

A detailed mosaic of Jesus Christ's face, rendered in a traditional Byzantine style. The face is composed of small, colorful tiles in shades of gold, brown, and blue. Jesus has long, wavy brown hair and a beard, and his eyes are large and expressive. The background of the mosaic is a mix of gold and blue tiles.

Third Millennium Church Evangelism & Discipleship

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EVANGELISM EXPLOSION
INTERNATIONAL

Third Millennium Church Evangelism and Discipleship
Fulfilling the Great Commission of Jesus Christ in Our Generation
by Dr. John B. Sorensen, President/CEO, Evangelism Explosion International

“And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’”

—Matthew 28:18–20 (NKJV)

The Big Idea

The Great Commission is **not** a human invention. The call to reach everyone on earth with the gospel didn’t originate in a conference room or through a group of well-meaning believers brainstorming evangelism strategies.

This command came from none other than **Jesus Christ Himself**.

And it is only because it comes from Him that we dare to believe we can actually be part of fulfilling such a seemingly impossible task. We hope to make a lasting difference because **He said we could... He said we should... and He said we will.**

I first fully grasped how impossible the Great Commission seems during a conversation with the late Dr. D. James Kennedy, senior pastor of Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church in Fort Lauderdale, FL, and Founder and President of Evangelism Explosion International. He was my boss—and a man I deeply admired.

He told me:

“John, the place to begin to change the world is both the easiest and the hardest task before us. It’s easy because it simply requires us to be willing to share a simple but profound message with the men and women of our generation. It’s hard because the response it requires is so all-encompassing that nothing short of a miracle of God can bring it about.”

The place to begin changing the world is inside—the hearts and minds of men and women. Unless we can influence the motivations, desires, perspectives, and goals of the people who make up our communities, any other changes will be merely cosmetic and temporary at best. Permanent change begins on the inside.

Unless we are first of all (and continually) concentrating our efforts on changing men and women from the inside out, we are certain to fail in our long-term desire to change the world. No amount of political activism, educational reform, or legislative action will yield lasting fruit unless this foundational matter is addressed.

How do we propose to accomplish such a change?

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Nearly two thousand years ago, Jesus Christ stood on a hill in Galilee and gave His disciples His plan for lasting transformation:

“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world” (Matthew 28:19–20).

This first and continual step—this easiest and hardest of tasks—is sharing with our neighbors and friends the story of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Without this, we will not change the world in our time.”

Simple, Yet Impossible?

The Great Commission may seem simple... but it is undeniably impossible—without Christ.

And yet, no matter how we look at it, **this is Jesus’ plan**—for building His Church, glorifying the Father, and populating Heaven.

Jesus repeated this command at **explicitly** five times:

- **Matthew 28:18–20** – “Go and make disciples of all nations...” (spiritual multiplication embedded in the command).
- **Mark 16:15–16** – “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.” (emphasizing “all”).
- **Luke 24:46–49** – Repentance and forgiveness will be preached to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.
- **John 20:21–23** – “As the Father has sent Me, I am sending you...” and He gives them the Holy Spirit.
- **Acts 1:8** – “You will receive power... and you will be my witnesses... to the ends of the earth.”

But Do We Know This?

Shockingly, many Christians haven’t even heard of the Great Commission.

A 2018 Barna study found that:

- 51% of U.S. churchgoers said they had never heard of the Great Commission.
- 49% said they had heard of it, but most couldn’t identify what it actually was.
- Only 17% could correctly state what the Great Commission is.

(Source: [Barna Group](#))

If this is the central mission Jesus left us, how have we drifted so far from knowing—let alone doing—the “main thing”?

How It Started

Right after Jesus ascended into heaven, having given His final instructions, we have to ask:

“What did the first Christians actually do with the Great Commission?”

The answer? **Not much.**

Yes, there were monumental events that shaped history—like **Pentecost**—and yes, the Church grew. But this early growth came mostly through public preaching events led by apostles and key evangelists. For the most part, **ordinary Christians stayed quiet and hidden—largely out of fear.**

This hesitation and inward focus sounds uncomfortably familiar to the modern Church.

Growth by Addition: The Early Pattern

In the first chapters of Acts, the Church grew through addition:

- **Acts 2:41** – *“About three thousand were added to their number that day.”*
- **Acts 2:47** – *“The Lord added to their number daily...”*
- **Acts 5:14** – *“More and more men and women believed... and were added...”*

This was powerful and exciting—but it was still **dependent on centralized events, prominent leaders** (like Peter), and **physical proximity**. The pattern looked like this:

Preaching → Believing → Being added to the community

We might call this **linear growth**—each event added a certain number of people to the Church.

But then **something changed**—dramatically. The Church shifted from **addition** to **multiplication**.

The Shift to Multiplication

To move the Church from passive addition to active multiplication, God **shook things up**.

He used persecution to push ordinary believers out of their holy huddles.

After the **stoning of Stephen** in Acts 7, we read this in **Acts 8:1**:

“At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.”

Notice who was scattered: **everyone except the professional evangelists.**

And what did they do?

- **Acts 8:4** – *“Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word.”*

This doesn’t mean they stood in pulpits or gave sermons—it means they shared the Good News personally, wherever they went. This was the **beginning of “every believer a witness”**—what we now call **personal evangelism**.

Exponential Growth Begins

Immediately, we begin to see a shift:

- **Acts 9:31** – *“...the church... grew in numbers.”* (The Greek implies multiplication.)
- **Acts 12:24** – *“But the word of God grew and multiplied.”*

Later, Paul would **codify the principle** of spiritual multiplication for his disciple Timothy:

- **2 Timothy 2:2** – *“Entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.”*

That verse describes **four generations**:

Paul → Timothy → Faithful people → Others

For Paul, spiritual multiplication meant:

- He regularly shared the Gospel using a **reproducible model**
- He brought Timothy alongside him to show him **how to do it**
- Timothy was expected to **train other faithful people**
- Those people would train **others still**

This replicating process—embedded in every believer—caused **exponential growth** in the early Church.

Key Differences Between Addition and Multiplication

Addition	Multiplication
Centralized leaders do the work	Every believer is equipped and sent
Growth depends on events	Growth depends on relationships

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Addition (cont.)	Multiplication (cont.)
Discipleship is a program	Discipleship is a lifestyle
Growth is linear	Growth is exponential
Focus on gathering	Focus on going and sending

Why This Shift Still Matters

Sadly, many—perhaps **most**—modern churches still operate in **addition mode**:

- Programs attract people.
- Staff and pastors do the witnessing at church.
- Growth is slow—if it happens at all.

Some pastors even publicly state that laypeople's role is simply to **invite others to church**, leaving the actual witnessing to the pastor.

This is classic **addition mode**.

By contrast, **missional movements**—like the early house churches, the underground Church in China, or disciple-making models like **Evangelism Explosion (EE)**—operate through **multiplication**:

- Simple, reproducible training (clear outlines)
- Rapid leadership handoff (trainees become trainers)
- Focus on spiritual generations, not just attendance

A Word from Billy Graham

One day I had the privilege of speaking with the great evangelist Dr. Billy Graham. I asked him:

- Why did you write the foreword to *Evangelism Explosion*?
- Why did you support EE so widely?
- Why did you allow Dr. Sterling Huston to give so much of his time and energy to a different ministry?

He thought for a moment, then said:

"John, if I were to fill a stadium with 100,000 people, and all 100,000 accepted Christ, and I did that every night of the year for all my life, yet I were the only one doing it, I would actually be further behind the day I died than the day I started..."

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Dr. Graham understood the value of **spiritual multiplication**. So did Dr. D. James Kennedy.

It's a principle that **has changed the world—and still can**.

In fact, it's the **only one that can**.

Because of this principle, the early Church grew **at a rate unmatched in history**.

Church Expansion (AD 30s–300s): A Summary

Period	Events & Trends
AD 30–70	Apostles spread the Gospel across the Roman Empire; Paul reaches Asia Minor, Greece, Rome
AD 70–100	After Jerusalem's destruction, Christianity spreads rapidly among Gentiles; house churches multiply
2nd Century	Explosive growth in North Africa, Egypt, Gaul (France), and Asia Minor; apologists emerge
3rd Century	Explosive growth in North Africa, Egypt, Gaul (France), and Asia Minor; apologists emerge
Early 4th Century	The Great Persecution under Diocletian fails; Christianity is legalized under Constantine (AD 313)

How Did the Church Grow Without Power or Buildings?

A. Persecution Fueled Expansion

Rather than retreating, believers **scattered and shared**.

As **Tertullian** (c. 200 AD) wrote:

“The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church.”

