

The Local Church in the World Conquest

By: George Miley

Announcer:

Five years with OM in India and 15 years as director of the Ship Ministries. In addition to that, he's also spent a number of years with his wife in numerous countries around the world. Right now, George is based in San Diego, where he's helping work with local churches, and his burden is mobilizing the local church. And his work includes education, as he shared with us yesterday motivation and just mobilizing the local church for missions. So please welcome him as he comes back to share with us again today.

Miley:

[inaudible sentence] how many of you were not in the meeting yesterday? Raise your hand. Okay, thanks for that. Because what we want to do is to build on what we did yesterday. And so in order to do that, I think we'll just have to give a two minute synopsis of what we said yesterday. What we said yesterday was that missions can be thought of as a great mountain, and it's a mountain that God wants to move. And we can picture the missionary force as at the bottom of this mountain with a teaspoon. And here's the missionary working away at the mountain, trying to move the mountain with a teaspoon. And if we come and say to this missionary, brother, the mountain is big and the teaspoon is small, do you really think that you're going to get this mountain moved in your lifetime? And the missionary's response so often is, well, I don't think we'll ever get it moved, but I just want to be faithful to the Lord. So here he is faithfully

trying to move the mountain with a teaspoon. And of course, the obvious response to that can be, hey, if we really want to move the mountain, I mean, if that's really what we want to do, then we need, in addition to the teaspoons, to bring in the heavy earth moving equipment, because that's the only way we're actually going to get the mountain moved.

Is world evangelization a doable task? Or is the whole area of missions just an endless round of circular activity which is filled with good things, but in the end isn't going anywhere? Or isn't going anywhere that we can perceive? What are we actually doing? Where are we actually going? Do we know where we're going? Is it possible to know where we're going? Is there any way that we can analyze what it is that we should be doing in order to conserve energy and resources? And we went on from there to say that in my own perception, unless we see a movement of mission renewal springing from local congregations aimed in the right direction, we're not going to finish the task. And you and I, if the Lord doesn't come earlier, are going to pass into eternity and there are going to be untold millions that today are untold, who will continue to be untold. In fact, roughly one half of the world's population is cut off from any meaningful presentation of the Gospel. And my suggestion is the thesis that I present to you is we need to know where we're going. And not only do the missionaries need to know where they're going, that's a big enough challenge, but it's not enough just for the missionaries to know where they're going.

I don't know how many of you in here are preparing for the ministry and how many of you see yourselves in secular life, but let me say this to you particularly who see yourself in secular life. Please do not leave the missionary mandate to the missionaries. What do you think of that? Does

Miley: The Local Church in the World Conquest

that prepare you for lunch or not? Let me say it again. Please do not leave the missionary responsibility to us missionaries. Please do not leave it to us. If it's going to be completed, it's going to take the whole body. Now, yesterday we talked about three elements of mission renewal in a local church. What was one of the elements? This it just a pop quiz. What was one of the elements that we talked about yesterday as an element of mission renewal in the local church? Anybody here that was here yesterday who remembers one element? All right, missions education. And we said, we don't have to make everybody a PhD in missiology, but there's got to be a basic understanding, a fundamental understanding in the body. Not just the missionary, but the pastors, the elders, the people on the mission committee, the Sunday school teachers, the businessman.

We need the businessman. A basic understanding, a fundamental understanding of the missionary cause. What's another element of mission renewal in the local church? What's that? All right. A movement of prayer. A movement of prayer where people are serious about prayer. So much that could be said about that. What's the third element?

Audience member:

Models.

Miley:

