

Catch the Vision 2000 by Bill & Amy Stearns (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1991) (20 Quotes selected by Doug Nichols)

1. Large Increase of Believers

Followers of Jesus Christ are increasing by more than 70,000 every day-by more than 120,000 a day during the year 1991. [page 14]

2. God Wants to Bless You

God does want to bless you. But not to make your life easy. He'll bless you because He's got a demanding job for you-a specific task, one that lays down rails to guide your major life decisions, to keep you from spinning your wheels in Christian self-improvement. [page 15]

3. Look What God is Doing:

- 3,500 new churches are opening every week worldwide.
- 28,000 become believers every day in the People's Republic of China. In 1950, when China closed to foreign missionaries, there were one million believers. Today, conservative estimates say there are well over 60 million.
- 20,000 become believers every day in Africa; that continent was 3% Christian in 1900 and is over 40% Christian today.

70,000 become Christians every day in the world.

- In 1900, Korea had no Protestant church; it was deemed "impossible to penetrate." Today Korea is 30% Christian with 7,000 churches in Seoul alone.
- In Indonesia, the percentage of Christians is so high the government won't print the statistic which is probably nearing 25% of the population. The last accurate tally of Indonesian Christians, in 1979, revealed that more than two million Muslims had turned to Christ!
- After 70 years of oppression in the Soviet Union, Christians numbered about 100 million-five times the number of the Communist Party at the height of its popularity, and 36% of the population.
- The government of Papua New Guinea recently mandated Bible teaching in every school in the country.

- More Muslims in Iran have come to Christ since 1980 than in the previous 1000 years combined. Before Khomeini's revolution in 1979 there were about 2,000 Iranian believers. After years of intensified persecution, there are now more than 15,000.
- In A.D. 100, there were 360 non-Christians per true believer. Today the ratio is less than seven to every believer, as the initiative of the Holy Spirit continues to outstrip our most optimistic plans! [page 16]

4. Uses the Devil to Further His Purposes

God in His sovereignty is using even the wiles of evil spirit beings- of the devil himself- to further His overarching purpose for man. And in His foreknowledge, He is orchestrating the choices of mankind to further His purposes for the angelic principalities and rulers and powers. [page 28]

5. He Uses Rebels for His Purposes

God uses angelic rebels and human rebels alike to accomplish His purposes. His sovereignty is so infinite that He makes even the wrath of man praise Him and His enemies- including Satan and his minions-to serve Him (psalm 76: 10). [page 29]

6. Carl Sandburg's Roommate

The story is told of Carl Sandburg, the great American poet, who as a college student took his roommate home to visit for the holidays. As Carl introduced his roommate to his hard-of-hearing aunt, he announced, "Auntie, I want you to meet my roommate, Al Specknoodle!" The aunt cupped her ear and shook her head. Carl tried again: "I want you to meet my roommate Al Specknoodle!" The aunt frowned and shook her head again. Carl sputtered and shouted, "Al Specknoodle! My roommate!" Finally the aunt burst into tears; "It's no use, Carl," she said. "No matter how many times you say it, it still sounds like ... Al Specknoodle!" [page 50]

7. God Will Always Do What He Says He Will

The television mogul Ted Turner, raised in a Christian environment, points back to a specific event that convinced him God-if God exists at all-is unreliable. As a teenager, Turner prayed and prayed that God would heal his terminally ill sister; but the sister died. From that point on, Turner lived the life of the practical atheist, a role many people who still "believe" in God ensue. They know He exists, but they frankly don't trust Him with their lives because He has "let them down."

But maybe it's time for us to get scriptural in our expectations of God's reliability. He won't always do what we say He should do. But He will always do exactly what He says He will do. And on this we can base a whole new life of confident assurance, of encouraging hope. God will do what He set out to do, and as we align with that, we have steadfastness and sureness like an anchor in the soul. [page 53]

8. Satan's Control Will Be Broken

Pray for the dozens of various people groups clustered in Calcutta. The futility of trying to feed every malnourished street orphan or of teaching job skills to every homeless youth can keep us from praying realistically at all about such depressing situations and groups of humanity. But aren't we angry at such injustice-that Satan keeps these hundreds of thousands captive in his evil domain?

