



The **African Church**  
**AND**  
the **Mission of God**



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GO! The African Church and the Mission of God

ELEAF Resources

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## INTRODUCTION

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Over 2000 years ago on a mountain in Galilee, Jesus gave his disciples one final command. In that Great Commission, he told them to “Go and make disciples of all nations.”<sup>1</sup> He promised to send them the Helper, the Holy Spirit, which he did in the second chapter of Acts. From that moment until today the same Spirit has been at work in the individual lives of believers in Christ and their corporate lives in the body of Christ, the church, to draw unto himself, as Revelation 7:9 makes clear, a people from every nation, tribe, people and language.

While the Church has undergone changes and reform, this commission from our Lord remains steadfast and is our ever constant focus. Disciples, empowered by the Holy Spirit, making disciples of all nations is not just *a* calling for missionaries but *the* calling of the church.

There are many distractions today in the church. It is very easy to begin the turn inward and to forget our high calling. We must fight this temptation and consistently and determinately focus our vision on those who have little to no access to the Gospel. This is the charge to every Christian and the responsibility of every church.

### TWO PROJECTS

In 2020, 55 unreached people groups<sup>2</sup> in Sub-Saharan Africa were identified and targeted for specific contextualized engagement in the next five years. These are, according to missiological research databases, the least reached people groups in Sub-Saharan Africa. This project, known as “**55 in 5**,” has begun and is being carried out all over the continent. We hope you and your church will join us in praying for these peoples. You’ll

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 28:19

<sup>2</sup> “For evangelization purposes, a people group is the largest group within which the Gospel can spread as a church planting movement without encountering barriers of understanding or acceptance” - from the 1982 Lausanne Committee Chicago meeting.

find in **Appendix A** the list of the peoples and other resources that have been created and are available for download.

While *55 in 5* is looking at all of Sub-Saharan Africa, we felt the need for country specific initiatives where we would take the same approach towards the least reached peoples. In other words, we would conduct research to identify the least reached peoples within each country so that we might encourage and equip the local church to pray, give, go and send so that those who have little to no access to the Gospel might hear and believe. This project, called “**GO**,” has begun as unreached peoples were identified, resources created, and focused evangelistic efforts commenced. In **Appendix B** you’ll find the list of the unreached peoples in your country and resources that have been created to help you personally and your church corporately

While strategies and resources are important in the Great Commission, the most essential element is a praying church. The task is too big for any one person, church, denomination or network. The task is only possible if it is done in the power of the Holy Spirit and through a dependence on prayer. Therefore, the first step in both of these projects is a call to prayer which is really what the book you are holding in your hands is all about.

## **THE PURPOSE OF THIS BOOK**

The purpose of this book is to stir up and to fuel the local church to take more serious than ever her calling to pray, give, go and send so that unreached peoples and places might be engaged with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Let me be clear: this Great Commission is for **EVERY SINGLE CHURCH**. Missions isn’t what some people or some churches do, it’s what everyone does and every church does. While it may look different from person to person and from church to church, it is, at the foundational level, the same: the Lord setting apart his people, giving them His spirit and commissioning them for this sacred task.

This book begins with a call to the African Church from Pastor Conrad Mbewe of Zambia. He will remind you that the time is now for the African Church. The remaining task of reaching unreached people groups will fall most heavily on the shoulders of African brothers and sisters who’ve been sent out by African churches.

After that you’ll find several articles outlining the fundamental understanding needed for the church to take up this task. These articles help us look back on church history to understand how we’ve come to

this moment but also to help us look forward into the practical implementation of this task.

Our goal with this book is that you and your church would be encouraged to do several practical things:

1. That you and your church would **pray intentionally** for the unreached peoples both near and far. Our goal is that you would pray consistently and specifically for unreached people groups. As mentioned, there are other complementary resources that will be available to guide you in this.
2. That you and your church would **give sacrificially** for the engagement of unreached people groups with the Gospel. Through whatever means possible, you and your church would give sacrificially so that both short term and long term workers might go and engage these unreached peoples.
3. That you and your church would **go joyfully** to these (and other) unreached people groups. That “going” might be for a week, a month, a year or a lifetime. It might mean moving to be close to those groups geographically or it might mean trying to find them represented in the major cities where you live.

We hope this book encourages, informs, and convicts you to begin seeking the Lord to determine how you might use your life (your time, your resources, and your spiritual gift) for His glory being made known among all peoples. We hope that you are able to resist the temptation to look inward but instead to look up and look out and see, as Jesus said in Luke 10:2, that the harvest is plentiful but the workers are few.

Thank you for taking the time to read prayerfully through this book. We are all better together and so grateful for your partnership in the Gospel.

Mark Phillips  
Niamey, Niger 2021







# **A Letter to the African Church**

## From Pastor Conrad Mbewe

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Dear fellow African pastors,

Missiologists who are studying the way in which the church is spreading globally not only see that there is exponential growth in the church in Africa but also that believers on this continent are poised to become the next major missionary force if the Lord Jesus tarries.

Whereas I do not doubt the exponential growth of the African church, I think there is a real need for a seismic mind shift if we are going to see missionaries from this continent taking the gospel to unreached people groups on this continent itself and around the globe.

Kabwata Baptist Church, the church I have been privileged to pastor for over 30 years, has planted over 30 churches across Africa since 1994. Yet, I recall how the members resisted our getting into missions work when we as leaders first made the proposal to them.

There were all kinds of reasons given as to why we were not yet ready to engage in missions work as a church. We were still meeting in a rented community hall, only had two elders, were needing to borrow money to pay rentals on the pastor's house, and so on.

If we had put the matter to a vote, the elders would have obviously lost. However, we were convinced in the leadership of the church that missions was not an optional extra to church ministry. We needed to start participating in the Great Commission immediately.

The members submitted to the leadership of the elders and we started on this journey of church-planting missions. 30 church plants later, and now each time we bring the name of a potential missionary before the church, almost all the members vote in favour.

We need to get over the impression that missionaries are Caucasians from America or England. We need to stop thinking that to be involved

in missions work, our church account should be full of money that we do not know what to do with. That is just not true.

We also need to realise that we are not the end of the missionary enterprise. There are still many parts of Africa that need true gospel-preaching churches. There are also many places on the globe where Christ is still not known. We need to take the gospel there.

Even in our major cities, new residential areas are springing up all the time. Sadly, it is prosperity gospel preachers who quickly take their poison there while we are content at simply ensuring we have a nice church where all our members are comfortable and happy.

We need to realise that whereas big churches may have space in their budgets to single-handedly send out missionaries, most of our churches can only do so in concert with other churches and individual believers. Missions makes our churches inter-dependent.

One church may simply have a couple whose hearts burn with the theme of taking the gospel to an unreached neighbourhood, tribe, or nation. Other churches may also be praying for such places but are lacking who to send. They can support with finances.

May I suggest to you that if we are going to have a robust missionary movement, it must be based on an appreciation of the Christian faith that truly makes us want the world to hear our message. The syncretic Christianity that pervades much of Africa will not do this.

We need to grow in our understanding of the height and depth, and the breadth and length, of the love of God in Christ Jesus—especially as it shone the brightest on the cross. This will cause us to love the church, the bride of the Lord Jesus Christ, for whom he died.

This means that our churches need to be educational centres where believers are “devoted to the apostles’ teaching,” as was the case with the church in the New Testament (Acts 2:42). Sadly, many of our churches are now nothing more than deliverance centres.

