

MULTIPLYING MISSION MOBILIZATION MOVEMENTS

Ryan Shaw

Several years ago, while driving near my home in Chiang Mai, Thailand, the Lord spoke through what some call the “inner, audible” voice of God. It came with authority, stunning me, accompanied with peace. *I am changing the face of global mission.* I discerned God intended to change the basic expression of the mission movement and understanding of mission mobilization, aligning them with His scriptural standards. I became aware this would mean a change in the fundamental expression of Christianity, resulting in shifts in mission and mobilization. Over the last decade this direction has been confirmed by ministry leaders and missiologists alike.¹

The statement was staggering, with layers of meaning, relating to the who, what and how of global mission itself, while broadening the global Church’s understanding of mission mobilization. The Lord wants His people in step with the Spirit, advancing in mission and mobilization through the progressive revelation of Jesus. History reveals as the world and society changes, the expression of the Church adapts as well.² This is also true in the understanding of the mission of that adapting Church, and how she engages in mobilization. We are in such a time right now where God is helping us move from the common, yet limiting, understanding of mobilization as primarily recruiting individual workers, to God’s big-picture, comprehensive, holistic intent for mission mobilization as calling the global Church to her core identity.

Yet what exactly do we mobilize the global Church to do? In a global mission landscape full of often random activities and divergent focal points, it is necessary to bring biblical and missiological emphasis. Moving beyond good ideas and hit and miss activities, embracing His direction in what the global Church is mobilized to do in mission.

We start with some questions. Are there specific biblical, Spirit-led means of advancing the Kingdom? Are there particular strategies God is seeking to employ to produce the great harvest? Does the Spirit have a progressive plan or is God somehow piecing together all the random efforts? The answer is yes, God has particular strategies, set forth in the New Testament and confirmed by the Spirit throughout

history.

THE SPIRIT’S FOUR POINT STRATEGY TO FULFILL THE GREAT COMMISSION

Many years ago, mission practitioner Roland Allen affirmed, “Far from being an indifferent or secondary matter, the ministry strategy used in cross-cultural work is of the utmost importance.”³ Not from the perspective of implementing a “formula,” guaranteeing fruitful results, but embracing biblical principles the Holy Spirit emphasizes and the Word of God advocates. Strategy of itself does not produce fruit, yet strategic models aligning with principles of the Kingdom produce great fruit. Many don’t like the concept of methods as it is thought these somehow limit the Spirit. In fact, quite the opposite. The Spirit used means and strategies (not rigid formulas) throughout the New Testament and mission history, progressing the Church in global mission. We need a return to biblical models of how and why the New Testament Church proved so successful in mission in the first century.

Let’s see a quick overview of the four-point progressive strategy of the Holy Spirit and then jump right into strategic point one. These concepts are steeped in scriptural foundation.

1. It is the will of God to multiply millions of individual local ministries across denominations, church networks and organizations emphasizing the Great Commission, putting it at the center of their local fellowships, mobilizing and equipping every disciple in their roles.
2. The Holy Spirit wants to scatter at least 20 percent of these disciples from every local ministry (mostly lay leaders and lay people) to near and distant culture unreached peoples, geographically near and far to that local ministry.
3. What is it this exponentially large number of Jesus’ laborers are doing among unreached peoples? Multiplying thousands of reproducing church planting movements (CPMs) within neighborhoods, villages, towns, apartment buildings, in areas the Spirit guides them. They take the Church to the people, not expecting the people to come to them.
4. Through the witness of these exponentially increased simple, reproducing churches planted, “people movements to Christ” are ignited across the many webs of relationships – family,

1. The concept of God bringing changes in mission has been the subject of many important books over the last few decades including *Missions in the Third Millennium* by Stan Guthrie; *Changing the Mind of Missions* by William Dyrness; *Transforming Mission* by David J. Bosch; *Changing Frontiers of Mission* by Wilbert R. Shenk; *Mission in the 21st Century* by Andrew Walls; *The New Faces of Christianity* by Philip Jenkins; *World Christian Encyclopedia* by Todd Johnson and Gina Zurlo.

2. Paul Pierson, *The Dynamics of Christian Mission: History Through A Missiological Perspective* (Pasadena: WCIU Press, 2009), 135.

