

# Module 1

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## How to Understand the Importance of Mobilization

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George Gallup projected 100,000 U.S. churches would close their doors between 1992-2002; not because of low funds or programs, but lack of vision. Proverbs 29:18 reaffirms this: "Where there is no vision, the people perish." Cad Dudley, Christian leader and missions enthusiast, spoke of the need to be strategic: "Congregations that intentionally affect their times have a sense of purpose and a plan; they have a vision of what God is calling them to be and to do. The person who articulates the appropriate vision for the church is both the cause and result of a mobilized church; both the church and the leaders are mutually empowered in the process."

Sadly though, it has been estimated that the time between the moment someone first gains a World Christian conviction and the time that person finally ends up working with an unreached people group is, on an average, seven years. If realistic evaluation and practical World Christian discipleship are not incorporated into people's lives during these seven years they usually lose their passion and vision for the world. This is why the late Donald McGavern, founder of Fuller School of World Missions, said in his book, *A Giant Step*, "Let us furiously organize frontier mission societies in every congregation of every denomination." He was trying to tell us of the absolute necessity of people banding together to create, maintain, and follow through on their missions vision; and within the Body of Christ, the mobilizer is the one who helps orchestrate it all.

Dr. Ralph Winter, founder of the U.S. Center for World Missions comments: "Here is a tragic fact: Only about one out of a hundred 'missionary decisions' results in actual career mission service. Why? First, because few parents, pastors and friends really encourage anyone to follow through on that kind of a decision. But what if that number could double to two out of a hundred? The effect would be explosive!" No less than 100,000 sincere, envisioned people write each year to one or another of the various mission agencies in this country asking for information about possible service under that agency. The estimate is that less than 1,000 of those will ever make it to the field. Why? There is no one to nurture, guide and equip them to complete the process. In other words, the workers are plentiful, but the mobilizers are few!

A mobilizer in simplest terms is one who multiplies, disciples or mentors in missions. Phil Parshall, missionary, author and mobilizer, said it this way, "Someone must sound the rallying call. Those who desire to see others trained, prepared and released to ministry are known as mobilizers. Mobilizers stir other Christians to active concern for reaching the world. They coordinate efforts between senders, the local churches, sending agencies and missionaries on the field. Mobilizers are essential. To

understand the role of mobilizers, think of World War II as a parallel. Only 10% of the American population went to the war. Of those, only 1% were actually on the firing lines. However, for them to be successful in their mission, the entire country had to be mobilized!"

What is mobilization, you ask? Wesley Tullis, formerly a Director of Prayer Mobilization for YWAM states: "Essentially mobilization refers to any process by which God's people are awakened and kept moving and growing until they find their place for strategic involvement in the task of completing world evangelization. Mobilizers are those who channel key resources, training and vision for world evangelization to the Body of Christ. It has been said, that to improperly appreciate and support the role of the mobilizer is to seriously hinder the functions of the goer, sender, and welcomer."

Dr. Winter believes that "the greatest mobilization effort in history is now gaining momentum, moving ahead with a quickening pace, and with more and more goals that are concrete, measurable and feasible." How can we participate? What are the critical components to get the job done? Winter claims, "The number one priority is for more mission mobilizers. Why do I say this? Because I believe there must be at least 40,000 younger adults who have in the past few years made a missionary decision, but who will never make it to the field - due to ignorance, indifference, baby boomer detachment, school debts, etc."

Standing before a crowd of college students, Dr. Winter challenged them, saying, "Suppose I had a thousand college seniors in front of me who asked me where they ought to go to make a maximum contribution to Christ's global cause. What would I tell them? I would tell them to stay home and mobilize. All of them." How in the world can this former missionary say this with a straight face - trying to talk people into not becoming missionaries? Because the need to sound the alarm is so great. Wouldn't it be strategic to awaken one hundred sleeping firemen rather than to throw your own little bucket of water on the huge fire yourself? Some will go as pioneer missionaries. Still others will be able to stay back from the field and assist this entire U.S. mobilization process to succeed.

When churches get involved in sending missionaries out – they want them to hold "important roles". They use words like "overseas" as if an ocean makes a difference, or "foreign field" – as if it needs to be far away, and "frontlines" – as if support personnel are not essential. There must be people who will stir the troops here declaring, "This is what is left to be done." Without them, we lose sight of the big picture and have no idea how to prioritize mission efforts. To stay and mobilize requires real faith and vision. In other words, anyone can count the seeds in an apple. But who can count the apples in just one seed?

Greg Parsons, Executive Director of the U.S. Center for World Missions, shares these innovative thoughts: "Missions mobilization is a strategic new category that churches are increasingly recognizing as key to their global outreach. It may not be in your church's missions policy.... yet, but it is becoming more and more understood by alert missions thinkers and strategizers. We are familiar with church planters, evangelists,

student workers, theological educators, etc... But this new, growing category may be the most important of all... the role of the missions mobilizer. It's really not new, though, mobilization has always happened! Every missionary, whether he calls it by its name or not, has been mobilized. Churches are now realizing that if you don't have people who work at spreading vision here, you won't have people who go to "the field".

For a long time it has been ingrained into the minds of church-goers and into church culture that to arrive spiritually is to be a missionary. Well, if the Church is going to succeed in her mission, we must begin to recognize and confidently live out the different roles God has set in place in order for us to move forward. We are a body whose parts have many functions. In the end, we work toward one ultimate goal – the redemption of all nations. May we not exalt one function over another. And may we never underestimate the importance of those whose missions vision leads them to stay behind and mobilize others to the nations.