

# How New Missionaries Choose Their Country of Service: Do We Need a Change?

By David Sherbrooke

*Asking Future Missionaries to Wait and Receive their "Calling" to the Country their Agency and Church Assign*

How new missionaries choose their country of service to me is a fascinating and crucially overlooked aspect of taking the Gospel to the remaining Unreached People Groups of the world. When I first read in 1983 that there were only 85,000 missionaries serving in the world I was shocked at how few there were and clear on one thing: We need more missionaries.<sup>1</sup> As Justin Long stated recently in Momentum Magazine: "Reaching the unreached is a challenging task, but our primary problem is not the cultural, economic, logistical or political barriers we face. It is more simple: we lack sufficient manpower."<sup>2</sup>

A few years later when I discovered that 90 percent of all missionaries were serving in the already reached part of the world, I began to be deeply concerned.<sup>3</sup> Not only do we need more missionaries, but we need more in the places no one ever volunteers for or feels "called" to serve in. Since that time I have had a great interest in observing how future missionaries choose their country of service.

## Missionaries to the Unreached... A Very Small Slice



**Missionaries Serving Reached Peoples  
420,000**

During the roughly 30 year history of the Frontier Mission Movement, the now worldwide movement focused on taking the gospel to the Unreached People Groups, things have improved slightly, but not nearly enough. Still today, the vast majority of missionaries (90%) serve where the church is already established.<sup>4</sup> (See "Missionaries to the Unreached...A Very Small Slice" at the end of this article for additional statistics, quotes and sources for the data used for the above pie chart. If we consider all missionaries, as shown above, then actually 98% serve in reached areas, only 2% amongst the unreached.)

Dr. Ralph Winter and the US Center for World Mission, along with many others, have called attention to the thousands of ethnic groups yet to have their own church. The Lausanne and AD 2000 and Beyond Movements as well as Luis Bush's development of the 10/40 Window concept have impacted and influenced mission agencies, churches and Christians world-wide to place heightened attention on the unreached peoples of the world.

The *Perspectives* course, which clearly paints the picture of the world situation, was created in part to give future missionaries (i.e. the Urbana mission conference long-term mission commitment card signers) information on the world situation so they could make a well informed decision regarding many aspects of their future mission service. Where in the world to serve and what approaches to use once you land there are major topics addressed in the course. Yet in all these years, the simple idea of assigning new missionaries to the Unreached People Groups has somehow been overlooked.

Our concern is that with as few as 10,000 workers serving today amongst the thousands of Unreached People Groups of the world, the vast number of Unreached People Groups will continue to be unreached as new missionaries continue to join the throng of missionaries already serving in the reached areas of the world.<sup>5</sup> The Church (Senders) and most missionaries (Goers) both seem to be echoing what Moses said to God in Exodus 4:13 "O Lord, please send someone else to do it."

## The "Zeal for Me"

In previous mission eras, most candidates simply went to the country their mission agency or denominational sending board assigned them to (a missionary "candidate" is a new missionary in the final stages of joining, training with, and being deployed by a mission agency).<sup>6</sup> But today's self-oriented individualism has resulted in a Christianized form of Maslow's Hierarchy with the ultimate goal: attaining my own personal spiritual fulfillment.<sup>7</sup> This perhaps has blinded many to focus more on the gifts and "calling" of the missionary rather than the command to take the Gospel to every tribe, tongue and nation (ethne or peoples). Indeed, we fully endorse the Scriptural teaching regarding wise stewardship of our spiritual gifts and talents, but where we use them also needs to be guided by the Scriptures, not just our personal preferences.

Trying to seek our own self fulfillment, a spin-off of modern psychology, is contrary to the most basic concept Jesus taught His disciples. "He knew that the only path to true fulfillment lay in denying self. The only way to find truly abundant life is to throw your life away for Jesus' sake."<sup>8</sup> The vast majority of new missionaries today simply go where they want to serve, and do what they want to do adding to the masses, today still ninety percent, serving in already reached peoples. "The biggest hindrance to the missionary task is self. Self that refuses to die. Self that refuses to sacrifice. Self that refuses to give. Self that refuses to go."<sup>9</sup> I would add to this: self that refuses to go where few if any missionaries are serving.

Almost completely lost today is any consideration of the point of view of the unreached peoples themselves who are still waiting for missionaries to bring the Gospel to them for the very first time. If a lost Libyan (who deep down longs to really know God) were on a church missions committee or mission agency leadership team, where would he vote to send a willing missionary candidate?

This "zeal for me" which often results in new missionaries going where they want to, means that the current 6,000 to 10,000 Unreached People Groups will continue to remain unreached unless missions agencies change their policy and ask candidates to be willing to go anywhere and work together with these willing candidates (and their sending church) to research and select an Unreached People Group.<sup>10</sup> No one knows better than mission agency leaders which specific Unreached People Groups that no one ever volunteers for. These "Unengaged" (with few if any missionaries) Unreached People Groups should be the top of the list that agency leaders begin recommending to willing candidates.

### **Why Do Most New Missionaries End Up Serving In Well Evangelized Countries Rather than Unreached People Groups?**

After mingling with pre-candidates (future missionaries) for almost twenty years now, our observation is that most new missionaries select their field of service based on a short-term trip to the country they later choose to serve in long-term. "Indeed, recruitment is a primary reason agencies began facilitating short-term missions. The Southern Baptist International Mission Board (SBIMB) appointed 885 new missionaries in 1998. Of those, 85 percent said God used short-term mission experiences to confirm their call."<sup>11</sup>

Many choose where to serve long-term by first going on a short-term trip once or perhaps even repeatedly to the same country. They fall in love with that place and the people. We must work together to change this trend because the primary result seems to be that most new mis-

sionaries continue to go where the majority of missionaries are already serving, and that is, in the reached parts of the world.

One simple reason for this pattern is the reality that long-term field missionaries, serving in the already Christianized parts of the world, are the primary hosts for the vast majority of short-term mission trips. Deeply influenced by their short-term experience, most new missionaries often choose to go back to serve themselves (long-term) with the long-term missionaries they met on their short-term (or at least to the same country). Yet, this very fact means that new workers continue to throng to the already reached areas where most missionaries are based. They end up joining in the work of those missionaries who are primarily working with Christians in churches that have already been established. This self-perpetuating pattern is a major factor in keeping the Unreached People Groups from being penetrated.

If a pre-candidate asks for advice from the missionary they got to know on their short-term trip, the field missionary likely will invite this new missionary to come and serve where the long-term missionary is already serving. Almost every missionary I have met over the past 25 years was understaffed and rarely would turn down the possibility of a fully funded new worker to join in their ministry.

Most new missionaries feel "led" based on this kind of personal contact and information from missionaries they meet out on the field during short-term trips. For some pre-candidates the field missionary they met on a short-term trip may be the only missionary they know. And for some new missionary candidates this kind of personal invitation from a long-term field missionary may be the very "sign" from God they were praying for.

For some new young missionaries, it may be very prestigious (and quite an honor) to have an older senior field missionary recognize the young missionary candidate who may not yet have their own sense of confidence and direction. An offer to come and serve together, from the older missionary, may literally be too hard for the younger new missionary to turn down. The result is that many new missionaries will accept such offers and thus, continue to go where churches are already established rather than to the Unreached People Groups.

In the past, contact with long-term missionaries was likely minimal, usually during a furlough visit to the pre-candidate's home church. The dusty missionary photo next to the world map in the church foyer really is a real person who springs to life every 4 or 5 years on the church stage. Maybe there was time for the future missionary to meet with that field missionary during the following week over lunch. Maybe not. Either way, contact was minimal with little sense of relationship.

