You may ask, “What does this have to do with local church education? Everything! This shift that distance is dead and the world is our campus has already begun, and will further accentuate and accelerate.

In addition, we have entered into third-millennium-church-expansion. In the past when solid members left our churches, we simply prayed for them and said goodbye. Yet, today, missional consideration should be given as to whether or not individuals, couples or families who are leaving could become ambassadors for their church. In other words, instead of simply saying good-bye to them, consider whether or not the Lord of the harvest

would desire for them to begin a house church, where they go. Think about it. Since the Internet does not know distance, members could be missionaries as to they go to different places around the world. In time, any local church could have tens, if not hundreds, of multisite locations around the world. We must move from addition to multiplication.



## **THE UNCHARTED WORLD BEFORE US**

While in Lisbon, Portugal, some years ago, I arranged for a Spanish speaking driver to take me to Palos, Spain, located three hours away. When I arrived at this small sea town, I went to a very old

monastery, where I looked at the old-world artifacts. As I walked into “The Vision Room,” I read the words above the entrance, “The Birthplace of America.”

I sat in the actual chair used by Christopher Columbus in 1491, when he met with a Franciscan Monk, who was a close friend to the King and Queen of Spain. Columbus proposed using a new trade route, sailing across the Atlantic Ocean instead of around the tip of Africa. The Franciscan Monk bought into that vision and shared it with the Queen, who communicated it to the King, after which the King and Queen funded Columbus’ journey to The New World.

Columbus had previously outlined the same vision with leaders of Portugal, but found no purchase, as they immediately dismissed it. I have often wondered, if Portugal had the opportunity to think about it again, if they would have chosen differently? They missed one of the grandest paradigm shifts in human history.

After my visit to The Vision Room, I went to the actual location where Columbus’ original boats – Nina, Pinta and Santa Maria – were anchored, which today is a lovely grass lawn with a fountain. As I stood there, I prayed, “Lord please double the size of the Church in my generation and make it harder for people who live on the earth to not hear the Gospel.”

I submit to you that we have a new world before us. It is time for the Third Millennium Church to set its technological sails into the ocean of evangelism, education and expansion or we will have missed one of the grandest opportunities of this generation.

*With Deepest Gratitude To The*

JERUSALEM COUNCIL   
*Apostolic Team*

*For Funding*

---

*Third Millennium<sup>®</sup>  
Church*

---

## **LEADERSHIP GUIDE**

***Brian & Karen Ashworth***

***Ezekiel Opet***

***Balgobind Ragnauth***

***Daniel Schmid***

# PROGRAM



## TUESDAY 1:00PM-9:00PM

THE NEW MAP FOR A NEW MILLENNIUM



**PROCTOR**  
Rev. & Mrs. Florin Cimpean



**NEW MAP FOR A  
NEW MILLENNIUM**  
Dr. James O. Davis



**WIJD IN CENTRAL  
& SOUTH AMERICA**  
Dr. Ricardo Castillo



**WIJD IN NORTH  
AMERICA**  
Dr. Sean O'Neal



**POSITION**  
Dr. John Sorensen



**THE MAP FOR ONENESS  
IN THE CHURCH**  
Mrs. Kathy Branzell

SCRIPTURE ABOUT THE UNKNOWN GOD



**PROCTOR**  
Mrs. Tammie Southerland



**SCRIPTURAL CONTEXT &  
CULTURAL SENSITIVITY**  
Dr. Craig Keener



**WIJD IN OCEANIA**  
Dr. Ezekiel Opet



**POSITION**  
Dr. Jennifer Holloran  
Dr. David Reeves



**SCRIPTURE AS STORY**  
Dr. ByoungHo Zoh

## WEDNESDAY 9:00AM-9:00PM

OUR HUMANITY IN A SECULAR CULTURE



**PROCTOR**  
Dr. Kim Maas



**THE JESUS HUMAN**  
Dr. Leonard Sweet



**WIJD IN THE  
CARIBBEAN**  
Dr. John O. Smith

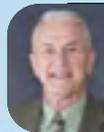


**POSITION**  
Dr. Kurt Dillinger



**17 CENTURIES LATER**  
Dr. Carla Sunberg

GRAIN AND THE CHURCH



**PROCTOR**  
Ret. Maj. Gen. Thomas L.  
Solhjem



**THE SPEED OF  
TECHNOLOGICAL LIGHT**  
Mr. Matt Potter



**WIJD IN  
SOUTHEAST ASIA**  
Rev. Eddy Leo



**WIJD IN  
EASTERN EUROPE**  
Rev. Doru Cirdei



**THE FUTURE HYBRID  
CHURCH**  
Rev. Fabian Jood

CHRISTIAN  
ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN THE  
GLOBAL MARKETPLACE



**PROCTOR**  
Dr. David Sobrepeña



**THE TOP FIVE IN THE  
NEXT FIVE YEARS**  
Mr. Bob Doll



**POSITION**  
Mr. Ed Raine



**WIJD IN  
NORTH AFRICA**  
Dr. Peter Thomas



**BUSINESS LEADERS &  
THE CHURCH**  
Rev. Yang Tuck Yoong

**THURSDAY 9:00AM-6:00PM**

GEN NOW AND THE CALL OF GOD



**PROCTOR**  
Revs. Brian & Karen  
Ashworth



**MILLION MINISTERS  
MANDATE**  
Rev. Brian Yuan



**WIJD IN EAST  
& WEST AFRICA**  
Dr. Alex Mitala



**WIJD IN THE  
MIDDLE EAST**  
Dr. Lazarus Yeghnazar



**WIJD MILITARY**  
Ret. Maj. Gen. Thomas L.  
Solhjem



**INTERVIEW BY DR. JAMES O. DAVIS;  
COMMISSIONING GEN NOW**  
Rev. Lias Effie



**THE CALL OF GOD  
& GEN NOW**  
Dr. Michael Brown

SYNERGISTIC LEADERSHIP AND THE CHURCH



**PROCTOR**  
Rev. Artur Krasniqi



**REVEALING THE  
UNKNOWN GOD**  
Dr. Craig Keener



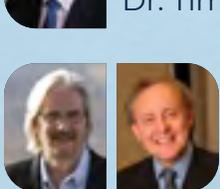
**WIJD IN INDIA**  
Dr. David Mohan



**WIJD IN CHINA  
& THE CHINESE DIASPORA**  
Dr. Yeou-Cherng Bor



**THE THIRD  
MILLENNIUM HARVEST**  
Dr. Timothy Hill



**COMMISSIONING THE  
MILLENNIUM THREE  
CHURCH DECLARATION**  
Dr. Leonard Sweet  
Dr. James O. Davis

NEW MAPS  
FOR A NEW  
MILLENNIUM



SCRIPTURE  
AND THE  
UNKNOWN  
GOD



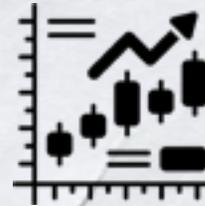
JESUS  
AND OUR  
HUMANITY



G.R.A.I.N  
AND THE  
CHURCH



CHRISTIAN  
ENTREPRE-  
NEURSHIP  
AND GLOBAL  
BUSINESS



THE CALL  
OF GOD FOR  
GEN NOW



SYNERGISTIC  
LEADERSHIP  
AND THE  
CHURCH



TO FINISH THE GREAT COMMISSION

# PRAYER



**PROGRESS**

**FINISH**

# 'End Time' Kingdom plans, being unfolded in Iran and the Middle East!

Dr. Lazarus Yeghnazar  
Founder Transform Iran

'Surely the Sovereign Lord does nothing without revealing his plan to his servants the prophets'.  
Amos 3:7 (NIV)

## Introduction

The Lord is pouring His mercies in the Biblical 'home region' of the Middle East, but there is no doubt that for the past few decades, God has had a particular focus on the nation of Iran. Despite what the Mullahs or the clerics of the Islamic regime might wish to think, we are seeing God's sovereign work spreading in Iran and across the Middle East region. It is said that Iran is the fastest growing church in the world. The story is so much greater than we can bring in this report, but we hope to encapsulate some of the wonderful ways in which God is showing His grace and mercy to Iran—and across the whole of the Middle East.

The Middle East is in the midst of major upheaval. Old powers fall, new powers rise, and the Kingdom advances in each country in a unique way. What God has planned for Iran, will have a profound impact not only on all the surrounding countries, but we believe it will have far reaching consequences beyond that region too. This report is being prepared on June 23, 2025. We are 11 days into direct confrontation between Iran, Israel and the USA. Who knows how events will have unfolded two months from now? We eagerly anticipate the changing of the seasons, and the ushering in of a new wave of the Spirit in Iran and across the Middle East.

The prophecy of Amos 9:13 is being manifested gloriously in Iran: "The days are coming," declares the LORD, "when the reaper will be overtaken by the plowman and the planter by the one treading grapes. New wine will drip from the mountains and flow from all the hills." The days are now!

God has plowed the hearts of millions all across Iran and sown the seed of hunger and thirst for the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This is unprecedented since the onslaught of Islam into Iran 13 centuries ago! Now, millions of Iranians are exposed to the message of Jesus and hundreds of thousands are born again (some would even say millions born again!). 46 years ago—before Muslim clerics hijacked the leadership and the government of Iran—in a period that all mission work was welcomed and respected, and all evangelism uninhibited, there was literally no thirst for the truth! Then the ayatollahs took over, and when mission agencies thought all was lost, God intervened mightily, pouring His Spirit on the souls of Iranians. Revival exploded! Light cut into the deep dense darkness.

## Overview

Millions of Iranians—and so many others in the Middle East region—are hearing the gospel from family or friends, or through every conceivable digital means, and responding with a resounding YES. No amount of social unrest or political turmoil can hold them back. If anything, the uncertainty, the poverty, the economic chaos, today's tragic war, and most importantly, the hypocrisy and betrayal of the Islamic leaders, have been driving people onto the solid rock of Jesus Christ!

This is not a mere abundance of harvest. This is the transformation of the destiny of entire nations. We see this clearly with Iran, but increasingly in other countries in this region too. After centuries of dense darkness, God's grace manifestly and abundantly pours out on hungry and thirsty souls.

All of us who are engaged in gathering the harvest in the Middle East feel humbled and privileged to have been given this incredible heavenly mandate. It is a divine partnership with Jesus. His pace is so fast, we can hardly catch up with the Sower! He is building His Church and the gates of hell will never prevail. Jesus is unstoppable and His mercies exceed all our expectations. We are simply prayerfully watching Him at work and following His footsteps.

## The Harvest Now, the Harvest 'Thereafter'

Since 2020, we have increased our focus to unite in prayer, share and strategize for a post-Islamic Christian Iran. Humanly inconceivable; but with God, all is possible. Can we imagine what the landscape will look like across this troubled region? What will the needs be? While our message is the same, yet the change in our approach is inevitable. The key question is: How should we prepare for such an enormous task? How are we called to play our part? If we don't prepare for the answer to our prayers—for the post-Islamic era—the harvest will be stolen by the enemy! Already we can see very disturbing signs of cults and witchcraft moving fast into Iran. While we are excitedly rejoicing for the harvest now, we need to be preparing, tirelessly and prophetically for the harvest yet to come!

In 2024, God spoke to us that 2025 will be a year like no other in the history of Iran and the Middle East. Already a chain of unthinkable events has unfolded and the long-anticipated Israel strike on Iran has created panic for the powers of darkness; but a tsunami of opportunities for the 'watchful'. This is a time to pray, to partner, to plan and to prepare. We need to engage all our resources with an accelerated pace and a great sense of urgency. Vigilant prayer is critical; but prophetic preparation is essential so that the harvest is not stolen by the enemy.

## Why Iran?

Once the seat of the great Persian Empire, Iran continues to play a significant role on a global scale, and especially in the Middle East region. Physically she occupies a strategically important location with coasts on the Persian Gulf, Gulf of Oman and the Caspian Sea, as well as being the land mass between the Middle East and Central and South Asia. With her oil reserves and large energy industry (Iran is holder of the world's fourth largest supply of proven crude oil and second largest natural gas reserves). Iran is considered one of the leading geopolitical powers of Western Asia.

References to Iran abound in the Bible. From Esther, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah and Jeremiah of the Old Testament; to the Magi's, the Medes, Parthians and Elamites at the birth of the Church at the day of Pentecost! Persians were blessed and they were a blessing. Satan hates God's plan. Instead of Iran being light and salt to the nations, Satan has used the last 46 years to export death—particularly to the countries surrounding Israel. He has brought his pirates to steal, kill, destroy, plunder and chant "Death to Israel"!

The Iranian Revolution of 1979 established a hardline Islamic regime; Christians faced increasing opposition and persecution: all missionaries were forcibly removed, evangelism was outlawed, Bibles in Persian were banned (it is illegal to own, print, import or distribute Bibles) and soon became scarce, and several pastors were martyred. In 2025, Open Doors ranked Iran as #9 most dangerous country for Christians; Yemen was #3 and Saudi Arabia #12. Against this backdrop, the Iranian Church has become the fastest growing in the world which has been influencing the Middle East region for Christ. More Iranians have become Christians in the last 46 years than in the previous 13 centuries put together, since Islam came to Iran. In 1979, there were an estimated 500 Christians from a Muslim background in Iran; now there are more than one million Iranian followers of Jesus (likely much more than that).

*"In once sense it is very easy to serve in Iran, because as soon as people see the light of Christ and the love expressed through us, they fall in love with the source of love and light, which is Jesus Christ, because the*

*disparity between the darkness and the light is so clear that even a blind person can see it.”* House Church Pastor in Iran

Today, the patience of the West has evaporated and step by step Iran’s ‘axis of terror’ has been dismantled. First her proxies, and now her own nuclear capabilities, have taken a significant hit. For the first time in 46 years, most of the opposition is uniting behind the Crown Prince Reza Pahlavi. I have personally shared the gospel with him, prayed with him, and given him a Bible. He is understanding of the needs of the Christian population in Iran. He is gaining recognition in the West and respect by his fellow Iranians. The end of the Islamic regime could come fast and catch all by surprise—and the pieces are in play for a post-Islamic era.

We see the day when instead of investing billions to export death and destruction, Iran will invest by sending missionaries into all the nations surrounding Israel and Iran! To this end we need to prepare intentionally.

## Learning from the past: three huge lost opportunities of the church

### Emperor Kubli Khan

Kublai Khan, the emperor of the Mongolian Empire, asked Marco Polo, to bring back some oil from the Holy Land and one hundred priests so the emperor could discern whether Christianity was the true religion. The Pope thought this is a wasted exercise.

Sadly, despite their efforts, Marco could only find two Dominican monks willing to make the long and dangerous journey. But those two priests didn’t make it that far—they left the traveling party and went home after becoming terrified of Mamluk bandits.

Ironically, Satan filled this void left by the ‘non-preparation’ of the church, by quickly linking China to the Abbasid Caliphate! At the time of Marco Polo’s travels (around 1271-1295), Iraq was under the rule of the Abbasid’s. Specifically, the last Abbasid Caliph, Al-Musta’sim, ruled until the Mongol conquest of Baghdad in 1258. Following the conquest, Iraq came under the control of a Mongol khanate. Muslim merchants were quick to propagate Islam passionately. It well suited the Mongol temper!

The Result: Mongolia, Kazakhstan, Kirgizstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan as well as Northwest China’s Xinjiang autonomous region, which contains a significant Uyghur population, all succumbed to Islam! Oh! What if the church was ready!

### General MacArthur

General MacArthur was a visionary Presbyterian. He asked his friend (President D Eisenhower) to send 1,000 missionaries to Japan. Some may dispute this fact today, trying to whitewash the visionary power of ‘knowing the times’ and specifically meeting the need (1,000 missionaries). However, even if the specific request of 1,000 missionaries is questioned, what we know for certain is that General MacArthur did actively seek the support of Christian missionaries to aid in the democratization of Japan after World War II. He believed that Christianity and democracy were intertwined and saw the presence of missionaries as crucial for the success of his post-war plans.

MacArthur’s actions were rooted in his belief that Christianity was essential for the successful implementation of democratic principles in Japan. He saw a strong connection between the two, stating that "Democracy and Christianity have much in common, as practice of the former is impossible without giving faithful service to the latter". He actively encouraged missionary work as a means of supporting the new political order. But the church was not ready and Japan was also lost.

Oh! What if the church was ready! We lost our second biggest opportunity!

### **The Fall of Communism**

A tragedy much closer to home; and much can be written here. We prayed for 70 years diligently and passionately yet failed to believe God was hearing us! If not, we would have prepared accordingly! Every international bank and business anticipated the upcoming opportunity but we as the church, settled for prayer without no action! I propose that if we had prepared, Putin would not be in power, a million youth from Ukraine and Russia would not have died, China would have been contained, and much could be different all across the land. Ukrainian and Russian missionaries, with great zeal, would have turned the world!

God spoke to me and told me that communism is finished: “get ready!” At that time, in a good year, we would smuggle one New Testament from Iran into Armenia. How could we have known that if we obeyed and prepared, in just ten years we would reverse the course and smuggle over 200,000 New Testaments from Armenia to Iran! But by the grace of God, I believed him when he shared the ‘times’ and we were the very first Iranian/Armenian ministry to enter Armenia with a \$9,000 cash injection prepared and anticipated in faith.

There were few cars in Yerevan at the time. Now it’s a traffic jam willed with the latest vehicle models. We captured the heart of Armenians early; preached, discipled, healed and established churches. The result: Armenia is one of the countries where cults such as Mormons, Jehovah’s Witnesses and Hare Krishnas have not been able to establish roots and strongholds! The harvest was not plundered! We were ready and prepared ahead of others!

We could share many sad stories of the result of the unpreparedness of the church. We rejoiced in the fall of the Iron Curtain, yet others entered and plundered the harvest, and the church by far and large was underprepared. Praise God for the living, loving, growing churches in Russia now. Yet because of the lack of strategy, unity and planning, instead of transforming the nation we retreated to a few beautiful churches.

### **The NOW! The implosion of Islam!**

The church is right now facing the fourth and maybe her most serious opportunity. In 1990, in my early morning devotion—which often turned into a fist fight against the demons of Islam—the Holy Spirit gently yet firmly stopped me! “Don’t ever pray against Islam anymore!” I asked: “Why not Holy Spirit? I need to see this spirit bound and destroyed!” The Holy Spirit answered: “Islam is finished. Now the cold serpent of Hinduism will rise from its slumber.”

I sent a message to all our churches worldwide and said: “Do not pray against Islam. Focus on preparation.” Soon after, within two years, on December 6, 1992, The Ayodhya 500-year-old mosque in India, known as the Babri Masjid, was demolished by Hindu nationalists. The demolition sparked riots that resulted in the deaths of approximately 2,000 people.

The demolition of the Babri Masjid was a pivotal event in Indian history, particularly for the rise of Hindu nationalism. This was also the beginning of a serious rise in the persecution of the church! This incident led to a long-standing legal battle over the site, ultimately resulting in the Supreme Court awarding the land to Hindus for the construction of a temple.

On January 22, 2024, more than three decades after the mob of militant Hindus ran the mosque to the ground, the country’s prime minister, Narendra Modi, inaugurated the new Hindu temple that stands in its place, and labeled the moment the fulfilment of “the dream that many have cherished for years”.

The consecration of the Ram temple became a national event, with 8,000 official guests including politicians, diplomats, Bollywood stars and religious leaders, as well as hundreds of thousands of pilgrims from across the country, all gathering to show their devotion to the new temple and 'Lord Ram'. The town also underwent a \$3 billion government-funded transformation.

The Holy Spirit's warning was spot on!

Now, if the church remains self-occupied and not ready to receive new strategies, understanding and council by the Spirit of wisdom (Isaiah 11), we will end up doing the greatest act of disservice to the Kingdom of God and even delay Christ's return.

Let us make sure that when the opportunity to return to Iran presents itself, we are all preoccupied with the reclaiming of the land for Christ, rather than any personal losses suffered by the brutality of this regime. Let us prepare ourselves with vision and partner in the work of our Lord.

### What is Jesus Doing?

"I will build my church. The gates of hell will not be strong enough to destroy it." Matthew 16:18b

Jesus is busy building HIS church in Iran and across the Middle East. We are simply trying to keep up!

The underground church in Iran is vibrant, courageous, and growing rapidly under constant threat of persecution. Every day, followers of Jesus make hard choices: risk exposure or stay silent, meet together or remain isolated, trust strangers or guard their faith in secret.

Christians in Iran are no strangers to hardship. The government relentlessly pursues believers, threatening, torturing, imprisoning and even executing those who stand for Christ. The Church is undeterred. Compelled with a boldness and compassion that only God can supply, believers walk the streets looking for opportunities to share the love of Christ both practically (feeding the hungry) and spiritually as they introduce them to the Light of the World. We are simply following the clear mandate in Isaiah 58.

Despite Iran's strict government bans on Christian and other external media, miraculous stories abound! Jesus cannot be stopped from appearing in dreams and visions, answering the prayers of seekers or transforming lives through healing. Those who encounter Him firsthand become unstoppable witnesses, sharing their newfound hope even when doing this could cost them everything.

Without official buildings believers gather in small groups, usually inside homes. They worship, study the Bible and pray together. These 'house' churches are intimate, deeply relational communities where trust is essential and every new member is prayerfully considered. Growth is fueled by hunger for truth, personal encounters with Christ, and a deep commitment to discipleship. Secure communication methods are used to ensure each new believer receives one-on-one discipleship and grows to stand strong

Although Iranians are exhausted by decades of oppression, even seekers are willing to risk everything for the freedom Christ offers. Every believer tells a story of being transformed by Christ and being filled with a joy they cannot contain. In Iran, there are no lukewarm Christians—only passionate followers who understand the cost of discipleship and embrace it boldly.

### Testimonies

There is nothing that so demonstrates what Jesus is doing as testimonies of His gracious working and transformation in the lives of people:

## **A Broken Teenage Boy Regains His Joy**

Kevin is a 14-year-old Iranian refugee boy living in the Middle East. He joined a youth outreach program while walking through one of the hardest seasons of his life. His father had been held in a deportation camp for 11 months. The emotional burden weighed heavily on Kevin, and it showed.

When Kevin first came, he was completely disengaged. He didn't want to be there. His mother had to forcibly hand him over just to get him through the door. He was taken to where the youth were worshipping—and something incredible happened. Right from those very first moments, a supernatural joy came into him. By the end of the session, Kevin was dancing in worship. They had a hard time convincing him to go home!

From that day, Kevin began attending weekly. The shy, withdrawn boy slowly came alive. His sorrow turned to smiles, and he engaged in every part of the sessions with joy and openness. It was a transformation that deeply moved not only his family, but everyone in the church.

About 6 weeks after joining the program, Kevin's father was unexpectedly (and miraculously!) released from camp. The family was restored.

Kevin continued to attend the sessions weekly and his heart softened more and more for the Lord until a few months later he gave his heart to Jesus Christ, surrounded by his peers as they all laid hands on him and prayed for him.

## **A Muslim Girl Discovers Her Worth in Christ—and turns Bible Translator**

Miriam had bought into the lie that women have no worth. She tried hard to please Allah: "Right into my adult life, I followed all the rules of Islam. I would constantly torture myself, wondering what my punishment would be in this world or in the afterlife for all my inevitable failures."

Miriam became more and more devout in her faith. At university, she studied Arabic. She didn't want to simply repeat Muslim verses without understanding what they say. But the more she knew what the Quran said, the bigger her questions became.

She eventually met a woman who began to share Jesus with her. When Miriam learnt about Christ's forgiveness, it pierced through her walls. "This was in stark contrast to what I had learned from the Quran and all the years I had spent trying to earn God's acceptance through my own good works. What struck me most was that she was sharing this message openly, knowing it could put her in grave danger. Yet she did it anyway, because she believed in the love and power of Jesus Christ."

Miriam decided to follow Christ and fully surrender to him. Not long after that she was invited to help translate the Word of God into her own language. It had taken years for her to find salvation but with the Word translated in the language of her people, she knew she would be able to help others know God quickly. It was an easy 'yes'.

A few months into the process, she finally found the courage to share the truth she had discovered with her husband. To her great delight, he responded in faith and it transformed their marriage! Today Miriam is an active evangelist leading other women like her to the love of Christ.

## A Teacher of the Quran Finds Jesus

Mohammad comes from a very religious family in the West of Iran. Both of his grandfathers were Muslim clerics. He himself held important Islamic status as a school principal and teacher of the Quran. But he knew there must be more.

He began researching Christianity. He had many questions. His search led him to Transform Iran's digital church: Persian Community Church. Here, he was introduced to a counselor who began to meet him weekly (long distance) and share Jesus with him.

"I brought my questions to him and he answered them thoughtfully. I sensed the outcome was inevitable but I wanted to be sure. I even cleared a room in my house so that I would be able to use it as a church once I finally embraced Christianity."

In his second session, Mohammad gave his heart to Christ. Now as a new believer, his counselor began discipling him and leading him to freedom in different areas of his life. "I was so grateful! I could sense the chains breaking and freedom taking hold."

Mohammad's life was transformed. He even threw his Islamic prayer book into the river to destroy it. These changes began to be noticed by those close to him. They want to understand what had led to his obvious transformation. They told him even his demeanor had become radiant! So Mohammad began leading others in his sphere of influence to Christ. With weeks he had led three others to the Lord. This included Ali, the son of a high-ranking cleric in his mosque.

Now where clerics would gather to discuss the Quran, they gather and study the Word of God together!

## Fulfilling the Mission of Christ

As we look ahead to a transformed Iran, there is work to be done here in the West in preparation. There are 5-6 million Iranians in the Diaspora; yet fewer than 100,000 of them know Jesus. Reaching the Diaspora, means reaching family and friends in Iran. Iranians who have experienced the love of Christ are eager to join in mission and spread the good news to their own family and friends in the country. For those in the Diaspora, communicating the gospel in bite sized portions on social media is the best way of getting the message across. We need to invest in equipping, resourcing, and motivating those who are eager to visit Iran when the doors are unhinged.

The Diaspora also offers a great pool of potential missionaries. As Iran's 'Islam Wall' crumbles, we need financial resources to send hundreds of volunteers two by two from the West to take the land; volunteers who are anointed and passionate evangelist/ teachers. We have been training them for many years. They are ready to go. Will we be ready to send them?

Iranians dream of the day their nation WILL be transformed for Christ. All our efforts need to point towards that day of transformation. We need to commit to resourcing and strengthening the revival that is taking hold. This is a very practical partnership. We need to have the feet of the evangelist in all corners of Iran. Isaiah 52:7.

***"I feel a strong longing to be part of God's work among Iranians. Their openness to the gospel moves me deeply. Despite the difficult circumstances in which many Iranians live, they display an immense hunger for truth and love. This inspires me to be actively involved in this work, bringing hope, restoration, and the love of Jesus, both in Iran and beyond. I consider it a privilege to be part of this movement and look forward to the fulfillment of God's promises for Iran."*** Non-Iranian Believer

## Challenges Ahead of Us

As we prepare, we must be mindful of the challenges and potential pitfalls.

- Fragmentation or balkanization of Iran.
- Chaos and anarchy
- Interest shifting from hearing the message of freedom, to fighting for survival!
- Our absence on the ground creating opportunities for cults.
- Evangelists flooding the land without the power to heal the land and break the YOKES!
- Building denominational or ministry platforms, instead of building organic 'churches in homes' throughout the land in all ethnic communities.
- Being occupied with the huge need now, instead of having a clear strategy to take the land as the opportunity widens!
- Being overcome and exhausted by the enormity of the task, rather than having a vision to train overcomers in Christ!
- Losing this Kairos moment for building strategic partnership and running solo races for name and fame.

## Conclusion

*God is busy drawing in Middle Eastern people to himself. He loves them. He died for them. And He is rescuing them. The stories of these ancient nations are changing. They are being redeemed. And God will be glorified throughout the region.*

But there is a caution. If we only get excited for the visible 'now' harvest and not look ahead to the 'invisible' with godly focus; and prepare strategically with a vision for a 'changed' Middle East, we will miss the opportunity. Instead of being 'overcomers' we will be washed ashore by the tsunami which will be unleashed upon us. To this end, we need to hear from God, from each other, and unite our resources. The Jerusalem council II gives us a unique opportunity towards this goal.

Rev Lazarus Yeghnazar  
Founder and President  
Transform Iran

# What Is Jesus Doing in Eastern Europe?

Rev. Doru Cirdei  
Biserica Filadelfia  
Chisinau, Moldova

*An overview of Gospel movement, leadership development, and church mobilization across the post-communist region*

## Introduction: A Continent in Transition

Eastern Europe is a region marked by rapid transformation. In the last three decades, it has undergone political liberalization, economic modernization, and cultural redefinition. Yet beneath these visible changes lies a deeper, spiritual shift. From the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea, from the plains of Poland to the mountains of the Balkans, Jesus Christ is drawing people to Himself.

In post-communist societies, once closed to the Gospel, churches are rising, leaders are emerging, and spiritual hunger is becoming more visible—especially among the younger generation. This report explores the current realities and emerging trends that define what Jesus is doing today across the 20 nations of Eastern Europe.

