



Reaching the Unreached:

A Practical Guide to Church Planting
among Unreached People Groups

SAMUEL TELEMAQUE

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IADPA

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Biblical Foundations of People Groups

GOD SELECTED a specific people group to channel His grace to the world, the Jewish people. They were not chosen because they were better than the other communities existing at the time or even now; they were

chosen to be a blessing to many people groups.

The Bible corroborates the premise that God moves from the specific to the general. This principle is expressed in His word to Abraham: “In thee shall all families of the

earth be blessed” (Genesis 12:3, KJV). Paul also echoes this in Romans 5:19 when he states, “by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous” (KJV). This tenet undergirds God’s selection of a specific group of people to be a blessing to all people groups.

The reverse is also true. Paul argues that one man’s disobedience brought sin and death upon everyone, (see Romans 5:12). Thus, the depravity of human nature is the result of the transgression of one man. Paul concludes that “there is none righteous,” “all have sinned” (see Romans 3:10, 23) and “the whole creation groans” (see Romans 8:22). The sin of one man affected the entire universe.

The principle “from one to many” is again enunciated from the perspective of Adam. By one many sinned. However, from the perspective of the second Adam—Jesus, by one many are made righteous. The principle remains the same, but the outcomes are different. This principle bolsters God’s mission to all people groups.

The Almighty’s mission has always been to all people groups. This inclusive mission is made explicit in Genesis 3:15, Genesis 12:3, and Revelation 14:6. These verses express God’s willingness to make Himself known to all people groups, in all their languages, and to all their communities. The Father’s mission and message is for all people groups. The death of Jesus provided salvation for “whosoever” (John 3:16). God never confined His mission to a specific group of people; God is omnipresent, which means He is everywhere at the same time. God’s omnipresence influences the scope of His message and mission. He wants Himself to be known to all people groups in all nations.

God brings His people in contact with other people groups. A people group consists of persons with affinity in ethnicity, language, culture, status, nationality, tradition, and/or religion. Examples of people groups are migrant communities, refugees, and so forth. God's people group in the Old and New Testaments sometimes took pleasure in their peculiarities—they were chosen, holy, and royal. These peculiarities tended to overshadow their mission.

However, mission gives meaning to peculiarities. Peculiarities without mission can become idolatry. Therefore, to keep His people focused on their mission, God brought His people into contact with other nations. In the Bible, there are many examples of His people interacting with other people groups, such as Abraham with Abimelech, Abraham with Pharaoh, Daniel in Babylon, Joseph in Egypt, Esther in Babylon, and Paul in Athens. God initiated these encounters to provide opportunities for His people to witness to other people groups. Such witness effects changes the thinking and behaviors of leaders in other people groups. These leaders then commanded their people groups to confess “the Lord your God is one God,” thus effecting changes in the lives of their followers.

God uses various means to initiate His people's contact with other people groups. These means include: dreams, visions, crucibles, divine contact, and nature. For example, God used crucibles and dreams to bring Daniel and Joseph into contact with other people groups—the Egyptians and the Babylonians. He used divine contact to bring Paul into contact with the Gentiles. God initiates His people's contact with other people groups, making Himself known through the testimony of His people.

God wants His people to give priority to making Him known among people groups. He has given His people a unique message for all. The core of the message states, “there is no other name given among men whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). God’s people need to look beyond their cultures, ethnicity, race, and language so that they can be involved with other people groups. This is intercultural mission.

We must continue to witness to people with similar ethnicity and language as ours. However, we are to become more and more comfortable to sharing Christ with people groups that are different from ours. The time has come to be intentional about building bridges and walking across those bridges to share the gospel with other people groups. God’s mission takes priority over our cultural, linguistic, and ethnic differences. His mission to all people groups comes first.

Global Mission Pioneers should assess their community from the perspective of people groups. This perspective enables Global Mission Pioneers to see their communities in the context of an unfinished task. The mission is not completed until witnessing communities are established among people groups and population segments in your territory.