Due to the exploding short-term missions movement, the one-on-one relationship building that many pre-candidates have with long-term field missionaries has greatly increased.<sup>12</sup> Now pre-candidates can more easily get to know a long-term missionary out on the field during their short-term mission trip experience. In fact, some pre-candidates may meet the same missionary every year during multiple trips to the same place. In some cases today, the frequent short-termer may actually visit a field missionary on the field more than that same long-term missionary visits the supporting church that the short-termer calls home. The relationship is not only deeper, but more dynamic because it “happens” out on the field rather than inside the walls of the home church.

Now it is much easier for the aspiring missions candidate to literally visualize themselves living and working in the very same place as the field missionary they met on a short-term trip. Some new missionaries have already lived in their selected country of service for days, weeks or even months via short-term trips to that place. The resulting impact on the young future missionary often is an even stronger feeling of being “called” to work long-term in that well-evangelized country possibly even with that missionary.



This cycle must either be broken or at least greatly redirected. We must begin to explore both creative yet very tangible ways to see the spinning out of control short-term missions movement make a radical shift towards short-term mission trips to Unreached People Groups.<sup>13</sup> How else will we see a new wave of missionaries who feel “called” to go to these people groups?

But this will not be easy. The first obvious major barrier to seeing short-term vision and pre-search trips to Unreached People Groups is the reality that so few long-term workers are already serving amongst the Unreached People Groups, thus, few are there to arrange such trips. And if we are talking about the Unengaged Unreached People Groups then workers serving amongst them and information about them is scarce and short-term trips there almost unheard of. Thus, as it is today, and has been for many decades, there is almost no way for aspiring missionaries to feel “called” or “led” to an Unreached People Group in the normal pattern of going on a short-term there first.<sup>14</sup>

In one sense, it would almost be better for future missionaries not to talk with long-term field missionaries if one of the primary results is more new workers serving in the well evangelized parts of the world. Yet, ironically, many of these same long-term field missionaries, who help organize most short-term trips, often (not always) have the latest and best information on nearby Unengaged Unreached People Groups that few if any missionaries are currently working with.

How wonderful it would be if the short-term mission movement took a major paradigm shift in purpose towards being used specifically (or could we hope and

dream...even exclusively?) as a tool to get new workers into people groups currently with few or no missionaries serving amongst them. Perhaps we need to further challenge, encourage and train field missionaries on how to organize and host vision and pre-search trips primarily to Unreached People Groups.

We do indeed highly recommend that new mis-

sionaries sit at the feet of and learn from experienced missionaries. Churches sending missionaries directly without leaning on the decades of wisdom, experience and knowledge that both long-term field missionaries and their agencies have has been a mistake. Traditionally, new missionaries may serve their first and even second term under the wing of a senior field missionary. Those senior missionaries know well how to “pull the ropes” in that area, region and country.

But if we assume that passing the baton of knowledge and experience can only occur when younger and older missionaries actually work together (on location) in the same field, then we have raised yet another barrier towards getting new missionaries into Unreached People Groups. The only way for new missionaries to actually reach Unengaged Unreached People Groups is to go beyond where other missionaries are already working rather than working together.

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We must find a better way to pass on this crucial knowledge and experience. Email, phone

and visits by traveling regional supervisors to wherever new missionaries are working are methods used today by many agencies. But the real root problem is that new missionaries actually prefer having a live person around all the time who can help them at a moments notice. This is another strong factor enticing new missionaries to choose to serve in the already reached parts of the world.

Short-term mission trips, invitations to serve with missionaries working in evangelized areas, lack of vision trips to Unreached People Groups and the pattern of serving directly under the personal (meaning in person) guidance of veteran missionaries all are reasons why most new missionaries end up going to the “reached” parts of the world. Probably one more even larger factor is the reality that it is simply often much easier to serve in reached areas. That ease is a big attraction for many missionaries. But the biggest factor may well be something much less tangible yet by far more influential than any factor we have presented thus far. It is called one’s “calling.”

## The Awe of the Call

There is a long standing hallowed tradition, primarily held, guarded and promoted by missionaries, that one must be “called” to serve in a certain country and to a specific kind of mission work. Kevin Howard boldly challenged this by stating: “But Scripture doesn’t teach this concept of a call for all believers, or even for most believers.”<sup>15</sup>

In fact, it seems that most “mission folk” are rather in awe of this mysterious call. But if we step back for a moment, and realize that the flip-side of our “calling” to missions is millions of Christians who are sure they are “not-called,” then we may want to go back and re-examine this tradition in light of Scripture.

It is a sad irony that those most devoted to missions are also often the ones most perplexed by the fact that the vast majority of Christians think missions is irrelevant. Perhaps we have helped fuel this dichotomy between the “called” and the “not-called” which is no where found in Scripture. Mission leaders, missionaries, and mission mobilizers have been trying to figure out for decades how to get more pew-sitters (who could care less about what we love most) actively involved in missions either as Senders or Goers.

We (mission folk) are sure the Great Commission is a command for all believers, not just those of us who were “called” into full-time missions service. Indeed, with all my heart I too believe this is true! But the very way we talk about our own “calling” may well be one of the prime factors fueling the masses of Christians who do not have missions anywhere on their “page,” much less, their hearts.

Many mission leaders have tried for years to show that all Christians are commanded to be involved some way in

missions either as Senders or Goers. There is no third option for sidelined benchwarmers (or pew-warmers). Everyone is in the game! Yet today, most data continues to reveal the fact that, world-wide, only about 10% of those who call themselves Christians are actively involved in world evangelization.<sup>16</sup> Those 10%, sometimes referred to as “Great Commission Christians,” would almost all fall into the popular new category called “Senders.” (And if we dare try to calculate what percentage the 10,000 missionaries to the Unreached People Groups represent out of all 2,100,000,000 Christians in the world, then we are only talking about 0.0005%). Seemingly lost today is simple obedience to the obvious command clearly found in the Scriptures (“Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.” *Mark 16:15 NIV*) and the great need found in the world situation today (still 10,000 Unreached People Groups with few missionaries serving amongst them).

Perhaps we need to develop a better way of talking about our “calling” with more emphasis on the Scripture such as God’s command for everyone to be involved in taking the Gospel to the whole world (Matthew 28:18-20) and less talk about our own personal “calling.” Sharing how God is “guiding” us or how the Holy Spirit is “leading” both may be more Biblically based terms and certainly are applicable in the daily lives of all believers.

Some may argue at this point “well that is just semantics, it does not really matter what words you use.” (Semantics by the way is the study of the meaning of words). But this is the point here, the images and meanings conjured up by the word “calling” have tremendous ramifications on both new and old missionaries alike, as well as non-missionaries. For many the meaning of the word “calling” is very powerful, almost sacred.

We feel that there is sometimes maybe more of an “Awe of the Call” to mission service rather than an actual awe of God Himself. We wonder if perhaps individualism and the pursuit of a Christianized self-actualization may also at times be cloaked in the “call” with its often high priority focus on me, my gifts, and my desires.

“Maybe Christians cloak their choices in spiritual language—“God’s calling me”—to make themselves feel better about their choice or to keep people from questioning their choice. Why not just say: “The Bible tells believers to makes disciples. Therefore, I want to go to Egypt,” or “Even though I have reservations about going to Egypt, I think they could benefit from my help as a follower of Christ”? What harm is there in approaching Christian service in that way? God is still glorified.”<sup>17</sup>

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Most likely, the “Awe of the Call” evolved over the centuries from two key Biblical models: Isaiah’s “call” and Paul’s “call.” The following passages are perhaps those that many have used over time in attempt to “Scripturally” base the idea, and the long-held tradition, of a “calling” to missions service.

