

Prologue...what went before

*** Spoiler Alert for those who haven't read *Hastening* ***

In Book One of the *No Place Left* saga, pastor Christopher Owen rallies his two best friends, businessman Nic Fernandez and university professor John Steward, to join him on a quest that changes the course of their lives and world history. Together with their wives—Chara, Stacy, and Renee—they mobilize their own church and believers around the globe to the greatest task given the global Church—taking the gospel of Christ's Kingdom to every remaining unreached people group in the world.

The group aspires to be in the generation that welcomes the return of Christ (Mt 24:14) and to hasten that day (2 Pe 3:12). They know they will not be done until there is *no place left* where Christ is not proclaimed (Rom 15:23). They realize this may mean living through the tumult of Revelation.

To force themselves in faith to attempt things they never would otherwise, the group sets a 2025 date to complete their quest. This prompts them to embrace and call other believers to a spiritual wartime mentality in place of peacetime complacency.

Colonel Win Dunbar (a retired and esteemed special forces commander) joins and aids them in their mission, along with his wife, Jeanie. Win helps Christopher and his team launch the Kingdom Preparation Force (KPF). The KPF's mobile, highly committed teams enter unengaged unreached people groups and start the first multiplying churches among them, much like the Apostle Paul and his teams did. Once these teams establish a movement with new believers living out the Great Commission, these teams then move on to other unengaged groups.

Meanwhile, U.S. Senator Michael Wroth and his assistant Marlene Hayes pursue an agenda to usher in a new age of peace and prosperity through political mechanisms. Wroth uncovers a conspiratorial group—The Ten—that has been quietly manipulating world events for centuries toward a golden age of peace—the

Rebirth. Seeing in Wroth someone who fits their agenda, The Ten recruit him to their cause while Wroth sees The Ten as a vehicle to “influence the world without being known to influence.”

While being mentored secretly by The Ten, Wroth seeks to gain control over them. He is aided by long-time family friend Dr. Larson Sayers, who possesses an uncanny ability to negotiate peace between opposing parties. Amidst increasing worldwide unrest and terrorist attacks on the political center of America, Wroth is catapulted into the powerful role of Director of the new International Coalition for the Preservation of World Peace (IC). Assisted by former CIA operative Jake Simmons, Wroth receives global acclaim as he leverages his secret connection with The Ten to shut down terrorist cells around the world.

All the while, he must balance using The Ten without them knowing he is doing so. Wroth’s aggressive pursuit of the Rebirth puts him at odds with Number One—leader of The Ten. Others in The Ten side with Wroth, particularly Number Three, Ethan Farnsworth.

Christopher Owen leads one of the KPF’s first long-term teams overseas to China, and a Kingdom movement explodes as disciples and churches begin multiplying throughout the remote mountain regions of the Tuxiang people. However, such activity is perceived by The Ten, particularly Wroth, as a direct threat to their plans for the Rebirth, and the KPF team experiences severe opposition and persecution.

Ruth Grant becomes the KPF’s first martyr, and her two companions (Lance Chu and George Yang) are imprisoned and beaten along with Christopher in a remote Chinese prison. A miraculous escape enables the three to return to the U.S. There they are both received as heroes and denounced as villains. Heroes to believers around the globe inspired to imitate their faith and devotion. Villains to those who feel they are manipulating young people into folly.

Ruth’s story inspires many to join the cause, and applications to the KPF and many other sending organizations skyrocket. Yet even as the NoPlaceLeft 2025 vision is galvanizing the global Church, Ruth’s parents are pursuing a lawsuit against the KPF that could obliterate it entirely.

ONE

The LED monitor on the wall glowed 3,131. Christopher Owen glanced at it again. “Not fast enough!” he muttered as he paced. “Not fast enough!” He ran his fingers through his hair for the hundredth time. *So far to go to complete the mission!*

Christopher and his Kingdom Preparation Force teams had committed to all-out mobilization, risking their health, wealth and in some cases their lives, in their pursuit of no place left where people have not heard about Jesus.

Over three thousand people groups still to reach. All in tough places—no, the toughest. And our teams bear the brunt of the harsh conditions in the remotest corners of antagonistic realms.

Christopher turned to the tracking monitor in the basement of the KPF’s Los Angeles headquarters. He reached out and gently touched the green dots on the map representing each team. “Not fast enough! Not fast enough!”

“Commander? Did you hear me, sir?” Colonel Win Dunbar sat at the planning table, his legs thrust out the other side.

“I’m sorry, Win.” Christopher shook his head and focused his gaze on the field leader of the KPF’s spiritual troops. “Can you repeat that?”

The others exchanged concerned glances.

“Um, Christopher,” Professor John Steward said, hesitating, “this fading out on us amidst strategy sessions is happening too often. And Win’s come all the way back from Southeast Asia just for this pow-wow.”

Christopher nodded slowly and returned to the table.

“Hey, buddy, you feeling okay?” Nic Fernandez asked. “That head wound still bothering you?”

The KPF leader touched the scar above his eyebrow. The throbbing from the wound never disappeared. Subsided at times, but never completely disappeared—especially at times like these.

Christopher’s wife Chara tiptoed down the rickety staircase and set a cup of French roast coffee in front of him.

“This ought to help, baby,” she whispered as she slipped him a couple of Tylenol.

John straightened in his chair.

“Sister, more than one of us in this subterranean nerve center could benefit from the invigorating effects of java.”

“Ooh! John, I’m so sorry.” Chara pursed her lips as she turned toward the stairs.

“Don’t pay him any mind, Chara,” Renee said as she jabbed her husband’s ribs. “John can brew his own. We need you here.”

Christopher took a deep whiff, then sipped. *That’s the ticket. Gotta get my wits together. Pay attention, Christopher!* “Win, you were saying?”

The Marine straightened and placed both palms on the table. “I was asking if you want to keep expanding the number of advance teams. Pressure from local authorities continues rising, and the frequency of incidents appears to be more than coincidence; there’s a pattern. My sources tell me we are in the crosshairs of someone powerful. I just don’t know who.”

“I hate to add to the gloom,” said Nic, the entrepreneurial prodigy, “but I’m not sure our organizational structure is scalable to the acceleration of our expansion.”

“In English, Nic?” Renee interjected.

“Uh, yeah. What I mean is that the number of our two-year teams is growing rapidly, but we don’t have enough experienced field leaders to handle the increase. We need more leaders to maintain our capacity and long-term hubs to cultivate longevity in the regions. We may need to slow down our expansion.”

Everyone nodded, except Christopher. They were all wearing more than one hat, and it didn’t help that most had full-time jobs outside of their KPF role. Their margin was non-existent.

“Makes sense.” Renee agreed. She consulted her phone app that tracked the countdown of bringing the good news to each remaining Unreached People Group. “We’ve made good progress. Almost a hundred Unreached People Groups have been engaged. We probably need to consolidate a bit.”

Christopher slammed his mug on the table. Coffee splattered nearby papers. All heads jerked his direction.

“Slow down? Are you kidding me?” Christopher pushed away from the table and paced again. “You think slowing down honors the price Ruth paid, the price Jesus paid?”

A few eyes turned to the journal excerpt framed on the wall:

*No place left?
Assaulting the gates of hell will cost the Church
unlike anything in history.
Paul told us, “So death works in us, but life in you.”
Life in them—the lost?
No cost is too great for their salvation.
We endure all things for the sake of the elect
that they may obtain salvation (2 Timothy 2:10).*

—Ruth Grant, martyr

The room fell silent but for the quiet hum of computers.

Christopher stopped pacing and threw up his hands. “Timothy, show us the progress.”

“Uh ... uh ... sure, boss.” The tech whiz tapped vigorously on his keyboard. “The green dots on the tracking monitor represent KPF or other international teams in the global NoPlaceLeft effort. Renee is right. About one hundred UUPGs have been engaged since we started this venture.”

All eyes focused on the world map as green dots spread across a band of tough-to-work-in nations.

“Looks like we’re getting pretty decent engagement for just a year’s time,” said John.

Christopher ignored him. “Now, Tim.”

Timothy Wu pressed ENTER, and thousands of black dots covered the monitor, drowning out the green. Even the colonel gasped at this visual of the remaining darkness.

“We’ve barely started among the 3,227 original UUPGs!”

Christopher walked, trancelike, to the massive screen.

“Don’t you see? It’s not fast enough! There are still more than three thousand places left without the gospel, with people going to hell! It’s not acceptable!

“Don’t look at the *progress*,” Christopher said, pointing to the black dots. “Look at the *gaps*! Always look at what remains!”

“When we started this quest a year ago, we embraced a total wartime footing to finish Jesus’ mandate by 2025. Ten years! One year is already gone, and not quite a hundred groups have been engaged. That leaves 3,131 still unengaged. It’s not fast enough.”

“Christopher,” John said, “we’re all pushing as hard as we can. Our families are at the breaking point. We can’t work harder.”

