

The Priority of Evangelism

I. INTRODUCTION

The proclamation of the gospel is going out in unprecedented ways today throughout the world! During this session, I want to share with you three excellent strategies of evangelism. But first, I want to share with you how I believe the Spirit of God is at work in fulfilling our Lord's Great Commission.

II. SOME SIGNS OF GOD'S SPIRIT AT WORK

A. The Explosive Growth of the Church in China and India

The church in China has grown about 100 times in the last 60 years. Likewise, people in India have been responding in unprecedented ways. The 2001 census reported 2.1% of the population as Christian. By 2005, researchers and newspapers started reporting that India was 6% Christian. Recently, some Christian leaders in India are estimating substantially more than that.

B. Visions of Jesus

In the Middle East, many people are having dreams of Jesus or something which points them to Jesus. In one location in Central Asia, a team was driving to a place to show the JESUS film. They got lost and stopped to regain their bearings. Just then a man emerged from a nearby grove of trees. He was rushing toward them. The team was afraid.

As he got closer, they heard him say, "You are the ones!" When he arrived next to them, he explained that a few nights before he had a dream. In it were people who looked like the team. He was told in the dream that those people would tell him "the truth." So he inquired, "Can you tell me the truth?" Needless to say, they did. They went back to the man's village and showed the film to the man, his family and others in the village.

Clearly God is being very intentional and expansive in His recent efforts to draw people to Himself. At times, His actions are above and beyond any strategy or concrete action on the part of Christians. But, for the most part, He is working with methods and in patterns we can understand and choose to be part of.

C. United Movements of Prayer

Jesus said in John 15:7, "If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish and it will be given to you." Prayer expert Steve Hawthorne says, "There is no question that united prayer for God's purposes to be fulfilled has been on the rise in astounding ways since the 1984 International Prayer Council. There have been concerts of prayer, using computers to connect prayer, national prayer leadership, local-church prayer leadership, prayer walking, prayer evangelism, spiritual-warfare emphasis, pastors' prayer summits, 24/7 prayer rooms and global events with local city-wide gatherings on the same day."

As an illustration of his last point, the 2009 Global Day of Prayer was estimated to have 300 million people involved in 220 countries.

D. Cooperative Planning

1. Ethiopia - A few years ago, the church in Ethiopia unveiled a 100-year plan, not just to evangelize the country and plant churches, but also to see dramatic change throughout the Ethiopian society.

2. Back to Jerusalem - Many Christians in China are part of the “Back to Jerusalem” movement. They believe that the gospel mainly went west from its beginning in Jerusalem. Now it is present in great strength in China. They believe it is their mandate to take the “relay-race baton” of the gospel further west until it arrives back in Jerusalem. If you think of the countries between Tibet and Jerusalem, you realize many Chinese missionaries will die in that quest. But, they are prepared for that and are making their plans.

3. Unreached People Group Networks - In the summer of 2000, a number of mission leaders were attending the Amsterdam 2000 meeting sponsored by the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. As the challenge was given to find ways to engage and reach the remaining Unengaged Unreached People Groups (UUPG), some of the leaders committed to seeing that happen. They began to dream of the day that researchers would not be able to find even one UUPG.

In the last several years, there has been significant progress toward that goal. Of the 639 UUPGs of populations of over 100,000 (as of four years ago), two-thirds have been engaged or reached and most of the rest have been adopted. More than 4000 full-time and part-time workers have gone to achieve engagement during that time. And substantial planning has occurred to finish the task with not only the larger UUPGs, but with the smaller ones, as well.

E. Unity and Partnerships

In John 17:20-21, Jesus prayed, “My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.” I have been involved full-time in missions for over 40 years, and I sense that kind of unity is truer now than it was before. My wife and I meet every six months with the couples who lead five other major college and high school ministries. We mainly share and pray for one another. Similarly, those who lead many of the U.S.-based missions organizations meet for a few days every year. We share ideas and best practices freely. We discuss and pray for challenges we face.

As another example, in 1998 a partnership was formed involving the JESUS Film Ministry of Campus Crusade for Christ and the global missions effort of the Church of the Nazarene. The JESUS Film Project provided films and projectors and the Nazarene Church provided workers to show the film and plant churches.

Since then, God has used that partnership to see over 55 million exposures to the gospel, with nearly 10 million indicated decisions; 3.5 million people have entered into follow-up, and 22,000 churches or preaching points have been established.

F. Breakthroughs in Bible Translation and Illiteracy

There have been some very substantial barriers to the spread of the gospel through the years.