## 1. From Oppression to Openness: Historical and Spiritual Landscape

Much of Eastern Europe experienced severe religious oppression during the 20th century. Under Soviet influence, nations such as Romania, Ukraine, Belarus, and the Baltic states endured decades of official atheism. Churches were monitored or closed, pastors imprisoned, and Christian education banned.

However, the fall of the Iron Curtain between 1989 and 1991 marked a spiritual turning point. Religious freedom was restored, and the underground church came into the light.

Today, faith communities face new challenges: rapid secularization in countries like the Czech Republic and Estonia, economic emigration from Moldova and Bulgaria, and war-related trauma in Ukraine.

Yet, in the face of these realities, Jesus continues to draw people to Himself. The Gospel message is spreading through both traditional and digital means. Churches are becoming centers of community transformation, and young people are increasingly open to questions of faith and purpose.

**Sources:** Pew Research Center, "Religious Belief and National Belonging in Central and Eastern Europe," 2017; Operation World, 2010 Edition.

## 2. Spiritual Dynamics Across the 20 Nations

Eastern Europe includes: Albania, Belarus, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Kosovo, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Montenegro,

North Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Russia (western part), Serbia, Slovakia, and Ukraine. These nations are culturally diverse, linguistically rich, and religiously complex.

Countries like Romania, Moldova, and Ukraine are experiencing a strong evangelical and Pentecostal presence. Romania alone has over 9,200 Pentecostal congregations (churches and affiliated branches), part of the Romanian Pentecostal Union. Ukraine, even in the midst of war, has seen new church plants emerge in conflict zones, and Moldova remains a spiritually vibrant country, sending missionaries across Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

Elsewhere, evangelical believers remain a small minority. In Serbia, Croatia, and North Macedonia, for example, Protestant Christians often constitute less than 1% of the population. Yet even in these contexts, Jesus is at work—through local initiatives, youth movements, and community outreach.

**Sources:** Romanian Pentecostal Union ([cultulpentecostal.ro](http://cultulpentecostal.ro)); East-West Church Report, 2023; Lausanne Movement Eastern Europe Reports, 2020.

### 3. Strategic Hubs of Leadership Training and Mission Sending

Jesus is not only saving lives but also shaping leaders. Across Eastern Europe, a growing network of training centers and mission agencies is equipping the next generation for ministry.

- **CRST (Romanian Center for Cross-Cultural Studies, Constanța):** Offers intensive theological and missiological formation for young Romanians preparing to serve in unreached areas. (<https://crst-ct.ro>)
- **APME (Romanian Pentecostal Agency for Foreign Mission):** Romania's national mission agency, sending long-term missionaries to over 25 countries. (<https://www.apme.ro>)
- **Bible schools and seminaries** are also key to national leadership development.
- **ProLider (Romania):** A ministry focused on developing emerging leaders within the Pentecostal church context. (<https://prolider.ro>)
- **Digital platforms and media ministries** like Alpha, YouVersion, and national Bible Societies offer accessible faith formation resources.

In addition, the **Global Church Network (GCN)** has launched national hubs in Romania, Moldova, Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro, Croatia, and Serbia. These hubs facilitate pastoral training, networking, and the implementation of GCN's "FINISH 2030" initiative to complete the Great Commission.

**Sources:** CRST website; APME mission reports; James O. Davis, "Global Church Network FINISH Movement," 2023; ProLider Training Curriculum.

### 4. The Church Mobilized: Multiplication, Collaboration, and Witness

Local churches are shifting from maintenance to multiplication. In Romania, Moldova, and Ukraine, there is a clear pattern of church planting, especially in underserved rural areas and urban centers.

Diaspora churches in Western Europe (e.g., Romanian and Ukrainian congregations in Germany, Italy, and the UK) are becoming mission bases, sending leaders and resources back into Eastern Europe.

Interdenominational cooperation is growing. Initiatives like the Pentecostal European Fellowship (PEF), Lausanne Europe, and Global Church Network are connecting pastors across borders. Churches are increasingly involved in holistic ministry: humanitarian relief (especially in response to the Ukraine crisis), counseling services, youth camps, and digital outreach.

Young people are stepping into leadership roles earlier, especially in worship, tech, and student ministry. Christian music, podcasts, and social media content are reaching thousands across language barriers. Jesus is calling this generation to be salt and light in their schools, workplaces, and neighborhoods.

**Sources:** Pentecostal European Fellowship Reports; Lausanne Europe Strategic Reports; GCN Summit Briefings, 2023.

## **5. What Is Jesus Doing—and What Lies Ahead?**

In Eastern Europe, Jesus is restoring the Church's voice, rebuilding trust in spiritual leadership, and renewing passion for mission. Signs of spiritual awakening include:

- A growing number of local leaders being trained and empowered
- Increasing unity among churches and denominations
- A missional focus on both local and global outreach

The challenges remain real: emigration, limited resources, and cultural secularism. Yet these obstacles are being met with courage, faith, and collaboration.

The Church is not just surviving; it is serving. Jesus is using Eastern Europe not only as a mission field but increasingly as a mission force.

**Sources:** Operation World (2021 Update); Evangelical Focus Europe; Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, 2022.

## **Conclusion: Eastern Europe as a Strategic Mission Field and Sending Base**

Eastern Europe today stands at the crossroads of tradition and transformation. The scars of the past have not disappeared, but they have become testimonies of God's faithfulness. What Jesus is doing in Eastern Europe is not a mere regional phenomenon—it is a vital chapter in the global story of Gospel advance.

Let us recognize Eastern Europe not only as a region in need, but as a region with spiritual resources, emerging leaders, and God-given vision. As churches plant, leaders rise, and movements multiply, we are witnessing Jesus at work in unmistakable ways.

To support this move of God, we are called to:

- **Pray** for continued revival and resilience
- **Partner** with national leaders and ministries
- **Participate** in God's mission across Eastern Europe and beyond

What is Jesus doing in Eastern Europe? He is building His Church. And the gates of hell will not prevail against it (Matthew 16:18).

# POSITIONS



# Living and Active

## The People of God and the Word of God in the 3rd Millennium

Jennifer Holloran, David Reeves, Sam Harrell, Tim Jore

Made available under the terms  
of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 License (CC BY)  
<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>

**Executive Summary:** Bible societies and translation organizations were established by the church to steward the Bible on its behalf and have largely succeeded in increasing access to Scripture across languages. As the church has expanded globally and taken on more responsibility for its own translation needs, the model of external stewardship is being reconsidered. Rather than diminishing their relevance, this shift calls for these organizations to focus on equipping the church for deeper Scripture engagement. Such engagement leads to transformation, which in turn fuels greater demand for translation and access. By exploring new ministry models and embracing global collaboration, these organizations are positioned to serve the church in even more impactful ways in the years ahead.

# Contents

<b>Living and Active.....</b>	<b>1</b>
Contents.....	2
Introduction.....	3
An Honorable History.....	3
Stewarding the Bible for the Church.....	5
Catalyzing Scripture Engagement Globally.....	10
A Hopeful Future.....	14
Conclusion.....	16
References.....	18

# Introduction

Over 3,000 years ago, Moses penned these immortal words under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit: “Lord, You have been our dwelling place through all generations. Before the mountains were born or You brought forth the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting You are God” (Ps 90:1).<sup>1</sup> David picks up the same theme when he writes, “The entirety of Your word is truth, and all Your righteous judgments endure forever” (Ps 119:160). As we observe the many and varied changes occurring globally at the dawn of the 3rd millennium, these words remind us of God’s eternal protection for His people and the enduring permanence of the Holy Scriptures. In the face of threat and opposition, God has always protected His people and His Word, and He will continue to do so forever.

From this vantage point, we can look back with gratitude at the honorable history of the people and organizations who have given the best of what God entrusted to them for the translation and distribution of the Bible, leading to the flourishing of God’s people worldwide. Because of God’s enduring protection and guidance, we can also look ahead with hope to a future of immense possibility. As we survey the outcomes of the past and observe the needs of the church in a rapidly changing global context, we are convinced that Bible societies and Bible translation organizations could have a profoundly positive impact in helping to meet these needs.<sup>2</sup> However, to do so, they must reconsider how they accomplish their enduring purpose. The central premise of this paper is that **the need for Bible societies and Bible translation organizations in the digital era is greater than it ever was in the print era, but the specific services needed by the church are changing.** We see many opportunities for exploring innovative approaches to advance God’s Word and the strategic position of these organizations to that end, in their continued service to the church. We suggest that this will create a fertile context for the transformation of lives and societies in every people group and nation, as well as a further increase in translation of the Scriptures into every language.

## An Honorable History

The Scriptures themselves tell us that the Word of God is “living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword...” (He 4:12) and that all Scripture is “God-breathed and is useful for instruction, for conviction, for correction, and for training in righteousness” (2Ti 3:16). By them we come to “the knowledge of him who called us by His own glory and excellence” and experience what God declares, “My word... will not return to Me empty, but it will accomplish what I please, and it will prosper where I send it” (Is 55:11). The Bible, we affirm, “was, is, and always will be the basis of the worship and work of God’s church.”<sup>3</sup> With regard to increasing access to the translated Scriptures in more languages, two recent inflection points are worth noting: the rise of the Bible societies and the rise of the Bible translation organizations.

---

<sup>1</sup> All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the Berean Standard Bible, CC0, <https://berean.bible>.

<sup>2</sup> Unless noted otherwise, when we refer to “the church” in this paper, we mean every expression of Christian tradition that aligns with historical orthodoxy, without reference to variations or distinctions in confession, denomination, etc. When we refer to “the church” in the context of Bible translation and language use specifically, we generally mean the “lingual church”—the element of the global church that speaks a given language.

<sup>3</sup> Minutes of the UBS Council, Chiang Mai, 28 September-5 October, 1980, (Appendix VI), 280. Cited in *Taking the Word to the World*, 229.

## Rise of the Bible Societies

In the late 18th century, some 275 years after the Protestant Reformation, William Carey proposed an innovative approach: the formation of voluntary societies to benefit the cause of world missions.<sup>4</sup> Christendom was divided along lines of different confessions and traditions, so Carey suggested that the organization of societies for mission would be more effective “in the present divided state of Christendom” if they engaged separately in the work.<sup>5</sup> Not long afterward, in 1804, the vehicle of the voluntary society was employed in an interdenominational posture with the express purpose of increasing access to the Bible. The first modern Bible society, with its “worldwide missionary outlook, its ecumenical character and its commitment to serving the Churches, was the British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS). Formed in 1804, its stated aim was, ‘to encourage the widest circulation of the Holy Scriptures without note or comment.’”<sup>6</sup>

Bible societies were soon established in many countries for the same purpose. Eventually, they organized into the United Bible Societies, with a clear objective: “to make the Bible available in a form which all can understand and all can afford.”<sup>7</sup> From early in their history, the Bible societies’ priority of Scripture distribution and engagement was preceded by the need to produce a Bible translation. This is clearly expressed in *The Centennial History of the American Bible Society*:

The provision of Scriptures in foreign languages is of greatest importance in the eyes of a Bible Society. Skilled translators have to be found, and arrangements made for properly printing and binding the Scriptures when they are translated. It is always necessary to remember when looking at Bible work in foreign lands that nothing whatever can be done until the Bible is translated into the tongue of the people. This implies very slow progress but the delay, like that in building a temple, must not dampen ardour since time is needed for laying foundations for the future.<sup>8</sup>

Within a century of the establishment of the first Bible societies, new organizations that were primarily focused on increasing the production of Bible translations came into existence.

## Rise of the Bible Translation Organizations

In the early 20th century, new mission organizations were formed with the purpose of using applied linguistics to produce Bible translations for use in minority language communities. At the outset, this

---

<sup>4</sup> Carey, William. *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians, to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens*, 1792.

<sup>5</sup> Carey proposes: “Suppose a company of serious Christians, ministers and private persons, were to form themselves into a society, and make a number of rules respecting the regulation of the plan, and the persons who are to be employed as missionaries, the means of defraying the expense, &c. &c. This society must consist of persons whose hearts are in the work, men of serious religion, and possessing a spirit of perseverance; there must be a determination not to admit any person who is not of this description, or to retain him longer than he answers to it. ... I wish with all my heart, that every one who loves our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, would in some way or other engage in it. But in the present divided state of Christendom, it would be more likely for good to be done by each denomination engaging separately in the work...” (Carey, *Enquiry*, 1792).

<sup>6</sup> 150 Years & Beyond, 2013, 21-22. Schaff recounts the original meeting: “On Mar. 7, 1804, a public meeting was held at the London Tavern, on the call of Mr. Hughes. Three hundred persons attended the meeting. It was quickly evident that a society for increasing the circulation of the Bible presented common ground, upon which all sects and parties could stand. Dissenters met churchmen, and in their interest in the needs of the masses, they forgot for a time their divergent interpretations of the same book. The sole condition necessary to union of action was that a text accepted by all should be issued without note or comment” (“Bible Societies,” § 1.2.1 “Origin and Constitution”).

<sup>7</sup> Robertson, *Taking the Word to the World*, 1996, xii.

<sup>8</sup> Dwight, *The Centennial History of the American Bible Society*, 1916, 133.

was a pioneering effort, as many of these communities had no known believers and no expression of the church. They describe their top priority as being “to provide the Word of God for those with no light at all... [We] are laying foundations by providing the basic document for evangelism, teaching and discipline by others....”<sup>9</sup>

In this way, an innovative paradigm of Bible translation and distribution developed that was shaped by the ecclesiastical and missiological realities of the era. Improvements to this model have been many over time. However, the fundamental aspects of the model itself have remained largely intact: Bible translation organizations and Bible societies work together in service to the church to produce and publish Bible translations for the church, then steward access to the translations on behalf of the church.

## Stewarding the Bible for the Church

### What happens when Bible societies and Bible translation organizations produce, publish, and steward access to Bible translations for the church?

To depict these essential elements of this Bible translation paradigm, consider the following simple diagram:



Diagram 1: Bible Translation Followed by Scripture Engagement

As depicted here, the essential process is generally linear and sequential, with the desired outcome being the engagement with the translated Scriptures by the church that speaks the language. As noted above, both Bible societies and Bible translation organizations started by seeking to position the Bible translation work before the evangelistic and theological work that would benefit from the translated Scriptures. Once produced, the translated Scriptures were published and distributed to the lingual church for engagement in ministry. A survey of the outcomes of nearly 200 years of this ministry shows remarkable success, as well as certain unintended consequences.

## Some Wonderful Success

Over the past 200 years, God has blessed the efforts of countless faithful people serving the church in the ministry of Bible translation and Scripture engagement. Together, Bible translation organizations and Bible societies have produced translations of Scripture in thousands of languages and equipped the church to engage with Scripture in ways that continue to transform lives and cultures around the world.

---

<sup>9</sup> Cowan, *The Word That Kindles*, 1979, 206. Later in the same book, this point is repeated, “Some people have been called by God to mass evangelism, church planting and theological training ministries. We have not. The very difference of our tasks enables us to serve and complement each other. Their ministries will be better with the Bible in the language of the people than without it. Their ministries supplement ours and thus leave us freer to move on” (Ibid., 209).

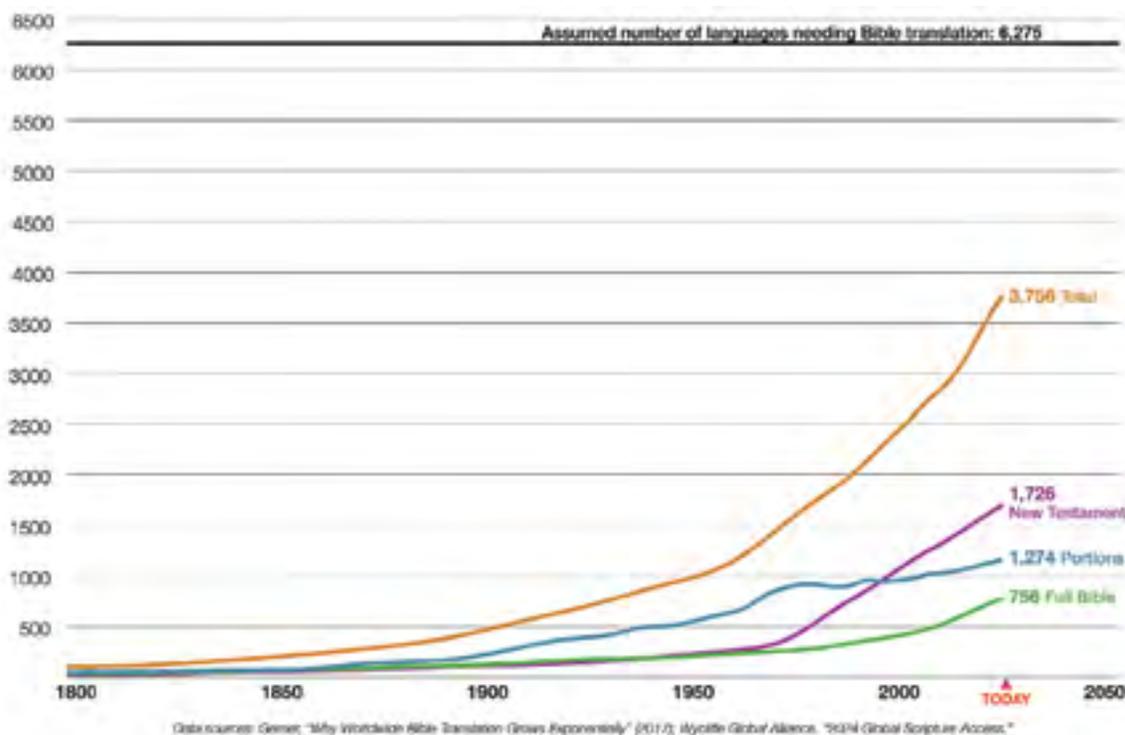


Diagram 2: Progress of Bible Translation<sup>10</sup>

The following is but a sample of the ministry of Bible societies and Bible translation organizations around the world in service to the church. In the Philippines, Scripture engagement is bringing transformation to remote towns and villages by introducing the Gospel through film showings, preaching, and altar calls. New believers are invited into small listening groups where they hear the Bible, grow in their faith, and learn to entrust their lives to God. Among tribal communities that once worshiped nature, many now worship Jesus Christ, finding new hope, strength, and peace.

In Guatemala, Scripture is reaching young gang members in detention centers through Bible studies and workshops. These programs offer spiritual support and help the youth break cycles of violence and crime by encountering God's love and hope. In Angola, Bible distribution in prisons has grown into a movement of worship, discipleship, and vocational training for former inmates. In Malawi, the Bible Society is teaching non-literate women to read the Bible in their own language, giving them new freedom. In Kenya and 25 other African nations, the provision of a women's devotional Bible in multiple languages is helping women see their worth through daily devotions, addressing real-life challenges and inspiring transformation. A discipleship program operating in 16 African countries is empowering youth through Bible-based stories and workshops to make wise choices, resist violence, and lead positive change.

In Slovenia, new Bible-sharing communities are being established to encourage regular Scripture reading and personal discipleship among Catholics and those on the margins of the church. In Egypt, the Bible is reaching a wider audience through various digital and print resources, including

<sup>10</sup> Chart is based on data from: Wycliffe Global Alliance. "2024 Global Scripture Access." Accessed May 15, 2025. <https://www.wycliffe.net/resources/statistics/>; Gerner, Matthias. "Why Worldwide Bible Translation Grows Exponentially." *Journal of Religious History* 42, no. 2 (April 12, 2017): 145–80. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9809.12443>. The assumption of total Bible translation need is from Wycliffe Global Alliance (Total languages (7,396) – Likely no need (1,131) = Total Need: 6,275), though estimates vary widely, especially when inclusive of translation into multiple language variants, as needed by the church.

youth apps, animated Bible stories, and social media, making Scripture accessible and understandable to Egyptians and other Arabic speakers.

Countless similar stories could be told of the ministry of many other Bible societies that we do not have the space to recount in this paper. However, as encouraging as these past successes of the Bible societies and Bible translation organizations have been, as with every innovation, there have been unintended consequences.<sup>11</sup>

## Some Unintended Consequences

While the success of the goal of “stewarding the Bible for the church” has enjoyed considerable success over the last two centuries, unintended consequences like the following have also occurred.

**Outdated translations** (*Available, but needing revision*) – Despite great effort to avoid it, some published Bible translations are later found to include errors of theological and linguistic consequence. Furthermore, languages are constantly changing, and languages that do not have a long literate tradition to anchor them change rapidly. In all these situations, the need of the church is for ongoing revision to their Bible translations, in order to improve its trustworthiness and comprehensibility. But it is costly and difficult to revise a printed Bible, especially given that the missiological economics are opposed to it—it can often be difficult to find outside funding for improving an existing translation in a world where donors are understandably motivated to fund “first Scriptures” for those who have never had any in their language.

**Unused translations** (*Available, but not desired*) – Some languages that are listed as having a completed translation of the Bible (or portions thereof) are found, upon observation, to not be using it as expected.<sup>12</sup> This may be for any number of reasons: the translation might not be in the needed dialect, or it is in need of revision, or it was never appropriately connected to the life of the church in production, or there was too long of a delay between production and Scripture engagement, or simply because the church is unaware of its existence. The net result is a growing list of Bible translations that are listed as “finished” but are not used as expected (and sometimes no longer used at all) by the church for whom they were intended.

**Unavailable translations** (*Needed, but not found*) – Thousands of languages now have at least some portion of Scripture translated, but there are nonetheless gaps between the need of the church and the availability of the translated Scriptures. Sometimes this is because a translation that was published is now out of print even though the church desires it. It may also be due to lack of funding for another print run. At other times it may be due to clerical anomalies where the records list a Bible translation as “finished” but no one can locate a copy.

**Expensive translations** (*Needed more affordably*) – In some scenarios, the economic factors affecting a Bible society make it difficult to provide printed Bibles at affordable prices without undermining the financial viability of the Bible society that publishes them. In these cases, the demand of the church for the Bible translation is high, and the available supply may also be sufficient to meet the need, but the economic model may be a limiting factor.

---

<sup>11</sup> Berkun argues, “...all innovations have good and bad effects regardless of the intention of the innovator. If we accept this, and concede that perspective is everything when it comes to goodness, we can reframe our judgment of innovations” (*The Myths of Innovation*, 143-144).

<sup>12</sup> For examples from Papua New Guinea, see: SIL Papua New Guinea. “Scripture Use Research and Ministry.” Unpublished Report, April 2017.

**Insufficient translations** (*More translations needed in more languages*) – In spite of all the progress made in Bible translation in recent years, many communities are still waiting for the first translations of the Bible in their languages. In addition, many language communities that have only portions of translated Scripture have had their appetites whetted and urgently desire the rest of God’s Word in their language. The church in many people groups affirms that the scope of their Bible translation need includes not merely one Bible translation in a single dialect, but translations in every language variant spoken by the church (and sometimes more than one complete version of the Bible in a given variant, perhaps in different registers of the language). In the aggregate, reports from church networks around the world suggest an actual Bible translation need that greatly surpasses the combined capacity of Bible translation organizations and Bible societies to meet.

**Restricted translations** (*Needed with greater freedom*) – The church often desires greater legal freedom to redistribute and use translations of the Bible in their languages in ways beneficial to their ministry. Even when those who by law are the legal owners intend to be generous, managing custom copyright licenses for an ever-increasing number of Bible translations and people desiring to use them becomes more cumbersome and costly over time. In spite of good intent to the contrary, the legal friction in this system results in a default answer of “no” to many of the needs experienced by the church (whether or not the copyright owners are even aware of these needs).

## New Opportunities

The world today is significantly different from the world in which the Bible societies and Bible translation organizations came into existence. Back then, the existence of truly monolingual societies was much more prevalent, and the expansion of the gospel into the people groups of the world was not as widespread. Thus, in that era, if a people group spoke a minority language, one could generally assume that they were unlikely to have an established church or a Bible translated into their language. Furthermore, if they did not have a printed Bible in their own language, one could generally assume that they had no access to Scripture at all, such as through other languages or media.<sup>13</sup> It follows, then, that if they were going to engage in Scripture for evangelism and discipleship, someone else (e.g., a Bible society or Bible translation organization) would need to produce and publish a printed Bible translated into their language for them.

After the Second World War (1939-1945), many things began to change rapidly. The post-war economic system began to accelerate patterns of urbanization and globalization. This resulted in a significant increase in ease of travel and increased patterns of multilingualism. As more jobs became available in the cities, more people who had lived in rural areas and spoke only local language(s) moved to the cities for work and learned the languages necessary for employment.<sup>14</sup> With the rise of global commerce, the means of producing and expanding educational opportunities also increased, contributing to generally increasing education levels as well as multilingualism.

---

<sup>13</sup> Technology for sharing and consuming Scripture in this era was typically limited to production of physical media (composed of “atoms”), namely printed books (and later, recorded cassette tapes). Radio broadcasts were also used (and are still), but given the cost, these were typically limited to major languages in a region. Even where minority languages could be included, their ephemeral nature rendered them suboptimal for deep and persistent engagement with Scripture.

<sup>14</sup> According to Johnstone, “In 1800, only 3% of humankind lived in cities. It is estimated that in 2100 the figure will be nearly 90%... The 21st Century will be the first urban century in history” (*The Future of the Global Church*, 2011). The rise of multilingualism and the role of globalization and technology in shaping the global sociolinguistic context is described in *The Handbook of Language and Globalization* (Coupland, 2011).

A second significant change was the rise of the digital era in the late 20th century. As digital technology developed, the Internet was invented. Around the dawn of the 3rd millennium, the world became connected via fiber optic cables that enabled data transfer at quantities and speeds never before imagined. Shortly afterward, mobile technology began to spread rapidly until, in a very short amount of time, the world went from largely isolated, generally monolingual people groups to increasingly multilingual people groups using mobile phones that enable them to connect with virtually anyone, anywhere, at any time.

The implications of this for Bible translation and Scripture engagement cannot be overstated: in the past, the only practical means of distributing Scripture was using “atoms” in the form of printed books (perhaps augmented by radio broadcasts). This was a process constrained by scarcity—production and publishing were costly (and risky)—and that scarcity was typically managed on behalf of the global church by Bible societies and other publishers. Today, in the digital era of “bits,” more Scripture can be produced more rapidly and shared in more media formats on more digital devices, nearly instantaneously and effectively for free. While this in no way nullifies the need for printed Bibles (more on this below), it nonetheless fundamentally changes the global system of Bible translation and Scripture engagement.

A third significant change is the accelerating advance of the gospel into more people groups and places than ever before.<sup>15</sup> Through Bible societies, missionary efforts, established churches, movements of disciples in hostile regions of the world, and many other means, Jesus continues to expand His kingdom and bring more people into His family from the farthest reaches of the globe.