Okay, models. Specific models of local churches owning the mission's task. And by the way, some people were talking to me after the meeting yesterday. On April 9, Harry Larson is going to be here speaking in seminary chapel. He is the missions pastor of the church that I was telling you about yesterday down in Escondido. And he's going to come and specifically talk about the process that is taking place in Immanuel Faith Community Church, a church of over 4000 people involving those three elements mission, education, prayer, and specific models. Now, what I would like to do with you today, I would like for us to talk about the task remaining, and I would like to have us do just a little bit of missions education. And what I'm going to do with you this morning, even if it doesn't teach you anything, is something that you can do in the church. And, by the way, is something that is desperately needed in the church. And I find once we do it is profoundly motivating. We talked yesterday about the difference between challenge and education. We need challenge. So much of what goes on in the church under the name of challenge is gone a month later. We need another challenge. And there is nothing more long term challenging and motivating than information and facts. So let's have a little bit of look this morning at some facts under the category The Task Remaining. The task remaining. If we are going to think if we're going to think about completing will that light go off? If we're going to think about completing the task of world missions a lot of people would say that's the most naive thought that they could even think. Can you on the side see this? If you can't look, really feel free to just get up and move, sit in the aisles. This is great. Some people would say to even think about completing the missionary task is the height of being naive. Well, let's talk about it a little bit. The task remaining. What is the task remaining? How can we understand the task remaining? Because if we can actually understand the task that's remaining to complete the world missionary

cause then we've got something to shoot at. If we don't have anything to shoot at, none of us know where we're going. If the final target is clear then we know what we're aiming at.

Well, to begin to think about this, let's think about a few definitions. Nothing like definitions to clarify our thinking. You know, it has been said writing makes an exact person. So let's try to really define what we're talking about. What do we mean by the word people? We're starting off with the hard ones. What do we mean by people? Well, we mean a group of individuals. The people of La Mirada. The people of the United States. People. A group of individuals. What do we mean when we say a people? Well, by that we mean a nation or a people group. A people. What do we mean when we use the word country? When we use the word country we mean a relatively recent political concept. About 220 countries in the world today. Now, when did most of the countries that are in the world today come into being? After World War II when we use the word country, we almost always mean nation. United nations. United Countries. But the concept of country is a new, relatively new concept. Let me give you the name of a country that was in existence before World War II.

Germany. Is Germany an old country or a new country? What is it?

Both.

It's both. Both old and new. When did Germany for the first time come into being as a country for the first time? Where are the history majors? Yes. Great. 1871. Isn't that great? Give him a hand. That's fantastic. Under the diplomatic brilliance of Otto Von Bismarck the German nation

was finally united into a political entity 1871. Nazism? Nazism is actually not old among the Germans that when did Nazism come into being? What's that? Alright 1933. What is old about the Germans? Their language. Yes. What else? Their culture. Yes, that's right. The Germans are an old people. They are an old people. The German nation. Das Deutsche Volk is what's old. Germany as a country is what is new. Now, what is the significance of this in missions? When we strategize in missions, what concept do we almost always use? Country. We use country. We think country. We have the flags of the countries. A missionary to this country, a missionary to that country. But in doing that, we are immediately throwing ourselves off target because a country is a superficial concept. The concept of country is a superficial, changeable concept. The unchangeable fundamental concept is the concept of people, a people. Now, which of these two concepts does the Bible talk about? People. Does the Bible talk about countries?

Does it give me a verse where the Bible is talking about countries. Does the Bible talk about countries?

[inaudible response from audience]

Miley:

Okay, good. Okay. It depends on how it's translated. Even most of our translations don't use country very often that I know of. How many countries were there in the biblical times? See, we get really confused about this. We say Paul preached the Gospel in Turkey. Did Paul preach the gospel in Turkey. Where did Paul preach the gospel? Asia Minor. Were the people living in Asia

Minor the same people as the people who are living in Turkey today? It's a different people. This is how we get confused on these things. We are oriented to think geography, and as we think geography, we will certainly be thrown off in our missiological thinking because geography or political boundaries are superficial, changeable, unreal boundaries. Now, we're going to talk a little bit more about this later. And if there were more time this is exciting stuff, isn't it? Isn't this exciting stuff we're talking about here? Look, let me ask you this. If a missionary you hear a missionary and I want to cut this off, but I can't, so I can because I don't want you looking at that too much.

Got to get you to look at me a minute. Look, missions. If you hear a missionary, he's going to come and speak on missions. What verse? Tell me what Bible verse he's going to speak on. Acts one eight. That's right. What other one? Matthew 2.8:18-20 What other? All right, genesis twelve. What other? What's that. Genesis nine. Matthew nine. Okay, Matthew nine. What else? All right, revelation three. Good. What else? Now, let me ask you this. The perception of God's people in the perception of God's people, where is missions in the Bible? Is it central or is it peripheral? Central. Is that the perception of God's people? You know, let's agree for the next 30 minutes, we tell it like it really is. Okay? Let's tell it like it really is. Not the way it ought to be. Do God's people perceive that missions is central or peripheral in the Scripture? What do you think?

