Exploring God’s Heart
For the Nations

A Guide to Discovering Our Unreached People Group

May 2011 Edition
Old Town Baptist Church
Winston-Salem, NC
April 25, 2011 (Easter Monday)

Wow! What a weekend! I am still processing the experiences of Secret Church and Easter Sunday. The only word I can think to say is, “Wow!” Reflecting on the great salvation our God has provided and the triumph His Son has achieved, I’m overwhelmed with two sentiments. First is gratitude which leads to praise. I reiterate Paul’s words:

“Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever! Amen. Romans 11:33, 36

My second sentiment is compassion which leads to action. When thinking about the great salvation so freely given us, we could spend all our time contemplating God’s Gift and praising Him for it. Of course, such reflection is crucial to our growth as worshippers of God. Yet, our worship is intended to motivate our mission: making disciples of all peoples. God’s desire is that all people on this planet hear the Good News of Jesus so they have the opportunity to experience His salvation. Therefore, we have embraced the “Acts One 8 Challenge”: Making Jesus Known Locally to Globally.

On a global level, God is opening doors to fulfill the vision behind Pastor Rick’s challenge for us to adopt an unreached people group which we will engage with the Gospel. That simply means we will assume responsibility for taking the Good News to a people group with no access to this Gospel. What an exciting – and daunting – task! We cannot achieve this goal alone. We need God’s heart for the nations and His empowering presence to realize that dream. This booklet can help us follow God’s leadership toward engaging our people group. Thank you for using it personally, with your family and in your Sunday school/small group. Join in praying for God to reveal this people group and give us the grace we need to join Him in His activity among them.
On a local level, it’s essential that we make Jesus known among family, friends, neighbors, co-workers and classmates. How encouraging to hear of our students and professionals sharing their faith. God is working through us to reach people who are like us. At the same time, we have the opportunity and responsibility of reaching people around us who are not like us culturally, ethnically, or socially. Those would include the rising ethnic population living around us. The recent US census data confirms what we’ve all noticed: our community is rapidly changing. The census tract in which our facilities are located has about equal percentage “Black” and “Hispanic” population at about 14% each. The two adjoining census tracts to our East Northeast have changed more dramatically. Those two tracts are 26% and 31% “Hispanic”; 22% and 42% “Black”, respectively. www.journalnow.com

In light of these statistics, we can respond with denial, indifference, or obedience. God established Old Town Baptist Church 50 years ago to “make Jesus known locally to globally”. At that time, He knew how our local community would change. Scripture records God’s sovereignty over people movements: “From one man he made every nation of men . . . and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him . . . .” (Acts 17:26 – 27) God placed a missionary people here to reach our neighbors regardless of what they look or sound like. Praise God for His forwarding looking plan, providing us the opportunity to make disciples of people groups locally and globally! The question is: “How does He want us to do that in this generation?” I invite you to join me in praying for God to make His plan clear; to open doors; and, to guide us into His way. Jesus said, “My Father is always at his work . . . and, I, too, am working.” (John 5:17) Let’s seek God’s activity and join Him – just like Jesus!

To Him be glory forever!
Pastor Mark
The Week of May 1, 2011

Scripture Reading: Genesis 11:8 - 9

The Tower of Babel story is intriguing. The scriptural account has huge implications for understanding God’s plan for the world’s peoples. God created mankind in His image with the instructions, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth . . . .” (Genesis 1:28) Human beings bear the image of God; we reflect something of His nature every place we set our feet. God instructed our planet’s first residents to “fill the earth” thus enabling His glory to fill the earth. By the time of Genesis 11 (a couple generations after Noah), earth’s occupants decided not to obey God’s command: “Come let us build ourselves a city . . . so that we may . . . not be scattered over the face of the whole earth.” (Genesis 11:4) In response to their rebellion, God created people groups so that His glory would fill the earth! What mankind was unwilling to do on their own as one people, God accomplished by creating many diverse peoples!