1. Illiteracy - About two-thirds of the population of the earth cannot be easily disciplined through written materials. In recent years, tremendous progress has been made in developing ministry approaches which do not require people to read. Audio materials have been developed, for example, which can systematically disciple a person from beginning as a new Christian, to becoming mature in Christ and even becoming a pastor or missionary without ever assuming that person learns to read.

Some strategies of Bible translation can use the telling of 50-60 carefully selected Bible stories to plant discipleship groups and even churches. In one fairly closed situation in northeast Africa, a number of national missionaries were trained in this approach. As they learned specific Bible stories, they went to nearby villages to share them at great personal risk. During the training, two small listening groups were started. The people in those groups met each week to learn new Bible stories and be prepared to share them with their neighbors. In just six months after the initial training, the people

in the two groups saw 30 more people come to Christ and two house churches were started.

Some of the 30 new believers used the same strategy to lead 50 more people to Christ and plant more house churches. As of the last report, there were nine house churches in all.

2. Bible Translation - Another significant historical barrier to the spread of the gospel has been the lack of Scripture in people's heart languages. Not too many years ago, Wycliffe Bible Translators projected that it would take 150 years to complete the task of Bible translation.

However, things have changed dramatically. It used to take 13 years to translate enough of the Bible to start a church. Now it takes much less time. Nationals are more involved, translation is often done in clusters of similar languages, and computers can be used to assist in the process. Wycliffe now projects that by the end of 2025 a Bible translation project will be started in every language that will ever need one.

Think about it! Never in the history of time has the Bible been available to everyone on earth. But, soon it will be.

3. Quicker Use - On top of just availability, Scripture translation is being sequenced to fit into the best timing for local church planting efforts. For example, a partnership has recently been formed called the End to End Partnership. The strategy is to locate a local church planting movement organization to ask what languages they are prepared to use as soon as possible. As needed, Wycliffe and their partners translate the script from Luke for the JESUS film as a first priority. As soon as the script becomes available, the JESUS Film Project dubs that language to create the film. Also, the Bible translators work on portions of the New Testament and certain critical Old Testament stories. Those translations serve as scripts to be recorded by Faith Comes by Hearing.

So, in a fast, seamless process Scripture can be made available to be shown on film and played in audio form for listening groups. Then the local church planting movement organizations put those materials to work as soon as they become available.

III. CREATIVE EVANGELISM STRATEGIES

Now let me elaborate on three specific ways you can take advantage of how God is opening evangelistic doors today.

A. Using Short Films

If we are going to reach all nations, all people groups, and all generations, we need to speak in the languages they speak. The 'language' of this upcoming generation -- those urban dwelling, technologically savvy, 13-35 year olds -- is entertainment. To reach this people group with the gospel, we need to speak their dialect, the dialect of Arts, Media, Music and Film.

The Global Short Film Network uses intriguing short films -- from 1-10 minutes in length -- to connect with this new generation, one that is visually oriented. The short films get the attention of students and young adults, stimulating discussions in a matter of minutes.

The Global Short Film Network is about using short films to springboard into conversations about Christ. How is this done? First of all, by creating great films that are both fun to watch and stir up deeper issues we all deal with -- themes like brokenness, self-image, love and forgiveness.

Second, the Global Short Film Network teaches young filmmakers around the world how to make films that speak directly to their culture in their own words. In just this past year, the Global Short Film Network with the help of Hollywood professionals, conducted film schools in Egypt, Hong

Kong, the Caribbean, Thailand, New Zealand and East Asia - coaching promising filmmakers in the essential skills needed to tell the visual stories of their culture.

Finally, they focus on equipping people with ideas of how to share these films and start conversations with their friends and families.

Just a few weeks ago, someone that the Short Film Network trained in the Caribbean, from Guyana, gave a report on his Facebook:

I'm a youth pastor at a juvenile prison. Every week I give Bible lessons to the group. But, I have seen that the interest of the group is not so great anymore. I tried a lot of things, but I couldn't get their attention.

Last week I took my projector and laptop and showed them a short film. After that, we talked about it. It was so AWESOME. I got everyone's attention, and we had a really good conversation after the movie. I think that in the coming weeks I will be showing more short movies.

Maybe I can make a short film with them in the future. I hope so.

That's the power of a short film. It gets the discussion going with those who may be hesitant to talk. Don't miss using the power of a short film to reach the next generation. There is a short film, called "Venia," which gives you a little idea of the kind of impact that can be made in 5 minutes.

If you would like more information on how to get many of the short films already produced, visit the website at <http://globalshortfilmnetwork.com>.