Those of us who are pastors should see one of our major responsibilities as that of passing on to believers who are in our churches what Paul called “the whole counsel of God” (Acts 20:27). That way they will be Christians by conviction and not merely tradition.

As the light of God’s truth shines brightest in their souls, they will want to share it with the world. Yet, they will want to do so in the context of the church that Christ bought with his blood. They will be jealous for church life that mirrors what is taught in the Bible.

They will want to have truly godly pastors, elders and deacons. They will want to see churches that exercise church discipline to maintain ho-

liness among God's people. They will want to see Christians who live in love and mutual accountability to the glory of God.

This is what they will want to see reproduced in other neighbourhoods in their cities, in other towns and villages in their nations, and in other nations in Africa and other parts of the world—especially where Jesus is not known. This is what fuels true biblical missions.

Brethren, when the gospel first crossed lands and seas to get to us, it cost many of our brothers and sister their very lives. They did not count their lives too precious to them because their Master shed his life's blood for his church. They have left us an example.

The baton is now in our hands. Let us be courageous and labour for a biblically rich Christianity that will produce solid churches, which in turn will be nursery beds from which the work of missions will spread to the remaining unreached people groups of the world.

Your brother,

*Conrad Mbewe*

Lusaka, Zambia

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Conrad Mbewe is the pastor of Kabwata Baptist Church in Lusaka, Zambia and is a Council member of The Gospel Coalition Africa. Conrad is Director of Advancement at the African Christian University in Lusaka. Conrad has written numerous books and seen over 30 churches planted. He and his wife, Felistas, have six adult children.





## The Mission of God & the Missionary Task

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by Mark Phillips

As the father of four children, I hear the question, “Why?” almost non-stop in our household.

“Let’s go to the market”

“Why?”

“Put up your dishes.”

“Why?”

“Tell your brother you are sorry”

“Why?”

My children seem to want to know the motivation behind every decision and every instruction. While this can be an annoyance as a parent, “Why?” is a great question for the Christian and for the Church.

Why do you go to church week after week? Why do you give sacrificially of your finances and your time? Why do you deny sinful cravings and seek holiness?

These are important questions and Christians must ask and answer them with Biblical answers. The church must be able to carefully and clearly articulate the ultimate “Why?” questions if the goal is to see truly transformed hearts with transformed motivations living for a transformed purpose.

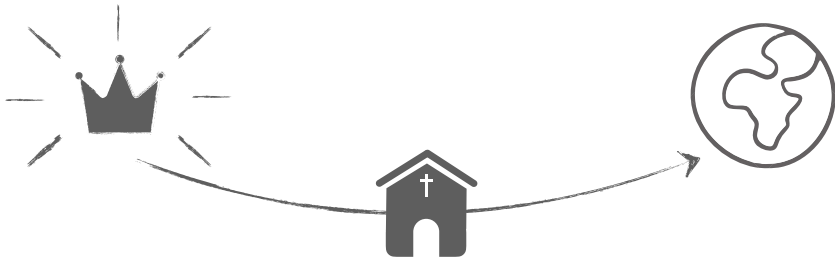
However, as important as this questions appears, is it one you’ve ever heard answered or one you’ve ever even asked? And most importantly, have you ever thought about God’s motivation? Why does God do what He does?

Thankfully, the Bible is not silent on this issue. In fact, from beginning to end, the Bible makes clear that ultimately God is motivated by one thing and one thing alone: **His Glory**.

This begs the questions: if His glory is what motivates the heart of God then shouldn't that motivate our hearts as well? Effort, guilt, adrenaline, excitement and emotion, while having the ability to motivate at least temporarily, are not sufficient for long term motivation. They are not sufficient for sacrificial giving and suffering-filled missional living. Understanding what motivates God is fuel for what motivates us to action and to give our lives towards His Great Commission.

This book and the accompanying resources are to stir the Church towards action. Specifically, this is a call for the African church to take more serious than ever her role in the Great Commission. For this to happen, we don't need an emotional appeal or a guilt-laden lecture. Instead, we need to see ever more clearly the mission of God and then see how we might engage in the Missionary Task.

The mission of God can be explained in a simple diagram:



## **THE MISSION OF GOD**

Three phrases accompany this picture:

### **FOR HIS GLORY**

From Genesis to Revelation, the Bible shows us our Creator God is motivated first and foremost by His own Glory. For any lesser creature to be motivated by their own glory would be selfish but for the Creator of all things, King of Kings and Lord of Lords, what higher being than Himself could be His ultimate motivation? Therefore God is motivated by receiving what God alone deserves, namely, glory, honor and praise from His creation.

God created the world and all of humanity for his glory<sup>1</sup> and even the heavens declare his glory.<sup>2</sup> God saving His people Israel out of Egypt and His people the Church out of Adam was for His glory.<sup>3</sup> He is motivated by his name being revered<sup>4</sup> and he will not give his glory to another.<sup>5</sup> As Christians, we are to do everything we do for the glory of God.<sup>6</sup> Even Christ's exaltation and his receiving a name above every name was ultimately for the glory of God.<sup>7</sup>

God is motivated by receiving what God alone deserves: glory. The mission of God begins with understanding that God is worthy of praise from every tribe and every tongue. The reason we desire to take the gospel to the nations is so that God will receive what God alone deserves; the glory due his name.

## **TO ALL PEOPLES**

From God's calling of a pagan nomad with a barren wife in Genesis 12 to John's heavenly vision in Revelation 7, we see that God's plan is and always has been that the nations would sing and be made glad in the God of their salvation.<sup>8</sup>

His forming of His people Israel was ultimately so that they might be a blessing to the nations. The plan was never about Israel alone but rather was about Israel being a light to the nations.<sup>9</sup>

When the Word became flesh, Jesus continued this theme saying things like, "I have sheep that are not of this flock"<sup>10</sup> and not all of Abraham's children are Israel.<sup>11</sup> And then, after Jesus' death, burial and resurrection there is the Great Commission: to take this good news and make disciples of all nations.<sup>12</sup> They were to begin in Jerusalem and con-

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<sup>1</sup> Isaiah 43:7

<sup>2</sup> Pslam 19:1

<sup>3</sup> Romans 9:22-24

<sup>4</sup> Isaiah 48:11

<sup>5</sup> Isaiah 42:8

<sup>6</sup> 1 Corinthians 10:31

<sup>7</sup> Philippians 2:9-11

<sup>8</sup> Psalm 96

<sup>9</sup> Isaiah 49:6

<sup>10</sup> John 10:16

<sup>11</sup> Matthew 3:9

<sup>12</sup> Matthew 28:18-20



tinue to spread out until they'd gone to the ends of the earth with this message.<sup>13</sup>

Paul's ambition was to keep pushing the Gospel to places it had not gone as the Kingdom of God advanced through gospel proclamation.<sup>14</sup> The Apostle John even gets a glimpse of the throne of Christ in heaven where He is being worshipped by people from every tribe and every tongue and every nation.<sup>15</sup> God's glory is a global endeavor. The nations hearing is our goal. The accomplishment of this task is certain. But how?

## THROUGH HIS CHURCH

Paul writes to the church at Rome that "all who call on the name of the Lord will be saved."<sup>16</sup> This is a glorious truth to be celebrated but then Paul asks the natural question: But how can they call on him in whom they have not heard?<sup>17</sup>

In order for people to call on the name of the Lord they need the *GOSPEL MESSAGE*. The Gospel Message is a clear, verbal proclamation of the life, death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord, Jesus Christ. This is the good news that sinful man can be made right with his Creator God.

