

A Global Church Great Commission YOUTH Movement

By Dr. Randy Smith

I believe the Great Commission, in order to be fulfilled in the 21st Century, must by-and-large become a **Youth Movement**. This should not be a matter for debate! The unreached and unengaged populations of the world, including the 10-40 window, are still getting younger by the second! Need I go into the demographics? Suffice it to say that of the world's 8 billion people, there are currently 3.5 billion youth (ages 10-29) and at least 2.5 billion of those do NOT follow Jesus! Again, that number is growing every hour of every day.... and I hate to report the bad news, but every day, we are losing the battle for lost souls as more people are coming into the world as non-believers than the number of people who are being converted to faith in Jesus. It grieves me to say that, but it is true! Even with all the advances in technology and new methods of sharing the gospel, we are currently losing the battle for the souls of man! And, if you are like me, this is NOT acceptable!

If you believe, as I do, that according to God's eternal plan, Jesus came to earth and died for 100% of the human race and wants ALL who are currently breathing on planet earth to hear a clear presentation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to come to faith in Him as Lord and Savior, then keep reading! Pause for a few minutes and re-read these powerful reminders of God's desire to win ALL the world to Himself: (John 3:16-17, John 12:32, Acts 17:30, Romans 5:6,18-19, Romans 11:32, 1 Timothy 2:3-6, 1 Tim. 4:9-10, Titus 2:11, 2 Peter 3:9, Psalms 145:9, 2 Corinthians 5:14, 15, 1 John 2:2 ... and many other Scriptures). Jesus charged us, as His followers, to take this All-Powerful Gospel to ALL the World so that ALL would have the opportunity to know and follow him – but we have FAILED TO DO SO. Using the most liberally inclusive stats, a maximum of 25% of the world's population know and follow Christ, leaving 75%, (6 billion precious souls) in a hopeless state of condemnation, and over 55% of those 6 billion are under the age of 30!

Now let me address the primary matter: who exactly can best reach the YOUTH of the world? The answer is Youth themselves! We need to reach and unleash the youth of this world to reach their own world, and the sooner the better! Having said that, if you are still with me, I want to move on to attempt to answer the question: "What can the church do to initiate and perpetuate such a global **youth movement** that will help the church of Jesus Christ fulfill the Great Commission?" If a global evangelistic youth movement is to be born that sweeps across the world, especially the world of the unreached, I sincerely believe it must begin in the existing local evangelical churches of the world! Yes, the churches of North America, South America, Asia, Africa, Europe, and everywhere in between... Then, spread to the unengaged and unreached parts of the world.

YOUTH... are the Key! The church must reach and disciple the youth of our world, specifically focusing on generations A (Alpha, born 2013-2025), Z (born 1996-2012) and Y or Millennial generation (born 1981-1996) who are taking over the world in record numbers. Sorry, but as generation Xers (born 1965-1980) and BOOMERS (born 1946-1964) our chance is waning fast, and we have FAILED to reach the finish line. Ouch, I know that hurts... but let's face facts, on

our watch, though conversion rates have increased, the overall number of unreached is outpacing the number of conversions worldwide! What do we do? How do we pray? Who's turn is it to "take the baton"?— TODAY'S YOUTH THEMSELVES! Where are these resurgent YOUTH who will change the tide of the unreached vs reached in the world? Answer: they are RIGHT HERE, RIGHT NOW in our local churches... just waiting like David (Christian youth) who was begging to Saul (the church of today) to say OK, "let me go fight Goliath (the challenge of world evangelization)... and allow me to use my OWN gifts and talents (sling shot) not our OLD culturally and traditionally paralyzed methodology! Too many Christian youth in our churches today are hanging out at home, away from the evangelical battlefield, tending sheep (non-ministry work while being controlled and inundated by screens, social media posts and post-modern "progressive" philosophy).

I believe that the reality is our youth are just waiting for the chance to be equipped, unleashed, empowered, and encouraged to enter the GLOBAL GOSPEL BATTLE, the battle for men's souls. Instead, too often they are in a battle to be the first in line to get pizza or grab the x-box controls at the local church youth group hangout! Or they are practicing for hours to be part of a display we often disguise as a "youth service" once a quarter or once a year, rather than having a weekly ongoing important role in the church's ministry responsibilities. Rather than have youth services, I would have them involved every week in important ministry. Engage them in roles such as teaching, discipling, advising the church elders, conducting personal and corporate evangelism efforts, leading prayer services, leading small groups, participating in and leading ministry teams that apply their gifts and talents to reach and disciple their world (drama teams, music teams, prayer teams, planning teams, sports teams, media teams, etc.)