3. Roland Allen, *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1997), 6.

neighborhood, work colleagues, universities—culminating in every subculture of every unreached people group globally hearing the word of Jesus, millions coming to saving faith and discipleship.

Each of the four builds on one another, unfolding progressively. We cannot proceed to points two, three, and four without seeing the foundation of point one firmly in place, which is why mission mobilization needs emphasis across the global Church right now. Point two progresses to point three and so on. We best understand God's big picture intent when considering the widespread multiplication of these strategies across every people group globally, not in pockets here or there.

STAGES OF MISSION MOBILIZATION MOVEMENTS

It is important to analyze the global Church's progression in mobilization emphasis in history. We looked in detail at the overall historical development of mission and mobilization in part 3 of this book.

Mobilization from the Outside

For now, it will suffice to point out mission mobilization over the last fifty to sixty years has consisted primarily in effective mission education courses and mission conferences being offered to those already having some kind of interest in global mission. We call this "mobilization from the outside." This is a first stage in developing a widespread or localized Mission Mobilization Movement. These tools are a significant part of any mobilization effort. A small percentage of participants becoming engaged in a meaningful way in global mission as a result. Research reveals, however, a large majority involved in mission education courses, conferences or experiencing a traveling group promoting mission, never get involved in their assigned roles in the Great Commission.⁴

An observable problem arises in these situations. A believer has participated and been inspired in some way about global mission. They want to continue to grow. But how and where? Sometimes there are further steps through "mobilization from the outside." At some point, however, that person returns to their own local ministry where the leadership isn't necessarily engaged with these same interests. No one from their local ministry experienced what they did. The enthusiasm they had is often squelched within the local ministry because others don't yet share the mission vision. Their vision for the nations is dulled because there was no ongoing mission fuel at the local ministry level. They had to go outside the local

4. Research gleaned through the author's research in 2002 among campus ministry leaders, mission leaders and church leaders. This research was compiled into the author's book *Waking the Giant: The Resurging Student Mission Movement* (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2006).

ministry to be envisioned for mission.

How much better for these and other mission mobilization tools to be experienced within the life of local fellowships instead of needing to go outside the local ministry. Of course, there is nothing inherently wrong with an outside mission education course or conference. These have a tremendous place in the overall mission mobilization process. The point is making sure the primary context for mission mobilization is within the local ministry itself, where the group is together growing in being educated, inspired, and activated. This foundation is then supplemented, developed further, through mission conferences and education/ envisioning courses.

Mobilization from the Inside

I suggest there are two further stages of Mission Mobilization Movements. The second is, "mobilization from the inside." This is when a growing mission emphasis takes root within an existing local ministry. Where that ministry is developing wholehearted disciples understanding their redemption as including partnering with Jesus toward the fulfillment of the Great Commission. The ministry is geared toward every disciple grasping the Great Commission, internalizing it. They may offer mission education courses and other tools, but in the context of the local ministry, not going outside to gain mission clarity. These ministries are aligning with the core identity of the Church considered in chapters eight and nine. I am confident the Spirit is seeking local ministries and overarching ministry structures to progress from reliance on "mobilization from the outside" to prioritizing "mobilization from the inside," while utilizing outside tools as supplements.

Many years ago, mission practitioner Roland Allen affirmed, "Far from being an indifferent or secondary matter, the ministry strategy used in cross-cultural work is of the utmost importance."⁵ Not from the perspective of implementing a "formula," guaranteeing fruitful results, but embracing biblical principles the Holy Spirit emphasizes and the Word of God advocates.

Campus ministries during the Student Volunteer Movement (SVM) of the late 1800s and early 1900s were of this sort. They had large student mission conferences happening every three years. Yet the individual campus fellowships did not wait for that next exciting conference to engage their

5. Roland Allen, *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1997), 6.

fellow students with Jesus' heart for the nations. Regular activities within the life of their fellowships included Bible studies looking at the theme of global redemption in the Bible. Prayer groups seeking God for the raising up of laborers and for the unreached themselves were also a mainstay. Information distribution and awareness of what was happening in global mission, including mission strategy, were the norm. This is a reason that movement saw such large numbers of message bearers scattered out. They engaged in "mobilization from the inside," not relying only on "mobilization from the outside."