“Not harder. Smarter!” Win pushed back his chair and stood to his full six-foot-four. The aging soldier lowered his head to avoid a rafter, approached the monitor and pointed at the image.

“None of us can work harder—without breaking. We need a global coalition to multiply the efforts.”

Nic jumped to his feet. “Exactly! We’ve got a model that works. We need to franchise this enterprise! No, not franchise, but give it away. No one owns this; we share everything we know—freely.”

“That’s right.” Christopher nodded. “We’ve been praying for this quest to go viral. We knew from the beginning we couldn’t finish the task alone, and we never intended to. NoPlaceLeft must inspire our generation to aim to be the *last* generation—the one that welcomes Jesus’ return. Our 2025 deadline must move the *global* Church into total mobilization for the final assault on the gates of hell. American believers alone are insufficient for this last lap of the race. We must stir the global Church if there is to be *no place left* standing against the King’s reign.”

Christopher strode to the table, chugged his lukewarm coffee and set the mug down firmly. He wiped his mouth on his sleeve and winked at John.

“No, bro, we’re not slowing down. Instead we must accelerate the mobilization of the global Church.”

“Whatever you say, little Napoleon.” The professor shook his head and a grin crossed his face. “You know I’m all in. Always have been and always will be. But I’d have a bit more vim and vigor with a cup of joe.”

Chara smiled as she rose. “Give me just a couple of minutes, Dr. Steward, sir, and I’ll have you taken care of.”

Renee tugged at Chara's blouse. "Let the big guy wait a bit longer, honey. I need you here for our next topic."

"Have we all forgotten this little baby?" Renee plopped a folder on the table, spreading the contents across its surface. "Ruth's parents are suing us for \$45 million over Ruth's death while serving with our team in China?"

"I don't care what plans we concoct in the safety of this cellar. All of this—" she waved her arms around the room, "—all your precious equipment in your precious war-room, will be gone a few short weeks from now. All our KPF funds, not to mention those of Church in the City. Gone. All the funds of our team members. Re-distributed."

"In precisely three weeks this case goes to trial—and we've chosen *not* to make a defense! In legalese we call that *stupidity* and *suicide*. I just thought I'd mention that before we finish our neat little plans."

Renee turned and looked at Christopher. Her eyes brimmed with tears. "Please, Christopher, I know you said we aren't fighting this. But think about the teams! Think about the mission!"

Christopher sat next to Renee, his friend since their freshman year of college, now serving as KPF's lawyer.

"That's exactly what I'm thinking about, sis! If we start to compromise our biblical foundations now, where do we stop? I *am* thinking about our teams and the mission. Either God will protect us or He has better plans for furthering His Kingdom. Remember? Love your enemies. No compromise."

Renee's head dropped, and she let out a long sigh. "As stubborn as my husband."

The colonel walked back and leaned on the table. "I'm afraid we're innocent pawns in a much larger drama than we imagine. I've already told the commander this. The forces against us are not merely flesh and blood. They are spiritual forces of wickedness in heavenly places."

Renee looked up. "Exactly. That's my point."

The soldier silenced her with a look honed over decades of commanding men in battle. "I said innocent, little sister, not helpless. This is first and foremost a spiritual battle, so we must begin and end the battle beseeching the Lord of Heaven's

Armies. I've walked down this path before, manipulated by forces beyond my ability. At that time I walked it without seeking God's help. I won't make *that* mistake again."

"Innocent as doves, but wise as serpents," Jeanie whispered. Win's gray-haired wife took his hand and winked at the former special forces officer.

"Wisdom to navigate this quest will come only as we abide in God's Word and cry out to Him in prayer," Jeanie continued. "This time Colonel Winthrop Dunbar is leading his troops with biblical principles toward an eternal promise. Much, much mightier weapons than he ever wielded on the battlefield."

The colonel nodded and squeezed her hand.

Christopher took Chara's hand, and all eyes turned to them.

"Before I called the colonel back from Southeast Asia," said Christopher, "I asked him to read the book of Revelation several times. Let's make no mistake. If we are the last generation, we are also the Revelation generation. And, if so, the enemy is just getting started."

Christopher paused to let this sink in. "We have all read *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, so we know how costly the advance of God's Kingdom has proven throughout history."

Christopher surveyed his teammates. Heads bowed as they recalled the horrendous yet inspiring stories of sacrifice.

"And now dear sweet Ruth has been added to that roll call of the faithful." Christopher touched the scar above his eye as he gazed at Ruth's journal entry. Eventually he turned again to the group.

"You guys, it will only get worse before it gets *eternally* better. The cost of the Great Commission is that someone must suffer. Paul said to his disciples 'So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you.' Until the grains of wheat fall into the ground and die, they bear no fruit."

Christopher slowly slid his chair back and stood at attention. One by one the others followed suit.

Slowly but deliberately he said, "We knew this was the cost of being the final generation. Someone must pay it. But remember, He is worthy!"

He made eye contact with each member of the faithful band. "Are you still with me?"

“Till there’s *no place left*, buddy!” Nic replied quickly. “You can’t scare us off.”

The others nodded and Christopher smiled. “Then let’s win for the Lamb who was slain the just reward of His suffering!”

The cohort clasped hands and cried out to the Ancient of Days from the hundred-year-old cellar.

“Christopher,” Renee said meekly after the last amen, “how would you like me to respond to the lawsuit?”

“Well,” Christopher winked at Chara, “we do have a strategy for that—sort of. We’re gonna do just what the Bible says to do—no matter the results, even though we’re scared to death.”

Renee’s face registered dismay.

Chara hugged her. “Hold on, sis! Let’s see what God does.”

“We have to leave the results with our heavenly Father,” Christopher said. “The authorities may take all we have. They may drive us underground. But no matter the cost, we will not shrink from taking the good news to every last people group on earth. This is the final lap—a sprint to 2025.”

Christopher rolled up his sleeves and sat down again. “Now, honey, what are you doing standing there hugging your friend? Her husband needs a fresh cup of joe. In fact, we all do. It’s time to get to work!”

Chara threw a wadded paper at her husband.

“‘Little Napoleon’ is right!” she said to John, grinning.

TWO

Patricia Grant couldn't sit still. Anger, bitterness, sorrow and hurt seethed within her. Pain over her daughter Ruth's death in China continued to wrack her soul. Nothing felt right. Not even fighting to shut down this KPF cult group.

Marlene Hayes, Director Wroth's right hand, had coached her thoroughly, and the well-oiled machinations of the International Coalition for the Preservation of World Peace hummed along. Director Wroth's full resources assured that. Highly paid lawyers kept the Grants informed of every development.

In their folly of putting up no defense, the Kingdom Preparation Force had ensured the trial would come and go even more quickly than anticipated, as if that mattered. The IC's juggernaut would steamroll the tiny missions organization, regardless.

The media was having a field day crucifying KPF founder Christopher Owen. Instead of passing quietly, the story grew exponentially, with reporters and news trucks camped out in front of the Grants' home and the KPF headquarters.

Patricia and her husband occasionally ventured out to share their feelings and give the sympathetic media updates on the case. From within her virtual prison, Patricia blogged and tweeted incessantly. And at Marlene's suggestion, Patricia formed a parents' association to denounce the KPF and discuss ways to protect young people from its evil clutches.

Still, nothing felt right.

Now, exhausted from the endless crusade, Patricia sat on the couch next to the living room window.

Rays of morning sunlight diffused through the sheer curtains.

The doorbell rang. "Now what?" she muttered.

She peered at the woman standing sheepishly before her, a small book in her hands.

"Mrs. Grant?"

"Yes?" Patricia thought she recognized the face. "You spoke at Ruth's memorial service. You're one of Ruth's friends."

“Yes, ma’am. I’m sorry to bother you, and I feel awfully ashamed. You remember when you asked for Ruth’s journals? We sent them all to you that night, but last night I was cleaning out her room and found this one from a few years ago. I brought it to you as soon as I could.”

Patricia accepted a worn blue notebook, and the woman turned and started slowly up the sidewalk as reporters craned their necks to survey the situation.

“Wait!” Something in Patricia longed for the woman to stay.

The woman turned.

“You—you knew Ruth pretty well, didn’t you?”

A tear escaped the woman’s eye as she smiled. “Ruth and I were good friends. We met weekly the last year of her life.”

Patricia’s eyes widened. “Hold on ... You’re *his* wife!” Patricia slammed the door shut.

Cameras at curbside clicked furiously.

Chara Owen turned for the lonely trek up the sidewalk, but before she had reached the gate Patricia opened the front door and ran to her. She grasped Chara’s arm gently. As cameras snapped, she called out loudly through a forced smile, “I’m so glad you’re here. Please come in for a moment, honey.”

As she escorted Chara back toward the house, Patricia leaned close and whispered in her ear, “The media circus out there will roast you mercilessly, especially once they realize who you are. Maybe it’s better if you stay for a bit. Would you come in for a cup of tea or coffee and—and—tell me about my Ruth’s last few months?”