B. Ordinary Believers Were the Missionaries

Evangelism wasn't merely for apostles. It happened through everyday, ordinary Christians as they went through their day-to-day lives. People like:

- Traders
- Soldiers
- Women
- Slaves

They shared the gospel, which for them was truly good news, with their **friends, relatives, neighbors, and coworkers**. And because of it, the Church **advanced relationally**.

C. House Churches Were Flexible and Reproducible

- The gatherings were small and informal
- Easy to multiply
- Local leadership emerged naturally
- Everyone was encouraged to lead and reproduce

Because of high need, **leadership development was constant**—leaders were recruited, trained, and deployed quickly.

D. Leadership Was Authentic

Thinkers like **Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, and Tertullian** gave intellectual depth to the faith.

They lived as examples—matching life to doctrine—which added credibility.

E. The Message Was Magnetic

- The Gospel was genuinely good news, offering:
- Forgiveness of sin
- Relationship with the God of the universe
- Radical equality (all equal before the Cross—Galatians 3:28)
- Compassion for the poor
- Hope beyond death
- Love, integrity, and deep community

The **distinctiveness** of Christians—and the **Holy Spirit's power**—drew people in.

Impact of This Era

The Church grew at such a rapid pace that by **AD 300**:

- The Roman Empire contained **6–10 million Christians** (roughly 10% of the population) Note: this is the lowest commonly agreed upon estimate. Many believe it was much higher (like 50-65%).

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- Christianity had spread far beyond Judaism
- It became a **multi-ethnic, empire-wide movement**

This was extraordinary growth for a **persecuted, illegal, grassroots faith**.

- Christianity doubled every 30–35 years—without buildings, budgets, or broadcast media.

Why?

Simply put, **every believer was a witness**.

And wherever they went—they **shared the gospel with everyone**.

Some even believed the **entire world could be reached by AD 500** if the pace continued.

But sadly—it didn't.

Something happened that would change everything again.

Christianity became legal.

Toward Toleration: Constantine and the Edicts

The Great Persecution (AD 303–311)

Under Emperor **Diocletian**, the Roman Empire launched the harshest persecution of Christians in its history:

- Churches were destroyed
- Scriptures were burned
- Christian leaders were jailed or killed

But the plan **backfired**—the Church didn't weaken, it **grew stronger**.

The Edict of Milan (AD 313)

In a stunning reversal, Emperor **Constantine** and **Licinius** issued the **Edict of Milan**, which:

- Legalized Christianity
- Granted freedom of religion
- Restored property and protections to Christians

Christianity was now **legal**—and soon after, it became **avored**.

Constantine's Role

Constantine did **not** make Christianity the state religion (that came later under Theodosius in **AD 380**), but he had a major impact:

- He **ended persecution**
- He **funded church buildings**
- He **gave bishops civic authority**
- He convened the **Council of Nicaea** in **AD 325**

However, this new status came at a cost.

As Christianity became state-supported, **thousands of unsaved Romans flooded the pews** of churches across the empire.

And what can non-Christians not do? **Evangelize**.

The “every believer as a witness” movement disappeared.

Evangelism became the job of **professional preachers and evangelists**, not ordinary believers. A shift had begun—one that would define much of Christian history.

A Word from Dr. D. James Kennedy

Dr. D. James Kennedy, founder of **Evangelism Explosion**, once told me:

“John, this is when the Dark Ages began. And with a few brief sparks of light throughout the centuries, we’ve continued in that state to this very day.”

Dr. Kennedy deeply believed the Church had moved away from the biblical model of every-believer evangelism. Together, we wrote about this in **Chapter 9** of our book *Well Done*, which is available at www.ad33.world. That chapter outlines Dr. Kennedy’s vision for a day when the **Church of Jesus Christ would wake up** and return to the actions and model of the first-century Church.

Why I Believe That Day Is Near

I’ve shared a high-level overview of the development of evangelism and Church growth over the centuries.

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The reality is: the Church largely returned to **addition-mode growth**—and stayed there for centuries. But **God is on the move. Jesus is building His Church** all over the world. And in the last century especially, the pace has accelerated:

The Acceleration of Global Conversions

Year	Estimated New Converts per Day (Worldwide)
1900	943
1950	4,500
1980	20,000
1994	92,000
Mid-1990s	~100,000
Late 2010s–2020s	~150,000

These are **staggering numbers**—and a clear sign that God is doing something extraordinary in our generation.

The Ratio of Christians to the Global Population

Dr. Ralph Winter, Chancellor of William Carey International University and past General Director of the U.S. Center for World Mission, published some astounding statistics on global Church growth:

- **AD 100:** 1 Christian for every **360** people on Earth
- **1900:** 1 Christian for every **21** people
- **2010:** 1 Christian for every **7.3** people

This is **spiritual multiplication** at a scale the early Church would recognize—millions of believers reaching millions more.

An Evangelism Explosion

In **1960**, Dr. D. James Kennedy stood before about fifteen faithful members of his congregation in a Fort Lauderdale schoolroom during a Sunday evening service.

He opened his Bible and read God's promise to the prophet:

“Call unto Me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not” (Jeremiah 33:3).

Then he closed the Bible, looked out over the small group, and, full of faith and enthusiasm, declared:

“You know what? I believe we can change the world!”

A Vision Without Borders

Years later, an unbelieving—and rather sarcastic—secular reporter said to Dr. Kennedy:

“It sounds to me like you aim to Christianize America!”

Dr. Kennedy smiled and replied:

“No sir, I’m not aiming to Christianize America. I’m aiming to Christianize the world.”

EE’s Vision Statement

Evangelism Explosion’s vision statement captures this global calling:

“Every nation equipping every people group and every age group to witness to every person.”

Our goal is that **every person on earth** will have the opportunity to hear the Good News of Jesus Christ. We believe the **Church** is the primary vehicle God will use to accomplish this.

In short:

- Our vision is to be a **catalyst** for Christ’s Church.
- We want to see the Church become a **witnessing, multiplying movement**.

The End Picture

What do we hope the world will look like when we’re done?

We believe the vision in **Revelation 7:9–10** will one day be reality:

“After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, saying, ‘Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!’”

This is a **wonderful promise**—and the amazing truth is that **we get to be part of bringing it to pass**.

Where Does EE Fit In Today?

The late Dr. Steve Douglass, past President of Campus Crusade, once shared with me his belief that it is **God Who gives every organization its purpose.**

And that this **calling does not change.**

We can choose to walk away from our calling—but only **at our own peril.**

I passionately agree with him. For **Evangelism Explosion International** to be all God intends it to be—and for each of us who are part of it—we must **hold fast to our original calling.**

Our Original Calling

What was EE's original calling?

The answer is found in the book Evangelism Explosion itself. From the beginning, several **Biblical principles** guided Dr. Kennedy's actions—and have guided this ministry since 1962:

- Every Christian is to be a witness
- Every Christian must be equipped to witness
- On-the-job training is essential
- Training soul-winners is most important

These principles have shaped our DNA for over **60 years**—and they will carry us into the future.

The Great Commission Requires Everyone

I realize this section may sound “EE-centric.” Let me quickly say—many other organizations were raised up by God in the same era with a similar focus:

Campus Crusade (Cru), The Navigators, InterVarsity, and others.

The reason I focus here on EE is simple: this is what I know.

- I was saved through EE.
- I was taught to witness through EE.
- I was taught to train others through EE.
- I was led into full-time ministry through EE.

And now, I serve as its President and CEO.

EE also serves as a barometer for the broader changes happening in gospel ministry today.

From a Small Beginning to a Global Movement

Over the past 60+ years, we've seen massive growth in the ministry of Evangelism Explosion:

- Started as a small church plant in Fort Lauderdale, FL
- Spread to become the **first Christian ministry active in every nation** on earth
- In the early years: hundreds of professions of faith annually
- Today: more than **20 million professions of faith each year**
- Leadership Training Clinics: from just a few per year to over **2,000 annually in 120+ nations**
- Leaders trained annually: from dozens to over **one million children, teens, and adults in 120+ languages and 400+ denominations**

The scope is massive, but the mission is still simple—**equip believers to multiply.**

Something New

In the past seven years, we've seen a **dramatic and unexpected shift.**

If you had asked an EE trainer in the 1980s what percentage of people they approached were open to a gospel conversation, the answer would have been:

“About 10%.”

But in January 2019, during a training in Oklahoma City, we went out for our non-negotiable On-the-Job Training (OJT) and tallied the results:

40% of the people we approached were open to having a gospel conversation.

We assumed it might be a temporary spike—like the days after 9/11—but it didn't fade. In fact, it's grown.