Then Paul asks: But how can they hear unless someone preaches?<sup>18</sup> In order for people to hear they need *GOSPEL MESSENGERS*. Gospel Messengers are sent out ones who carry this Good News to un-reached peoples and places.

Finally Paul asks, how can they preach unless they are sent.<sup>19</sup> In order for people to go and preach there is a need for *GOSPEL SENDERS*. These senders are the local church. Jesus promised that He would build His church and the gates of hell would not prevail.<sup>20</sup> Paul writes that it is "through the church that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known."<sup>21</sup> The Church is God's chosen instrument

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<sup>13</sup> Acts 1:8

<sup>14</sup> Romans 15:20

<sup>15</sup> Revelation 7:9

<sup>16</sup> Romans 10:13

<sup>17</sup> Romans 10:14

<sup>18</sup> Romans 10:14

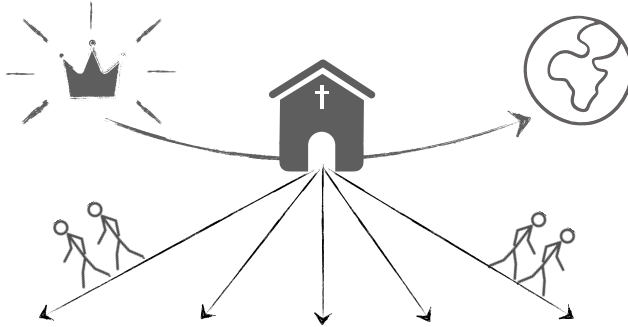
<sup>19</sup> Romans 10:15

<sup>20</sup> Matthew 16:18

<sup>21</sup> Ephesians 3:10

for this task. The Church is God's *Gospel Sender* sending out *Gospel Messengers* with a *Gospel Message* to all peoples.

## **SENT OUT ONES FROM THE CHURCH**



### **THE CHURCH: GOD'S LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM**

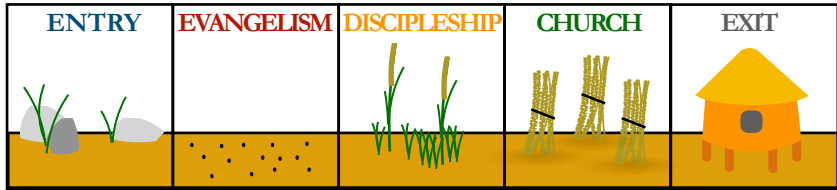
Sadly, we've made church about ourselves. We come to church hoping to get "a word from the Lord" or wonder if we'll be blessed just for being in attendance. We want programs to serve us and our families. While these things aren't inherently sinful, they miss the mark of what the Lord's intention for His body was to be. It is the church who has received the Great Commission and it is through the local church that the nations will hear as sent out ones begin to share the gospel in unreached places and among unreached peoples. The mission of God is the mission of the Church: making disciples of all peoples so that God would receive the glory that God alone deserves.

The church is God's chosen instrument for reaching the nations and the church is God's chosen instrument for developing and raising up leaders. From sending out cross cultural workers to training up deacons and elders to equipping lay members to share and grow in their faith, the church is God's design to build up, equip and send out. The church has been entrusted with the task of equipping the saints for the work of ministry and for building up the body of Christ.<sup>22</sup> These equipped leaders carry out the work of ministry both near and far to engage in the missionary task.

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<sup>22</sup> Ephesians 4:12

Again, a simple picture helps to visualize each component of this task. It is helpful to imagine a field that is to be planted, cultivated and harvested:



## THE MISSIONARY TASK

Farmers understand that their work and their field moves through different phases depending on the season. The good farmer knows that before he can plant seeds, the field must first be cleared of rocks and weeds. Then he sows his seed widely across the prepared field. After the rains come the crop begins to grow. However, as it grows, so do weeds and the farmer must remove these weeds so that the crop can grow and reach maturity. Eventually all of this work ends in harvesting the crop. A good harvest means a full barn where there is enough seed to feed his family this year and to sow his field the following year.

This process is very similar to our gospel work. Each step in this process for the farmer represents a component of the missionary task.

### **ENTRY - Gospel Bridges**

The first component of the Missionary Task is to enter new fields. Those fields could be a people, a region, a village, a neighborhood, a home or even an individual. The point is an intentional effort is made to begin looking for ways to share the Gospel in this field. This will require doing the hard work of learning language and culture.

Oftentimes, barriers or misunderstandings about the Gospel need to be cleared up. Praying for people, sharing your testimony and beginning to turn conversations towards spiritual matters are all ways that the field of Entry is being prepared for the Gospel to be shared.

### **EVANGELISM - Gospel Communication**

Once a field is prepared, it is ready to be seeded. The seed that we sow is the Gospel message through evangelism. Evangelism is the proclamation

of the gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit with the aim of persuading people to repent and believe in Christ.<sup>23</sup>

Evangelism always involves verbal communication of the message of the gospel using language the hearer can understand. While the example of our lives is important, it is never enough. Communicating the gospel always involves proclamation of the gospel as we share the hope we have in the good news of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus.

We know our role is limited for it is God who gives the growth.<sup>24</sup> We cannot cause a seed to grow and we cannot cause a heart to repent. These are the work of God. Our job is to sow widely as we share the gospel faithfully and intentionally.

### **DISCIPLESHIP - Gospel Growth**

Those who confess Christ as Lord and Savior begin a lifelong journey of sanctification and growth in word and deed. The role of sent out ones in this field is to make disciples who can make disciples.<sup>25</sup>

The central command of the Great Commission is to make disciples. A disciple is more than a person who has mastered a set of information or practices a set of spiritual disciplines. Discipleship involves the intentional transformation of the heart, mind, affections, will, relationships, and purpose, without pitting the importance of one against another. The essential tools for discipleship are the Word of God, the Spirit of God, and the people of God.<sup>26</sup> Discipleship is the Spirit of God using the Word of God to transform the People of God more and more into the image of the Son of God. Therefore discipleship is both personal and corporate as this transformation happens in the context of the local church. Discipleship involves nurturing and developing the disciple's unique spiritual gifts<sup>27</sup> so that he is equipped to build up the body.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> From the document created by IMB leadership entitled *Foundations*

<sup>24</sup> 1 Corinthians 3:6

<sup>25</sup> 2 Timothy 2:2

<sup>26</sup> Matt. 16:24–26, 28:16–20; Mark 12:28–34; Luke 6:40; 14:25–33; John 8:31–32, 13:34–35, 14:15–26, 15:1–17, 16:7–15; Romans 12:1–21; Galatians 5:16–26; Ephesians 4:1–16; Philippians 2:1–18; Colossians 1:28–29, 3:1–4:6; Hebrews 4:12

<sup>27</sup> Romans 12:3–8, 1 Corinthians 12

<sup>28</sup> Ephesians 4:11–12

## **CHURCH** - Gospel Communities

Just as individual stalks are harvested and bundled together into bushels, individual Christians come together in Gospel Communities called churches. These communities are like cities on a hill<sup>29</sup> shining the light of the Gospel into a dark world.

Each church is an autonomous local community of baptized believers. These believers are bound together by a common confession and come together regularly around a common table.<sup>30</sup> Within the context of the local church, believers build up one another into spiritual maturity.<sup>31</sup>

The local church operates under the Lordship of Christ and under the authority of His Word. The church prays the Word, sings the Word and preaches the Word.

There are two offices within the church: pastors/elders and deacons. These leaders become Gospel stewards as they direct and guide the ministry of the local church to fulfill her role in the Great Commission.