They walked swiftly to Patricia’s door as reporters shouted questions from the street. One rose above the din: “Mrs. Grant! Does this visit from the wife of the cult you’re suing indicate an out-of-court settlement is being negotiated?”

Patricia wavered as they reached the house.

“Mrs. Grant, you do know who I am, right? Are you sure you want me to come in?” Chara asked gently.

Tears began streaming down Patricia’s cheeks from her bloodshot eyes. She reached up and smeared her running mascara. “N—no, I’m not. But j—just come in, please. I need to know more about my daughter’s last few months.”

Patricia stood erect and closed the front door behind them, shutting out the distractions of the reporters.

Minutes later, Patricia set a steaming teapot on the table and filled their porcelain cups. Hers sat undisturbed as she peppered her foe's wife with questions from a mother's heart.

Chara's gentle manner dismantled Patricia's defenses. *How does this woman—who should be my enemy—put my heart at ease?* Patricia went through half a box of tissues as Chara shared about Ruth's devotion to the Lord and, as much as she knew, of Ruth's activities in her last few months and days.

Patricia's body shook with sobs as Chara described Ruth's love for her parents and her earnest desire that they draw closer to God and understand why Ruth was so surrendered to Him.

Two hours later, when Chara had to leave, Patricia said, "Thank you for coming. I would never have expected to let you in, but thank you. It sounds like you genuinely loved my Ruth."

Patricia stiffened as Chara hugged her, but as the embrace continued, her body relaxed.

Patricia reluctantly showed Chara to the back door. "Slip out the alley, honey, and circle around to your car. Perhaps the media won't see you that way."

As Chara stepped through the garden trellis into the alley, Patricia shook her head. *Such simple love, faith, and peace. Here I am on the side of good. Why is it that my enemy's wife is the first truly decent person I have met, through this whole process?*

Clutching Ruth's notebook in her trembling hand, Patricia went inside and ascended the stairs to Ruth's bedroom. Seeing Ruth's mementos, Patricia cast herself prostrate on the bed and sobbed again, "Why? Why? Why?"

As her body stopped convulsing, it struck her that she had visited with Ruth's friend but never thought of visiting with Ruth *herself* through her journals.

Ruth's journals had felt sacrosanct, but now Patricia realized they held the key to understanding her daughter's heart.

"Ruth, if you can see or hear me, please forgive me."

Patricia picked up a stack of six journals, sank into a massive papasan chair in Ruth's room and began a journey through the last years of her daughter's life.

One entry in particular struck her:

*How can I keep up the facade any longer?
I know so much about God. I've been to church all my life,
and my bishop talks about living a good life.
Is this all there is to religion?
When I read the Bible, it seems the people in it actually knew God!
They spoke with Him, lived with Him, and lived for Him.
It was a lifestyle and more,
a marriage that affected everything around them.
It was a new birth into a living relationship,
not a physical birth into a dead religion.
A relationship—not a list of do's and don'ts.
As much as I love my family and my church, I need new life, O God.
I need forgiveness of my sin. I need to come back to my Creator.
I want to be married to You, Jesus.*

On and on Patricia read, of Ruth's new birth and how she was disciplined by Christ-followers in school, of Ruth's desire to live wholeheartedly for the One Who died for her, of how she became involved in the KPF and of her hopes for the Tuxiang people in China.

Patricia read for hours. *I've never felt so confused in my life. Is this idea of being "born again" really true?*

From time to time Patricia paused her reading and managed, with great difficulty, to look up Bible verses Ruth had referenced. It appeared to her that the Bible supported Ruth's experience.

Anger began welling up inside Patricia. *Why hasn't our bishop told us anything about needing to be born again?*

Her next thought was just the opposite. *If neither our current bishop nor any of our previous bishops have told us about this new birth, maybe Ruth was the one who was mistaken.*

As Patricia wavered between these conflicting views, she couldn't shake the impression that the Bible supported Ruth's perspective. Finally she blurted toward the ceiling, "God, if there really is more to the Christian life, show me!"

I must call my bishop. He can unravel this for me.

When the bishop's secretary answered, Patricia asked for an

appointment to see him the next day.

“I’m sorry, the bishop is tied up all day tomorrow. I can give you an appointment—” Patricia heard appointment book pages rustling “—let’s see. How’s Thursday, a week from tomorrow? Say, 2:00 in the afternoon?”

After weeks of dealing with relentless lawyers, I know there’s a quicker way in.

“Now you listen to me. I have been a member of First Church all my life. My grandparents were among the founding members. My husband and I support the church quite substantially. If you want to shield the bishop from friction with the church board, and you don’t want any interruption in our offerings, I suggest you make time for me on the bishop’s calendar—*tomorrow*.”

“Oh, I—I—I didn’t realize it was *urgent*, Mrs. Grant. You know many people just want to monopolize the bishop. But he always has time for really urgent needs of important members. Would 2:30 tomorrow be okay?”

Patricia agreed, hung up, and returned to Ruth’s room. She picked up the next journal and read through the night.

* * *

At 2:30 the following day Patricia sat across from the bishop, pouring out her concerns about what she had read.

“You see, Bishop Evans, I am really uncertain about my own salvation and that of my husband. Have we been Christians in name only? What does it *feel like* to be a Christian? Shouldn’t I have some sort of emotions in this whole affair?”

“Dear Mrs. Grant,” the good-natured bishop chuckled, “you can’t go by your feelings. I must say all this ‘born again’ stuff has upset quite a few of our parishioners. I’ll ask you the same things I ask each of them.

“Were you baptized as an infant?”

Patricia nodded.

“Did you go through confirmation as a child?”

She nodded again.

“And have you adhered to the teachings of the church, given a portion of your wealth to the needy, and served the church in various ways?”

“Yes.”

“Then you’re a Christian, Mrs. Grant. Your grandparents and parents were born to this life, and so were you. You’re a good Christian and have shown the fruit of it. Don’t let some hot-blooded fanatic make you feel guilty about this sin stuff. You’re forgiven and you’re a child of God. When Jesus died on the cross, He forgave all of us. We are all children of God.”

“But I don’t feel forgiven. I feel guilty.”

“Ah—ah—ah!” The bishop shook his finger. “There you go with feelings again. This is something you must take by faith.”

“Yes, I understand that, but don’t you think I should have *felt* forgiven at some point in my life?”

“My dear woman, I have no doubt you *have* felt forgiven at times. It’s just that in your present emotional state, you don’t remember those times. You’ve experienced a lot of grief and been under a lot of pressure the last several weeks. What you need now is to put this behind you and get some rest. You’ll feel better when the distress is over. May I suggest a vacation?”

“Now, let me pray for you. I’m afraid my next appointment is in a few minutes.”

After praying for Patricia as a father would with a child, the bishop took her by the hand and led her into the reception area. She left the office numbly. *The bishop knows even less about the Christian life than I do. I at least know that I know nothing! If he doesn’t have answers, who might?*

Chara? That’s it, I’ll call Chara Owen.

As Patricia walked toward her car, she realized she didn’t know how to reach Chara. As much as she loathed the idea, she decided to call the KPF office to get Chara’s phone number.

She looked up the KPF headquarters on her smart phone. With trembling hands, digit by digit, she keyed in the number.

“KPF, this is Christopher, may I help you?”

Patricia’s heart pounded. *Christopher Owen? What is he doing answering the phone?*

“Hello?” Christopher repeated.

“This—this is Patricia Grant.”

The line went silent.

“Listen, Mr. Owen,” Patricia blurted. “I’m confused. I need to talk to Chara as soon as possible.”

Patricia heard a muffled shout, then Chara’s voice.

“Patricia?”

“I’ve just read all of Ruth’s journals, and I’ve got questions about my salvation. My bishop doesn’t have the answers, and I was—was—was wondering—well, I think you’re the only person I know who can answer my questions. I know your husband must hate me, but would you be able to come over tonight? I just need to get some answers.”

“Mrs. Grant! I’d be happy to come. Will your husband be there? If so, c—could I bring my husband?”

“N—no. Uh, well. I’m so confused. I don’t know.”

Just then Patricia saw the bishop leaving the church office for his “appointment,” golf bag slung over his shoulder. Patricia stared incredulously, then jumped in her car and slammed the door.

“Yes! Yes, he may come also.”

* * *

That night Patricia opened her back door to the gentle knock of Christopher and Chara Owen. She eyed Christopher warily, but Chara broke the awkwardness by hugging Patricia.

Mr. Grant ushered the two couples into the den, where they traded polite remarks as Patricia served tea.

When the small talk waned, Christopher cleared his throat. “Mr. and Mrs. Grant, this is perhaps the most awkward position we’ve ever been in. We loved your daughter dearly, and we—”

Patricia stopped him. “She’s the reason we asked you here. My heart has been burning ever since I read her journals. We don’t want to discuss the lawsuit or her death. I—we just want to know what changed in Ruth—what her salvation looked like.”