Try this, on a normal Sunday, call a teenager up to the platform to give the service's opening or closing prayer! Watch the reaction of the adults and other youth in the church! Both will likely gasp and think they must have forgot that this was "Youth Service Sunday! "I have discovered in my time as a youth leader in the U.S. (more than 50 years), in addition to my observation of many youth groups all around the world (more than 35 nations), that this generation of youth, ages 10-29 are ready to LEAD NOW! These same youth are sick and tired of being relegated to the pathetic mantra of – "Our Youth are the 'Leaders of the church of TOMORROW!'" NO, they WANT to, and CAN be "Leaders of the church of TODAY!"

One of the headlines regarding this year's "2020" Tokyo Olympics was how the number of teenagers dominated the medal count. They were recruited and trained and funded to represent their countries at the highest levels. And they did, winning medal after medal after medal, from 12 years old to 19 years old. They set world records and competed right alongside the "adults!" They used their own gifts and talents to win the respect of their countries and their peers! Why can't the church recruit, train, invest in and trust its youth to strive for the highest Gold Medal of all... winning the Lost for Jesus. But no, our churches who still "defund the Youth Budget," demand less and less out of the commitment by its youth to Christ.

What has happened since Christian Endeavor (started in 1881 in Portland, Maine), one of history's greatest Christian youth movements? For a teenager to join the group they had to

take an oath: Here is the oath; can you imagine a church youth today taking this oath? (Actually, I think they would LOVE to see us RAISE the Bar of Consecration): Read it!

“Trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ for strength, I promise Him that I will strive to do whatever He would like to have me do; that I will make it the rule of my life to pray and to read the Bible every day, and to support the work and worship of my own church in every way possible; and that just so far as I know how, throughout my whole life, I will endeavor to lead a Christian life. As an active member I promise to be true to all my duties, to be present at and to take some part, aside from singing, in every Christian Endeavor meeting, unless hindered by some reason which I can conscientiously give to my Lord and Master, Jesus Christ. If obliged to be absent from the monthly consecration meeting of the society, I will, if possible, send at least a verse of Scripture to be read in response to my name and the roll call.” (Christian Endeavor Youth Pledge).

The Christian youth I know, and have ministered to and with, long to LEAD and FIGHT NOW... and they (like David) want us as the “older generation, and ‘gatekeepers’” (like Saul) to give them PERMISSION to lead. They want us to make them feel NEEDED by the church... not babysat by the church! They want the church (and the Great Commission), to be a ministry OF youth and WITH youth, not just a church (and Great Commission) FOR youth and TO youth! For my entire youth pastor career. I have operated under the assumption that youth CDA (Can Do Anything), and I believe it today more than ever. We need to allow them to break out of the Western World’s adolescent” cultural prison and join the battle... as “child-warriors” and “child Olympians” and “child-entrepreneurs” and do what other youth have been doing since Old and New Testament times: (Isaac, Joshua, Joseph, Josiah, Daniel, Shadrack, Meshack, Abednego, Jeremiah, Esther, Mary, Joseph, the apostles, Mark, Timothy), just to name a few of more than 35 youth in scripture who were used by God to join Him in the Battle for men’s souls!

We in the church, by surrendering to the adolescent cultural labels and characterizations by the world of developmental psychology, have relegated youth to a world of watching and waiting for “their time” (meaning, married, educated and “mature”) before they are given permission and training for “REAL” ministry! Shame on us as the church of the 20th and 21st centuries! So sadly, instead of WAITING for “their time” far too many (depending on which stat you believe) are LEAVING the church, and sometimes putting their FAITH “on hold,” since they have come to believe that they are NOT NEEDED in the church, and therefore presume that they are NOT NEEDED by God. As a result, they go where they ARE NEEDED...into the world of their peers that is dominated by “relativism,” “tolerance,” “plurality,” “agnosticism,” “materialism” and outright distrust for most authority and institutions. They have buried themselves into a world of smartphones, google, social media, and political causes, where they believe is the only place their voices, opinions, and actions will be respected. AND, this is not just a trickle effect, but rather, according to Barna and other major social research authorities, it has become a MOVEMENT away from the church and even more devastating – away from the Great Commission charge given to ALL by Jesus!

I implore you as a church leader (pastor, youth pastor, elder, parent), it is time to reevaluate what is happening to our “church youth groups.” No, I am not going to jump off into a rampage about what we used to DO, “back in the day,” but I am going to say let’s apply the Biblical principles of ministry (yes, and of youth ministry as an obvious derivative) to TODAY and stop allowing church culture and tradition to paralyze our young people. Please, let’s break the chains of historical and cultural methodology and release the youth in the church to step up and take risks, as their Biblical teen counterparts have done when God USED them, CALLED them, and TRUSTED them, as youth, to do great things for Him. They are waiting! Waiting to be released in your church, and around the world to prayerfully facilitate a movement to evangelize our world of 8+ billion souls by the end of the 21st century.



Dr. Randy Smith
President/Founder – Great Commission Youth Ministry (GCYM)

(Randy has personally ministered to teens in over 33 countries and trained National Youth Workers in more than 20 countries, starting his ministry to youth in 1970).
Contact him at Youthman1@aol.com and visit the GCYM website at www.gcymining.com