Mobilization Fruitfulness

This leads to the third stage of Mission Mobilization Movements, the "mobilization fruitfulness" stage. As individual local ministries and church network/denominational structures multiply mission mobilization movements, the numbers of believers identifying and engaging in their assigned roles in global mission exponentially grows. That means growing waves of intercession for the nations, giving to the unreached, mobilizing others to become engaged, advocating for specific niche Great Commission focal points, and reaching out to unreached peoples in the home community. And finally, yes, increased responding to the Spirit's call to become message bearers, both among near culture peoples geographically near and distant culture peoples geographically farther away. We want to progress, as the global Church, from individual local ministries giving lip service to global mission, to those ministries set on fire with wholehearted devotion to Jesus which inevitably overflows into passion for His global heartbeat. This process requires "mobilization from the inside."

WHAT ARE MISSION MOBILIZATION MOVEMENTS?

Having established "mobilization from the inside" appears most strategic, we now consider what this practically looks like. There is presently a low standard of responsibility in local ministries to mobilize and equip believers. When looking around the world, grappling with the large number of unreached people groups remaining in the world (over 5,000) and relatively small number of professional "missionaries" serving around the world (430,000 full-time workers),⁶ we must conclude our concept of mission mobilization has been too thin, needing change, giving way to a comprehensive viewpoint. It is time for a shift, a new paradigm in our local ministry settings.

Over the last decade, I have been asking the Lord a question, searching Scripture and church/mission history for answers. Just as we may be familiar in mission strategy with "saturation church planting,"⁷

6. Missionary Statistics - <http://missionaryportal.webflow.io/stats>.

7. <https://ocresearch.info/sites/default/files/DAWNpercent202.0.pdf>.

is there a corresponding concept of "saturation mission mobilization"? I have come to believe there is. I am convinced part of the answer is working toward the multiplication of Mission Mobilization Movements (MMMs) across every level of the body of Christ in every nation. Every disciple, every local ministry, denomination/ church network, national evangelical alliance and mission association has a role and responsibility in fulfilling the Great Commission. Jesus' heart longs for a mobilization movement prioritizing the Great Commission within the life of every local ministry as intended. This concept is not mere theory but a recognition of evident facts.

My friend Tshepang Basupi, a Botswanan mobilizer now living in South Africa, tells his story.

In 2016, whilst busy doing mobilization in Botswana we were not getting the needed results. A few people who were mobilized were eventually unable to go because their churches were unwilling and unable to send them. The main issue we later discovered was the lack of vision and understanding of the Church's role in God's global mission. The Church in Africa is growing and has such a huge potential to be a major player in global missions. But why is it that only a handful of Africans are taking the gospel to the unreached. According to Operation World, there are over 182 million evangelicals in Africa today.⁸ However, less than 50,000 message bearers have been sent from Africa, which is even less than 0.01 percent of the evangelicals in Africa. In August 2016 I joined 1400+ other young leaders from over 140 countries for the Lausanne Younger Leaders Gathering in Jakarta, Indonesia. During the Gathering, I listened to Dr. David Lim share a bit of his journey of mobilizing tent makers. He shared about the Filipino believers being sent into China and all across the Middle East and the vision of the Filipino church to mobilize 200,000 message bearers. As he was speaking, the Lord spoke to me. "Can you trust me for one million missionaries (message bearers) from Africa?" I was stunned? One million? This was a huge challenge to my faith and all that I have ever known and imagined.⁹

How does God intend to mobilize one million African message bearers (and many more from other parts of the world)? Tshepang highlighted a significant hindrance. Local ministries lacking vision and understanding of God's global mission and His intent for them to be actively involved, even if

8. <http://www.operationworld.org/africa/owtext.html>.

9. Tshepang Basupi, "Can You Believe Me For 1 Million Missionaries From Africa" Abandoned Times Article - <https://www.globalmmi.net/can-you-believe-me-for-1-million-missionaries-from-africa>.

they never leave their hometown. How can this be realized? Through multiplying Mission Mobilization Movements across the body of Christ.

