



Fall 2019 Update on the Worldwide Ministry of The HOPE . . .

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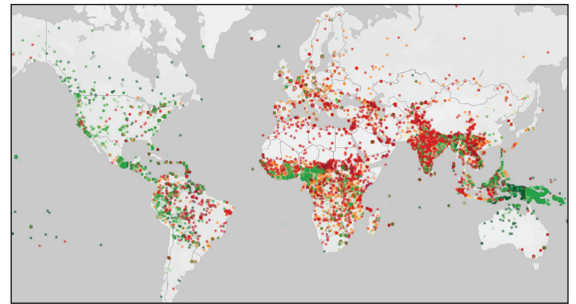


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What Will It Take to Reach the Rest?

Understanding Your Mission within the Great Commission

It is only by playing a specific role that a musician can experience his or her purpose within a symphonic performance. God's grand plan to populate heaven with people from every tongue, tribe and nation is like a symphony - one of divine proportions. As a Christian, you will never fully know your purpose in life until you understand your personal God-given mission within the context of that grand plan of God . . . the Great Commission.



The red dots show where most of the thousands of unreached people groups are found. Source: International Mission Board

And yet, a recent study indicates that 51% of Churchgoers in America have not even heard of the Great Commission! So, before wading deeper into the topic of this article, let's determine that we are on the same page regarding this amazing mission from God.

The Mission – Every Tongue, Tribe & Nation

Jesus gave His followers the mission . . . “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.” (Matt.28:19-20). Volumes have been written on this mandate, we call it simply, the Great Commission.

The Importance of the Mission

In the words of John Piper, “The final goal of all things is that God might be worshiped with white-hot affection by a redeemed company of countless persons from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.” (see Rev.5:9; 7:9) The completion of this “countless number” (according to God's assessment) will not only result in complete worship, it will hasten the day in which this broken sin-infected world is replaced by a new heaven and new earth in which righteousness dwells (2 Pet.3:13).

The Status of the Mission

Depending on which research organization you look to, there are in the world today somewhere between 10,249 and 11,757 “people groups” (*ethne* in the Greek; translated as “nations” in the Bible). And somewhere between 4,425 and 7,096 of these are considered unreached; there is no indigenous community of Christians able to engage the people group with church planting. In some cases, the group is so unreached that the name of Jesus is not even known. This is the real world!

Now, having briefly defined the Great Commission and its status, let's return to the title question by looking at a real life example of someone who has lived the mission.

A Story of Two Missionaries to the Unreached

In the mid-80's, Mark and Gloria Zook were sent out by their Church in Pennsylvania as missionaries with Ethnos360 (formerly New Tribes Mission) to reach the Mouk tribe in Papua New Guinea with the Gospel. The Zooks spent 2 years building a relationship

with the Mouk and learning their language. Mark then spent 3 months taking the whole village through God's redemptive story chronologically, beginning with creation and arriving finally at the resurrection of Jesus. Along the way, Mark worked with a Mouk man to translate certain Bible verses that were key to the story. By the time Mark gave the Mouk an opportunity to respond to Jesus - at the end of the 3-month journey - their hearts and minds were like a tinder box. Spiritual awakening broke out with dancing and celebration as the people shouted, EE-TAOW! (It is true!) At that very moment a Church of worshipers was born among the Mouk people!

The Zooks then worked with the Mouk Church to translate the entire New Testament in only 8 years, a remarkably short time in the world of Bible translation! (to view this story - <https://ethnos360.org/mission-videos-and-mission-photos/ee-taow-the-mouk-story>)

A Few Relevant Observations for Reaching the Unreached

- **Many Roles - One Mission** - The Zooks understood the need to reach the unreached. This may have come through a Bible teacher who discipled them (a mobilizer). Others also saw the need, and were willing to do their part. Their Church supported them with prayer and finances (senders). And of course, the Zooks were trained by the team at Ethnos360 (equippers).
- **The Sufficiency of the Gospel** - From the moment the Zooks stepped foot in the Mouk village they had one goal, to share the Gospel, and to do so in a chronological narrative form from creation through Christ. This is a typical Ethnos360 approach to Church planting among the unreached. It has proven to be effective time and time again!
- **The Role of Bible Translation** - There is today a great movement to translate the Bible into every language "that needs it." However, many in this movement promote the idea that Bible translation is a necessary precursor to the completion of the Great Commission, while agreeing it could take 15-25 years for most language groups to get significant portions of scripture. From the Mouk story we see that Bible translation was accelerated as a result of Church planting, not as the precursor to it.
- **The Role of Human Development** - Papua New Guinea is on the United Nations' "Low Human Development" list. The Zooks did address physical needs as best they could; i.e. basic medical and hygiene issues. However, they did not go to the Mouk thinking they first had to lift their quality of life to earn the right to share the Gospel. Nor did their experience prove otherwise.