God’s goal is that His glory fills the earth. This goal is realized through us – His people! 2 Corinthians 3:18 says, “We, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory . . . .” As the moon reflects the light of the sun, so God’s children reflect the light of His Son! This week, we can choose to embrace our first priority: to fill the earth with God’s glory. Let us commit to allow God’s glory – His presence – to burst through our lives in every attitude, thought and action we choose. In this way, we will fulfill God’s purpose for our lives and embrace His plan for all the world’s people.
Unreached People Group Focus

Nosu (Yinuo) of China

Population: 615,000
Percentage Evangelical Christian: 0.00%
Primary Religion: Ethnic Religions
“Jesus” Film: No

Prayer Points
- That God will send Christians willing to work in rugged terrain and with difficult cultural-language issues;
- That the Gospel will overcome a strict caste system;
- That cultural stories similar to Bible stories (like, the Flood story) will become bridges to sharing the Gospel.
The Week of May 8, 2011

Scripture Reading: Psalm 96:1 -3

Throughout Scripture we discover God’s desire for all people to experience His glory. God’s glory is the fullness of His presence. To experience God’s glory is to experience Him. So, God’s passion for His glory to fill the earth reflects His passion to fill the lives of people with His presence. Our role is to declare – announce – His glory to the world’s peoples. The Psalmist listed two ways we do this: by singing praise to God – that’s worship; and, by sharing His saving activity – that’s evangelism. How crucial that we show God’s glory through our lives; and, that we declare His glory with our lips.

Scripture reveals many ways we ‘Declare His glory’.

- Staying united as God’s people – Romans 15:5 – 6
- Experiencing answered prayers – John 14:13
- Bearing spiritual fruit – John 15:8
- Eating and drinking – whatever – 1 Corinthians 10:31
- Giving thanks for salvation – 2 Corinthians 4:15
- Living righteous lives – Philippians 1:11

Have you chosen as your goal in life to glorify God? This is God’s goal for us – a realistic goal because we ‘reflect the Lord’s glory.’ (2 Cor. 3:18) Whether we go across the street or around the world, our location may change; but, our vocation remains the same: to glorify God! From the list above, choose actions this week that “declare His glory”. God promises us success: “For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.” (Habakkuk 2:14) Declaring His glory is something every believer can succeed in! Rejoice.
Unreached People Group Focus

Bederia of Sudan

Population: 784,000
Percentage Evangelical Christian: 0.00%
Primary Religion: Islam
"Jesus" Film in local language: Yes

Prayer Points
- For intercessors willing to “break up hard soil” through commitment to pray earnestly for the Bederia;
- For Northern Sudan Christians to reach out to Bederia;
- A church planting movement to begin among this UPG.
Week of May 15, 2011

Scripture Reading: 2 Samuel 7:22 – 24

The Hebrew people are God’s chosen people. These descendants of Abraham were blessed by God to be a blessing to all people (remember Genesis 12:1 – 3). This prayer of David reveals at least two reasons God chose the Hebrews and delivered them from slavery. Did you catch those reasons? (pause for response) God chose Israel to: have a people for Himself; and, to make a name for Himself. In other words, God chose His people for His glory!

Throughout Israel’s history, God accomplished amazing feats through them and did awesome things for them. One such event is the exodus from Egypt mentioned by King David. The exodus period was a challenging time for God’s people! They suffered as slaves awaiting freedom; and, they suffered during the plagues God sent to deliver them. Even in those painful circumstances, God acted for His glory. Exodus 14:17 – 18 reveals God’s hand: “I will gain glory through Pharaoh and all his army, through his chariots and his horsemen. The Egyptians will know that I am the Lord when I gain glory . . . .”

This principle applies to our lives. Our difficulties are God’s tools to gain glory through us. The challenges we will face in engaging the UPG He has chosen for us will become the means of His gaining glory. Paul wrote: “I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.” (Romans 8:18) Will you trust God enough to embrace the difficulties you are experiencing – and the challenges yet to come – as a means of His gaining glory through you and through His church? That is the life of His chosen ones!
Unreached People Group Focus

Urdu of Saudi Arabia

Population: 585,000
Percentage Evangelical Christian: unknown
Primary Religion: Islam
Resources: Bible (1998): Yes
“Jesus” Film (in Urdu): Yes

Prayer Points
- For God to open doors for Christian businessmen to share the Gospel with the people;
- That Holy Spirit soften people’s hearts to Good News;
- That God to reveal Himself to people through dreams.
Week of May 22, 2011

Scripture Reading: 1 Kings 8:41 – 43

During the dedication of the Jerusalem Temple, Solomon lifted an awesome prayer to God. The chosen people stood on the chosen spot before the Temple built by the chosen man. Truly this was a historical highlight! The moment represented centuries of struggle to realize a God-given dream. What a reason to celebrate! How easily, though, God’s people – overflowing with pride – could have turned inward. Yet, Solomon’s prayer indicates an outward focus on spreading God’s glory among the “foreigners” – those outside His family, i.e., UPGs.

