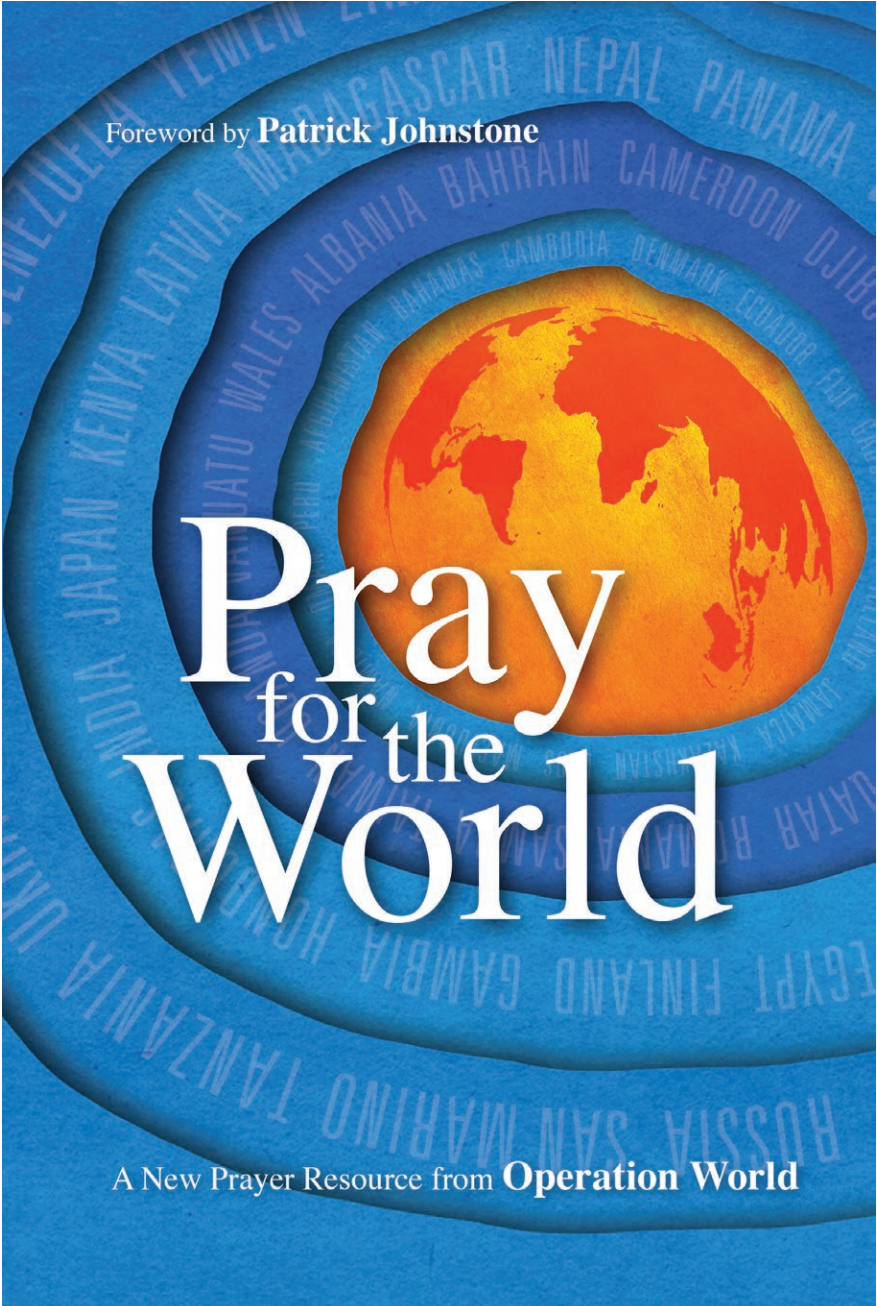


Foreword by **Patrick Johnstone**



Pray for the World

A New Prayer Resource from **Operation World**



InterVarsity Press
ivpress.com

Taken from *Pray for the World*, abridged from Operation World, 7th ed.,
by Jason Mandryk, advising editor Molly Wall.
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Published by InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, IL. www.ivpress.com.