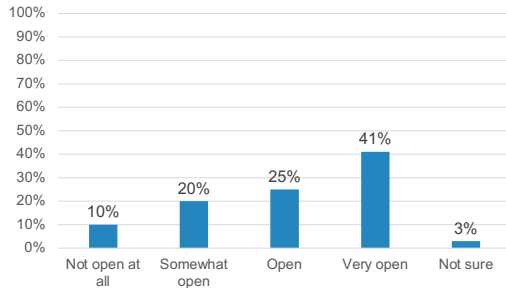
Today:

Over 60% of people we approach say yes to talking about Jesus.

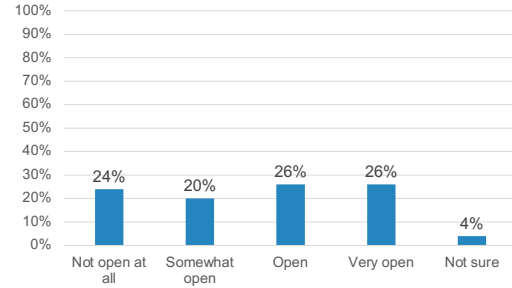
That's 6 out of 10 people saying yes to the most important conversation in eternity.

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66% say they are open or very open to having a conversation about faith with a friend



51% say they are open or very open to having a conversation about faith with a stranger



Confirmed by Research

A few years ago, we commissioned **Lifeway Research** to study this shift, and they confirmed it's real—not only in certain cities but nationwide. You can read the full study at www.ad33.world.

And this openness isn't just in the United States—it's global.

SWOT of the Nations

We recently conducted a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) of 89 mature EE national ministries across:

- Africa
- Asia
- Eurasia
- Europe
- Latin America
- North America
- Oceania

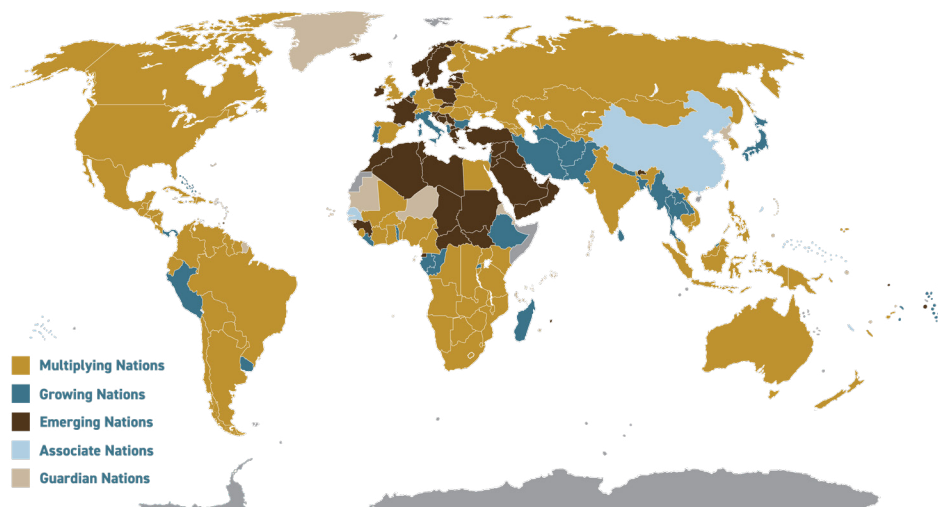
Criteria for Inclusion

To be part of this study, each national ministry had to have:

- A signed EE covenant
- Functional Board of Directors

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- National Director
- Paid field staff (full- or part-time)
- Self-support (annual budget)
- Annual Action Plan
- Measurable results
- EE materials in their language
- Significant interdenominational representation
- Nationwide multiplication and implementation strategy
- Ability to assist other nations
- Official legal registration



What We Found

It was exciting to see the strengths of these nations listed and celebrated:

- the number of trainers available
 - wide interdenominational cooperation
 - the overall number of Christians within the nation
 - Biblical engagement on the rise
 - And key partnerships
-

The weaknesses and threats would not surprise you (lack of finances and resources, danger from those that threaten Christians, and the opposite of what was listed as strengths).

What I was the most surprised, and encouraged by, was what was listed in the area of opportunity:

- The openness of people to the gospel (the same or greater than what we're experiencing in the USA)
- The response rate to the gospel (what was typically 25-30% has now become over 50%)
- And the opportunities that are currently open in many nations

A Moment Like No Other

All of this points to one conclusion:

We have an opportunity for the gospel today like perhaps never before in history.

The question is—**will we seize it?**

The Bottom Line

Every indication we see tells us we are in the midst of the **greatest revival the world has ever known**.

Sadly, many believers are unaware—because they remain **inside the walls** of their church buildings.

What Will It Take to Seize This Moment?

I believe with all my heart that this is our **opportunity** to return to **multiplication mode**—by activating **every Christian as a witness**, just like in the first century.

At the opening session of **Jerusalem Council 2**, our focus is “**New Maps for a New Millennium.**” We recognize we **cannot** reach today's and tomorrow's world using **yesterday's maps**.

But here's the truth: what we're proposing isn't a *new* map at all.

It's an **old map**—Jesus' map from **Acts 1:8**.

It's the same map the early Church followed for its first 300 years: **every believer a witness**.

Five “Coordinates” for the Mission Map

These are not optional strategies—they are **essential coordinates** for a multiplying, global, Spirit-led movement.

Disciple-Making: The New Compass

To accomplish the Great Commission, we must train **every believer** to make disciples who make disciples.

We must provide **clear, simple, and complete** multiplication tools—like Evangelism Explosion—that anyone can use.

Every Believer a Missionary: The New Traveler

Ordinary believers must live **missionally** in their everyday environments—**at work, at home, and in their communities**.

Every believer must be **an active witness**.

Unreached Peoples: The Uncharted Lands

Unreached people are everywhere—both across the globe and across the street.

We must:

- Train believers to see the mission fields **in their circles of influence**
- Adopt unreached people groups for **prayer, giving, and going**
- Intentionally reach the lost around us

Prayer, Fasting, and the Holy Spirit: The Spiritual GPS

We must be **continually filled** with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18), daily surrendering to His direction.

We must saturate everything in **prayer and fasting**—launching sustained rhythms that keep us aligned with God's heart.

Simple Church Groups: The Portable Basecamp

Every believer should be part of, or start, **life groups, house churches, or micro-gatherings** that:

- Multiply easily
- Encourage outreach
- Create accountability for fulfilling the Great Commission

The “New” Old Map

You’ve been given a map—but it’s not just for **admiring**.

It’s for **following**.

So I ask:

- What route will you take?
- What territory will you claim for the Kingdom?
- Will you be a map-maker, trailblazer, and disciple multiplier?

If we do, we **can** change the world.

If we return to the “**every believer a witness**” model, we could see what the early Church saw:

An 11.58% growth rate per year—enough to complete the Great Commission by 2044.

(See my conversation with ChatGPT included in the notes for details.)

Your Next Step

May God grant you grace as you:

- Plot your next step on the map (using the handout I’ve provided)
- Adopt a new route—a person, group, or place
- Join a movement of map-makers

My friend—**may God bless you as you do.**

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SUPPORTING NOTES

The expansion of the Christian church from **Acts 8:1,4** — when persecution scattered the believers — to the **Edicts of Toleration under Constantine** (~AD 313–324) marks one of the most remarkable growth movements in history. It spans about **250 years** of mostly underground, decentralized, yet unstoppable momentum.

Acts 8:1,4 – The Launch Point

“On that day a great persecution broke out... Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went.”

This verse is key. Persecution **decentralized** the church and **activated ordinary believers** as missionaries. It shattered the Jerusalem-centric model and fulfilled Jesus’ promise in Acts 1:8 — “...to the ends of the earth.”

1. Church Expansion (AD 30s – 300s): A Summary

Period	Key Events & Trends
AD 30–70	Apostles and early disciples take the gospel throughout the Roman Empire. Paul’s journeys reach Asia Minor, Greece, and Rome.
AD 70–100	After the destruction of Jerusalem (AD 70), Christianity spreads rapidly among Gentiles. House churches multiply.
2nd Century (100s)	Explosive growth in North Africa, Egypt, Gaul (France), Asia Minor, and beyond. Apologists defend the faith amid sporadic persecution.
3rd Century (200s)	Despite severe Roman persecution, Christian numbers grow. Networks of house churches and bishops begin to emerge.
Early 4th Century (300–313)	Great Persecution under Diocletian fails to stop growth. By 313, Constantine issues the Edict of Milan , legalizing Christianity.