Over the last decade, I have been asking the Lord a question, searching Scripture and church/ mission history for answers. Just as we may be familiar in mission strategy with “saturation church planting,”¹⁰ is there a corresponding concept of “saturation mission mobilization”?

Mission Mobilization Movements can be defined as any entity (whether a local ministry, denominational, organizational, or church network structure or national evangelical or mission association) where the Spirit of God is emphasizing the message, vision, and strategies of the Great Commission, as a natural overflow of wholehearted, abandonment to Jesus, activating every member in assigned Great Commission roles, spreading mission mobilization in a contagious way to other local ministries.

Characteristics of “Movements”

A professor and mentor of mine at Fuller Seminary, Dr. Bobby Clinton, has studied movements for many years. Not only Christian movements, but secular movements, religious movements, historical movements, social movements—looking for common principles. His conclusion is that movements have similar characteristics, no matter their type. Clinton defines a movement as a “groundswell of people committed to a person or ideals and characterized by the following important commitments” with five common commitments made on the part of those involved:

1. Commitment to personal involvement
2. Commitment to persuade others to join
3. Commitment to the beliefs and ideals of the movement
4. Commitment to participate in a non-bureaucratic, cell-group organization
5. Commitment to endure opposition and misunderstanding.¹¹

We can apply these five commitments as we seek to multiply Mission Mobilization Movements as well. The World Christian movement, started in the book of Acts, had each of these five. Those exalting Jesus are part of a movement with committed roots. It is difficult

¹⁰. <https://ocresearch.info/sites/default/files/DAWNpercent202.0.pdf>.

¹¹. Clinton, *Clinton's Biblical Leadership Commentary*, 535.

to claim to be committed believers yet withhold ourselves from the global Christian movement as a whole. The most effective Mission Mobilization Movements have been, and will be, among those who buy into these five characteristics with zeal and sacrifice. Mission mobilization movements are based on the fundamental principle that God is interested in not only mobilizing individuals but mobilizing and equipping entire local ministries. As many of the world's cultures are communal in worldview, it is necessary to mobilize them as “communities.”¹²

Individual Local Ministries as Mission Mobilization Movements

I first met Mirna Santa Cruz in Asuncion, Paraguay. I was sharing during a workshop for a COMIBAM conference for the Southern Cone region of South America. She excitedly told me about her student ministry called Red de Universitarios y Profesionales Cristianos and her passion to infuse Great Commission emphasis within the life of its fellowship. We began a friendship that day and many years later Mirna has seen that student ministry implement the core principles of a mission mobilization movement, producing great fruit in those students and professionals. Influencing them in their core identity as God's multiplying, reproducing, missionary people. Local ministries of this sort provide teaching, discipleship and fellowship which builds up every member toward spiritual maturity, preparing them to embody their role(s) in the Great Commission. They make deliberate plans to integrate mission vision into the life of that fellowship. The ministry becomes an incubator for growth in mission awareness, understanding, education and local implementation. The ministry becomes fueled by the conviction they all are responsible before God for becoming involved, in some divine assignment, with local and global mission to the unreached. Admittedly, this can sound unrealistic because we have generally given such a low priority to the Great Commission in our local ministries.

Although individual local ministries prioritizing the Great Commission tend to be an afterthought, they are meant to be on the forefront of our hearts, ministry plans, and strategies. Ministries that prioritize cross-cultural mission are God's primary strategy in mobilizing and equipping His people for the Great Commission.¹³ As we look back through the history of the Church and mission, we find the most impact coming through entire ministries taking this calling seriously by envisioning and empowering their members. Today is no different. The global Church has made tremendous strides over the years in developing proven mission mobilization tools serving

¹². This is the premise of Charles Mellis' landmark book, *Committed Communities: Fresh Streams for World Missions*, (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2013).

¹³. *Handbook for Great Commission Ministries*, 23, published by IGNITE Media. This Handbook is designed to serve local ministries seeking to implement tools and principles to mobilize and equip their own members.

local ministries (churches, youth groups, campus ministry fellowships, Bible schools).