---

<sup>15</sup> At the Lausanne Congress in 1974, the missiological priority of “people groups” (ta ethne) began to come into focus. Before then, missiological emphasis tended to focus on evangelizing nations (ie., countries), which was shaped by the Christendom mindset of “Christian nations” as distinct from “heathen nations.” As depicted in William Carey’s *Enquiry* (1792), the missiological worldview in the 18th century reflected a neat dichotomy between nations in the Christian world and nations in the heathen world: “God has promised the most glorious things to the heathen world ... We can neither expect to be transported into the heathen world without ordinary means ... none shall be converted in the heathen world till the universal down-pouring of the Spirit... (Enquiry, § 1.)” This same missiological dichotomy is evident in the early 20th century: “...God has not left Himself without witnesses, even in lands that we are accustomed to think of as heathen lands. ... In view of the great extent of the heathen world, and the degree to which it is opened ... considering the vast extent of the yet unevangelized world of heathenism ... an efficient pre-occupancy of any particular portion of the heathen field by any evangelic church or society should be respected by others ... the multiplication of suitable agents for the heathen missionary field. (*Report of the Ecumenical Conference on Foreign Missions, Held in Carnegie Hall and Neighboring Churches, April 21 to May 1 .. Vol. 1. 2 vols. New York: American Tract Society, 1900. Ch. 1 Origin of the Conference, 14, 20. Emphasis added.*)

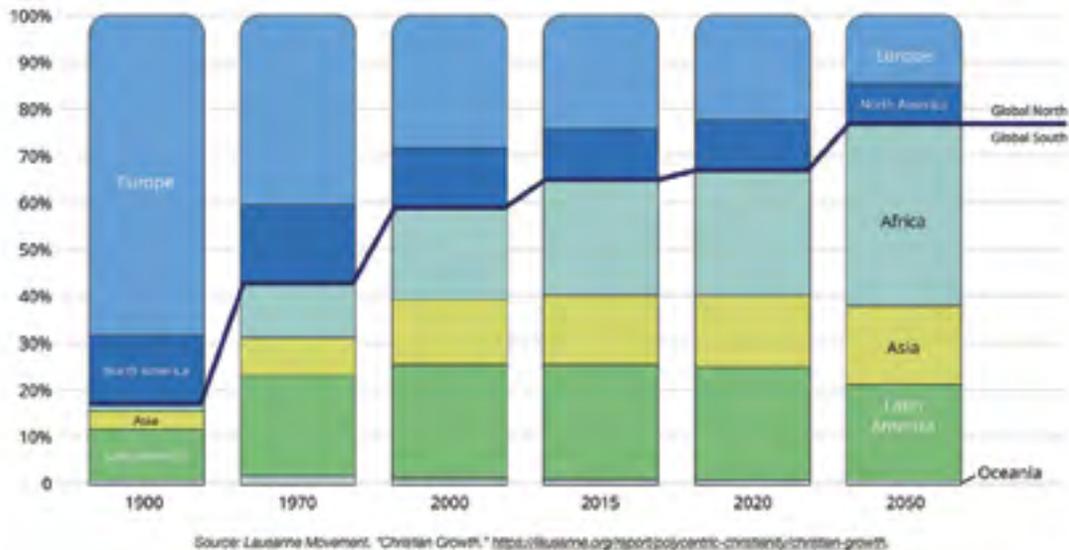


Diagram 3: Growth of the Global Church

Finally, as noted above, the increase in Bible translation has been both a contributing factor in the expansion of the church as well as the result of the expansion—as more people in more languages gain access to the first Scriptures in their language, it tends to catalyze an even greater hunger for Scripture in more languages than ever before. For the first time, perhaps, the rise of Bible-translating church networks is giving the rest of the global church early visibility into the actual scope of the Bible translation need, including not just more languages, but more versions of Scripture in more language variants than have ever been in view before.<sup>16</sup>

Organizations that are created to manage the scarcity of a process (like Bible publishers) will find that their business model may need to change significantly when global trends in technology, economics, education, multilingualism, missiology, and the rise of the global church all converge to fundamentally transform the scope of the need and the means of meeting it. This is especially true for those focused on Bible translation and distribution, but this in no way undermines the need for Bible societies and Bible translation organizations. It suggests the opportunity to reimagine how these organizations can achieve the unchanged purpose for which they exist in the first place. We close this section with Gonzalez’s observation in light of the rise of the global church:

... to send the same kind of missionaries we did a hundred years ago, to do the same task, implies that the task was not done, when all facts indicate the opposite. The missionary movement did succeed. It is precisely because it succeeded and strong churches now exist in practically every country to which missionaries went, that new forms of mission must be found.<sup>17</sup>

## Catalyzing Scripture Engagement Globally

We noted above two inflection points regarding the church’s provision of the Bible for all people: the formation of the Bible societies in the early 1800s and the formation of Bible translation organizations in the early 1900s. We are now, in the early 2000s, in the midst of what may one day be recognized as a third major inflection point in the history of the church, with regard to maximizing

<sup>16</sup> The expansion of the scope of Bible translation when undertaken by the church is considered in Jore, “Duplication of Effort?”

<sup>17</sup> Gonzales, Justo L. *Christian Thought Revisited*, 2013, ch. 9.

access to the translated Scriptures: the translation of the Bible by churches into their own languages as part of their discipleship ministry. The rise of the Bible-translating global church is already greatly expanding the scope of Bible translation. This raises an important question:

**What happens when Bible Societies and Bible Translation Organizations equip the church to meet its own Bible translation and distribution needs?**

## Increasing Scripture Engagement

All over the world, the desire for God’s Word is increasing. Despite opposition and scorn from some who are opposed, anecdotes from around the world suggest that the desire for increased engagement with Scripture is surging even to levels of desperation in some places. Seekers of Jesus steeped in other religious traditions are longing to understand the message to them from the King of kings and Lord of lords. Christians from traditions that span generations earnestly desire the current and next generations to engage with the life-transforming Scriptures in printed books and on their mobile phones. Movements of disciples in unreached people groups face hindrances to the expansion of the gospel due to the need for more translations of the Scripture into more languages. All over the world, the desire for meaningful engagement with Scripture is on the rise.<sup>18</sup>

In light of this, we confidently affirm that the same need driving the purpose of forming the first Bible societies in the early 19th century is still true today and will be into the future—maximizing the availability of and access to the translated Scriptures in every language. The need for organizations like Bible societies and Bible translation organizations is greater in the digital era than in the print era, and their purpose of maximizing access to God’s life-transforming Word is effectively unchanged. However, the former need of the global church for Bible societies to manage the scarcity of print-only distribution is waning, and in its place is rising a corresponding need: Scripture Engagement.

The global church needs Bible societies and other organizations that can not only maximize access to more Bible translations in more language variants than ever before, but also equip the church to understand and respond to the Scriptures. This includes providing Scripture in many more languages in multimedia formats and available on any technology. Ultimately, however, it is essential for readers of Scripture to be equipped to engage Scripture faithfully. These organizations have an opportunity to help meet the church’s need for resources that lead to sound understanding and application.<sup>19</sup>

---

<sup>18</sup> These assertions are supported by the recent findings of The British and Foreign Bible Society in “The Patmos World Bible Attitudes Survey” which makes the following key global findings: “Finding 2: ... In every cluster, there is at least one population segment that is committed and engaged with the Bible. ... Finding 3: ... Across all clusters, the majority of Christians are interested in learning more about the Bible. ... Finding 4: ... In all clusters, respondents agree that it is good for children to know at least some stories from the Bible, even if they are not interested in learning more about the Bible themselves. ... Finding 5: ... The survey has found 11% of respondents from multiple religious traditions — and those with no religious tradition — are open to learning more about the Christian Bible. This represents over 250 million people” (2025, 3).

<sup>19</sup> The need for basic explanatory resources and study resources is already a recognized need, and the UBS continue to provide resources oriented especially to translators (e.g., MARBLE). It is also important to note that this fits neatly into the “Bible lifecycle” of the UBS, which emphasizes not only Bible Availability (Translation and Production), but also Bible Accessibility (Distribution and Engagement) and Bible Credibility (Advocacy and Ministry).

## Resulting in Transformation and Translation

The reason for the existence of Bible societies and translation organizations that increase the availability of and access to Scripture is that engagement with Scripture tends to result in the transformation of lives, societies, and even entire cultures.<sup>20</sup> Scripture enjoins us to “be transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Ro 12:2) through engagement with Scripture. It is through the “living and enduring word of God” that we are born again (1Pe 1:23). Salvation is the result of repentance and “humbly accept(ing) the word planted in you” (Ja 1:21). So it follows that we should “let the word of Christ dwell in [us] richly” (Co 3:16).

Less commonly known is how Scripture engagement results in increased translation of the Scriptures. One of the most remarkable aspects of the growth in the number of churches around the world that are beginning to meet their own Bible translation needs is that it is Scripture engagement that is driving the need for more Scripture. The interaction with early Bible translations—often only made available in limited scope (selections, the New Testament, etc.) and in limited languages—has catalyzed a greater hunger for Bible translation than was previously realized. Scripture engagement increases the need for Bible translation and creates the context where the church can grow in its capacity for understanding and gain experience in Bible translation.

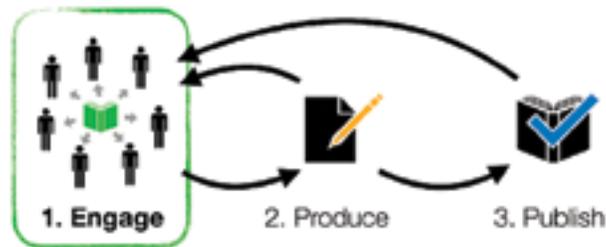


Diagram 4: Bible Translation as a Result of Scripture Engagement

Seeing how increasing Scripture engagement generally results in increased transformation and Bible translation, it suggests that a focus on engagement could be catalytic toward achieving the ends of Bible Societies and Bible translation organizations. What might happen if these organizations were to emphasize building up the global church’s capacity for understanding Scripture and translating it faithfully into their own languages?

## Some Desirable Consequences

When the church is equipped and strengthened to meet its own Bible translation and distribution needs, desirable outcomes like the following typically occur.

**Always current translations** (*Available with improved quality in current forms of the language*) – By equipping the church to meet their own Bible translation needs, the church is able not only to decide when a revision is needed, but also to undertake the revision directly to improve their translations of Scripture. This is especially true when the church does not rely on external funding sources to provide for the translation work.

**Actively used translations** (*Alignment of supply with demand*) – Meeting urgent Bible translation needs is the driving force behind Bible translation by the church. When the church is equipped to meet its own Bible translation needs, it tends to result in near-perfect alignment of translation need

---

<sup>20</sup> In “Bible Engagement as the Key to Spiritual Growth,” Cole and Ovwigho show how consistent engagement with Scripture is the most powerful predictor of spiritual growth.

with translation availability. Because Scripture engagement happens first and is the impetus for translation into needed languages, there is an intrinsic determination of need that results in virtually no gap between the availability of a Bible translation and the desire for it.

**Available translations** (Alignment of data and reality) – Equipping the church for translation of Scripture in the context of the life and ministry of the church, greatly minimizes the potential for misalignment of data pertaining to translation production and availability. Instead of translations that are reportedly finished but can't be located, the opposite is not uncommon: More translations are created in more languages and variants than were previously recognized as needing translated Scripture.

**Affordable translations** (*Available at the lowest possible cost, including free*) – A common factor motivating the church to meet her own Bible translation needs is the desire for more affordable printed Bible translations, and for free access to digital Bible translations in text, audio, and (increasingly) digital formats. A growing number of Bible societies and Bible translation organizations are acknowledging this need and making the Bible available in digital formats free of charge and with the freedom to share with others: “freely you have received, freely give.”

**Abundant translations** (*Available in any quantity*) – When the church is able to publish (and republish) Bible translations in response to their own identified need, the lag between need and availability of Bibles to meet the need drops considerably. The net result is that Bible translations are abundantly available in both digital and print formats, sufficient to keep up with any increased demand.

**Accessible translations** (*Freely available*) – A characteristic aspect of Bible translation by the church is a willingness to remove every legal restriction that hinders widespread sharing of the Scriptures to anyone, using any technology. In addition to the freedom to redistribute, some church networks are releasing translations under open licenses (e.g., Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike) to perpetuate the freedom to revise the translation in the future, to extend it from portions to the entire canon, to adapt it into new language variants, and so on. This approach to Bible translation has been underway for several years, and the early evidence of its impact is encouraging.<sup>21</sup>

## A Consideration: Increasing Access to Trustworthy Resources

On this point, we recognize the importance of Intellectual Property Rights, a topic that requires grace and balance. These rights are not inherently good or bad. However, it may be helpful to take a fresh look at them in light of Scripture and the needs of the church in the digital era. A full treatise is outside the scope of this paper, but let us consider two pertinent points.<sup>22</sup>

First, legal systems have affected the spread of God's Word since at least the beginning of the church's mission. The Apostle Paul, bound by the legal system of his day in an attempt to restrict his gospel ministry, rejoiced that “the word of God is not bound” (2Ti 2:9). To what extent can the global church joyfully agree with the Apostle Paul that, in our day, the word of God is not restricted by the legal systems of our day in ways that hinder the church's gospel ministry? What if Christians became known as the most generous sharers of content in the entire world of content creation?

---

<sup>21</sup> Champeon documents several examples in “Dichotomies in Bible Translation.”

<sup>22</sup> For a more in-depth consideration of Intellectual Property Rights in light of biblical missiology, see: Jore, “Letting Go.” <https://ufw.io/letting-go>.

Second, owning the copyright to a Bible translation does not stop bad actors from doing bad things with the content. Furthermore, enforcement of copyright restrictions requires filing lawsuits (ostensibly, for the protection of God’s Word) in secular courts. However, this creates a fear-based culture that is antithetical to the foundational principles of the gospel. The net result is too often a church that is hindered from doing good things with God’s Word and bad actors who continue to break the law, regardless of copyright restrictions to the contrary.

We believe Bible societies can continue to honor their obligation to the church of ensuring that they are providing trustworthy Bible translations for the church’s theological well-being. We propose they can do so while also removing barriers to access. To that end, consider the following.

Jesus told a story about the kingdom of heaven, likening it to a man who sowed good grain in his field, but his enemy sowed weeds in it (cf. Mt 13:24–30). The weeds to which He referred were likely darnel, which looks similar to wheat but is toxic if consumed. By way of analogy, let us consider trustworthy Bible translations and other biblical resources as the good seed that is sown, and the proliferation of theologically untrustworthy resources to be the weeds that are sown by the enemy.

It is impossible to prevent the creation of content that purports to be biblical, but that is actually theologically detrimental. This has always been true, and is especially so now in the digital era, when “biblical content” of dubious theological reliability can be instantly created, changed, and distributed by anyone with a mobile phone. Consequently, the ability to leverage copyright restrictions in order to prevent bad things from happening to good content has diminished drastically. Furthermore, it seems unlikely to increase, especially now that we are well into the era of Generative Artificial Intelligence. But when content is ubiquitous, the need for identification of the “wheat” in a field overrun by weeds becomes increasingly urgent. This presents a new and critically important opportunity.

Bible societies the world over are respected and appreciated as trustworthy, serving the church across many traditions, and holding a high view of Scripture. The massive increase of theologically ambiguous content in the digital era creates a greater need than ever before for Bible societies to return to a different aspect of Intellectual Property Rights for the glory of God and the good of His people: trademarks. Whereas copyrights restrict access to urgently needed biblical resources, trademarks and imprints provide clarity as to which of the many resources available are actually trustworthy and beneficial to God’s people. It is important to note that widespread use of copyright restrictions on Bible translations was a later development that did not become common practice until the early 20th century. Reflecting on the first century of the American Bible Society, Dwight observes that the safety of the text was tied to the imprint (identifier) of the Bible society, with no mention of restricting access through copyrights:

An interdenominational Society only can properly secure the text against alteration; it being a body trusted by all denominations, it watches over the inviolability of the text. A copy bearing the imprint of such a Society is of guaranteed authenticity. ... Only after Bible Societies became established could one feel that an authoritative control guaranteed the new editions as they came from the press.<sup>23</sup>

What we suggest is an emphasis on identifying trustworthy Bible translations and biblical resources on behalf of the global church, rather than relying on protection methods that inadvertently restrict usage. This approach makes it possible to maximize the availability of reliable Bible translations that are beneficial to the global church.

---

<sup>23</sup> Dwight, *Centennial History*, 133-134.

## A Hopeful Future

Of the many factors contributing to the potential for Bible societies and Bible translation organizations to fulfill their enduring purpose in new ways, we will focus on two: the rise of technology and the increase in Bible translation by the global church.

### Rise of Advanced Technology

An obvious result of the continued growth of worldwide mobile technology and internet connectivity is the ease with which digital multimedia resources can be shared. Many Bible societies are leveraging this opportunity to provide Scripture and other biblical resources in text, audio, and video formats in order to maximize engagement with Scripture using the devices that people carry with them every day. These new technologies also provide creative means of providing access to the Scriptures for those who live in environments that are hostile to followers of Jesus.

Some advanced technologies like Generative Artificial Intelligence are providing fresh hope of solving age-old challenges pertaining to Scripture engagement and Bible translation. For example, some Bible translation organizations are exploring the use of these advanced technologies to strengthen the church's ability to study Scripture and learn how to translate the Bible effectively. Early results indicate that what used to require considerable technical ability, financial resources, English language fluency, and time is becoming ever more accessible, affordable, and usable for everyone—in languages that communicate meaningfully to them.

It would be understandable to conclude that the increasing global demand for Scriptures in digital and multimedia formats might result in a decrease in demand for the Scriptures as a printed book. But observation across many regions suggests the opposite tends to be true. As access to Scripture on mobile devices increases, there is typically a commensurate increase in desire for the printed Scriptures. New technologies (including print-on-demand) are improving the ability to produce more printed Bible translations in more languages, at lower costs.

As mentioned above, one of the greatest needs of the global church going forward is the identification of trustworthy Bible translations and biblical resources. Advanced technologies are providing new opportunities for Bible societies to meet this need at scale, in ways that were never before possible. This suggests an opportunity for Bible societies and other publishers to provide abundant access to legally unencumbered digital versions of Scripture that contain clear identifiers of the Bible society that is making them available.<sup>24</sup> In this way, Bible societies can take full advantage of every new digital technology to maximize the availability of biblical resources, ensuring that only those that they deem trustworthy carry the identifying mark of their affirmation.

### Rise of the Global Bible-Translating Church

As the global church continues to take responsibility for meeting its own Bible translation needs, Bible societies and translation organizations are discovering new opportunities to catalyze and expand Bible translation at a scale that was not possible before. In this context, two desires of the church are readily apparent. First, the church urgently desires free and unhindered access to God's Word in every language in digital formats. Second, the church wants strong Bible societies to

---

<sup>24</sup> Modern technologies such as blockchains make possible widespread availability of cryptographically secure information pertaining to the identity and provenance of trustworthy resources. These could provide powerful tools to accomplish the objective of identifying trustworthy biblical resources.

continue their ministry to the church in the days ahead. The church does not want to supplant the Bible societies, but to work with them in ways that are beneficial and supportive.

This will require churches and Bible societies to work together to negotiate the means by which the Bible societies can honor both of these requests. There are many (largely unexplored) opportunities for Bible societies to enjoy financial sustainability in service to the church in the digital era. We suggest that, to the extent that Bible societies continue to fulfill their purpose of service to the church, these opportunities in each region and country can be discovered and leveraged for the glory of God and the good of His people.

When the church in a given region takes up the responsibility of meeting its own Bible translation needs, much of the scarcity that is typical of historical expressions of Bible translation is replaced by abundance. For example, instead of only very few people involved in the work, there may be dozens or even hundreds. Instead of a narrow focus on only one dialect of a selected language, the church often undertakes translations in multiple dialects of many languages in parallel. The scope of translation is not constrained to limited selections of Scripture but is often expanded to the entire Bible for everyone in whatever language variant they speak. In light of the new opportunities the Holy Spirit is bringing about at the dawn of the 3rd Millennium, the future can—and we argue should—have a scope of vision never before possible: the Bible in every dialect, every people group, on every technology, in every format, accessible to everyone. Could the Bible societies and Bible translation organizations in the near future be instrumental in bringing about the complete saturation of the earth with the living and active Word of God in the heart language of every person?

To that end, we invite Bible societies and Bible translation organizations to consider meeting three needs that will help achieve this vision.

1. How might we make every Bible translation available for free in digital formats, with the legal freedom for anyone to join in sharing and redistributing it? This is especially important for languages where only one Bible translation is available.
2. How might we provide widespread access to the biblical resources that illuminate comprehension and catalyze faithful interpretation of the Scriptures? In what strategic languages does the church need these resources, and how could they be made freely available in digital formats?
3. How might we equip the church to meet its own Bible translation needs? What new opportunities are there for achieving the enduring purpose of Bible societies and Bible translation organizations by emphasizing a primary function of coaching and encouraging the church to achieve the desired outcome of trustworthy translations?

Bible Societies and Bible translation organizations face several pressing challenges as they seek to serve the church more effectively across its diverse expressions and stages of maturity, and they need the church's collaboration to solve these challenges. One is the need to reposition their role in ways that maximize their ability to meet the current and emerging needs of the global church. Another is to curate and steward the abundance of biblical content wisely, while avoiding models that inadvertently reinforce scarcity. A third is the urgent task of developing sustainable financial models that support their long-term ministry impact. Ultimately, the innovative approaches discovered and developed to address these challenges will themselves have unintended consequences that will also need to be addressed collaboratively in the days ahead.

## Conclusion

We have shown in this paper that Bible societies and translation organizations were formed by the church many years ago to steward the Bible on behalf of the church. These organizations generally succeeded in their objective of increasing access to Scripture for more people in more languages. At the same time, the church has advanced into more people groups and places than ever before, increasing the demand for Bible translation in more languages. As the church continues to meet its own Bible translation needs, they are addressing the unintended consequences of the “stewarding the Bible for the church” model. This has not diminished the need for Bible societies and translation organizations, but the nature of how they serve the global church’s Bible needs.

We have suggested that the most important and catalytic emphasis that these organizations could have in this new era is equipping the church for increased engagement with Scripture. As more people understand the Scriptures and learn to obey everything Jesus has taught us, the transformation of lives and societies increases. This, in turn, increases the church’s need for more Scripture in more languages, which results in more translation of Scripture than could ever have been possible before.

This requires new explorations of opportunities and ministry models, some of which are already being pioneered by some Bible societies and translation organizations. We invite a global participation in discovering how God will be glorified by massively increasing access to his living and active Word which will not return to Him void. We are convinced that God intends to use those vessels instituted for this purpose in order to accomplish it in new and even more effective ways than ever before.

In closing, we want to draw attention to the encouragement given by the Very Rev. Dr. Kenneth C. McMillan, who after many years in the service of the Canadian Bible Society and the United Bible Societies, looked forward to the future with confidence and encouraged the Bible societies to do the same. In the final pages of *Taking the Word to the World*, in the chapter entitled “Looking Toward the Third Millennium” he said:

There is every reason to believe that the greatest days of the Bible Society movement are in the future, not the past. Rapidly changing world events which made traditional work difficult can be new opportunities for the Bible Society. ... Even in the post-Gutenberg age the printed page will communicate in a unique and distinctive way, but the Bible Societies will be involved also and increasingly in electronic publishing. ... The greatest challenge the Bible Society movement faces is meeting the modern world with the same vision and faith the founders met their world.

We hope that this paper is found to be constructive to the end of discovering together that the greatest days of the Bible societies and Bible translation organizations in service to the global church are, in fact, still ahead.

## References

- Berkun, Scott. *The Myths of Innovation*. Sebastopol, Calif: O'Reilly Media, 2010.
- Carey, William. *An Enquiry Into the Obligations of Christians, to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens*. Leicester, Printed by Ann Ireland, 1792.
- Champeon, Connie. "Dichotomies in Bible Translation: Can Case Studies in Church-Centric Bible Translation Provide New Insight?," 2021. <https://unfoldingword.org/publications/>.
- Cole, Arnold, and Pamela Caudill Ovwigho. "Bible Engagement as the Key to Spiritual Growth: A Research Synthesis." Center for Bible Engagement, August 2012. <https://www.centerforbibleengagement.org/post/bible-engagement-a-key-to-spiritual-growth>
- Coupland, Nikolas, ed. *The Handbook of Language and Globalization*. Wiley-Blackwell, 2011.
- Cowan, George M. *The Word That Kindles: People and Principles That Fueled A Worldwide Bible Translation Movement*. 1st edition. Chappaqua, N.Y: Wycliffe Bible Translators, Inc., 1979.
- Dwight, Henry Otis. *The Centennial History of the American Bible Society*. New York : Macmillan, 1916. <https://archive.org/details/centennialhistor00dwiguoft>.
- Ecumenical Conference on Foreign Missions (1900 : New York, N. Y. ). *Ecumenical Missionary Conference, New York, 1900 : Report of the Ecumenical Conference on Foreign Missions, Held in Carnegie Hall and Neighboring Churches, April 21 to May 1 ..* Vol. 1. 2 vols. New York : American Tract Society, 1900. <https://archive.org/details/cu31924031023496>.
- Gonzalez, Justo L. *Christian Thought Revisited: Three Types of Theology*. Nashville, Tennessee 37202: Abingdon Press, 1989.
- Johnstone, Patrick. *The Future of the Global Church: History, Trends and Possibilities*. IVP Books, 2011.
- Jore, Tim. "Duplication of Effort?," March 2023. <https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.22303696>.
- — —. "Letting Go." *unfoldingWord*, November 2024. <https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.27798495>.
- Robertson, Edwin H. *Taking the Word to the World: 50 Years of the United Bible Societies*. Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson Publishers, Inc., 1996.
- Schaff, Philip. "Bible Societies." In *New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, Vol. II: Basilica - Chambers, II:88–93, 1908. <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/encyc02.html?term=Bible%20Societies>.
- SIL Papua New Guinea. "Scripture Use Research and Ministry." Unpublished Report, April 2017.
- The British and Foreign Bible Society. "The Patmos World Bible Attitudes Survey," 2025.
- The Pakistan Bible Society. *150 Years & Beyond*, 2013.
- Wycliffe Global Alliance. "2024 Global Scripture Access." Accessed May 15, 2025. <https://www.wycliffe.net/resources/statistics/>.

Jerusalem II<sup>1</sup>  
**Contemplating Evangelism**  
**1700 years after Nicaea**

Dr. Carla Sunberg

At the original Jerusalem Council meeting the church was grappling with evangelism. It was a good problem, because the church was growing and reaching out and ministering to the gentiles. At the same time, this growth brought with it new questions for the church to consider.

In the year 325 the church's first ecumenical council was held in the town of Nicaea, not far from today's city of Istanbul. An ecumenical council is a worldwide gathering of bishops and other church leaders, recognized as representing the universal church, convened to deliberate and make authoritative decisions on issues of doctrine, discipline, and practice. Between the first council in Jerusalem and the first ecumenical council in the year 325 the church had grown, stretched, evangelized, and eventually become recognized by the government. It was the secular leader of the day, Constantine, who chose to bring the church together in Nicaea.

As we gather for this Jerusalem II council, we are again grappling with the question of evangelism, but also with some of the same questions that they had 1700 years ago in Nicaea. Where do we go from here? What is the Spirit saying to us?

Contemporary society questions whether evangelism is dead. In reality, that question may be more about methodology than the spirit of evangelism, or the sharing of "good news" that originally led to the expansion of Christianity. Therefore, I invite us to reach back 1700 years, into the fourth century, and there we may discover a wellspring of understanding that informs and provides a paradigm for practice that may bear fruit today.

Michael Green's work, *Evangelism in the Early Church*<sup>2</sup> explores the period from the ascension to the middle of the third century. Interestingly, Green hypothesized, the Church grew as a result of the Christocentric focus of its message. In a rather simplistic way, the early Christians presented Christ and their faith out of a sense of gratitude. They testified to the work of Christ in their lives, the gift they had received, and they lived with an obligation to share that gift.<sup>3</sup> Green concluded, "In the first two centuries or so of the Church's existence we find many faults, [and] much which dishonors the name they professed. But we also find an evangelistic zeal and effort, exerted by the whole broad spectrum of the Christian community to bring other people to the feet of their ascended Lord and into the fellowship of his willing servants."<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> An excerpt from Lett, Jacob ed. *Sanctifying Theology: At the Intersections of Wesleyan Theology, Dogmatics, and Practice—A Festschrift in Honour of Thomas A. Noble*. Kindle Edition. Chapter 13, "Evangelism in the Fourth Century: A Cappadocian Model," by Carla D. Sunberg.

<sup>2</sup> Michael Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970).

<sup>3</sup> Green, *Evangelism*, chapter 9.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, 280.

Much changed from the time of the early church to the world of the fourth century. It is in the transition between the third and fourth centuries that Christians were no longer persecuted, and Christianity became an acceptable religion within the Roman Empire. In the year 250 A.D., after more than 200 years of “evangelistic effort, Christians still made up only 1.9 percent of the Empire. However, we discover that by the middle of the next century, more than 50% of the population of the Roman empire claimed to be Christian.<sup>5</sup>

Initial growth was not exponential, but continued at a steady rate of approximately 3.42% each year. That steady growth led to astounding numbers by the end of the third, and beginning of the fourth, century. In the year 200 A.D., there were approximately 200,000 Christians in the Empire. By the year 250 A.D., there would have been 1.1 million, but by the end of the century, there were six million. The convergence of multiple factors seems to have led to the explosive expansion of Christianity within the Roman Empire. As a result, the middle of the fourth century saw Christianity reach more than 33 million people.<sup>6</sup>

Particular factors intersected synergistically to create the expansion of Christianity in the fourth century, and a similar confluence may prove consequential for evangelism in current society. The impact of culture, conversion, church structure, adaptation to a life of virtue, and the role of women all emerge as components of evangelism that is deeply Christocentric. Christ, himself, engaged with his culture and the needs of the day while modeling a life of self-sacrifice and denial. The church, founded on the day of Pentecost, infused by the presence of the Holy Spirit, was to reflect Christ through the ways in which it engaged with world. Jesus, and his successors, like Paul, reached out and employed women in mission in ways not previously seen. These principles are also all found in the church that gathered in 325 in Nicaea.

Many point to the “conversion” of Constantine as the turning point in the evangelistic efforts of Christianity in the fourth century. Others might argue that it was actually the final persecutions, from 303-312 A.D., under Diocletian, that plowed the fertile ground of faith development. In Emperor Diocletian’s desire to eliminate Christianity, he actually prepared the way for it to become the preferred religion of the Empire. During his rule, Christians were excluded from leadership roles in the government, as well as military service.<sup>7</sup> As a result, they flourished within their own communities, where the common people became evangelistic through their own faithfulness. Harnack tells us, “The most numerous and successful missionaries of the Christian religion were not the professional teachers but Christians themselves, in virtue of their loyalty and courage.”<sup>8</sup> These were ordinary men and women who “propagated the Faith, lived the life, formed the communities and raised their children in the Church.”<sup>9</sup>

Before Nicaea, the Church was already establishing a method of outreach, and assimilation. This included a long period of instruction or *catechesis*, which often lasted up to a year and prepared

---

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity: How the Obscure, Marginal Jesus Movement Became the Dominant Religious Force in the Western World in a Few Centuries*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 3.

<sup>7</sup> Arthur James Mason, *The Persecution of Diocletian: A Historical Essay*, (Cambridge, Deighton Bell and Col, 1876), 63.

<sup>8</sup> Harnack, *Mission and Expansion*, 266-267.

