

Recruiting and preparing qualified people to serve as missionaries has always been a monumental task facing the Church down through the years. In a large way, the Christian student world has been a major source of the Church's manpower pool. For it is in college that a majority of men and women decide on their life's work.

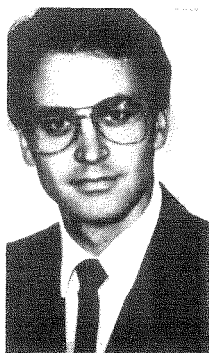
Those of us who have made it our profession to be interested in solving mission problems, particularly those regarding frontier missions, must continually be concerned about how the missions establishment interfaces with the student world. In the last few years, as mission leaders have considered the challenge of the unreached peoples they have raised the banner of "200,000 missionaries by the year 2000." They have recognized that young people in the church from every continent need to be mobilized to tackle the priority of establishing "a Church for Every People."

For the past 11 years I have been involved in youth ministries, first as a student myself, then as a campus minister and then lately as an educator of Christian youth focused in the area of mission studies. During this time, I have repeatedly asked myself the question, "What is it going to take to raise up a new force of missionaries from this generation of youth worldwide to meet the challenge of the unreached peoples?"

In this article I would like to share four convictions that I have developed over the past five years to answer this question. In a way I hope these four convictions can lay a groundwork for a frontier missions agenda for student ministries in the 80's. Mission leadership, youth pastors, educators, denominational leadership, missionaries, campus ministers, staff of Christian organizations, and their students all need to join in this discussion of how our various ministries to youth can be sharpened in our day to point their graduates towards a lifetime involvement in fulfilling the Great Commission.

The first conviction I would like to share is this: *throughout history the Lord of the harvest has continued to raise up massive youth mission movements which have had a lasting impact on world evangelization—and if God has done it before, He can do it again.*

AGENDA FOR STUDENTS IN THE 80's



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**The Phenomena
of Youth Mission
Movements in
History**

The earliest example of a student mission movement happened over 1900 years ago in the province of Asia Minor within the Roman Empire. You can read it for yourself in Acts 19:8-10! In this passage we see that Paul began his ministry at Ephesus in the Jewish Synagogue, but within a few months he moved his base of operations to the "lecture hall of Tyrannus"—the local university.² The real miracle of Ephesus was not just what God did *in* that new university church over the two years that followed but rather what the Holy Spirit did *through* that small band of students. The record of Acts 19 goes on to say that in a period of less than two years, "all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia (Minor) heard the word of the Lord." Talk about student power in world missions! This was the start of a tremendous missions effort by the Ephesian church which was responsible for sending out scores of trained missionaries (cf. 2 Tim. 2:2) and planting the seven major churches of Asia Minor (cf. Rev. 1:11).

The next youth missions movement we need to mention rose out of a counter-culture uprising of disenchanted upper middle class young people of Italy. In fact, within 50 years of its founder's death, it raised up over 200,000 young missionaries. I'm talking about none other than the Franciscan monastic order and its founder St. Francis of Assisi. Although Francis' original motivation was one of church renewal, within a few years his movement became aggressively missionary and literally reached out to the ends of the earth. At a time when the church had taken a combative stance against Muslims through the Crusades, St. Francis was seeking to take a gospel of love to the world of Islam. All in all, St. Francis himself undertook three missions to Muslims, believing they would respond to the Gospel if it was preached in its simplicity. Within three centuries, the followers of Francis had taken the Gospel worldwide to India, China, Japan, and America.

By the early 1500's the Protestant Reformation had begun in northern Europe to renew the local church structures. At the same time in southern Europe, a major missionary movement began among Catholic seminary students in Paris. The name of this order was the Society of Jesus (or the Jesuits) and within 200 years its

work had circled the globe. Some of their earliest missionaries included such famous figures as Francis Xavier, Apostle of India, Robert de Nobili, the Christian Brahmin and Matteo Ricci, the brilliant missions strategist who opened the door to China at the beginning of the 17th century. What most people don't know about the Jesuits is that they originally started among a band of seven students who were studying at the University of Paris. Francis Xavier was one of the original seven students who dedicated himself to the "greater glory of God," wherever it took him. Later, when Xavier was pioneering new works in India, he sent a message back to the University of Paris saying, "Tell the students to give up their small ambitions and come eastward to preach the Gospel of Christ . . ." The Jesuits started on the campus and continued to recruit missionaries from the student world over the centuries.