#### **Isaiah’s Call**

*Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?” And I said, “Here am I. Send me!” (Isaiah 6:8 NIV)*

#### **Paul’s Call**

*‘Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen of me and what I will show you. I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.’ (Acts 26:16-18 NIV)*

It is rather easy to show that Isaiah’s “call” was to serve as a prophet in Israel, not as a missionary. Paul’s “call” is more likely the foundation that any missionary would love to use to Scripturally substantiate their own personal “calling.” I know I would. I am unashamed to admit, that after Jesus Himself, Paul is my hero! But some have questioned whether there really is sufficient Biblical evidence to confirm the idea of the traditional “call” to missions so popular in the jargon of missionaries.

Kevin Howard, referring to different passages than those above, wrote in EMQ in 2003:

“As we think about a calling, let’s consider the first missionary journey in Acts 13:2. It says, “And while they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them’” (NASV). The other passage that comes to mind regarding God’s call to missions is the Macedonian Call in Acts 16. Paul wanted to preach in Asia, but was forbidden by the Spirit, and a vision led him to Macedonia. Many Christians conclude that all believers must therefore have this kind of clear calling. But, can we make either of these experiences the standard for all other missionaries? If so, why? Nowhere does Scripture promise this sort of clarity when doing God’s will.”<sup>18</sup>

I do agree with Howard that there seems to be scant Scriptural evidence to support the long held tradition of a “calling” to missions service. But I am actually perhaps arguing against this idea of a “calling” for a different reason than Howard. (See “A Call to Missions: Is There Such a Thing?” in *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, October, 2003 for more on this topic of “calling” in the Scriptures).

Few argue that the Great Commission indeed applies to all believers. Teaching all believers to obey the Great Commission is actually part of that commission (“...teaching

*them to obey everything I have commanded you.” Matthew 28:20 NIV).*

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Howard’s article received some strong critique through a long letter to the editor of EMQ from a well known missionary who was “shocked and deeply disturbed” that someone questioned the idea of the “call” to missions service.<sup>19</sup> In this article I am not really challenging the idea of the “call” so much as the way I think it is often misused. (In fact my own “call,” more than twenty years ago is still foundational to what I am doing today.)

The general “calling” or decision to serve in career missions work perhaps needs to be differentiated from the specific “calling” to a certain country or people group. We (mission folk) tend to use the term “calling” to describe both, even if our “calling” to serve in career missions and our “calling” to serve in a specific country came many years apart from one another, as often is the case. Our focus here is on “calling” as we use that term in relation to place of service (country and people group).

Rather than fully entering into a theological debate as to whether or not the idea of a “calling” has substantial Scriptural footing (later we hope to write more on that topic), I simply would like us to think about how the traditional “call” to a specific country does not seem to be well guided by the Biblical emphasis to take the Gospel to those who have never heard. “*It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known, so that I would not be building on someone else’s foundation.*” (Romans 15:20 NIV)

How do we explain God’s calling only 10% of all missionaries to the Unreached People Groups? Are only 2 missionaries out of every 100 hearing the Holy Spirit call them to these 10,000 Unreached People Groups still waiting to hear the Gospel? Why is that? Does not the Holy Spirit want to send missionaries to these Unreached Peoples? Is the problem the Holy Spirit or perhaps that we are not truly listening? And perhaps we are not able to really listen to God mainly because we already thought for sure God “called” us to go somewhere else based on being “led” through our short-term experience and contact with a missionary we met there in a well-evangelized country.

Do we perhaps mistakenly apply the concept and especially the “timing” of when we receive our personal “call” to serve in a certain country? Thus, mission agency leaders, who are best suited to steer people to Unreached People Groups, do not suggest specific people groups because these leaders also have the same “awe” and respect for the mysterious “call” of service to a certain country. In fact, these agency leaders likely hold very dearly their own personal “call” to the country they formerly served in and are not about to tell a new missionary, even someone willing to serve anywhere, which country or people group they should serve in. That would be tantamount to breaking the long held tradition and perhaps even putting in jeopardy their own previous “calling” to the field they served in. But it does not need to.

What we are suggesting is that the “calling” to a particular Unreached People Group (and country) can just as easily take place after the mission agency assigns the new missionary to a specific people and place. This is simply a timing change. Both old and new missionaries could still gather years later and share stories about their “calling” to serve in a certain country with a specific people group.

Would not almost all mission agency leaders be thrilled if a new generation of applicants began filling in their application forms as follows: **Country of Calling: ANY-WHERE. People Group: ASSIGN US.** If this actually began to happen, these leaders could both maintain the integrity of their own previous “calling” while also helping many new applicants discover their own “calling” through the new process of being assigned to the peoples and places no one ever writes on those lines of their application form. As it stands today, in general, most agencies simply want the missionary to go where the missionary feels “called” to go (in other words, where the missionary wants to go).

Frontiers and Pioneers are two of my favorite mission agencies. They each grew out of the Frontier Mission Movement in direct response to the shift towards Unreached People Groups. These fine agencies send missionaries only to Unreached People Groups. But if most missionary sending agencies, including Frontiers and Pioneers, still follow the traditional “awe of the call” concept, then thousands of Unreached People Groups these two agencies (and many others) would love to target will remain unreached with few if any workers while workers they recruit and send continue to amass amongst certain popular Unreached People Groups.

The long held tradition of having a “calling” to a specific country and people group before joining a mission agency may actually be thwarting many agencies original vision to get workers into as many Unreached People Groups as possible. Certainly, it seems to be thwarting Jesus original command to go to all peoples.

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Why not look more at how the timing of the “calling” to a specific country and people group might come as a process in community between the sending church, candidate, and the sending agency closer to the actual time of departure to the field or even after arriving to the place of service one has been assigned? One Biblical model that seems to support a post arrival (or arrival at their

post!) “calling:” The way Paul and Barnabas were sent off by the Antioch church. In fact, these two new missionaries got most of their direction to various cities, countries and peoples after they landed on the mission field!

*In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off. The two of them, sent on their way by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia and sailed from there to Cyprus. When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the Jewish synagogues. John was with them as their helper. (Acts 13:1-5 NIV)*

The way Paul and Barnabas were sent off seems to provide Biblical support to the idea of receiving one’s “calling” at the time of departure or even after arriving on the field. They had no short-term experience. Their “calling” (or sending if you look at it from the church’s point of view) involved no sense of specific countries or peoples. They were not limited by imagining God had told them years earlier to serve in a specific country. Their prime directive seemed to be that which applies to all believers, and that is to take the Gospel to the whole world. “It really is God giving the vision for the world rather than just the specific country” as the director of training at a mission agency told me.

Therefore, we propose that new missionary candidates should wait, pray and be willing to go anywhere, then receive their “call” from God closer to their departure time, just at Paul and Barnabas did, with confirmation of their “call” through specific guidance from God and the

leading of the Holy Spirit while already on the field they are sent to.

The simple two part solution we are suggesting is to encourage pre-candidates not to choose a country or people group but be willing to serve anywhere while at the same time asking mission agencies to assign these new missionaries to Unreached People Groups, especially those people groups that no one ever volunteers to serve with.

## Willing and Waiting

How many stories do we know of missionaries who were on their way to \_\_\_\_\_ (fill in the blank of any of the 141 already well evangelized countries of the world that have 60% or more church members) when they were redirected to an Unreached People Group?<sup>20</sup> I personally know of only one or two examples and my ministry the past 10 years and interest the last 20 has been almost exclusively with pre-candidates or future missionaries.

Yet, how many stories do we know of mission candidates who marched off to serve in countries where the church is well established? Likely, most of the missionaries we know serve there, since 90% (or more) of all missionaries are serving in the evangelized parts of the world. In Romans 15:20 Paul clearly emphasizes his desire to not work where other missionaries are already serving to ensure that

he is taking the Gospel to those who have never heard. This should be our desire as well. For centuries since Paul penned this prototype “mission statement” the Church has almost completely lost this desire to not build on others work. We actually seem to prefer it.

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The simple idea we are suggesting begins with asking pre-candidates, during their long years of preparation, (as well as new mission agency applicants) to wait and receive their “call” after they submit to the mission agency, and their sending church, with a willingness to be steered or guided especially to a country and an Unreached People Group that no one is volunteering for.

