

CATCH THE VISION!

An accelerating global movement is well under way—and you can be a part of it!

God is doing amazing things in our world. He's sending Navajo missionaries to the Laplanders and European Gypsy believers to Madagascar. He's shaking up Christian finances for His worldwide Cause, blasting open the Iron Curtain and riddling China with a searing spiritual hunger. He's raising a movement of excited disciples ready to go anywhere and do anything.

Followers of Jesus Christ are increasing by more than 90,000 every day. Eminent world watchers have documented an unprecedented initiative of God in this final decade of the 20th century, during these closing years of the second millennium. And maybe your heart is restless to be a part of His big picture. Maybe you're restless to catch a new vision for your life.

▼ What Are You Doing?

Think over the energy you're throwing into life now—trying to be the best you can be, trying to get ahead, to be a better Christian, a better family member, a better you. Why work so hard? Why ask so often for God's blessing on your life?

If it's to have a nicer, happier life, that's not a bad goal. Especially since that's what heaven will be—an easier, nicer existence. But if that were God's purpose for you right now, He would simply take you home to heaven, right? In the here-and-now, biblical discipleship is never described as "nice" or "easy."

▼ The Cause

God does want to bless you. But not to make your life easy. He'll bless you because He's got a demanding job for you—a specific task, one that lays down rails to guide your major life decisions, to keep you from spinning your wheels in Christian self-improvement.

Go ahead: Break out of the Christian-culture idea that to join God's family is to become part of a nice, privileged group. It's more like being born into a family business—everybody is naturally expected to take part in the Father's

work. Do you know what the Father is doing these days?

▼ An Unchangeable Purpose

Get a grip on your Bible. It will spell out how to break through to the crystal-clear, specific task God has for you in His historic purpose—in His "family business." He does have a wonderful plan for your life!

When you dig into the simple Bible study in the box on the lower right, you'll notice that Psalm 67 is a perfect overview of God's purpose:

*May God be gracious to us
and bless us*

*And make His face shine
upon us;*

*That Your ways may be
Known on earth,*

*Your salvation among all
nations.*

*... God will bless us, and all the
ends of the earth will fear Him.*

It's not too hard to figure out that God has blessed us for a specific purpose, right?

Notice too, Jesus' summary of Scripture and His role in fulfilling messianic prophecy:

"This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" Luke 24:46-47.

What you'll see over and over in these passages about God's purpose on earth are terms such as *peoples, nations, families, languages, tribes, the Gentiles* or even *Greeks*—all signifying the idea of "people groups." A people group, according to Christian anthropologists and mission experts, is the largest ethnic group within which the Gospel can spread without being stopped by barriers such as language or culture.

▼ Peoples Power

Survey your Bible concordance listings of the people-group terms such as *nation, peoples, Gentiles*. And remember not to equate "peoples" with our idea of political "countries." For example, the country of India has at least 3,000 distinct people groups within its borders. Irian Jaya has about 250 and Russia more than 300.

The 70 people groups formed at the Tower of Babel had splintered into about 60,000 by the time of Christ—when He commanded us to make disciples of every "nation" or people group.

Since then, these groups have merged through communication and trade into about 24,000 distinct people groups.

Fourteen thousand people groups are currently being discipled. The other 10,000—mostly among the Muslim, Han Chinese, Hindu, Buddhist and tribal cultures—have no church among

To learn more of God's heart for the world as revealed in scriptures, read through the following references. (If time allows, read the context of each verse as well.) They summarize God's "unchanging purpose" on earth—to bless His people, and through them, to bless every people group on earth.

Think through:

Genesis 12:1-3, 18:18, 22:17-18, 26:4,5, 28:14;
2 Chronicles 6:32-33;
Psalm 67, 96, 105;
Isaiah 49:6, 51:4, 56:6-8;
Zechariah 2:11;
Malachi 1:11;
Matthew 28:18-20;
Luke 2:30-32, 24:45-47;
Acts 1:8;
Romans 1:5, 10:13-15, 15:8-24, 16:25-27;
Galatians 3, verses 8, 14 & 29;
Ephesians 3:1-6;
Revelation 5:9; 7:9.

them and little or no mission work.