It does not matter where a church meets. Churches may meet in homes, factories, rented spaces, dedicated buildings, under the shade of trees, or anywhere that is available and convenient for them. Every follower of Christ needs the teaching, worship, fellowship, and accountability of a local church.

The New Testament speaks also of the universal church which includes all of the redeemed of all the ages, believers from every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation. The church is God's chosen instrument for carrying out His mission and our missionary task. It is the context through which disciples are made and disciples are sent out.

## **12 CHARACTERISTICS OF A HEALTHY CHURCH**<sup>32</sup>

The following characteristics serve as a tool to help us understand healthy churches.

**Biblical evangelism.** People come into the church because they have heard the full biblical message of the gospel and have responded in re-

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<sup>29</sup> Matthew 5:14-16

<sup>30</sup> Ephesians 4:4-6

<sup>31</sup> Ephesians 4:13

<sup>32</sup> These are taken from the IMB document *Foundations*

pentance and faith. They then continue to share the gospel with the lost in a lifestyle of evangelism.

**Biblical discipleship.** Members of the church intentionally invest in one another's lives to grow to maturity in Jesus Christ. This discipleship is characterized by transformed hearts, minds, affections, wills, relationships, and purpose, all in keeping with the Word of God.

**Biblical membership.** The members consist only of people who give credible evidence of repentance from sin and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and who have been baptized as believers. Biblical church members are committed to one another, to assemble faithfully together with one another, and to be the body of Christ to one another.

**Biblical leadership.** The Bible recognizes two types of leaders in the church: pastors/elders/overseers and deacons. In the New Testament, the words "pastor," "elder," and "overseer" are used interchangeably, and refer to the same office (Acts 20:17, 28; Titus 1:5–7; 1 Peter 5:1–4; note that pastor = shepherd). The qualifications for these leaders are given in 1 Timothy 3:1–7 and Titus 1:5–9. They must be examples of faithful discipleship, and they must hold firmly to sound doctrine. They must be gifted by God to teach. According to Scripture, pastors/elders/overseers must be men. Scripture is clear that not everyone is gifted and called to teach and lead in the church, but all gifts are equally honorable and necessary to the church. The consistent pattern in the New Testament is for churches to have a plurality of pastors/elders/overseers. Deacons are servants of the church whose qualifications are listed in 1 Timothy 3:8–13. They are chosen as needed to perform tasks, which free the pastors/elders/overseers to devote themselves to the ministry of the Word and prayer.

**Biblical preaching and teaching.** Such teaching is central to the weekly gatherings of the church, and consists of the exposition and application of Scripture. The church regards the Bible as the supreme, controlling authority over all it believes and does, and faithful Bible teaching saturates the life of a healthy church. A healthy church holds to the inspiration, inerrancy, authority, sufficiency, and clarity of Scripture, and interprets each text of the Bible responsibly in context, according to the norms of grammatical/historical interpretation.

**Biblical ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper.** Baptism is immersion in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and it is only administered to those who give credible evidence that they are born-again believers in Jesus Christ. All believers are expected to be baptized. A healthy church regularly celebrates the Lord's Supper in remembrance of the death of Jesus, as a visible sermon of the gospel, and in anticipation of His return.

**Biblical worship.** A healthy church offers to God worship that is acceptable to Him according to His Word, with reverence, awe, and joy. It sings psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs whose content is saturated with biblical truth. Its worship includes the public reading of Scripture, the testimonies of God's people, and prayer. As appropriate, it may also include corporate fasting. All of its worship aims to glorify God and edify His people.

**Biblical fellowship.** Members of the church love each other, encourage one another, and build each other up. They care for one another, serve one another, and bear each other's burdens. They are kind to one another and forgive each other. They teach, admonish, and exhort one another with the Word of God. They stir one another up to love and good works. They are involved in one another's lives and know each other well enough to be fruitfully involved in one another's discipleship.

**Biblical prayer.** Members of the church pray both privately and corporately. In their prayers, they worship God, confess their sins, thank God for His blessings, intercede for others, and ask God to meet their own needs. A healthy church prays fervently and frequently.

**Biblical accountability and discipline.** Members of the church hold one another accountable for their obedience to the Word of God, and leaders of the church watch over the flock that has been entrusted to them. When necessary, the church exercises church discipline according to Scriptural instructions, always praying and laboring for restoration of the erring brother or sister.

**Biblical giving.** Members of the church give freely of their resources for the support of those who teach the Word, the expenses of the church, the relief of the poor, and the advance of the gospel around the world. Healthy churches are financially self-sustaining or moving toward being financially self-sustaining. Experience has consistently shown that foreign financial subsidy damages the health of a church.

**Biblical mission.** Not only is the church organized to share the gospel and make disciples locally, but it is also organized and actively involved in taking the gospel to the nations. Members of a healthy church demonstrate the goodness of God in their works of mercy while declaring the gospel of Christ to the lost.

### **EXIT** - Gospel Launch

A full barn means two things: there will be enough food for the family this season and seeds for next season. In the Missionary Task, the goal is that this process of entry, evangelism, discipleship and church planting will continue to cycle through among more unreached peoples and places.

For exit to happen, the local church should be able to feed themselves (self-governing, self-financing, self-propagating, and self-theologizing) and to seed a new field (carrying out the Missionary Task in another area).

As with so many worthwhile endeavors, it is helpful to begin with the end in mind. In other words, it is helpful to imagine this final picture before the first seed of the Gospel is sown. This will keep the church planter, pastor, missionary, or church member focused on the end vision. The goal is not people hearing the Gospel (as important as that is). The work is not done once people come to Christ and begin to be discipled (as necessary as that is). The point isn't even a church being planted (as vital to the task as that is). The goal is that God would receive what God alone deserves, namely the praise and worship from all peoples.

Throughout the missionary tasks there will be many "exits" as you transition from a season of sowing to a season of harvest. There will be an "exit" as people are sent out from your church to another unreached area. But the true "exit" that we all long for is that day when the earth is



filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.<sup>33</sup>

### **WHERE DO YOU FIT IN?**

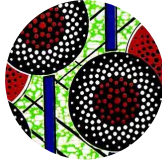
Not everyone will go live among one of the unreached peoples you will be learning about in this book. Not everyone will plant a church. Not everyone is a pastor or a cross-cultural missionary. But every Christian is called to be a disciple and that means active participation in the mission of God. Every person who has the Spirit and numbered among the elect has been called by God to leverage their life for the Mission of God as they participate (pray, give, go, send) in the Missionary Task. The geography will be different, the specifics will vary but do not be mistaken, there is ONE task and we are all joyfully giving our lives to that end!

Why do we do what we do? Hopefully it is for the same reason God does what He does, namely so that His glory might be made known among all nations through the witness and missionary activity of His church.

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<sup>33</sup> Habakuk 2:14





# **HIS-story:** The Grand Narrative of God's Redemption

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by Dr. Nick Moore

Have you ever wondered how some people can foretell almost exactly what is going to happen in the plotline of a book or movie that they have never read or seen? As the story unfolds, they begin to make predictions about what this or that character is going to do and how the situation is going to resolve. Are such people prophets? Are they psychic? Have they cheated the story by reading or watching the end before the beginning?