THE WORLD

Pop 6.9 billion.

Christians 2.2 billion. *Evangelical Christians* 545.9 million.

Largest Religion Christian.

Fastest Growing Religion Muslim.

487 of the world's cities have over 1 million inhabitants, and 21 cities have over 10 million. The urban population reached over 50% for the first time in history in 2009.

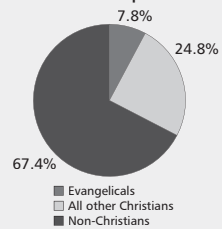
Peoples The Joshua Project lists 16,350 distinct peoples. The World Christian Database lists 13,674 peoples. Both base their figures on an ethno-linguistic basis, with peoples counted multiple times across the various countries where they live.

Languages The world's largest languages (by number of first-language speakers) are Chinese (1.2 billion), Spanish (329 mill), English (328 mill), Arabic (221 mill), Hindi (182 mill), Bengali (181 mill), Portuguese (178 mill), Russian (144 mill), Japanese (122 mill), and German (90 mill).

All Languages The numbers vary by definition of language and dialect. The Ethnologue (2009) counts 6,909 languages. The World Christian Encyclopedia counts 13,511 with 30,000 dialects. The Global Recordings Network estimates over 10,000 spoken languages and dialects.

Languages with Scriptures Wycliffe Bible Translators list 6,909 languages, out of which only 662 have adequate Scriptures. 2,582 languages have some Scripture (457 have Bibles, 1,202 have New Testaments, and 953 have portions of the Old or New Testament). They list 2,252 languages that may still need Scripture translation (and 1,363 projects are underway). The population of people groups with no Scripture, who still wait for work to begin, is 200 million.

Christian Population

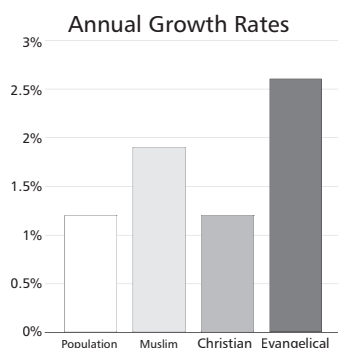
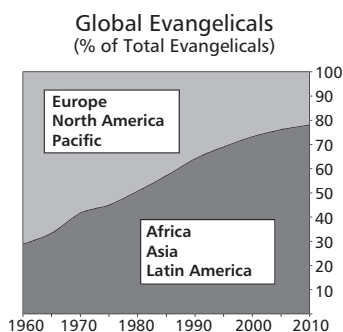


God remains sovereign in our world today, now as much as ever. Yet prayer can be a difficult act for believers. God makes many promises to His people, but the world, the flesh, and the devil cause us to doubt. News reports focus on wars, disasters, famines, scandals, tragedies, and every form of evil. The beautiful, wholesome, and good things – like the works of God and His servants – often go unreported or even unnoticed. Our spiritual vision is not perfectly clear. Here on earth, we see through a glass darkly (1 Corinthians 13:12).

Like the disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24), we need Jesus to open our eyes to the hidden truth. God is answering prayers, and doing wonderful things in the world! This has been a remarkable generation in church history. Who among us, 30 years ago, could have imagined more than 100 million Chinese Christians, or massive people movements to Christ in Iran and Algeria, or breakthrough in Cambodia and Nepal? Only God! So we begin here with answers to prayer, with all gratitude and praise to our Lord. And we persist in prayer for the things that to our eyes seem impossible, because nothing is impossible with God.