Third Millennium Church Evangelism and Discipleship

SUPPORTING NOTES

2. How Did the Church Expand So Rapidly Without Power or Buildings?

A. Persecution Fueled Expansion

- Christians didn't stop under pressure — they scattered and shared. Tertullian (c. 200 AD): *"The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church."*

B. Ordinary Believers Were Missionaries

- Most evangelism happened through **non-apostles**: traders, soldiers, women, slaves.
- The gospel spread through **relational networks**, not centralized structures.

C. House Churches Were Flexible and Reproducible

- Small, informal, easy to multiply — much like the **early Acts model**.

Leaders emerged locally; gatherings were intimate and resilient.

- Thinkers like **Justin Martyr**, **Irenaeus**, and **Tertullian** responded to attacks and clarified doctrine, giving Christianity intellectual credibility.

E. The Message Was Counter-Cultural and Magnetic

Christianity offered radical equality (Gal. 3:28), community, care for the poor, and hope beyond death. The moral integrity and love of Christians attracted attention.

3. Toward Toleration: Constantine and the Edicts

The Great Persecution (AD 303–311)

- Emperor **Diocletian** launched the harshest persecution yet — churches destroyed, Scriptures burned, leaders jailed.
- It backfired — the church **grew stronger**, not weaker.

The Edict of Milan (AD 313)

- Issued by **Constantine and Licinius**, it granted **freedom of religion** to Christians and returned confiscated property.

Christianity became legal — and soon after, favored.

- He did not make Christianity the state religion (that came later, under Theodosius in 380), but he **ended persecution** and **elevated** the Church.

He funded church buildings, gave bishops civic authority, and called the Council of Nicaea (325).

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Impact of This Era

By AD 300:

- There were likely **6–10 million Christians** in the Roman Empire (roughly 10% of the population).
NOTE: I've heard wildly different views on this. I believe it to be much higher. Dr. Kennedy always said it was 65%! For the sake of discussion, I've included the lowest number that I've heard, and one supported by even non-Christian historians)
- Even so, Christianity had **outgrown Judaism** and become a multi-ethnic, empire-wide movement.
- The Church transitioned from **marginalized minority** to **a major cultural force** — which brought both opportunities and challenges.
- That's **extraordinary** for a persecuted, illegal, grassroots movement.
- It means Christianity **doubled in size roughly every 30–35 years**, without state support, media, or buildings (note discussion on next page)
- The movement's **moral appeal, relational spread, and resilience under pressure** are unmatched.

Scenario: Billy Graham's Mass Evangelism

He fills a stadium with 100,000 people per night. All 100,000 accept Christ (an extremely optimistic assumption). He does this every night for his entire life. **Let's calculate how many people he could reach:**

- 1 year = 365 days → $100,000 \times 365 = 36.5$ million people/year

Let's assume he does this for 50 years (a generous lifetime of consistent nightly events):

$36.5 \text{ million/year} \times 50 \text{ years} = 1.825 \text{ billion people}$

Compare with Global Population Growth

When Billy Graham was born in 1918, the world population was about 1.8 billion. When he died in 2018, it was 7.6 billion.

That means the world added nearly 6 billion people during his lifetime.

Currently, the global population grows by about 80 million people per year (net).

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So even if one person were reaching 36.5 million per year, and everyone accepted Christ, it would not keep pace with population growth.

In fact:

Population grows at ~80 million/year. He “adds” 36.5 million/year. He’s falling behind by ~43.5 million people per year.

Conclusion

Billy Graham’s quote is numerically sound and makes a key point:

Mass evangelism alone (addition) cannot keep up with global population growth. Only multiplication—disciples making disciples—can.

That’s why discipleship and training others to reach others is the core strategy for true long-term spiritual movement.

Early Church and Post-Constantine Reflections

1. Eusebius of Caesarea (*writing after Constantine’s rise*)

“The Emperor himself, as a personal servant of God, leads the whole empire in the way of truth and of righteousness.” — Life of Constantine, Book IV, Ch. 20

Eusebius saw the empire itself as a vehicle for spreading Christianity. But this marks the beginning of the top-down model—growth by decree, not discipleship.

2. Tertullian (*before Constantine, ~AD 197*)

“We are but of yesterday, and we have filled every place among you—cities, islands, fortresses, towns, marketplaces, the very camp, tribes, companies, palace, senate, forum—we have left nothing to you but the temples of your gods.” — Apology, Ch. 37

This reflects the organic, grassroots explosion of early Christianity—before institutionalization.

3. Roland Allen (*20th-century missionary thinker*)

“The moment the Church ceased to be a missionary society, she began to decline.” — Missionary Methods: St. Paul’s or Ours?

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Allen argued that the Pauline model of church planting and local discipleship was abandoned once Christianity became institutional.

4. Michael Green (*Evangelism in the Early Church*)

“The enthusiastic laity were largely responsible for the rapid spread of Christianity. Evangelism was not the preserve of the apostles or of the clergy.”

This quote emphasizes that it was ordinary believers, not clergy or emperors, who fueled the early movement.

5. David Bosch (*Transforming Mission*)

“When Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire, mission changed from a dynamic movement to a staid institution.”

Bosch’s observation highlights the loss of reproducing discipleship in favor of political and cultural expansion.

From Multiplication to Addition

If we put it simply:

Era	Growth Model	Method	Outcome
30–313 AD	Multiplication	Disciples making disciples	Rapid movement under persecution
Post-313 AD	Addition (institutional)	Top-down, mass conversion	Expansion by empire, not reproduction

Chat with ChatGPT:

Q: If the Church started with 11 believers in ad 33, and had 10 million Christians in ad 313, what percentage of growth is that?

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ChatGPT said:

To calculate the total **percentage growth** of the Church from 11 believers in AD 33 to 10,000,000 believers in AD 313, follow this formula:

$$\text{Percentage Growth} = \frac{(\text{Final} - \text{Initial})}{\text{Initial}} \times 100 \quad \text{Percentage Growth} = \frac{(\text{Initial Final} - \text{Initial})}{\text{Initial}} \times 100$$

Where:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Initial} &= 11 & \text{Final} &= 10,000,000 & \text{Percentage} \\ \text{Growth} &= \frac{(10,000,000 - 11)}{11} \times 100 = \frac{(9,999,989)}{11} \times 100 = 909,089 \times 100 = 90,908,090\% \\ \text{Percentage} \\ \text{Growth} &= \frac{(110,000,000 - 11)}{11} \times 100 = \frac{(109,999,989)}{11} \times 100 = 909,089 \times 100 = 90,908,090\% \end{aligned}$$

Answer: The Church grew by approximately **90,908,090%** from AD 33 to AD 313.

To calculate the **average annual growth rate** over 280 years (from AD 33 to AD 313), we use the **Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR)** formula:

$$\text{CAGR} = \left(\frac{\text{Final}}{\text{Initial}} \right)^{\frac{1}{t-1}} - 1 \quad \text{CAGR} = \left(\frac{\text{Initial Final}}{\text{Initial}} \right)^{\frac{1}{t-1}} - 1$$

Where:

- Final = 10,000,000 Initial = 11 t = 313 - 33 = 280 t = 313 - 33 = 280 years

$$\begin{aligned} \text{CAGR} &= \left(\frac{10,000,000}{11} \right)^{\frac{1}{280-1}} - 1 = \left(\frac{909,090.909}{11} \right)^{\frac{1}{280-1}} - 1 \\ \text{CAGR} &= \left(\frac{110,000,000}{11} \right)^{\frac{1}{280-1}} - 1 = \left(\frac{909,090.909}{11} \right)^{\frac{1}{280-1}} - 1 \end{aligned}$$

Using a calculator:

$$\text{CAGR} \approx 1.1158 - 1 = 0.1158 \text{ or } 11.58\% \quad \text{CAGR} \approx 1.1158 - 1 = 0.1158 \text{ or } 11.58\%$$

Final Answer:

The average annual growth rate of the Church from AD 33 to AD 313 was approximately **11.58% per year**.

Q: Assuming there are 1 billion Evangelical Christians today, and you applied an 11.58% growth rate to the church, how large would it be in 2050?

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ChatGPT said:

To project the number of Evangelical Christians in **2050** using an **11.58% annual growth rate**, we use the **future value formula** for compound growth:

$$\text{Future Value} = \text{Present Value} \times (1+r)^t$$

Where:

- Present Value = 1,000,000,000 (1 billion) $r=0.1158$ ($r=0.1158$ (11.58% growth rate))
 $t=2050-2025=25$ $t=2050-2025=25$ years

Step-by-step:

$$\begin{aligned}\text{Future Value} &= 1,000,000,000 \times (1.1158)^{25} \\ \text{Future Value} &= 1,000,000,000 \times (1.1158)^{25} \approx 15.02 \times 1,000,000,000 \\ \text{Future Value} &\approx 1,000,000,000 \times 15.02 = 15,020,000,000\end{aligned}$$

Final Answer:

If the Church grows at **11.58% annually**, the number of Evangelical Christians in **2050** would be approximately **15 billion** — which is more than the projected total global population.