Peripheral.

Peripheral. The Bible is thick, isn't it? I mean, it's a big thick Bible. Now, how many verses, what percentage of the verses in the Bible talk about missions in the perception of God's people? Very few. Very few. Now, these are not things that we verbalize, but in the perception of God's people, missions is peripheral in the Bible, where is missions going to be in the focus of God's people? It's going to be peripheral. And look, let's face it, if you are interested in missions, are you mainstream? Is it the mainstream people who are all excited about missions? I mean, if you're interested in missions, you are one of the peripheral types. You're one of the cookie-cutter ones that are kind of over here in the corner doing your own little thing. I mean, there's only one thing that is less popular than missions. What is it? In the church. The budget. Okay. Okay. What is the only thing that is less popular than a missions meeting in the church? Tell me. The prayer meeting. The prayer meeting. You can get more people to missions than to prayer, but the prayer is absolutely at the bottom.

Okay. Now, if we go through the Bible and we begin to highlight every time we come across the concept of peoples, you know what we discover? We discover that missions is central in the scripture and that throughout the entirety of the scripture, God is working to thrust his people into redemptive contact with other peoples. Now boy, that right there, you know, we could go for hours on that and we can't do it. But why are we saying that? Well, we are saying that people, the concept of people is a biblical concept, not country. And if we are going to deal with the task remaining, we are going to have to deal with the concept of peoples. Now, what do we mean by the word nation? Well, in popular usage we mean a country. That's how it's used. A nation. The United Nations. In the biblical usage, we mean a people group. Matthew 28:19 go and make disciples of all nations. What is the concept there? It's not the concept of country. It's the concept

of people group or cultural group. That's actually what the Bible is talking about. Now let's try to define people group.

What do we mean by people group? Shall we have a go at that? Let's have a go at that. What are we actually talking about? A people group. Here's a people group. A people group can be defined as a significantly large sociological grouping of individuals already you switched off who perceived themselves to have common affinity for one another because of their shared language, religion, ethnicity, residence, occupation, class or cast situation, etc. Or combinations of these. Now, if that definition seems just really hey, too scientific, a key concept in that definition is a group of people who perceive themselves to have a common affinity. In other words, it's a group of people. The basic concept here is the concept of us. This is us, we are this group. We have a shared identity. And that group over there is them, us and them. Now, if that definition seems a little bit too scientific, let's try to come at it again from the point of view of evangelization, a definition of a people group. From the viewpoint of evangelization, it is the largest group within which the gospel can spread as a church planning movement without encountering barriers of acceptance and understanding.

Now, let's see if we can have a go just a little bit at this whole concept of culture, because what we're dealing with here is a cultural concept. I remember when I was a little boy trying to eat scrambled eggs with my fork and I was chasing the scrambled eggs all over my plate. And at one point, when I thought my mother wasn't looking, I did what to me was the most logical thing I could ever do, and that is take my finger and push the scrambled eggs onto the fork. At which time my mother immediately saw me and she said, George, don't touch your food with your

fingers because your fingers are dirty. Your fingers are dirty. 20 years later, I found myself in a beautiful, plush, green tropical rainforest in southern India as the guest of a beautiful Indian Christian family. And the first meal I had with this family, they brought out the banana leaves and then a big pile of rice on each banana leaf and then the fish carry all over the rice. And then everybody began to eat with their hands, because in India, your hands are clean and your fork is dirty.

Isn't that funny that somebody would think a fork is dirty? Isn't that funny? I mean, when we go to lunch and we take that fork, we put it in our mouths, have we ever thought that that fork has been in hundreds and hundreds of other mouths, but we know it's clean because it's been washed in the wash up room. And we know what happens in the Biola University wash up room. I mean, we know that every fork gets washed. And even though that fork has been in hundreds of other people's mouths, we know that when we put it in our mouth, it's clean. Not an Indian. You see, for an Indian, this right hand has been with me wherever I've been since the day I was born. I know exactly whose mouth this hand has been in. And if I want to get it clean, I can get it clean. So to an Indian, the hand is clean, the fork is dirty. To an American, the hand is dirty even if I just washed it and the fork is clean. What are we talking about here? We're talking about culture. We're talking about culture. And culture forms us in the most fundamental ways of which we are unaware.