ANSWERS TO PRAYER

1 **The amazing harvest of new believers continues** across Africa, Asia, and Latin America. By contrast, the Church grows very slowly or even declines in the rest of the world. Although sometimes small in number, or away from public view, Christians now live and fellowship inside every country. World mission, migration, and globalization all spread the Church. It is not a European “white man’s religion”, but a global faith for all peoples. The majority of Christians today are Africans, Asians, and Latin Americans.



2 **Evangelical Christianity grew faster than any other world religion or global religious movement.** Most of this growth happened through local movements, in places where the evangelical church was new. Evangelicals numbered 89 million (2.9% of the world’s population) in 1960, but by 2010 they were 546 million (7.9%)! Much of this growth was by conversion, not just by birth rates. The Church grows in lands where past or present persecution of Christians is quite strong. But as population growth continues to slow down, evangelical growth will slow down as well.

3 **Pentecostals and other charismatic movements grew beyond expectation.** The Pentecostal movement began over 100 years ago. Charismatic renewal began mostly in mainline denominations in the 1950s and 1960s, and then a Third Wave came at the end of the 20th century. The charismatic renewal movement has touched many parts of the Church, in thousands of denominations, in nearly every country! Every movement has human flaws, but charismatic renewal has revived or renewed the faith of almost half a billion people.

4 **Many of the world’s least-reached peoples received the good news!** In many cases, peoples with no known believers 10 or 20 years ago now have churches that grow and thrive! Research work in the 1990s helped the global Church pray for, adopt, and focus missionary efforts on unreached peoples. Today we have an even greater understanding of the need, yet much pioneer mission work remains. But praise God that doors opened and people responded to the gospel within hundreds of people groups – even some groups once considered impossible to reach!

5 **God’s people joined together to pray** in greater numbers, and with greater focus, than ever before! Grassroots movements on the local, national, and international levels pray for their communities, for countries and people groups, and for important global issues (like the persecuted Church, children at risk, victims of human trafficking, others). Go and connect with others around the world to pray for the country, region, or issue you are passionate about!

6 **Aid, development, and charity work increased around the globe** through the 1980s and 1990s, and into this decade. Praise God that, more than ever before, people reach out to address the needs of the world's most vulnerable and needy. Ministry that cares for the needy, and that brings justice for the oppressed, reflects both the heart of God and the commands of Scripture. It also opens many doors to the gospel message. Christians can enter countries, regions, and communities through practical service, where traditional missionaries cannot reach.

7 **The globalization of the Great Commission movement** changed the face of missions. Many nations in Asia, Africa, and Latin America have mission-sending movements (like Ethiopia, Nigeria, Brazil, Philippines, South Korea). The Majority World nations together already send more missionaries than Western countries. This exciting 21st-century reality also introduces unique challenges. New missions movements will still make old mistakes, and workers from the Global North will now work alongside or even serve under the leadership of those from the Global South. International agencies see more recruits from the Majority World. Praise God for a global mission force that is more multi-cultural and multi-national than ever before!