Our anger alone can keep us crying out to God for Calcutta. He promises that "blessed is the people group whose God is the Lord." If we pray against the strongholds of Satan over this city, if we petition God to thrust forth hundreds of church-planting teams into Calcutta, as people group after people group make the Lord their God, Satan's control will be broken. Jesus Christ says to the hopeless, desperate people of the world's megacities that He has come "to preach the Gospel to the poor ... to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are downtrodden, to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord" (Luke 4: 18, 19). The babies and young people and the aged of Calcutta will have a chance to enjoy the blessing of God! Pray for Calcutta. [page 77]

9. God has blessed His people.

What are we doing with His resources? Running to panel our own houses while God builds His temple of living stones the "hard way?"

We devote more than 85% of these resources to our own development. That is, only 15% of this arsenal of personnel, finance, prayer and tools goes to bless unreached people groups. In the U.S., the picture is even more bleak. According to the Bibles for All World Prayer Map, American Christians spend 95% of offerings on home-based ministry, 4.5% on cross-cultural efforts in already reached people groups, and 0.5% to reach the unreached. [page 90]

10. Persecution Brings Faith

The infamous Cultural Revolution in the People's Republic of China in the 1960's and 1970's parallels this persecution account in the book of Acts. Beginning in the 1960's, the Chinese Communist Party "purged" their culture of millions of intellectuals and Western-influenced citizens. Tens of thousands of these persecuted people were Christians, and as they were forcibly relocated or as they fled from China's cities to remote, rural areas, they carried the Gospel with them.

Before the time of the Cultural Revolution, it was estimated that there were about 2,000 unreached people groups within the political borders of China. But after 1976 when China opened somewhat to the West, researchers were astounded to find that possibly 1,000 of these unreached people groups had been reached with the Gospel during these terrible years of persecution. God had spread His Word from people group to people group through persecution. [page 105]

11. We Are All Witnesses

We are all witnesses. But we are not all missionaries. The job of the Body is to:

- Identify in our midst those who are designed by God to be cross-cultural workers or missionaries. Not everyone is a missionary any more than everyone is a pastor.
- Equip those sent ones with training.
- Send them out and support them. [page 110]

12. Need 20 Times the Senders of Missionaries

In World War II, it was estimated that behind every American combat soldier, fifteen support personnel made sure he was equipped and cared for. In the 90's, the ratio of support personnel in uniform to an American combat soldier is 20 to one. As we'll see, this decade needs to raise up nearly 100,000 new missionaries to finish the task of blessing every remaining people group with the Gospel. And if that is true, we meanwhile need to raise up perhaps 20 times that number of senders- those who are willing to join the Cause in sacrificial prayer and action behind the lines. [page 110]

13. Early Days, Missionaries Died in Two Years

In the First Era of modern missions, progress on the field is pain-fully, agonizingly slow. Missionary after missionary succumbs to fever, especially in West Africa. Early

missionaries are well aware that they are probably going to their death. Out of 35 who go to Ghana between 1835 and 1870, only two live more than two years. Yet the Gospel takes root and grows. [page 121]

14. Status of Great Commission

What is the remaining task? What is the status of the Great Commission in today's world?

Roughly half of the world's population-actually about 3.05 billion-live in reached people groups. This does not mean all these individuals are Christians; it simply means they live in people groups where it's possible for them to respond to a clear presentation of the Gospel from within their own culture in their own language.

There are about 12,000 reached people groups in the world.

In the rest of the world, about 2.2 billion people live in unreached people groups.

