

Prominent Missiologist Ralph Winter Dies

✖ Ralph D. Winter, the noted missiologist who coined the term “unreached people group,” died Wednesday in his Pasadena, Calif., home after a long battle with cancer. He was 84.

Listed among *Time* magazine’s 25 most influential evangelicals, Winter founded the U.S. Center for World Mission and Frontier Mission Fellowship in 1976. The following year he opened William Carey International University and in 1985 formed the International Society for Frontier Missiology.

Winter is perhaps best known for his 1974 address to the Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization during which he called Christians to focus on evangelizing what he called “unreached people groups.” The talk is considered a watershed moment that shifted the focus of world missions to the least-evangelized people groups.

A missionary to Guatemala with his wife, Roberta, for 10 years, Winter also helped develop a system for providing theological education to indigenous pastors and lay church leaders. While in Guatemala, Winter launched the first Theological Education by Extension program, which set up campuses in rural areas so church leaders could continue working as they took courses. The program has influenced other distance-learning programs for theological training.

After returning to the U.S., Winter became one of the first professors at Fuller Theological Seminary’s School of World Mission, now the School of Intercultural Studies. There he developed what became the 15-week Perspectives on the World Christian Movement course, which has taught more than 70,000 people how to engage in world missions.

An ordained Presbyterian minister, Winter studied engineering

at Cal Tech and earned a Ph.D. in structural linguistics from Cornell University with a minor in cultural anthropology before graduating from Princeton Seminary.

South Korean pastor David Cho, Winter's longtime friend and founder of the David Cho Missiological Institute in Seoul, told Christian Today that Winter's death is "like one big star disappearing."

"It is doubtful whether a prophetic missiologist scholar [like him] can ever appear again," Cho said.

A memorial service is scheduled for June 27 in Pasadena, Calif.

He is survived by his wife, Roberta, their four daughters and several grandchildren.