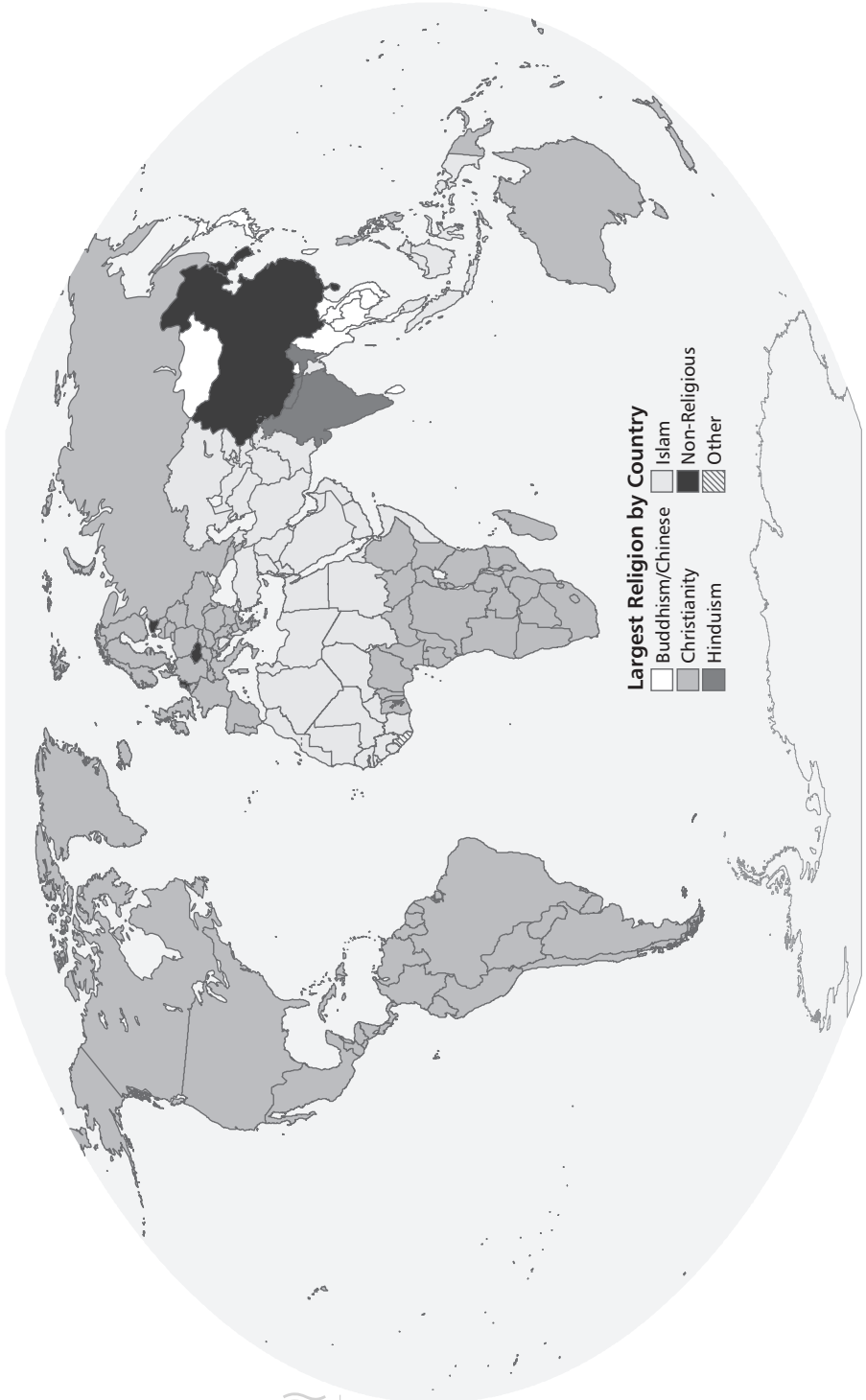
8 **The Church must find new ways of training, sending, and supporting missionaries**, especially non-Western workers. Traditional Protestant mission agencies will continue to serve the global movement, but changes in global politics and economics require new models and patterns of mission work.

- **Mission agencies increasingly work through partner networks**, based on specific unreached areas or people groups. The networks share resources or even workers, and collaborate on initiatives.
- **Mission-minded Christians serve overseas in a variety of vocations**, whether relief and development, business, education, sports, the arts, or others. Some serve through agencies, but others go on their own, or hold looser connections with a mission fellowship.
- **Groups that migrated all over the world** (like Filipinos, Chinese, Koreans, Nigerians) have become stronger forces for mission as they see opportunities for Kingdom service abroad.

9 **Areas that appear in the news because of tragedies or conflict** often become the focus of intense prayer and related mission efforts. In the past 20 years, more Muslims than ever before came to Christ, and more workers serve in Muslim heartlands. As the world became more aware of the size, complexity, and challenges of the Muslim world, many believers developed a burden to share Jesus with Muslims. Political crises in Buddhist strongholds (Tibet, Thailand, Cambodia) raised a similar interest in the Buddhist world, and the difficult situation of the Dalits/Untouchables (India, Nepal) attracted prayer and ministry from around the world.