Q: Ok then, let's assume 1 billion Evangelical Christians, and a growth rate of 11.58%, how long until the growth equals the number of people on earth? What year would that be?

ChatGPT said:

Great question — let's calculate **how long it would take** for 1 billion Evangelical Christians growing at **11.58% per year** to equal the **entire global population**.

We'll use the **compound growth formula** again:

$$\text{Future Value} = \text{Present Value} \times (1+r)^t$$

We want to solve for **t** when:

- Future Value = World population (say **8 billion** today for simplicity — but we'll mention other thresholds too)

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Present Value = 1,000,000,000 $r=0.1158$ $r=0.1158$

Step 1: Solve for t

$$8,000,000,000 = 1,000,000,000 \times (1.1158)^t \quad 8,000,000,000 = 1,000,000,000 \times (1.1158)^t$$

Divide both sides:

$$8 = (1.1158)^t \quad 8 = (1.1158)^t$$

Take the natural logarithm of both sides:

$$\ln(8) = t \times \ln(1.1158) \quad \ln(8) = t \times \ln(1.1158) \quad t = \frac{\ln(8)}{\ln(1.1158)} = \frac{2.0794}{0.1097} \approx 18.95 \text{ years} \quad t = \frac{\ln(8)}{\ln(1.1158)} = \frac{2.0794}{0.1097} \approx 18.95 \text{ years}$$

Final Answer:

At **11.58% annual growth**, the number of Evangelical Christians would reach **8 billion people in about 19 years**, or by **the year 2044**.

The Shift from Addition to Multiplication in the Early Church

1. Addition: The Early Growth Pattern

In the earliest chapters of the book of Acts, the church grew by **addition**:

- **Acts 2:41** – “About three thousand were added to their number that day.”
- **Acts 2:47** – “The Lord added to their number daily...”
- **Acts 5:14** – “More and more men and women believed... and were added...”

This was powerful and encouraging growth—but it was still dependent on central events, key leaders (like Peter), and physical proximity. It looked like:

Preaching → Believing → Being added to the community.

This is **linear growth**: more people are added as apostles and evangelists preach.

2. Multiplication: A Missional Breakthrough

Soon after, we begin to see **multiplication** rather than just addition:

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- **Acts 6:7** – “The word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly...” (“increased rapidly” here in Greek implies **multiplication**).
- **Acts 9:31** – “...the church... grew in numbers.” (again, exponential sense)
- **2 Timothy 2:2** – Paul to Timothy: “Entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.” That’s **four generations**: Paul → Timothy → faithful men → others.

Multiplication means:

- Every believer is a disciple-maker. Every disciple becomes a discipler. Leadership and evangelism aren’t centralized—they’re **reproducible**.

This is **exponential growth**—a DNA of replication embedded in each believer.

Key Differences

Addition	Multiplication
Centralized leaders do the work	Every believer is equipped and sent
Growth depends on events	Growth depends on relationships
Discipleship is a program	Discipleship is a lifestyle
Growth is linear	Growth is exponential
Focus on gathering	Focus on going and sending

Why the Shift Matters Today

In modern churches, many ministries still function in “addition mode”: programs attract people, staff do the ministry, and the church grows slowly.

But **missional movements**—like early house churches, underground churches in China, or disciple-making movements—aim for **multiplication**:

Simple, reproducible training with outline for reproduction
Leadership personally models expectations
A high level emphasis is placed on the importance of this training
Spiritual multiplication is a focus strategy
This shift is the key to fulfilling the Great Commission.

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High level history of the growth of Christianity since Christ's ascension:

The period from **AD 313 (Edict of Milan)** to the **Reformation (beginning around 1517)** is a pivotal era in Church history — nearly 1,200 years of dramatic growth, institutionalization, cultural influence, and eventual fragmentation. Here's a high-level summary of the Church's growth and development during that time:

1. The Edict of Milan (313 AD): The Church Legalized

- Emperor **Constantine** issued the Edict of Milan, granting legal status to Christianity in the Roman Empire.
- This ended centuries of persecution and opened the door for **rapid growth and social acceptance**.
- Christianity quickly became **entwined with political power**.

2. Constantine and the Rise of Christendom

- Constantine supported the Church with resources and initiated the construction of major churches (like **St. Peter's Basilica**).
- Christianity became the **official religion** of the Roman Empire under Emperor Theodosius I in **AD 380** (Edict of Thessalonica).

Pagan temples were closed, and the Church began shaping education, law, and culture across Europe.

3. Church Growth through Political and Cultural Integration

- With imperial backing, the Church expanded rapidly throughout the Roman world and beyond. Missionaries spread the faith among **Germanic, Celtic, and Slavic** peoples (e.g., St. Patrick in Ireland, Cyril and Methodius in Slavic lands).
- The Church became **central to medieval society**: overseeing education, health care, and land.

4. Monastic Movements & Evangelism

- Monasteries (like those founded by **Benedict of Nursia** in the 6th century) preserved Scripture, educated clergy, and became centers of **missionary activity**.
- Monks played a key role in **evangelizing Europe**, especially after the fall of the Western Roman Empire in 476.

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5. The Rise of the Papacy and Christendom (500–1300)

- The Bishop of Rome gradually gained primacy, and by the 11th century, the **Pope** claimed authority over all Christians.
- The **Holy Roman Empire** (from 800 AD) fused Church and State, with Popes crowning kings and asserting influence over monarchs.
- The Church wielded vast wealth and power — owning land, collecting tithes, and even leading armies in the **Crusades** (1096–1291).

6. Internal Corruption and Calls for Reform

- By the late Middle Ages, the institutional Church had become **wealthy, hierarchical, and often corrupt** (e.g., indulgences, simony, political intrigue).
- Reformers like **John Wycliffe** (England, 1300s) and **Jan Hus** (Bohemia, early 1400s) called for Scripture-based renewal.

These movements were often suppressed, but they laid the groundwork for broader change.

7. Toward the Reformation (Late 1400s – 1517)

- The invention of the **printing press (1450s)** allowed for broader dissemination of Scripture and reform ideas.
- Growing frustration with Church abuses (e.g., the sale of indulgences) spread across Europe. In **1517**, **Martin Luther** nailed his **95 Theses** to the church door in Wittenberg, launching the **Protestant Reformation** — a spiritual and cultural revolution.

Church Growth Summary (313–1517):

- Christianity spread from a persecuted minority to become the **dominant religion of Europe and parts of the Middle East and North Africa**.
- Estimated Christian population: ~10 million in AD 313~50–100 million by the 1500s (exact numbers vary widely due to lack of records) Growth was not only in numbers but in **geographic spread**, institutional depth, and cultural influence.

Following the Reformation (16th century), the Church saw several significant movements — often Spirit-led and grassroots — that reignited the global missionary vision. These movements often combined deep theology, passion for the unreached, and radical obedience. Here's a breakdown of the most influential ones:

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Significant Missionary Movements After the Reformation

1. Pietist Movement (late 1600s – 1700s)

Key Figure: Philipp Jakob Spener (Germany) Legacy: Renewed heart-based, lived-out Christianity within Lutheranism.

Emphasized personal conversion, Bible study, and holiness. Birthed the University of Halle as a missions training hub. Sent missionaries to India and beyond (e.g., Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg, 1706). Greatly influenced the Moravians (see next).

2. Moravian Movement (1700s)

Key Figure: Count Nicolaus Zinzendorf Origin: Herrnhut, Saxony (Germany)

Formed a 24/7 prayer chain that lasted over 100 years. Sent out the first modern Protestant missionaries (e.g., to the Caribbean, Greenland, Africa). Famous for their radical obedience — some sold themselves into slavery to reach slaves. Influenced John Wesley and the later evangelical revivals. *Motto: “May the Lamb that was slain receive the reward of His suffering.”*

3. Evangelical Revival / Great Awakening (1730s–1800s)

Key Figures: John Wesley, George Whitefield, Jonathan Edwards Context: UK and American colonies

Rekindled passion for holiness, evangelism, and preaching. Created a mobilized lay movement that crossed class and racial boundaries. Sparked new missionary societies (especially in Britain).

4. The Modern Missionary Movement (1790s–1900)

Key Figure: William Carey (England) Book: *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians...* (1792)

Often called the Father of Modern Missions. Helped form the Baptist Missionary Society. Went to India, translated the Bible, and inspired global mission movements.