The Application for Mars Hill and The HOPE

The mission of Mars Hill is to "Use Media to Draw People to Jesus Christ." Over the years we've pursued this mission in different ways to address specific needs and opportunities within the Great Commission. This story brings into focus the current need and opportunity we believe God is calling us to address - to serve goers like the Zooks by using media and technology to facilitate and accelerate the sharing of God's redemptive story from creation through Christ among the unreached.

The Application for You

Every Christian is called to a role in the Great Commission. If you are not called to be a goer (like the Zooks), then you are called to some other role . . . perhaps that of a sender, funder, prayer, equipper or mobilizer. The role you are called to is the role you were created for. That is where you will discover great fulfillment in your relationship with your Heavenly Father.

The Answer to Our Question

What will it take to reach the remaining unreached people groups of our world? Very simply, it will take the Body of Christ on earth doing what it was called by Jesus to do over 2,000 years ago. Each of us has a mission within the greater mission!

A Different Kind of Metric

How do you measure the impact of a ministry? Some can point to the end recipients of their work - i.e. people saved, fed or rescued. Mars Hill is a toolmaker. The people who use our tools may be in touch with the end recipient, but usually, we are not. When Cuisinart sells a crockpot, it has no way of knowing how many people will be fed a meal from it. As with other toolmakers, we could measure our success in terms of numbers of units distributed. However, the metric that means the most to us is what you might call "user buy-in."

When a missionary or mission organization comes to us asking for a version of The HOPE for their language group, they are typically willing to invest their own time and money to help produce it. When a ministry wants to distribute thousands of Micro SD cards to the underground Church in a closed access country, they are willing to fund it. When a satellite broadcast ministry wants to use their airtime to broadcast The HOPE, they are willing to cover their costs. This is good user buy-in. As these kinds of opportunities continue to be initiated by those a) who are the closest to the field of mission opportunity, and b) who are willing to do whatever it takes to acquire and utilize the tool, then we are confident it is having an impact.



Many of those who benefit from The HOPE are in closed access countries where ministry is security sensitive. Conventional metrics are difficult to collect.

Thinking Outside the Box - The HOPE in a Box

One of the most basic ways to increase work-flow is to identify and remove the constraints that are causing “bottle necks.” Two of the biggest constraints to creating new translations of The HOPE are that the process requires 1) someone who understands the best practices of translation, back-translation and the resolution of theological issues in a cross cultural context, and 2) someone with the technical know-how to produce quality audio and video. These roles frequently fall on Mars Hill, but our team is small, thus we are often the bottle neck. For quite some time we have dreamed about a technology solution, a software application that would automate the process and remove the constraints. Until recently, such a solution was not really possible.

We are now investing significant time and energy into the design of a software solution that would basically allow a Christian worker anywhere in the world to add narration to The HOPE video in their language using only a mobile phone. Much like the well known Turbo Tax software, our app would lead a person, step by step, through the best practices of translation and back-translation to arrive at a good final translation. And when that translation is ready to be recorded, the software would automatically determine if the quality of the recording is adequate. If not, instructions to improve the quality would be available. For oral cultures, the whole process could be done without a written script using only a voice-to-voice work-flow.

For the time being, we are calling this software, “The HOPE in a Box.” This is not only a potential game changer for The HOPE; it has tremendous implications for anyone who is looking for accurate, culturally relevant translations of audio for video. We are now working with a software development company and hope to roll out a beta version of this software in 2020.

There are thousands of unreached people groups with no Bible or Bible-based materials in their language. This software will make it possible for them to get God’s redemptive story from creation through Christ via The HOPE in their own language, in a relatively short amount of time.



The App will use steps in the best practices of Bible translation to lead users in creating a version of The HOPE in their own language.

The HOPE for India - Climbing the Remaining Mountain

With more unreached people groups than any country in the world, many in the global missions movement believe that India is the greatest mountain yet to climb in order to complete the Great Commission.

In September, we filmed the storytellers for our new Hindi version of The HOPE, the first of 10 major Indian language versions we hope to create over the few next years. It has taken us a long time to get to this place in The HOPE for India project, but by the grace of God, we now have a very capable production team of Indian nationals in place, and we’re moving forward!

For the Indian versions of The HOPE, we are planning to shoot India specific footage to replace the western/North American scenes in the introduction and conclusion of the current version of The HOPE. We also intend to replace some of the musical score with tracks that are more typical of an Indian genre. We really want Indian viewers to feel this movie was made for them.