10 **Global movements shaped the course of world mission** in the last generation. The Lausanne Movement, the World Evangelical Alliance, the Global Day of Prayer, and AD2000 & Beyond, all helped mobilize different parts of the global Church for outreach.

11 **God uses many tools** to minister to both believers and non-believers (personal witness, literature, Scripture translation, Christian audio resources, TV, the Internet, and so many more). Pray that the new combined ministry efforts in Bible translation (Vision 2025), audio resources (The 10K Challenge), Christian radio (World by Radio), and others, might greatly increase the opportunity for non-Christians to hear the gospel and respond! Yet, even with all this activity, probably 24-27% of the world's population have not had the good news presented to them in a way they could understand and receive.



Jesus founded the first missionary team: the apostles. The New Testament Church was the result. The global Church should function as a missionary agency, and be involved in this Great Commission that Jesus gave to us all. Much missionary progress has been made in the last 50 years, but around 25% of the world have still never heard the good news! Pray for a united Church to reach the world for Christ.

THE UNFINISHED TASK (THE WORLD'S RELIGIOUS SYSTEMS)

- 1 World religion in the 21st century.** Religion plays a foundational role in most societies, and many people turn to religion or spirituality as a reaction against changes in the world around them.
 - **The world has become more religious in this century, not less**—across every region and in almost every religion! Many thought the 20th century would be a time of triumph for secularism, yet religion is very much alive in the 21st century.
 - **Fundamentalist groups increased within most every religion.** Some act with aggression and even violence against people of other faiths, or sometimes against those within their own faith.
- 2 The future of global faith** will likely be dominated by Christianity, Islam, and the non-religious, when considering birth rates, evangelistic activity, and cultural influence. Other religions mostly stay within one region of the world, or within specific ethnic groups. Islam has the highest birth rate, but fewer conversions. Although many people “convert” to non-religion, the birth rates of that group are very low. From 1900 to 2010, Christianity went from 34.5% of the world population to 32.3%, only a small change. Christian growth in Africa and Asia offset the decline in Europe.
- 3 Christianity** is the most global religion. Every country has a Christian witness or a fellowship of believers. But only a minority of the world's Christians actively practise their faith. Many have a Christian heritage, but personally know very little about Jesus. In some cases, people groups received Christianity, but mixed it with their traditional religious practices and folk superstitions. Cults such as Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, and others call themselves Christian, but also hold unbiblical beliefs, values, or practices. Millions who go by the label of “Christian” are not saved, and still need to hear the true gospel.
- 4 Islam** dominates a territory that stretches from West Africa, through the Middle East and Central Asia, down to Indonesia. Islam grew quickly, from 12.3% of humanity (1900) to 22.9% (2010). Most Muslim growth comes through high birth rates, but conversion plays a big part in West Africa, Indonesia, and the USA. But Islam faces significant internal crises. The violence and terror tactics of radical Islamists horrify the world, including many of the peace-loving Muslims who make up the majority of Islam. More Muslims than ever have turned to Jesus, but many Muslims decide to abandon religion altogether. Muslims have become a large minority inside many Western countries, but communities struggle with the social and spiritual effects of secular culture on their faith, especially among young people. Pray for the small streams of Muslims who come to Christ to become rushing rivers all over the world!
- 5 The bloc or group of people who claim no religion** had the most massive growth of the last century. This group was just 0.2% of the world's population in 1900, but 13.6% in 2010. The majority are Chinese or European. As Communism declined in Europe and now declines elsewhere, many religions see new growth. But all over the world, people continue to leave their religious tradi-

tions. So far, Christianity has not effectively communicated the gospel to secular, postmodern cultures. Churches struggle against the spread of secular thought and values, and many leave the faith, especially the younger generation.