The Grants listened raptly as the Owens shared the simple, wonderful news of God’s love for them, and their total lostness apart from Him. Christopher shared how Jesus died on a cross to pay for their sins and then rose again to prove He is the King who governs life. The Grants looked at the floor as Christopher explained the response God requires from everyone.

“‘Repent and believe.’ That’s what Jesus said. ‘Deny yourself. Take up your cross daily and follow Me.’

“These are not the words of cultural Christianity. Yet Jesus promises that His Spirit will be in us like springs of living water in response to such complete surrender.

“He is the treasure we’ve all been searching for,” Christopher continued. “What Ruth found, Mr. and Mrs. Grant, was a living relationship with Jesus Christ—a relationship that starts with dying to your old self through repentance and receiving forgiveness and new life through faith in Him. This isn’t a once-a-week or twice-a-month faith, but a 24/7 lifestyle of living life *with* Him and *for* Him—living out the purposes for which He created you.”

In the quietness of their living room, the Grants surrendered to God and experienced new birth. The surprise and joy Christopher and Chara felt over this miracle was as great as anything they had experienced in China. The four wept and talked excitedly, and Chara and Patricia embraced repeatedly.

At a lull in their celebration, Christopher said, “Mr. and Mrs. Grant, we pledged to pay all the damages you have asked for, and that won’t change just because you’re now our new brother and sister in Christ.”

“Mr. Owen,” Patricia said, taking his hand in both of hers.

“Christopher,” he said gently.

“Christopher,” she corrected herself, “until this evening I hated you and all I thought you stood for. But what God has done in our lives changes everything. How can I require damages from you when I am the one who has been at fault? You have given us something worth more than the \$45 million we were suing you for.

“It seems to me that if one is going to live for Jesus Christ, it must be all or nothing, not this empty sham we have been living to this point. I regret the damage we have done to the KPF. I hope you can forgive us for dragging your name through the mud.”

“I’ve experienced worse,” Christopher chuckled, touching the scar above his eye. “Of course we forgive you.”

Mr. Grant spoke up. “I do have one favor to ask, Christopher.”

“Anything.”

He leaned over and whispered in Patricia’s ear. She nodded.

With trembling hands, he picked up a stack of Ruth's tattered notebooks and placed them in Christopher's arms.

"Help us get Ruth's journals published. She's famous, you know. If these journals can help others know Jesus Christ and help the KPF inspire others to share this news around the world, then maybe it can make up for some of the damage we've done. What we have just received from God—well, everyone in the world should have the chance to receive this!"

* * *

Marlene had rarely heard Michael Wroth even raise his voice. Now he pounded his fist on his desk. "What do you mean they dropped the case? And they've been *converted*? Marlene, fix this!"

Wroth's office was in confusion and dismay. One short phone call from a determined woman had ended their only legal avenue for shutting down the KPF.

Marlene had tried all her subtle persuasive tactics, then her strong-arm techniques as well. But not even the Director of the International Coalition for the Preservation of World Peace himself was able to persuade Patricia Grant to change her mind. The legal flotilla that had anchored around the Grants reluctantly sailed away.

The media stayed, but now with a bigger story. News of the Grants' conversion and their call for a Christian publishing house to print Ruth's journals created an even bigger splash than their lawsuit. Within days several offers had been submitted, and the Grants accepted one that guaranteed publication in just a matter of weeks. To the Owens' surprise, the Grants assigned all the royalties to fund the NoPlaceLeft effort!

This one decisive stroke catapulted the KPF to another level. In the following months tens of thousands of books sold, and the KPF found its coffers inundated with funds. More importantly, the number of service applications soared.

The great problem now was how to prioritize and to weed out the wishful from the faithful.

And how to maintain some semblance of order in what was fast becoming an out-of-control movement.

THREE

A **NoPlaceLeft movement** was taking North America by storm. Its waves lapped upon the shores of other continents. Churches began springing up everywhere—in church buildings, offices, homes, pancake houses, coffee shops, parks—wherever God’s people could find to meet and purposefully live out Acts 2:36–47. In over 27 cities, church planting movements began to emerge.

Seekers came from all over, inspired by the story of the KPF and its initial success; they represented churches, missions agencies, and denominations. Christopher was humbled that they came to find out how a small fellowship like Church in the City and its multiplying sister churches could spawn the KPF movement that was now resulting in movements overseas.

Ultimately, Christopher told all inquirers the same thing. It had nothing to do with them, but everything to do with God. The Kingdom Preparation Force was not more spiritual than other missionaries and missions agencies and definitely not more experienced or knowledgeable. In fact, the results were not nearly as large as some of the longer-running church planting movements around the world, even if the KPF movements had started quickly.

All the KPF could claim was a desire to complete the task by 2025 and inspire others around the globe to do the same, no matter how radical the commitment had to be. KPF members had decided to act as if they were waging a war, which, in the spiritual realm, they were. They chose to live with a wartime mentality in a peacetime society. Their deep desire to hasten the return of Christ motivated them to take exceptional risks.

And KPF teams were not going to stop until there was *no place left* where the good news of Jesus had not penetrated deeply. They longed to see Kingdom movements spread to every people group. Christopher was quick to remind everyone that such resolve and the ensuing success had come with a great price—imprisonment,

beatings, deportations, death. Ultimately, Church in the City and KPF members resolved to live as if they were the last generation.

In light of that, Christopher concluded that God must have had mercy on that simple desire and commitment and had granted them success. As a result, they would gladly share their training, knowledge, insights, and resources with any Christian group that asked. And they were eager to learn from others. Only a collaborative effort by the whole body of Christ globally would fulfill the mission of the King.

And so they did. They mobilized, advised, and trained when asked, often taking members of other churches and missions groups into their own KPF boot camp. In addition, they received suggestions from others who were further down the CPM path than they were, especially about the wisest way to mentor the budding church planting movements in Southeast Asia.

Thrust into the public spotlight, KPF members were honored to be so sought out and therefore, at every turn, had to guard against pride. What inspired them the most were the stories of the many other churches and organizations that began to make sacrifices in running the final lap of the Great Commission. One particular day at their staff meeting, KPF leaders shared emails and stories they had received.

“Brothers and sisters, these are my heroes—these individuals, churches, and agencies that have made sacrifices to participate in what God wants to do in this generation!” said Christopher.

“I want to share the first story with you. Nic and I were in Ohio consulting with a rather large fellowship there. They run about fifteen hundred in worship and were getting ready for a major building program. Their building holds only seven hundred, so they have three worship services right now. They know that when they move into their proposed three-thousand-seat auditorium, they’ll grow to over two thousand in a couple of months.”

Chuckles came from the corner. “So what were they consulting you for?” asked Phil Young, who had been a part of the first China team.

Christopher smiled. “I don’t know. I guess some of the elders were hesitant about asking their people to give basically a second tithe to finance the twenty-million-dollar facility. They wanted

to give more money to missions, especially when they heard our story, but didn't see how they could."

Nic slid to sit next to Christopher and winked. "Here is the really amazing part. Christopher and I shared with them about God's heart for the world. Within a few hours, the pastor and elders decided to go through with the giving program they were proposing to finance the building."

Christopher and Nic could see everyone's shoulders slump. Someone in the circle muttered sarcastically, "Another glorious building raised for the Kingdom of God!"

Christopher said, "Don't knock buildings. Churches have to meet somewhere; it's just that we often devote too much priority to the facility. If we spent on missions all the money we spend on buildings, we could have financed and finished the task a long time ago. We don't lack the resources—just the resolve!"

"This church in Ohio realized that. They decided they could handle slower growth and add even more worship services, perhaps even start a few new churches elsewhere in the city to reduce the demand on the main building."

Renee stopped him. "Wait. I thought you said they decided to go through with the building program."

Nic grinned. "Wrong! We said they decided to go through with the *giving* program, only now they've decided to use all that money to finance people from their church that will go as a team to penetrate new unreached people groups. The first team will be sent to a people group they have adopted in the Middle East! Right, buddy?"

Christopher beamed. "Yes! Twenty million bucks! Plus, some of the members who weren't that excited about giving an extra tithe to finance another building got really excited about doing something as Kingdom significant as bringing the gospel to unreached people groups. I got a call yesterday from one of the staff. The initial pledges are in, and it looks like they're going to approach the twenty-one million dollar mark! They've started a campaign to call on other churches to forsake building new structures and encourage their members to give a second tithe for missions!"

Everyone applauded, some praising God out loud.

Nic, the businessman, added, “The demand for our KPF boot camp is so high that we can’t handle all the teams wanting to go through. So this Ohio church is going to help us franchise the training to be duplicated around the country, starting there first. They’re sending a couple here in two weeks to participate in the next boot camp.”

Grace Wu, the other IT specialist, pulled up an email on her tablet. “A lot of fellowships feel they can’t reach into multiple places, but they can seriously engage just one unreached people group. One group in Georgia has already been sending out several short-term teams each year but without any real strategy; they just send teams wherever they’re invited or have connections or sometimes just wherever people want to go.