<sup>9</sup> Tosi, *Evangelism*, 33.

the individual for the formal act of baptism. After baptism, believers were encouraged to continue their growth in prayer and instruction. We find early documents such as the *Didache* and the writings of Hippolytus that “were quite precise on exactly how to conduct that prayer life, especially in preparing to commune.”<sup>10</sup> The church had to remain strong in its faith during those early centuries because of the encroachment of religious syncretism, in addition to ongoing periodic persecution. In his book, *Destroyer of the gods*, Larry Hurtado tells us, “Christianity was considered, and really seems to have been, a dangerous development that challenged what were then accepted notions of religion, piety, identity, and behavior.”<sup>11</sup> He noted that the behaviour of Christians had distinguishing features, and identified five distinctives:

1. The church was made up of racial and ethnic diversity — people from every tribe and nation of the known world were welcomed into fellowship in the church.
2. There was economic diversity within the life of the church community. The church took responsibility for the poor and cared well for those within the Christian community.
3. The church cared for babies and children who were abandoned by their parents.
4. The church had a moral vision of marriage for a lifetime between one man and one woman.
5. The church was non-violent.<sup>12</sup>

Therefore, a theology for and of the church was developed, along with practices and preaching, which helped to reinforce the faith of Christianity.

By the early fourth century, Christianity was having a direct impact on the culture of the Roman Empire. Due to the sheer number of converts, the Roman government could no longer control the Christian population. More than likely, this is why the final persecutions failed, for far too many people within the government were now averse to participating in those persecutions.

It is into this milieu that Constantine stepped and embraced the faith of these Christians. His motivations remain unknown, whether he was sincere in seeking Christ, or whether he saw Christianity as a way in which to unite the Empire. Some have suggested that his approval of Christianity became pivotal in the explosive growth the Church experienced in the next half-century. Others believe that the explosive growth of Christianity may have made it prudent for him to embrace the faith.<sup>13</sup>

What we glean from the church 1700 years ago is that a convergence of factors led to the explosive expansion of Christianity. The slow and intentional growth of the church over the years, and especially during the persecutions, came to a head in this particular moment in time.

Some would suggest that the church today, at this time may be facing a new wave of persecutions. Rather than impeding evangelism, persecution actually forged the church in the crucible and it came out stronger and more resilient. It is in times of persecution that the people of God have to determine how they will live and express their faith, and this leads to greater

---

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 44-45.

<sup>11</sup> Larry W. Hurtado, *Destroyer of the gods*, Baylor University Press. Kindle Edition, 9.

<sup>12</sup> Hurtado, 16.

<sup>13</sup> Stark, *Rise*, 5.

evangelism. The church has always had good news to share with the world, and as society places stresses upon Christianity, we will discover that we still have good news.

There are some truths that we can glean from that early church, the one that met in Nicaea. The fourth century saw a conversion to a way of life. The last half-century has seen the church in the West seeking acceptance and approval from society. At the same time, there are those who have pushed back against the idea of a Christian, or holiness lifestyle because it has been seen as being too legalistic. While legalism may have been a problem, there remains the possibility that there has been an over-correction and the church no longer appears different from the world. Evangelism must include conversion to a lifestyle that is dedicated to spiritual formation, prayer, and personal practices of self-denial that will be deemed counter-cultural.<sup>14</sup> These actions echo a Christocentric lifestyle that became vital to evangelism in the early church, for it became a visible testimony of the transformed life.

A lifestyle committed to spiritual formation resulted in a holy life. There was no distinction between being a Christian, and being a holy Christian. It was understood that Christ had come to transform humanity into his image, which is holy. This emphasis on holiness led to the monasteries becoming centres of holiness. The shift from the home and local church to the monastery made the experience of holiness much less accessible to the ordinary Christian. Holiness is evangelistic when it remains at the heart of the Christian life, for the clergy and laity alike. Jerusalem I wrestled with this question, wanting the Christian life to remain accessible for all who were becoming believers. We cannot allow the spiritual centre of the church to become out of reach for those who need to come to Christ.

Ecclesial factors are a bit more troublesome. From the year 325, the church found itself in a much more acceptable position with the secular government. While the relationship between the church and the state may have made things easier for the bishops, it also led to syncretism. The bishops no longer worked as itinerant missionaries, but became leaders over territories that were defined by the Empire. For better or worse, this put them into direct relationship with the governing authority of that region. On the one hand, the church gained power, but on the other, it was tempted to compromise to retain that power. Evangelism did ensue, but potentially more so because it may have been expedient to convert to Christianity. The church is always in danger of losing its God-ordained power through the *dunamis* of the Holy Spirit, when it compromises with governmental authorities.

Interestingly, evangelism did result from the theological work that was done by the bishops. The church engaged in council meetings where it hammered out the Nicene faith. The clarity of the faith was evangelistic, and this is something that ought to be considered. Currently, there is a rush to put people into positions of leadership in the church because they appear to be successful by the world's standards. Those with charismatic personalities, who are able to draw a crowd, may be elevated to leadership positions without the necessary theological education. The church of early Christianity had been charging on for three centuries, but there continued to be a need for clarity about theological matters. Those who chose to participate in the theological debates of the day spent much time in personal study and spiritual formation. These were not simply intellectual theologians, but individuals who endeavoured to bring Christocentric expression to

---

<sup>14</sup> Matthew 16:24-26.

what had been experienced by themselves and the Christian community. This exercise of articulation became a form of apologetic and way of sharing the good news of Jesus Christ. We have an ever-increasing need for an educated and Spirit-filled clergy, at all levels of leadership, with a passion for leading the world to Christ.

While the emphasis on holiness resulted in the establishment of new monasteries, women continued to play a vital role in evangelism. It was mothers who were evangelizing in the home, and raising up children who were committed to following Christ. Other women, established female monasteries where they could exercise their spiritual gifts. One of the great Cappadocian Fathers, Gregory of Nyssa had a sister, Theosebia who served with him in Nyssa and was a deaconess of the church and who participated in the sacraments. Church history is lined with mothers who poured themselves into the education of their children. These children were not only evangelized, but also prepared to lead a new generation of Christians. Significantly, women were also used to provide *catechesis* during the season of rapid expansion. Throughout history, Christian women have stood in the gap and ensured the continuation of the faith. Unleashing women for service fuels evangelism.

As a result of early evangelistic work, the Roman Empire was transformed. Julian, the emperor who attended the school in Athens with the Cappadocian Fathers, Basil and Nazianzen, became frustrated by this growth. He encouraged his governors to have a greater positive impact on society than the Christians, but secular society simply could not keep up with the good will of the now overwhelming number of Christians. There is an apocryphal report of Julian's dying words, "νενίκηκάς με, Γαλιλαῖε," -- "You have won, Galilean."<sup>15</sup> If the Galilean is to win today, the church must reclaim these practices from the past. The only roadmap we have to the future comes to us from the past, but by reclaiming these practices and standards, the church may be able to unleash another wave of evangelism and Scriptural holiness.

This is why we gather at Jerusalem II. May the same Spirit that infused the early church council meetings come and minister to us and may this become a pivotal moment in the life of Christ's church.

### Select Bibliography

*Evangelism in the Early Church: Did you Know?* Christian History Institute, cited July 10, 2021, online: <https://christianhistoryinstitute.org/magazine/article/evangelism-in-early-church-did-you-know/>.

Gavrilyuk, Paul L. "The Legacy of the Council of Nicaea in the Orthodox Tradition," in Young Kim, ed., *Cambridge Companion to the Council of Nicaea*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming. Cited 7/1/2021 online: [https://www.academia.edu/36428895/The\\_Legacy\\_of\\_the\\_Council\\_of\\_Nicaea\\_in\\_the\\_O](https://www.academia.edu/36428895/The_Legacy_of_the_Council_of_Nicaea_in_the_O)

---

<sup>15</sup> First recorded by Theodoret in the 5<sup>th</sup> century. Theodoret, *Historia ecclesiastica*, 3.25.

rthodox\_Tradition\_The\_Principle\_of\_Unchangeability\_and\_the\_Hermeneutic\_of\_Continuity\_

Green, Michael. *Evangelism in the Early Church*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970.

Harnack, Adolph von. *The Mission and Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries*. Williams and Norgate, 1908.

Hurtado, Larry W. *Destroyer of the Gods: Early Christian Distinctiveness in the Roman World*. Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2016.

Lett, Jacob ed. *Sanctifying Theology: At the Intersections of Wesleyan Theology, Dogmatics, and Practice—A Festschrift in Honour of Thomas A. Noble*. Kindle Edition. Chapter 13, “Evangelism in the Fourth Century: A Cappadocian Model,” by Carla D. Sunberg.

Lossky, Vladimir. *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*. Cambridge & London: James Clarke & Co., 1957.

Madigan, Kevin and Osiek, Carolyn, eds. *Ordained Women in the Early Church: A Documentary History*. Johns Hopkins University Press: Baltimore, 2007.

Mason, Arthur James. *The Persecution of Diocletian: A Historical Essay*. Cambridge, Deighton Bell and Col, 1876.

McGuckin, John Anthony. *St. Gregory of Nazianzus: An Intellectual Biography*. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2001.

Schaff, Philip. *History of the Christian Church: Nicene and Post-Nicene Christianity from Constantine the Great to Gregory the Great*. Volumes 1-2, T&T Clark: Edinburgh, 1981.

Silvas, Anna. *Macrina the Younger, Philosopher of God*. Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2008.

Stark, Rodney. *The Rise of Christianity: How the Obscure, Marginal Jesus Movement Became the Dominant Religious Force in the Western World in a Few Centuries*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996.

Tosi, Eric. *Evangelism in the Early Church*, cited July 1, 2021, online : [https://www.academia.edu/1949066/Evangelism\\_in\\_the\\_Early\\_Church](https://www.academia.edu/1949066/Evangelism_in_the_Early_Church), 2-3.

Yarbrough, Anne. “Christianization in the Fourth Century: The Example of Roman Women.” *Church History*, vol. 45, No. 2 (June 1976): 149-156.

# Responding to the Global Hunger Crisis through the Power and Mission of the Church

## Food For The Poor Position Paper

### The Jerusalem Council II. The Church of the Third Millennium.

Athens, Greece. 2025

## Introduction

The global hunger crisis remains one of the most urgent challenges facing humanity today, with approximately between 713 and 757 million people — one in eleven worldwide — experiencing hunger daily.<sup>1</sup> In regions such as sub-Saharan Africa, where one in five people faces food insecurity, and in conflict zones like Gaza, Sudan, South Sudan, Haiti, and Mali, people are on the brink of famine, the crisis demands immediate and sustained action.

## The Global Hunger Crisis<sup>1</sup>

Despite the world producing enough food to feed its 8 billion people, issues of access, distribution, and affordability create significant barriers, particularly in low-income countries. Recent data underscores the severity of global hunger:

- **Hunger continues to affect millions across the globe, but its impact is not evenly distributed.** While some regions have seen encouraging progress, others remain in crisis. In Africa, hunger is still rising, affecting a significant portion of the population. In Asia, the situation has stabilized, though challenges persist in conflict-affected areas. Meanwhile, Latin America and the Caribbean have made notable strides, **except Haiti**, where nearly **51% of the population** faces acute food insecurity, highlighting the ongoing humanitarian emergency there.
- **At least 319 million people across 67 countries are experiencing acute hunger**, with around 70% of these individuals living in fragile or conflict-affected regions.<sup>2</sup>
- **Conflict remains a key driver of food insecurity**, pushing vulnerable populations in places like Gaza, Sudan, South Sudan, Haiti, and Mali to the brink of famine. Northern Sudan faces an especially dire situation as officials have confirmed famine in the Zamzam camp.<sup>2</sup>
- **Extreme weather events** continue to exacerbate hunger and food insecurity, caused by a mix of lasting impacts from previous events and recently arising challenges. Regional-scale droughts have caused major failures in crop production, adversely affecting subsistence farmers due to irregular rainfall and extremely high temperatures.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> [The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2024. FAO](#)

<sup>2</sup> [The World Food Programme \(WFP\) 2025 Global Outlook](#)

- **Hunger is most severe** in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, where undernourishment, child mortality, and malnutrition rates are rising due to poor diets, economic challenges, and natural disasters.<sup>3</sup>
- 2.8 billion people — 35% of the global population — **cannot afford a healthy diet**, with 71.5% of people in low-income countries facing this challenge. Malnutrition links to half of all child deaths, and hunger-related causes kill **9 million people** every year.<sup>3</sup>

Prolonged hunger casts a devastating shadow over both body and mind, condemning those who endure it to a life of profound disadvantage if we fail to act swiftly. Starvation stunts physical growth, leaving children with weakened bodies and diminished potential, while cognitive impairments from malnutrition erode their ability to learn, reason, and thrive. These individuals face a future where opportunities are scarce, trapped in a cycle of poverty and struggle that robs them of their God-given potential. Intervening early is crucial — every moment of delay entrenches these barriers further and limits individuals' capacity to rise above their circumstances.

Worse still, hunger can erode the very foundation of faith. When survival is the daily concern, a person may question their faith, wondering how a loving Christ could allow them to suffer. This despair can harden hearts and close them off to the hope and grace that could sustain them. To delay action is not simply to ignore a physical need; it is to risk extinguishing hope and severing their connection to a relationship with God. Acting decisively to alleviate hunger is a moral and spiritual imperative — an act of mercy that opens the door to human flourishing and to encountering Christ in both body and spirit.

## **A Call to the Church**

The Bible provides a compelling call to action and a clear mandate to address hunger and poverty. This mandate is rooted in the Old Testament's provisions for the poor, such as gleaning laws (Leviticus 19:9-10) and protections for the marginalized (Deuteronomy 15:11), which emphasize God's heart for justice. In the New Testament, Jesus identifies with the hungry in Matthew 25:35-40, declaring that serving "the least of these" is serving Him. The early church in Acts 4:32-35 modeled this by sharing resources to ensure no one was in need. The Word of God consistently emphasizes God's heart for the marginalized and the responsibility of believers to act with compassion and justice.

---

<sup>3</sup> [Global Hunger Index, 2024. Concern Worldwide. IFHV](#)

Christians are called to "feed the hungry" (James 2:15-16) and to grieve the profound scale, depth, and inequities of the global hunger crisis. This call, rooted in Hebrews 13:2's exhortation to show hospitality to strangers — serving Christ unknowingly — extends to caring for the hungry, the stranger, and the prisoner. Yet, when emergency relief is insufficient for a chronic crisis, how can the church respond holistically?

Our daily choices shape the world and, as believers, we affirm that God created a world of abundance, intending all to flourish in His provision (Psalm 145:15-16). Hunger contradicts this divine vision, disrupting the *shalom* — the peace, wholeness, and justice God desires for His creation. Therefore, addressing hunger and food insecurity requires more than financial contributions or charitable acts; it demands a holistic approach that recognizes the complexity of food systems and the interconnected spiritual, human, structural, and ecological factors.

The global hunger crisis — where conflict disrupts food production and distribution, prolonged droughts and extreme storms reduce crop yields and food availability, and economic inequality and systemic issues limit access to nutritious food for vulnerable populations — **cannot be resolved by food aid alone**. The paradoxical solution lies in tackling root causes through both systemic change and spiritual renewal. While governments, civil society, and international NGOs play essential roles in poverty alleviation, the church actively leads and drives holistic, hope-filled solutions that address today's challenges and foster a food-secure world for everyone, now and in the future.

Food For The Poor (FFTP) strives to preserve and defend the sacredness of God-given lives, especially of those living in conditions contrary to their inviolable dignity as human beings. From this vantage point, poverty is a scandal that impels us to act. Inspired by this sacred calling, Food For The Poor envisions a church that leads globally in addressing the hunger crisis, rising as a global beacon of hope. We are called to embody Christ's love by meeting both spiritual and physical needs, fostering lasting transformation among every tribe, tongue, and nation through compassionate action, courageous advocacy, and sustainable solutions.

Deuteronomy 8:3 reminds us that "man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord," underscoring the need to address both physical and spiritual hunger. Matthew 5:14-16 reminds us of Jesus's astounding affirmation regarding the identity and mission of the church. As the light of the world, the church is God's agent of **transformation**. Empowered by God's Spirit and stewarding His resources, the church must lead globally, combining immediate relief, advocacy for justice, and sustainable solutions to restore God's intended *shalom* for all creation.

## **Our Proposal for Holistic Transformation**

### **1. Activate church-based solutions for food security:**

*"The generous will themselves be blessed, for they share their food with the poor."  
(Proverbs 22:9, NIV)*

- Lead the global church in prayer and fasting for an end to hunger and wisdom for global leaders and proclaim that every person is created in the image of God and deserves dignity, justice, and daily bread.
- Equip churches to become local hubs of food security through home and community gardens (FAITH gardens), food banks, meal-pack events, and nutrition programs.
- Promote prayer and giving campaigns that connect congregations in wealthier regions with needs in vulnerable communities.
- Cultivate and promote an attitude of unity and cooperation through various ministries, parachurches, and across denominations to amplify impact on holistic transformation and share best practices.

## **2. Empower local communities:**

*"The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it." (Genesis 2:15, NIV)*

- Train, support, and strengthen subsistence and smallholder farmers with climate-resilient crops, sustainable farming practices, and combining agricultural stewardship principles from God's word (farming in God's ways).
- Support women, children, and marginalized groups who are disproportionately affected by food insecurity and involve them as responsible participants rather than passive recipients through maternal support, early childhood interventions, and extension services.
- Partner with local faith leaders and networks to deliver nutrition education and spiritual formation (God's provision for healthy food).

## **3. Advocate for systems change, raise awareness, and peace promotion:**

*"Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy." (Proverbs 31:8-9, NIV)*

- Educate the church and raise awareness about the root causes of hunger and food insecurity, and the church's role as an agent of transformation.
- Encourage church members, including the youth, to advocate for policy changes for fair trade, debt relief, agricultural extension services, risk mitigation, and increased investments and accountability in the transformation of sustainable food systems.

#### 4. Lead emergency response and resilience efforts:

*“If you spend yourselves on behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness.” (Isaiah 58:10)*

- Strengthen church-based networks to respond rapidly to famines, conflicts, and climate disasters and increase risk mitigation and preparedness.
- Equip local churches with resources, training, and networks to serve as hubs for relief, development, and spiritual support in their communities (Bridges of peace and restoration)
- Integrate relief-focused work (e.g., food aid) with longer-term development to build self-reliance and risk prevention.

#### United in Christ: The church's power to end hunger

The crisis of hunger is vast, but so is the power of the church when united under Christ's mission of love and restoration. The church can take a leading role in addressing the global hunger crisis because of her:

1. **Extensive networks for rapid mobilization:** churches are present in nearly every community, with established communication channels and grassroots structures that swiftly activate volunteers, congregations, and partners in times of urgent need.
2. **Deep-rooted trust and relationships for lasting influence:** unlike many external actors, local churches often hold relational capital built over generations. This trust allows them to effectively influence behaviors, shape values, and foster lasting change with community buy-in.
3. **Valuable resources and support:** Churches often have access to underutilized land, a committed base of volunteers, donor networks, and benefit from strong reputational trust—all of which can be leveraged to implement and sustain food security initiatives.
4. **Consistent presence before, during, and after crises:** unlike many temporary or project-based actors, the church remains embedded in communities over the long term, providing a stable presence that can sustain both immediate relief and ongoing development efforts.

Leveraging these strengths intentionally and collaboratively is critical to multiplying the church's impact in the fight against hunger. By working alongside secular agencies, other faith-based partners, and local communities, we can help ensure that no one goes to bed hungry.

Let us embrace and commit to this calling wholeheartedly. Together, we will feed the hungry, transform communities, and bear witness to Christ's Kingdom here on earth. May the church rise boldly to this challenge.

### **Transformed by Love: From physical relief to spiritual awakening**

In one of his final messages to the staff before his passing, Food For The Poor's founder, Ferdinand Mahfood, reminded us:

*"If all we're doing is just feeding people and not telling them about Jesus, then what are we doing?"*

This profound question, shared during a Day of Reflection in Food For The Poor's Prayer Room, underscores a truth that lies at the heart of our ministry: feeding the body without reaching the soul is incomplete.

At Food For The Poor, poverty alleviation is essential, but it is not the end. Our ultimate purpose is to reflect God's unconditional love in a way that invites every person into a relationship with Him. It is not just about ending hunger; it is about revealing hope, dignity, and salvation.

We believe in applied theology. Every home built, every meal shared, every school restored is more than a charitable act — it is a tangible expression of Christ's love. It is our way of living out the Gospel.

In John 6, Jesus feeds a crowd of thousands with five barley loaves and two small fish offered by a child. This miracle — abundance emerging from insufficiency shows that God not only meets physical needs but also reveals Himself as the true source of satisfaction.

Scripture is filled with testimonies of provision through faith. God multiplied oil for a desperate widow (2 Kings 4), sustained His people with manna in the wilderness (Exodus 16), and sent an angel to strengthen Elijah with food for the journey ahead (1 Kings 19). Each of these moments reminds us that divine provision flows where there is faith and obedience.

Miracles often begin with human faithfulness.

Too often, we encounter people so weighed down by the oppression of poverty that their sense of worth, purpose, and identity is stripped away. When survival is the only goal, it is difficult even to imagine a loving God, let alone believe in one.

This is why our mission must be holistic.

The Parable of the Sower illustrates that the seed of God's Word thrives on fertile soil. But how can the soul be ready when a person has never known dignity, rest, or safety? As we meet material needs, we also prepare hearts for the message of grace. This is why faith-based humanitarian work is essential. It shows the poor that they are indeed loved by God.

This lived experience serves as a foundation for spiritual growth. When physical needs are met with dignity and compassion, the poor experience a God who sees them, values them, and has not forgotten them. And this lived expression of love becomes the fertile ground where hope is restored, trust is rekindled, and the soul is awakened to receive the Gospel.

The miracle of the loaves and fish reminds us there is no problem too big for Jesus to solve, no person too small for God to use, and no hunger too deep for Christ to satisfy. The same Jesus who asked, "Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?" already knew what He was going to do.

Yet the needs of our world — spiritual, physical, emotional, and systemic — are too vast for a few alone to address. Jesus said, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few." (Luke 10:2, NIV)

We walk alongside the poor not as rescuers, but as brothers and sisters. We listen, we serve, and we proclaim — with our words and our actions — that God loves every human being.

We are convinced that the church, equipped with faith and love, can help the poor move from mere survival to flourishing. In doing so, we fulfill the Great Commission not only with our voices but with our hands, our resources, and our lives.

Jesus said, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty." (John 6:35) This is not just physical nourishment — it is spiritual fulfillment. The deepest hunger of every heart is for Jesus.

The Gospel is not simply spoken. It is demonstrated. And when it is, lives are changed, and communities are transformed — in both body and spirit.

Throughout Scripture, God's power is revealed through miracles that remind us nothing is impossible with Him. He parted seas (Exodus 14), raised the dead (John 11), fed multitudes (John 6), and calmed storms (Mark 4:39).

The miracle of the five loaves and two fish is not isolated — it is part of a divine pattern: God takes what little we offer and multiplies it for His glory.

Jesus said, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few." (Matthew 9:37–38) In the face of today's global hunger crisis, this call is louder than ever.

The time is now. The need is urgent. The call is clear. May we respond not with hesitation, but with faith, offering all we have to Jesus, confident that He will multiply it for the good of His people and the glory of His name.

# The Sparks That Ignite Personal Evangelism

Dr. Daniel Schmid

LiFe Everywhere

If every Christian won just one person for Christ each year, we could fulfill the Great Commission within three years. According to the most recent United Nations estimates, the world population stands at 8.23 billion (July 2025). Approximately 2.4 billion people identify as Christians—31.6% of the global population—making Christianity the world's largest religion. Simple mathematics reveals an astounding truth: If each Christian led one person to faith annually, the entire world could be reached by 2028.

So why does this vision remain unfulfilled? Why are we nowhere near achieving this mathematical possibility? The answer lies in what most Christian traditions and denominations lack: the sparks that ignite personal evangelism. We have knowledge, we have numbers, but we lack the fire that transforms ordinary believers into passionate soul-winners.

Christianity has experienced remarkable growth since the pivotal 1910 World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh, Scotland. This gathering brought together over 1,200 delegates, primarily from Protestant denominations in Europe and North America, to discuss and coordinate global missionary efforts. At that time, approximately 600 million people worldwide identified as Christians.

Fast forward one hundred years to the 2010 World Missionary Congress in Cape Town—called “the most representative gathering of Christian leaders in the 2,000-year history of the Christian movement.” 4,000 leaders from 198 countries attended, with thousands more participating through GlobaLink technology. The geographic center of Christianity had shifted dramatically: the majority of believers now lived in Asia, Africa, and South America rather than Europe and North America.

While we've quadrupled our numbers from 600 million to 2.4 billion Christians, our percentage of the global population has remained virtually unchanged. Despite facing numerous obstacles and persecution over the past century, Christianity has not been eradicated. It remains the world's largest religion with a significant global presence. However, persecution has significantly impacted the faith in various regions, causing decline in some areas while spurring growth in others.

As we gather for the Jerusalem Council II here in Athens, we must confront an urgent question: Where are the sparks that ignite personal evangelism? How can we achieve our goal of every Christian winning one soul annually? What would accelerate Christianity's growth rate significantly?

The answer to our dilemma begins with acknowledging a fundamental truth: Only the Holy Spirit can ignite the fire for personal evangelism. Reflecting on my theological education in Switzerland, I cannot recall a single lesson focused on the Holy Spirit. My training in reformed theology at the Universities of Zurich and Basel, while academically rigorous, overlooked this crucial element. By God's grace, however, I experienced powerful sparks that ignited my zeal for personal evangelism even before beginning theological studies. Yet for too long, my academic training remained separated from my ministry as an evangelist and disciple-maker.

My dissertation research on American revival history—studying John Wesley, early Methodists, the Holiness Movement, and Pentecostalism—revealed the powerful sparks that ignited nineteenth-century Christians. A clear theological foundation helps us identify the source of an ongoing fire that will ignite more believers who desire fundamental change in their approach to evangelism. These Christians long to be part of churches that experience what the early church in Jerusalem witnessed: “The Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.” (Acts 2:47 ESV).

While Luke’s report of Jerusalem revival seems distant from our modern context, the early Methodist movement offers a more recent and relatable example of exponential growth. Statistics reveal an astounding trajectory: In 1776, when the thirteen American colonies declared their independence from Great Britain, the Methodist movement counted approximately 25,000 members. By 1860—just 84 years later—official membership had exploded to 1,661,086. This represents a 66-fold increase, meaning they doubled their numbers six times in less than a century. What sparks ignited such extraordinary personal evangelism among early Methodists?

Their belief system centered on the transformative power of God's grace. They pursued personal holiness through both faith and good works, cultivating a deep, personal relationship with God that permeated every aspect of their lives. All of that was supported by the commitment to attend weekly class meetings—there was no such thing as passive or nominal membership. The commitment was so serious that membership itself was conditional: Class leaders issued membership cards valid for only three months at a time.

Following are the key elements of the early Methodists:

### **1. Experiencing God’s Grace**

Early Methodists believed that salvation comes through faith in Jesus Christ, not through works or merit. John Wesley, a key figure in Methodism, emphasized the universal availability of God's grace, extending to all of humanity—a view that distinguished them from some other Protestant denominations, according to some scholars. While acknowledging the possibility of falling from grace, they also emphasized the assurance that comes from a life lived in accordance with God's will.

### **2. Pursuing Holiness**

Early Methodists believed that through the power of the Holy Spirit, it was possible to grow in grace and increasingly live a life free from voluntary sin, though not achieving complete sinlessness. They practiced various spiritual disciplines, including prayer, Bible study, fasting, and participating in small group meetings (called “class meetings”) to nurture their faith and promote spiritual growth. This wasn't just about personal piety; they also believed in putting their faith into practice through works of love and service to others.

### **3. Adhering to The Wesleyan Quadrilateral**

*Scripture:* The Bible was seen as the primary source of authority and guidance.

*Tradition:* They drew upon the wisdom and practices of the Church throughout history.

*Reason:* They believed in using their God-given intellect to understand and apply Christian teachings.

*Experience:* They valued personal experiences of God's presence and power in their lives.

#### **4. Emphasizing Small Groups**

Class Meetings were essentially small groups where individuals could share their spiritual struggles, encourage one another, and hold each other accountable. This fostered a sense of community and mutual support, crucial for navigating the challenges of pursuing holiness.

#### **5. Making Social Impact**

Their emphasis on personal transformation and social action challenged the established norms of the time. They reached out to the poor, the sick, and the forgotten, demonstrating the practical application of their faith.

The distinction between early Methodists and contemporary churches lies not primarily in theology but in systematic discipleship and Christian formation. Every Methodist understood their specific role within the movement's structure.

Members committed to weekly attendance, pursued consistent spiritual growth, and actively invited seekers into their class meetings. Class leaders provided pastoral care for their group members, served as spiritual mentors guiding them toward holiness, and took responsibility for multiplying their groups when they reached capacity. Circuit riders traveled between class meetings to provide training in John Wesley's doctrine and practice, maintained oversight to ensure standards were upheld, and reported progress to bishops.