We feel that mission agencies and churches should ask those seriously considering long-term mission service to not decide where they want to go but rather wait and be willing to be assigned to an overlooked country and people group with few if any missionaries serving there. Actually, pre-candidates should be challenged with this concept early on, perhaps before or during their first short-term mission trip, because many decide where to go years before joining a mission agency and departing for their long-term place of service. Where to serve (meaning country and ethnic group) is perhaps the most crucial de-

cision that missionaries, mission agencies and sending churches make.

We believe the Spirit is calling. Yet new missionaries are often not in a position to listen because of what they already “thought” God told them regarding their country of service. The Bible certainly seems to support the idea of having a willing (to do anything) obedience to God without first having all the details spelled out before a commitment is made. Surely flexibility, submission, willingness and obedience all are qualities any aspiring missionary should have. Encouraging new missionaries to have a willingness to serve anywhere is not asking them to do anything more than that which God is asking of them. Agencies and sending churches should then work together to assign these willing candidates to Unreached People Groups.

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## Agencies Assigning

Most of us have experienced the uneasy feeling when individual members of a Christian group, committee or team disagree on what should be done in a given situation. Impasse, deadlock and delay are often the results. But as the Holy Spirit is sought through prayer, the affirmation that indeed the Spirit is speaking (rather than men) is found through agreement. The Holy Spirit can guide different people, sometimes with their own personal agendas, together as one regarding an important decision.

The Bible teaches this simple yet too rarely applied principle for discerning the placement of Christian co-laborers (actually, I believe this concept applies to all decisions that Christian leadership teams make). When the Holy Spirit speaks, directs, and guides, confirmation can be discovered by agreement of those in spiritual authority.

The situation in Antioch, described in Acts 13, shows that the church leaders (which many believe included Paul and Barnabas) all agreed on the same decision: to send out these two as missionaries. We can more clearly discern the Holy Spirit’s work in community to affirm a decision than we can by ourselves. It is far easier to be misled (by ourselves) when making a decision on our own. Deceiving our selves goes back all the way to the Garden. All of us are naturally pretty good at it.

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We see the same pattern in Acts 1:23-26 when a new apostle was appointed to replace Judas. They began with two choices, prayed, then all agreed to select Matthias. Again in Acts 6:1-7, when the problem about distributing food to the widows arose, agreement amongst the leadership regarding what to do and who to have do it was confirmed by one thing: agreement. Actually, the 12 apostles agreed to delegate the decision to the much larger group (the disciples) who amazingly (because it is not always easy to see large groups come to agreement) were able to agree upon seven men to fulfill this need.

We believe that these (and other) Biblical models suggest that God's will can best both be sought and confirmed through a communal decision. Thus, regarding new missionaries country and people group placement, we suggest that the three-legged community of church, the applicant (new missionary) and the mission agency as the closest modern application of these Biblical models. To achieve this, we need to literally (i.e. by email and phone) connect the missionary, their home or sending church leaders and their mission agency leaders so that together they can pray, discuss and discern which country and Unreached People Group to send the new missionary to.

Once all three parties agree on the same country and people group, then together they can all be much more assured that they are truly hearing from God. If two or three of the parties begin by choosing different countries and people groups, then they must go back to the drawing board (actually, the prayer room) until a unified decision is reached.

One caution with this approach. If the mission agency, sending church or missionary is not fully committed to sending and going only to Unreached People Groups, especially where few if any missionaries are serving, then this communal decision process may actually backfire resulting in more new missionaries going to the well evangelized parts of the world. But if at least one or even two of the three parties have this conviction and commitment to go where other missionaries are not going, then the other parties can be moved by the Holy Spirit to eventually agree on one and the same direction.

Leadership teams at churches, mission agencies and other types of ministries spend a significant amount of time meeting and discussing where to place, replace, assign and reassign (or sometimes even release) staff members serving under their authority. Just because new missionaries

**1** Future missionaries should wait and pray that God would give them a heart willing to go anywhere.

**2** Mission agencies and churches should assign these willing new missionaries to Unreached People Groups.

are not working directly on location in those ministry "offices" no less time should be devoted to discussing these new candidates specific placement on the field. Shouldn't the placement and role of their "field staff," the missionaries churches support

and mission agencies send out, justify as much or even more discussion time amongst those leaders? The same unity in decision making used daily amongst leaders in mission agency and church offices can also be used in assigning new missionaries to the field.

This process may well be more Biblical and actually offer even more assurance for the new missionary than the commonly heard argument that one must have a sure "calling" to a country or they may later lose heart, give up and come home when faced with difficulties. Seeing these three parties start with possibly three different choices yet later end up agreeing on the same country and people group also can provide assurance of the Holy Spirit's guidance, perhaps, even more. It seemed to work for Paul and Barnabas. They never doubted or turned back on the decision made by the leaders in the Antioch church who sent them out.

In the old paradigm, where placing missionaries in specific countries was the primary focus for most mission agencies, the number of options were far less than today's focus on reaching the remaining 10,000 Unreached People Groups. In previous mission eras many agencies specialized on one continent, a certain region or a specific religious bloc. The number of options were radically lower when discerning which country to assign the new missionary applicant to. For large denominational agencies who desired to have representation in every country of the world, there were less than 200 options. And for continental or regionally focused agencies the number of country placement options often would have been well below 50. This is nothing compared to 10,000 options for placement!

Perhaps the sheer number of Unreached People Groups in the world today has made some agency and church leaders think "Why only God can choose where to assign you," so they opt out of the tremendous opportunity God has given them to place new missionaries into overlooked people groups. Therefore, we are challenging mission agencies to turn the clock back and once again begin assigning willing long-term workers, this time not only to countries but specifically to Unreached People Groups rather than where the missionary wants to serve.

One of the major reasons for this approach is the fact that mission agency leaders know best where they really need workers (i.e. where no one ever signs up to go). These leaders have access to the latest data on the number of missionaries serving in creative access countries, something hard to get on the Internet or in books such as the excellent *Operation World* by Patrick Johnstone.

**More directly directing new missionaries should be the primary function of a mission agency director.**

If mission agency leaders would actually once again be willing to assign new candidates, not just to countries but also to specific Unreached People Groups, I believe we could speed the day of Jesus return. Indeed we should hope and pray for the coming glorious days when so many new missionaries are evenly spreading out to serve amongst the remaining 10,000 Unreached People Groups that assigning new missionaries eventually becomes a “10, 9, 8, 7” countdown.

We hope and pray for the coming day when the Unreached People Group lists become so short that new missionaries might actually know the “limited” options of where their service is needed before filling out their application. “Bummer...so many workers have already flooded Libya...I guess the only choice left for me is Somalia,” might be recorded and saved on the audio portion of the on line application as the candidate mutters to themselves just before their “live” web cam interview with the agency director in the year 2025. We never will reach that point if we continue to allow new missionaries to go wherever they want.