Why are you all sitting on those platforms because the floor is dirty. That's right. Also because the floor is uncomfortable. Now, everywhere do they sit on platforms? Hannah and I were married in India. Several hundred people came to our wedding. Do you know where they sat? On

the floor. They sat on the floor. They would have given us a chair if we wanted it because they knew we were Westerners. And Westerners sit on chairs. But for them, the most comfortable place to sit, the easiest place to sit, the cleanest place to sit because they put out grass mats, is the floor. Everybody sits on the floor. Men on one side, women on the other. That seems very normal to a person who has grown up in India. Now, in the area, let's take two of the words and then we will go on. From this notice, we have said that a people group a people is the largest group within which the gospel can spread as a church planning movement without encountering barriers of acceptance and understanding. Now, what is a barrier of understanding? What would you think of when you think of a barrier of understanding between peoples?

Okay, good. Talking about sheep to an eskimo. You're talking about a concept that's not in his culture. What would be another really fundamental area of barrier of understanding? Language. Language. Now, not every people group speaks a different language, but language. Now, what would be a barrier of acceptance? All right, eating with your hands in the wrong place. Now, does Jesus does he want us to eat with our hands or fork? What would he prefer? This is a neutral thing, isn't it? This is an element of culture that is neutral. Doesn't matter. But if I am invited to a home in Southern California for the purpose of sharing the gospel, and I go into this home and I say, Jesus doesn't care whether I eat with a fork or my hands, so I'll just eat with my hands, what have I immediately done? Erected a barrier of understanding. Well, we'll deliver you from any more of that. But what we're talking about here is the concept of a people group. Now, how do we reach the world? We're talking about completing the task of world evangelization. How can we complete the task? How shall we think about the world?

Not one country at a time. That's not the way to think. That will throw us off every time. We're going to reach America for Christ, we're going to reach Guatemala for Christ. This concept is going to be unhelpful. In fact, it's going to be detrimental to think that way. Not one person at a time. Have you ever heard the world population is exploding? And now we've just passed 5 billion people, and by the year 2000 it'll be 6 billion. What does that do to you when you think about world evangelization? It's impossible. You think this is just 1 billion, 2 billion, 5 billion 6 billion think, boy, might as well just forget it and try to make enough money to buy a million dollar house because we're never going to be able to finish this job. But that's not the way we think. You see, our culture has influenced that way. We Westerners, we are individualists, and we interpret everything individually. That is, by the way, one of the reasons why our culture is just in the grip of loneliness and despair. We are a bunch of islands. We do not experience true friendship because we're also individualistically oriented in our outlook. That's another seminar.

Not one country at a time, not one person at a time, but one people at a time. This is the biblical target. One people at a time. This is what God said to Abraham. Abraham, I am going to bless you and through you all what peoples or nations or families. Different translations there, but the same concept. All peoples on Earth are going to be blessed. Where did those peoples come from, by the way? Genesis twelve three. All peoples are going to be blessed. Where did they come from? Tower of Babel. That's another whole thing to get into. One people at a time. What do we mean by people blindness? We mean the blindness to the existence of separate peoples within countries. Now, let me give you an example of that. Here is a map showing some of the political countries in the Middle East and also showing where the Kurdish people live. Now, the Kurdish people are a people group. Have you ever read about the Kurds in the Bible? Shall I tell you who

the Kurds are in the Bible? Almost certainly. Almost certainly. The Kurdish people are the same as the Medes.

Remember the meads? Darius the Mede. He was a Kurd. And those dots show where the Kurdish people live. The Kurdish people call it Kurdistan. Why isn't it on our maps? Because it's in different countries. Who who drew the borders of those countries? Whoever it was there weren't any Kurds on the council. Nobody asked the Kurds. There are thousands of people groups like this. The Kurds are between twelve and 18 million people. Nobody knows how many Kurds there are because it's almost impossible to get in there and take a census. Is twelve to 18 million people a big group? Would you say that Norway is an authentic country? How many people in Norway? How many people in the country of Norway? About 4 million. Would you say that Sweden is an authentic country? How many people in the country of Sweden? About 8 million. The point is that the Kurds, as a people are larger than many, many, many countries in the world who sit in the United Nations. Do you see why we say the concept of country is an artificial concept? That's not helpful. The target is not country. The target is peoples. Now, here is a Muslim people group.

