

10 Reasons We Must GO

The Great Commission is not a suggestion. If you are  wondering whether you should be involved in missions, consider these biblical mandates.

Twenty-three humanitarian workers from a church in South Korea were kidnapped in 2007 in Afghanistan. Two of them, including a pastor, were killed by their Taliban captors. After wrenching negotiations the remaining workers were freed. They came home—but not to accolades. They were castigated for bringing “shame” on their nation.

In Kenya, 10 short-term mission workers from an affluent Presbyterian church in Dallas were ambushed in the jungle and robbed at gunpoint in 2007. They finally escaped after a terror-filled hour during which their fate was debated by the gunmen.

These are not isolated incidents. Sadly, the people groups yet unreached with the gospel are also the groups most hostile against it. Antagonism against Christian evangelism and the planting of churches has spiked in the last few years.

Even in America, persecution against Christians is not December 2007 a gunman in Colorado specifically targeted a missions compound as the site for his deadly tirade. He shot four people, wounding two and killing two teenagers who had recently returned from a missions outreach.

Missions, because they can be costly in human lives, challenge our resolve to obey God’s command to go. These days they are also financially challenging. As the dollar continues to slide against most other currencies, the expense of outreaches keeps rising.

Many churches here in the U.S. are struggling to meet their budgets and pay their staffs. Their economic downturn and the

nation's rapid descent into neo-paganism have left many Christians wondering why all the money and manpower spent on missions should go elsewhere. When the need is so great in our own backyard, are missions efforts worth the money or the martyrdom of some of the church's best and brightest people?

I am often asked such questions. They're good ones. In fact, every Christian needs to examine the issue. Just why do we go with the gospel? A Chinese proverb states, "He who knows *why* can endure any *how*." In other words, those who know the reasons behind their actions can endure any hardships in carrying out those actions.

God's Word gives abundant reasons for us to go with the transforming message of Christ. Of course we should increase our efforts to spread the gospel in our own nation. But renewed evangelism here is tied to renewed missions worldwide. Here are 10 biblical reasons we are to take the gospel to the ends of the earth.

1. Because the Son is worthy. Jesus is worthy to be known, obeyed and lavishly worshiped by all people and nations. The Bible says that the early Christian disciples "went forth for His name's sake" (3 John 7).

This is what spurred missionaries to China 100 years ago, even though dozens of missionary families were slaughtered in the Boxer Rebellion. It was love for Christ that motivated my friend Michael Mongane, a Congolese pastor, to stand against evil attempts to buy the influence of the church in his nation. As a result he laid down his life in martyrdom for Christ and His people. It is love for Christ that stirs church planters in Orissa, India, to continue to plant churches even though dozens of churches have been looted and burned in the last few months.

The apostolic leader of the Moravians, Nikolas von Zinzendorf, challenged hundreds to missionary service "to win for the Lamb

the reward of His sacrifice." Missions isn't first about a cause; it's about Christ. We go "for the sake of His name."

2. Because the Father is longing. Ever since mankind's fall in the Garden of Eden, the Father has been wooing humanity back to Himself. The Bible says that God is "not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9).

Do you want proof that God loves you? Look at the cross! "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). God longs to bring people everywhere into His loving embrace.

3. Because the Spirit is moving. God promised the prophet Joel, "'I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions'" (Joel 2:28). This word is being fulfilled in our time. In the last few years Jesus has appeared to hundreds of non-Christians in dreams and visions, bringing them to faith in Him. All over the world God's Spirit is moving, drawing millions to faith in Jesus Christ. He is revealing His resurrection glory "by many infallible proofs" (Acts 1:3).

4. Because the harvest is ripe now. I have been preaching the gospel for more than 40 years, since I was a teenager. But I've never before seen spiritual hunger like there is today. The harvest is ripe. We must intentionally look over the fence of our cloister and see a bigger world. Jesus challenges us, "'Lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest'" (John 4:35).

5. Because the people are lost. Even the most tender verse in the Bible, John 3:16, presents eternal options: "'For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.'" Those who put their faith in Jesus Christ have

everlasting life. Those who do not will perish.

There could not be a more serious issue. The apostle Paul wrote soberly of the coming judgment “when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power” (2 Thess. 1:7-9).