Our main point here is simply this: If mission agency leaders, many today who long to get more new missionaries into Unreached People Groups, are not willing to take measures to assign willing candidates to specific Unreached People Groups, then the majority of new missionaries will simply continue to go to well-evangelized countries and work with Christians and churches they got to know through previous short-term mission trips to those places. The “calling” is perhaps the biggest barrier of all:

“What frustrates me with the advice “go where God calls you” or “find where God is working and join him” is that it is given as sort of the panacea answer, the ultimate solution to all my questions and doubts. But this advice only begs the question. To tell me to go where God is calling me leaves unanswered the very question it proposes to answer—Where do I go?”<sup>21</sup>

Longing, praying, strategizing and even making new agencies focused exclusively on unreached peoples will not break this pattern unless those seasoned field veterans, who know very well the places and peoples who are really being overlooked, do not directly assign these young new missionaries. Relying solely on God to “call” new mis-

sionaries to the remaining 10,000 groups sounds spiritual and God reliant. But perhaps agency leaders need to realize that God has appointed them to their position of leadership for “such a time as this.” More directly directing new missionaries should be the primary function of a mission agency director. The young new missionaries simply lack this broader global vision and will end up making their own private decision based on personal preferences. Likely, the majority will continue to go to the places where many missionaries are already serving.<sup>22</sup>

### **Troubled by “Strategic” Missions?**

Some will argue that this approach, assigning new missionaries to Unreached People Groups, is simply a “strategic” approach and thus, void of the leading of the Holy Spirit or lacking God’s guidance. Perhaps the entire category labeled “strategic missions” always has been a misnomer. The word “strategy,” especially in eyes of the fastest growing segment of the church world-wide (Charismatic), has likely always been a poor choice. It just does not sound spiritual enough and seems void of the Holy Spirit.

Many assume the word “strategy” involves only man-made plans simply because we associate the word with the fields of business or the military, two things we are sure God has nothing to do with (which of course is not true...God has His hands into just about everything). The term was borrowed from the business and military worlds, so many may assume that a “strategic” missions approach must be man directed and have little to do with the leading of the Holy Spirit. Perhaps we should develop a different term such as “Spirit Led Missions” or “God Guided Missions” instead of the term “mission strategy.”

One only needs to look a little closer at what “mission strategy” is actually talking about to see that it speaks volumes regarding the leading of the Holy Spirit and the main thing on Jesus’ heart: His desire to have a relationship with the peoples who least likely have any way of coming to know Him and how we can be led of the Spirit and used by the Holy Spirit to accomplish Jesus’ mission.

Peter Wagner, one of the top missiologists advocating the Holy Spirit’s role in missions explains how the Holy Spirit is using “mission strategy” in the Frontier Missions Movement. (See Wagner’s article “On the Cutting Edge of Mission Strategy” in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*).<sup>23</sup> The Scriptures and the heart of God clearly reveal what the Holy Spirit most wants to do and that is to bring the light and Person of Jesus to those who have no way of hearing. This is what strategy is all about!

## Hyper-Statistic Approach?

Others may fear that statistics alone and a desire to be “strategic” will result in people being assigned without a clear sense of God’s leading to serve amongst a specific Unreached People Group. But for many, statistics are what the Spirit uses to reveal the presence or lack of presence of the Holy Spirit around the world. William Carey, Hudson Taylor, Ralph Winter, Luis Bush, Patrick Johnstone and many other mission leaders who have helped awaken the church to send missionaries to places no one was working all have heavily used statistics.

I often enjoy using *Operation World* at the end of my daily quiet times. The statistics never have been dry, black and white ink on paper, or in any way man-made, but rather they have always represented the voices of the masses calling out for someone to do something to tell them of Jesus! Statistics, coupled with the Word of God, have been two of the main things the Holy Spirit has spoken to me through the most in relation to where to serve and what to do there. If you have never done this before, open your Bible and a copy of *Operation World* together, lay them side-by-side and read a little from each. Then pray that the Holy Spirit would speak. Watch out! Your plans and even what you “thought” God already told you to do may get turned upside-down by the Holy Spirit.

**Statistics are just numbers. But they represent real souls and the reality we must face in the world today, that is, the lack of the presence of the Holy Spirit today still amongst 10,000 Unreached People Groups.**

Statistics are just numbers. But they represent real souls and the reality we must face in the world today, that is, the lack of the presence of the Holy Spirit today still amongst 10,000 Un-

reached People Groups. My heart has been breaking for more than twenty years now at the thought of the millions of people who have no church, no missionaries, and no JESUS. Statistics were used by the Holy Spirit to open my eyes to this reality. Statistics are not just numbers on paper or from a website on your screen. They represent the lost sheep that Jesus is trying to bring home, but so few willing shepherds are hearing the Master Shepherd’s voice urging us to bring the lost sheep back home.

## Promoting, Mobilizing, Recruiting & One More Thing: Assigning New Missionaries to Unreached People Groups

During the birthing years of the Frontier Mission Movement many missionary applicants began asking to be sent to Unreached People Groups (in part a fruit of the *Perspectives* course). Next, in response to the demands of those pre-candidates, new agencies focused exclusively on reaching the Unreached People Groups began to be

formed (i.e. Frontiers, Pioneers and others, but we certainly could use many more agencies devoted only to Unreached People Groups). Today many churches are wanting to send missionaries to and support work in Unreached People Groups. All of this has resulted in workers gradually starting to trickle into the Unreached People Groups.

This year at Urbana ‘06 (or “St. Louis ‘06?”...be sure you don’t go to Urbana, I mean the city, because nobody will be there...except maybe one guy with a sign and an arrow “St. Louis This Way”!) I would guess that almost every one of the hundreds of mission agencies on display will somewhere mention what they are doing with Unreached People Groups (even if in reality they are not doing much). Today a variety of projects, campaigns and even specialized ministries have also come into being moving us in the direction of challenging new missionaries to go to Unreached People Groups. Yet, through all the promotion, mobilization and even specific recruiting for certain people groups we still have only 10,000 missionaries working with Unreached People Groups.

What we are suggesting is one more crucial additional step: the actual placement or assigning of new missionaries to Unreached People Groups. Even this procedure of assigning new missionaries to Unreached People Groups needs to be balanced with a priority focus on the Unengaged Unreached People Groups, those groups that still do not have any (or just a few) missionaries. The well established pattern of new missionaries going to where other missionaries are already serving is now also happening in some prominent Unreached People Groups while other Unreached People Groups are left barely touched. It is just a numerical coincidence that 10,000 workers are serving in Unreached People Groups today and that 10,000 Unreached People Groups remain unreached. Don’t assume that this means there is one worker in each group! In fact, the reality is that in some of those groups there are 1000 workers while in other groups there are just 5, and still others with 0!

## Shorter Lists:

### A Step in the Right Direction

I am very excited about the project where several agencies are cooperating together to focus on Unreached People Groups that are being overlooked. The project leaders are developing a priority list of Unreached People Groups and collaborating between several mission agencies to get new missionaries into these overlooked groups while at the same time not duplicating or overlapping but rather combining their efforts. I am also thrilled to be directly involved with the Vision 2015 project to send 300 new Asian missionaries to 50 Unreached People Groups (I actually was assigned to research and select the initial list of 50 focus people groups!).

These and other similar projects are a major step in the right direction for two reasons. One, the lists of people groups are shorter. Secondly, challenging new workers using these shorter lists may very well be just one step shy of assigning new missionaries to specific people groups. We recognize that the main way people choose countries or people groups is from some personal contact event. But wouldn't it be better if that personal contact was from the director of a mission agency that wants to get new missionaries into Unreached People Groups rather than a field missionary serving in a well evangelized country?

We live in the information age. But information alone is not the answer. Any pre-candidate in the world could daily pray over the lists of thousands of Unreached People Groups at the *Joshua Project* website and still never know where to go (see the lists of Unreached People Groups at <http://www.joshuaproject.net/>). More likely they will be overwhelmed and either give up and stay home or just go to an easy place, like they did on their last short-term trip. Thus, the shorter lists being used by Vision 2015 and other similar projects are a step in the right direction. These lists are less overwhelming simply because they are shorter, more focused, and thus easier both for pre-candidates to choose from and for mission agency directors and church leaders to assign from. The latter, actually assigning willing new missionaries, is what we are proposing.

We are now producing our own list of more than 70 Unengaged Unreached People Groups for a multi-country region. If a pre-candidate we come in contact with is already leaning heavily to one country in our region then the number of people groups to choose from for each country is even shorter. As we work with any of these priority people group lists, we are counting on not just "suggesting" where a new missionary might go by asking them to pray over the list, but rather we are actually hoping to assign these new missionaries to a specific people group from the list, if they are willing.