Twelve to 18 million individuals among whom there is not one known national ethnic church. Not one. But they're hidden. They've been called hidden peoples because we don't see them, because we're so into the concept of countries. Now, here is a chart of two people groups. Now, let's think. We're thinking now in terms of the question, how can we finish the task? World evangelization, how can we finish the task? Now, this is a representation of two people groups on the left. What kind of people group would you think that is? Now, let me give you the

options. We have reached people groups and we have unreached people groups. So what would you say about the people group on the left? Is it reached or unreached? Now, why do you say reached? What is the activity in that people group? That is being demonstrated by the diagram? All right. There are churches indigenous to the people group. There are churches there. How many? We don't know how many, but there's a lot of them. What are those churches doing? They are reaching out to their own people group. They are not encountering barriers of acceptance and understanding because they are of that culture.

So they understand whether you eat with a fork or whether you eat with your hands, whether you sit on platforms or whether you sit on the fork. They understand all that. They're part of that culture. They're reaching their own people. Have you ever heard emissions? The statement, Leave it to the nationals? Ever hear that? Is that a good statement, leave it to the nationals? How many think that's a good statement? Leave it to the nationals? Raise your hand. No wrong answers. We're not going to how many think it's not a good statement. Raise your hand. How many don't really know? Raise your hand. Okay, good. In one of these people groups, that statement, Leave it to the nationals is the correct statement for which group? Is it the correct statement for the reached group. Hey, do we need to send more missionaries into the group on the left? Now, I'm not saying no foreigners will ever go there. Maybe those churches will invite some foreigners to help them. Maybe so, but we don't need to be targeting that group. Were there once missionaries in that group? Yes. Are we still hearing about that group as a target for missions?

Maybe. Maybe we are. Maybe we're still hearing, hey, this group, we must send more workers there, like we said yesterday. But do we need to send more leave it to the nationals. But what about the statement leave it to the nationals for this group on the right? It's wrong. Why? There are no nationals there. There are no nationals there. So who are the best people to reach this group? Who are the best people to reach this group? Okay, the people in the group, they are the best. But there aren't any churches there, so we've got to send missionaries in to evangelize that group. Now, how many unreached groups are there? If we could know how many unreached groups there were, and if we could identify those unreached groups, we would immediately be able to define the task remaining. Now, Missiologists tell us that this is a list roughly of the people groups who are beyond the reach of the Gospel. And I wish we had a world map up here to try to identify where these peoples live. 1000 approximately of these groups are among Buddhists. Where do Buddhist people live? Asia, basically from Sri Lanka, the island country off the coast of India, right on up through East Asia.

Buddhist people. 2000 among Chinese. Where do Chinese live? In China. Some other places as well, but mostly China. 3000 among Hindus. Where do Hindus live? Almost all Hindus live in India. There are, of course, some that live in Nepal, some that live in Bhutan, some that live in Indonesia, some that live in England. But the vast majority of all Hindus live right there on the Indian subcontinent. 4000 among Muslim peoples. Where do the Muslims live? Los Angeles. Right. The home areas of the Muslims are from Morocco right on out to Indonesia. That whole belt and then 5000 tribals that are scattered and 2000 other scattered groups. Now, roughly 17000 of these groups, unreached groups, these are the target. If we can put an indigenous church in each one of these 17000 groups that can carry out the job of reaching its own group,

the task of taking the Gospel to all peoples will be completed. What did you want to say?
[inaudible statement from audience member] That's right. These designations Buddhists, Chinese, Hindus, etc. are large blocks among whom these smaller groups are being said to be there. Now, let me ask you this. 17000 groups, you say, hey, George, you're supposed to be talking about the local church, by the way before I say that, let me just give you this.