While we believe that much ministry will result directly from the use of The HOPE in the major languages of India, we also know that these languages are the gateway languages for hundreds of tribal languages in India. With the growing influence of Hindu nationalism in India, the persecution of Christians in India is increasing. The time to act is now. We plan to put these major languages into our “HOPE in a Box” software application so that Christian workers on the ground in India can quickly translate The HOPE into tribal languages. Please pray for our work in India!



Our production team in India on set . . . some of the most talented and committed people we’ve ever known.

More Great Things Our God Has Done . . .

- **Broadcast** - By year end, The HOPE will have been broadcast 17 times via satellite into millions of homes in the Middle East.
- **Internet** - Thus far in 2019 our main HOPE website has been visited from every country in the world ... over 500 visitors a day. Over a dozen of our ministry partners also stream The HOPE on their sites as part of their ministry strategy.
- **Boots on the Ground** - This year The HOPE has been used around the world in remote villages, on college campuses, in ESL classes, with refugees, in mass Bible distribution campaigns - and by more people in more ways than we can list!

The Laotian HOPE - Never Too Late to Be Used by God, Even in Death!

In the Southeast Asian country of Laos, approximately 109 distinct people groups have yet to be reached with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. With a population of nearly 7 million people, there are over 125 languages spoken in Laos! The challenge to reach the Laotian people with the Gospel is daunting when viewed through earthly eyes. In addition to the cultural and linguistic obstacles, the government has enacted legislation aimed against individuals involved in "Christian activities." There have been instances of the Laotian government officials attempting to make Christians renounce their faith and closing down Churches that are seen as a threat. Christian leaders have been targeted and arrested.

In 2016, missionaries, Tom and Gayle Silkwood, were working to create a version of The HOPE in Lao, the main language of Laos. They intended to use this gateway language version of The HOPE as a ministry tool, and as a bridge to create several tribal versions. When Tom passed away unexpectedly, Gayle remained in Laos, and was committed to their vision for The Laotian HOPE.

Our partners in ministry, School to the Nations (see story below), picked up the project and saw it through to completion. In the spring of 2019, Christian leaders from across Laos were invited to a premier screening at a Church in Savannakhet, Laos. When it became apparent that local authorities intended to raid the event with the likelihood of harassing and possibly arresting attendees, the premier was called off. But as He often does, God had another plan.



Scene from the premier of The Laotian HOPE while a memorial service was taking place on the floor below.

Through the ministry of the Church that planned to host the premier, a homeless man had recently come to faith in Christ. He prayed that God would use him, not knowing he would pass away within days of the scheduled premier. Leaders in the Church recognized that God had provided the perfect cover for a large gathering that would not be questioned by the authorities, a funeral. The premier was quickly rescheduled. A memorial service was held on the first floor of the building while the premier of The Laotian HOPE was held on the second floor. In that man's death, his prayer to be used of God was answered as the people caught a vision for using this powerful new ministry tool to reach their country for Christ.

The Laotian HOPE did not come easy. But when images from the movie illuminated the screen, the Laotians were filled with joy seeing their own people in a glorious presentation of God's redemptive story. The light of the Gospel broke through the darkness that day. We pray that it will continue to shine across Laos through The HOPE, bringing many to faith in Christ, and encouraging others to carry on with Tom and Gayle's vision to translate The HOPE for the many tribal languages of Laos!

Capacity Building through Partnering - School to the Nations

School to the Nations is a missions mobilizing and missionary training ministry based on a 20-acre campus near Springfield, Missouri. In 2018, the Director of STN, Randy Copeland, contacted us about partnering to create new translations of The HOPE. Since then, STN has completed The Laotian HOPE (story above), and has initiated work on other new translations. They have recruited a man, Austin Baker, as their Director of Video Operations, and have built a studio on their campus for the primary purpose of creating translations of The HOPE. The goal is to replicate the work of Mars Hill with The HOPE through STN and their newly constructed, "Studio One Seed."

In order to make The HOPE available in the heart languages of the thousands of people groups who have yet to receive the Gospel, we must dramatically increase the output of new translations. We believe the best way to do this is through strategic partnering in the body of Christ. We thank God for STN. Please pray for them! And please pray that God would raise up even more partners just like STN!



Image from the construction of "Studio One Seed."

The HOPE is a project of Mars Hill, a non-profit ministry dedicated to ministry through media. For more than 40 years, award-winning Mars Hill films and videos have been used around the world to introduce thousands of people to Jesus Christ.

The Mars Hill website - www.mars-hill.org
Email us at hopeinfo@mars-hill.org

The HOPE Partnering Portal - <http://www.hopepartnering.com/>
The HOPE Ministry website - www.TheHOPEProject.com

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