We recognize that new missionaries still need personal contact as they discern where to serve. We hope to help somehow facilitate that kind of personal connection for these more than 70 people groups in our region. Many of these Unengaged Unreached People Groups have few if any missionaries serving with them so it would be quite rare for a missionary on the field to set up a short-term trip to one of these groups. But we will attempt to do just that.

We also want to promote a stepping-stone or interim practice which new missionaries could use before the "waiting

and assigning" procedure we have described here becomes commonplace (as we earnestly pray that it someday will). We recognize that it may be many years from now before the process we are suggesting actually is put into practice both by the majority of new missionaries and by several mission agencies. Because so few agencies today are willing to assign missionaries to specific countries and Unreached People Groups then we suggest that new missionaries ask to at least be assigned to (or choose on their own) a general region to serve in, move there, then do field research looking specifically for the people groups that no missionaries are serving.

These new missionaries can then report their findings to both their sending church and their mission agency and through what they discover (together), discern which Unreached People Group to focus on. This interim procedure of going to the field without a country or people group in mind primarily helps the new missionary get fresh information from the field before discerning where to serve. Abraham simply left his country and trusted that God would show him the specific land to go to after he was already living in the new region (Genesis 12:1). This is

also similar to the way Paul and Barnabas left their church and received guidance for the specific places to minister in after arriving on the field (Acts 13 and beyond).

There is however one great danger with this "scoping out the land" type of field research. Just like the short-term mission syndrome we described earlier, there is a great risk that the new missionary will be swayed by the long-term missionaries they meet to simply

come and join them. Only those fully committed to working where other missionaries are not working should attempt this type of field research or they too may succumb to joining the masses of workers in the well-evangelized world.

## Still Willing to Be Assigned

The convictions we have shared here are the result of all we have been through the past five years of trying to discern where to serve (as well as almost 20 years of watching others go through the same process). As of this writing, my wife and I (new missionaries ourselves) are still open to our agency and sending church coming to agreement then telling us what country and Unreached People Group to serve in. The long tradition of hearing from the Lord (having a "calling") is the main block in our observation.

Here's our story. For years we felt led to T-1 Country (I will use artificial names for security purposes). But then



we learned that a couple from our home church was on their way there so we were willing to go elsewhere (You know...spread out a little amongst the 10,000 Unreached People Groups!).

Then one day in early 2004 my wife and I were sure God told us to go to T-2 Country. This happened quite by accident, just shooting the breeze one night. There was no reason for us to discuss other countries since we were so certain of our "calling" to T-1 Country. But the uncanny way it (T-2) came up, the peace and full agreement we had, actually made us even more sure of our "calling" to T-2 Country. So, we prepared for more than a year including a pre-search trip to T-2 Country, six months of intensive fundraising for T-2, followed by four months of intensive training all for our planned service in T-2 Country.

Just months before our departure to T-2 Country, two leaders in our agency had the courage to approach us and "suggest" that we not go to T-2 Country (which by the way is one of those popular Unreached People Groups I mentioned earlier with over 1000 workers serving there today). It was awkward, our bags were packed, but we were willing to let go. We are kinda' old fashion folk in that we think submitting to spiritual authorities is really rad (Gen X), cool (Boomers), and good (Old Timers).<sup>24</sup>

Almost everyone we have talked to since we followed their advice (and canceled our plans for T-2 Country) simply has told us to listen to God. When the founder of our agency and the director of our sending base (the leaders mentioned above) suggested we not go to T-2 Country (or later not even T-1 Country, where our home church was suggesting we go), we struggled because of our "calling" but eventually we were convinced that the opportunity to literally go where almost no missionaries are serving is really what God has been "calling" us to do all along (Romans 15:20). We believe this is what God is calling all new missionaries to do.

We understand why none of these leaders approached us earlier, during our five years of searching and seeking where to go. If God had already told ("called") us to go to a specific country, then what leader would feel free to suggest another? The system and current tradition (requiring a "calling") prevented these leaders from telling us where to go since we were so sure God had called us first to T-1 Country then more recently to T-2 Country.

But God has used our journey to open our eyes to this concept: We think agencies and churches should tell willing applicants where to go...meaning...to the places no one ever volunteers for or feels called to go to! Maybe God has allowed us to go through this wilderness so that we more personally can know and understand what so many pre-candidates feel who truly are willing to go anywhere. Most give up and just go to the well-evangelized place they did a short-term in. That is our temptation too!

## Missionaries to the Unreached... A Very Small Slice

However you slice it, most researchers agree that just a handful of all missionaries are serving in Unreached People Groups.

### **90% of all missionaries serving in well evangelized world**

"Those passionate about the unreached are simply asking Christians to bring resources to bear on the unreached. In spite of years of talk, over 90% of the world's cross-cultural missionaries are still focused on areas that are largely evangelized; less than one percent are focused on places that call themselves non-Christian or anti-Christian. Some significant portion of these mission resources should be brought to those who have nothing."

Source: Justin Long, "'Unreached' is Not a Fad" in *Momentum*, September/October, 2005, p.7 (INTERNET: <<http://www.momentum-mag.org/>>).

### **10,000 Missionaries amongst Unreached People Groups**

"Only an estimated 10,000 of the global foreign mission force\* are working within the 10,000 unreached groups, while 41 times that number of foreign Missionaries continue to work within people groups already reached. What an imbalance! Even if you include the foreign missionaries working with Christians within the entire major cultural blocs, reached and unreached...it is still a glaring fact that most foreign missionaries work within peoples which are predominantly Christian.

\*The global foreign mission force includes all kinds of Christians (Protestants, Anglican, Roman Catholic, Orthodox, etc)."

Source: Ralph Winter and Bruce Koch, "Looking at the Task Graphically" in *Mission Frontiers*, June, 2000.

"In 2000, 26% of 6.0 billion people were unevangelized = 1.6 billion [and only] 10,000 cross-cultural missionaries work among them."

Source: Justin Long, "Where Are We Going" in *Momentum*, July/August 2006, p.7 (INTERNET: <<http://www.momentum-mag.org/>>).

### **420,000 Missionaries of all kinds in the world today**

"*World Christian Trends* estimates there are 420,000 missionaries worldwide (including Orthodox, Marginals and Roman Catholics)."

Source: Justin Long, "What Will it Take" in *Momentum*, September/October, 2006, p. 27 (INTERNET: <<http://www.momentum-mag.org/>>).

### **97,732 Missionaries sent to other lands**

#### **104,196 Missionaries serving in homelands**

#### **201,928 All missionaries** (Protestant, Independent, and Anglican)

"The global totals show 201,928 missionaries sent and received. Of these 104,196 are serving within their own country and 58,357 within a near culture. There are 97,732 missionaries serving in a country other than their own."

Source: Patrick Johnstone, *Operation World* (Waynesboro, Georgia: Paternoster USA, 2001). In appendix 4 "The World's Missionary Force."

### **429,000 Missionaries of all kinds**

#### **12,870 Missionaries working amongst Unreached peoples**

"429,000 Missionaries from all branches of Christendom (Only between 2 and 3% of those missionaries work among unreached peoples.) 140,000 Protestant Missionaries"

Source: Mobilization Division USCWM, "*Approximate 2002 AD Global Missions Statistics*" (INTERNET: <<http://www.uscwm.org/>>).

## The Spinning Out of Control Short-Term Missions Explosion

We believe the short-term missions movement is spinning out of control primarily in that it likely is one of the greatest deterrents to long-term mission service. While it is true that almost every long-term missionary today has been on a short-term trip, a smaller and smaller percentage of short-termers ever decide to go long-term. This is true both due to the massive numerical increase in short-termers and the slow down in Western missionaries going out.