“Now they have decided to consolidate and send just one long-term team to an unreached group in North Africa. Well, I guess a lot of churches are starting to do that. But this church is not as big as a lot of the others that are doing that, only about 400 people.

“But they’re going to send out six members, financing them in a variety of ways: car washes, offerings, auctions, bake sales—you name it.

“What I thought was exciting was that they are adopting a wartime mentality until they successfully reach this group. They have encouraged the members to give up some pleasure like a hobby, a favorite grocery item, an extra movie each month, whatever, and give that money to the mission team. Other people have taken a part-time or Saturday job and are giving all that money to the team. They expect to send out this team before the end of the year!”

Timothy, Grace’s husband, added, “Another church got very creative as well. They decided that the last Sunday offering of each month will be completely given to send their UPG team. Would you believe that those last-Sunday offerings have skyrocketed?”

John added, “I heard of another church that even sold ‘war bonds’ like the government did during World War II. People could buy them in amounts as low as \$5. These war bonds, however, will not be paid back to the purchasers. Instead, the members know they will get heavenly interest one day!”

Everyone laughed at such a creative idea.

“They’re selling them in Awanas, small groups, even Sunday morning worship times!” John finished.

“Okay, dudes, my turn,” said Lance Chu, another original China team member. “Like there’s this megachurch in Texas that loses three staff members. It’s one of those churches that’s so big it needs to have a directory board for all the staff. So, the senior pastor dude is new and is going to replace these three staff, plus just got budget to add two more.

“Like, you know what he does? He tells the church what he heard about KPF, even listened to a couple of Christopher’s podcasts. He tells the church he wants to add the new staff, only he wants the dudes to live overseas in another people group!

“Almost got him fired at first, but soon the church wised up. The regular members realized they could do a lot of the things those new staff members would have had done, and they agreed to send out a team of five.

“Now, because this big church was willing to give up some staff funding at home, they’re sending a team to Central Asia! They’re so excited about it, they’re trying to find more money in the budget they can redirect to send more people to join them in the same country so they can branch out to other people groups!”

A soft, enthusiastic voice was next after the applause. “My story,” said Stacy Fernandez, “is just the opposite. It’s about a fellowship in Oregon with only eighty-five people. I don’t know if you guys realize it, but most churches in America have fewer than a hundred regular attenders. I think that many of them feel helpless to jump in and do what we’re talking about. Eighty-five people normally can’t finance a whole mission team.

“But this little fellowship wasn’t going to let that stop them. They’ve been following the KPF blog and have been stirred by the vision and the stories.

“In their small town there are five other evangelical churches, each numbering a hundred and fifty members or less. The first church approached all the others with their desire to send a team to ignite a church planting movement among an unreached people group.

“My sweet husband,” she said as she squeezed Nic’s hand, “and John went there to discuss with all six fellowships just how

easy this plan could be to implement.

John picked up the story from there. “We’re going to do all the training for them to save them money. With involvement from all six churches and some real deep digging into their pockets, they’ve managed to find enough money and volunteers to send three families and one single person. They’ll have to live with minimal expenses, so we helped them find a high-priority people group where the cost of living is very low!

“Get ready to meet them, guys. They’ll be here for training in two weeks!”

The group waited as it became obvious that Chara wanted to share but didn’t quite know how to start. “You guys know how much the Fernandezes’s and our thinking was changed by the CPM training we got in Singapore. It has forever changed our approach to starting Christ-communities. We received so much from the organization that sponsored it.

“Would you believe they recently wrote us that they had received something from us? Inspired by the intense focus of our two-to-four-year teams, they have begun forming apostolic teams from their own missionaries whose responsibility is to itinerate among UUPGs to do the same type of thing we have done. And wherever they see the fires of CPMs start, they are going to take the hot coals from those people groups to nearby people groups to do the same, much like the Tuxiang are doing. I’m just humbled by this—that God would use us!”

John said, “When a fellowship in the Philippines approached us about how to send a team of three to a people group in Laos, I was a bit skeptical. Finding the finances and then building trust to collect and channel that money without any compromises was tough. But Colonel Dunbar has had a bit of experience in that regard, right?”

Win Dunbar squirmed. “Well, yes, I’ve had more than my share of working with local folks in various projects.” He cleared his throat. “I helped them see how they could work together through a trustworthy accountability system. I then taught them how to set aside a portion of their farms’ output or livestock as a faith offering. As they surrendered to Jesus as Master and decided to give a portion of their produce to sending the team,

the harvests in those portions of their fields and flocks have far outstripped the rest of their harvest.

“I’m amazed. They are going to fully support this small team in a way they had not dreamed possible. What’s more, my contacts tell me that a global movement is developing as churches from many nations are sending teams to unreached areas. North America cannot and should not do it alone.”

The stories kept coming—of small and large churches, new and old denominations, innovative and traditional missions agencies around the world—all inspired to make sacrificial attempts to do in their generation what few had thought could be done and to think in new ways with clear priorities. The race toward 2025 was accelerating.

And in many of these “sending” countries, church planting movements were emerging as churches renewed a commitment to sharing the gospel, discipling, starting churches, raising up leaders in a simple biblical way, and expecting new disciples to do the same. In the wake of the CPMs, many unreached people group immigrants even in North America were being swept into the Kingdom of God.

NoPlaceLeft by 2025 had become a rallying point for finishing the task. The real-time *Unengaged Unreached People Group Countdown* app had become viral, as tens of thousands of disciples tracked the progress of the Kingdom of God to the last frontiers. Christopher pulled out his smartphone and glanced at the screensaver: 3,004 UUPGs glowed in red. *Oh Lord, over two hundred UUPGs already engaged with a church planting strategy. You’re doing it! We’re almost under three thousand!*

He cast his eyes around the room, amazed as he listened to the stories. Nowhere did he hear jealousy or worry about others getting more results or venturing into “KPF territory.” Instead, he heard excitement that God was stirring up something big, something awesome, something much bigger than the KPF. He heard a new cooperation, a new inspiration, a new commitment, a new priority. It was all about the *Kingdom of God*.

And though church planting movements were exciting, they were not the goal. They were just the starting point to get to *no place left* where the gospel was not proclaimed.

A quiet vibration on Christopher's phone drew his eyes toward it again. The numbers now glowed 3,003 UUPGs.

Maybe it really will happen in our generation. God, don't let it stop with this handful of stories! Let us be the final generation.

Even as he unlocked his phone, an email arrived. The subject line: "KPF group preaches false doctrine." His heart sank. A heaviness tugged at the corners of his mind.

God, do I read these things or not? Please don't let us get distracted. Please don't let me get distracted.

FOUR

Michael Wroth's power grew daily. As Director of the International Coalition for the Preservation of World Peace, he held more sheer authority and raw power than did most presidents and prime ministers. In fact, as Wroth gained increasing influence and popularity even George Springer, the handpicked successor to the president of the United States, and Vice President Philip Bowen sometimes bantered with him about who had more clout.

Wroth directed a crack security force of well over a hundred thousand troops, and while that did not approach the size of many nations' armed forces, it was large enough to suit his purposes. His troops, the International Coalition (IC) forces, were used only for *securing* peace and eliminating subversive groups. The responsibility for maintaining *ongoing* peace and order rested with local governments or, when needed, with United Nations peacekeepers. With the precision of a surgeon, Wroth inserted his highly mobile, superbly trained units into key situations, struck decisively, and moved on. Terrorist cells that appeared in headline news one week were eliminated the next week. No one complained. The world was ready for order.

IC forces, wearing their black berets embroidered with a silver triangle, quickly gained a respect—or dread—rivaling that of the Army Rangers, Green Berets, or Navy SEALs. In fact, many IC soldiers had transferred from these units. Terrorist groups feared IC forces more than they feared these others, however, because IC forces did not have to wade through bureaucratic red tape before striking. Wroth's *carte blanche* authority was well known, and his funding for training, weapons, and deployment seemed limitless.

Around the globe, Wroth's popularity increased daily. The masses were refreshed by his decisiveness in eliminating terrorists. As a result, no country argued when IC forces showed up on its doorstep to eradicate them, especially since the IC forces

didn't stay around long. They came and went unobtrusively. Governments liked that; the IC zapped their problems but stayed out of their hair.

Drug trafficking took a nosedive. Wroth and his commandos were frequently photographed next to downed drug-laden cargo planes or on location in Colombia near a seized estate or in Vietnam near a burning poppy field. Violence diminished so greatly in Mexican border towns that formerly wary American tourists began once again to venture south of the border for excursions.

Latest in Wroth's series of successes was the distribution of food to starving masses. A severe famine had struck many of the developing countries in Africa, Central Asia, and Central America. Until the IC intervened, hundreds of thousands were starving. Corrupt local officials diverted much aid into their own pockets. Donors who saw this were reluctant to contribute—that is, until IC forces began escorting the shipments and tracking distribution. Donations quadrupled as television images relayed the success of IC-escorted shipments. Within a span of months, the famine's stranglehold was loosened as aid reached the intended recipients.