Key Outcomes:

Explosion of mission agencies: London Missionary Society, Church Missionary Society, etc. Growth of “voluntary societies” independent of state churches. Missions framed as a moral and spiritual duty of all believers.

5. Student Volunteer Movement (SVM) (1886–1920s)

Key Figures: John R. Mott, Robert Wilder *Motto: “The evangelization of the world in this generation.”*

Born out of college revivals and the Mount Hermon 100 (Dwight Moody’s student conference). Mobilized over 20,000 students to commit to overseas missions. Spread across the U.S., Europe, and parts of Asia. Laid the foundation for modern student missions (e.g., InterVarsity, Cru).

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6. Faith Mission Movement (1800s–1900s)

Key Figures: Hudson Taylor (China Inland Mission), George Müller
Belief: Rely solely on God's provision — no fundraising or salaries.

Hudson Taylor took missions inland, not just to port cities. Pioneered contextualization: wore Chinese dress, learned the language deeply. Inspired new models of holistic, incarnational mission.

Pentecostal and Charismatic Missions (1900s–Present)

Roots: Azusa Street Revival (1906) Emphasis: Empowerment by the Holy Spirit for witness (Acts 1:8).

Spread rapidly in Africa, Latin America, and Asia. Prioritized healing, deliverance, and indigenous leadership. Today, Pentecostal/Charismatic churches are leading many of the fastest-growing mission movements globally.

Summary Table

Movement	Century	Focus	Impact
Pietists	1600s–1700s	Heart renewal	Launched modern missions
Moravians	1700s	Prayer + sacrifice	First Protestant global missionaries
Great Awakening	1700s	Evangelism + revival	Mobilized lay people
Modern Missions	1790s+	Global reach	Systematic missionary agencies
Student Movement	1886+	Young adults	20,000+ committed to missions
Faith Missions	1800s+	Total dependence on God	Pioneered deep fieldwork
Pentecostal	1900s+	Spirit-empowered missions	Fastest-growing global movement

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Key Notes on the Expansion of the Gospel From the book *Well Done*:

On the movement of Global Christianity: (Note paper by Todd M. Johnson that further elaborates this topic.) Tremendous change has taken place over the past century as a result of the Gospel traveling around the world:

In 1900, Christians (of all varieties) in the Third-World countries numbered about 87 million (15.6%), while Western countries reported over 470 million (84.4%). By 1980, that figure had radically changed to 631.8 million (out of 1.433 billion Christians) in the Third-World (44.1%). The Western world slipped to 546.6 million (38.2%), while the Communist world grew to 254.1 million (17.7%). By that point, nearly half of the world's Christians now lived in the Third-World. By the year 2000, 983.9 millions Christians (out of 2.01 billion) lived in the Third-World (48.7%) while 592.1 million (29.3%) lived in the Western world. The Communist world grew to 443.8 million (22%). So Christianity is no longer a Western religion. Christianity is no longer a white man's religion. It is a world religion. During the 20th century, Christianity has become the most extensive and universal religion in history. **On the expansion and acceleration of the Gospel worldwide:**

In 1900 there were 943 converts to Christ per day worldwide. That increased to 4,500 by 1950. By 1980 that grew with incredible speed to 20,000. By the end of 1994, that figure had grown to 92,000. It reached about 100,000 per day worldwide during the mid-1990s. And at last estimate, it was up to 150,000 per day by the end of this decade. Dr. Ralph Winter, Chancellor of William Carey International University and past General Director for the U.S. Center for World Mission, published some amazing facts about the growth of Christianity worldwide. He states that in A.D. 100, there was one Christian for every 360 people on earth. By 1900, that number dramatically changed to 21 people for every active believer. In 2010, he lists the number as 7.3 people for every Christian believer.

The Great Global Shift of Christianity (1900–2000)

Year	Third World (Global South)	Western World	Communist World	Global Total
1900	87 million (15.6%)	470 million (84.4%)	–	~557 million
1980	631.8 million (44.1%)	546.6 million (38.2%)	254.1 million (17.7%)	~1.433 billion
2000	983.9 million (48.7%)	592.1 million (29.3%)	443.8 million (22%)	~2.02 billion

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Summary: In just 100 years, Christianity went from being **Western-centered to globally distributed**, with the majority of Christians now living in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

Key Takeaways

1. Christianity Has Gone Global

The gospel has moved **from the West to the rest**, and now increasingly from **everywhere to everywhere**. Missiologists like Andrew Walls, Lamin Sanneh, and Philip Jenkins have highlighted this shift as **historic and unprecedented**.

2. Christianity Is No Longer ‘White or Western’

The typical Christian today is likely a woman in Africa or Latin America — not a European or American male. This destroys colonial myths and opens the door for **majority-world leadership** and theology.

3. The Church Is Growing Fastest Where It Once Had No Roots

Africa: 9 million Christians in 1900 → over 700 million today.

China: underground church growth despite persecution; tens of millions of believers.

Latin America: enormous Pentecostal/charismatic expansion.

4. The Mission Field Has Become the Mission Force

Nations once considered “receivers” of the gospel are now **sending** missionaries themselves (e.g., Nigeria, Brazil, South Korea, Philippines). There’s a move toward **mutual partnership** and **cross-cultural collaboration**, not just North-to-South sending.

Implications for the Church and Mission Today

A. Decentralize Leadership

Western churches must **decrease control and increase collaboration**. Honor and empower indigenous leaders and theologians.

B. Celebrate Global Diversity in Theology & Worship

Theology isn’t one-size-fits-all. African, Asian, and Latin American voices bring essential perspectives. The global church worships in thousands of languages, rhythms, and cultural forms.

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C. Prepare for South-to-North Missions

Immigrant churches are now planting churches in secular Western nations. We must receive missionaries and leaders from the Global South with humility and joy.

A New Era of Global Christianity

“Christianity is the most extensive and universal religion in history — not by force, but by faith.”

The Gospel’s global travel has transformed the Church into a mosaic of nations, languages, and cultures, exactly as Jesus envisioned in Revelation 7:9.

Global Daily Christian Conversions: A Century of Acceleration

Year	Daily Converts to Christ (Worldwide)
1900	~943 per day
1950	~4,500 per day
1980	~20,000 per day
1994	~92,000 per day
Mid-1990s	~100,000 per day
Late 2010s–2020s	~150,000 per day

Key Insights

1. Exponential Growth

In 1900: just under 1,000 people came to Christ daily. Within a century, that number had multiplied more than **150-fold**. **This isn’t just revival — it’s movement.**

2. Driven by Global South Movements

Most of this growth is happening in: **Africa** (especially Sub-Saharan), **Latin America**, **South**, and **East Asia** (especially India, China, Indonesia, and Iran). Much of the growth is powered by **house churches**, **disciple-making movements (DMMs)**, and **charismatic/pentecostal expressions**.

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3. The Mission Field Has Become the Mission Force

The majority of daily conversions are occurring **outside the West**. Missionaries are now being sent from **Nigeria, Brazil, Philippines, and Korea** to Europe and the U.S.

Implications for Church and Strategy

A. Rejoice and Recalibrate

We are not in a time of decline globally — we are in a time of **unprecedented spiritual harvest**. Western churches must resist despair and rediscover their role in a global movement.

B. Partner, Don't Control

The explosive growth is not centrally planned. It's: Spirit-led, Local-leader-driven, Reproducible, and relational Western institutions must **support**, not **steer**, these movements.

C. Urgency with Humility

Jesus said: *"The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few."* (Luke 10:2) Now more than ever, we must **pray, send, go, train, and release**.

A New Missions Era

"Every day, 150,000 people are stepping into the Kingdom of God. That means 150,000 answered prayers. 150,000 new family members. 150,000 reasons to keep going."

Source of the Conversion Data

The key source is *World Christian Encyclopedia: A Comparative Study of Churches and Religions in the Modern World, A.D. 1900–2000*, first published in 1982 by **David B. Barrett** (Oxford University Press) [Reddit+3Wikipedia+3TIME+3Scholarly Publishing Collective+5Wikipedia+5OpenBU Repository+5](#).

This foundational global missions census includes historical data and projections on conversions. Barrett meticulously documented patterns such as:

~943 daily conversions in 1900~4,500/day by 1950~20,000/day by 1980~92,000/day by 1994~100,000/day by the mid-1990s~150,000/day by the end of the 2010s

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How Barrett Gathered His Data

Barret traveled to **212 countries**, gathering local church statistics and historical records, often correlating with earlier global surveys [TIMEWikipedia+1Wikipedia+1](#). The first edition of the Encyclopedia (1982) covered up to AD 2000; subsequent editions have refined his estimates. Though some may debate exact numbers, the growth **trend** he identified is widely affirmed by later works [ICDST+3Wikipedia+3Wikipedia+3](#).