While about 1,000 of these unreached groups are scattered among various world cultures, 11,000 of them are primarily in five major cultural blocs:

- 4,000 unreached Muslim groups. Nearly a billion individuals are Muslims.
- 3,000 unreached tribal groups. Only about 140 million individuals are in these 3,000 groups.
- 2,000 unreached Hindu groups comprise a population of about 550 million individuals.
- 1,000 unreached Han Chinese groups in which live 150 million individuals.
- 1,000 unreached Buddhist groups. About 275 million individuals are in these groups.

These 12,000 groups in total are in 3,000 clusters which have similar cultural characteristics such as having dialects of the same basic language, etc.

Most of the unreached groups are located geographically in what some scholars call "The 10/40 Window"-from West Africa across Asia between ten degrees latitude [south] of the equator to 40 degrees north. [page 134]

15. Not Wait to Reach the Lost

At a 1980 world-level conference in Edinburgh, Scotland, 170 mission groups from 37 countries adopted the catch-phrase "A Church for Every People by the Year 2000." But if date-setting is forbidding to you, imagine it's 2041 and we can put a church-planting mission team within every unreached group within seven years. Would 2048 be a less threatening target date than 2000?

But why wait? Every day, more than 55,000 men, women and children die within unreached peoples that have never encountered the claims of Christ. These fellow humans beings are without God and without hope. Why should we wait to reach them?
[page 149]

16. Need the Spirit of Enterprise

American pastor A. T. Pierson wrote,

In every generation a distinct and definite plan of Providence may be detected by the careful observer of God in history; and the true seers, the wisest and greatest in His eyes, are those who seek first to find out that plan and then fall into their place in it, and so serve their own generation by the will of God

These are days of giant enterprises in the interests of commerce, science, art and literature. Why not carry the spirit of sanctified enterprise into our religious life and work. .. ?

There is no lack of money nor means to compass the evangelization of the world within the present century if there were but the spirit of enterprise to dare and undertake for our Redeemer! [pages 149-150]

17. Christianity Sweeping Across the Latin World

Of the 400 million Latin Americans, more than 40 million have become evangelical Christians. Even secular, world-watching publications such as World Press observe that living Christianity is sweeping across the Latin world. "The [Roman Catholic] church's golden age is drawing to a close, and a quiet revolution comparable to the Reformation in 16th-century Europe is taking place."

By the end of this decade, a majority of the people in Brazil, Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador will be evangelical believers. Chile, Costa Rica, and Bolivia will be about 40% Bible-believing evangelical. Already Mexico's population is more than 35% evangelical. Sao Paulo, Brazil, is home to one of the world's largest congregations with more than 20,000 members attending each week. One denomination in Brazil began 50 years ago with three North American missionaries; within the past five decades it has exploded into more than 8,000 churches. [page 155]

18. Preach the Gospel

The challenge today is exactly that of Francis Xavier who 500 years ago dreamed of returning to Paris from his mission work in India, China and Japan. Why? So he could "go shouting up and down the streets to tell the students to give up their small ambitions and come eastward to preach the Gospel of Christ!"? [page 157]

19. Life on Earth is War

Can we visualize-can we ever forget-the fact that since the time of Christ, 40 million believers have been martyred for faith in Jesus Christ? In recent times, the total number of Christians killed for their faith is 300,000!

Perhaps too many of us Christians have been led to believe that Christianity is supposed to be nice-respectable, predictable and smooth. We are deceived into thinking that being the people of God means lots of meetings and lots of blessings.

But God's big purpose for leaving you on this earth is not to put you through a spiritual health spa regimen to make you feel better. He'll do all that in heaven in the twinkling of an eye. Life on earth is war. And war is never nice. [page 159]

20. Do What No One Else Is Doing

The lost will always be there; it's all sort of hopeless anyway, right? Wrong. Unfortunately these groups sometimes feel more urgency about their own fiscal condition than the fact that 55,000 people die daily without ever hearing the name of Christ. It's a good rule of thumb to judge whether you in your personal plans or the organizations you link up with mean business:

Does this effort further the completion of the Great Commission?

So get strategic. Do as Cameron Townsend, founder of Wycliffe Bible Translators advised: "Find something no one else is doing. Then do it!" [page 180]