91% of the World Mission Force is working among reached groups. 9% is working among unreached groups. What does that mean? Does it mean that the 91% are all out of the will of God? What does it mean? It means they have done a fantastic job. They have gone out, god has answered prayer, indigenous churches have sprung into being. And for the fact that 91% are working among rich people, we should rejoice and give praise to God. But what does that say about new missionaries? They tend to go the same place because of the system that we talked about yesterday that we haven't got time to reiterate now. Namely, we have a system where missionaries come back and tell their story and other people get called and they go to the places where the missionary is already there. We must we must send out a whole new wave of missionaries aimed in the right direction, namely aimed at the unreached peoples. Now, let me ask you this question. What's all this got to do. With the local church. 17,000 groups. Does that sound like many or few to you?

17,000 sounds like few? Sounds like a lot to some, sounds like a few to others, 17,000 unreached groups. Now, listen to this. For every one of those unreached groups, by the way, some would say it's fewer unreached groups than this, because it all depends on where you get that barrier of acceptance or understanding. So 17,000 is the maximum number. Maybe it's not even 17,000,

but let's say it is 17,000. Now, for every one unreached people group, there are 15000 evangelical Christians in the world. Now, suppose we could get because, by the way, that 15000 evangelical Christians, they're not all Americans, to reach the world with the Gospel. We now may be coming to the time when the Westerners can step back. And you, brothers and sisters from Asia and from Africa and from Latin America, now, maybe you should move into the forefront. We Westerners have made a lot of mistakes. We Americans come from a country that, from the day we're born, tells us we're the greatest country on earth. That does not tend to build within us the attitudes that are the most effective on the mission field. I'm not saying American missionaries shouldn't go.

They should go. God hasn't let us off the hook. But maybe you brothers and sisters from Asia and from Africa and from Latin America should now be leading the way. Maybe you can do the job in Libya better than we can. Maybe you can do the job in Iran better than we can. So that 15,000 evangelical Christians are people from all over the world. Chinese, Nigerians, Brazilians, from all over the world. Now, suppose we had a gathering of 15000 evangelical Christians. 15000 and we said to these people, your job is to reach one unreached people group. Do you think they could do it? What do we mean by reaching an unreached people group? What do we have to do in order to have a people group go from unreached to reached? What do we have to do? Establish a church. How many churches? Just one congregation. All right, good enough. I don't know how many. It depends on the group. But enough so that Kurds can reach Kurds. Our target with the Kurds is not to reach 18 million Kurds. Who should reach 18 million Kurds? The Kurds. That's not our job.

As Americans, we can't even do that very well. What is our job? To plant enough congregations among Kurds that are truly Kurdish congregations that will allow them to, in turn, go out and reach, finish evangelizing the Kurdish people. Now, do you think 15000 Christians are able to reach one group? How would they do it? Can you imagine how they would do it? Well, I can imagine 17,000 different ways they could do it. Probably every 15,000 group would be a unique way. But they would pool together, would all of them go as missionaries? Would we send the whole 15,000 of them in as missionaries? No. This would be a disaster if we did that. How many missionaries would we have to send?

Enough.

That's right. Enough. How many is enough? How many is enough? Depends on the group. I don't know how many are enough, but we would only have to send a small percentage of that 15,000. What would the others do? Pray. Finance? What else would they do? They would be involved practically with their giftedness, with their expertise in life. I don't know how they would be involved, but they would be involved. If you've got 150 people filled with the Holy Spirit pooling their common energies and resources aimed at one unreached people group. The task is a doable task. The task is a doable task. But in order for that to happen, we have got to see the mobilization of the church. We cannot simply leave it to the missionaries. The missionaries have got to be supported in every way, not just financially, in every way by the total strength and energy of the church. You know, let me close by just letting you see my own personal purpose statement. You know, when I came back to the States I went through a period of asking the Lord, Lord, what is it that you really want me to do?

I need a statement that can keep me focused. And after a period of months of writing this and rewriting it and praying and thinking this is my own personal purpose statement and I believe it's the direction that many of you should be moving to participate in a mission renewal movement. The task of world evangelization is the task of the whole church springing from local congregations. I believe we should aim for a movement that comes from the grassroots up that springs from the laity, that involves people sitting in the church pews and a movement that is aimed what is it aimed at? You see, it's got to be aimed at something. Not just a movement where we all get excited, but we don't know-

[Miley's talk stops abruptly, new talk begins]