6 **Hinduism** remains strongly centred in India (90% of the world's Hindus live there). But Hindu ideas became more popular across the world, through New Age thinking, yoga, transcendental meditation, the Hare Krishna sect, and popular Indian *gurus* (spiritual guides). Like Islam, Hinduism also has a violent side. Extremist Hindu groups actively persecute Christians and followers of other faiths in India and Nepal. The Indian sub-continent has the world's highest concentration of unreached peoples. While the Church continues to grow rapidly among the poorest and the lowest castes, the main body of caste Hindus remains largely isolated from the gospel.

7 **Buddhism** is the state religion of 4 nations in Asia, of the majority in another 3, and of a significant minority in 9 others. In most places, followers actually mix Buddhism with Chinese religions, Daoism, Confucianism, and Shinto. After Communism lost strong influence in Asia, Buddhism began to grow again. The Dalai Lama of Tibet has made Buddhism more popular in Western countries. Only a small minority from Buddhist backgrounds have come to Jesus. The worldviews of Buddhists and Christians have great differences, and many Buddhists struggle to understand the gospel message in the ways Christians have tried to communicate it. Pray for a breakthrough.

8 **Ethnic religions and animism** now grow again in some parts of the world. In many cases, when people accepted other religions (Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, even Christianity), they actually added a thin layer on top of deeply held ethnic religious beliefs and practices. Traditional religions still greatly influence people's lives, communities, and whole cultures. Even in the secular West, people have a fascination with New Age or other alternative spiritual practices, mysticism, or the occult. This reveals that humans are truly spiritual creatures! And that we are in a spiritual war.

9 **Several other religions** exist in smaller numbers and fewer locations. Sikhs, Jains, Parsees all live mostly in South Asia, while the Baha'i have spread around the world.

10 **The number of Jews** decreases in most countries from a combination of low birth rates, secular influences, conversions to Christianity, and migration to Israel. (Nearly 37% of all Jews now live in Israel.) Of the world's 14.8 million Jews, perhaps around 150,000 follow Jesus. Pray for the Jewish people to find salvation in *Yeshua*, their Messiah.

THE UNFINISHED TASK (THE WORLD'S PEOPLES)

It was nearly 2,000 years ago that Jesus commanded His followers to make disciples of all peoples. But it was only in the last 20 years that we gained a clear picture of the world's peoples and languages! In the Joshua Project list, 6,645 out of the world's 16,350 peoples remain in the unreached/least-reached category. That's 41% of all peoples! The total population is 2.8 billion individuals. (Keep in mind that Christian individuals can be part of an unreached people group, just as unreached individuals can be part of a reached people.)

1 **Churches around the world must gain a vision for unreached peoples.** "Peoples"—or *ethne* in New Testament Greek—are the basic units in God's plan to redeem all humanity. When we read the Old Testament, the Gospels, and Revelation, we see that disciples will come from among every people on earth. Pray that the Church might passionately pursue this end! Christian missions

will have many strategies, approaches, and trends, but the concept of *ethne* always needs to be part of how the Church understands the Great Commission.

2 **Most of today's least-reached peoples** have not heard the gospel because it remains so difficult to reach them! Many barriers (geography, language, culture, religion, politics, economics, spiritual darkness) leave them hidden or overlooked. These unreached groups generally will not hear the good news until someone reaches across the barriers to share and demonstrate the love of Christ, until a Church grows among them. Pioneer mission work is hard, expensive, and takes time. It requires great cultural understanding, commitment, and spiritual warfare through prayer. Many unreached peoples have small populations, and Christians know very little about them because they are so isolated, or because they appear to blend in with larger groups. Ask God to reveal Jesus to these smaller, more vulnerable groups.

When Jesus commissions the Church, He assures the believers of God's power and authority, and the presence of the Holy Spirit. The work before us is great, but not so vast as the greatness of God, who promises to go with us and empower us.

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