Local ministries as Mission Mobilization Movements align with Jesus' Great Commission through committing to the following action points:¹⁴

1. Cultivating abandoned devotion for Jesus among disciples under their influence
2. Implementing four core components for mobilizing and equipping their members
3. Developing and executing a sending strategy from their members to near culture and distant culture unreached/ unengaged people groups.

In addition, they hold the following three purposes:

1. Educating every disciple with a passionate understanding of God's heart in the Great Commission
2. Inspiring every disciple with a vision of ordering their lives around the fulfillment of the Great Commission, even if they never leave their hometown
3. Activating every disciple in their God-given role(s) in the Great Commission.¹⁵

Instead of taking a one-by-one mobilizing approach, it is important for local ministries to prioritize mobilizing the whole of their ministry to grasp the Kingdom's outworking among every ethnic people group. This includes not merely periodically mentioning cross-cultural mission, but making it an integral part of their ministry's focal points on an ongoing basis. Instead of Jesus' global commission being sidelined as a department or committee, it is meant to grab the imaginations of every believer in that ministry. This does not mean every member will become a cross-cultural message bearer, yet it does mean they will understand and value global, cross-cultural mission, identifying and becoming activated in their role(s) in the Great Commission.

Four Core Mobilization Tools

A primary way a local ministry influences its members is through the implementation of four core mobilizing tools used by God throughout history in awakening His people for the nations. They are not new or trendy but help the global Church return with faithfulness to the basics of faith and discipleship. These four can be implemented and reproduced in any local church, campus ministry fellowship and Bible School in any part of the world. They are simple, user-friendly tools. Local ministries using these tools with perseverance, over time, will see fruitfulness in mobilization as a result of their implementation. Most believers possessing Jesus' heart for mission have been influenced by one or more of these four tools

14. *Handbook for Great Commission Ministries*, 23, 37 ff.

15. Learn more about these six roles in the Great Commission in the GMMI Handbook for Great Commission Ministries, available through IGNITE Media, 115-123.

throughout history.

1. Small group Bible studies within a ministry encountering God's mission heart and passion from Genesis to Revelation.
2. A committed prayer ministry that engages the whole local ministry body in intercession for abandoned devotion in His global Church and harvest among the unreached and unengaged.
3. Monthly or quarterly meetings within the life of the local ministry providing crucial information about aspects and nuances of the Great Commission most believers never hear about.
4. Making faith-filled, Spirit-led commitments to be scattered with one's family and job for long-term ministry among near and distant culture unreached and unengaged people groups.

Denominations/ Church Networks as Mission Mobilization Movements

Let's progress beyond one local ministry as a mission mobilization movement. What might it look like for a whole denomination, church network or campus ministry organization within a particular nation to multiply individual local churches and fellowships within their ministry structures to prioritize local and global mission? Such efforts become Mission Mobilization Movements across a wider spectrum than one individual local ministry. They are self-sustained, self-reproducing mobilization initiatives utilizing a step-by-step strategy enabling a saturation style mobilization emphasis within denominational, church network and organizational structures.¹⁶ For example, a particular denomination/ church network may have 100 local churches in a certain nation. Is it possible to see core principles of mobilization implemented within the life of every one of these 100 local churches? This is what we are referring to.

Randy Mitchell, international director of One World Mission, affirms the concept of mobilization movements: "We believe it is possible to see mobilization occurring within churches, denominations, associations, networks and even nations as movements."¹⁷ He goes on to reveal, "This means we can speak of them being fully mobilized or not at all or somewhere along a continuum of mobilization. A church, church network, denomination, people or even nation can be mobilized by degree. If a people can be mobilized or not mobilized we should be able to speak of them being partially mobilized and that percentage could through the right combination of efforts be increased."¹⁸

Take the body of Christ in Myanmar, for example. Operation World cites 8.98 percent of the total

16. Learn more about a step by step strategy for multiplying mission mobilization movements utilized by GMMI through the GMMI Facilitation Manual, available through IGNITE Media.

17. Unpublished paper by Randy Mitchell titled Presentation For the Anglican Church of Nigeria.

18. Randy Mitchell Unpublished Paper.

population are Christians.¹⁹ This is one of the highest percentage of followers of Jesus in any South East Asian nation. What happens if that population of believers is mobilized to internalize Jesus' Great Commission emphasis within the life of their fellowships. Some of them voluntarily crossing ethnic barriers in their own nation, relocating with family and jobs. How can this be realized? Through multiplying Mission Mobilization Movements within their churches and ministry network structures that mobilize and equip.