When classes reached twelve members, they multiplied to form two new groups. This built-in multiplication mechanism ensured continuous growth while maintaining intimate community. No group became too large for personal accountability, and new leaders constantly emerged through the multiplication process. The system was both organic and organized—growth happened naturally within a carefully designed structure.

The structure of the class meetings meant that ordinary farmers, merchants, and laborers became effective evangelists and disciple makers. Seeking people received invitations to class meetings. After some time they understood the message of salvation, accepted Jesus as their Savior and started to grow in faith and were able to invite their friends or family members to the class meeting.

Modern Christianity often treats discipleship as optional—a special calling for the particularly zealous. We've reduced church membership to attending Sunday services and holding correct beliefs. But the Great Commission leaves no room for such passivity: "And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.'" (Matthew 28:18-20 ESV).

Here we need a first spark that ignites personal evangelism: When we study the four Gospels we see that Jesus' highest priority was to make disciples of His twelve chosen young men. Certainly, His sacrifice on the cross of Calvary is sufficient for forgiveness and salvation. Yet Jesus was equally intentional about how the gospel would advance following His death, resurrection and ascension.

Jesus's strategy is profoundly simple: Saved sinners become disciples who make more disciples. This multiplication principle explains every period of exponential growth in church history.

Over the past two hundred years, evangelism has been reduced to merely “saving lost souls.” Consequently, the priority shifted from cultivating deep discipleship to promoting various evangelistic methods. Today's typical church is seen simply as a gathering of Christians. Whether members actually live as disciples or make disciples rarely drives church activities. When churches prioritize everything except training members for evangelism and discipleship, decline becomes inevitable. However, when churches prioritize disciple-making through intentional strategy and training, a profound transformation occurs: Evangelism becomes integrated into the natural process of discipleship rather than standing alone.

Every believer must hear anew Christ's invitation to Peter: “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.” (Matthew 4:19 ESV). When someone asks, “What are the basics of successful evangelism?” the answer is straightforward: “Making disciples!” We challenge Christians to become intentional companions to seekers in their network of relationships. Through solid teaching, practical training, evangelistic projects, and mentorship, they learn to fulfill their calling as fishers of men and disciple makers.

How do these principles translate into twenty-first-century practice? The following account from Switzerland demonstrates that the sparks igniting personal evangelism still burn brightly when believers commit to intentional discipleship.

Agnes worked as a physiotherapist, treating patients' physical ailments while remaining alert to their spiritual needs. Her patient Edith ran a local inn with her husband Julius, managing staff and caring for guests while raising three daughters. During their therapy sessions, Agnes recognized an opportunity beyond physical healing.

Agnes invited Edith to attend a LiFe seminar—a structured evangelistic program designed to address seekers' questions in a welcoming environment. The upcoming session's theme, “Why Does God Allow Suffering?” resonated deeply with Edith. She agreed to attend, feeling particularly comfortable because another friend would also be participating. Edith found herself drawn to the authentic testimonies of transformed lives. The stories revealed something she had been missing—a living relationship with God.

Unfortunately, Edith missed the crucial fourth evening when participants were invited to make personal decisions for Christ. Agnes understood her responsibility as a companion and refused to give up. She pursued another opportunity to meet with Edith privately.

Initially, Edith resisted this follow-up meeting. However, the gentle persistence of Agnes paid off when they finally met on June 6, 2004. That day, Edith prayed the prayer of surrender, committing her life to Jesus Christ.

Edith's conversion triggered a remarkable chain reaction within her family and business. She immediately encouraged her daughter Nadja to attend the next LiFe seminar, where Nadja also surrendered her life to Christ. Mother and daughter began discussing biblical topics regularly, transforming their family dinner conversations.

Edith's husband Julius grew curious about the changes he witnessed in his wife and daughter. He attended another LiFe seminar along with his youngest daughter. Within months, the entire

family had come to faith. The Holy Spirit's work was unmistakable—the whole household experienced spiritual transformation and started attending church services every Sunday.

The impact extended beyond the family to their business. One employee, two service staff members, and the housekeeper all came to faith through the family's witness. The atmosphere in the inn transformed so dramatically that the family decided to host LiFe seminars in their establishment, multiplying their evangelistic impact.

This story illustrates a crucial principle from our earlier discussion: Agnes, Edith and her family succeeded because they understood that fishing for people and making disciples was their personal calling. They attended weekly small group meetings faithfully, praying specifically for opportunities to accompany their friends, neighbors, and family members to future LiFe seminars that were held on a regular basis.

While Agnes's story demonstrates individual effectiveness, the experience of a church in Minsk, Belarus, shows how these principles can transform entire congregations. In 2023, they submitted this report: "After your training for LiFe evangelism in 2017, we initially organized LiFe seminars specifically for young people in our church. The results exceeded expectations—ten to fifteen seeking guests attended each seminar. As a result some of them got baptized as new believers. Encouraged by this success, our church leaders decided to expand the program to include our entire congregation. The beginning proved challenging because church members initially only invited guests without understanding how to accompany them through their faith journey. Our organizers quickly recognized this gap and put together a team of experienced mentors. We now conduct two to three LiFe seminars annually. Last year alone, approximately fifty seeking guests attended. We baptize new converts after each seminar, witnessing continuous growth in our congregation."

By April 2024, their success had multiplied beyond imagination. At their most recent LiFe event, 80 of the 200 participants were seeking guests! The program's effectiveness has inspired numerous other churches throughout Belarus to adopt the strategy and materials of LiFe. The church in Minsk now operates as a training center, equipping other congregations to implement LiFe evangelism. Their September 2024 update revealed even greater expansion: "LiFe continues to transform our church in Minsk, but the impact now extends throughout Belarus. We're training churches nationwide to use the enhanced LiFe materials in Russian, witnessing a movement of evangelistic renewal across our country."

Returning to our opening premise: If every Christian won one person for Christ annually, we could fulfill the Great Commission within three years. Can this become our reality? The early church in Jerusalem saw daily additions to their number. The Methodist movement achieved a 66-fold increase in 84 years. Contemporary examples from Switzerland to Belarus prove that systematic personal evangelism still produces exponential growth. The spark hasn't died—it can be fanned into flame if we remember that Jesus didn't call us to "do church"—He called His twelve disciples to go and make disciples! And He faithfully sent the promised Holy Spirit, empowering them to make disciples who would raise up many more generations of disciples until the Roman Empire was conquered for Christ.

This same reality can unfold in our time: The Holy Spirit will again ignite our hearts for disciple-making, beginning with renewed passion for personal evangelism.

# Film & Media in the Third Millennium Church

Presented by  
Nathan Todd Sims  
FusionFlix Entertainment

By realizing the origin of humanity's compulsion to create believable stories coupled with the confluence of storytelling and technology, an unmistakable pattern emerges which not only provides a possible understanding of what is happening today but also of what is to come in the future: coalescing in a theoretical construct called the Divinity Singularity of storytelling.

Humanity has been on an unmistakable, accelerating trajectory of storytelling since the earliest cave drawings depicting animals fleeing hunters. Generation after generation the expression of stories utilizing, initially rudimentary, now sophisticated, technology has exponentially become increasingly advanced, evidentially influencing audiences to accept a story's "truth." This drive for believability is now coalescing at the nexus of the most sophisticated technology and creativity and compelling stories in history, advancing at an almost disturbingly rapid pace as we approach the start of the Third Millennium of the Church.

The seemingly radical superfluous, ever changing, ever proliferating film and visual media demands both percipience and superintendency by the Church while revealing opportunities to advance the Gospel of Christ immediately as the fulfillment of the Great Commission is imminent while revealing a protocol for the future Church.

## Believability

There is broad agreement that creativity is a fundamental attribute of God and according to Leonard Sweet, God's first act of holiness.

and God saith, 'Let light be;' and light is.  
Genesis 1:3 YLT

Since we are, "in the image of God" (Gen 1:27 YLT), we too must be intrinsically creative beings. From assembling a meal to writing a paper to creating a baby to making a movie, the power to create is exhibited in a myriad of expression which are unique to each of our personalities, our physical attributes, our talents and divine gifts. Some people become professional artists: less than 2% of the population (NASERC). Everyone enjoys art of some kind. Everyone is a creator. God is Creator and Artist.

The creation of Film and Media is characteristic of God's world making artistry:

for by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth,  
visible and invisible,  
Colossians 1:16a NASB

Film and Media artists pursue "world making" in elaborately creative collaboration, fusing constituent talents into a unified story. Everything from a camera or digital effects rig designed by numerous engineers are coupled with scripts, actors, sets, editing systems, visual effects: each project as specialized as the artists involved in the project's creation, all combining to build a world that audiences perceive as believable.

Rather than one initial tremendous, inexorable, divine creative act, artisans, driven by their innate world making character, must combine efforts to create their own worlds. Lacking the miraculous power of the divine, they regularly spend vast amounts of time and money to ensure their worlds appear true. The latest *Mission Impossible* movie fused the talents of over 1,700 people, not including all the people who designed the equipment such as cameras, vehicles, edit systems: the list is extensive: and cost over USD 350 Million (IMDb) and took seven years to create (ET): a truly amazing artistic feat. Even small indie films such as Fusionflix' *Miracle on the Precipice* or Virtual Reality or TV series or digital video games or factual documentaries all combine the efforts of numerous people all working to create a digital world that is perceived as true to the story being told.

In his essay titled "On Fairy-Stories," J. R. R. Tolkien says for a narrative to work, a reader must believe that what they read is true within the secondary reality of the fictional world. He calls this inner consistency of reality, "Secondary Belief." A story must function within a certain set of parameters that cannot be violated. If there is no gravity in the world, then the ball cannot fall to the floor, otherwise, the audience rejects that world and believability suffers. Who has not seen a film and commented at one time or another, "That doesn't make any sense"? These are the moments when our Secondary Belief is fractured, making the world being built less "true" to the audience.

Storytellers are driven to create true worlds because God is a world creator and they are in the image of God. They cannot help themselves. They do not just subsist but are compelled. Their gifts and callings are irrevocable (Romans 11:29 NASB). Whether they serve Christ or not, their passion and talent are derived from some of the most fundamental aspects of God's character. Perhaps this is why storytelling has had and continues to have such a profound impact on the world: shaping thought, behavior, and even consciousness. For many, it defines their reality, often without them even knowing.

## **Believability Meets Technology**

Storytelling through Film and Media has become one of the most pervasive forces in our modern world with people now consuming nearly three hours per day of television series and films (Durrani), with an additional one and a half (1.5) hours of video gaming by the 3.5 billion gamers in the world (Duarte, "Gamers"). These numbers do not include the consumption of news, sports, or social media. Collectively individuals worldwide are consuming screen content at 6 hours and 40 minutes per day (Duarte, "Screen Time"). Comparatively, less than 10% of people in the United States read the Bible even a few minutes each day (Fulks et al. 4).

The marriage of technological advances and story has created the most pervasive and consuming and authoritative narrative delivery systems in history. A concern of losing ourselves and our values, and of morals and virtue being hijacked and eroded, or worse, substituted, from Christian principles is a justifiable concern. Storytelling has, in some respects, become intoxicating, bending the conscious will to the desires of the creators. Conversely, these same paradigms are creating the liberation of imagination like nothing ever seen in history, enhancing believability and equipping artists with the most formidable tools to provoke Christian principles, equip the saints, preach the gospel to the ends of the Earth, and prepare the bride for the glorious return of Christ.

However, the sheer velocity of technological advances in the creation of story is accelerating and evolving so fast that the Church could be unprepared to handle the impact to believers much less to take advantage of these powerful tools to advance the gospel of Christ. The propounded inevitability of a looming Divinity Singularity simplifies the Church's response: reject or embrace.

Wisdom instructs us to weigh carefully such a decision with souls potentially in jeopardy. Examining the anatomy of the Divinity Singularity reveals a pattern which has emerged through millennia that provides evidence of where the digital storytelling is headed providing a predictive model for engaging with global digital creations without actually predicting the ultimate destination, providing an opportunity to embrace rather than reject. For would it not appear self evident that if we are created in God's image with even a fraction of God's imagination coupled with technical skills, also divinely sourced, to create the sophisticated technology abounding all around us, that we were created to do so? While sin and the fallen world we sojourn through infect the divine spark, there remains hope through redemption and even a mandate to engage with the culture and not bury such resources "in the ground." (Matthew 25:25 AMP)

## **Toward Singularity**

The essence of a singularity is the inability to predict the outcome (Vinge 12-13). Identifying patterns which indicate a looming singularity, however, may be possible. Understanding the results of a singularity may not be possible beyond understanding that tremendous change is coming (Ulam 5). A technology singularity is "a hypothetical future event where technological growth becomes so rapid and profound that it becomes unpredictable and irreversible" (Mucci). Gilles Deleuze views a singularity "as moments or points of intensity that can disrupt existing structures and systems" and "are in a constant state of change and transformation" (Borum).

Before computers, Bain wrote in 1937 that technology,

"includes all tools, machines, utensils, weapons, instruments, housing, clothing, communicating and transporting devices and the skills by which we produce and use them" (860).

Broadly, "Technology means the systematic application of scientific or other organized knowledge to practical tasks" (Galbraith 12).

So when the storytellers of old decided to create depictions on cave walls, story first intersected with technology. Some of the oldest cave drawings in the world are considered to be in the Chauvet Cave in France. The image of a volcanic eruption is portrayed along with depictions of mammoths, bear, and rhinoceros. The technological breakthrough of black paint made from charcoal or manganese dioxide and red paint made from haematite (Groeneveld) empowered a verbal story to expand its reach to generations. A new discovery in Indonesia telling the story of a pig hunt has now become the oldest technologically enhanced storytelling discovered so far (Ghosh).

### *Imaginary Worlds*

Thus began the irreversible and increasingly accelerating fusion of story and technology. *The Epic of Gilgamesh* recorded in cuneiform script on clay tablets using a stylus becomes the first written story in about 1700 BC (George). Thespis steps out of the Greek chorus in Athens, Greece to play an individual character and theater is born in 534 BC (Adcock). Early Greek dramatists pushed for believability and technology pushed theater to new heights with staging, acoustics, special effects, (Taylor 2) and even scents (earth smells, flowers, various fragrances) (Krabbe).

The Romans are credited with mainlining entertainment sometimes with horrifying results. Slaves were granted their freedom when they would gouge out their own eyes on stage with a stylus. By 80 AD the Roman Colosseum became one of the most advanced technological wonders of the Ancient world with trap doors, elevator systems, platforms that could transport elephants from below ground to the stage, and hydraulic systems which could flood the performance area where sea battles were reenacted: all enhancing believability (Evans).

Biblical stories were told in stained glass as early as 1140 AD (Sowers). Art gravitates to realism in the Gothic age (VAM). Biblical Mystery Plays performed on Pageant Wagons in the late 1300s (Wilson 146) are followed by the Gutenberg Press in 1455 contributing to the European Renaissance (Cartwright). Michelangelo's astonishing Sistine Chapel was completed in 1512 (Marinazzo 44) followed by William Shakespeare's first play in 1590 (RSC). In 1600 Opera combined music, performance, and staging, transporting audiences into an even more immersive creative world (VAM).

### *Replication of the Real*

Then in 1826 a technological advance would again irreparably alter the world using light passing through glass and separating light from dark. Joseph Nicéphore Niépce, using a camera obscura, captured the image titled "View from the Window at Le Gras," in Burgundy, France (Brown). For the first time in all human history, a still image of reality was captured and photography was born.

A few years later, in 1878, Eadweard Muybridge created the first motion picture, proving for the first time in history that all four hooves of a horse leave the ground when it gallops and establishing that cameras see more than the eye sees (Shah). This new technology combined time and reality enabling storytellers to capture and express life in motion, mimicking the “real” in a form that could be experienced again and again. “Moving pictures” were initially documentary films of real people doing real things but quickly evolved to fiction stories with actors like in "*La Passion du Christ*" by Albert Kirchner in 1897 (Shepherd).

These black and white, grainy, silent, short films rapidly expanded to feature length and by 1920 Hollywood was the film capital of the world (Bordwell). Sound was added and changed motion pictures forever in 1927's, *The Jazz Singer* (Bergan 20). Experimentation with color went mainstream in *The Wizard of Oz* in 1939 (Bergan 25).

Artists were becoming more and more sophisticated world builders, using technology to make their worlds more real, more convincing, more seductive, more authoritative. Humanity across the globe embraced these stories and exhibited a ferocious appetite for more. Fiction stories could transport the imagination to the moon or the center of the Earth or Jerusalem at the time of Christ. Factual documentaries and news reels brought the rest of the world to movie screens.

A seismic shift occurs when television brings entertainment and news into people's homes. The process toward singularity accelerates dramatically as performance art, always a community function, infiltrates millions of homes on television by the 1950s (Barnouw 198). Color TV quickly followed black and white much like film (Barnouw 401): much like cave drawings. A pattern becomes more clear. As television expanded to multiple networks, then hundreds of cable channels, the psychology of humans began to change (Arceneaux).

### *Computer Age*

As visual media became a norm for daily living, the integrated circuit revolutionized the Computer Age in 1960. Gordon Moore observed in 1965, just three years before co-founding Intel, that core computer technology would double every year for the next decade. It did. Then postulated it would double every two years after 1975. The accuracy of his predictions became known as Moore's Law. However, Moore's Law was declared dead in 2016 and advances in hardware have momentarily slowed but astonishing advances like quantum, neuromorphic, or photonic computing may activate Moore's Law once again (Woods).

Computers radically changed the world as well as the ability to create worlds for storytelling. Imaging, graphics, special effects, sound, and music all rapidly entered the digital space. Color depth is now approaching that of the human eye (Vtech). Resolution has gone from Standard Definition (SD), to HD, 4k, 6k, 8k, 12k. At 16k resolution, now in use in machine vision applications (Teledyne), the resolution captured is beyond the human eye's capability to perceive (Cavazzana). Robots can now "see" beyond what

we can see by capturing the world beyond the human optical spectrum such as ultraviolet and infrared (Kapernikov).

While Film and TV shows had always been scheduled, videotapes changed the dynamic of viewing when people could watch whatever they wanted to watch whenever they wanted to watch it. Choice combined with powerful computer technology evolved through DVD to video streaming.

Choice spawned the technological paradigm of interactivity which is at the core of computing. Creative world builders used it to create video games, now a global phenomenon. Now we can be the hero of our own story, making decisions critical to the success or failure of the story. Churches have sprung up in these virtual worlds with members from around the world joining to worship and then quest together. We are no longer passive audiences but actively engaged.

Shortly after television brought the world into our homes, infant mobile phones quickly matured into "smart phones" and suddenly, Film and Media could now come with us wherever we went for the first time in history. Society was changing again. Lives were becoming less private, less introspective. Faster and faster data networks and more powerful phones have gone from 1G networks that could transfer basic audio and text data over analog networks in the 1980s to 3G networks in the 2000s with speeds of 2 Megabits per second (Mbps) (four times faster than 2G) to 4G networks rapidly increasing data speeds more than 5-fold to 12.5 Mbps (Galazzo). Now 5G networks operate at 100 times faster than 4G with data rates no longer calculated in Megabits but Gigabits with top theoretical transfer rates at 20 Gbps (Goss). These massive data rates have enabled mobile Film and Media to achieve HD quality video on a smart phone, revolutionizing mobile storytelling, compounding streaming data, and further altering media consumption behavior.

### *The Virtual World*

The merger of the most advanced storytelling technology in digital film and television has merged with the most advanced computer technology in gaming to give birth to a new apex of technological/narrative evolution called Virtual Reality and Augmented Reality. These powerful story delivery systems are further altering humanity's imagination and perhaps consciousness.

Virtual Reality exposure therapy has already proven effective at treating Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) with recent trials resulting in "100% of the sample losing their diagnosis of PTSD at post-treatment and no relapse at follow-up" (Beidel et al. 8). VR and AR has also been effective in the treatment of phobias (Albakri et al.). The "world" projected by VR/AR is so convincing that the brain is effectively re-wired into believing the information being communicated and thereby alters the user's consciousness to relieve traumatic symptoms.

A technology that alters perception of reality so effectively will become the most powerful storytelling medium in history. AR gaming such as *Pokémon Go* revolutionized the use of AR throughout the world (Wingfield). VR movies are in infancy. Both AR and VR combined are projected to be used by over 130 million people worldwide by 2027 (Kumar).

Christian church services are already being held in VR like VR MMO Church, a virtual church community in the metaverse (Berg). Interactive VR games like *David vs. Goliath* allow players to face off against Goliath (Law). While games like *Deisim* allow players to act as a deity and create their own world "offering a unique perspective on creation and power" (Myron Software).

### **The Divinity Singularity**

A Divinity Singularity of storytelling emerges as a plausible consequence of an unmistakable pattern of technological entanglement with the creation of stories. The pattern seems chaotic and spans millennia but has become more pervasive and determinate in the last 200 years since actual reality was able to be reproduced in the first photograph. According to IBM a singularity "is rooted in technological evolution, which is generally irreversible and tends toward acceleration" (Mucci). The unmistakable acceleration over the last two centuries obfuscated the same ordonnance of technological concurrence that was proceeding through history.

### *A Dark Destructive Future*

Many predict that a technological singularity will either create a utopian outcome or a dystopian outcome (Bostrom). Since by its very nature, we can not know the ultimate outcome, speculation can become highly misleading and/or confusing like in the radical simulation theory, a fascinating, but ultimately flawed, theory that our world and all we are experiencing is an elaborate computer simulation. Philosopher Nick Bostrom suggests that in some time in the past, some beings achieved the ultimate story telling achievement and built a world so realistic as to be incomprehensible. Looking at the pattern throughout history, one could understand how simulation theory could seduce creatives into a euphoric state of pride so consuming that they seek to create such convincing worlds and become the god of their world. Nothing would seem so comparable to the sin of Lucifer than this kind of seeking equality with God (Isaiah 14:14 NASB).

Indeed, all film and media efforts lack full inoculation against this ancient of all sins without redemption through Christ. Scrutiny of film and media as we approach the end of the second millennia of the Church reveals many questionable practices found within these industries as well as content that shocks the senses and seems contrary to the virtuous life we are called into by Christ. Yet, Hollywood and its ilk are continually feeding the global demand for more content, more stories, more worlds. Secular creatives, made in the image of God, with creative desires reflective of the nature of

God, can quickly fall under the influence of the evil which is fighting to corrupt the entire world as we move to singularity: the outcome of which could be devilishly harmful.

### *A Future of the Greatest Millennium of the Church*

The Church of the Third Millennium has an opportunity to lead the world toward a Divinity Singularity by embracing the God-born unction of righteous creatives and facilitate economic and technological systems that edify not only the Church but the entire world. The Church must embrace the responsibility to guide believers in lifestyle choices which reflect virtuous use and consumption of Film and Media and encourage the protection of children, who are particularly susceptible to the powerful images that are emerging. A balanced, virtuous life must be maintained. The Church must provide the requisite superintendency to cultivate mature faithful believers that can accurately parse holy scripture and create worlds that accurately reflect the fundamental truths of the faith.

The alternative is to leave film and media in the control of secular creatives. The Church must lead, not follow. The call to depart from Babylon at the end of the age is clarion,

“Come out of her, my people, so that you will not participate in her sins and receive any of her plagues;” (Revelation 18:4 NASB).

Independent faith filled producers, game designers, Virtual Reality directors and whatever the future holds must join technologists who create infrastructure that support them, whether studios or capture systems or global cloud based servers that are completely separate from the world’s secular systems such as Fusionflix’ Doxa, private cloud server, which can serve as a global exchange of redemptive media.

### **Conclusion**

A Divinity Singularity of Film and Media is coming. Artificial Intelligence (AI) is already fueling the acceleration of film and media as it approaches its own singularity that Ray Kurzweil, one of the most vocal proponents of the (AI) singularity, has famously predicted will happen by 2045 (122). Pervasive, accelerating, and rapidly evolving world building technology such as VR and AR delivered through the coming 6G networks operating at 1 Terabit per second by 2030, 100 times the speed of standard 5G, creates opportunities that have never existed before which can be harnessed for messaging and storytelling for the fulfillment of the Great Commission now. These same technologies, coupled with faithful creatives nurtured by the Church, strategically position the Church of the Third Millennium to proceed joyfully, united globally as the Divinity Singularity inevitably approaches: a point that can be embraced as wholeheartedly as the impending “new heaven and a new earth” (Revelation 21:1 NASB) when a wholly new story begins.

## Bibliography

- Adcock, Patrick. "Thespis." *EBSCO Information Services, Inc. | Www.Ebsco.Com*, EBSCO, 2023, [www.ebsco.com/research-starters/biography/thespis](http://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/biography/thespis).
- Albakri, Ghaida, et al. "Phobia exposure therapy using virtual and augmented reality: A systematic review." *Applied Sciences*, vol. 12, no. 3, 5 Feb. 2022, p. 1672, <https://doi.org/10.3390/app12031672>.
- Arceneaux, Kevin, and Martin Johnson. *Changing Minds or Changing Channels? Media Effects in the Era of Expanded Choice*. University of Chicago Press, 2012.
- Bain, Read. "Technology and state government." *American Sociological Review*, vol. 2, no. 6, Dec. 1937, p. 860.
- Barnouw, Erik. *Tube of Plenty: The Evolution of American Television*. United Kingdom, Oxford University Press, 1990.
- Berg, Stefan van der. "Beyond the Physical Walls: Virtual Reality Poised to Revolutionize Church and Mission." *Christian Daily International*, 23 July 2024, [www.christiandaily.com/news/virtual-reality-poised-to-revolutionize-church-and-mission#:~:text=Attendees%20can%20actively%20participate%20in,in%20dynamic%20and%20impactful%20ways](http://www.christiandaily.com/news/virtual-reality-poised-to-revolutionize-church-and-mission#:~:text=Attendees%20can%20actively%20participate%20in,in%20dynamic%20and%20impactful%20ways).
- Bergan, Ronald. *The Film Book: A Complete Guide to the World of Film*. DK Publishing, 2021.
- Beidel, Deborah C., et al. "Virtual-reality exposure treatment for First Responder PTSD: A pilot investigation." *Frontiers in Virtual Reality*, vol. 5, 30 July 2024, p. 8, <https://doi.org/10.3389/frvir.2024.1336523>.
- Bostrom, Nick. "Are we living in a computer simulation?" *The Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. 53, no. 211, Apr. 2003, pp. 243–255, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9213.00309>.
- Bostrom, Nick. *Ethical Issues in Advanced Artificial Intelligence*, 2003, [nickbostrom.com/ethics/ai](http://nickbostrom.com/ethics/ai).
- Bordwell, David. "1919: Hollywood's Boom Year." *The New York Times*, 5 Feb. 2019, [www.nytimes.com/2019/02/05/opinion/hollywood-movies-1919.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/05/opinion/hollywood-movies-1919.html).
- Borum, Peter. "The Notion of 'Singularity' in the Work of Gilles Deleuze." *Deleuze Studies*, vol. 11, no. 1, 2017, pp. 95–120. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/45331765>.

- Brown, Barbara. "The First Photograph: Abbey Newsletter." Nov. 2002.
- Cartwright, Mark. "The Printing Revolution in Renaissance Europe." *World History Encyclopedia*. World History Encyclopedia, 02 Nov 2020, <https://www.worldhistory.org/article/1632/the-printing-revolution-in-renaissance-europe/>.
- Cavazzana, Leonardo. "What Is the Resolution of the Human Eye?" *Shotkit*, 24 Sept. 2024, [shotkit.com/resolution-of-human-eye/](https://shotkit.com/resolution-of-human-eye/).
- Duarte, Fabio. "Alarming Average Screen Time Statistics (2025)." *Exploding Topics*, Exploding Topics, 24 Apr. 2025, [explodingtopics.com/blog/screen-time-stats](https://explodingtopics.com/blog/screen-time-stats).
- Duarte, Fabio. "How Many Gamers Are There? (New 2025 Statistics)." *Exploding Topics*, 18 July 2025, [explodingtopics.com/blog/number-of-gamers](https://explodingtopics.com/blog/number-of-gamers).
- Durrani, Ana. "Top Streaming Statistics." *Forbes*, Forbes Magazine, 15 Aug. 2024, [www.forbes.com/home-improvement/internet/streaming-stats/](https://www.forbes.com/home-improvement/internet/streaming-stats/).
- Entertainment Tonight (ET). "'Mission: Impossible -- The Final Reckoning': BTS of Tom Cruise's Most EXTREME Stunts Yet!" YouTube, 10 May 2025, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D8ZGtCcpYOE>.
- Evans, Farrell. "How the Colosseum Was Built-and Why It Was an Architectural Marvel." *History.Com*, A&E Television Networks, 28 May 2025, [www.history.com/articles/how-roman-colosseum-built](https://www.history.com/articles/how-roman-colosseum-built).
- Fulks, Jeffery, et al. American Bible Society, 2025, *State of the Bible: USA 2025*, p. 4.
- Galazzo, Richard. "Timeline from 1g to 5G: A Brief History on Cell Phones." *CENGN*, 28 July 2022, [www.cengn.ca/information-centre/innovation/timeline-from-1g-to-5g-a-brief-history-on-cell-phones/#:~:text=Although%20being%20a%20revolutionary%20technology,only%20reached%20around%202.4kbps](https://www.cengn.ca/information-centre/innovation/timeline-from-1g-to-5g-a-brief-history-on-cell-phones/#:~:text=Although%20being%20a%20revolutionary%20technology,only%20reached%20around%202.4kbps).
- Galbraith, John Kenneth. *The New Industrial State*. Houghton Mifflin, 1967.
- George, Andrew. *The Epic of Gilgamesh: The Babylonian Epic Poem and Other Texts in Akkadian and Sumerian*. Penguin Classics, 2003.
- Ghosh, Pallab. "World's Oldest Cave Art Found in Indonesia Showing Humans and Pig." *BBC News*, BBC, 3 July 2024, [www.bbc.com/news/articles/c0vewjq4dxwo](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c0vewjq4dxwo).
- Goss, Michaela. "5G vs. 4G: Learn the Key Differences between Them." *Search Networking*, TechTarget, 7 Feb. 2025, [www.techtarget.com/searchnetworking/feature/A-deep-dive-into-the-differences-](https://www.techtarget.com/searchnetworking/feature/A-deep-dive-into-the-differences-)

between-4G-and-5G-networks#:~:text=of%20mobile%20networks-  
,Latency,lower%2Dfrequency%20spectrums%20as%20well.