I would suggest that the reason some people can accurately make such predictions is because they have become well acquainted with the art of storytelling. There has been much study and discipline put into the craft of developing a story with its characters, setting, conflict, tension, plot twists, climax, and resolution. And one who spends enough time in story telling (either telling or hearing) can develop the ability to start recognizing the clues and markers which indicate the direction a story is going. Knowing where a story is ultimately headed and will land in the end can assist us as we read through the various parts which lead up to that end.

In the first chapter of Ephesians, the Apostle Paul gives us a “behind the scenes” glimpse into just such a story. In this passage, Paul is pulling back the curtain (albeit slightly) on THE story, HIS-story; the grand narrative of redemptive history.

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and

insight making known<sup>al</sup> to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. - Ephesian 1:7-10 ESV

According to Paul, God's plan (or will) from before the foundation of the world has been to unite "all things" in Christ. In this passage, Paul specifically says this "uniting" can only take place "in Christ" and more specifically the "redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses." Apparently God's plan from before the foundation of the world had everything to do with Jesus, and more specifically the Gospel of Jesus Christ!

Reading through such a backwards lens, we are able to see how the Gospel of Jesus Christ has been central to God's plan from the first words of Genesis. When God speaks into the darkness and void (Gen 1:2), He does so with a "Word" which John tells us was "with God and *was* God" (Jn 1:1) and which, in the fullness of time, "became flesh and dwelt among us" (Jn 1:14). Even in the act of creation, God was initiating a plan by which Jesus would come to be seen as all in all (Col 3:11). God's first words to His creation were Gospel words.

Similarly, when He placed Adam and Eve in the Garden outside of Eden, He placed them there as His "image" bearers and commissioned them "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it..." (Gen 1:28). God's desire even from those early days was for His "image" and glory to cover the dry lands like waters cover the sea (Hab 2:14). Even in this command, though, God was pointing forward to a time when *the* "image of the invisible God" (Col 1:15) and the "exact imprint of His nature" (Heb 1:3), namely Jesus, would be lifted up and draw all men everywhere to Himself (Jn 12:32).

This vision becomes blurred, however, when this new commission for God's glory becomes hijacked through a hiss. That "ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world" (Rev 12:9) enters the Garden and engages the man and his wife on, of all topics, God's word. "Did God actually say..." (Gen 3:1). By calling God's "word" into question, we can now see that Satan was enticing the man and wife away from God's central purposes in Christ and pointing them to an alternate agenda. In this agenda we should not live only by every "word that comes from the mouth of God" (Matt 4:4) but instead should live by bread (or fruit) alone. This alternative vision for the uni-

verse is what the Bible calls “sin” and it came into the world through Adam, and following it came death (Rom 5:12).

The subsequent chapters of Genesis read like a casualty report. The chapter immediately following centers around the first fratricide (brother killing brother). The chapter after that is punctuated by a never-before-uttered phrase that should shock us to our core, “...and he died” (Gen 5:5, 8, 11, etc.). “The wages of sin is death” (Rom 6:23), and this payroll has been fully paid from the earliest of days. God’s purpose to unite all things in Christ had become so compromised that He decided to start again with a new *adam* (man), named Noah. The well-known story of the global flood (Gen 6-9) starts to sound similar to Genesis 1, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth” (Gen 9:7). But by the end of the story, because of continued sin, it resonates more closely with Genesis 3 “Cursed be Canaan...” (Gen 9:25).

The sin agenda continues to increase after the flood to the point that God once again (graciously) disrupts the flow of human history, this time by confusing their “words” (Gen 11:7). This judgment has the dual effect of slowing human self-destruction and also dispersing the human population to the ends of the earth and dividing them for the first time ever into segments called “nations, tribes, peoples, and languages” (Rev 7:9). While this was a necessary moment of course correction, we can see that in the big picture this was not God’s desire for His people from the beginning. This story sets the stage perfectly for our next major plot event.

In Genesis 12, we meet a man named Abram whose name literally means “father of peoples.” This name proves providential as God calls him to be Abraham “father of MANY peoples.” Interestingly, the fatherhood with which Abraham is commissioned is not of a single bloodline but of all nations! This is why God blessed Abraham saying, “I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Gen 12:2b-3). God’s expressed desire is that, through Abraham and his offspring, all the peoples/families of the earth would be reunited under His blessing. With this pronouncement, God has set His people back on a track that would see His original plan for His global glory restored.

We began tracing God’s story in Genesis 1 and, so far, have only progressed 11 chapters. But, it is at this point that the story hits triple-speed. The remainder of the Old Testament is essentially a chronicle of

how this single family attempts, fails, re-attempts, and then re-fails (over and over again) to accomplish their commission of being a people set apart for God's glory to the nations (Is 46:13). Underlying this entire epic journey, however, there is a resounding note of hope. The glorious future of Israel and all nations will not be brought about through any man-made convention or institution. The only hope for the world will be through a Savior King, brought into the world via Abraham's bloodline, but to bring salvation from the dual dreaded disasters called sin and death to the ends of the earth.

In the fullness of time, of course, we know how this part of the story resolves. Paul tells us these "promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, 'And to offsprings,' referring to many, but referring to one, 'And to your offspring,' who is Christ" (Gal 3:16). Again elsewhere, "all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why it is through Him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory" (2 Cor 1:20). The New Testament makes it clear that Jesus of Nazareth came into this world to rescue it from the clutches and curse of sin and to re-establish a people who would be set apart for displaying God's glory to the ends of the earth. Jesus accomplished this redemption through His substitutionary death on the cross, His bodily resurrection from the grave, and His Holy Spirit-endowment upon His disciples.

At the beginning of the book of Acts, Luke tells us that in his "first book" (Gospel of Luke) he dealt with "all that Jesus *began* to do and teach" (Acts 1:1). One might think it is perhaps reading too much into the single word "*began*," but it only takes a quick glimpse at the book of Acts as a whole to realize it is all about what Jesus *continues* to do and teach through His disciples. Following Jesus's prescribed programme (Acts 1:8), the Gospel about Jesus Christ and the salvation that is found only in Him began to be proclaimed throughout Jerusalem (Acts 1-7), Judea & Samaria (Acts 8-15), and to the Ends of the Earth (Acts 16-28). We even get a sneak peek into God's end-time vision for His people in Acts 2 where men "from every nation under heaven" (Acts 2:5) encountered the disciples preaching the Gospel and "were bewildered, because each one was hearing in his own language" (2:6).

This temporary reversal of the Tower of Babel (Gen 11) was, however, only that- temporary. The end-goal of God's story was not yet fully accomplished in the book of Acts. In fact, the ending of Acts (chapter 28) has no formal conclusion, leaving the reader in suspense with the expectation that this work of God's story is still moving forward. The Great Commission which Jesus gave, "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” (Matt 28:18-20a) still applies to believers. To this very day, Jesus’s disciples (disciples of disciples of the original disciples) whom we call “Christians” are busy working toward the ultimate end of God’s story.

Of course, the Bible informs us how the story will ultimately end—with all things “under his feet” (Ps 8:6; 1 Cor 15:27; Eph 1:22; Heb 2:8). But we do not yet fully know the all the various *means* to that end. The church of the Lord Jesus Christ has been engaged in global mission since its very inception and, by God’s grace, will continue marching forward with the Good News of Jesus at the forefront of our ranks. In doing so, we (individually and collectively) are taking up our place in this story (or plan/will) which began before the foundation of the world (Eph 1:4) and will find its conclusion when we finally “obtain possession of our inheritance” (Eph 1:14). In this meantime, we Christians are not merely spectators but actors who have been chosen to play our parts in the unfolding of this plot.