Short-term mission trips seem to be immunizing far more with a surety they will never go long-term than it is inoculating massive numbers of new long-term workers. If it were true that the short-term missions explosion is producing long-term workers, then the sheer explosion the past 15 years should have resulted in a corollary explosion of new workers rather than an overall decrease we are seeing in the Western sending countries.

For a few years now we have proposed the publishing of a booklet including articles both from advocates and critics of the movement in hopes to help steer this movement towards one of its purported goals, and that is that it would result in more Goers, not just Senders. Certainly, additional major steps are needed beyond this small step we are suggesting.

“Is this the first major missionary movement carried out primarily for the personal benefit of the missionaries?” (Timothy Paul Erdel, Review of *Between Past and Future* by Jonathan J. Bonk, in *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, April, 2004, Vol. 40, No. 2, p. 250.)

“Involvement in and spending on missions trips is seeing an unprecedented increase, while recruitment for full time mission service is flat.” (Frampton F. Fox, “Screwtape on Summer Missions” in *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, October, 2003, Vol. 39, No. 4, p. 483.)

“Anti-long-term sentiment. Fifteen years ago a missions-minded church could identify the people from its congregation who were preparing for long-term service. Today, many of those same churches cannot name one such person. Of greater concern, they seem content with this disparity. Their priority on so many people in short-term trips seems to replace any need to prepare people for long-term service. Simply stated, the number of people being challenged to long-term cross-cultural ministry is declining every year.” (Don Parrott, “Managing the Short-Term Missions Explosion” in *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, July, 2004, Vol. 40, No. 3, p. 357.)

“As we look with realistic eyes on today’s student mission world, we find some things need an overhaul if we are going to be serious about pursuing this goal. First is the imbalanced focus on short-term ministry to the neglect of the importance of long-term....A generation is coming of age familiar with the long-term goal but only thinking about short-term options. Hence short-term trip participants are increasing dramatically while long-term workers dwindle....I believe in the importance of short-term ministry, but it must not be substituted for long-term ministry. Short term mission should be presented as a stepping stone for God’s lifelong call to radical discipleship and wholehearted obedience, which includes long-term service. Unfortunately this is not the underlying philosophy of a majority of trips anymore. One discouraged campus leader said, “short-term trips highlight having a spiritual experience rather than producing prepared laborers for the harvest.” (Ryan Shaw, “From Trips to Careers” in *Momentum*, November/December, 2005, p. 24 (INTERNET: <<http://www.momentum-mag.org/>>).

## Endnotes

1. Keith Green, “Why You Should Go to the Mission Field,” brochure reprinted from article in *The Last Days Magazine*, 1982. The original statement: “Right now worldwide there are only 85,000 workers on the mission field - working mainly among those who have heard the gospel before.” This statistic was then referenced to the USCWM Pasadena, CA.
2. Justin Long, “Where are We Going?” in *Momentum*, July/August, 2006, p. 7 (INTERNET: <<http://www.momentum-mag.org/>>).
3. Ralph D. Winter, “The Task Remaining: All Humanity in Missions Perspective” in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, Ralph D. Winter, ed. (Pasadena, California: William Carey Library, 1981), p. 324. Figure 7 revealed the situation 25 years ago: 81,500 Workers or 91% of the mission force serving in reached people groups and only 8,000 Workers or 9% serving in unreached people groups.
4. Long, op. cit. , p. 7.
5. Long, op. cit. , p. 7. See additional quotes regarding these statistics from Justin Long in the box entitled “*Missionaries to the Unreached...A Very Small Slice*” at the end of the article.
6. While our point here is that we are proposing a return to the old days of assigning candidates, we are suggesting this only if there is clear collaboration amongst mission agencies who are committed to the goal of seeing missionaries evenly spread out to the remaining 10,000 Unreached People Groups. Sadly, in previous eras, the denominational agencies’ process of assigning missionaries was at least in part for the purpose of each denomination’s desire to have their own missionaries and churches in each country of the world. One only needs to glance briefly at *Operation World* (by Patrick Johnstone) to see the resulting long lists of a variety of denominations in country “A” followed on the next page with virtually no Christian presence whatsoever in country “B”.
7. Stan Nussbaum, *American Cultural Baggage: How to Recognize and Deal with It* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2005), p. 40. Nussbaum explains that “self-actualization” is a top American cultural value: “American culture has adopted the view of the psychologist Maslow, who taught that “self-actualization” (fully becoming the person you could become) is the highest level of human development.” It is my reflection that we have Christianized this core American cultural value in the Church with an overt focus on our gifts and our desires rather than God’s desires (Nussbaum does not mention this). I highly recommend Nussbaum’s book which should be required reading for all American missionary candidates going abroad and used by mission agencies in their training programs.
8. Thomas Hale, *On Being a Missionary* (Pasadena, California: William Carey Library, 1995), p.46. Hale explains further: “Why is no one psychologically suited to be a missionary? Because being missionary means denying self, and that is contrary to that teaching of modern secular psychology, which says, “Affirm self.” Secular psychologists

preach self-fulfillment; Jesus preached self-denial. But Jesus was a better psychologist than them all.”

9. Ibid., p.29.
10. For one of the best brief yet thorough explanations on why there are various numbers of Unreached People Groups see “Why Are There Various Counts of People Groups?” (INTERNET: <<http://www.joshuaproject.net/numbers.php>>). We personally lean towards the higher numbers of 10,000, thus the reason for using that number herein versus the more popular 6500 per the Joshua Project website.
11. Scott and Sandi Tompkins “The Short-Term Explosion” in *Moody*, Vol. 101, Number 2, November/December, 2000, p. 14.
12. To give just a glimpse of the numbers going out each year on short-term mission trips, here is a one number (and this was published in 2000): “The Evangelical Fellowship of Mission Agencies estimates that in 1999, a half million North American Christians participated in cross-cultural, short-term missions outreaches, a number that has quadrupled in less than 10 years.” Scott and Sandi Tompkins “The Short-Term Explosion” in *Moody*, Vol. 101, Number 2, November/December, 2000, pp. 13-14.
13. See our comments in the box at the end of this article entitled “*The Spinning Out of Control Short Term Missions Explosion*” to begin to understand why we feel the Short-Term Missions Movement is one of the greatest deterrents to long-term service. Much more needs to be written.
14. Indeed there are Joshua Project Research trips which are now called “Research Expeditions” (INTERNET: <[http://www.calebproject.org/main.php/learn\\_and\\_get\\_involved/how\\_research\\_expeditions\\_work](http://www.calebproject.org/main.php/learn_and_get_involved/how_research_expeditions_work)>), and other similar initiatives from some cutting edge agencies committed to Unreached People Groups (i.e. Pioneers and Frontiers and others do have short-term trips to Unreached People Groups). But these tiny efforts to do short-term trips in Unreached People Groups are dwarfed by the massive number of trips in the Christianized world.
15. Kevin L. Howard, “A Call to Missions: Is There Such a Thing?” in *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, Vol. 39, No. 4, October, 2003, pp. 462-465. I’ve included below an important excerpt from Howard’s article (as cited above) for those who may not take time to read the whole article so that you can further understand his emphasis which is different than mine: “Most Christians have struggled in similar ways as I did to discover God’s specific calling for them. I want to explore the idea of a calling, and see if this is really the best way to talk or think about ministry. In 1980, Garry Friesen wrote a book titled, *Decision Making and the Will of God*. Friesen argues that there is no specific will of God for each believer. Rather, believers should make wise decisions based on what Scripture has revealed. Friesen deals in detail with all of the passages that supposedly promote the specific will of God. So, I don’t want to just rehash those same passages. Rather, I want to briefly discuss whether or not there is a calling to missions. I think this is needed because not everyone will read Friesen’s four-hundred-page book and the idea of a calling plays such a big part in the language and beliefs of the average missionary. Their understanding of a calling affects the way they make decisions and the way they counsel others. Thus, there are lots of ramifications to this idea of a calling. So, we do well to explore it again. Now that I’m back in the States and contemplating returning overseas as a career missionary, I’m talking to lots of missionaries about where I might go. Frequently, I’m counseled to go where God is calling me. By calling I understand them to mean a strong sense that God is clearly leading me in a certain direction.”
16. David B. Barrett and Todd M. Johnson, “Status of Global Mission, AD 2006, In Context of 20th and 21st Centuries” in *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, Vol. 30, No. 1, January, 2006, p. 28. Since 2000, in many different public forums, several mission leaders have stated that only about 10% of the church world-wide is actively involved in missions. I have tried to find published data to substantiate this, but without success. The closest figure I know of which may somewhat substantiate this is the 695 million Great Commission Christians listed by David Barrett on the table cited above (out of 2.1 billion Christians of all kinds). But this would be over 33% of all who call themselves Christians. Yet, 10% seems to fit what I have observed in Asia, South America, Africa and North America in the churches in each continent the past 25 years of watching. Also see the one page summary with statistics which summarizes and further illustrates the term “Great Commission Christians” which can be found at: (INTERNET: <<http://www.thetravelingteam.org/2000/articles/stat-commission.shtml>>).
17. Kevin L. Howard, “Kevin Howard Responds” Letters to the Editor in *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, July, 2004, Vol. 40, No. 3, pp. 276-279. It may be far better for missionaries to drop this term “calling” and instead talk about how God and the Holy Spirit guided them, something clearly taught in Scripture and applicable to all believers, daily in all situations. It is simply too easy for most Christians to say they have never been “called” to missions, and for most missionaries to say they have been “called” to well-evangelized countries.
18. Kevin L. Howard, “A Call to Missions: Is There Such a Thing?” in *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, Vol. 39, No. 4, October, 2003, pp. 462-465. Earlier I made reference to Thomas Hale’s excellent book “*On Being a Missionary*” (see endnote 8). I highly recommend this book to all new missionaries and deeply respect the author as a humble man of integrity. Reading this book feels like sitting and talking with him (Hale) eye-to-eye as well as heart-to-heart (and you will fall off your chair laughing a few times too). Chapter 2, entitled “The Call”, represents well the common views amongst most “mission folk” about the term the “call” (which is also known as the “call to missions” or the “missionary call”). Yet the entire chapter entitled “The Call” provides little Scriptural basis to substantiate this mysterious call. All of us who have personally experienced a “call” to serve as a missionary, myself included, need to openly search the Scriptures to see how we justify this. (Hale’s “call” was two days after accepting Christ and was both his mission calling and country calling wrapped together in one event). This is what I am challenging, even though I too do not doubt my own “call” to missions. In the preface Hale states “I write in the belief that there is no