Global Growth of Christianity: Ralph Winter's Ratios

Year	Ratio	Explanation
A.D. 100	1 Christian : 360 people	The early church was small, underground, and persecuted.
A.D. 1900	1 Christian : 21 people	After 1,800 years, significant expansion through global missions and colonial expansion.
A.D. 2010	1 Christian : 7.3 people	Massive growth through movements in the Global South, especially in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

These numbers reflect **active believers**, not just nominal affiliation.

Why This Is So Significant

1. Exponential Reach

The Church grew from a small persecuted minority to a **global community** touching every nation and people group. By 2010, **nearly 1 in 7 people worldwide identified as Christian**, and a growing portion were **active in faith and mission**.

2. Shift to Global South

This ratio improvement reflects not just more Christians, but a **wider global distribution**: Vibrant movements in **Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, China, Iran, and India**. Missionaries are now being sent **from the Global South to the Global North**.

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3. A Reversal of Early Church Challenges

In A.D. 100, Christians were isolated and scattered. By 2010, they were **connected, multiplying, and taking the Gospel back into places it had declined** (e.g., post-Christian Europe and North America).

A Powerful Message for Today

“The ratio of Christians to the global population has improved from 1:360 to 1:7 in 2,000 years — but it may be the next generation that sees Revelation 7:9 fulfilled: every tribe, tongue, people, and nation.”

This data gives **hope, urgency, and vision**:

Hope — the Gospel is winning hearts.

Urgency — we are closer than ever to finishing the task.

Vision — every believer counts in the plan of God.

Sources

Dr. Ralph D. Winter shared these insights in various writings and lectures, most notably:

Publications through the **U.S. Center for World Mission**

The **Perspectives on the World Christian Movement** course materials (edited by Winter & Steven Hawthorne)

Related articles published in **Mission Frontiers** magazine

Missiologists and scholarly projections consistently suggest that over the next 50 years, the **global Church will continue to grow**, with significant growth patterns shifting towards the Global South and evolving church structures.

1. Global Numbers — Over 3 Billion Christians by 2050

- According to the Center for the Study of Global Christianity, the worldwide Christian population is currently around **2.63 billion** (2024) and is projected to **surpass 3 billion by 2050** [Baptist Press+11frontierpartners.org+11Ministry Magazine+11](https://www.baptistpress.org/11frontierpartners.org/11MinistryMagazine/11). Pew Research figures echo this: estimates show Christians increasing to **about 3 billion (31–32% of the global population)** by 2050 .

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2. Regional Shifts — Africa & Asia Lead the Way

Africa: Projected to host more Christians by 2050 than **Asia and Latin America combined** frontierpartners.org. **Sub-Saharan Africa:** Christian population could double from ~517 million to ~1.1 billion by mid-century [Wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sub-Saharan_Africa). Asia and Latin America also show strong growth trends, fueled by both birth rates and sustained evangelism [Global Christian Relief](http://www.globalchristianrelief.org).

3. The “Majority-World Church”

- A majority of global Christians now live outside the West: **over 70%** of believers are in Africa, Asia, and Latin America [Lausanne Movement](http://www.lausanne-movement.org). Missiology emphasizes that the **cultural, organizational, and spiritual dynamics** in these regions differ from Western approaches—more indigenous leadership, widespread charismatic vitality, and rapid replication .

4. Denominational & Structural Forecasts

- Some experts warn of a “religious singularity”: **more denominations and church plants** being created than the total number of believers, risking structural overload .
- Predictions specific to the U.S. suggest further **consolidation of denominations**, increased church closures, and more **nontraditional, co-vocational pastor models** .

5. Factors Driving Growth

- **High fertility rates:** Christian-majority countries average ~2.7 children per woman—above replacement level—compared to global averages [Wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fertility_rate). **Conversions and Pentecostalism:** Pentecostal and evangelical churches, particularly in Africa and Latin America, are among the fastest-growing subgroups—some studies estimate **tens of thousands of new converts daily** .

6. Challenges Ahead

Issue	Description
Western Decline	Secularization in Europe/North America is reducing overall Christian clout .
Church Health	Rapid numerical growth in the Global South can sometimes outpace leadership development and deep discipleship .

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Institutional Fragmentation

The ballooning number of denominations may undermine cohesion and mission clarity .

Summary

Over the next 50 years, the global Church is projected to **exceed 3 billion** believers, with growth **centered in Africa, Asia, and Latin America**. While numerical expansion remains strong, especially through births and Pentecostal renewals, mission scholars underscore the need for durable **leadership, discipleship depth, and structural resilience**, particularly as Western churches decline and institutional forms diversify.

History of EE

Why does EE exist? Back in 1960, to about fifteen of his faithful members who were gathered in a Ft. Lauderdale school room for a Sunday evening service, Dr. Kennedy read from the Old Testament God's promise to the prophet, "Call unto me and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not" (Jeremiah 33:3)." Then he closed the Bible and looked out over the small congregation and said full of faith and enthusiasm, "You know what? —I believe we can change the world!"

Not long ago an unbelieving, rather sarcastic secular reporter said to Dr. Kennedy, "it sounds to me like you aim to Christianize America!" Dr. Kennedy replied with a smile, "No sir, I'm not aiming to Christianize America. I'm aiming to *Christianize the world*."

Our vision statement bears out our desire to be part of changing the world. It reads:

"Every nation equipping every people group and every age group to witness to every person."

Our goal is to see every person on earth have the opportunity to hear the Good News of Jesus. We also believe that the Church is the vehicle that God will use to see this happen.

So then, our vision is to be part of changing the world by being a **catalyst** to Christ's Church, causing it to be a witnessing, multiplying Church.

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How do we propose to accomplish such change? Back in 1984 Dr. Kennedy wrote this:

“The place to begin to change the world is both the easiest and the hardest task before us. It’s easy, because it requires only that we be willing to share a simple but profound message with the men and women of our generation. Yet, it is difficult, because the response it requires is so all encompassing that nothing short of a miracle of God can bring it about.

“**The place to begin changing the world is on the inside**, within the hearts and minds of men and women. For unless we are able to do something about the motivations, desires, perspectives, and goals of the people who make up the communities of our world, any other changes we might be able to introduce will be merely cosmetic and temporary at best. Permanent change begins on the inside. Unless we are first of all and continuously concentrating our efforts on changing men and women from the inside out, we will be certain to fail in our long-range desires of changing the world. No amount of political activism or educational reform and no legislative or judicial enactment will yield any abiding fruit without this first most important matter being addresses by all concerned.

“How do we propose to accomplish such a change?

“Nearly two thousand years ago, Jesus Christ stood on a hill in Galilee and presented His disciples with His plan for bringing permanent, positive change into the world. As He surveyed the ages and considered the problems and needs of men and women from all nations, tribes, and generations, He concluded that there was one primary solution, which all would require: “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” (Matt. 28:19-20).

This first and continuous step, this easiest and hardest of task, this undertaking guaranteed to begin the process of changing our world from the inside out, is the sharing with our neighbors and friends of the wonderful story of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Without this most important effort on the part of each and every one of us, we will most certainly not be able to change the world in our time.”[i]

Dr. Kennedy also stated clearly that without a mighty initiative and an ongoing commitment to **spiritual multiplication**, we would never succeed in the critical assignment of bringing lasting change into our world.

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What do we hope the world looks like when we're done? We believe that what we are told in Rev. 7:9-10 will one day come to pass:

“After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of **all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues**, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, saying, “Salvation *belongs* to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!”[ii]

This is a wonderful promise! The amazing news is that **we can be part** of seeing this come to pass!

Where do we fit in? I believe that God gives an organization its purpose. I also believe that this calling does not change. God gives us a specific purpose and a specific calling. We can decide to change our calling but only at our own peril.

For Evangelism Explosion International to be all that we were called to be (and for us individually as part of this ministry), we must look at and hold fast to our original calling. What was Dr. Kennedy (and what have we been) called to do through this work worldwide? And why was Dr. Kennedy the one God used to introduce this work to the world?

It is clear from the book *Evangelism Explosion* what our calling is. Several Biblical Principles guided Dr. Kennedy's actions over the past 40 plus years:

- Every Christian is to be a witness
- We all need to be equipped to witness
- On-the-job training is vital
- Training soul winners is most important

These principles have guided this ministry since 1962 and will continue to guide us into the future.

Have you ever thought about why God used Dr. Kennedy to bring this ministry into world? I believe that the biggest reason is his heart. And I believe we can learn a lot by examining his guiding principles over the past 40 plus years.