I would like to mention one final student mission movement from history.³ The Student Volunteer Movement (SVM) of the last century will always be remembered for its unparalleled intercollegiate and international impact. Starting in 1886 and continuing strong over the next 45 years, this organization won up to 100,000 students to a lifetime commitment to the Great Commission as almost no other student movement has ever done. Working as an arm of the Young Men's and Young Women's Christian Association, the SVM spread worldwide and laid much of the basis for international missionary coordination and worldwide church cooperation in the 20th century. Most importantly, it was the SVM that recruited over 20,000 missionaries for the denominational and faith missions of its day. This young wave of missionaries left scattered around the globe growing, healthy, Christian churches by the thousands. At the student level, however, the SVM began to wane over 50 years ago.

Although we have seen some tremendous stirring in the student world since then, nothing has come close to matching the proportions of missionary volunteers to the number of Christian students in college that God raised up in the days of the SVM. Will we see the rise of another SVM in our day? It may not take the same *form* it did a century ago, yet I believe that God is ready to



fuse together another "student and world connection" in our day and repeat the "miracle of Ephesus."

The great historian of the expansion of the Christian movement, and former SVM member, Kenneth Scott Latourette, expressed these same convictions in 1936 when the SVM had pretty well run its course. He wrote:

Our reading of Christian history has accustomed us to see Him break forth in unexpected places where souls have opened themselves to Him and have been made great by the touch of His Spirit . . . We believe that He will break forth again, even though it may be in the most unpredictable quarters . . . we believe that souls will be found to respond to God and that tomorrow as yesterday new movements will demonstrate His power (Latourette 1936:129-31).

Will Latourette's prophecy be fulfilled in our day? That remains to be seen, yet this one thing we can be sure of: God has done it before among students and HE can do it again—even in our day!

This leads me to my second conviction: *if God were to raise up another massive youth movement in our day, I do not think that it would develop apart from the influence of the frontier missions movement which has been developing among mission agency leadership for the past nine years.*

Since 1974, we have witnessed the emergence of a new awareness of the unreached mission frontiers of our day among the world of mission agencies. International congresses have gathered Christian leadership from around the world to study the task of world evangelization. Major research institutions have been started to provide mission agencies with the kind of strategic research information they need to expand their efforts to plant clusters of churches among these unreached peoples. On top of this, for the last five years, the subject of frontier missions has been one of the main agenda items that mission executives in Europe, Asia, and North America have been discussing at their various regional and national association meetings.

In spite of all these "world level" strategies being made at the mission agency level we have yet to see these field strategies being matched with "local level" mission mobilization strategies drafted by groups of leaders from the different student and youth Christian organi-

zations worldwide. Nothing, though, could mean more for the whole cause of world evangelization at this time than if the frontier missions movement would organize itself among leaders in the student world. What we need to see is a wedding take place again between the missions tradition and the student world as it did in the last century.

What would this mean in practical terms? First of all it would mean that the leadership of the various student and youth organizations in every country, region, and continent would begin *to familiarize themselves with the field of missiology*. While I was serving as a campus minister in Philadelphia in 1977, I can remember how excited I was to discover "Church Growth" literature.⁴ I learned that many of the principles of how the church grows on the mission field could help me understand my own student "mission field" in downtown Philadelphia. But more importantly, I began to be sensitized to the emerging new concepts that were crucial in world evangelization and how my ministry to students could be more targeted towards the Great Commission.

In the second place, if the frontier mission movement would organize itself in the student world, it would mean that the leadership among the various student and youth organizations would begin *to adopt mission related goals for their ministries*. Three years ago, as the decade of the eighties began, Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship, USA began to announce that they were believing God for 5,000 new career missionaries to be raised up out of their ministries. We need to see more student and youth ministries set mission goals like this. Not only do they need to set goals in the area of students who go as missionaries, but they need to match these plans with goals in the area of students who graduate from their ministries and become actively involved in the mission of their local churches.

