

WHAT ARE UNREACHED PEOPLE GROUPS?

(And Why Every Christian Should Care)

by Nathan Burd

There are 3.58 billion people on earth today who have never once had a real chance to say yes or no to Jesus. Not because they rejected Him, but because no one has ever told them about Him. These are what the missions world calls UPGs or “Unreached People Groups.”

A VILLAGE ELDER NAMED ONWAS

Onwas (Uno-wass) was the village elder in the first village I went to among the Hadzabe in Tanzania. A few years ago, the Hadzabe would have been categorized by the missions world as one of the Unreached People Groups: a people group that is less than 2% Christian. Though numbers vary slightly depending on your source, based on numbers from [Joshua Project](#), there are about 4,500 Unreached People Groups in the world. Of those, about 3,200 belong to an even more restricted status called Frontier. A Frontier People Group is a group that is less than 0.1% Christian: meaning for every 1,000 people in the group, one (or fewer) is a Christian.

Over several years of ministry among the Hadzabe, Onwas became a thoughtful and prolific messenger of the Gospel. He would share the Gospel with others and then train them to do the same.

The day I heard that he died was a difficult one. As I prayed that day, what brought me peace was the realization that Onwas was with Jesus. A peace that led me to celebrate the fact that Onwas had decided to follow Jesus. A peace that reminded me of the importance of sharing the Gospel with the unreached.

THE NUMBERS THAT SHOULD DISTURB EVERY CHRISTIAN

According to Joshua Project, there are 3.58 billion people on earth today who have not heard the Gospel, and they may die before they get the chance. 3.58 billion seconds amount to 113 years. Hear me on this. Each second for over 100 years is a lost person with little to no access to the Gospel.

The unreached are not people who heard about Jesus and said no. They are not people who had a bad church experience and walked away. They are not people who have had any real option to choose. Instead, they are people who will be born, live their whole lives, and possibly die without ever once having the chance to say yes or no to Jesus. Because nobody ever told them. ([Romans 10:14](#))

WHAT WENT WRONG?

For every \$100,000 Christians earn, they give just \$1.83 to reaching the unreached (Check out [The Traveling Team](#) to read more about these statistics). That means for every dollar Christians earn, they give a fraction of a cent. Truly, it would be like taking one penny of that dollar, cutting it into 1,000 pieces, and giving about one and a half (1.83) of those tiny pieces to the unreached.

We only send 3.4% of all cross-cultural missionaries to the unreached. The unreached make up 43% of the world's population, and we only send 3% of cross-cultural missionaries to them. If anything, those numbers would be equal: 43% of missionaries sent to 43% of the world. What would make even more sense is sending 97% of the missionaries to the unreached, who need them most. Sadly, that is just not what happens.

THREE HONEST REASONS THE UNREACHED REMAIN UNREACHED

The first is ignorance. People just don't know.

The second is laziness. We know. We just don't act.

The third is fear. But here's the thing. The nation of Israel walked toward literal giants because God told them He was with them. He is with you too.

FOUR WAYS TO PARTICIPATE IN REACHING THE UNREACHED

- **Give.** Finances move missions forward. And I encourage you, when you give, make sure it goes specifically toward the unreached.
- **Pray.** Real prayer, not the polite Christian version where we say "I'll be praying for you" and then forget, but specific, named, intentional prayer.
- **Use what you've got.** Think creatively about your skills. Developers, business owners, doctors—there are ways into closed countries that don't involve a mission visa.
- **Go.** God may be calling you! Ask Him!



Mudrunner by Charlie Marq is a raw and honest resource for anyone who wants to stop sitting on the sidelines and start moving toward the mission God has for them.