

## THE MIRACLE OF MULTIPLICATION (PART 1)

Just before writing this article, I looked at a world population clock that uses calculations by the census bureau to calculate up to the second estimates of the current population of the world. You can check out this world population counter for yourself at:

[www.ibiblio.org/lunarbin/worldpop](http://www.ibiblio.org/lunarbin/worldpop)

The world population at this moment (March 2007) reads almost seven billion. What was amazing to me was in the brief moment it took me to write the first two sentences of this article, the world's population had increased by another 576 people.

So, every few seconds, another 500+ people are born. At the current rate of growth, the world's population will increase to almost nine billion in the next twenty years. To put a billion into perspective, consider that one billion seconds is the equivalent of thirty-one years or one billion minutes ago was about the time of Christ. In other words, a billion is a very large number! Today, almost seven billion people are living on planet earth.

I have said all of this because I wonder what the result would be if we could set up a counter that recorded every time someone in the world became a follower of Christ side-by-side with a world population counter to see how these two statistics would compare.

Unfortunately, the way things are right now, it would be discovered that the number of people born into this world far outnumber those who are "born-again." It's a fact that the non-Christian population is increasing at a much faster rate than the Christian population of the world.

In my investigation about the world's population, it was also important to take into consideration the fact that at the same time people are born others die. Christians should never stop realizing that each minute of every day, someone, somewhere has just died without accepting Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

When I was pastoring, I would sometimes read the obituary section of the local newspaper and reflect about if I knew or ever met any of the people who had died in my community that week. I would then show the obituary to my staff and remind them that not all of these people who died in our town that week were saved. With that in mind, we would discuss the fact that as a local church we needed to reach as much of our community as we could before next week's obituary was printed. I wanted the weight of eternity to sink into our motivation to get the Gospel out to people who may not live beyond the next week.

A similar experience got my attention as I was writing this article. I found a website [www.biblehelp.org/mortality.htm](http://www.biblehelp.org/mortality.htm) that estimates how many people have died during the time you choose to leave this web site open. In the few seconds it took me to finish typing out the web address above, it indicated that 83 people had died around the world.

I couldn't help but think about the fact that the vast majority of those eighty-three people probably went to hell instead of heaven. When their heart stopped they awoke into an eternity, tormented and separated from God.

### **JESUS SPOKE ABOUT THE MULTITUDES WHO WOULD PERISH UNLESS THEY WERE SAVED**

Matthew 7:13-14

“Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.”

Notice how these same verses read in the New Living Translation of the Bible.

<sup>13</sup> “You can enter God's Kingdom only through the narrow gate. The highway to hell is broad, and its gate is wide for the many who choose the easy way. <sup>14</sup> But the gateway to life is small, and the road is narrow, and only a few ever find it.”

The obvious question for Christians in light of the billions who don't know Christ is, “What can be done to reach so many people who are living and dying in this world without receiving God's free gift of salvation?”

On the one hand, you could take the position that we can't do anything about the situation. Not because we don't want to, but because it seems that we're too far behind to catch up. With the ever increasing non-Christian population, the task of sharing the gospel with everyone in the world seems insurmountable in part, because the number of people who need to hear the gospel is so much greater than those who are willing and trained to share the gospel with others.

The same situation also existed in Jesus' day. He told his disciples, “The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few; therefore pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.” (Luke 10:2)

Because of the size of the harvest and the few workers available to harvest souls, we can become pessimistic about the problem of how to successfully evangelize the world. The better way to think about the task of evangelizing the entire population of the world is to have faith in God and remain optimistic. As we attempt to rescue as many of the perishing souls as we can by faith, God will bless our efforts!

The believers of the first-century earned the nickname, “Those who are turning the world upside down.” The reason they were making that kind of difference in the world of their day was because the Church of the first century was a disciple-making Church. It wasn't just a Church full of members, but instead was a Church full of disciple-makers.

The potential also exists for today's Church to "turn our world upside down" for Jesus by seeing many more people saved than the current pace of conversions. First of all, in order for that to happen, we must set out to win the world with the same determination and sense of mission that Jesus had. Jesus declared, "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." (John 9:4-5)

I love the way that missionary evangelist Reinhard Bonnke declares that his mission in life is to, "Plunder hell, in order to populate heaven."

Christians can and should cover the earth with the gospel message of Jesus Christ so more and more people come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. However, if we are going to overtake the ever-widening gap between the number of people who are saved and those who are not, we must get back to basics and put into practice the one way Jesus indicated that his disciples would evangelize the entire world.

Jesus' method for world evangelism is so simple it seems profound. In fact, he summed it up for his own disciples, with just two words, "*make disciples*," until the whole world hears about Jesus! That's it. Jesus said disciple-making would get the job done and that includes when the task involves reaching seven billion people with the Gospel like it does today.

Remember that Jesus didn't ask the Church to do something that He did not empower us to do. Among the last words that Jesus spoke to his disciples while He was upon this earth was, go into all the world making disciples of everyone, everywhere!

Acts 1:8

"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses about me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

The reason that Jesus' strategy of making disciples until the whole world hears the Gospel doesn't seem to be working today, like it did for his original disciples, is because we have come to misunderstand over the centuries since he spoke those words what it really means to make another disciple of Christ.

You can't disciple someone just by having them sit in an audience at a local church listening to a sermon once a week. It helps a lot, but there's much more to disciple-making than just listening to scripture based sermons.

Attending a bible study where the teachings of the bible are explained and applied to our lives is so important, but such studies, by themselves, won't turn the students into disciples of Christ.

Authentic discipleship occurs when a man or woman of God sees to it that what God has given them is passed on to another individual, or a very small group of people, in such a way that they also, become disciple-makers. That's the miracle of multiplication!

If a pastor, for example, would win one new believer and let him be his apprentice disciple-maker for one year, with the agreement that this apprentice would do the same thing for another new believer the following year. And the pastor does the same thing with one person every year for the next ten years, the result would be that he would be pastoring a church with 1,000 disciple-makers in attendance, if those disciples plugged into his local church over that ten-year period. That's the miracle of multiplication!

Imagine 1,000 disciples in ten years as a result of just one pastor who annually made one disciple-making disciple every year for ten consecutive years. Jesus knew about the miracle of multiplication when he said, in order to reach the world with His message it would require that his disciples taught and trained up their own disciples to become disciple-makers.

Jesus told us how the world could be evangelized. It wasn't just through television evangelism, crusade evangelism or any other method of mass evangelism, as valuable as these methods are. They help greatly in making new believers, but unless there is a personal follow-up of these new believers through local churches, disciples are not made.

Jesus' method for world evangelism is men...men and women of God, who have been taught and trained by Jesus Himself who then taught and trained their converts everything they had learned from Jesus while they were with him.

This discipleship continued in the early Church as the disciples of those who had been discipled by the disciples of Christ then taught and trained future new believers everything that they had learned from the disciples who taught and trained them to become disciple-makers.

On and on Jesus intended for his disciples to multiply until the whole world witnessed a powerful presentation of the gospel through the words and deeds of his disciples.

Evangelism from the disciples of Jesus grew out of a lifestyle seasoned by many hours in the presence of Jesus. They were apprenticed in real-life ministry situations. Jesus' method of discipleship was "Come follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." (Matthew 4:19)

We know that Paul, the apostle, understood that Jesus' method for world evangelism was the multiplication of men and women who were taught and trained to be disciple-makers, because he told his own disciple, Timothy, in simplest terms, how to make disciples.

"And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." (2 Timothy 2:2)

We can and will evangelize the world by using Jesus' method for world evangelism which can be described in just one word DISCIPLESHIP!