

Shocking Study: Only 17 Percent of Respondents Know Jesus' Matthew 28 Command

A new survey revealing that more than half of churchgoers don't know of the Great Commission has spotlighted the importance of a movement to spur more commitment to taking the gospel to the unreached—those who have never had the opportunity to hear the gospel.

Organizers of the International Day for the Unreached (IDU,) say the urgency of their campaign is underscored by the study, *Translating the Great Commission*, which found 51 percent of those questioned were not familiar with the term describing Jesus' directive in Matthew 28 for his followers to “make disciples of all nations.”

In its third year, the International Day for the Unreached is being championed by an alliance of 11 missions and other Christian organizations concerned that too little money and manpower are going to sharing the gospel with the 2 billion-plus people around the world who have yet to hear about Jesus.

Only 17 percent of respondents said that they knew the Great Commission reference, according to the survey conducted by Barna Group in partnership with The Seed Company. It rang a bell for 25 percent.

“The data indicates that churches are using the phrase less, which may reveal a lack of prioritizing or focusing on the work of the Great Commission,” said the report, but could also mean that the phrase “has simply fallen out of favor with some.”

“This concerning new report serves as a clear endorsement of the importance of the International Day for the Unreached,”

said Jon Fugler, chairman of the Alliance for the Unreached. "It makes us even more committed to doing all that we can to raise the awareness of the task that remains for the global church."

To be held on May 20—Pentecost Sunday—the International Day for the Unreached will feature an event to be livestreamed on Facebook and other channels to churches and individuals around the world with news about what is happening in frontier missions, and how they can get more involved to help fulfill Jesus' command.

The different ministry emphases of the 11 alliance members spotlight the wide range of needs and opportunities for service.

Central to World Mission's (WM,) work is distribution of *The Treasure*, a solar-powered audio Bible for use among people groups with an oral culture or no access to printed Scriptures. More than 40,000 copies are given out each year through national partners, often alongside disaster relief, medical and clean water projects.

Among the fruits of these efforts is a newly formed, first-ever house church in part of Myanmar (formerly Burma), where a World Mission partner evangelist gave copies of *The Treasure* to several Myanmar and Nepali families who subsequently came to Christ. "Every resource at World Mission is allocated to ensure people without access to the gospel hear the truth before it's too late," said WM President Greg Kelley.

Partners International (PI,) works with nationals in Africa, Asia and the Middle East, a region containing the majority of the world's Muslims and 80 percent of the world's poorest. Through 58 field ministry partners, the organization last year saw more than 2,500 new churches planted, trained almost 21,000 leaders, and served nearly 200,000 through community relief and development projects.

“Jesus created us and saved us for one purpose, and that is to proclaim the gospel to the whole earth,” said PI President and CEO Larry Andrews. “The infinite God of the universe, who has a mission to share his love with every person on this planet, has given all of his power and resources to us who call him Lord, so that we can play a significant part in that mission.”

Missio Nexus () is a network of churches, missions agencies and training centers in North America committed to helping fulfill the Great Commission by providing ways for members to exchange ideas and resources through events, training and joint initiatives.

“We at Missio Nexus are full endorsers of IDU for one simple reason,” said Senior Vice President Marv Newell, who is also an adjunct professor at Moody Theological Seminary. “The remaining unreached peoples in the world—of which there are 2.5 billion—are not on the radar screen of most Christians. Not only do they not believe in Jesus, they do not know there is a Jesus to believe in. That opportunity continues to be denied them unless we act.”

The International Day for the Unreached is held on Pentecost Sunday because it marks the day when the Holy Spirit fell upon the early church, empowering members to take the good news into the whole world. The 90-minute live event to be hosted at the headquarters of Focus on the Family in Colorado Springs, Colorado, will begin at 4 p.m. Mountain time.

More than six million people learned about the International Day for the Unreached event livestreamed on Facebook last year.

The IDU alliance is composed of Bibles For The World, Frontier Ventures, Missio Nexus, OM-USA (Operation Mobilization), Mission Network News, Partners International, Reach Beyond, William Carey International University, World Mission, ZimZam Global and InChrist Communications.