There are about 10,000 peoples who have never yet heard the Good News of Jesus in a way that they can understand it.

▼ What are the unreached people groups?

The Muslim Qashqa'i of Iran, the Buddhist Brao of Cambodia, the Tribal/Hindu Koya of India, the Nomadic Fezara of Sudan, the Folk/Religionist Manchu of China and about 9,995 others.

▼ Where are they?

In the remote jungles of Irian Jaya, in the ethnic neighborhoods of Berlin and nearly every major metropolitan city in the world, on Native American Indian reservations in the United States, in restricted-access countries, in India, in....

▼ Your vision

If you have a vision to share Christ in your neighborhood, your town or even all of your country, rejoice! Reaching your Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria is critical. But keep in mind that your country—no matter how large—represents only a very small part of our planet's total population—and a very small part of God's heart for the world.

It's also important to realize that God never expected or asked that we create a perfect society. If we get it in our minds that we must totally transform and "save" our city or country before we move on to other areas, *we never will move on!*

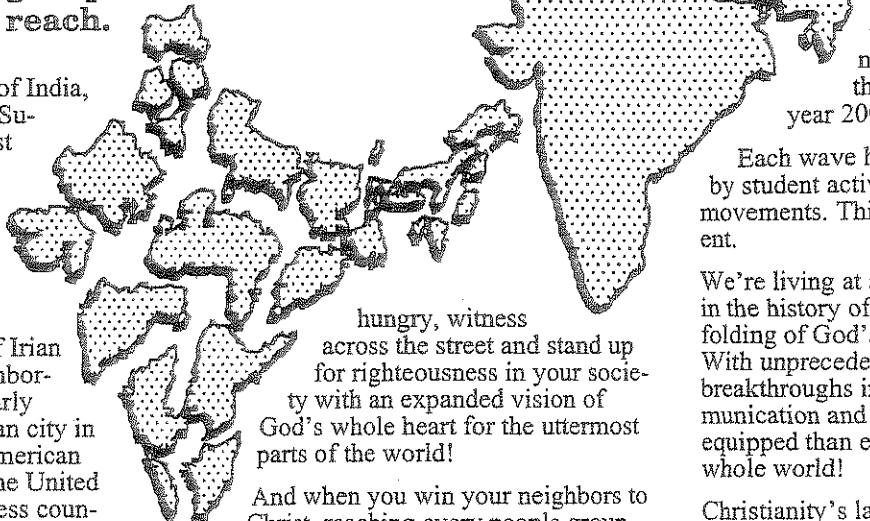
A "healthy" local church or body of believers walking in obedience to the Word of God will be active in two major areas:

- Evangelism and discipleship in their local area and,
- Assisting in the "whole Church" task of establishing a church movement in

every remaining unreached people group—a church movement which can effectively do in those peoples what their church does back home.

So, clothe the needy and feed the

The political country of India is actually a composite of at least 3,000 "nations" or people groups—the *ethne* we're to reach.



hungry, witness across the street and stand up for righteousness in your society with an expanded vision of God's whole heart for the uttermost parts of the world!

And when you win your neighbors to Christ, reaching every people group with the Gospel. Make sure that you and your church are a part of God's historic purpose to add to the Body of Christ those purchased with His blood "from every tribe and tongue and people and nation."

God is carrying out His unchanging purpose (see Hebrews 6:17 and context) through His obedient servants around

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the globe. And the pace of completing that purpose is accelerating rapidly in this final decade of the century!

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▼ Lessons from the past

Historically, the modern movements to reach the ends of the earth with God's

blessing have occurred in waves. The first era, championed by William Carey in the late 1700s, penetrated the coastlands of the globe's continents. The second, spearheaded by Hudson Taylor about 1865, has penetrated the inland regions of every country on earth.

The third wave, responding to Cameron Townsend and Donald McGavran's call to go to all the remaining "hidden" or "unreached peoples," is nearing completion in this last decade before the year 2000.