Groeneveld, Emma. "Chauvet Cave." *World History Encyclopedia*, World History Publishing Ltd, 12 February 2017, [www.worldhistory.org/Chauvet\\_Cave/](http://www.worldhistory.org/Chauvet_Cave/).

*Holy Bible*. New American Standard, The Lockman Foundation, 1971.

*Holy Bible*. The Amplified Bible, The Lockman Foundation, 2015.

Jacobs-Pinson, Dr. Elka. "Screen Time Statistics: How Much Are We Staring at Screens?" *Crown Counseling*, 31 Jan. 2025, [crouncounseling.com/statistics/screen-time/](http://crouncounseling.com/statistics/screen-time/).

Krabbe, Judith K. *The Metamorphoses of Apuleius*. P. Lang, 1989.

Kumar, Naveen. "Virtual Reality Statistics 2025: Users & Trends." *DemandSage*, 28 May 2025, [www.demandsage.com/virtual-reality-statistics/](http://www.demandsage.com/virtual-reality-statistics/).

Kurzweil, Ray. *The Singularity Is near: When Humans Transcend Biology*. Penguin Books, 2006.

Law, Jeannie Ortega. "Hollywood Visual Effects Artist Creates 'David vs. Goliath' VR Game 'to Tilt Scales' of Gaming." *The Christian Post*, 24 Dec. 2020, [www.christianpost.com/news/hollywood-visual-effects-artist-creates-david-vs-goliath-vr-game.html](http://www.christianpost.com/news/hollywood-visual-effects-artist-creates-david-vs-goliath-vr-game.html).

Marinazzo, Adriano, and Michelangelo Buonarroti. *Michelangelo: The Genesis of the Sistine*. Mandragora, 2025.

"Mission: Impossible - the Final Reckoning." *IMDb*, IMDb.com, 23 May 2025, [www.imdb.com/title/tt9603208/?ref\\_=ttfc\\_ov\\_bk](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt9603208/?ref_=ttfc_ov_bk).

Mucci, Tim. "What Is the Technological Singularity?" *IBM*, 17 Apr. 2025, [www.ibm.com/think/topics/technological-singularity#:~:text=The%20underlying%20assumption%20in%20the%20argumen%20t%20that,is%20eventually%20used%20to%20its%20fullest%20potential](http://www.ibm.com/think/topics/technological-singularity#:~:text=The%20underlying%20assumption%20in%20the%20argumen%20t%20that,is%20eventually%20used%20to%20its%20fullest%20potential).

Myron Software. *Deisim*, [www.deisim.com/](http://www.deisim.com/).

"National Arts Statistics and Evidence-Based Reporting Center (NASERC)." *National Endowment for the Arts*, 2025, [www.arts.gov/impact/research/NASERC](http://www.arts.gov/impact/research/NASERC).

"Opera – an Introduction · V&A." *Victoria and Albert Museum (VAM)*, 2017, [www.vam.ac.uk/articles/opera-an-](http://www.vam.ac.uk/articles/opera-an-)

introduction?srsId=AfmBOoo0lhfBML53PLofvp890lv685reB-wjbOr3H3jHrpJ1-l8sVupz.

Shah, Haleema. "How a 19th-Century Photographer Made the First 'gif' of a Galloping Horse." *Smithsonian Magazine*, 13 Dec. 2018, [www.smithsonianmag.com/smithsonian-institution/how-19th-century-photographer-first-gif-galloping-horse-180970990/](http://www.smithsonianmag.com/smithsonian-institution/how-19th-century-photographer-first-gif-galloping-horse-180970990/).

Shepherd, David. "The Gospel According to Alice Guy: A Cinematic Life of Christ by the World's First Female Director." *National Bible Society Of Ireland*, 4 Feb. 2020, [nationalbiblesocietyofireland.ie/gospel-according-to-alice-guy/#\\_ftnref4](http://nationalbiblesocietyofireland.ie/gospel-according-to-alice-guy/#_ftnref4).

Sowers, Robert W. "Stained Glass." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 4 July 2025, [www.britannica.com/art/stained-glass/Subject-matter](http://www.britannica.com/art/stained-glass/Subject-matter).

Sweet, Leonard [lensweet]. "Excerpt from 'The Imagination of Jesus.'" Facebook, 20 May 2025.

Taylor, David. *The Greek and Roman Stage*. Bristol Classical Press, 2002, p. 2.

Teledyne. "Linea HS2 16K 1mhz BSI." *Teledyne Vision Solutions*, Nov. 2024, [www.teledynevisionsolutions.com/products/linea-hs2/?model=H2-HM-16K100H-00-B&vertical=tvS-dalsa-oem&segment=tvS](http://www.teledynevisionsolutions.com/products/linea-hs2/?model=H2-HM-16K100H-00-B&vertical=tvS-dalsa-oem&segment=tvS).

"The Gothic Style – an Introduction · V&A." *Victoria and Albert Museum (VAM)*, [www.vam.ac.uk/articles/the-gothic-style-an-introduction](http://www.vam.ac.uk/articles/the-gothic-style-an-introduction).

*The Holy Bible: Consisting of the Old and New Covenants, Translated According to the Letter and Idioms of the Original Languages*. Young's Literal Translation, Translated by Robert Young, 1898.

"Timeline of Shakespeare's Plays." *Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC)*, [www.rsc.org.uk/shakespeares-plays/histories-timeline/timeline#:~:text=1580%20%2D%201590,Often%20dated%20to%201595%2D96](http://www.rsc.org.uk/shakespeares-plays/histories-timeline/timeline#:~:text=1580%20%2D%201590,Often%20dated%20to%201595%2D96).

Tolkien, J. R. R. "On Fairy-Stories" in *The Monsters and the Critics and Other Essays*, George Allen & Unwin Press, 1983, p. 109–161.

Ulam, S., Tribute to John von Neumann, *Bulletin of the American Mathematical Society*, vol 64, nr 3, part 2, May, 1958.

Vinge, Vernor. "The Coming Technological Singularity: How to Survive in the Post-Human Era." *Vision-21 Interdisciplinary Science and Engineering in the Era of Cyberspace*, NASA Conference Publication 10129, Mar. 1993, pp. 11–22.

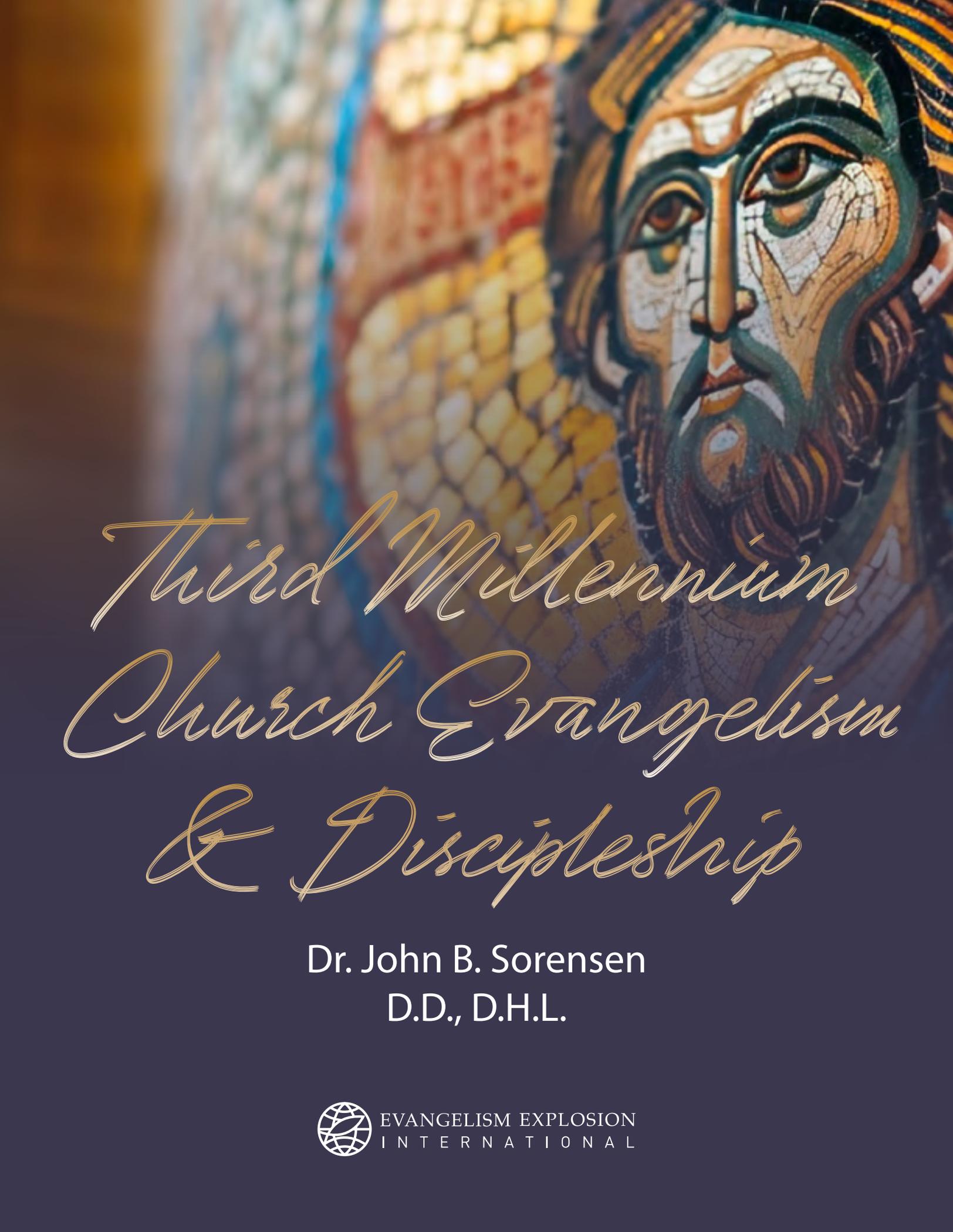
Vtech. "Color Bit Depth and Perception in Human Vision." *Medium*, High-Definition Pro, 7 Jan. 2020, [medium.com/hd-pro/color-bit-depth-and-perception-in-human-vision-ca97313722d3](https://medium.com/hd-pro/color-bit-depth-and-perception-in-human-vision-ca97313722d3).

"What Is Machine Vision?" *Medium*, Kapernikov, 21 Jan. 2022, [medium.com/kapernikov/what-is-machine-vision-kapernikov-673be620b3cf](https://medium.com/kapernikov/what-is-machine-vision-kapernikov-673be620b3cf).

Wilson, Edwin, and Alvin Goldfarb. *Living Theatre: A History of Theatre*. W.W. Norton & Company, 2018.

Wingfield, Nick, and Mike Isaac. "Pokémon Go Brings Augmented Reality to a Mass Audience - The New York Times." *The New York Times*, 12 July 2016, [www.nytimes.com/2016/07/12/technology/pokemon-go-brings-augmented-reality-to-a-mass-audience.html](https://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/12/technology/pokemon-go-brings-augmented-reality-to-a-mass-audience.html).

Woods, Audrey. "The Death of Moore's Law: What It Means and What Might Fill the Gap Going Forward." *MIT Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence Laboratory Alliances*, [cap.csail.mit.edu/death-moores-law-what-it-means-and-what-might-fill-gap-going-forward](http://cap.csail.mit.edu/death-moores-law-what-it-means-and-what-might-fill-gap-going-forward).

A detailed mosaic of a man's face, likely Jesus, with a beard and long hair, set against a background of colorful mosaic tiles. The man's face is the central focus, with a serene expression and a slight smile. The colors used in the mosaic include gold, blue, green, and brown.

*Third Millennium  
Church Evangelism  
& Discipleship*

Dr. John B. Sorensen  
D.D., D.H.L.



EVANGELISM EXPLOSION  
INTERNATIONAL

**Third Millennium Church Evangelism and Discipleship**  
**Fulfilling the Great Commission of Jesus Christ in Our Generation**  
*by Dr. John B. Sorensen, President/CEO, Evangelism Explosion International*

---

“And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’”

—Matthew 28:18–20 (NKJV)

### **The Big Idea**

The Great Commission is **not** a human invention. The call to reach everyone on earth with the gospel didn’t originate in a conference room or through a group of well-meaning believers brainstorming evangelism strategies.

This command came from none other than **Jesus Christ Himself**.

And it is only because it comes from Him that we dare to believe we can actually be part of fulfilling such a seemingly impossible task. We hope to make a lasting difference because **He said we could... He said we should... and He said we will**.

I first fully grasped how impossible the Great Commission seems during a conversation with the late Dr. D. James Kennedy, senior pastor of Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church in Fort Lauderdale, FL, and Founder and President of Evangelism Explosion International. He was my boss—and a man I deeply admired.

He told me:

*“John, the place to begin to change the world is both the easiest and the hardest task before us. It’s easy because it simply requires us to be willing to share a simple but profound message with the men and women of our generation. It’s hard because the response it requires is so all-encompassing that nothing short of a miracle of God can bring it about.”*

The place to begin changing the world is inside—the hearts and minds of men and women. Unless we can influence the motivations, desires, perspectives, and goals of the people who make up our communities, any other changes will be merely cosmetic and temporary at best. Permanent change begins on the inside.

Unless we are first of all (and continually) concentrating our efforts on changing men and women from the inside out, we are certain to fail in our long-term desire to change the world. No amount of political activism, educational reform, or legislative action will yield lasting fruit unless this foundational matter is addressed.

How do we propose to accomplish such a change?

**Third Millennium Church Evangelism and Discipleship**  
**Fulfilling the Great Commission of Jesus Christ in Our Generation**  
*by Dr. John B. Sorensen, President/CEO, Evangelism Explosion International*

---

Nearly two thousand years ago, Jesus Christ stood on a hill in Galilee and gave His disciples His plan for lasting transformation:

*“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world” (Matthew 28:19–20).*

This first and continual step—this easiest and hardest of tasks—is sharing with our neighbors and friends the story of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Without this, we will not change the world in our time.”

### **Simple, Yet Impossible?**

The Great Commission may seem simple... but it is undeniably impossible—without Christ.

And yet, no matter how we look at it, **this is Jesus’ plan**—for building His Church, glorifying the Father, and populating Heaven.

Jesus repeated this command at **explicitly** five times:

- **Matthew 28:18–20** – *“Go and make disciples of all nations...”* (spiritual multiplication embedded in the command).
- **Mark 16:15–16** – *“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.”* (emphasizing “all”).
- **Luke 24:46–49** – *Repentance and forgiveness will be preached to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.*
- **John 20:21–23** – *“As the Father has sent Me, I am sending you...”* and He gives them the Holy Spirit.
- **Acts 1:8** – *“You will receive power... and you will be my witnesses... to the ends of the earth.”*

### **But Do We Know This?**

Shockingly, many Christians haven’t even heard of the Great Commission.

A 2018 Barna study found that:

- 51% of U.S. churchgoers said they had never heard of the Great Commission.
- 49% said they had heard of it, but most couldn’t identify what it actually was.
- Only 17% could correctly state what the Great Commission is.

(Source: [Barna Group](#))

If this is the central mission Jesus left us, how have we drifted so far from knowing—let alone doing—the “main thing”?

---

**Third Millennium Church Evangelism and Discipleship**  
**Fulfilling the Great Commission of Jesus Christ in Our Generation**  
*by Dr. John B. Sorensen, President/CEO, Evangelism Explosion International*

---

## **How It Started**

Right after Jesus ascended into heaven, having given His final instructions, we have to ask:

**“What did the first Christians actually do with the Great Commission?”**

The answer? **Not much.**

Yes, there were monumental events that shaped history—like **Pentecost**—and yes, the Church grew. But this early growth came mostly through public preaching events led by apostles and key evangelists. For the most part, **ordinary Christians stayed quiet and hidden—largely out of fear.**

This hesitation and inward focus sounds uncomfortably familiar to the modern Church.

## **Growth by Addition: The Early Pattern**

In the first chapters of Acts, the Church grew through addition:

- **Acts 2:41** – *“About three thousand were added to their number that day.”*
- **Acts 2:47** – *“The Lord added to their number daily...”*
- **Acts 5:14** – *“More and more men and women believed... and were added...”*

This was powerful and exciting—but it was still **dependent on centralized events, prominent leaders** (like Peter), and **physical proximity**. The pattern looked like this:

**Preaching → Believing → Being added to the community**

We might call this **linear growth**—each event added a certain number of people to the Church.

But then **something changed**—dramatically. The Church shifted from **addition** to **multiplication**.

## **The Shift to Multiplication**

To move the Church from passive addition to active multiplication, God **shook things up**.

He used persecution to push ordinary believers out of their holy huddles.

After the **stoning of Stephen** in Acts 7, we read this in **Acts 8:1**:

*“At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.”*

Notice who was scattered: **everyone except the professional evangelists.**

---

**Third Millennium Church Evangelism and Discipleship**  
Fulfilling the Great Commission of Jesus Christ in Our Generation  
*by Dr. John B. Sorensen, President/CEO, Evangelism Explosion International*

---

And what did they do?

- **Acts 8:4** – *“Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word.”*

This doesn’t mean they stood in pulpits or gave sermons—it means they shared the Good News personally, wherever they went. This was the **beginning of “every believer a witness”**—what we now call **personal evangelism**.

### **Exponential Growth Begins**

Immediately, we begin to see a shift:

- **Acts 9:31** – *“...the church... grew in numbers.”* (The Greek implies multiplication.)
- **Acts 12:24** – *“But the word of God grew and multiplied.”*

Later, Paul would **codify the principle** of spiritual multiplication for his disciple Timothy:

- **2 Timothy 2:2** – *“Entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.”*

That verse describes **four generations**:

**Paul → Timothy → Faithful people → Others**

**For Paul, spiritual multiplication meant:**

- He regularly shared the Gospel using a **reproducible model**
- He brought Timothy alongside him to show him **how to do it**
- Timothy was expected to **train other faithful people**
- Those people would train **others still**

This replicating process—embedded in every believer—caused **exponential growth** in the early Church.

### **Key Differences Between Addition and Multiplication**

<b>Addition</b>	<b>Multiplication</b>
Centralized leaders do the work	Every believer is equipped and sent
Growth depends on events	Growth depends on relationships

---

**Third Millennium Church Evangelism and Discipleship**  
Fulfilling the Great Commission of Jesus Christ in Our Generation  
*by Dr. John B. Sorensen, President/CEO, Evangelism Explosion International*

---

<b>Addition (cont.)</b>	<b>Multiplication (cont.)</b>
Discipleship is a program	Discipleship is a lifestyle
Growth is linear	Growth is exponential
Focus on gathering	Focus on going and sending

### **Why This Shift Still Matters**

Sadly, many—perhaps **most**—modern churches still operate in **addition mode**:

- Programs attract people.
- Staff and pastors do the witnessing at church.
- Growth is slow—if it happens at all.

Some pastors even publicly state that laypeople’s role is simply to **invite others to church**, leaving the actual witnessing to the pastor.

This is classic **addition mode**.

By contrast, **missional movements**—like the early house churches, the underground Church in China, or disciple-making models like **Evangelism Explosion (EE)**—operate through **multiplication**:

- Simple, reproducible training (clear outlines)
- Rapid leadership handoff (trainees become trainers)
- Focus on spiritual generations, not just attendance

### **A Word from Billy Graham**

One day I had the privilege of speaking with the great evangelist Dr. Billy Graham. I asked him:

- Why did you write the foreword to *Evangelism Explosion*?
- Why did you support EE so widely?
- Why did you allow Dr. Sterling Huston to give so much of his time and energy to a different ministry?

He thought for a moment, then said:

*“John, if I were to fill a stadium with 100,000 people, and all 100,000 accepted Christ, and I did that every night of the year for all my life, yet I were the only one doing it, I would actually be further behind the day I died than the day I started...”*

---

**Third Millennium Church Evangelism and Discipleship**  
Fulfilling the Great Commission of Jesus Christ in Our Generation  
*by Dr. John B. Sorensen, President/CEO, Evangelism Explosion International*

---

Dr. Graham understood the value of **spiritual multiplication**. So did Dr. D. James Kennedy.

It's a principle that **has changed the world—and still can**.

In fact, it's the **only one that can**.

Because of this principle, the early Church grew **at a rate unmatched in history**.

**Church Expansion (AD 30s–300s): A Summary**

Period	Events & Trends
AD 30–70	Apostles spread the Gospel across the Roman Empire; Paul reaches Asia Minor, Greece, Rome
AD 70–100	After Jerusalem's destruction, Christianity spreads rapidly among Gentiles; house churches multiply
2nd Century	Explosive growth in North Africa, Egypt, Gaul (France), and Asia Minor; apologists emerge
3rd Century	Explosive growth in North Africa, Egypt, Gaul (France), and Asia Minor; apologists emerge
Early 4th Century	The Great Persecution under Diocletian fails; Christianity is legalized under Constantine (AD 313)

**How Did the Church Grow Without Power or Buildings?**

**A. Persecution Fueled Expansion**

Rather than retreating, believers **scattered and shared**.

As **Tertullian** (c. 200 AD) wrote:

*“The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church.”*

**B. Ordinary Believers Were the Missionaries**

Evangelism wasn't merely for apostles. It happened through everyday, ordinary Christians as they went through their day-to-day lives. People like:

- Traders
  - Soldiers
  - Women
  - Slaves
-

**Third Millennium Church Evangelism and Discipleship**  
**Fulfilling the Great Commission of Jesus Christ in Our Generation**  
*by Dr. John B. Sorensen, President/CEO, Evangelism Explosion International*

---

They shared the gospel, which for them was truly good news, with their **friends, relatives, neighbors, and coworkers**. And because of it, the Church **advanced relationally**.

### **C. House Churches Were Flexible and Reproducible**

- The gatherings were small and informal
- Easy to multiply
- Local leadership emerged naturally
- Everyone was encouraged to lead and reproduce

Because of high need, **leadership development was constant**—leaders were recruited, trained, and deployed quickly.

### **D. Leadership Was Authentic**

Thinkers like **Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, and Tertullian** gave intellectual depth to the faith.

They lived as examples—matching life to doctrine—which added credibility.

### **E. The Message Was Magnetic**

- The Gospel was genuinely good news, offering:
- Forgiveness of sin
- Relationship with the God of the universe
- Radical equality (all equal before the Cross—Galatians 3:28)
- Compassion for the poor
- Hope beyond death
- Love, integrity, and deep community

The **distinctiveness** of Christians—and the **Holy Spirit's power**—drew people in.

### **Impact of This Era**

The Church grew at such a rapid pace that by **AD 300**:

- The Roman Empire contained **6–10 million Christians** (roughly 10% of the population) Note: this is the lowest commonly agreed upon estimate. Many believe it was much higher (like 50-65%).

**Third Millennium Church Evangelism and Discipleship**  
**Fulfilling the Great Commission of Jesus Christ in Our Generation**  
*by Dr. John B. Sorensen, President/CEO, Evangelism Explosion International*

---

- Christianity had spread far beyond Judaism
- It became a **multi-ethnic, empire-wide movement**

This was extraordinary growth for a **persecuted, illegal, grassroots faith**.

- Christianity doubled every 30–35 years—without buildings, budgets, or broadcast media.

### **Why?**

Simply put, **every believer was a witness**.

And wherever they went—they **shared the gospel with everyone**.

Some even believed the **entire world could be reached by AD 500** if the pace continued.

But sadly—it didn't.

Something happened that would change everything again.

### **Christianity became legal.**

#### **Toward Toleration: Constantine and the Edicts**

##### **The Great Persecution (AD 303–311)**

Under Emperor **Diocletian**, the Roman Empire launched the harshest persecution of Christians in its history:

- Churches were destroyed
- Scriptures were burned
- Christian leaders were jailed or killed

But the plan **backfired**—the Church didn't weaken, it **grew stronger**.

##### **The Edict of Milan (AD 313)**

In a stunning reversal, Emperor **Constantine** and **Licinius** issued the **Edict of Milan**, which:

- Legalized Christianity
  - Granted freedom of religion
  - Restored property and protections to Christians
-

**Third Millennium Church Evangelism and Discipleship**  
Fulfilling the Great Commission of Jesus Christ in Our Generation  
*by Dr. John B. Sorensen, President/CEO, Evangelism Explosion International*

---

Christianity was now **legal**—and soon after, it became **avored**.

### **Constantine's Role**

Constantine did **not** make Christianity the state religion (that came later under Theodosius in **AD 380**), but he had a major impact:

- He **ended persecution**
- He **funded church buildings**
- He **gave bishops civic authority**
- He convened the **Council of Nicaea** in **AD 325**

However, this new status came at a cost.

As Christianity became state-supported, **thousands of unsaved Romans flooded the pews** of churches across the empire.

And what can non-Christians not do? **Evangelize**.

The “every believer as a witness” movement disappeared.

Evangelism became the job of **professional preachers and evangelists**, not ordinary believers. A shift had begun—one that would define much of Christian history.

### **A Word from Dr. D. James Kennedy**

Dr. D. James Kennedy, founder of **Evangelism Explosion**, once told me:

*“John, this is when the Dark Ages began. And with a few brief sparks of light throughout the centuries, we’ve continued in that state to this very day.”*

Dr. Kennedy deeply believed the Church had moved away from the biblical model of every-believer evangelism. Together, we wrote about this in **Chapter 9** of our book *Well Done*, which is available at [www.ad33.world](http://www.ad33.world). That chapter outlines Dr. Kennedy’s vision for a day when the **Church of Jesus Christ would wake up** and return to the actions and model of the first-century Church.

### **Why I Believe That Day Is Near**

I’ve shared a high-level overview of the development of evangelism and Church growth over the centuries.

---

**Third Millennium Church Evangelism and Discipleship**  
Fulfilling the Great Commission of Jesus Christ in Our Generation  
*by Dr. John B. Sorensen, President/CEO, Evangelism Explosion International*

---

The reality is: the Church largely returned to **addition-mode growth**—and stayed there for centuries. But **God is on the move. Jesus is building His Church** all over the world. And in the last century especially, the pace has accelerated:

**The Acceleration of Global Conversions**

Year	Estimated New Converts per Day (Worldwide)
1900	943
1950	4,500
1980	20,000
1994	92,000
Mid-1990s	~100,000
Late 2010s–2020s	~150,000

These are **staggering numbers**—and a clear sign that God is doing something extraordinary in our generation.

**The Ratio of Christians to the Global Population**

Dr. Ralph Winter, Chancellor of William Carey International University and past General Director of the U.S. Center for World Mission, published some astounding statistics on global Church growth:

- **AD 100:** 1 Christian for every **360** people on Earth
- **1900:** 1 Christian for every **21** people
- **2010:** 1 Christian for every **7.3** people

This is **spiritual multiplication** at a scale the early Church would recognize—millions of believers reaching millions more.

**An Evangelism Explosion**

In **1960**, Dr. D. James Kennedy stood before about fifteen faithful members of his congregation in a Fort Lauderdale schoolroom during a Sunday evening service.

He opened his Bible and read God’s promise to the prophet:

*“Call unto Me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not”* (Jeremiah 33:3).

---

**Third Millennium Church Evangelism and Discipleship**  
Fulfilling the Great Commission of Jesus Christ in Our Generation  
*by Dr. John B. Sorensen, President/CEO, Evangelism Explosion International*

---

Then he closed the Bible, looked out over the small group, and, full of faith and enthusiasm, declared:

***“You know what? I believe we can change the world!”***

### **A Vision Without Borders**

Years later, an unbelieving—and rather sarcastic—secular reporter said to Dr. Kennedy:

*“It sounds to me like you aim to Christianize America!”*

Dr. Kennedy smiled and replied:

*“No sir, I’m not aiming to Christianize America. I’m aiming to Christianize the world.”*

### **EE’s Vision Statement**

Evangelism Explosion’s vision statement captures this global calling:

***“Every nation equipping every people group and every age group to witness to every person.”***

Our goal is that **every person on earth** will have the opportunity to hear the Good News of Jesus Christ. We believe the **Church** is the primary vehicle God will use to accomplish this.