As we do so, we do so with urgency, fervor, and intensity, but not with anxiety or fear. Because, after all, we know the Author of this Story. We have read an advanced copy of His script. And based on that information, we are able to claim not only a prediction but the promise about where this story is headed. The glory of God displayed in the face of Jesus Christ, our King!

*After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!” - Revelation 7:9-10*







## The History of Missions: A 10,000 Meter View

by Dr. Phil Barnes

In his well-known and enduring book on the topic of the history of Christian missions, Bishop Stephen Neill writes, “To write the whole history of Christian Expansion in one volume is a difficult task.” To do so in just a few pages is even more difficult. Nevertheless, we will press forward. The question that we are seeking to answer in these few pages is, “How did we get from small group of believers in Acts 1 to today to 2.5 billion people claiming to be Christians in the world today?”

### **First Century (up to A.D. 100)**

Returning to Neill’s formative work, we will borrow three radical changes from him that took place in the first century A.D. *First*, Christ did not return immediately. So, missionary work would not be “frenzied proclamation because time is short, but a steady programme of expansion throughout the world, yet with an unfailing sense of urgency because for each man and every moment may prove to be the crucial time of decision.” *Second*, it became clear that the church would be centrifugal and not centrist in its approach. Instead of being, “come and see,” the mission would be “go and tell.” The *third* radical change was the destruction of Jerusalem. Neill writes, “Since A.D. 70 the Christian Church has never had one local centre; it has learned to look only to the living presence of the Lord within itself.” Neill concludes with two key statements: “The Church of the first Christian generation was a genuinely *missionary* Church . . . What is clear is that *every* Christian was a *witness*.”

## **Second Century (A.D. 100-199)**

Christianity in the second century “spread naturally along the main roads and rivers of the Roman Empire.” By the end of the second century the gospel had spread into Arabia, North Africa, and into Europe. It is during this time that churches in North Africa became the first Latin-speaking churches. The churches in the area now known as Turkey (then called Asia Minor) became very strong.

We can look at the church at Rome as an *example* of a church that began in the second century. The preface to a commentary written in the 4<sup>th</sup> century gives credibility to the theory that neither Peter nor Paul was involved in the planting of the church at Rome: “They [the Romans] had embraced the faith of Christ, although they saw no sign of mighty works nor *any* of the apostles.” So, if it was not Paul or Peter, then who planted this church? It is likely that Jews and/or Gentile proselytes or God-fearers who had been present when the Holy Spirit came on the Apostles in Jerusalem at Pentecost and were converted under Peter’s preaching there were the founders of the church at Rome. In other words, following the pattern set in the first century, ordinary people started the church at Rome.

## **Third – Fifth Century (A.D. 200-500)**

Even though Jesus spent most of his life and ministry in rural areas, the church in the second century spread primarily to cities. The term pagan comes from the Latin word for “rural person.” In fact, up until A.D. 260, church growth was confined to the cities, but around that year, rural people began to come to Christ. Due to civil unrest due to the threat of Germanic tribes invading the Roman Empire and economic hard times, “rural folk began to question their traditional cults as the hard times continued . . . [and] the gospel offered both social justice and assurance of power over demonic forces.” Rodney Stark believes that the church grew in the third century because of its ability to provide “potent antidotes to life’s miseries her and now.”

With the rise of Emperor Constantine in 313 A.D., the environment in which church operated changed. Within a few years, Christianity went from being a persecuted minority to the official religion of the Roman Empire. This period of Christianity becoming favoured by the government and by most people is known as Christendom. As Christendom expanded throughout Europe and beyond, the spiritual and political aspects of life became inseparable. As a result, governments were able to

impose religion upon individuals, families, towns, cities, and whole populations. This kind of imposition is not biblical evangelism and discipleship. As a result, many people became “Christians” without actually becoming disciples of Jesus.

### **The Middle Ages (500-1500)**

A.D. 500-1500 is often referred to as “the Dark Ages.” While these years are marked by an unfortunate mixing of church and state, God was not silent. He used called-out individuals to advance and preserve the gospel. We will just look at a few.

The first was Augustine of Canterbury. Augustine of Canterbury (not to be confused with Augustine of Hippo, North Africa) is known as The Apostle to the English. While he did not want to go at first, Augustine eventually relented and made his way to England. He and his other missionaries led honorable lives before the king and his people, and they preached the gospel. As a result, the king and 10,000 people were converted. Augustine is also known for converting pagan temples and festivals into church buildings and Christian feasts.

The second individual was a man called Boniface. Neill called Boniface “the greatest of all the missionaries” during the Middle Ages. Boniface was a famous evangelist who spread the gospel in the area that is now Germany. He is probably best known for defiantly chopping down an oak tree that was the center of the pagan worship of the Thundergod. Terry writes that Boniface’s experience is reminiscent of Elijah mocking the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel. Boniface’s ministry yielded long-term success. Over the course of his 40 years of missionary labour, as many as 100,000 Germans were baptized through his ministry.

These two men represent the Lord’s faithfulness to Himself and His gospel during a time when the gospel was being clouded by church traditions and customs that drew people away from the Bible rather than towards it. Now, we will discuss a few individuals who God used to preserve the true message of the Bible during this same time period

Englishman John Wycliffe (1320-1384) has been called the Morning Star of the Reformation. Just as the morning star signals the coming of the morning every day, Terry writes that Wycliffe’s life and writings “signaled the coming of the Reformation.” Wycliffe’s central principle was that ordinary people needed to hear the gospel in their own language. One of Wycliffe’s most lasting contributions was the idea that the Bible should be translated into the language of the people. This emphasis on

the Bible is one of the central reasons that he is known as the Morning Star of the Reformation. The Reformation emphasized *Sola Scriptura* – that Scripture alone is the foundation of our faith. Wycliffe wanted all people in England to hear the good news in English rather than Latin. His emphasis on Bible translation is reflected in the contemporary missions organization that bears his name – Wycliffe Bible Translators.

Following in the footsteps of Wycliffe, Jan Huss (1373-1415) put a great deal of emphasis on the Scriptures and believed that many practices in the church were corrupt. Hus was from Bohemia – modern-day Czechoslovakia. Hus was burned to death for working to get the Bible translated into the language of the people. As Hus was being burned, he “is said to have uttered the words ‘You may roast this goose [‘Hus’ means ‘goose’ in Czech], but a hundred years from now a swan will arise whose singing you will not be able to silence.” In our next section, we will hear about Martin Luther – who came almost exactly 100 years later.

### **Luther, Calvin, and the Protestant Reformation (1500-1800)**

The men mentioned above helped to set the stage for the Protestant Reformation. Taking place during the 16th century, the Protestant Reformation was initially an attempt to reform the Roman Catholic Church from within. In the end, of course, the Reformers broke away from the Church. The Reformation began on October 31, 1517, when a professor of theology named Martin Luther nailed his Ninety-Five Theses to the door of the university chapel in Wittenberg, Germany. These theses recounted Luther’s questions and complaints about some of the problems that he saw within the Church. The remaining details of this movement are beyond the scope of this book, but it is safe to say that Luther was the central tool that God used to restore the gospel to its central place in the Church. The Reformation’s main contribution to the cause of missions was to restore biblical doctrine. Terry lists four doctrines as being the Reformers’ key contributions to missions. The first key doctrine was the doctrine of justification by grace through faith. Without this crucial biblical doctrine, missionaries and missions organizations would have no gospel to preach. The second key doctrine was the Reformation’s emphasis on biblical authority. The question of biblical authority continues to be a key component in distinguishing *true* biblical missions and those efforts that are merely humanitarian in nature. Without a clear mandate for the authoritative Word of God, missions would have no foundation. Third, like the forerunners to the Reformation mentioned earlier, the Reformers’ practice of Bible translation spanned several languages. This

practice helped to bring the Bible into the hands of the ordinary and everyday believers. It also set a pattern for translating the Bible into local languages and making sure that ordinary people had access to the Word of God. Finally, as mentioned above, the Reformers also placed a great deal of emphasis on biblical preaching. Romans 10 clearly teaches that people are saved through hearing the message preached to them. Without biblically-based gospel-centered preaching missions would be futile. By refuting false doctrine, the Reformation gave back to the Church and individual believers correct biblical teaching to be taken to the nations.