Each wave has been characterized by student activism, revival and prayer movements. This last wave is no different.

We're living at a very interesting point in the history of the world, in the unfolding of God's unchanging purpose. With unprecedented technological breakthroughs in cultural studies, communication and travel, we are better equipped than ever before to reach the whole world!

Christianity's largest denominations and major interdenominational mission agencies have committed the decade of the '90s to world evangelization. Many Christian leaders believe these final years of the 20th century will witness the greatest spiritual harvest the world has ever seen, bringing the task of world evangelization to completion!

Associations of mission agencies in various countries (and even whole continents!) have set goals to target and reach their share of unreached peoples through the international "Adopt-A-People Campaign."

For example, Latin American churches and mission agencies are planning to send teams to 3,000 unreached groups. Australia has selected 2,000 groups as their target.

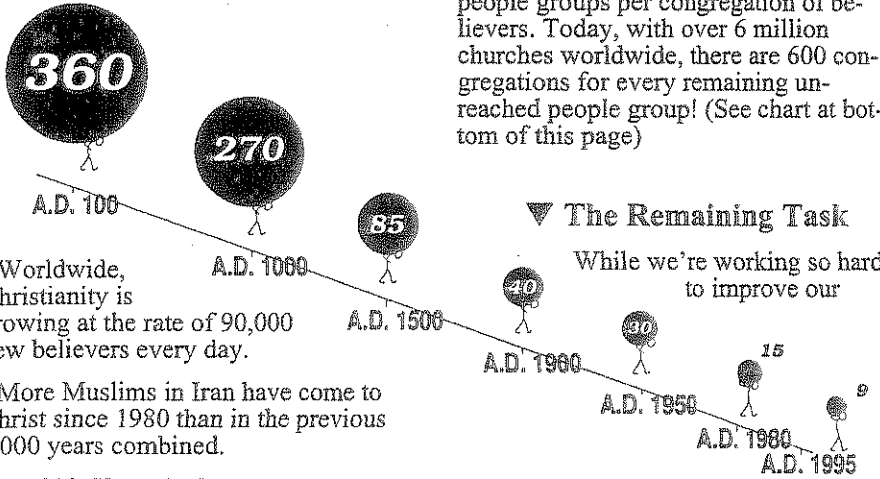
Christians worldwide are getting excited, realistic, and specific about throwing themselves into the final era of God's unchanging purpose.

▼ Look what God is doing

Especially if you're in a dull little corner of Christendom, it's critical you realize what God is doing these days around the globe. On the following page are a few highlights.

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- 3,000 new churches are opening every week worldwide.
- The Church in Africa is increasing by 20,000 per day on the average; that continent (south of the Sahara) was 3% Christian in 1900 and is nearly 60% Christian today.



- Worldwide, Christianity is growing at the rate of 90,000 new believers every day.
- More Muslims in Iran have come to Christ since 1980 than in the previous 1,000 years combined.
- In 1900, Korea had no Protestant church; it was deemed "impossible to penetrate." Today Korea is 30% Christian with 7,000 churches in the city of Seoul alone.
- In Islamic (Muslim) Indonesia, the percentage of Christians is so high the government won't print the statistic—which is probably nearing 15% of the population.
- After 70 years of oppression in Russia, people who are officially Christians number about 85 million—56% of the population. In one Siberian city people are being baptized 24 hours a day!
- God is creatively sending Chinese believers to reach Tibetans, Hondurans to reach North African Muslims and Navajos to reach Laplanders. There are currently more than 60,000 non Western missionaries from over 1,000 non Western mission agencies. Many of these are serving in places which are hostile to Western missionaries.

Where the church has been planted, it's growing like wildfire. The Good News is breaking loose worldwide:

- In AD 100, only 1 of every 360 people was an active believer. Today one in ten people is an active believer (9 to 1). (See chart below)
- In AD 100 there were 12 unreached people groups per congregation of believers. Today, with over 6 million churches worldwide, there are 600 congregations for every remaining unreached people group! (See chart at bottom of this page)

▼ The Remaining Task

While we're working so hard to improve our

lives, to deepen our fellowships, to seek God's healing of our families and our land, let's simply face the fact: We haven't yet finished the missionary assignment that Jesus gave us. But is it possible to finish it?

