

Impact of a Movement

One more thought ...

By **GREG H. PARSONS**

Greg Parsons and his wife have been on staff with Frontier Ventures since 1982. They live in Southern California.

Almost 700 of us gathered in July 2024 for the 50th Anniversary of the Perspectives course. That group included some 140 from around the globe—all representing about 250,000+ alumni since 1974. I have been to *many* mission-focused events and this was a great event on several levels:

Baseline Understanding of the Issues

Since everyone had taken the Perspectives course, we all had the foundational understanding of the mission of God to “bring about obedience of faith among all gentiles” (Roman 1:5). I’ve often been to events where I wished we could pause the event, have everyone take Perspectives, and then start again!

Relational Connections

Everyone came with or met friends they knew because of the course. You could see deep relationships reflected in hallway discussions and other interaction. For those of us who were involved early in the movement, this was deep and sweet.

Wise interaction

Questions and interaction during workshops reflected a deeper knowledge than typical events. We could move beyond Perspectives base knowledge quickly.

Excellent General Sessions

I confess I can be quick to judge “plenary” speakers at large events. But I was so proud of our Perspectives team in the way they pulled this together and ran the event. The context was excellent.

A number of those presentations reflected the impact of the Perspectives movement. Beyond the number of alumni, or the people at this event (and many who could not get visas to attend from around the world), there were the stories of people who have served cross-culturally to establish fellowships of Jesus followers in new people groups and places.



Becky Lewis, second daughter of Ralph Winter, presented a global statistical update, which was not unlike her father’s presentation at Lausanne in 1974. She pointed out that when Perspectives started, 60% of the world were in Frontier People Groups (less than .1% Christian of any kind). Now, that is only 25%!

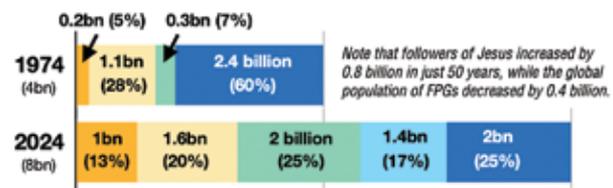


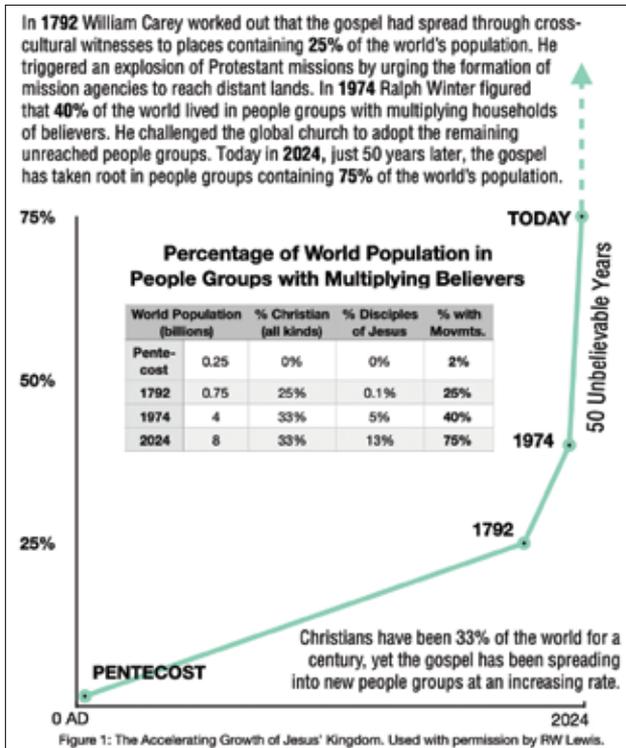
Figure 3: The World in 2024: 8 Billion People from JoshuaProject.net/GreatProgress
Used with Permission by RW Lewis and Chris Maynard.
Video explanation in multiple languages available at JoshuaProject.net/Frontier

In those 50 years, the population of the world increased from four billion to eight billion, and still, Christians (of all kinds) remained 33% of the world’s population. (See chart on the following page.)¹

A key, long-term leader from the Latin American movement shared on Friday evening. Allan Matamoros outlined the impact of the vision of the Unreached and Perspectives on the prayer and sending of cross-cultural workers. He noted many other events, organizations and other resources as well. It was a stunning, encouraging message!²

1 See joshuaproject.net/greatprogress for a PDF with all these details.

2 You can watch these presentations for a donation (to help cover the costs of the event) at: www.perspectives.org



Allan mentioned a book written by a Brazilian reporter named Adriana Carranca. Her book alternates chapters between the background of the growing movement in Latin America and the story of several Brazilians who were sent out to hard places and suffered. She outlines much of what you might have read in *Mission Frontiers* in the 1980–90s. People who influenced the movement from both Latin America (such as Luis Bush) and organizations you would know about (if you have tracked with us) such as COMIBAM. I personally know many of the organizations and people mentioned.

The book was reviewed in the *New Yorker*,³ noting that Adriana,

...heard about a married couple from her home country who were running a pizza-delivery business in Kabul. They had to be mercenaries, or drug dealers, Carranca thought, and she wondered about the plausibility of anyone believing that the pair, who at the time had two young children, would cross the world just to sell pizza. Indeed, the

*business was a front for a clandestine operation, and it took Carranca two years to uncover how extraordinary their true mission was: to convert Afghans to Christianity in a nation where such a conversion can be deadly.*⁴

After reading the book, I would have called the Brazilian workers “cross-cultural servants of Jesus who were trying to share about the love of God” in a very difficult place. They needed to be very careful. So, yes, in a way clandestine, and perhaps illegal, but not wrong!

The review of the book continued,

Their story may sound like an extreme case of religious fervor, but it's part of a striking phenomenon: the expansion of the evangelical movement in the Global South, and the growing role that Latin Americans play in it—a development that has received ample attention from academia but not enough from journalism. Carranca's book arrives to fill that void.

Sprinkled through the book were clear examples of the impact of the mobilization movement in Latin America. She shared about early pioneers, both Latins who encouraged her and missionaries to Latin America with a passion to see sending increase. The Perspectives course was part of that, as was our small global network of Centers for World Mission, and later Perspectives Global—which seeks to serve those who want to see similar impact from Perspectives in their nation.

Now, the largest Perspectives program outside the U.S. is in Brazil. So much more could be said about the movement, but it is encouraging to think that God has been willing to answer so many of our prayers and bless the service of our staff, ministry partners, and churches over these years. In turn, we are blessed too. And Frontier Ventures is seeking to continue to be a blessing to “bring about the obedience of faith” among all peoples. ❏

³ “The Surprising Rise of Latin American Evangelical Missionaries” by Graciela Mochkofsky, *New Yorker*, April 30, 2024. [newyorker.com/news/daily-comment/the-surprising-rise-of-latin-american-evangelical-missionaries](https://www.newyorker.com/news/daily-comment/the-surprising-rise-of-latin-american-evangelical-missionaries)

⁴ I have been avoiding the word *conversion* because that English word has many unnecessary Western and “religious” connotations. We are not trying to get people to change their religion! We are trying see them do what the translated word *convert* means, which at its core is the idea of a turning, turn away, twist, change, change direction. It is used of a new branch in a plant!