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Dr. Kennedy's Guiding Principles

1. Spiritual Commitment

We must live our lives by God's standards with excellence. Early on Dr. Kennedy urged me to not cut corners with the truth, even on the smallest of items. We must be a group committed to integrity. And we must be committed to:

- Prayer—EE is a ministry with a solid biblical basis, total dependence upon the Holy Spirit, stressing the importance of the witness' consistent life-style while enlisting the faithful intercession of dedicated prayer partners. Prayer must be at the very heart of our movement.
- The Holy Spirit—The essence of the evangelical faith is: "Salvation is of the Lord" (Jonah 2:9). Our work must be supernatural. We can only hope to succeed if we live by the power of the Holy Spirit and not by salesmanship, persuasion, rhetoric, argumentation, or any other human endeavor.

2. Love for Jesus' Church

The Church is the bride of Christ. We believe that the Church is the vehicle God will use to accomplish His purposes on earth. Our job is to be a catalyst to His Church in the area of witnessing.

Because of this core belief, we have a very high view of the Church. Our actions flow out of that view in that we believe:

- Pastors and Church Leaders are the authority ultimately led by Christ through His Word. It is because of this that we train them in Leadership Training Clinics, and then send them back to their local churches to model personal evangelism and equip members of their congregations to witness and train others to witness.
- Interdenominational—EE is not a para-church (per se) ministry but is local-church based and led, ministering to and through over 400 denominations, which subscribe to EE's Statement of Faith.

3. Love for Jesus (and His Commands)

From Christ's first and last commands, from His model of a faithful witness and the example of the early church, it is obvious that every believer is to witness both by his life and his lips.

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Jesus said, “Follow me and I will make you to become fishers of men.” He also said, “You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” These statements are either true or false.

We must believe that His promise about us is true. No amount of conflict, persecution, trial, or challenge can keep us from it. We know that no servant is greater than his master. If we suffer with Him, we will reign with Him! If we love Christ, we will keep His commands.

4. Love for the Lost

Regardless of your theology this truth remains: lost people lose. And we know from Scripture that Jesus loves the lost! We must also have a genuine love for the lost. Because of our love for the lost, we must be:

- Relational—Whether in a first-time presentation of the Gospel or in a person’s every-day network of relationships, friendship is emphasized as a crucial element in personal evangelism and discipleship.
- Passionate—When we truly care for the lost like Christ, our passion for their souls will consume us and drive our every action. People will be able to see our passion.

5. Commitment to Modeling

One day you’ll be able, God willing, to walk into a vision center that we build here on a campus here in the United States. The first thing you’ll notice is a glass case. In the glass case you’ll see a book kept by Anne Kennedy listing all the people she has won to Christ in her time with Evangelism Explosion.

The reason this will be the first thing you see is because it focuses on a key aspect of the ministry—personal involvement. One of the strongest testimonies I can give is that Dr. and Mrs. Kennedy have been actively involved in this ministry from the very beginning. This is not just a “good idea”. This is at the very heart of their ministry for Christ.

We believe that:

- Evangelism is better caught than taught—Classroom teaching followed by on-the-job training dispels the witness’ crippling fear and demonstrates how EE really works. As has been aptly said, “Evangelism is better caught than taught!”

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- Quality—Starting small and building strong. Trainees learn the Gospel presentation step-by-step and bit-by-bit over an extended period of time—normally 13 to 16 weeks—and continue to grow in their understanding of the Gospel and their ability to witness.

We must keep in mind that the commitment that people have for evangelism will most likely not be greater than ours.

6. Open Handed Nature (Giver)

One of Dr. Kennedy's strongest qualities is that he is a giver. Dr. Kennedy loves to give. December 31st, Dr. Kennedy loves to come around to each of the ministries that he has started and gives a gift. And he gives all that he can give.

What does this have to do with EE? All over the world, there are people doing the ministry of EE and they are all benefactors of this quality that Dr. Kennedy possesses. This quality allows for what we call "indigenous ministry". What it means is that the ministry is owned by the individual nations that do it. And, because they own it, they care about it and keep it up. They make it personal. That could only happen because Dr. Kennedy was willing to give. It's important to note that this goes against human nature. But it is very important to see if we intend to continue this ministry and see it grow.

We need to be:

- Open handed—I remember the day that Susan Ivey came before the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors to talk about an idea she had for our ministry. She wanted to adapt EE for use with the elderly in Nursing Homes and assisted living environments. She told Dr. Kennedy that she could not do a 35-45 minute Gospel presentation without many of them falling asleep. She intended to shorten the presentation to make it work better. Dr. Kennedy got up, put his arm around her and prayed for her for God's help in making these adaptations so that seniors would have the opportunity to hear the Gospel.
- Assisters not enlists—Although the words may sound the same, they don't feel the same to a pastor. Many pastors feel like we say to them, "It's our way or the highway!" It's a bit like recruiting someone into the army. When you join, you give up your right to do things your own way. You eat when they say, you sleep when they say, and you march when they say. Some view (whether rightly or wrongly) EE in this way. We must make an effort to change

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the way we view and act toward pastors so that they truly feel us come along side of them and assist them to do what Christ has commanded them to do. After all, it's their church and they are the one given the responsibility of equipping their flock for Christ. Our job is to assist them in doing their work.

7. Biblical Strategy

Recently, I had the opportunity to spend a day with Dr. Kennedy in London. Dr. Kennedy once and again recounted the many ways in which EE is founded on Biblical principles. I was so encouraged as I was reminded just how Biblical this ministry is.

And because it's Biblical, it's cross-cultural and cross-generational. The basic outline, complete with scriptures and illustrations, provides the witness with a tool for presenting the Gospel to non-Christians and for training fellow believers to do the same. While adhering to these non-negotiable, controlling principles, EE adapts to the culture of every nation, territory and people group with the ultimate goal of each ministry becoming self-supporting, self-managed and self-propagating.

8. Spiritual Multiplication is Most Important

Trainers equip trainees who in turn and in time become trainers of others to win people to Christ, reproducing themselves many times, while maintaining a top quality ministry through a teacher and trainer certification process.

This is the truth found in the Great Commission. Here we are told to, "Go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age." We're supposed to go and make disciples and part of the job is to teach them to do all that we were told to do. All includes "go." With this simple but profound truth, the world can be reached for Jesus.

If every one of the roughly one billion Evangelical Christians learned to share their faith and could teach others to do the same, everyone on earth could hear the Good News. And that is our ultimate vision.

[i] D. James Kennedy, T.M. Moore, Chain Reaction! (Waco: Word Books Publisher, 1985), 42-43.

[ii] Taken from the New King James translation of the Holy Scriptures, highlight added.

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The answer to fulfilling the Great Commission of Jesus Christ — “*Go and make disciples of all nations...*” (Matthew 28:19–20) — is **obedient, multiplying discipleship**.

Core Answer:

Make disciples who make disciples, across cultures, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Here’s how that unfolds:

1. Obedient Discipleship

Jesus didn’t just say “make converts” or “start churches.” He said:

“...teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.” (*Matthew 28:20*)

Fulfilling the Great Commission means:

- Leading people to **follow Jesus personally**
- Teaching them to **obey His commands**
- Helping them grow into **mature disciples** who can disciple others

2. Multiplication, Not Just Addition

The model Jesus gave (and Paul followed in 2 Timothy 2:2) was **reproducible multiplication**:

“What you have heard from me... entrust to faithful people who will be able to teach others also.”

This is a **4-generation plan**:

- Paul → Timothy → Faithful men → Others

Multiplying movements (like in Acts) are more effective and sustainable than just “gathering more people.”

3. All Nations — Cross-Cultural Mission

The Greek word for “nations” is *ethne*, meaning **ethnic groups or people groups**, not just political countries. That implies:

- Reaching **unreached people groups**
- Adapting to different **languages, worldviews, and cultures**
- Partnering globally with the **majority-world Church**

There are still thousands of people groups with **no access** to the gospel — fulfilling the Great Commission includes reaching them.

4. Empowered by the Holy Spirit

Jesus followed the Commission with a promise:

“I am with you always...” and in Acts 1:8, *“You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you...”*

No strategy or plan can fulfill the Great Commission **apart from the Spirit of God**. He leads, convicts, empowers, and multiplies.

5. Holistic Faithfulness

Fulfilling the Great Commission also includes:

- **Prayer** (Matthew 9:37–38)
- **Sending** (Romans 10:15)
- **Going** (Acts 13)
- **Suffering well** (Matthew 24:9)
- **Finishing well** (Matthew 24:14 – “...then the end will come.”)

Summary Formula:

Obedient Disciple × **Spirit Empowerment** × **Multipling Movement** × **Global Focus** = Great Commission Fulfilled.