Missiologists say that it would be easy to send church-planting teams into each of these 10,000 unreached groups within a two year period. To do it, we need:

- 20,000 new missionaries
- \$300,000,000 for support of the new missionaries
- More prayer—at least a collective hour per day for each new missionary.

Can we do it? It seems like an intimidating task. But God will accomplish His purpose. The gates of hell that lock in the unreached peoples of the world can't stand against His church. At the end of time Christ will be exalted with the song: "...you were slain, and

with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation" (Revelation 5:9).

So the question isn't "Can we do it?" but rather "Will we do it?"

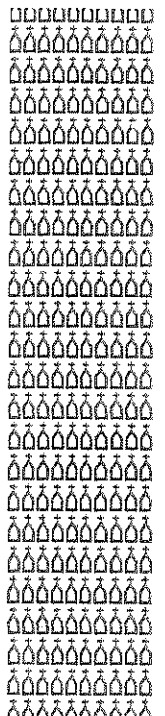
The fact is that the "Lord of the harvest" has showered His Church with more than enough resources to complete the task:

- 20,000 new missionaries seems like a lot—but it would only take one new missionary from every 300 churches to supply them all!

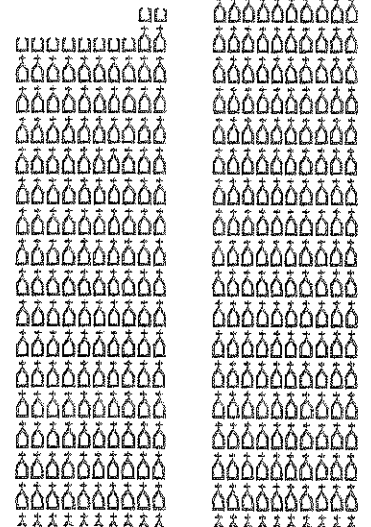
- \$300 million sounds like a huge (and impossible) amount to most of us—but if every believer would simply give an additional 50 cents per year, or every congregation gave an additional \$50 more per year, it would fully supply what is needed!

- According to survey results, the prayer necessary would take only 2% of the time we evan-

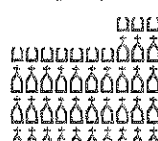
600 to 1



162 to 1



33 to 1



1 to 12



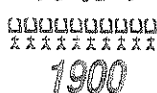
1 to 5



1 to 1



10 to 1



1900



1950



1980



1995



♥ YEAR A.D. ♥



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gical Christians spend daily watching TV and shopping.

So you see, our Lord didn't just give us an impossible assignment and then step back to watch us fail. He has supplied every thing we need *in abundance!* We may choose a path of disobedience, but there's absolutely no *good* reason we can give for not finishing the assignment He gave us!

▼ Countdown

We're 4,000 years into God's promise to Abraham that all the people groups would be blessed with redemption—and the "children of Abraham" (see Galatians 3:29) are making some incredible advances toward fulfilling that mandate! Hundreds of mission groups worldwide have set AD 2000 as an arbitrary target date for reaching the unreached. (i.e. By AD 2000 every person would have access to the gospel in their own culture.)

You might feel uncomfortable about the year 2000 as a target date in light of what Jesus said in Matthew 24:14, *"And this Gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations [ethne or peoples] and then the end will come."*—As if the year 2000 is then some prediction of the return of Christ.

You can relax because the countdown of people groups to be reached by the year 2000 is simply an arresting way to suggest that we can make the Gospel available to everyone in their own culture within the next few years—if we will.

In 1980, at a world-level conference in Edinburgh Scotland, 170 mission groups from 37 countries adopted the catch-phrase "A Church for Every People By the Year 2000."