B. The Power of the Internet

A second powerful medium of evangelism is the Internet. Millions of people are indicating decisions for Christ over the Internet every year. One of the most effective evangelism strategies in the world today is Global Media Outreach. Their vision is to give every person on earth multiple opportunities to accept Jesus Christ by 2020. Their mission, though, is not only evangelism, but discipleship that leads to the incorporation of new believers into local churches. They are located in the high tech area of California in the United States so they can immediately apply the emerging communication technologies to ministry for the Lord.

GMO currently has 102 highly segmented websites that draw more than 400,000 visitors daily. Of those, more than 60,000 indicate they have prayed a prayer to receive Jesus Christ as their personal Savior. Of those, 8,000 will give full contact information stating their interest in being discipled and eventually connected to a local church. In the course of any given week, Global Media Outreach will reach people in every major trade language from as many as 191 countries.

In 2009, GMO had more than 10.5 million indicated decisions, with 2 million new believers who gave full contact information. In 2010, based on first quarter results, GMO expects 20 million people to indicate decisions to receive Christ with 5 million of them who will express interest to join a small group or a local church.

There is a 2-minute video which captures the live action of what is happening as people log in to one of the GMO sites. If you want to go to the site live, it is www.greatcommission2020.com. The blue banner stands for those who are right now online reading the gospel message. And, when you see a yellow banner, it means a person has indicated a decision to receive Christ.

What I like about GMO is their desire to get people into discipleship and to try to connect them with other believers. They have recruited and trained almost 5,000 online missionaries who provide answers to questions, help new believers grow in their faith, and assist in getting them introduced to

local Christian movements. They are continually trying to measure changed lives. They sent out a survey to people who 6 months earlier had indicated decisions to receive Christ. Listen to these results:

8,509 surveys were received back from 185 countries. The top 12 countries, in order were: India, South Africa, United States, Philippines, Nigeria, Kenya, Malaysia, United Kingdom, Ghana, Canada, United Arab Emirates and Indonesia.

- Assurance of Salvation 87% were “very certain” that they now knew Christ as their personal Savior
- Change in Biblical world view and life experience 72% said their thoughts/actions were changed by a prompting of God’s Spirit “daily”
- Daily Bible reading 44% read their Bible daily and 30% 1 – 2 times a week
- Attending church/small group regularly 63% attend church or meet with a small group weekly
- Daily prayer 58% spend 10 minutes or more daily in prayer
- Sharing their faith 92% have shared their faith with others

Can the world really be reached by 2020?

Recently, GMO launched the Jesus2020 site in multiple languages with the goal of giving every person on earth multiple opportunities to accept Jesus Christ by 2020. GMO believes that the future of network technology is going to be about mobile receiving devices powered by solar energy. The O3B Project (Other 3 Billion) will launch 5 satellites in the next few years that will provide connectivity to every person in the world.

GMO believes Apple has changed the game with iPad, introducing the notion of sensory computing which will allow a person to touch an image in order to get information. GMO is now developing concepts to touch a picture, which will generate a gospel presentation in an audio or video format. With these technologies, the Jesus2020 Site is expected to generate between a half-billion to one billion people indicating decisions for Jesus Christ by 2020.

If your organization or denomination would like to become a partner with Global Media Outreach, there are two possibilities:

1. Recruit e-Missionaries. Local churches are tremendously energized when its members get involved in evangelism and discipleship following up responses from the Internet. To get involved, contact GMO at gmojoinus.com. Online missionaries are needed in the following languages: English, French, Italian, Chinese, German, Urdu, Spanish, Russian, Farsi, Japanese, Portuguese, and Swedish.

2. GMO is looking for a few partners who will help them open the next 23 language sites. If you have ministry locations in any one of the following languages, you might be interested in becoming a facilitating partner to launch the Jesus2020 site in that language: Arabic, Bulgarian, Croatian, Czech, Danish, Dutch, Finnish, Greek, Hebrew, Hungarian, Indonesian, Korean, Latvian, Lithuanian, Norwegian, Polish, Romanian, Serbian, Slovak, Thai, Turkish, Ukrainian, Vietnamese. This would involve an initial investment of \$20,000 to bring the site up and provide an advertising budget to draw people to the site. If you are interested in this option, contact Walt Wilson at waltwilson2000@aol.com.

C. The Dramatic Impact of Feature Films.

Over the past thirty years, the most prolific tool of evangelism that we have had in the ministry of Campus Crusade for Christ is the JESUS film. It has now been translated into nearly 1,100 languages. It has been shown in every country of the world and has generated more than 6 billion exposures to the gospel. New translations are still being completed every month.

Some of you have not yet seen the Story of JESUS for Children or the version of the JESUS film called “Magdalena.” The following is a report from Cris Uy, who handles all of our film evangelism

throughout the Philippines, to bring you up-to-date on the JESUS film.

