

## Mobilize Disciples Like the Early Church

For the past 2,000 years, Christians have been praying for the fulfillment of the Great Commission.

And we're still not there yet. But it's within sight. We're closer than ever before.

More than 2 billion people have never even heard the message of Jesus, so it's time to take a radical stand and say, "This has to be completed in our generation."

Nothing matters more than getting the Good News to people who haven't heard it.

It's why you're still on this planet. It's why every person in your church is still around. There are only two things you can't do in heaven: You can't witness to other people, and you can't sin.

Nothing matters more than getting the Good News to everyone—and finishing our task. History depends upon it. The spiritual destinies of people depend upon it.

The church's birth in Acts 2 gives us a great model for how we'll reach the remaining unreached people groups on the earth. Within the story of these early Christians, we get the biblical foundation for mobilization.

### **1. We must depend upon the Holy Spirit.**

If we don't begin, continue, and end with the Holy Spirit, we'll never finish the task before us. We can't finish the task without the power of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit's presence is what makes us different from every other organization. No business or government has the Holy Spirit, but we do.

In Acts 1:8 Jesus tells us, *"You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth"* (NLT). The Holy Spirit gives us his power for evangelism, to share the message of the Gospel.

We'll never finish the task of reaching the unreached without supernatural power. If we don't have supernatural power, let's just close up shop. Nothing we do on behalf of the unreached will get done.

### **2. We must use every available communication channel.**

If we're going to reach people without any other access to the Gospel, we must employ saturation evangelism. We can't leave any options that work off the table.

In Acts 2, these early Christians spoke in different tongues. The people in Jerusalem on Pentecost came from countless nations. The apostles couldn't have communicated with them using just one language, so the Holy Spirit enabled them to speak in the heart languages of the people to whom they were preaching. We won't finish the task unless we speak in the heart languages of those we're engaging.

We need each other to do this because it's not just about reaching people who speak different languages. It's about using multiple channels to reach people with different backgrounds, interests, and experiences. Your church might need to partner with another church with experience speaking into a rural community or an urban one. Or maybe you need help speaking the language of art, music, or accounting.

No channel should be off-limits. Our task is too important and our mission too urgent to quibble over methods.

### **3. We must use everyone's spiritual gift.**

We can't just depend on those with the gifts of evangelism or prophecy. To finish the task before us, we need 100 percent participation. There are no spectators in the mission of God. We must mobilize every member in our churches. Everyone can have a role and use their gifts. The church isn't an audience; it's an army.

To do this, we'll need a discipleship process that turns attendees into members, members into mature members, and mature members into ministers and missionaries. That's why we [developed the CLASS system](#) at Saddleback.

Peter certainly understood this. In his Pentecost sermon, he quotes this passage in Joel: *"In the Last Days,' God says, 'I will pour out my Spirit on every kind of people: Your sons will prophesy, also your daughters; Your young men will see visions, your old men dream dreams. When the time comes, I'll pour out my Spirit on those who serve me, men and women both, and they'll prophesy'"* (Acts 2:17-18 The Message).

The passage mentions sons, daughters, young men, old men, and women. No one should be left behind as we engage the unreached! The church's mission has always taken *the whole church* to complete. It still does today.

### **4. We need to give people the Bible.**

Our opinions won't help the unreached. Psychology won't help them. Western culture won't save them either.

The Bible is what transforms the hearts of people. It's the truth that sets us free. No other message on planet Earth transforms people into saints.

Peter's sermon on the first Pentecost was full of God's Word. He pointed to what God was doing in those days and showed how God had prophesied about that unique moment in his Word. As God formed the church out of the 3,000 saved at Pentecost, the church was devoted to the apostles' teaching. Why was God's Word so important in the early church? Because you can't reach the unreached without it.

## **5. We must demonstrate God's love by cooperating together.**

Our greatest witness to the world isn't our apologetics. It's how we love one another. The world needs us to show them a different way as we work together to fulfill the task God has given us. Political and denominational barriers shouldn't divide us in this. That's why our upcoming [Finishing the Task conference](#) is so critical. It's an opportunity for you to connect with others committed to fulfilling the Great Commission.