Why wait? Every single day 48,000 individual members of unreached people groups die. Though we'd like to think otherwise, scripture is very clear about the fate of those who die without Christ.

"Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son."

—John 3:18

Study this distressing fact in God's Word. Then ask yourself, "Why wait?"

God has put it within our reach to establish a church for every people group by the year 2000. And you can be a part of this urgent, historic, big-picture priority.

▼ The Catch

There's always a catch, you know. If the biblical mandate is so clear, if the big picture of what God is doing in our world is so exciting, if the 10,000 remaining groups can be reached by the year 2000, if millions are perishing without any knowledge of Christ, why isn't all Christendom buzzing with the news that we can finish the task? Because—here's the catch—there's a cost involved.

Obedience costs. Real discipleship costs. The price is giving up any small, local agendas that detract from God's global cause. The cost is to forsake little lives. To give up claims of ownership to affluence and security. The requirement for ministries is to selflessly cooperate rather than needlessly duplicate efforts and compete for funds.

Obedience means shifting our expectations to being a blessing instead of just being blessed. Refusing to embrace the vision of being a blessing was a key problem in Old Testament Israel. (Read the prophet Haggai's Old Testament book for a current-events update.)

The price of being a part of God's global purpose is losing your life for His sake.

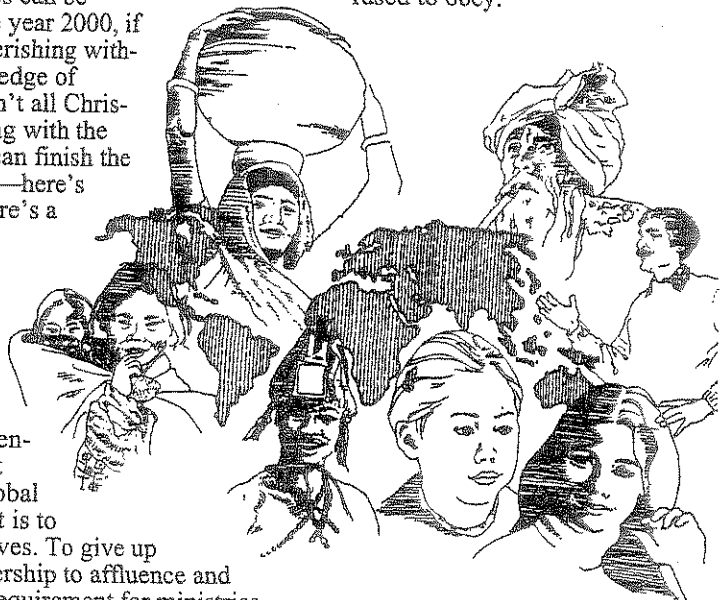
Active participation in the big picture of God's plan is also dangerous. It's the danger of signing on in wartime as a soldier who doesn't "entangle himself in the affairs of everyday life" (2 Timothy 2:4).

Battling the "powers and world forces" (Ephesians 6:12) that have bound these 10,000 groups for thousands of years means spiritual warfare. And warfare means casualties, body counts, blood, sweat and tears.

God's big purpose on this planet is not a game. It's not a spiritual health spa regimen to make you feel better. It's war. And war is never nice.

Maybe too many of us have been led to believe that the Christian life is supposed to be nice—respectable, predictable and smooth.—That Christianity means blessings and lots of meetings, not war.

Or maybe we have counted the cost of real discipleship in God's big plan. And then, God help us, we knowingly refused to obey.



▼ But what about you?

Is there any good reason you and your fellowship aren't seriously involved in God's unchanging purpose to disciple the nations? Have you—will you—allow Christ and His perfect plan to be at the very center of your life?

If you said, "yes" to the last question, the rest of this handbook should prove to be quite useful in helping you to find additional information on how to grow as a "World Christian" as well as how to get others involved in the Great Commission with you. "Catch the Vision" is also available as a four page brochure from the U.S. Center for World Mission's Adopt-A-People Campaign. If you would like to order it you can do so by calling William Carey Library at: (818) 798-0819.