God is very serious about getting the good news of Christ to those who are sincerely seeking a relationship with Him. Cornelius was devout, prayed often, gave generously to the poor and even had an angelic visitation. Yet God went to great lengths to get the gospel to him so he could come to know Jesus Christ and be saved!

The account in Acts 10 and 11 clearly shows that Peter did not consider Cornelius forgiven of his sins until he believed the message of the gospel. In fact, the angel instructed Cornelius to send for Peter “‘who will tell you words by which you and all your household will be saved’” (Acts 11:14). Then the Holy Spirit profoundly verified Cornelius’ act of faith.

6. Because the nations deserve Him. Many years ago missionary-statesman Oswald J. Smith asked the piercing question, “Why should anyone hear the gospel twice until everyone has heard it once?” It is true that millions in America have little or no comprehension of who Jesus is or what He has done for them.

Still, in America, most people have to willfully surf past Christian television stations, intentionally drive past evangelical churches and turn a deaf ear to thousands of Christian radio stations to remain uninformed of the gospel. Such ready access to the good news is not the norm in most of the world.

All nations deserve to hear the gospel, and God is determined to receive glory from every people and nation. His Word says: "Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy. For all nations shall come and worship before You, for Your judgments have been manifested" (Rev. 15:4).

7. Because we are commissioned. The King of kings has commanded us to go. If we are truly His disciples, our hearts should beat in sync with God's heart to see His glory drench the entire earth and His Son worshiped by all.

Jesus issued the Great Commission in some form in all the Gospels and also in the book of Acts:

- " 'Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations'" (Matt. 28:19).
- " 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel'" (Mark 16:15).
- " 'Repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations'" (Luke 24:47).
- " 'As the Father has sent Me, I also send you'" (John 20:21).
- " 'You shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth'" (Acts 1:8).

This is a supernatural assignment. It is far beyond our best human efforts. That is why Christ also promised supernatural power—the power of the Holy Spirit—each time He gave this supreme commission.

8. Because we will give an account. The Bible reminds us that believers in Christ must ultimately give Him an account of our post-conversion lives. How did we spend our time? How did we steward our gifts? How did we invest our resources?

All this will come up for review at the judgment seat of Christ. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body,

according to what he has done, whether good or bad” (2 Cor. 5:10).

I do not want to stand before the Lord and try to sputter out a reason for being spiritually AWOL in the most awesome season of harvest in the church’s history.

9. Because the time is brief.

Multitudes of people go into eternity without Christ every minute. This is why the evangelistic mandate is always urgent. Further, today’s opportunities are not open-ended. Harvests are seasonal.

The time to reap is now! Jesus said, “‘I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work’” (John 9:4).

10. Because we have a destiny. “You are a chosen generation ... His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Pet. 2:9). Christians have been reading that verse for nearly 2,000 years. But if ever a group of Christians should read this passage and shout, “He’s talking about us!” it is today’s Christians.

By sovereign grace it has fallen on our generation to have within our grasp what other generations of Christians have prayed, dreamed and died for: the completion of the Great Commission. And if it is not this generation of Christians—who possess more data on global harvest than any previous generation and stand on the shoulders of 20 centuries of missionary giants—then who is it?

This is not simply championing a righteous cause, even a cause as noble as world missions. It is a call to so freshly fall in love with Jesus that what is precious to Him becomes precious to us, and what is priority for Him becomes priority for us.

It is Christ’s love that compels us to go. “For the love of

Christ compels us. ... He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him" (2 Cor. 5:14-15).

This is why we go. Far too many Christians are living out their lives as couch potatoes, with no sense of God's purpose and none of the thrill of God's passion. How tragic, and how dishonoring to Jesus.

I challenge you to become involved today in God's global drama to bring worldwide honor to His Son by helping to fulfill the Great Commission.

David Shibley is president of *Global Advance*, a ministry that equips church and business leaders in developing nations to fulfill the Great Commission. Shibley's latest book is *Living as if Heaven Matters (Charisma House)*.

DON'T EVANGELIZE?

"Why *NOT* to Evangelize." Find out 10 reasons *not* to tell unbelievers about Christ at .