higher or more glorious calling than that of being a missionary of Jesus Christ.” This sounds like the “Awe of the Call” which I too have had in the past. See Thomas Hale, *On Being a Missionary* (Pasadena, California: William Carey Library, 1995), pp. v, 16-29.

19. Wesley Duewel, “No Clear Calling?” in Letters to the Editor, *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, Vol. 40, No. 3 July, 2004, pp. 276-279. Duewel in his Letter to the Editor responds to Howard’s article yet also never gives a Scriptural basis for the “call” just as Hale does not either show the concept of calling from the Scriptures (see endnote 18). My point is that actually more may be released into missions service, not less as Duewel fears, by moving towards emphasizing the Scriptural command for all believers to obey the Great Commission. Also, emphasizing obedience to the Great Commission would allow for more open confrontation of those who say they are “called” to already reached lands. If we drop our emphasis on the “calling” then we can more directly challenge new missionaries regarding where they are going. As it is now, who can question what God told (“called”) any new missionary to do? Howard responds by challenging Duewel that he did not use Scripture, but rather just experiences, to argue his point. Howard says: “Hinting that my position opens the door to liberalism is unfair, especially when I’ve used Scripture to make my point, and you’ve used feelings and experience to support yours. My view challenges Christians to take another look at Scripture, probing whether or not it teaches what so many have labeled as a “calling.” Does Scripture warrant the commonly held ideology of a calling? No, Scripture doesn’t prescribe a calling—a clear and unalterable sense of God’s leading—as the norm for most believers.” See Kevin L. Howard, “Kevin Howard Responds” Letters to the Editor in *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, July, 2004, Vol. 40, No. 3, pp. 276-279.
20. David Barrett & Todd Johnson, *World Christian Trends* (Pasadena, California: William Carey Library, 2001), Global Diagram 34 “Today’s Global Mission The Status of World Evangelization in AD 2000.” This chart explains that 141 countries in the world have more than 60% Christian populations (and are more than 95% evangelized). To further make our point we may have included the World B figures, the 59 countries that are half evangelized (50% evangelized countries with church members less than 60%), then the total together is 200 countries. These are the 200 countries that almost all missionaries work in. If we know a missionary, they likely are in one of these 200 countries.
21. Kevin L. Howard, “A Call to Missions: Is There Such a Thing?” in *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, Vol. 39, No. 4, October, 2003, pp. 462-465. I recognize that Howard is using the argument both in his article and the further thoughts in his response to the letter to the editor from Duewel possibly almost in an opposite way than I am using Howard’s quotes to make my points. The end result of Howard’s argument is a freedom to go anywhere. The end result I am searching for here is to see that the Scriptures really are urging us to see more missionaries go where no one goes. But Howard and I seem to agree on the central point, and that is, that the Scriptures do not teach a specific “calling.” I am using this argument in hopes that more will obey the clear command to make disciples everywhere (both as Senders and Goers). I am also using Howard’s

arguments to release the misuse, or subjective personal use, of the term “calling” by so many who say that they are “called” to the reached nations.

22. The next step should be to conduct a simple yet broad survey of EFMA and IFMA member mission agencies regarding three key numbers: A. The number of new missionaries that chose their long-term country of service in relation to a previous short-term trip to that country. B. The number of applicants willing to go anywhere, desiring the agency to place them. C. The number of new missionaries being assigned by agencies to Unreached People Groups. The results of such a survey may be a real needed eye opener for mission agency directors.
23. C. Peter Wagner, “On the Cutting Edge of Mission Strategy” in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, Ralph D. Winter, ed. (Pasadena, California: William Carey Library, 1999), pp. 531-540.
24. We believe that only those who trust God enough to submit to spiritual authorities whom they can see can also be trusted to truly submit to God whom none of us can see (in other words, if you cannot submit to authority how can you submit to God?). Submitting to leaders is another clear Biblical command and is essential towards applying our concept that candidates would willingly submit and go where they are assigned by agency and church leaders. We believe that emphasizing submission to authority actually can be conveyed to (and embraced by) Gen X’ers and the next generation because they long to do what the Bible says. This is why we argue for a return of agency placements rather than subjectively leaving the choice to the missionary. Submission to authority is a clear Biblical principle. Having a “calling” to a specific country is just not that clear Scripturally as a principle. Ironically, Duewel in his letter to the editor states that he submitted to his board when they ordered (asked) him to work in the office, even though he really wanted to or felt “called” to remain in India: “When my board asked me to stay at our headquarters to help, I told them I was under their authority, but if the choice were left to me I wanted to go back to India. They sent me out of the room and prayed. When they called me back in the room and told me I was to stay at headquarters, I said a quiet “thank you,” but the tears rolled down both cheeks.” Wesley Duewel, “No Clear Calling?” in Letters to the Editor, *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, Vol. 40, No. 3 July, 2004, pp. 276-279.

This is an unedited version of the article we hope to submit for publishing. Please email us specific suggestions so that we can soon submit this article for publishing (the more specific you are...such as page and paragraph the more helpful your feedback will be). General feedback, especially opposing opinions will best be left for the public arena through those who wish to publish their point of view on the subject. We welcome that!

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