In short:

- Our vision is to be a **catalyst** for Christ’s Church.
- We want to see the Church become a **witnessing, multiplying movement**.

### **The End Picture**

What do we hope the world will look like when we’re done?

We believe the vision in **Revelation 7:9–10** will one day be reality:

*“After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, saying, ‘Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!’”*

This is a **wonderful promise**—and the amazing truth is that **we get to be part of bringing it to pass**.

---

### **Where Does EE Fit In Today?**

The late Dr. Steve Douglass, past President of Campus Crusade, once shared with me his belief that it is **God Who gives every organization its purpose.**

And that this **calling does not change.**

We can choose to walk away from our calling—but only **at our own peril.**

I passionately agree with him. For **Evangelism Explosion International** to be all God intends it to be—and for each of us who are part of it—we must **hold fast to our original calling.**

### **Our Original Calling**

What was EE's original calling?

The answer is found in the book Evangelism Explosion itself. From the beginning, several **Biblical principles** guided Dr. Kennedy's actions—and have guided this ministry since 1962:

- **Every Christian is to be a witness**
- **Every Christian must be equipped to witness**
- **On-the-job training is essential**
- **Training soul-winners is most important**

These principles have shaped our DNA for over **60 years**—and they will carry us into the future.

### **The Great Commission Requires Everyone**

I realize this section may sound “EE-centric.” Let me quickly say—many other organizations were raised up by God in the same era with a similar focus:

**Campus Crusade (Cru), The Navigators, InterVarsity, and others.**

The reason I focus here on EE is simple: this is what I know.

- I was saved through EE.
- I was taught to witness through EE.
- I was taught to train others through EE.
- I was led into full-time ministry through EE.

And now, I serve as its President and CEO.

---

**Third Millennium Church Evangelism and Discipleship**  
Fulfilling the Great Commission of Jesus Christ in Our Generation  
*by Dr. John B. Sorensen, President/CEO, Evangelism Explosion International*

---

**EE also serves as a barometer** for the broader changes happening in gospel ministry today.

### **From a Small Beginning to a Global Movement**

Over the past 60+ years, we've seen massive growth in the ministry of Evangelism Explosion:

- Started as a small church plant in Fort Lauderdale, FL
- Spread to become the **first Christian ministry active in every nation** on earth
- In the early years: hundreds of professions of faith annually
- Today: more than **20 million professions of faith each year**
- Leadership Training Clinics: from just a few per year to over **2,000 annually in 120+ nations**
- Leaders trained annually: from dozens to over **one million children, teens, and adults in 120+ languages and 400+ denominations**

The scope is massive, but the mission is still simple—**equip believers to multiply.**

### **Something New**

In the past seven years, we've seen a **dramatic and unexpected shift.**

If you had asked an EE trainer in the 1980s what percentage of people they approached were open to a gospel conversation, the answer would have been:

***“About 10%.”***

But in January 2019, during a training in Oklahoma City, we went out for our non-negotiable On-the-Job Training (OJT) and tallied the results:

***40% of the people we approached were open to having a gospel conversation.***

We assumed it might be a temporary spike—like the days after 9/11—but it didn't fade. In fact, it's grown.

Today:

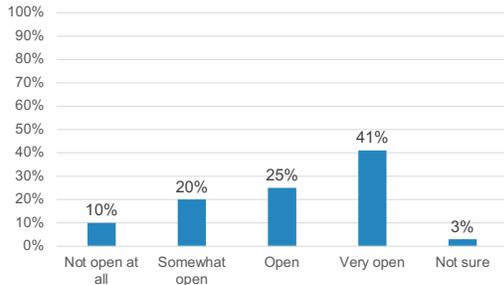
***Over 60% of people we approach say yes to talking about Jesus.***

That's 6 out of 10 people saying yes to the most important conversation in eternity.

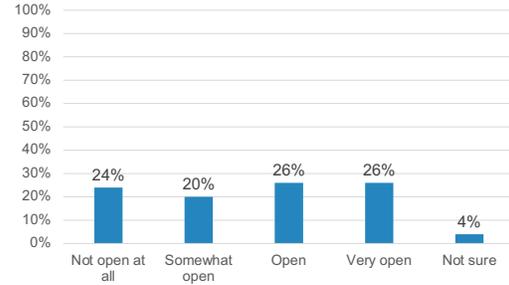
**Third Millennium Church Evangelism and Discipleship**  
Fulfilling the Great Commission of Jesus Christ in Our Generation  
by Dr. John B. Sorensen, President/CEO, Evangelism Explosion International

---

**66% say they are open or very open to having a conversation about faith with a friend**



**51% say they are open or very open to having a conversation about faith with a stranger**



### Confirmed by Research

A few years ago, we commissioned **Lifeway Research** to study this shift, and they confirmed it's real—not only in certain cities but nationwide. You can read the full study at [www.ad33.world](http://www.ad33.world).

**And this openness isn't just in the United States—it's global.**

### SWOT of the Nations

We recently conducted a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) of 89 mature EE national ministries across:

- Africa
- Asia
- Eurasia
- Europe
- Latin America
- North America
- Oceania

### Criteria for Inclusion

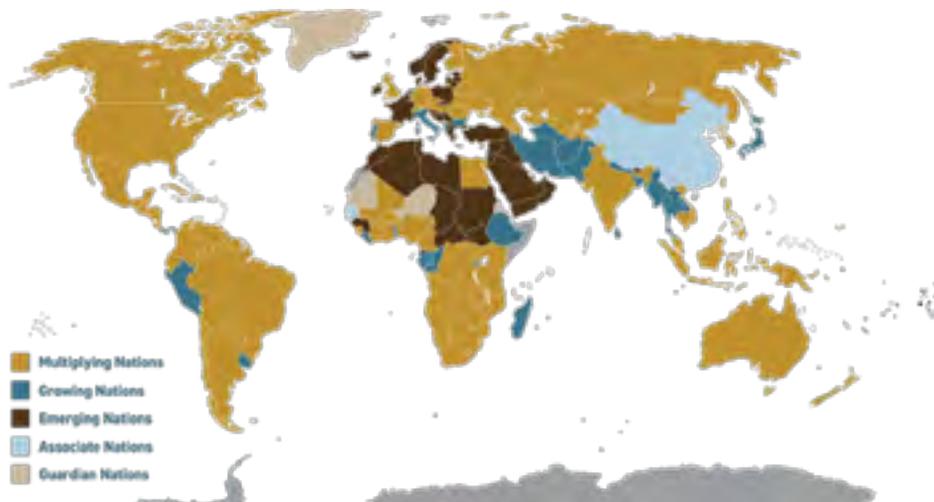
To be part of this study, each national ministry had to have:

- A signed EE covenant
  - Functional Board of Directors
-

**Third Millennium Church Evangelism and Discipleship**  
**Fulfilling the Great Commission of Jesus Christ in Our Generation**  
*by Dr. John B. Sorensen, President/CEO, Evangelism Explosion International*

---

- National Director
- Paid field staff (full- or part-time)
- Self-support (annual budget)
- Annual Action Plan
- Measurable results
- EE materials in their language
- Significant interdenominational representation
- Nationwide multiplication and implementation strategy
- Ability to assist other nations
- Official legal registration



### **What We Found**

It was exciting to see the strengths of these nations listed and celebrated:

- the number of trainers available
  - wide interdenominational cooperation
  - the overall number of Christians within the nation
  - Biblical engagement on the rise
  - And key partnerships
-

**Third Millennium Church Evangelism and Discipleship**  
**Fulfilling the Great Commission of Jesus Christ in Our Generation**  
*by Dr. John B. Sorensen, President/CEO, Evangelism Explosion International*

---

**The weaknesses and threats** would not surprise you (lack of finances and resources, danger from those that threaten Christians, and the opposite of what was listed as strengths).

What I was the most surprised, and encouraged by, was what was listed in the area of opportunity:

- The openness of people to the gospel (the same or greater than what we're experiencing in the USA)
- The response rate to the gospel (what was typically 25-30% has now become over 50%)
- And the opportunities that are currently open in many nations

### **A Moment Like No Other**

All of this points to one conclusion:

***We have an opportunity for the gospel today like perhaps never before in history.***

The question is—**will we seize it?**

### **The Bottom Line**

Every indication we see tells us we are in the midst of the **greatest revival the world has ever known.**

Sadly, many believers are unaware—because they remain **inside the walls** of their church buildings.

### **What Will It Take to Seize This Moment?**

I believe with all my heart that this is our **opportunity** to return to **multiplication mode**—by activating **every Christian as a witness**, just like in the first century.

At the opening session of **Jerusalem Council 2**, our focus is “**New Maps for a New Millennium.**” We recognize we **cannot** reach today's and tomorrow's world using **yesterday's maps.**

But here's the truth: what we're proposing isn't a *new* map at all.

It's an **old map**—Jesus' map from **Acts 1:8.**

It's the same map the early Church followed for its first 300 years: **every believer a witness.**

### **Five “Coordinates” for the Mission Map**

These are not optional strategies—they are **essential coordinates** for a multiplying, global, Spirit-led movement.

### **Disciple-Making: The New Compass**

To accomplish the Great Commission, we must train **every believer** to make disciples who make disciples.

We must provide **clear, simple, and complete** multiplication tools—like Evangelism Explosion—that anyone can use.

### **Every Believer a Missionary: The New Traveler**

Ordinary believers must live **missionally** in their everyday environments—**at work, at home, and in their communities**.

Every believer must be **an active witness**.

### **Unreached Peoples: The Uncharted Lands**

Unreached people are everywhere—both across the globe and across the street.

We must:

- Train believers to see the mission fields **in their circles of influence**
- Adopt unreached people groups for **prayer, giving, and going**
- Intentionally reach the lost around us

### **Prayer, Fasting, and the Holy Spirit: The Spiritual GPS**

We must be **continually filled** with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18), daily surrendering to His direction.

We must saturate everything in **prayer and fasting**—launching sustained rhythms that keep us aligned with God's heart.

### **Simple Church Groups: The Portable Basecamp**

Every believer should be part of, or start, **life groups, house churches, or micro-gatherings** that:

- Multiply easily
  - Encourage outreach
  - Create accountability for fulfilling the Great Commission
-

**Third Millennium Church Evangelism and Discipleship**  
**Fulfilling the Great Commission of Jesus Christ in Our Generation**  
*by Dr. John B. Sorensen, President/CEO, Evangelism Explosion International*

---

### **The “New” Old Map**

You’ve been given a map—but it’s not just for **admiring**.

It’s for **following**.

So I ask:

- What route will you take?
- What territory will you claim for the Kingdom?
- Will you be a map-maker, trailblazer, and disciple multiplier?

If we do, we **can** change the world.

If we return to the “**every believer a witness**” model, we could see what the early Church saw:

***An 11.58% growth rate per year—enough to complete the Great Commission by 2044.***

*(See my conversation with ChatGPT included in the notes for details.)*

### **Your Next Step**

May God grant you grace as you:

- Plot your next step on the map (using the handout I’ve provided)
- Adopt a new route—a person, group, or place
- Join a movement of map-makers

My friend—**may God bless you as you do.**

The expansion of the Christian church from **Acts 8:1,4** — when persecution scattered the believers — to the **Edicts of Toleration under Constantine** (~AD 313–324) marks one of the most remarkable growth movements in history. It spans about **250 years** of mostly underground, decentralized, yet unstoppable momentum.

### Acts 8:1,4 – The Launch Point

*“On that day a great persecution broke out... Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went.”*

This verse is key. Persecution **decentralized** the church and **activated ordinary believers** as missionaries. It shattered the Jerusalem-centric model and fulfilled Jesus’ promise in Acts 1:8 — “...to the ends of the earth.”

### 1. Church Expansion (AD 30s – 300s): A Summary

Period	Key Events & Trends
AD 30–70	Apostles and early disciples take the gospel throughout the Roman Empire. Paul’s journeys reach Asia Minor, Greece, and Rome.
AD 70–100	After the destruction of Jerusalem (AD 70), Christianity spreads rapidly among Gentiles. House churches multiply.
2nd Century (100s)	Explosive growth in North Africa, Egypt, Gaul (France), Asia Minor, and beyond. Apologists defend the faith amid sporadic persecution.
3rd Century (200s)	Despite severe Roman persecution, Christian numbers grow. Networks of house churches and bishops begin to emerge.
Early 4th Century (300–313)	Great Persecution under Diocletian fails to stop growth. By 313, Constantine issues the <b>Edict of Milan</b> , legalizing Christianity.

---

## 2. How Did the Church Expand So Rapidly Without Power or Buildings?

### A. Persecution Fueled Expansion

- Christians didn't stop under pressure — they scattered and shared. Tertullian (c. 200 AD): *"The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church."*

### B. Ordinary Believers Were Missionaries

- Most evangelism happened through **non-apostles**: traders, soldiers, women, slaves.
- The gospel spread through **relational networks**, not centralized structures.

### C. House Churches Were Flexible and Reproducible

- Small, informal, easy to multiply — much like the **early Acts model**.

Leaders emerged locally; gatherings were intimate and resilient.

- Thinkers like **Justin Martyr**, **Irenaeus**, and **Tertullian** responded to attacks and clarified doctrine, giving Christianity intellectual credibility.

### E. The Message Was Counter-Cultural and Magnetic

Christianity offered radical equality (Gal. 3:28), community, care for the poor, and hope beyond death. The moral integrity and love of Christians attracted attention.

## 3. Toward Toleration: Constantine and the Edicts

### The Great Persecution (AD 303–311)

- Emperor **Diocletian** launched the harshest persecution yet — churches destroyed, Scriptures burned, leaders jailed.
- It backfired — the church **grew stronger**, not weaker.

### The Edict of Milan (AD 313)

- Issued by **Constantine and Licinius**, it granted **freedom of religion** to Christians and returned confiscated property.

Christianity became legal — and soon after, favored.

- He did not make Christianity the state religion (that came later, under Theodosius in 380), but he **ended persecution** and **elevated** the Church.

He funded church buildings, gave bishops civic authority, and called the Council of Nicaea (325).

---

## Third Millennium Church Evangelism and Discipleship

# SUPPORTING NOTES

---

### Impact of This Era

By AD 300:

- There were likely **6–10 million Christians** in the Roman Empire (roughly 10% of the population).  
**NOTE:** I've heard wildly different views on this. I believe it to be much higher. Dr. Kennedy always said it was 65%! For the sake of discussion, I've included the lowest number that I've heard, and one supported by even non-Christian historians)
- Even so, Christianity had **outgrown Judaism** and become a multi-ethnic, empire-wide movement.
- The Church transitioned from **marginalized minority** to a **major cultural force** — which brought both opportunities and challenges.
- That's **extraordinary** for a persecuted, illegal, grassroots movement.
- It means Christianity **doubled in size roughly every 30–35 years**, without state support, media, or buildings (note discussion on next page)
- The movement's **moral appeal, relational spread, and resilience under pressure** are unmatched.

### Scenario: Billy Graham's Mass Evangelism

He fills a stadium with 100,000 people per night. All 100,000 accept Christ (an extremely optimistic assumption). He does this every night for his entire life. **Let's calculate how many people he could reach:**

- 1 year = 365 days →  $100,000 \times 365 = 36.5$  million people/year

**Let's assume he does this for 50 years (a generous lifetime of consistent nightly events):**

$36.5$  million/year  $\times$  50 years = 1.825 billion people

### Compare with Global Population Growth

When Billy Graham was born in 1918, the world population was about 1.8 billion. When he died in 2018, it was 7.6 billion.

That means the world added nearly 6 billion people during his lifetime.

Currently, the global population grows by about 80 million people per year (net).

## Third Millennium Church Evangelism and Discipleship

### SUPPORTING NOTES

---

So even if one person were reaching 36.5 million per year, and everyone accepted Christ, it would not keep pace with population growth.

In fact:

Population grows at ~80 million/year. He “adds” 36.5 million/year. He’s falling behind by ~43.5 million people per year.

#### **Conclusion**

Billy Graham’s quote is numerically sound and makes a key point:

Mass evangelism alone (addition) cannot keep up with global population growth. Only multiplication—disciples making disciples—can.

That’s why discipleship and training others to reach others is the core strategy for true long-term spiritual movement.

#### **Early Church and Post-Constantine Reflections**

##### **1. Eusebius of Caesarea** (*writing after Constantine’s rise*)

*“The Emperor himself, as a personal servant of God, leads the whole empire in the way of truth and of righteousness.” — Life of Constantine, Book IV, Ch. 20*

Eusebius saw the empire itself as a vehicle for spreading Christianity. But this marks the beginning of the top-down model—growth by decree, not discipleship.

##### **2. Tertullian (before Constantine, ~AD 197)**

*“We are but of yesterday, and we have filled every place among you—cities, islands, fortresses, towns, marketplaces, the very camp, tribes, companies, palace, senate, forum—we have left nothing to you but the temples of your gods.” — Apology, Ch. 37*

This reflects the organic, grassroots explosion of early Christianity—before institutionalization.

##### **3. Roland Allen (20th-century missionary thinker)**

*“The moment the Church ceased to be a missionary society, she began to decline.” — Missionary Methods: St. Paul’s or Ours?*

---

Allen argued that the Pauline model of church planting and local discipleship was abandoned once Christianity became institutional.

**4. Michael Green (*Evangelism in the Early Church*)**

*“The enthusiastic laity were largely responsible for the rapid spread of Christianity. Evangelism was not the preserve of the apostles or of the clergy.”*

This quote emphasizes that it was ordinary believers, not clergy or emperors, who fueled the early movement.

**5. David Bosch (*Transforming Mission*)**

*“When Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire, mission changed from a dynamic movement to a staid institution.”*

Bosch’s observation highlights the loss of reproducing discipleship in favor of political and cultural expansion.

**From Multiplication to Addition**

**If we put it simply:**

<b>Era</b>	<b>Growth Model</b>	<b>Method</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
30–313 AD	Multiplication	Disciples making disciples	Rapid movement under persecution
Post-313 AD	Addition (institutional)	Top-down, mass conversion	Expansion by empire, not reproduction

**Chat with ChatGPT:**

**Q:** If the Church started with 11 believers in ad 33, and had 10 million Christians in ad 313, what percentage of growth is that?

Third Millennium Church Evangelism and Discipleship  
**SUPPORTING NOTES**

---

**ChatGPT said:**

To calculate the total **percentage growth** of the Church from 11 believers in AD 33 to 10,000,000 believers in AD 313, follow this formula:

$$\text{Percentage Growth} = \left( \frac{\text{Final} - \text{Initial}}{\text{Initial}} \right) \times 100 \quad \text{Percentage Growth} = \left( \frac{\text{Final} - \text{Initial}}{\text{Initial}} \right) \times 100$$

Where:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Initial} &= 11 & \text{Final} &= 10,000,000 \\ \text{Percentage Growth} &= \left( \frac{10,000,000 - 11}{11} \right) \times 100 = \left( \frac{9,999,989}{11} \right) \times 100 = 909,089 \times 100 = 90,908,090\% \\ \text{Percentage Growth} &= \left( \frac{10,000,000 - 11}{11} \right) \times 100 = \left( \frac{9,999,989}{11} \right) \times 100 = 909,089 \times 100 = 90,908,090\% \end{aligned}$$

**Answer:** The Church grew by approximately **90,908,090%** from AD 33 to AD 313.

To calculate the **average annual growth rate** over 280 years (from AD 33 to AD 313), we use the **Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR)** formula:

$$\text{CAGR} = \left( \frac{\text{Final}}{\text{Initial}} \right)^{\frac{1}{t-1}} \quad \text{CAGR} = \left( \frac{\text{Final}}{\text{Initial}} \right)^{\frac{1}{t-1}}$$

Where:

- Final = 10,000,000 Initial = 11 t = 313 - 33 = 280 t = 313 - 33 = 280 years

$$\text{CAGR} = \left( \frac{10,000,000}{11} \right)^{\frac{1}{280-1}} = (909,090.909)^{\frac{1}{280-1}} \quad \text{CAGR} = \left( \frac{10,000,000}{11} \right)^{\frac{1}{280-1}}$$

Using a calculator:

$$\text{CAGR} \approx 1.1158 - 1 = 0.1158 \text{ or } 11.58\% \quad \text{CAGR} \approx 1.1158 - 1 = 0.1158 \text{ or } 11.58\%$$

**Final Answer:**

The average annual growth rate of the Church from AD 33 to AD 313 was approximately **11.58% per year**.

**Q:** Assuming there are 1 billion Evangelical Christians today, and you applied an 11.58% growth rate to the church, how large would it be in 2050?

Third Millennium Church Evangelism and Discipleship  
SUPPORTING NOTES

---

**ChatGPT said:**

To project the number of Evangelical Christians in **2050** using an **11.58% annual growth rate**, we use the **future value formula** for compound growth:

$$\text{Future Value} = \text{Present Value} \times (1+r)^t$$

Where:

- Present Value = 1,000,000,000 (1 billion)  $r=0.1158$  ( $r=0.1158$  (11.58% growth rate))  
 $t=2050-2025=25$  ( $t=2050-2025=25$  years)

**Step-by-step:**

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Future Value} &= 1,000,000,000 \times (1.1158)^{25} \\ \text{Future Value} &= 1,000,000,000 \times (1.1158)^{25} \approx 15.02 \times 1,000,000,000 \\ \text{Future Value} &\approx 1,000,000,000 \times 15.02 = 15,020,000,000 \end{aligned}$$

**Final Answer:**

If the Church grows at **11.58% annually**, the number of Evangelical Christians in **2050** would be approximately **15 billion** — which is more than the projected total global population.

**Q:** Ok then, let's assume 1 billion Evangelical Christians, and a growth rate of 11.58%, how long until the growth equals the number of people on earth? What year would that be?

**ChatGPT said:**

Great question — let's calculate **how long it would take** for 1 billion Evangelical Christians growing at **11.58% per year** to equal the **entire global population**.

We'll use the **compound growth formula** again:

$$\text{Future Value} = \text{Present Value} \times (1+r)^t$$

We want to solve for **t** when:

- Future Value = World population (say **8 billion** today for simplicity — but we'll mention other thresholds too)
-

## Third Millennium Church Evangelism and Discipleship

### SUPPORTING NOTES

---

Present Value = 1,000,000,000  $r=0.1158$   $r=0.1158$

#### Step 1: Solve for $t$

$$8,000,000,000 = 1,000,000,000 \times (1.1158)^t \quad 8,000,000,000 = 1,000,000,000 \times (1.1158)^t$$

Divide both sides:

$$8 = (1.1158)^t \quad 8 = (1.1158)^t$$

Take the natural logarithm of both sides:

$$\ln(8) = t \times \ln(1.1158) \quad \ln(8) = t \times \ln(1.1158) \quad t = \frac{\ln(8)}{\ln(1.1158)} = \frac{2.0794}{0.1097} \approx 18.95 \text{ years} \quad t = \frac{\ln(8)}{\ln(1.1158)} = \frac{2.0794}{0.1097} \approx 18.95 \text{ years}$$

#### Final Answer:

At **11.58% annual growth**, the number of Evangelical Christians would reach **8 billion people in about 19 years**, or by **the year 2044**.

### The Shift from Addition to Multiplication in the Early Church

#### 1. Addition: The Early Growth Pattern

In the earliest chapters of the book of Acts, the church grew by **addition**:

- **Acts 2:41** – “About three thousand were added to their number that day.”
- **Acts 2:47** – “The Lord added to their number daily...”
- **Acts 5:14** – “More and more men and women believed... and were added...”

This was powerful and encouraging growth—but it was still dependent on central events, key leaders (like Peter), and physical proximity. It looked like:

Preaching → Believing → Being added to the community.

This is **linear growth**: more people are added as apostles and evangelists preach.

#### 2. Multiplication: A Missional Breakthrough

Soon after, we begin to see **multiplication** rather than just addition:

---

## SUPPORTING NOTES

---

- **Acts 6:7** – “The word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly...” (“increased rapidly” here in Greek implies **multiplication**).
- **Acts 9:31** – “...the church... grew in numbers.” (again, exponential sense)
- **2 Timothy 2:2** – Paul to Timothy: “Entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.” That’s **four generations**: Paul → Timothy → faithful men → others.

Multiplication means:

- Every believer is a disciple-maker. Every disciple becomes a discipler. Leadership and evangelism aren’t centralized—they’re **reproducible**.

This is **exponential growth**—a DNA of replication embedded in each believer.

### Key Differences

<b>Addition</b>	<b>Multiplication</b>
Centralized leaders do the work	Every believer is equipped and sent
Growth depends on events	Growth depends on relationships
Discipleship is a program	Discipleship is a lifestyle
Growth is linear	Growth is exponential
Focus on gathering	Focus on going and sending

### Why the Shift Matters Today

In modern churches, many ministries still function in “addition mode”: programs attract people, staff do the ministry, and the church grows slowly.

But **missional movements**—like early house churches, underground churches in China, or disciple-making movements—aim for **multiplication**:

Simple, reproducible training with outline for reproduction  
Leadership personally models expectations  
A high level emphasis is placed on the importance of this training  
Spiritual multiplication is a focus strategy  
**This shift is the key to fulfilling the Great Commission.**

**High level history of the growth of Christianity since Christ's ascension:**

The period from **AD 313 (Edict of Milan)** to the **Reformation (beginning around 1517)** is a pivotal era in Church history — nearly 1,200 years of dramatic growth, institutionalization, cultural influence, and eventual fragmentation. Here's a high-level summary of the Church's growth and development during that time:

**1. The Edict of Milan (313 AD): The Church Legalized**

- Emperor **Constantine** issued the Edict of Milan, granting legal status to Christianity in the Roman Empire.
- This ended centuries of persecution and opened the door for **rapid growth and social acceptance**.
- Christianity quickly became **entwined with political power**.

**2. Constantine and the Rise of Christendom**

- Constantine supported the Church with resources and initiated the construction of major churches (like **St. Peter's Basilica**).
- Christianity became the **official religion** of the Roman Empire under Emperor Theodosius I in **AD 380** (Edict of Thessalonica).

Pagan temples were closed, and the Church began shaping education, law, and culture across Europe.

**3. Church Growth through Political and Cultural Integration**

- With imperial backing, the Church expanded rapidly throughout the Roman world and beyond. Missionaries spread the faith among **Germanic, Celtic, and Slavic** peoples (e.g., St. Patrick in Ireland, Cyril and Methodius in Slavic lands).
- The Church became **central to medieval society**: overseeing education, health care, and land.

**4. Monastic Movements & Evangelism**

- Monasteries (like those founded by **Benedict of Nursia** in the 6th century) preserved Scripture, educated clergy, and became centers of **missionary activity**.
- Monks played a key role in **evangelizing Europe**, especially after the fall of the Western Roman Empire in 476.

### 5. The Rise of the Papacy and Christendom (500–1300)

- The Bishop of Rome gradually gained primacy, and by the 11th century, the **Pope** claimed authority over all Christians.
- The **Holy Roman Empire** (from 800 AD) fused Church and State, with Popes crowning kings and asserting influence over monarchs.
- The Church wielded vast wealth and power — owning land, collecting tithes, and even leading armies in the **Crusades** (1096–1291).

### 6. Internal Corruption and Calls for Reform

- By the late Middle Ages, the institutional Church had become **wealthy, hierarchical, and often corrupt** (e.g., indulgences, simony, political intrigue).
- Reformers like **John Wycliffe** (England, 1300s) and **Jan Hus** (Bohemia, early 1400s) called for Scripture-based renewal.

These movements were often suppressed, but they laid the groundwork for broader change.

### 7. Toward the Reformation (Late 1400s – 1517)

- The invention of the **printing press (1450s)** allowed for broader dissemination of Scripture and reform ideas.
- Growing frustration with Church abuses (e.g., the sale of indulgences) spread across Europe. In **1517, Martin Luther** nailed his **95 Theses** to the church door in Wittenberg, launching the **Protestant Reformation** — a spiritual and cultural revolution.

### Church Growth Summary (313–1517):

- Christianity spread from a persecuted minority to become the **dominant religion of Europe and parts of the Middle East and North Africa**.
- Estimated Christian population: ~10 million in AD 313~50–100 million by the 1500s (exact numbers vary widely due to lack of records) Growth was not only in numbers but in **geographic spread**, institutional depth, and cultural influence.

Following the Reformation (16th century), the Church saw several significant movements — often Spirit-led and grassroots — that reignited the global missionary vision. These movements often combined deep theology, passion for the unreached, and radical obedience. Here's a breakdown of the most influential ones:

---

## Third Millennium Church Evangelism and Discipleship

### SUPPORTING NOTES

---

#### Significant Missionary Movements After the Reformation

##### 1. Pietist Movement (late 1600s – 1700s)

Key Figure: Philipp Jakob Spener (Germany) Legacy: Renewed heart-based, lived-out Christianity within Lutheranism.

Emphasized personal conversion, Bible study, and holiness. Birthed the University of Halle as a missions training hub. Sent missionaries to India and beyond (e.g., Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg, 1706). Greatly influenced the Moravians (see next).