* * *

Ethan Farnsworth, Number Three, sat across the coffee table from Wroth in IC's Washington office.

"I do not like it, Michael. Number One is getting suspicious. Your popularity is too widespread. He is questioning your ability to act covertly as one of The Ten. You need to make a radical turnaround, or something dreadful may happen to you!"

"I'm surprised at you, Ethan!" Wroth leaned back on a soft cushion. "We've discussed all this before. You know as well as I do that we won't usher in the Rebirth without both our secret alliance operating from within The Ten *and* my growing popularity and acceptance on the world stage.

"Danger? Danger is an ever-present constant I accept and guard against. For instance, whom can we trust in The Ten? I mean, *unequivocally* trust?"

"There is Number Nine, my Korean partner on Religion and Education. I do not think we can trust my other partner, Number

Eight, from India.” Farnsworth furrowed his brow in thought and continued. “On Science and Economics the only one we can thoroughly trust is Number Seven, the Arab. Although I must say Number Six, the African, has been deeply moved by what the IC has been doing for the starving people on that continent.

“And on Politics, well, there is you,” Farnsworth smiled, “though officially you are only an apprentice. We may be able to trust Number Five, the South American, though he and Number Four, the Russian, are so close to Number One that it is hard to say.”

“So, besides the two of us, there are two others we are certain of,” Wroth summarized. “Now, how many are absolutely opposed to me and to our work to launch the Rebirth in the near future?”

“Definitely Number One, our Prime Director,” Farnsworth said quickly.

“Uh-uh-uh! Not *our* Prime Director.” Wroth grinned.

Farnsworth glanced nervously around the office and shook his head. “Okay, *the* Prime Director. Who else is opposed? Definitely Number Two, the Chinese gentleman who is head of Science and Economics. Most likely Number Four, who is like Number One’s right hand.”

Wroth jotted down notes as they talked:

Opposed:

- ✘ Number 1, Italian, Prime Director and head of Politics
- ✘ Number 2, Chinese, head of Science & Economics
- ✘ Number 4, Russian, Politics
- ✘ Number 8, Indian, Religion & Education

Uncertain:

- ? Number 5, South American, Politics
- ? Number 6, African, Science & Economics

Supportive:

- ✓ Number 3, British (Ethan), head of Religion & Education
- ✓ Number 7, Arab, Science & Economics
- ✓ Number 9, Korean, Religion & Education
- ✓ Number 10, American (self), Politics

“Well, see there, Ethan, things are about as I expected. Not bad on the whole. I could never carry out the work of the IC so

effectively without the power and resources of The Ten.

“Don’t you see?” Wroth continued reassuringly, “The IC is, in reality, just an arm of The Ten. When we—and by ‘we’ I mean The Ten—work publicly in this limited, anonymous way, we are hugely successful. And when we decide to go public, we will meet with the same success.

“Do you believe that, Ethan?”

Farnsworth considered the question, and its repercussions.

“Yes, Michael, I believe that. More importantly, I believe in *you*. You can make it work.”

“Then, Ethan,” Michael leaned forward, “it’s up to you to hold things together. Buy me time with members of The Ten. The IC won’t work without The Ten. But I’m not going to be in a position to bring about the Rebirth for another couple of years.”

“Michael, I don’t know if I can buy you that much time.”

“Do your best, my friend. Meanwhile, maintain my informants in the other two offices. I need unfettered access to the raw data and the office workings if I’m going to keep the IC growing. I’ll talk to the Prime Director and work out something with him.”

Farnsworth shook his head as he walked out the door to return to England.

Moments later, Wroth’s assistant Marlene buzzed him.

“Excuse me, Senator,”—she had continued to call him ‘Senator’ despite his relinquishing that office—“but a very strange thing has occurred. Dr. Larson Sayers is on the line—your private line that no one has access to.”

“That’s quite all right, Marlene,” Wroth laughed. “That’s Dr. Sayers’s way. Put the call through.”

Wroth smiled as he picked up the phone. “Hello, Uncle Lars! So good to hear from you!”

“And you, Michael.” The normally gentle voice sounded agitated. “Sorry to cut in on your private line, but it’s the only one that is truly secure in your office.”

“Nonsense, Uncle Larson, I have several lines that are quite secure.”

“No, actually you don’t. Michael, I need to speak with you privately at my Big Sur estate.”

“Well, will Thursday wor—”

“Michael, this is of utmost importance. You must do exactly as I say, or you will not survive the week. Most likely not even the night.”

“What? What are you talking about?”

“My jet will land at Washington Reagan in an hour. I have a trusted driver that will collect you in exactly forty-five minutes in a sedan with blackened windows at the service entrance of your building. You must disguise yourself, Michael, and slip into the sedan unnoticed. This driver will take you to the plane.

“You must make a recording of yourself and have your assistant use it as a decoy phone call an hour after you have left the building. Thirty minutes later, have her phone someone and tell him she has to cancel a dinner date. She is to say that the two of you will be working at the office all night on some urgent business.”

“Uncle Larson, this is all very unsettling and rushed. I can assure you that my security is quite good here.”

“Michael,” Dr. Sayers said quietly, “The Ten are very close.”

Wroth stammered, “Th-the Ten? What are you talking about?”

“Michael, I don’t have time to explain, and I prefer that you not feign ignorance. If we’ve developed any trust over your lifetime, then do exactly as I have said.”

The line went dead.

* * *

Forty-five minutes later, Wroth emerged incognito from the service entrance into a misty evening. Though the measures were extreme, Sayers’s awareness of The Ten alone had persuaded Wroth to comply.

A dark sedan awaited him. The driver said nothing, only drove. After fifteen minutes, they pulled into a private hangar where Wroth boarded a small executive jet. The plane itself was empty except for the pilot, co-pilot, and an immaculately dressed, bearded gentleman. “Good evening, sir,” he said as he took Wroth’s coat and hat.

Wroth eyes immediately lit up at the sight of Dr. Sayers’s aging personal steward.

“Charles? Are you still around?”

Actually, the director wanted to laugh, as he usually did, at the man who reminded him of Mr. French, the valet of *Family Affair*. “What are you doing away from Dr. Sayers’s side?”

“It is most urgent, sir. Dr. Sayers thought it best if I personally accompanied you. He also thought it prudent that no one else know about your meeting.”

“I agree. It must be urgent.”

Four hours later, the plane touched down in Monterey, California. Another sedan drove them the final forty-five minutes to Dr. Sayers’s wooded estate, *Optasia*.

If I had to be whisked off to someplace, this is the one place I would most want to come. Wroth recalled his frequent visits to *Optasia* as a child—playing among the redwoods as the fog rolled in off the Big Sur coastline, walking the paths through the several hundred acres, and catching frequent glimpses of the rocky coastline. Those had been times of unparalleled peace in Michael Wroth’s life. Not just emotional peace, but deeper. *A spiritual peace, maybe? Why haven’t I returned before now?*

The car turned into the drive, and they waited as an elk paid them little attention and finally meandered off the road in search of edibles.

Then Wroth spied it atop the hill. *Optasia*. Greek for “vision” or “trance” or “divine encounter.” Surely if there was any place on earth those could occur, it was here. Despite the ominous conversation that had brought him here, Wroth felt a twinge of excitement at returning, along with unexplainable peace.

“It works on you, does it not, sir? *Optasia*, that is,” said Charles, noticing the change in Wroth’s demeanor. “Each time we return here to the manor, it’s the same—deep contentment. A spiritual and emotional retreat from the world.”

“Yes, Charles. I had forgotten. It’s been too long.”

“Yes, sir. We’ve missed you, the staff and I.”

As the men left the sedan, Dr. Larson Sayers limped onto the front porch, supporting himself with an exquisitely carved walking cane he’d picked up in his travels. Wroth bounded up the short flight of steps into Sayers’s fatherly embrace.

“For the first time in my life, I wasn’t quite sure I’d get you here safely,” Sayers said, hugging him longer than normal. “Come

in; the air is getting a damp chill. Dinner is ready. We must eat before we talk.”

Arms around each other, the men entered the embrace of Optasia together.

Thank you for reading this portion of *Rebirth*

Increase *Rebirth's* ranking on Amazon
by [buying](#) and [reviewing](#) it there.

Direct feedback or inquiries to:
hastening@noplacelleft2025.org

* * *

Share *Rebirth* with others
by pointing them to this link:
NPL2025.org/pub/R.pdf

Receive updates and promotional discounts,
by signing up at eepurl.com/beXiv9

Read on in the *Rebirth* appendix to see
how this story is working out in real life.

