

Bridging the Gap to the Unreached

August 20, 2021 | Daryl Witmer, All-Nations Bible Translation | Leticia, Colombia

Definitions:

1. **The Unreached (unreached, partially reached, mis-reached)**
 - a. Unreached – Isolated with little to no contact with the outside world.
 - b. Partially reached – people groups who are in places that you can contact them, and may have had experiences with missionaries in the past (certain level of syncretism)
 - c. Mis-reached – people groups who have had contact with missionaries, Catholics, JW's etc., (syncretism, animism, atheism, "confusion-ism")

2. **The Gap – the barrier between us and the unreached**
 - a. "Protective" measures - Government policies, "other missionaries", anthropologists, etc.
 - b. Harmful previous contact – Groups moved away from contact points to isolate themselves
 - c. Cultural misunderstandings – Isolation caused by cultural misunderstanding from previous contact
 - i. Define culture simply as habits and customs that have been acquired since birth
 - ii. Define worldview as "A network of basic beliefs in terms of which every aspect of life is interpreted." (Greg Bahnsen)
 - d. Geographical challenges – Travel to reach them is difficult
 - e. Summary — The isolated are "unreachable" by traditional mission strategy. (The typical 70s-90s contact a people, translate, disciple, plant church, etc.)

3. **The Bridge – Building the bridge to get to the unreached**
 - a. The edge principle – Find the edge of the church and build out from that point
 - b. Multi-cultural – Building the bridge involves everyone along the way that is willing
 - i. Sending country culture (Example: United States)
 - ii. Host country culture (Example: Colombia)
 - iii. Indigenous culture (Example: Tanimuka)
 - c. Teaching teachers – Missionaries training people to go further into places currently impossible to go themselves.

Building the bridge:

1. **The example of Christ (Phil. 2:1-8)**
 - a. Cultural learning is based in humility and unselfishness.
 - b. You are a learner and a teacher. You need to earn your right to teach in a community.
 - i. Respecting local authorities and social structures.
 - ii. Humbly enter with connections bridging from relationship to relationship.
 - c. The importance of cultural understanding
 - i. Don't compromise Scripture to save cultural practices. This results in syncretism.
 - ii. Don't clutter the Gospel by putting your culture on them. This results in people rejecting the Gospel because of your insensitivity to cultural issues.

- d. Becoming fluent in the language is imperative to communicate the Gospel.
- e. Become bi-cultural or at a minimum culturally humble and sensitive.

2. Identify the challenges

- a. Spiritual warfare – Nehemiah-style work ethic
- b. Foreign – cultural differences and challenges to be overcome
- c. Long-term – Realistic about the length of time to get to the unreached
- d. Current environment of people at the edge (of the gap)
 - i. Are there current dependency issues?
 - ii. What is their previous experience with foreigners?
- e. Connect your vision with the real life environment where the need exists.

3. Develop your strategy for construction

- a. Strategy of the practical steps to get to the target people
- b. Strategy for language acquisition – Become bi-lingual
- c. Strategy for cultural acquisition – Become bi-cultural
- d. Strategy for becoming “a person immersed in the Word”

4. Build the bridge – go make it happen

- a. 1 John 4:17 “As He is, so are we in this world.”
- b. Go to edge and work with people along the way.
- c. Build firm foundation with each disciple along the way (chronological Bible teaching).
- d. Be flexible and adapt your strategy as needed. The places left to go to have already tested the existing strategies.

Take home today:

1. Prayer

- a. Unreached – Preparing them to receive the sent.
- b. Goers – Prepare laborers for the harvest.
- c. Senders – Prepare people to support and encourage the laborers.

2. Prepare to go

- a. Be in the Word now and be busy with the people around you now.
- b. Learn cultural humility now.
- c. Learn to have a simple lifestyle now.
- d. Learn a language of a target group or the trade language of that group.

3. Prepare to send

- a. Senders should have a basic concept of what is needed for cultural and language acquisition of the worker.
- b. Senders should understand the scope and necessity of their own calling.

4. Plea to churches

- a. Train teachers in your congregations now
 - i. Encourage young people to stretch their own abilities by doing Kingdom work
 - ii. Can you take one or two along when as you go about your work?
 - iii. Can you be available to study deep in the Word with a goer?
- b. Encourage within your congregation the exploration of what cross-cultural indigenous church planting looks like.