We're not in competition to reach the unreached. We're on the same team. The early church understood this. Acts 2:42 tells us the early Christians *"were like family to each other"* (CEV). We need to learn from their example.

## **6. We must go with the spirit of joyful praise.**

Acts 2:46-47 says, *"The believers had a single purpose and went to the temple every day. They were joyful and humble as they ate at each other's homes and shared their food. At the same time, they praised God and had the goodwill of all the people. Every day the Lord saved people, and they were added to the group"* (GW).

The early church knew that the Great Commission isn't a task we complete out of duty. It's a mission we embark on in delight. We don't tell the world about Jesus in drudgery but out of gratitude because he changed our lives. Worship energizes missions, missions creates more worshipers, and worship creates joy.

## **7. We must make generous sacrifices.**

We'll never finish the task in our spare time. It'll never be convenient. It'll take sacrifices.

It's why the early church grew so rapidly. Acts 2:44-45 says, *"All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need"* (NIV). Think about this a bit. They sold their land and everything they owned to give money to those who needed it. How many people in our churches would do that today?

Pastor, your church will become generous when you're generous. If you want to know the temperature of your church, put the thermometer in your mouth. You don't grow a generous church by accident. Your church becomes generous when you intentionally build it to be generous. We must teach people in our congregations that the greatest thing they can do is sacrifice for something greater than themselves.

## 8. We must expect exponential growth.

I call this the “faith factor.” When I was still in seminary, I wrote to the 100 largest churches in America and asked them a series of questions. I read every book in print on church growth. At that time, there were about 72 books. I also did more than 120 crusades before I was 20 years old. During this period, I kept notes about what was working in those communities—and what wasn’t. I kept looking for common characteristics. I discovered God uses all kinds of churches and all kinds of methods. Anyone who tells you there is only one way to reach new people is simply wrong.

The only common denominator I could find in churches and other organizations God uses in an unusual way is that the leadership isn’t afraid to trust God. Jesus said in Matthew 9:29, “*According to your faith let it be done to you*” (NIV). God tells us we get to choose how much God blesses us.

When will we finish the task? We’ll do it when enough people believe we’ll finish the task.

My dad died a few years back. During the last week of his life, he began dreaming aloud. For that last week, I sat by his bedside just listening to him dream. You learn a lot about somebody listening to their dreams. I never once heard him talk about being a war hero in World War II. I never heard him talk about the books he’d read or the movies he watched. I never heard him talk about fishing, which he loved.

More than anything else, he talked about the mission projects he had been on. I’d hear him all the time reliving building projects he had participated in.

The night before he died, he was in this dream like state. He became very agitated and kept trying to get out of bed. Every time he’d try, Kay would tell him, “Jimmy, you can’t get out of bed. Whatever you need, just tell us. We’ll get it for you.” He still did it over and over again. He could barely stand up though.

Then my dad started saying, “Got to save one more for Jesus. Got to save one more for Jesus.” He said it over and over in front of my wife, my niece, and myself.

As I sat by my father’s bed, tears ran down my cheeks. I thanked God for a heritage of a father like that.

Then my dad frailly reached up his hands and put them on my head like a blessing as he said, “Reach one more for Jesus. One more for Jesus, one more for Jesus.”

I intend for that to be the theme for the rest of my life. It’s why I am committed to the very core to finishing the task of reaching all of the unreached people groups around the world. There is nothing more important than bringing God’s lost children back to him, building them up to maturity, training them for ministry, and sending them out on mission. I decided a long time ago I didn’t want to waste my life.

I'm addicted to seeing God change lives. I hope you are, too. That's why we're going to finish the task before us. And I hope you'll attend the upcoming [Finishing the Task conference](#) at Saddleback.

Together, let's reach one more for Jesus.

> [Read more from Rick.](#)

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