### **AD 1800 - today: Winter's categories**

In September 1997, Ralph Winter wrote an article called "Four Men, Three Eras." In this article, Winter gave an overview of the history of missions since 1792. I will summarize that article below.

In the first era, characterized by William Carey, the gospel went to the coastlands. During this era, missions organizations from Europe and the United States sent missionaries around the world. They established sound missiological theories and methods. Much of the world had received the gospel

The second era is represented by Hudson Taylor of the China Inland Mission (now known as OMF). Taylor and others noticed that while missions organizations had done well in reaching the coastlands, the gospel had not penetrated the peoples and places in the interior of Asia and Africa. During this era, lay people were also mobilized for the cause of missions.

The third era of missions is represented by Cameron Townsend and Donald McGavran. The second era recognized that geographical barriers needed to be crossed to fulfill the Great Commission. Townsend focused on linguistics and Bible translation. Following in the footsteps of Wycliffe, Luther and others, he understood the importance of the Bible in vernacular languages for missions. Meanwhile, McGavran pointed to the need to recognize and cross socio-cultural barriers in reaching the unreached peoples and places of the world.

### **Africa's Role in Church History**

*"Christianity is not alien to Africa."*

*"Christianity is an African religion."*

The purpose of this article is to prove these two statements to be true. Africans and Africa played an important role in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. They also played a key role in the development of early Christian thought. Finally, Africa is home to more Christians than any other continent and stands poised to lead Christianity in the next century.

### **Africa and Africans in the Bible**

The Bible is full of references to Africa and Africans. A quick survey of the Old Testament and the New Testament will demonstrate the central role that Africa has in the storyline of the Bible.

#### *Africa and Africans in OT*

There are over one thousand references to African peoples and places in the Old Testament. Let's look at two categories of peoples. The first group of people are the Cushites. The Cushites descended from Noah's grandson Cush. The area in the Bible known as Cush is roughly equivalent to modern Sudan. There are a number of Cushites mentioned in the OT. Three of the most prominent are Moses' wife, Phineas, and Ebed-Melech. Moses' wife is said to be a Cushite in Numbers 12:1. This may be the same person previously called Zipporah, or it may be Moses' second wife after Zipporah's death. In any case, the wife of the author of the first five books of the Bible is clearly a key figure. The second figure is Phineas. He is a priest who the OT presents "as a model for all priests to follow." The third Cushite is a man named Ebed-Melech. He is mentioned in Jeremiah 38-39 where he is presented as a man of deep faith, bold courage, and righteous behaviour.

The second category of Africans in the OT is Egypt and the Egyptians. Egypt plays a central role in the storyline of the OT. While Egypt and Egyptians are often presented as the enemies of the people of God, God is clearly at work *in* and *through* the Africans of Egypt as well. In 2 Chronicles 35:21-22, "the African Pharaoh received a message from God, a message he passed on to the King of Judah."

#### *Africa and Africans in NT*

While the number of references to Africa and Africans decreases in the New Testament, Africa and Africans continue to play an important role. Three examples will demonstrate this extremely significant truth.

First, Africans were present at Pentecost in Acts 2. Both Egyptians and Libyans were present when the Holy Spirit came and the Church was born. The presence of these African brothers means that from the very first day of the Church, the gospel was spoken and heard in the tongues of Africa.

Second, the Philip the deacon shared the gospel with a man from Ethiopia in Acts 8. From this story, we learn that the gospel came to Africa many years before Europe and Asia and over a thousand years before the gospel went to North America. The gospel is at home in African soil.

Third, in Acts 13, we learn that two of the key leaders in the first center for intercultural missions were from Africa. One was a man named Simeon whom the people called Niger. Niger was the word for black, so this man was clearly a black man from Africa. The second was a man named Lucius who came from Cyrene (in Libya). These two men were key church leaders at the first missions-minded church in history.

### *Conclusion*

These few examples demonstrate that the Bible is full of references to Africa and Africans. The few references we have seen above lead us to agree with Welch who concluded, “Africans are not late recipients of the gospel message; they are truly a part of the Christian message . . .”

### **Africa and Africans in the Christian Thought**

Africa not only played a central role in the Bible. Africa and Africans also played a central role in the develop of early Christian thought: “During the formation of early ecumenical Christianity, Africa was . . . a creative intellectual dynamo.” The three examples of Athanasius, Augustine, and Cyril will sufficiently prove this idea.

First, Athanasius was an early church leader and defender of the faith from Egypt. His work *On the Incarnation* was pivotal in defeating an early heresy called Arianism. Athanasius demonstrated from Scripture that Jesus was not a part of creation but was fully God. Athanasius’ important teaching about Jesus being fully divine and unique are relevant in today’s world where false teachers are claiming that we can become like Jesus and become “little Christs.” As the Preacher says, “There is nothing new under the Sun” (Ecclesiastes 1:9, CSB).

Augustine, usually known as Saint Augustine or Augustine of Hippo, was born in A.D. 354 in modern day Algeria. Many theologians down to

today continue to rely on Augustine's writings. Augustine did not just influence theology. His impact can be felt in the study of Philosophy, as well. In fact, one contemporary author has written that Augustine impacts almost *all* areas of today's world: "His influence in in the water so you don't notice it." He then goes on to write that most modern thought is "already Augustinian; we just didn't know it." In terms of theological influence, many of the ideas of the Protestant Reformation were foreshadowed by Augustine. In fact, Augustine has had more influence on the Christianity than any writer outside of the Bible.

Finally, known as Cyril of Alexandria, Cyril was born in Egypt. His thoughts and writings on the person of Jesus formed the foundation for the Chalcedonian Creed. This formulation of Jesus as one person with two natures serves as a foundation for a biblical understanding of Jesus. Contemporary theologians continue to rely on this important African theologian.

### **Africa in the Contemporary World**

There are more Christians in Africa than anywhere else in the world. Given this new reality, Africa stands poised to lead the Church into the next century. The influence of African Christians is not limited to the churches located in Africa. The churches that are most "alive and well" in North America are those made up of immigrants and ethnic minorities. Churches in Europe are also often led by first generation immigrants to Europe. Many of these immigrants came from Africa. Just last year, renowned historian and author Philip Jenkins wrote, "Christianity will become ever more markedly a religion of Africa and the African diaspora."

The impact of Africans in the future will be felt in at least two significant ways. First, African pastors, scholars, and theologians will be among those who write the next great works of Biblical, Systematic, and Pastoral Theology. As the Bible continues to be studied and applied to the lives of African contexts, theological books that are relevant to those contexts will help churches around the world to better understand and apply the gospel of Jesus Christ "that was delivered to the saints once for all" (Jude 3, CSB).