Finally, if the frontier missions movement were to organize itself among the student world it would mean that the leadership among the various student and youth organizations would begin *to implement new missions programming into their existing ministries of evangelism and discipleship*. In November of 1980, I began to realize the importance of missions programming as an

integral part of any discipleship ministry. For ten days that month it was my privilege to travel to Edinburgh, Scotland, to join 180 student delegates from over 25 countries to attend the International Student Consultation on Frontier Missions. Within 3 days we split up into task forces to hammer out position papers on various student mission issues. And like most working conferences, our lunch and dinner conversations began to be preoccupied with how to make these issues practical to the youth in our own respective countries.

During one of these lunch sessions I had a very illuminating discussion with a woman who served as the co-director of a very large national college student ministry. As we talked we discovered together that her ministry had sufficient resources and programs to guide her staff and students in the area of *evangelism*. The same could be said for *discipleship*, they had their retreats, small groups, and well developed study curriculum to build their students in their faith. But when we got to the area of *missions*, she could only pinpoint two activities each year that helped their students grow as world Christians. The problem her ministry faced was that they had well-developed ministries in the areas of evangelism and discipleship but only embryonic ministries in the area of missions. I believe the same thing could be said about most college student ministries around the world today.

How are we going to see this situation correct itself? It will only come as the leadership of the various student and youth organizations begin to get acquainted with the field of missiology, then set mission related goals for their ministries and finally match those goals with programs which help their students grow as world Christians.

Yet this refocusing and retooling effort by various student ministries on behalf of frontier missions won't take place without a nudge toward this direction from the missions world. This leads me to my third premise: those of us who are frontier missions minded and who have made it our profession to be interested in solving mission problems, particularly among the student generation, *must begin to place our highest priority on*

helping the leadership of student and youth organizations understand, master, and integrate the cause of frontier missions into their own ministries.

Most of our mission mobilization efforts among students today are what I call "reaping efforts" rather than "sowing" ministries. Let me explain what I mean and its implications for us who are seeking to further the cause of frontier missions.

You are probably familiar with the pattern of mission agencies designating area representatives, candidate secretaries, or missionaries on furlough to travel to Bible colleges and Christian student fellowships in order to expose as many students as they can to their agencies' needs and hopefully generate enough interest so that out of their efforts missionary recruits are raised up. I would call this pattern a "horizontal reaping" effort for missions. It's a "horizontal" effort because it cuts across many groups of students and I classify it as a "reaping" effort because the mission recruiter is harvesting a student that someone else has primarily built into. I have represented this "horizontal reaping effort" for missions by the long arrows moving from left to right through the pyramid in figure 1. The pyramid is drawn to represent any student group, whether they are based at a church or a campus.

Complementing this "reaping" effort are some little arrows drawn on the diagram which move from top to bottom. They represent a "vertical sowing" mission ministry initiated by the staff leaders towards the students. A staff member leading students in a world Christian bible study or on a weekend mission project would qualify as an example of missions "sowing" ministry.

Both of these mission functions, sowing and reaping, are needed among students today. The point I want to make, though, is that among most groups of students there is very little sowing going on and yet it is this very function of sowing which must step up if we are going to see the reaping function recruit vast numbers of new missionary candidates to match the unreached peoples challenge in our generation.

David Bryant, author of *In the Gap: What it Means to Be a World Christian*, has put his finger on the prob-

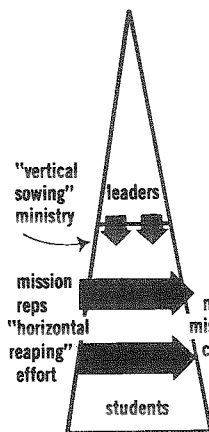


Figure 1.

lem when he says that we usually try to move our students from initially "catching" the vision to an immediate "obeying" of the vision without providing them with an opportunity for "keeping" the vision at the center of their Christian life. When Bryant says this he is essentially calling staff leadership of student organizations back to a priority of a missions "sowing" ministry. How are we going to see this sowing function accelerate? It will only come about to the extent that we help staff leadership of student groups understand, master, and integrate the cause of frontier missions into their ministries.