##### 2. Moravian Movement (1700s)

Key Figure: Count Nicolaus Zinzendorf Origin: Herrnhut, Saxony (Germany)

Formed a 24/7 prayer chain that lasted over 100 years. Sent out the first modern Protestant missionaries (e.g., to the Caribbean, Greenland, Africa). Famous for their radical obedience — some sold themselves into slavery to reach slaves. Influenced John Wesley and the later evangelical revivals.

*Motto: “May the Lamb that was slain receive the reward of His suffering.”*

##### 3. Evangelical Revival / Great Awakening (1730s–1800s)

Key Figures: John Wesley, George Whitefield, Jonathan Edwards Context: UK and American colonies

Rekindled passion for holiness, evangelism, and preaching. Created a mobilized lay movement that crossed class and racial boundaries. Sparked new missionary societies (especially in Britain).

##### 4. The Modern Missionary Movement (1790s–1900)

Key Figure: William Carey (England) Book: *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians...* (1792)

Often called the Father of Modern Missions. Helped form the Baptist Missionary Society. Went to India, translated the Bible, and inspired global mission movements.

##### Key Outcomes:

Explosion of mission agencies: London Missionary Society, Church Missionary Society, etc. Growth of “voluntary societies” independent of state churches. Missions framed as a moral and spiritual duty of all believers.

##### 5. Student Volunteer Movement (SVM) (1886–1920s)

Key Figures: John R. Mott, Robert Wilder Motto: *“The evangelization of the world in this generation.”*

Born out of college revivals and the Mount Hermon 100 (Dwight Moody’s student conference). Mobilized over 20,000 students to commit to overseas missions. Spread across the U.S., Europe, and parts of Asia. Laid the foundation for modern student missions (e.g., InterVarsity, Cru).

---

SUPPORTING NOTES

**6. Faith Mission Movement (1800s–1900s)**

Key Figures: Hudson Taylor (China Inland Mission), George Müller  
 Belief: Rely solely on God’s provision — no fundraising or salaries.

Hudson Taylor took missions inland, not just to port cities. Pioneered contextualization: wore Chinese dress, learned the language deeply. Inspired new models of holistic, incarnational mission.

**Pentecostal and Charismatic Missions (1900s–Present)**

Roots: Azusa Street Revival (1906) Emphasis: Empowerment by the Holy Spirit for witness (Acts 1:8).

Spread rapidly in Africa, Latin America, and Asia. Prioritized healing, deliverance, and indigenous leadership. Today, Pentecostal/Charismatic churches are leading many of the fastest-growing mission movements globally.

**Summary Table**

<b>Movement</b>	<b>Century</b>	<b>Focus</b>	<b>Impact</b>
Pietists	1600s–1700s	Heart renewal	Launched modern missions
Moravians	1700s	Prayer + sacrifice	First Protestant global missionaries
Great Awakening	1700s	Evangelism + revival	Mobilized lay people
Modern Missions	1790s+	Global reach	Systematic missionary agencies
Student Movement	1886+	Young adults	20,000+ committed to missions
Faith Missions	1800s+	Total dependence on God	Pioneered deep fieldwork
Pentecostal	1900s+	Spirit-empowered missions	Fastest-growing global movement

SUPPORTING NOTES

**Key Notes on the Expansion of the Gospel From the book *Well Done*:**

**On the movement of Global Christianity:** (Note paper by Todd M. Johnson that further elaborates this topic.) Tremendous change has taken place over the past century as a result of the Gospel traveling around the world:

In 1900, Christians (of all varieties) in the Third-World countries numbered about 87 million (15.6%), while Western countries reported over 470 million (84.4%). By 1980, that figure had radically changed to 631.8 million (out of 1.433 billion Christians) in the Third-World (44.1%). The Western world slipped to 546.6 million (38.2%), while the Communist world grew to 254.1 million (17.7%). By that point, nearly half of the world's Christians now lived in the Third-World. By the year 2000, 983.9 millions Christians (out of 2.01 billion) lived in the Third-World (48.7%) while 592.1 million (29.3%) lived in the Western world. The Communist world grew to 443.8 million (22%). So Christianity is no longer a Western religion. Christianity is no longer a white man's religion. It is a world religion. During the 20th century, Christianity has become the most extensive and universal religion in history. **On the expansion and acceleration of the Gospel worldwide:**

In 1900 there were 943 converts to Christ per day worldwide. That increased to 4,500 by 1950. By 1980 that grew with incredible speed to 20,000. By the end of 1994, that figure had grown to 92,000. It reached about 100,000 per day worldwide during the mid-1990s. And at last estimate, it was up to 150,000 per day by the end of this decade. Dr. Ralph Winter, Chancellor of William Carey International University and past General Director for the U.S. Center for World Mission, published some amazing facts about the growth of Christianity worldwide. He states that in A.D. 100, there was one Christian for every 360 people on earth. By 1900, that number dramatically changed to 21 people for every active believer. In 2010, he lists the number as 7.3 people for every Christian believer.

**The Great Global Shift of Christianity (1900–2000)**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Third World (Global South)</b>	<b>Western World</b>	<b>Communist World</b>	<b>Global Total</b>
<b>1900</b>	87 million (15.6%)	470 million (84.4%)	–	~557 million
<b>1980</b>	631.8 million (44.1%)	546.6 million (38.2%)	254.1 million (17.7%)	~1.433 billion
<b>2000</b>	983.9 million (48.7%)	592.1 million (29.3%)	443.8 million (22%)	~2.02 billion

**Summary:** In just 100 years, Christianity went from being **Western-centered to globally distributed**, with the majority of Christians now living in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

### Key Takeaways

#### 1. Christianity Has Gone Global

The gospel has moved **from the West to the rest**, and now increasingly from **everywhere to everywhere**. Missiologists like Andrew Walls, Lamin Sanneh, and Philip Jenkins have highlighted this shift as **historic and unprecedented**.

#### 2. Christianity Is No Longer ‘White or Western’

The typical Christian today is likely a woman in Africa or Latin America — not a European or American male. This destroys colonial myths and opens the door for **majority-world leadership** and theology.

#### 3. The Church Is Growing Fastest Where It Once Had No Roots

Africa: 9 million Christians in 1900 → over 700 million today.

China: underground church growth despite persecution; tens of millions of believers.

Latin America: enormous Pentecostal/charismatic expansion.

#### 4. The Mission Field Has Become the Mission Force

Nations once considered “receivers” of the gospel are now **sending** missionaries themselves (e.g., Nigeria, Brazil, South Korea, Philippines). There’s a move toward **mutual partnership** and **cross-cultural collaboration**, not just North-to-South sending.

### Implications for the Church and Mission Today

#### A. Decentralize Leadership

Western churches must **decrease control and increase collaboration**. Honor and empower indigenous leaders and theologians.

#### B. Celebrate Global Diversity in Theology & Worship

Theology isn’t one-size-fits-all. African, Asian, and Latin American voices bring essential perspectives. The global church worships in thousands of languages, rhythms, and cultural forms.

### C. Prepare for South-to-North Missions

Immigrant churches are now planting churches in secular Western nations. We must receive missionaries and leaders from the Global South with humility and joy.

#### A New Era of Global Christianity

*“Christianity is the most extensive and universal religion in history — not by force, but by faith.”*

The Gospel’s global travel has transformed the Church into a mosaic of nations, languages, and cultures, exactly as Jesus envisioned in Revelation 7:9.

#### Global Daily Christian Conversions: A Century of Acceleration

Year	Daily Converts to Christ (Worldwide)
1900	~943 per day
1950	~4,500 per day
1980	~20,000 per day
1994	~92,000 per day
Mid-1990s	~100,000 per day
Late 2010s–2020s	~150,000 per day

#### Key Insights

##### 1. Exponential Growth

In 1900: just under 1,000 people came to Christ daily. Within a century, that number had multiplied more than **150-fold. This isn’t just revival — it’s movement.**

##### 2. Driven by Global South Movements

Most of this growth is happening in: **Africa** (especially Sub-Saharan), **Latin America, South, and East Asia** (especially India, China, Indonesia, and Iran). Much of the growth is powered by **house churches, disciple-making movements (DMMs), and charismatic/pentecostal expressions.**

## Third Millennium Church Evangelism and Discipleship

# SUPPORTING NOTES

---

### 3. The Mission Field Has Become the Mission Force

The majority of daily conversions are occurring **outside the West**. Missionaries are now being sent from **Nigeria, Brazil, Philippines, and Korea** to Europe and the U.S.

#### Implications for Church and Strategy

##### A. Rejoice and Recalibrate

We are not in a time of decline globally — we are in a time of **unprecedented spiritual harvest**. Western churches must resist despair and rediscover their role in a global movement.

##### B. Partner, Don't Control

The explosive growth is not centrally planned. It's: Spirit-led, Local-leader-driven, Reproducible, and relational. Western institutions must **support**, not **steer**, these movements.

##### C. Urgency with Humility

Jesus said: *"The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few."* (Luke 10:2) Now more than ever, we must **pray, send, go, train, and release**.

#### A New Missions Era

"Every day, 150,000 people are stepping into the Kingdom of God. That means 150,000 answered prayers. 150,000 new family members. 150,000 reasons to keep going."

#### Source of the Conversion Data

The key source is *World Christian Encyclopedia: A Comparative Study of Churches and Religions in the Modern World, A.D. 1900–2000*, first published in 1982 by **David B. Barrett** (Oxford University Press) [Reddit+3Wikipedia+3TIME+3Scholarly Publishing Collective+5Wikipedia+5OpenBU Repository+5](#).

This foundational global missions census includes historical data and projections on conversions. Barrett meticulously documented patterns such as:

~943 daily conversions in 1900~4,500/day by 1950~20,000/day by 1980~92,000/day by 1994~100,000/day by the mid-1990s~150,000/day by the end of the 2010s

---

### How Barrett Gathered His Data

Barret traveled to **212 countries**, gathering local church statistics and historical records, often correlating with earlier global surveys [TIMEWikipedia+1Wikipedia+1](#). The first edition of the Encyclopedia (1982) covered up to AD 2000; subsequent editions have refined his estimates. Though some may debate exact numbers, the growth **trend** he identified is widely affirmed by later works [ICDST+3Wikipedia+3Wikipedia+3](#).

### Global Growth of Christianity: Ralph Winter's Ratios

Year	Ratio	Explanation
A.D. 100	1 Christian : 360 people	The early church was small, underground, and persecuted.
A.D. 1900	1 Christian : 21 people	After 1,800 years, significant expansion through global missions and colonial expansion.
A.D. 2010	1 Christian : 7.3 people	Massive growth through movements in the Global South, especially in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

These numbers reflect **active believers**, not just nominal affiliation.

### Why This Is So Significant

#### 1. Exponential Reach

The Church grew from a small persecuted minority to a **global community** touching every nation and people group. By 2010, **nearly 1 in 7 people worldwide identified as Christian**, and a growing portion were **active in faith and mission**.

#### 2. Shift to Global South

This ratio improvement reflects not just more Christians, but a **wider global distribution**: Vibrant movements in **Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, China, Iran, and India**. Missionaries are now being sent **from the Global South to the Global North**.

### 3. A Reversal of Early Church Challenges

In A.D. 100, Christians were isolated and scattered. By 2010, they were **connected, multiplying, and taking the Gospel back into places it had declined** (e.g., post-Christian Europe and North America).

#### A Powerful Message for Today

*“The ratio of Christians to the global population has improved from 1:360 to 1:7 in 2,000 years — but it may be the next generation that sees Revelation 7:9 fulfilled: every tribe, tongue, people, and nation.”*

This data gives **hope, urgency, and vision**:

Hope — the Gospel is winning hearts.

Urgency — we are closer than ever to finishing the task.

Vision — every believer counts in the plan of God.

#### Sources

Dr. Ralph D. Winter shared these insights in various writings and lectures, most notably:

Publications through the **U.S. Center for World Mission**

The **Perspectives on the World Christian Movement** course materials (edited by Winter & Steven Hawthorne)

Related articles published in **Mission Frontiers magazine**

Missiologists and scholarly projections consistently suggest that over the next 50 years, the **global Church will continue to grow**, with significant growth patterns shifting towards the Global South and evolving church structures.

#### 1. Global Numbers — Over 3 Billion Christians by 2050

- According to the Center for the Study of Global Christianity, the worldwide Christian population is currently around **2.63 billion** (2024) and is projected to **surpass 3 billion by 2050** [Baptist Press+11frontierpartners.org+11Ministry Magazine+11](#). Pew Research figures echo this: estimates show Christians increasing to **about 3 billion (31–32% of the global population)** by 2050 .

## 2. Regional Shifts — Africa & Asia Lead the Way

**Africa:** Projected to host more Christians by 2050 than **Asia and Latin America combined** [frontierpartners.org](http://frontierpartners.org). **Sub-Saharan Africa:** Christian population could double from ~517 million to ~1.1 billion by mid-century [Wikipedia](http://Wikipedia). Asia and Latin America also show strong growth trends, fueled by both birth rates and sustained evangelism [Global Christian Relief](http://Global Christian Relief).

## 3. The “Majority-World Church”

- A majority of global Christians now live outside the West: **over 70%** of believers are in Africa, Asia, and Latin America [Lausanne Movement](http://Lausanne Movement). Missiology emphasizes that the **cultural, organizational, and spiritual dynamics** in these regions differ from Western approaches—more indigenous leadership, widespread charismatic vitality, and rapid replication .

## 4. Denominational & Structural Forecasts

- Some experts warn of a “religious singularity”: **more denominations and church plants** being created than the total number of believers, risking structural overload .
- Predictions specific to the U.S. suggest further **consolidation of denominations**, increased church closures, and more **nontraditional, co-vocational pastor models** .

## 5. Factors Driving Growth

- **High fertility rates:** Christian-majority countries average ~2.7 children per woman—above replacement level—compared to global averages [Wikipedia](http://Wikipedia). **Conversions and Pentecostalism:** Pentecostal and evangelical churches, particularly in Africa and Latin America, are among the fastest-growing subgroups—some studies estimate **tens of thousands of new converts daily** .

## 6. Challenges Ahead

Issue	Description
<b>Western Decline</b>	Secularization in Europe/North America is reducing overall Christian clout .
<b>Church Health</b>	Rapid numerical growth in the Global South can sometimes outpace leadership development and deep discipleship .

---

## Third Millennium Church Evangelism and Discipleship

### SUPPORTING NOTES

---

#### **Institutional Fragmentation**

The ballooning number of denominations may undermine cohesion and mission clarity .

#### **Summary**

Over the next 50 years, the global Church is projected to **exceed 3 billion** believers, with growth **centered in Africa, Asia, and Latin America**. While numerical expansion remains strong, especially through births and Pentecostal renewals, mission scholars underscore the need for durable **leadership, discipleship depth, and structural resilience**, particularly as Western churches decline and institutional forms diversify.

#### **History of EE**

**Why does EE exist?** Back in 1960, to about fifteen of his faithful members who were gathered in a Ft. Lauderdale school room for a Sunday evening service, Dr. Kennedy read from the Old Testament God's promise to the prophet, "Call unto me and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not" (Jeremiah 33:3)." Then he closed the Bible and looked out over the small congregation and said full of faith and enthusiasm, "You know what? —I believe we can change the world!"

Not long ago an unbelieving, rather sarcastic secular reporter said to Dr. Kennedy, "it sounds to me like you aim to Christianize America!" Dr. Kennedy replied with a smile, "No sir, I'm not aiming to Christianize America. I'm aiming to *Christianize the world.*"

Our vision statement bears out our desire to be part of changing the world. It reads:

**"Every nation equipping every people group and every age group to witness to every person."**

Our goal is to see every person on earth have the opportunity to hear the Good News of Jesus. We also believe that the Church is the vehicle that God will use to see this happen.

So then, our vision is to be part of changing the world by being a **catalyst** to Christ's Church, causing it to be a witnessing, multiplying Church.

**How do we propose to accomplish such change?** Back in 1984 Dr. Kennedy wrote this:

“The place to begin to change the world is both the easiest and the hardest task before us. It’s easy, because it requires only that we be willing to share a simple but profound message with the men and women of our generation. Yet, it is difficult, because the response it requires is so all encompassing that nothing short of a miracle of God can bring it about.

“**The place to begin changing the world is on the inside**, within the hearts and minds of men and women. For unless we are able to do something about the motivations, desires, perspectives, and goals of the people who make up the communities of our world, any other changes we might be able to introduce will be merely cosmetic and temporary at best. Permanent change begins on the inside. Unless we are first of all and continuously concentrating our efforts on changing men and women from the inside out, we will be certain to fail in our long-range desires of changing the world. No amount of political activism or educational reform and no legislative or judicial enactment will yield any abiding fruit without this first most important matter being addresses by all concerned.

“How do we propose to accomplish such a change?”

“Nearly two thousand years ago, Jesus Christ stood on a hill in Galilee and presented His disciples with His plan for bringing permanent, positive change into the world. As He surveyed the ages and considered the problems and needs of men and women from all nations, tribes, and generations, He concluded that there was one primary solution, which all would require: “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” (Matt. 28:19-20).

This first and continuous step, this easiest and hardest of task, this undertaking guaranteed to begin the process of changing our world from the inside out, is the sharing with our neighbors and friends of the wonderful story of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Without this most important effort on the part of each and every one of us, we will most certainly not be able to change the world in our time.”[i]

Dr. Kennedy also stated clearly that without a mighty initiative and an ongoing commitment to **spiritual multiplication**, we would never succeed in the critical assignment of bringing lasting change into our world.

## Third Millennium Church Evangelism and Discipleship

### SUPPORTING NOTES

---

**What do we hope the world looks like when we're done?** We believe that what we are told in Rev. 7:9-10 will one day come to pass:

“After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of **all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues**, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, saying, “Salvation *belongs* to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!”[ii]

This is a wonderful promise! The amazing news is that **we can be part** of seeing this come to pass!

**Where do we fit in?** I believe that God gives an organization its purpose. I also believe that this calling does not change. God gives us a specific purpose and a specific calling. We can decide to change our calling but only at our own peril.

For Evangelism Explosion International to be all that we were called to be (and for us individually as part of this ministry), we must look at and hold fast to our original calling. What was Dr. Kennedy (and what have we been) called to do through this work worldwide? And why was Dr. Kennedy the one God used to introduce this work to the world?

It is clear from the book *Evangelism Explosion* what our calling is. Several Biblical Principles guided Dr. Kennedy's actions over the past 40 plus years:

- Every Christian is to be a witness
- We all need to be equipped to witness
- On-the-job training is vital
- Training soul winners is most important

These principles have guided this ministry since 1962 and will continue to guide us into the future.

Have you ever thought about why God used Dr. Kennedy to bring this ministry into world? I believe that the biggest reason is his heart. And I believe we can learn a lot by examining his guiding principles over the past 40 plus years.

**Third Millennium Church Evangelism and Discipleship**  
**SUPPORTING NOTES**

---

**Dr. Kennedy's Guiding Principles**

**1. Spiritual Commitment**

We must live our lives by God's standards with excellence. Early on Dr. Kennedy urged me to not cut corners with the truth, even on the smallest of items. We must be a group committed to integrity. And we must be committed to:

- Prayer—EE is a ministry with a solid biblical basis, total dependence upon the Holy Spirit, stressing the importance of the witness' consistent life-style while enlisting the faithful intercession of dedicated prayer partners. Prayer must be at the very heart of our movement.
- The Holy Spirit—The essence of the evangelical faith is: "Salvation is of the Lord" (Jonah 2:9). Our work must be supernatural. We can only hope to succeed if we live by the power of the Holy Spirit and not by salesmanship, persuasion, rhetoric, argumentation, or any other human endeavor.

**2. Love for Jesus' Church**

The Church is the bride of Christ. We believe that the Church is the vehicle God will use to accomplish His purposes on earth. Our job is to be a catalyst to His Church in the area of witnessing.

Because of this core belief, we have a very high view of the Church. Our actions flow out of that view in that we believe:

- Pastors and Church Leaders are the authority ultimately led by Christ through His Word. It is because of this that we train them in Leadership Training Clinics, and then send them back to their local churches to model personal evangelism and equip members of their congregations to witness and train others to witness.
- Interdenominational—EE is not a para-church (per se) ministry but is local-church based and led, ministering to and through over 400 denominations, which subscribe to EE's Statement of Faith.

**3. Love for Jesus (and His Commands)**

From Christ's first and last commands, from His model of a faithful witness and the example of the early church, it is obvious that every believer is to witness both by his life and his lips.

Jesus said, “Follow me and I will make you to become fishers of men.” He also said, “You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” These statements are either true or false.

We must believe that His promise about us is true. No amount of conflict, persecution, trial, or challenge can keep us from it. We know that no servant is greater than his master. If we suffer with Him, we will reign with Him! If we love Christ, we will keep His commands.

#### **4. Love for the Lost**

Regardless of your theology this truth remains: lost people lose. And we know from Scripture that Jesus loves the lost! We must also have a genuine love for the lost. Because of our love for the lost, we must be:

- Relational—Whether in a first-time presentation of the Gospel or in a person’s every-day network of relationships, friendship is emphasized as a crucial element in personal evangelism and discipleship.
- Passionate—When we truly care for the lost like Christ, our passion for their souls will consume us and drive our every action. People will be able to see our passion.

#### **5. Commitment to Modeling**

One day you’ll be able, God willing, to walk into a vision center that we build here on a campus here in the United States. The first thing you’ll notice is a glass case. In the glass case you’ll see a book kept by Anne Kennedy listing all the people she has won to Christ in her time with Evangelism Explosion.

The reason this will be the first thing you see is because it focuses on a key aspect of the ministry—personal involvement. One of the strongest testimonies I can give is that Dr. and Mrs. Kennedy have been actively involved in this ministry from the very beginning. This is not just a “good idea”. This is at the very heart of their ministry for Christ.

We believe that:

- Evangelism is better caught than taught—Classroom teaching followed by on-the-job training dispels the witness’ crippling fear and demonstrates how EE really works. As has been aptly said, “Evangelism is better caught than taught!”
-

- Quality—Starting small and building strong. Trainees learn the Gospel presentation step-by-step and bit-by-bit over an extended period of time—normally 13 to 16 weeks—and continue to grow in their understanding of the Gospel and their ability to witness.

We must keep in mind that the commitment that people have for evangelism will most likely not be greater than ours.

### 6. Open Handed Nature (Giver)

One of Dr. Kennedy's strongest qualities is that he is a giver. Dr. Kennedy loves to give. December 31<sup>st</sup>, Dr. Kennedy loves to come around to each of the ministries that he has started and gives a gift. And he gives all that he can give.

What does this have to do with EE? All over the world, there are people doing the ministry of EE and they are all benefactors of this quality that Dr. Kennedy possesses. This quality allows for what we call "indigenous ministry". What it means is that the ministry is owned by the individual nations that do it. And, because they own it, they care about it and keep it up. They make it personal. That could only happen because Dr. Kennedy was willing to give. It's important to note that this goes against human nature. But it is very important to see if we intend to continue this ministry and see it grow.

We need to be:

- Open handed—I remember the day that Susan Ivey came before the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors to talk about an idea she had for our ministry. She wanted to adapt EE for use with the elderly in Nursing Homes and assisted living environments. She told Dr. Kennedy that she could not do a 35-45 minute Gospel presentation without many of them falling asleep. She intended to shorten the presentation to make it work better. Dr. Kennedy got up, put his arm around her and prayed for her for God's help in making these adaptations so that seniors would have the opportunity to hear the Gospel.
- Assisters not enlists—Although the words may sound the same, they don't feel the same to a pastor. Many pastors feel like we say to them, "It's our way or the highway!" It's a bit like recruiting someone into the army. When you join, you give up your right to do things your own way. You eat when they say, you sleep when they say, and you march when they say. Some view (whether rightly or wrongly) EE in this way. We must make an effort to change

the way we view and act toward pastors so that they truly feel us come along side of them and assist them to do what Christ has commanded them to do. After all, it's their church and they are the one given the responsibility of equipping their flock for Christ. Our job is to assist them in doing their work.

## 7. Biblical Strategy

Recently, I had the opportunity to spend a day with Dr. Kennedy in London. Dr. Kennedy once and again recounted the many ways in which EE is founded on Biblical principles. I was so encouraged as I was reminded just how Biblical this ministry is.

And because it's Biblical, it's cross-cultural and cross-generational. The basic outline, complete with scriptures and illustrations, provides the witness with a tool for presenting the Gospel to non-Christians and for training fellow believers to do the same. While adhering to these non-negotiable, controlling principles, EE adapts to the culture of every nation, territory and people group with the ultimate goal of each ministry becoming self-supporting, self-managed and self-propagating.

## 8. Spiritual Multiplication is Most Important

Trainers equip trainees who in turn and in time become trainers of others to win people to Christ, reproducing themselves many times, while maintaining a top quality ministry through a teacher and trainer certification process.

This is the truth found in the Great Commission. Here we are told to, "Go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age." We're supposed to go and make disciples and part of the job is to teach them to do all that we were told to do. All includes "go." With this simple but profound truth, the world can be reached for Jesus.

If every one of the roughly one billion Evangelical Christians learned to share their faith and could teach others to do the same, everyone on earth could hear the Good News. And that is our ultimate vision.

[i] D. James Kennedy, T.M. Moore, Chain Reaction! (Waco: Word Books Publisher, 1985), 42-43.

[ii] Taken from the New King James translation of the Holy Scriptures, highlight added.

The answer to fulfilling the Great Commission of Jesus Christ — “*Go and make disciples of all nations...*” (Matthew 28:19–20) — is **obedient, multiplying discipleship**.

**Core Answer:**

**Make disciples who make disciples, across cultures, through the power of the Holy Spirit.**

Here’s how that unfolds:

**1. Obedient Discipleship**

Jesus didn’t just say “make converts” or “start churches.” He said:

“...teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.” (*Matthew 28:20*)

Fulfilling the Great Commission means:

- Leading people to **follow Jesus personally**
- Teaching them to **obey His commands**
- Helping them grow into **mature disciples** who can disciple others

**2. Multiplication, Not Just Addition**

The model Jesus gave (and Paul followed in 2 Timothy 2:2) was **reproducible multiplication**:

“*What you have heard from me... entrust to faithful people who will be able to teach others also.*”

This is a **4-generation plan**:

- Paul → Timothy → Faithful men → Others

**Multiplying movements** (like in Acts) are more effective and sustainable than just “gathering more people.”

---

### 3. All Nations — Cross-Cultural Mission

The Greek word for “nations” is *ethne*, meaning **ethnic groups or people groups**, not just political countries. That implies:

- Reaching **unreached people groups**
- Adapting to different **languages, worldviews, and cultures**
- Partnering globally with the **majority-world Church**

There are still thousands of people groups with **no access** to the gospel — fulfilling the Great Commission includes reaching them.

### 4. Empowered by the Holy Spirit

Jesus followed the Commission with a promise:

*“I am with you always...”* and in Acts 1:8, *“You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you...”*

No strategy or plan can fulfill the Great Commission **apart from the Spirit of God**. He leads, convicts, empowers, and multiplies.

### 5. Holistic Faithfulness

Fulfilling the Great Commission also includes:

- **Prayer** (Matthew 9:37–38)
- **Sending** (Romans 10:15)
- **Going** (Acts 13)
- **Suffering well** (Matthew 24:9)
- **Finishing well** (Matthew 24:14 – *“...then the end will come.”*)

### Summary Formula:

**Obedient Disciple** × **Spirit Empowerment** × **Multipling Movement** × **Global Focus** = Great Commission Fulfilled.

# PRIORITIES

A vision becomes a goal  
when you put a date to it

-Dr. James O. Davis

# PROMOTIONS



**ISRAEL**

MAY 18-25, 2026



*the*  
**3RD MILLENNIUM  
LEADERSHIP**  
*Tour*

**SCHEDULE**

**MAY 18**

*The Strategies of Exceptional Leadership*

**MAY 19**

*The Secrets to Transformational Leadership*

**MAY 20**

*The Steps to Confrontational Leadership*

**MAY 21**

*The Stones of Foundational Leadership*

**MAY 22**

*The Systems of Successional Leadership*

**MAY 23**

*The Statutes of Relational Leadership*

**MAY 24**

*The Sacrifices to Resurrectional Leadership*

**MAY 25**

*The Sequences of Visional Leadership*



# SYNERGIZE 2026

FEBRUARY 11 - 12, 2026 | ORLANDO FLORIDA



SYNERGIZE.TV



We are Synergizing and Mobilizing to  
Finalize the Great Commission!





JERUSALEM  
*2030*

*it is finished!*

**JUNE 9 - 11, 2030**

**JERUSALEM2030.COM**

**In honor of the first 3,000 people who came to Christ, 3,000 leaders will synergize to finish the Great Commission.**

The Global Church Network will host the 2000th Birthday of the Church, and will celebrate the beginning of the Third Millennium Church on June 9-11, 2030, in Jerusalem, Israel.

You Are Invited To Join Christian Leaders From 100 Plus Nations!



GCNW.TV

P.O. Box 411605 | Melbourne | FL 32941 | USA

GCN@gcnw.tv | 417-861-6645