

The Vanishing Ministry in the 21st Century: Calling a New Generation to Lifetime Service by Woodrow Kroll, Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids: 1991.
(12 Quotes selected by Doug Nichols)

1. Ministry Is Thriving

In spite of the danger, the deprivation, the personal sacrifice, there are well over 80,000 Protestant missionaries and 138,000 Roman Catholic missionaries in the world today.¹ Scores of mission agencies have been raised up to coordinate these soldiers of the cross as they depart for the four corners of the world. Currently there are 395 agencies engaged in sending career personnel overseas, and that's an increase from 371 in 1985.²

¹ David Bryant, *In the Gap* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1984), p. 160.

² W. Dayton Roberts and John A. Siewert, eds. *Mission Handbook*, 14th Edition, (Monrovia, CA: Missions Advanced Research and Communication Center, 1989), p. 53. [Page 13]

2. Christianity Is Growing

A total of 1,684,535,500 persons claimed allegiance to the Christian religion in 1988 (33% of the world's 5.1 billion people), somewhat less than twice the number of adherents to Islam, the second largest religion with nearly a billion followers. David Bryant says that every day the number of Christians grows by an estimated 60,000 new believers in Jesus Christ as Saviour. This results in 1600 new churches opening their doors every Sunday for the first time.⁴

⁴ Bryant, *In the Gap*, p. 158. [Pages 13-14]

3. Attitudes Need Changing

Of the setting of goals there is no end. We need them; we live by them. Without goals the missionary enterprise would be static. And as the 21st century dawns the setting of goals to reach the world increases. In spite of the flurry of activity, a note of realism needs to be sounded. Barrett and Reapsome have documented that nearly half of the 788 world-capturing visions since the days of the apostles have sputtered on the launching pad.⁷ It will take more than plans, programs and projections to win the world for Christ. It will take a basic restructuring of finances, attitudes and approaches.

⁷ David B. Barrett and James W. Reapsome, *Seven Hundred Plans to Evangelize the World* (Birmingham, AL: New Hope, 1988) [5a] [page 16]

4. Career Missionaries Are Decreasing

The truth is that while the number of career missionaries, lifetime missionaries, the USA sends overseas continues to increase, the number of career missionaries to short termers continues to decline, 57 percent of the total today, down from 64 percent of the total in 1985.³⁵ Are we headed for a short term, part time missionary force? If we are, we're headed for disaster. Our Lord did not call His disciples to go into all the world and preach the gospel part time, or for a short term. Lifetime was His intent, and lifetime was His command. [The harvest fields have more souls to be harvested today than ever before, and the number of laborers in ratio to those needy souls is smaller than ever before. In business, that's a classic formula for bankruptcy.

³⁵ W. Dayton Roberts and John A. Siewert, eds., *Mission Handbook*, 14th Edition, p. 52. [Page 34]

5. God Cares for Your Children

You need not worry about the welfare of your children when you give them to God. He can take better care of them than they can of themselves. You need not worry about the career advancement of your children when you give them to God. After all, He is the captain of a mighty army, the potter over every piece of clay. You need not worry about giving your children in lifetime ministry to God. If He doesn't want to use them in this way, He'll give them back to business, industry, education or another career. [Page 46]

6. Dedicate Your Older Children to God

The greatest denial you can make to your children is to deny them from being your greatest gift to God. Don't dedicate them to God at birth and direct them from Him at college or career time! [Page 47]

7. Are Christian Education Institutions Doing Their Job?

Although we would never expect 100 percent of any of these [Christian] institutions' graduates to be heading out for the mission field, where should we look for the candidates needed to fill God's vineyard? Where are the institutions whose mission has not been broadened so that business and elementary education have supplanted the pastoral major as the largest major in the institution? Who really is placing the emphasis on training pastors and missionaries? We know which institutions claim to be doing this, for we have read their promotional literature. But a quick look at the majors on a graduation program jolts us back to reality. [Page 57]

8. Lifetime Service Means a Lifetime

In the secular world 33 percent of all overseas employees return to the USA within the first year. It's tough out there, and perhaps this is why it has been calculated that up to half of all new missionaries do not last beyond their first term on the field. ¹ The typical length of service in the decade of the '80s is between two and ten years on the field. [The missionary enterprise cannot afford to recruit potential missionaries who are not going to make it past the first term of service. The church of Jesus Christ needs men like Onesiphorus, not men like Demas (see 2 Timothy 4:10). Lifetime service means just that - lifetime service, a commitment to serve the Lord with consistence, with initiative, with determination never to quit.

¹ Stanley Lindquist, "Prediction of Success in Overseas Adjustment," in *Journal of Psychology and Christianity*, Vol. I, No.2, Summer, 1982, p. 22. [Page 78]

9. McCheyne Wept over Ministry

Robert Murray McCheyne was one of the most powerful preachers of the gospel to grace this earth. He preached his heart out in Dundee, Scotland, before the Lord took him home at the early age of 29. Once a preacher visited McCheyne's church in Dundee and stood in the pulpit before an empty sanctuary. Unknown to him, the sexton of the church was in the back cleaning. The sexton interrupted the silence by asking, "Do you want to preach like McCheyne?"

Startled, the preacher replied, "Yes."

"Then come with me," said the sexton. He took the preacher into McCheyne's study where everything was essentially just as McCheyne had left it.

"Now sit in the chair," ordered the sexton. The preacher rounded the corner of the pastor's desk and sat down. "Now put your elbows on the desk." The preacher complied. "Now cup your hands and bury your face in your hands." Once again the guest complied.

"Now let the tears flow," said the discerning old sexton. "That's how McCheyne did it!" [Pages 83-84]

10. Revival Accounts for Change

Revival always swells the ranks of lifetime servants for the Lord. If the ranks are depleted today, the attitudes listed above need to be implemented in our lives. That in

itself is revival, and there has never been a revival without a corresponding flood of laborers for the vineyard. [Page 101]

11. Low Giving

In 1990, American evangelicals gave only 2.7 percent of their annual incomes to the Lord's work. And of the total amount given to church work, only a fraction of that went to world missions. [Page 124]

12. You Are Never Too Old

...the Earl of Halsburg was 90 when he began preparing his 20-volume revision of English law. Galileo made his greatest discovery at age 73. Hudson Taylor was laboring vigorously on the mission field at age 69. Goethe wrote Faust at 82. And at age 85 Caleb wanted a mountain so that he could drive out a stronghold of giants (Joshua 14:10-15). [Page 132]