We have even more reason to celebrate! We don’t gather at God’s Temple; we ARE God’s Temple (1 Corinthians 6:19 – 20). We have been given “every spiritual blessing.” (Ephesians 1:3) How easily we could savor these blessings and neglect sharing them with others. Such a decision would defeat God’s purpose for choosing us and deprive us of glorifying Him. A commitment to God’s mission led one church to adopt the motto: “The Church That Gives Itself Away”. What an appropriate slogan for a missional people. Solomon’s prayer reveals an outward focus on others begins with an upward focus on God.

This week, let’s honestly examine our lives, families, and church family to see evidence of an inward or outward focus. Pay attention not merely to what we say is important with words; but, to what we show is important through action. In response to what we see, let’s lift our eyes upward to our God who will focus us outward on ‘foreigners’ – unreached peoples – who will “know His name and fear Him” through our obedience to God’s commission to make Him known to all people.
Unreached People Group Focus

Lao of Laos

Population: 2,805,000
Percentage Evangelical Christian: 0.30%
Primary Religion: Buddhism
Resources:
- Complete Bible (1932): Yes
- “Jesus” Film (Lao language): Yes

Prayer Points
- That God would give mission agencies new strategies to effectively evangelize/disciple Lao people;
- For Lao believers to share the Gospel with their people;
- For strong, multiplying Lao congregations to emerge.
Week of May 29, 2011

Scripture Reading: Acts 2:5 – 12, 41

Pentecost is the climactic post-resurrection moment when God the Spirit set Jesus’ Great Commission into motion. On that day, John’s vision in The Revelation began to be realized. By God’s design, members of every people group present heard the Good News about Jesus. Those who believed returned home as the first missionaries to unreached people groups! I love the way God moves people around for His purposes. Paul’s message to the crowd in Athens reveals God’s sovereign plan: “From one man [God] made every nation of men . . . and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him . . . .” (Acts 17:26 – 27)

Obviously, God will go to any length necessary to connect people with the Good News. The movement of peoples for God’s glory is not something isolated to other countries; He’s doing this same thing here at home. Have you noticed the rise in our local ethnic population? The Hispanic population in Forsyth County more than doubled over the last decade; and, the Asian population has increased 10 fold during that time! As we consider the UPG God wants us to engage globally, we must also remember the UPGs in our own backyard. One way to become aware of people movements is to eat a meal at an ethnic restaurant (other than El Maguey) or shop at one of the handful of stores along Reynolda Road catering to Hispanics. Look for chances to befriend internationals. Pray about how God would have us engage UPGs here at home. Express a willingness to embrace God’s plan.
Unreached People Group Focus

Ahar of India

Population: 1,376,000
Percentage Evangelical Christian: 0.00%
Primary Religion: Hinduism
Resources: Complete Bible (2000): Yes
           “Jesus” Film local language: Yes

Prayer Points
- That Ahar caste members will sense their need for forgiveness and will not trust their own righteousness;
- For a hunger among the people to know Christ;
- For a realization of need for Jesus’ power in their lives.
Helpful Resources

Bible Study Resources

Unveiled at Last: Discover God’s Hidden Message from Genesis to Revelation by Bob Sjogren (YWAM Publishers, 1988)

Radical: Taking Back Your Faith from the American Dream by David Platt (Multnomah Books, 2010)

Get Connected: Mobilizing Your Church for God’s Mission by Johnny M. Hunt (International Mission Board of the SBC, 2010)

Helpful Definitions

*People group:* A group of individuals who share a common language, culture and worldview. Strategically, a PG is the largest group through which the gospel can flow without significant barriers. There are approximately 12,000 people groups on earth today.

*Unreached people group (UPG):* A people group with less than 2% evangelical Christian among its population (often far less than 2%). The world is populated by about 6,400 UPGs.

*Unengaged Unreached People Group (UUPG):* A people group that no one is attempting to reach with the Gospel. This amounts to 3,700 people groups with a population of 1.8 billion.

*People Group Adoption/Engagement:* A church’s commitment to focus her attention on making disciples among a specific people group.

Helpful websites for exploring People Groups

Operation World: www.operationworld.org
Joshua Project: www.joshuaproject.net
International Mission Board, SBC: www.imb.org
Peoplegroups.org: www.peoplegroups.org