Second, Africa is transforming itself from a mission field to a mission force. In the coming years, African churches must raise up and train intercultural missionaries to take the gospel to the unreached peoples and places of the world. In some cases, this mission work will take



Africans to the Muslim World from North Africa across Central and South Asia to Southeast Asia. In other cases, the vast Hindu and Buddhist populations of East and Southeast Asia are ripe for African missionaries to harvest them. Finally, the Christ-haunted cultures and societies of Europe and North America need to be re-evangelized, and Africans are the perfect mission force to do that. African churches must continue to hear this call to take the gospel to the unreached peoples and places of the world!





## Now What? Next Steps & Resources

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We hope that what you've read so far has encouraged you and challenged you as well. All of us are tempted to become globally near-sighted. This condition causes us to only focus on what is right in front of us (*my* family, *my* church, *my* job, etc) and forget about the nations who are lost and without access to the Gospel.

The goal of this book was to provide a biblical foundation and a practical motivation for using your life so that all peoples might hear and believe the Good News of Jesus Christ. While informative, the book isn't primarily about information/knowledge. Instead, it is a call to action.

Our goal is that because of this book and the resources associated with it that you and your church would **pray intentionally, give sacrificially** and **go joyfully** to the unreached peoples and places in your country and beyond. We hope that your heart has been stirred towards these three actions.

Jesus told his disciples in Luke 10:2 that the harvest was plentiful but the workers were few. God, in His sovereignty, has chosen the local church to be His instrument in gathering the harvest of all peoples around the Throne of Christ. Don't miss out what God has called each of us to do. Don't get distracted with temporary things. Let us focus our hearts, our minds, and our hands on this Great Commission that we have received from our Lord.

It will not be easy. It will be costly. Many will suffer and some will be persecuted. But it is worth the cost because the Lamb of God is worthy

to receive His reward, a people from every tribe and tongue redeemed by His blood and gathered around His throne worshipping Him.<sup>34</sup>

Perhaps that is the most important next step: worship. When you see our Great God and His mission, it leads first and foremost to worship Him and give Him the glory due His name. It is when we behold Christ that we will run to the myriads of nations today who do not know Him. It is when we treasure Christ above all else that all else becomes counted as loss and as rubbish<sup>35</sup>

Let us not waste our lives. Let us give all that we have until every people and every tribe in every nation hear of our Great God! Thank you for joining in this great task!

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<sup>34</sup> Revelation 5:9-10

<sup>35</sup> Philippians 3:7-8



## APPENDIX A

### 55 in 5

In 2020, 55 unreached people group in Sub-Saharan Africa were identified and targeted for specific contextualized engagement in the next five years. These are, according to missiological research databases, the least reached people groups in Sub-Saharan Africa<sup>36</sup>. This project, known as “55 in 5,” has begun and is being carried out all over the continent. We have developed some resources to help you and your church participate in this initiative.

#### RESOURCES:

**1. Info cards on each of the groups**

These provide basic information on each people group

**2. Children’s Stories**

Stories on each people group designed to be told to children and to provide prayer points

**3. Banner**

This resource can be printed in a large format to hang up

**4. Powerpoint Slides & prayer prompts**

Power point slides to be used in worship service and prayer prompts for each people group..

**5. Small group/Sunday school material**

A thirteen week curriculum: *God’s Heart for the Nations*

**6. Praying for the 55 card**

Quick prayers for the 55 in 5

**7. People group profiles and prayer prompts**

Background information on each group and prayer prompts

*All of these resources can be downloaded for free at  
[www.thegoproject.net](http://www.thegoproject.net)*

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<sup>36</sup> As you learn more about these groups you’ll see some surprising information. For example, some of these people groups will have (reportedly) 10, 15, or even 20% of their population listed as “evangelical” Christians. These are oftentimes peoples who were historically “Christian” but practically “Animist.” In other words, they might claim to be a Christian or even attend a church but they, in large part, do not know Christ and have not believed His gospel.



# THE 55 IN 5 PROJECT



# THE 55 IN 5 PROJECT

#	PEOPLE GROUP	POPULATION
1	Kotafon of Benin	164,000*
2	Pila of Benin	100,000
3	Jula of Burkina Faso	2,065,000
4	Soninke of Burkina Faso	177,000
5	Banda of Chad	110,000
6	Mango of Chad	87,500
7	Bangi of Congo	101,000
8	Bisa of Côte d'Ivoire	122,000
9	Konyanke of Côte d'Ivoire	233,000
10	Bangobango of DR Congo	318,000
11	Ngando of DR Congo	439,000
12	Ngiri of DR Congo	411,000
13	Ngongo of DR Congo	218,000
14	Salampasu of DR Congo	288,000
15	Seba of DR Congo	303,000
16	Sonde of DR Congo	164,000
17	Yela of DR Congo	101,000
18	Naath of Ethiopia	186,000
19	Northern Teke of Gabon	105,000
20	Sankaran of Guinea	145,000
21	Antefasy of Madagascar	173,000
22	Antesaka of Madagascar	1,400,000
23	Sihanaka of Madagascar	609,000
24	Bozo of Mali	450,000
25	Bozo Tiemaxo of Mali	317,000
26	Fula Jalon of Mali	105,000
27	Fulanke of Mali	90,000
28	Jula of Mali	99,000
29	Syenara Senufo of Mali	199,000



<b>#</b>	<b>PEOPLE GROUP</b>	<b>POPULATION</b>
30	Wolof of Mauritania	295,000
31	Makhuwa-Merravone of Mozambique	552,000
32	Manyika of Mozambique	243,000
33	Herero of Namibia	181,000
34	Kwangali of Namibia	135,000
35	Nama of Namibia	127,000
36	Yerwa Kanuri of Niger	176,000
37	Manga Kanuri of Nigeria	359,000
38	Okpamheri of Nigeria	90,000
39	West Marghi of Nigeria	288,000
40	Bambara of Senegal	89,500
41	Fulakunda of Senegal	1,980,000
42	Maninka of Sierra Leone	160,000
43	Zande of South Sudan	834,000
44	Ingessana of Sudan	114,000
45	Konongo of Tanzania	116,000
46	Ndengereko of Tanzania	99,500
47	Rwandese of Tanzania	243,000
48	Suba of Tanzania	225,000
49	Zigua of Tanzania	679,000
50	Borgu Fulbe of Togo	102,000
51	Kotokoli of Togo	438,000
52	Hima of Uganda	285,000
53	Mwanga of Zambia	271,000
54	Chikunda of Zimbabwe	202,000
55	Tswa of Zimbabwe	212,000





## APPENDIX B GO!

While *55 in 5* is looking at all of Sub-Saharan Africa, we felt the need for country specific initiatives where we would take the same approach. In other words, research to identify the least reached peoples within each country so that we might encourage and equip the local church to pray, give, go and send so that those who have little to no access to the Gospel might hear and believe. This project, called “GO,” has begun as unreached peoples were identified, resources created, and focused evangelistic efforts commenced. We have created resources to mobilize you and your church to pray for these peoples. We hope you and your church will prayerfully consider joining us in this task.

### RESOURCES AVAILABLE

**1. Information and prayer cards**

Snapshot of information on each people group plus a prayer request.

**2. Banner**

This resource can be printed in a large format to hang in the church building.

**3. Powerpoint Slides & prayer prompts**

These resources are to be used on Sunday morning. You’ll find a quick snapshot of information to be read and a prayer prompt for each people group. There are also powerpoint slides that can be used as a visual.

*All of these resources can be downloaded for free at  
[www.thegoproject.net](http://www.thegoproject.net)*