How to get involved in No Place Left 2025— Four Stages to Completing Matthew 24:14 in Our Generation

Adapted from the Sep/Oct 2016 *Mission Frontiers* article:
[Four Stages to “No Place Left” in Our Generation](#)

The *No Place Left* saga was inspired by the *real* global movement pursuing No Place Left where Christ has yet to be named (Rom. 15:23). This movement is *not* fiction; it is *already* a reality, dedicated to launching replicating kingdom movements that multiply disciples and churches in every city, region and unreached people group (UPG).

All over the world, Jesus’ disciples are rising up to finish what He started 2000 years ago. Ours *could* be the generation that finally starts church planting movements in every last remaining people group and place on earth. The *No Place Left* saga describes just *one* way this could happen.

We have the resources. But do we have the resolve?

Our longing is, through the Holy Spirit, to fulfill Matthew 24:14 in our generation so that the gospel of the kingdom is preached in each remaining UPG/UUPG (unengaged UPG).

And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations (ethne), and then the end will come.

—*Matthew 24:14, ESV*

This task warrants a global No Place Left movement.

We could call it a **24:14 movement**.

Movements are How Peoples are Reached

Yet a local people group or city will not be reached without a Spirit-empowered local *movement* that can exceed population growth. As illustrated among the Tuxiang in *Hastening* (Book One), church planting movements (CPMs; also known as disciple making movements, or DMMs) are kingdom movements in which disciples, churches and leaders multiply many generations throughout a place or people group.

Although such movements may seem unfamiliar:

- Jesus and Paul birthed *movements* recorded in the Bible,
- most nations were first reached by such *movements*, and
- many new *movements* are now growing around the world.

However most of us lack current experience in such movements, so how can we become effectively involved in launching kingdom movements for No Place Left among the world's remaining peoples (*ethne*)?

The Experience Gap

Too many missionaries get to the field without basic skills in sharing the gospel with the lost, let alone discipling new believers in multiplying ways. For the sake of lost multitudes, we must change how we equip missionaries before sending them.

Rather than sending inexperienced laborers, the church in Antioch sent out 40% of its leadership to the mission field (Acts 13:1–3). In *Hastening*, “Church in the City” similarly gave its top leaders to the mission effort. In the same way, those committed to No Place Left must be prepared to sacrificially send their best.

While it is a huge leap for individuals to go to the mission field and seek to start a movement among a UPG without prior movement experience, we *are* seeing teams and individuals bear rapid fruit among UPGs after coaching through smaller steps. Such teams arrive among the unreached with a clearer understanding and experience in the dynamics through which biblical movements are typically birthed.

Bridging the Experience Gap

Since the late 1990s, movements have been starting among UPGs at an increasing rate as field missionaries have applied biblical principles and gathered insights from each other's successes.

Such movements now exist on every continent, in very diverse religious blocs. See [Someone has to be First](#) in the May/June 2011 *Mission Frontiers*.

For individuals and teams with no movement experience back home, it is a huge leap to enter a UPG and try to apply movement principles. Most who try often end up employing the models and methods they are familiar with, and these generally hinder the very kind of movement seen in the book of Acts.

The transition from living and serving in one's own culture to living and serving in another is challenging, to say the least. To simultaneously add a major change of ministry philosophy is to set a missionary team up for disaster.

(To learn how conventional ministry models hinder movements, see Donald McGavran's 1982 article [A Church in Every People: Plain Talk About a Difficult Subject](#) in the Oct 1997 *Mission Frontiers*, T&B Lewis' [Planting Churches: Learning the Hard Way](#) in the Jan/Feb 2009 *Mission Frontiers*, and the Nov/Dec 2015 *Mission Frontiers* article [4 Stages of a Movement](#) by Smith, Mims and Stevens.)

Two Distinct Challenges

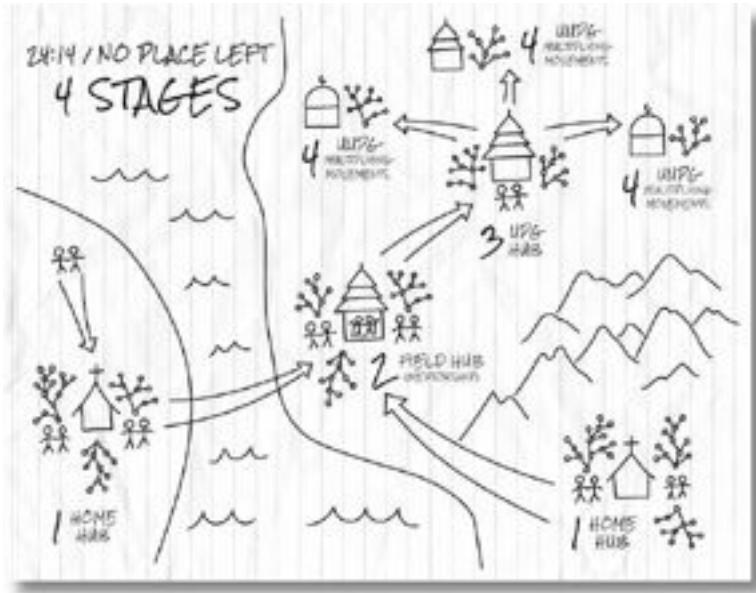
Today's missionaries face two distinct obstacles to *getting to the field prepared to birth movements*.

First is the resistance in many churches to prioritizing Jesus' Great Commission and making the sacrificial last push to finish the task. It's not that the resources aren't there, but the cost associated with the last push feel too high. **We do not lack the resources, just the resolve.**

Second is ministry models that fail to launch movements. As mentioned above, even when we sacrificially send people, we most often send missionaries who lack experience in multiplying disciples, much less multiplying churches, leaders and movements. Our missionaries are ill-prepared for the task ahead.

The following pages outline the most fruitful approach we know of to date which is rapidly coalescing as you read. We invite you to join us, for the glory of God among all nations, in this approach to pursuing completion of the task Jesus assigned us in Matthew 28:18–20.

Four Stages to No Place Left (fulfillment of Mt 24:14)



1. Home hub: Around the world, individuals and teams start by finding or forming hubs in their home cultures to live out movement principles and practices among both the majority and minority/*ethne* populations of their contexts.

2. Field hub: After laborers develop CPM proficiency at home and visit unreached areas, they intern in a field hub where a fruitful CPM team mentors them in the context of a thriving movement. There these new laborers experience the full range of CPM principles in action, in a cultural context similar to the UPG they are preparing to reach.

3. UPG hub: The new laborers move to a new area to launch a new movement in a UPG within that same affinity bloc—adapting what they have learned and experienced to pursue the Holy Spirit for a CPM/DMM there.

4. Multiplying Movements: Once a CPM emerges in that people group, rather than *exit*, they take the hot coals from the fire of that movement and help *expand* the movement to other nearby UPGs. At this stage, movements are multiplying movements.

Stage 1: Home Hub

Stage one of the *Four Stages* model involves forming home hubs in sending countries. In these hubs, individuals and teams can mature in faith to implement CPM methods to

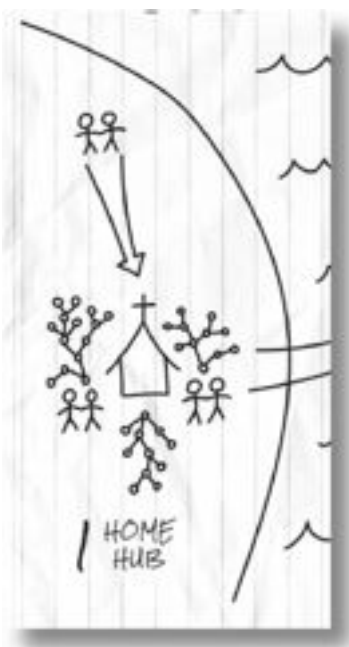
- reach the lost (not just the unchurched) with the gospel,
- make and multiply disciples,
- start and multiply healthy churches, and
- develop and multiply leaders from within the harvest.

This process starts with people like ourselves—from our culture and worldview—but must expand to cross-cultural situations in our own cities and areas.

This is a *global* task and home hubs should emerge in any country which has the church of Jesus Christ. A home hub can emerge in Manila, London, Rio, Delhi, Shanghai, Houston, Nairobi or Prague. Antioch sending bases should emerge wherever the church exists.

Our missionary teams can and must learn at home the same biblical principles they will implement among UPGs. In Chapter 36 of *Hastening*, John Steward tells Christopher that sixty-seven new churches have started in L.A., stretching out to seven new ‘generations.’ Such local ministry is fruitful soil for gaining skills for starting movements among UPGs. And again, this isn’t mere fiction. The [Mar/Apr 2016 Mission Frontiers](#) has cases studies, of five churches on three different continents, pursuing and seeing this kind of impact.

As these teams learn to make disciples who make disciples among the majority and minority populations, they will also make forays into various parts of the world to seek the Lord’s direction for a UPG to pursue with the kingdom of God.



And home hubs are emerging world-wide, but most are in the early stages. Many more churches are needed to serve as home hubs—willing to pursue a CPM/DMM in which individuals can be mentored in launching movements at home.