This past spring for six weeks, under the auspices of the agency I work with, we conducted a "Leadership Planning Workshop" for several staff leaders of a Canadian student ministry. During our time together we studied the crucial issues facing the missions world today and then began to explore what systems would need to be designed in Canada to mobilize their students for the frontier missions cause. Here are some of the topics we dealt with:

- The Biblical Perspective for World Evangelization
- The Cross-Cultural Expansion of the Christian Movement in History
- Contemporary Strategies to Reach Unreached Peoples
- Developing a Missions Philosophy of Ministry for a Student Christian Organization
- Designing Student Mobilization Systems for Frontier Missions

Each of the participants left the workshop with well thought out plans for how they could help their staff carry out a more effective missions "sowing" ministry. This type of planning on the part of staff leadership needs to be repeated in every country, region, and continent among Christian youth organizations. This type of planning should lead the staff leadership to modify existing programs they conduct or even add additional programming to their ministries. No doubt some of the large youth ministries may even require a new department specifically focused on missions with a specialized staff appointed to help other staff carry out effective "sowing" ministries.

In figure 2, I have expanded the student ministry pyramid to represent these special leadership training efforts

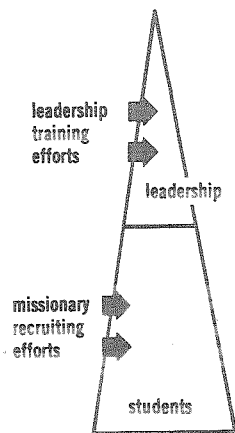


Figure 2.

efforts for staff carried out by those of us who have a concern for frontier missions.

While these leadership development efforts deserve to be given the highest priority by those from the missions world, I believe these efforts coming from outside the student world will never be adequate by themselves to equip student ministry staff to carry out an ongoing, effective missions ministry. These efforts must develop into something more enduring which can nurture student ministry staff wherever they are found.

This leads me to the final conviction I would like to share. It concerns itself with establishing an ongoing means by which those student ministry staff who become interested in frontier missions can help each other in their efforts to develop an effective missions ministry. Without the specific system this final point proposes, I do not believe we will see the Christian youth around the world mobilized proportionally to what past centuries witnessed. The specific function I am speaking of is *the gathering of Christian student leadership at its various national, regional, and international settings in order to form their own professional association focused on frontier missions*. I believe a structure like this would be of strategic importance as the decade of the 80's develops.

Recently, John Naisbitt, in his book *Megatrends*, has described a new way in which people are relating to each other which cuts across the hierarchical organizations or pyramidal structures we all belong to (Naisbitt 1982). He calls it "networking." As I share what he means by "networking" I think the reason for a professional association of student ministry leadership will become clear. Networks include any kind of association of people which seek to spin lines of communications across organizations, through problems and around solutions. Some examples of network most people might be familiar with could include a self-help network, an expecting mother's network, or an old boy network.

For the past couple of years I have been asking myself, "Why not construct a network of leaders of Christian student ministries interested in frontier missions who associate with one another in order to share infor-

Forming a Professional Association of Christian Student Leadership Focused on Frontier Missions

mation and be resources to one another?" There would be no need in this network to be dependent on a particular board of directors or exalt any particular revered leader. In fact, the power would not have to flow from top to bottom but rather it could flow across lines of communication which would serve as "alternative express highways" that we and our associates could use at times to get things done.

Let me illustrate from my own experience how Christian student leaders could serve each other in a network like this. From 1980 to 1982, I served as the director of the Institute of International Studies in Pasadena, California, administrating one of the unique mission education programs for students in existence today.⁵ This past year, Steve Holloway was promoted to take over the responsibilities I had once held. The abilities that Steve brought to that job were every bit as good or better than I had as I entered the same job in 1980. Yet, as Steve and I have seen each other over the months since I left the Institute, there has always been one aspect of my experience that helps him in his position. That aspect is the network of resource people I developed outside the Institute while I had that job. By sharing these contacts with Steve I have helped him build his own network for getting new things done. The type of leadership network I'm describing would function like Steve and I have done, yet be multiplied many hundred times over.

