

On Mission 2019

*The State of the Global Gospel:
Present and Future Trends*

Justin Long - Beyond Where we Are and What's Left to be Done

Hi, my name is Justin Long, I'm the Director of Global Research for Beyond and I'm here to talk about what -where we are in missions, where we are on the task of world evangelization, and what's left to be done. So, I want you to start by picturing three children, one child we'll call Justin. Justin is raised in a Christian home, he's born into a Christian home, he's got loving, Christian parents. They take him to church; he goes to Sunday school. They pray at meals. They have Bible stories at night. He's got his own Bible at a young age. And at a young age, he comes to follow Jesus and stays fairly close to Jesus for all of his life. That's child number 1. Child number 2 - we'll call him, Jacque and he grows up in a family where the parents are not Christians, and they don't go to church and they don't pray with him. But he has friends at school who are believers who come from believing homes and he's invited by his grandparents to church from time to time. This is child number 2. Child number 1 becomes a Christian. Child number 2 is in a situation where he has access to the Gospel, but he is not a believer, maybe all of his life, maybe until very late in his life. Child number 3 - let's call him, Abdul. Abdul grows up in a family where there are no believers in his family, or in his community, or in his village, in the city or nearby. There are no Christian schools, there's no Christian radios, he speaks a language that the Bible hasn't been translated in, he has no access to the Gospel.

These 3 children are critical to understanding where we are in the task of mission today. Because it's not just 3 children, it's 3 situations in life. So, in 1900 at the turn of the century, our world had about a billion and -1.6 billion people- about a billion and a half on the planet. About 1/3 of those were in the situation of child number 1. They were Christians, of some variety or another. About 20% of the world, -so 33% plus 20%- about 20% of the world, were people who had access to the Gospel, but they were not Jesus' followers. And in 1900, about half the world, about 50%, had no access to the Gospel. They lived in places where the Bible hadn't been translated, Christianity had not come, there were no Gospel presence, there was no Gospel workers. Throughout the 1900's, people responded to the call of missions, people went with things like the student volunteer movement, and other initiatives. By the thousands, missionaries went out. And they brought the Gospel to places where it was not, and we learned about peoples and people in the process.

And in the 1970's, 1980's men like Ralph Winter, David Barrett, and Patrick Johnstone wrote books like, "Operation World" and the "World Christian Encyclopedia" and started groups like,

"The US Center for World Mission" and they helped us to understand better the concept of unreached people groups. Whole peoples, whole languages that were cut off from the Gospel. By the year 2000, something had happened. We understood the world a lot better in terms of people groups, and in terms of who had the Gospel and who didn't. But at the same time, population was blossoming.

In 1900, there was about 1.6 billion people on the planet. By 2000, it rose to 6 billion. By today, it's now over 7 billion. So, between then and now, in 1900, about half of the world -about 800 million people- had no access to the Gospel. Now it's over 2 billion. So, think back to those 3 children, every year, about 45 million children are born into Christian homes, grow up, and become -often become- Christians. About 90 million grow up in non-Christian homes. About half of the people who grew up in Christian homes will hear the Gospel from something outside their family, but about half won't. This is what we call the un-evangelized, the unreached part of the world. It's the part of the world that does not intersect Christianity. It's the part of the world that will not hear. It's hard for us to imagine, but think of a child, who grows up in a village who never hears the Gospel at all in his entire life, because he never runs into a Christian. He's born, he marries, he has children and eventually he dies, and he's never heard the Gospel once. Every year about 16 million people who had no opportunity to hear the Gospel slip into a Christ-less eternity. 16 million every day, that's 43 thousand every hour. That's about 1800 every minute. That's about 30 - it's 1 every 2 seconds. It's one every 2 seconds - 1 - (snap) -2. 1 - (snap) - 2. It's just that fast. From Algerians, to Zhuang, from Fulani to Pashto, these peoples are perishing because -without any access to the Gospel.

So, what needs to happen? Where do we need to go? Well today, in the 80's and the 90's, there was a lot of talk and understanding of things called like, "the unreached world," the "1040 window," "world day." Those things haven't changed. Most of the world's unreached and unevangelized population are in the swath of the 1040 window from North Africa through the Middle East, into East Asia. 625 million or so of the 2.2 billion are in 40 provinces in a handful of countries like India and China. A large majority of the remaining task is in 30 frontier peoples. This is the core. This is the part that we need to get to. And in order to get into those people groups, we need to translate the Gospel, in-culturate the Gospel into those languages. And then we need strategies that could rapidly multiply the Gospel out faster than population growth through whole populations to fill up areas in peoples, and spill over into neighboring areas and peoples. This is where we've seen a lot of things happening in the last 20 years. We've started to see what we're calling, "disciple-making movements" or "ACTS-like movements" that are blossoming in some of the hardest places to reach. From North Africa through South Asia, into East Asia, and Southeast Asia, places where we wouldn't think the Gospel could get to, it's getting there. Thanks to these movements. We're tracking over 700 of these movements right now with 68 million believers and 4.4 million churches, starting to penetrate the darkness. But these numbers, although they are very large, are very small percentage of the remaining task.

We still need more workers to go to places where the Gospel is not, in order to -only God starts movements. But we have to be there because He uses us. And so, if we're there and doing the things He's called us to do, He will use us to catalyze these rapidly multiplying movements out all over the place.

What does it take? It takes three things, I think. One is an Apostolic Passion. It is the heart for the unreached. It is the passion that looks out at peoples, and sees their lostness, and is concerned for it. The second thing it takes is, a willingness to ask, "What is it going to take to get there? What do I have to change about what I am doing to go where the Gospel is not? And the third thing it takes is a willingness to persistently endure through all sorts of trials, all sorts of difficulties, all sorts of experiments that fail in order to find the things that work. You know for a long time, people always told us that people groups like the Saudis were unresponsive, that people groups like Afghanis were unresponsive, but then we did some research and discovered that it wasn't so much that they were unresponsive. It's that they didn't have a chance. If you compare the responsiveness to these people groups to the offers that they get of the Gospel, they're actually, some of the most responsive peoples on the planet. They just need people who will go where they are, put on flesh and move into the neighborhood as the first chapter of John says, and bring the Gospel to these families, to these individuals, who have never heard it before, but are wanting the chance at eternal life.