In early 2000, a mission mobilization gathering in Manila set up display booths representing a number of unreached people groups in the Philippines. One booth represented a Muslim people group living on an isolated island. Unlike all the other colorful and lively booths, it was the only booth that had nothing in it but a message that read, “Nothing is here because no one is there.” The fact that no one was trying to reach this group caused different organizations and churches to come together and discuss what should be done. These men and women shared their resources and sent three young Filipino missionaries to the island. These young workers taught the people how to set up their own health center, pharmacy and schools.

Central to the project was the use of the classic JESUS film, known to them as “Isa Al Masi.” These missionaries changed the spiritual climate of the island. Today, the ministry is being led by indigenous leaders and the people have been reaching out to their fellow Muslims in the other islands around them.

The classic JESUS film is being used all over the southern part of the Philippines to help change the spiritual climate in that part of the country. In spite of wars and terrorism, the good news is being proTOKYO claimed to our cousins all over that area. If you walk in the marketplace, it is a common site to see and hear this familiar video being illegally sold by Muslim store-owners to their Muslim customers. They are selling pirated versions of the JESUS film in their language!

You are familiar with the Classic version of the film and I just talked about it. I want to introduce you to two other versions, and then find out in which languages you could still use translations of the Classic film.

We have two objectives in showing evangelistic films. The first objective is to filter out the ripe fruit that God has already prepared. The second is to help change the spiritual climate of the area, making it common for them to hear the name of Isa or Jesus. Two years ago we surveyed our staff working across the world and asked which stories from the scriptures appealed most to Muslim women. We then filmed these and introduced the Magdalena version of the JESUS film with 20 minutes of new footage. The response has been outstanding.

After we showed the English version of this film to our Muslim women friends in Mindanao, they said “This must be shown to all Muslim women.” We just finished recording a new language of this film to be used all over Mindanao and in Sabah, Malaysia where hundreds of thousands of Filipino Muslims reside and work.

In Manila, on the other hand, a medical doctor, who heads up the National Children’s Medical Center, has been using another version of the JESUS film called the “Story of JESUS for Children.” He is using it to reach out to sick and dying children and comfort the grieving parents and nannies. In the Philippines, we now have this version available in three major Filipino languages. It is being used by Child Evangelism Fellowship and other groups who are working with children. You will receive copies of both Magdalena and the Story of JESUS for Children.

Finally, I want to say a word about the Classic JESUS Film. We are finding that it is very effective in the smaller language groups. However, we are now using DVD in most of the world, and are packaging it in new ways.

In your Handbook you will notice a listing of the 865 languages, over 50,000 people, that still do not have a translation. We are looking for partners in the translation and distribution of these languages. We will try to raise the finances, if you can help with the translation and the showings. The JESUS Film Regional reps will be available during the session and at their table.

Finally, I want to tell you a story of what happened in the Philippine national election. We have used

the national election as a platform to massively evangelize throughout the entire country. We developed a tool called VoteRIGHT – a non-partisan voters’ education guide which is evangelistic in nature. Because of this, millions of Filipinos were given a chance to say “yes” to Jesus Christ. We also gained the respect of the politicians nationwide, including all of the candidates for the presidency. For the first time in the history of Philippine politics, evangelical Christians were able to attract the attention of the media networks.

IV. ACTION

Please turn your attention back to the commitment form in your Handbook. We want to give you a chance to indicate your interest in being involved in any of the three evangelistic efforts mentioned above.

1. If you’d like more information on implementing the short film strategy, you can check that box and we’ll make sure that someone contacts you.
2. If you would like to become a partner with Global Media Outreach, either by recruiting e-missionaries or helping to develop a website in one of the languages I mentioned earlier, you can indicate that by checking the box.
3. If you want to help get the JESUS film translated and shown in a new language, you can indicate that and list the name of the language(s). If you don’t get a chance to talk with one of the JESUS film reps this week, they’ll contact you at a later date.
4. Remember to bring this form with you Thursday night to the evening session.

V. CONCLUSION

God is moving today! If things keep progressing as they have in recent years, I believe the Great Commission will be fulfilled in our lifetime. What a privilege it is to be alive and in ministry at a time like this!

*

Steve Douglass leads Campus Crusade for Christ with a passion for ministry built over nearly four decades of service. Douglass came to Campus Crusade with a resume that included a Bachelor of Science degree from M.I.T. and a Masters in Business Administration from Harvard. During the next 32 years he held a variety of positions with Campus Crusade for Christ, including executive vice president and director of U.S. Ministries. In July 2001, founder Bill Bright personally selected Douglass to be his successor. Along with his wife Judy, Steve Douglass resides in Orlando, FL, USA.