Or consider South Sudan (gaining independence as recently as 2011). Operation World records that 62.3 percent of the total population are Christians.²⁰ What is strategically exciting is while their official national language is English, the entire population also speaks fluent Arabic, having been part of Sudan for generations. This means South Sudan has a large number of Arabic speaking believers and local churches strategically placed to influence the Horn of Africa and all of North Africa, overcoming the significant hurdle of learning one of the world's most difficult languages.²¹ Yet right now South Sudan churches have little worldview of Jesus' Great Commission plan. What is needed? Multiplying Mission Mobilization Movements within their local ministries and ministry structures.

Utilizing a strategic plan, senior leaders appoint others within their particular ministry structures to be trained to multiply mission mobilization emphasis within the grassroots local ministries in a particular district, area or region. These appointed leaders are released across an area of oversight within the ministry structure to in turn train and overall advise local ministry leaders to implement core principles of mission mobilization movements.²² Many, if not most, denominational/ organizational structures have leadership positions such as "Mission Director," "Evangelism Director" or the like in their structures. I have observed many leaders having these titles yet with little clarity as to how to mobilize local ministries in their denominational/ network structures for the Great Commission. Empowering such leaders is a significant way forward.

My friend Jimmy Fundar was in this category when I first met him. He was appointed by the Federation of Southern Baptist Conventions in the Philippines as their "National Missions Mobilizer." Yet he was unclear on what exactly this meant or how to go about his role. As were the denominational leaders overseeing him. Around that time, he learned of a

GMMI Mobilizer Equipping School and thought this might be an opportunity to learn to do his role. He is now implementing core principles of Mission Mobilization Movements systematically across the 1,200 local churches of the Federation of Southern Baptist Conventions in the Philippines.

CONCLUSION

Multiplying Mission Mobilization Movements is a key strategy the Lord appears to be encouraging across the earth. It is a significant foundation purpose of God to create an environment within local ministries all over the world that operate as incubator's for developing mission understanding and vision. Not in a periodic way, nor from the periphery, but having the global heartbeat of God genuinely at the center of the life of every fellowship. Learn more about this topic and many more related to mission mobilization by reading my newly released book *Rethinking Global Mobilization*, available on Amazon.com, and by visiting the Global Mission Mobilization Initiative website (www.globalmmi.net). There you will find many tools and resources to help multiply mission mobilization movements in your denomination or ministry structure.

Author's Note – This article has been adapted from the author's new book called **Rethinking Global Mobilization: Calling the Church to Her Core Identity. The book seeks to lay foundations of a Biblical missiology of mobilization while providing a practical framework to mobilize and equip the global Church in mobilization. The publisher, IGNITE Media, has given permission for portions of the book used in this article. Order copies at Amazon.com and find more info about the book at RethinkingMobilization.com*



Ryan Shaw
rshaw@globalmmi.net

Ryan Shaw is International Lead Facilitator of Global Mission Mobilization Initiative (GMMI), a resourcing ministry equipping the Church for mission mobilization through tools, teaching, training and strategies. A fourth-generation message bearer, Ryan graduated from Fuller Theological Seminary (Pasadena, CA) with a Master's in Intercultural Studies. He has traveled in a mobilization capacity to over 65 nations and lives with his family in Chiang Mai, Thailand, where GMMI has its International Base and Global Mobilization Institute.

19. Jason Mandryk. *Operation World*, 7th Edition (Colorado Springs: Biblica Publishing, 2010), 610.

20. Operation World Webpage – South Sudan - <https://operationworld.org/locations/south-sudan/>.

21. Arabic is the sixth hardest language to learn for English speakers according to this article - <https://www.jumpspeak.com/blog/hardest-languages-to-learn>.

22. In GMMI circles, we call these Mobilization Coordinators. They serve to mobilize their ministry structures with a vision for global mission using a proven step by step strategy. For more info on these leaders and how GMMI serves them, please click here - <https://www.globalmmi.net/movements/mobilization-coordinators>.