Already missions leadership have structured themselves in various international or national networks. The Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, the Evangelical Foreign Mission Association, and the Association of Mission Professors are just a few examples of various kinds of mission leadership networks. There is no reason why Christian student leadership interested in frontier missions couldn't do the same.

The question, however, might come up, "Why do we need another association of Christian student leaders when we already have the World Student Christian Federation, the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students, or the International Society of Christian Endeavor?" This is an excellent question. While these organizations may function as networks in their own right for some people, they all serve their own organizational

family of Christian youth leaders such as YMCA or Christian Endeavor. The network I'm describing could expand and unfold across any organization to include leaders of Christian students who were committed to the frontier missions goal of "A Church for Every People."

I envision a network like this would operate along the following parameters. The program would be comprised of three interrelated set of levels: a local level, a national level, and an international level. Each level would constitute a working element relating to each other in a semi-autonomous fashion and focusing on the same goals. Below I have listed some activities that could develop as a part of this network:

1. *International and National Consultations:* Here I am referring to 4-5 day working conferences which would bring together leadership of all levels from the various Christian youth ministries interested in frontier missions. These international and national consultations would be designed to further the discussion and action regarding the frontier mission issues which face the student world.

2. *Chapter Associations:* As relationships between various staff of student ministries develop, they could choose to form a chapter association on the local or regional level. They could organize themselves as any professional association would. Monthly programs could feature mission mobilization principles or case studies from a colleague or a missions leader could be invited to speak on some aspect of missiology. Here is where relational "networks" could be built which would help promote the ongoing integration of frontier missions vision into different ministries.

3. *International Journal:* As chapters associations multiply, and a frontier missions dialogue develops on the local level, a journal could provide the forum where these discussions and research could be shared between chapters and national associations. Mission field issues as well as home base mobilization articles could be featured in this publication.

4. *Leaders Workshops:* These workshops would be identical to the leadership training workshops I mentioned earlier in this article. Various national associations could sponsor these workshops which would seek to help those at the local chapter level build their awareness and skills building a missions oriented student ministry.

All of these activities, in one way or another, would seek to help any youth pastor, educator, missions representative, or campus staff broaden their knowledge and resource contacts in the area of frontier missions. The result of this ministry to leaders would hopefully be the sharpening of the missions focus of every group of students—so that each student might be prepared to

carry out the role which they will need to play for the rest of their lives in a local congregation or through a mission agency to fulfill the Great Commission.

What is it going to take among this student generation to raise up a new missionary force to reach the final mission frontiers? Will we see another intercollegiate and international youth missions movement emerge in our day? What should be the relationship between the emerging frontier missions movement among missions leadership and the leadership of the student Christian world? What priority should we place on helping staff leadership develop a "vertical" missions ministry among their students? Could a local, national and international frontier mission association of student and youth ministry staff advance the cause of world evangelization in our day? These are the questions that I feel must be answered if we are going to develop a feasible and practical frontier missions agenda for students in the 80's. Let the monologue end and the discussion begin!

Notes

1. When I speak of "Christian youth or students" in this article, I'm referring to people 14-23 years old involved in a church or campus group. When I use the phrase, "leadership of Christian student and youth organizations," I am thinking of the staff leadership at all levels of the various church and parachurch organizations which minister to youth, i.e., Youth for Christ, Int., Young Life, any denominational youth fellowships, Boys Brigade, Christian Endeavor, Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship, Campus Crusade for Christ, Int., The Navigators, Youth With a Mission, Operation Mobilization, etc.
2. I must thank David Bryant for pointing out to me in 1980 this phenomena of the Ephesian Church being a student-based movement.
3. For those who would like a more complete history of students in missions, David Howard's book entitled *Student Power in World Missions*, published by InterVarsity Press, presents an easy reading survey.
4. The William Carey Library still serves mission audiences by publishing the best in missions research and strategy. To obtain a catalogue write W.C.L., 1705 N. Sierra Bonita Ave., Pasadena, CA, 91104, USA.
5. The Institute of International Studies runs year round study programs on missions in Pasadena and has developed an outstanding frontier missions curriculum that others can use. It also conducts teacher training workshops on how to manage mission education programs for students on the college level. For information on its

courses, curriculum, or workshops, write IIS, 1539 E. Howard St., Pasadena, CA, 91104, USA.

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