Whether mission teams rise up within a city or converge on the home hub from elsewhere, they need to emerge in every nation with model that work at home and among the unreached. Specific methods will adjust for the unreached, but the kingdom principles and lifestyle will be similar.

Two things are yet needed to make home hubs a reality:

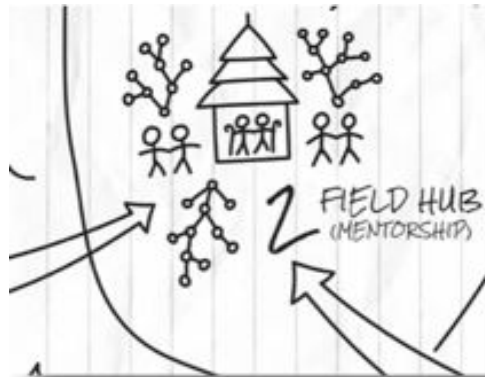
- Churches where the senior pastor and leaders embrace this model and the vision to send teams to finish the task abroad. These leaders bless and support experimental zones in which teams can learn CPM principles.
- Coordinators to handle the logistics of such home hubs. A number of church leaders are ready to walk this path, but need a champion to make these ideas a reality.

Stage 2: Field Hub

Logically, it would seem that learning to implement CPM principles at home would make implementing them in a UPG the next step. But the cross-cultural jump of application of CPM/

DMM practices in a foreign context is so great that it is actually *faster* for teams to stop along that journey to be coached in a context in which a CPM is going or on the way. That context should be similar to the one the team will end up in.

In *Hastening*, the Owens and Fernandez families fly to Singapore to get training and coaching from others who already have experience in CPMs. Ideally, it would have been even better for them to have spent several months in a CPM context before



launching. Later as KPF developed more, new teams were able learn from those that had already experienced CPMs in China and Southeast Asia.

In a true 4-stage model, for example, if the team plans to target a Buddhist UPG in South Asia, it makes sense for them to take one or two years to base in a place like Delhi or Kathmandu with a field hub team of experienced CPM practitioners. In that context they can walk the streets or dusty roads with these practitioners—both foreigners and nationals. CPMs are more easily “caught” than “taught.” In the spirit of those CPM efforts, they will find culturally-appropriate CPM tools, national partners, Great Commission coaches and increased faith that will equip them to launch into another UUPG of that same affinity bloc.

The time frame for this can be a year or two, but the goal is for them to learn and add value to the kingdom work there. Basic language study in a trade language may be appropriate during this stage. Once they have developed some proficiency in ministry they will be ready to take the next step toward their own people group. Alternatively, it may become apparent to them that they are not suited for this type of pioneering work.

In many affinity blocs, field hubs are emerging—nationals and expats with CPM experience who are willing to receive a coach a number of new missionaries from various nations. The hub team’s vision is the greater advance of the kingdom beyond their own city or people group. A number are willing, but one great obstacle hinders the development of field hubs: field hub coordinators. Coordinators are needed who will oversee the logistics of receiving new personnel and helping them get plugged in to the local efforts. Such logistics are beyond the purview of the CPM practitioners in that hub. The practitioners would gladly receive the missionaries IF someone would oversee the logistics. Perhaps this would be a retired couple, a family or single with the gift of service, or perhaps a college graduate taking a gap year or two.

Stage 3: UPG Hub

When the team leaves the field hub to launch a CPM in an unreached area is less a matter of time than of proficiency. When the team has demonstrated the ability to give themselves to the high value activities of movements and produced the fruit thereof, they are ready to tackle their own UPG. In the early stages of leaving the home



hub, a team may feel the two-year stint in a field hub is a delay in the UPG strategy. But in actuality, it is very likely they will be able to fast-forward CPM ministry in the new context because they have already tasted, smelled and touched a CPM in a similar context.

A number of us who have been a part of CPMs well understand the dark period of trial and error to find the keys to unlock a movement in a people group or city. If we had had the opportunity to see it modeled for us in a context similar to our own, the waiting period for a breakthrough and the mistakes we made along the way may have been lessened.

In *Hastening* and *Rebirth* the emphasis is clearly on starting church planting *movements* not just doing good church planting because that is *what it will take* for everyone to be reached with the gospel. In the pages of these books I have tried to paint a picture of what movements feel like and the high cost of discipleship in them. What is described here is very similar to actual events around the world.

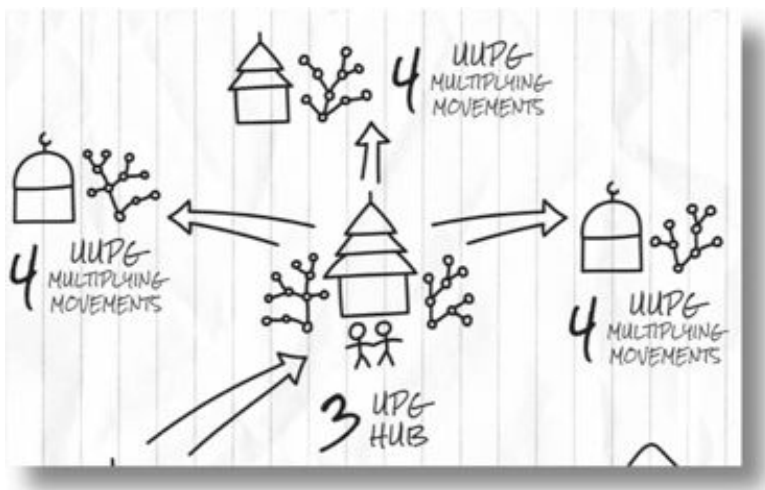
A benefit to teams launching into a UPG after the field hub stage is that it is very likely they will have formed relationships with near-culture nationals who may move with them or come for short term trip to help launch the new movement.

The UPG launch toward a CPM is the stage of this progression we are so familiar with: the missionary team that has been sent from a home culture to a foreign culture—yet with no experience or mentoring in the movement dynamics they seek to implement.

Teams at this stage need much training and coaching in movement dynamics, which is where many of us devote our efforts.

Hopefully, the four stages can shorten the years of frustration that many teams experience in trying to launch a movement among the unreached. Four stages does not eliminate the need for training and coaching, but it makes that task much easier. We cannot dictate when God will launch a movement, but we can posture our lives to move in conjunction with His Spirit better (Mark 4:26-29).

Stage 4: Multiplying Movements



In the early days of CPMs we often talked about an “exit strategy.” The idea was that when a movement began to spread among our people group, we were ready to exit the work and go to a new place. Now we realize we were a bit off in that thinking. Instead of exit, we should expand.

CPMs are much easier to start if the hot coals of a movement are transferred to nearby people groups! This is very similar to what Yijing and the Tuxiang believers did in this book—leaving China to start movements in Laos and then eventually Sumatra.

Disciples from within these movements already know how to walk a CPM path with a high level of faith. They know how to find person of peace, how to reach their households, how to plant the

initial DNA of disciples who are fervent followers of Jesus and fishers of men. They know how to implement discipleship, church planting and leadership development methods that are simple enough that new believers can practice them and pass them on. And, these hot coals are similar enough in worldview, culture and language that they can get to the heart of this UPG much faster than distant-culture believers can.

In a number of places around the world, catalytic missionaries have decided not to exit but rather to expand the movement to cascade into to other UPGs. They are launching short and long term teams of national disciples to start CPMs in these places.

To the growing vision to get to movements of multiplying *disciples, churches* and *leaders* we must add “multiplying *movements.*” The great need here is missionary catalysts who will broaden their horizon from a movement among a people to multiplying movements among many peoples. We should emulate the Apostle Paul who picked up Timothys, Priscillas, Aquilas and Epaphrases from the fires of existing movements and helped them start fires in new places.

At the end of the day, we may never send enough missionaries from home cultures to finish the task. Fortunately, we serve a Lord who told us to pray to the Lord of the Harvest for more workers—workers that would arise from the harvest (Luke 10:2). This was the King’s plan from the beginning to get to No Place Left in our generation.

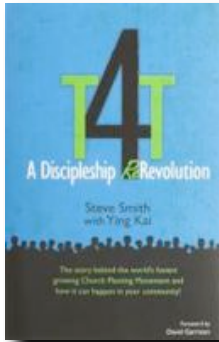
Join us!

The No Place Left or 24:14 movement is not an organization or a denomination. It is a global, open-handed movement of God’s kingdom, welcoming you to take your place. The best way to connect with us is to email us: NPLglobal@gcnow.org

Wherever you are in the world, we will seek to connect you with others near you who are pursuing No Place Left in our generation.

Let’s finish the race to get the gospel and multiplying churches to every people group by 2025!

Books by Steve Smith



T4T: A Discipleship Re-Revolution
(2011, WIGTake Resources)
with Ying Kai

Hastening
Book One in the *No Place Left* saga
(2015, 2414 Ventures)



Rebirth
Book Two in the *No Place Left* saga
(2016, 2414 Ventures)