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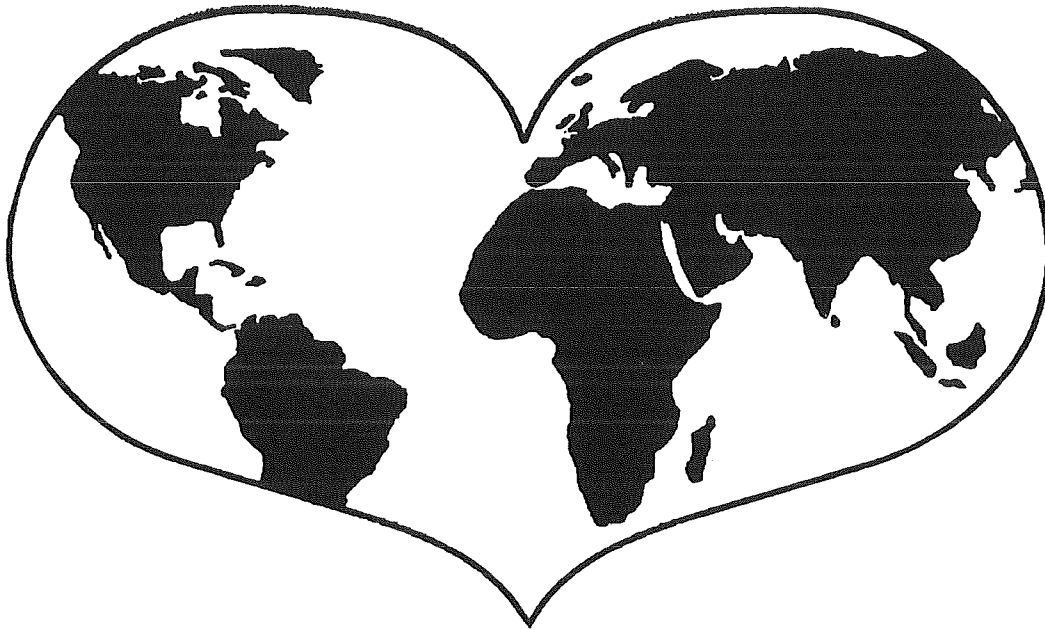
PRACTICAL HELP FOR MISSIONS INVOLVEMENT

HOW TO ADOPT/RESEARCH AN UNREACHED PEOPLE GROUP

FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP AND THE GREAT COMMISSION

MISSIONS AND THE LOCAL CHURCH

MISSIONS ADVENTURE PREPARATION SCHOOL





Chapter 8

HOW TO ADOPT/RESEARCH AN UNREACHED PEOPLE GROUP

When Foothills Fellowship, a New Mexican church of 200, first heard about the Bahui people of Pakistan, there was not one known Christian believer among them. The pastor and his wife led their congregation (consisting primarily of homeschoolers) in “adopting” this people group. They began by calling the Adopt-a-People Clearinghouse, but soon learned that there was no compiled information about this particular group, so Foothills Fellowship proceeded to take on this project alone. They began to research the Bahui people—gathering information and filling out profile charts (similar to ones included in this chapter). As a result, many church members caught God’s heart for unreached people and one family has moved to Pakistan as long-term missionaries to these people.

They also traveled to Pakistan to help this new missionary family establish their home base. During this time, they had the awesome opportunity to meet the first known Bahui believer. This young man has now dedicated the rest of his life to reaching his people (consisting of approximately 3 million people) with the message of Jesus.

A friend of ours had taken several short-term mission trips to Uganda and heard about a remote people group called the Karamojong. He began to research the Karamojong, and planned an evangelistic outreach in several key cities and villages. A month after the outreach,

my husband led a second major outreach in several other main villages. The local church was strengthened, and multitudes came to Christ. Because of the research, national Ugandans were motivated to reach other isolated people. Several new churches were established, and Karamojong pastors were raised up.

These testimonies are examples of “people group thinking.” As a family, a group of families, or an entire church, you can adopt an unreached people group to pray and intercede for and even participate in reaching them for the Lord. Perhaps your part will be to fervently pray, to sacrificially give, to help share the need with others, or to actually go.

What is a People Group?

When we look at a world map and think of different people, we usually think in terms of countries or geographical boundaries. However, each country is often made up of many distinct people groups—people sharing a common language, culture, and traditions. For example, the Kurds are a people group located in the countries of Turkey, Iran and Iraq. Although they do not currently have a land of their own, they are a distinct people group that can be targeted for the Gospel.



By definition, a people group is “a significantly large grouping of individuals who perceive themselves to have a common affinity for one another because of their shared language, religion, ethnicity, residence, occupation, class or caste, situation or combinations of these.” From the standpoint of communicating the message of Christ, it is “the largest group within which the gospel can flow along natural lines without encountering barriers of understanding or acceptance due to culture, language, geography, etc.”¹ When beginning to look at a people group, we try to find out what they have in common with each other and what things separate them from other groups.

Why Think in Terms of People Groups?

Before ministering to a particular group of people, it is important to understand their background and culture. Learn the general needs of the community, and the specific needs of children, youth, adults, families, and senior citizens.

When the task is broken into specific needs and goals for one people group, the goal of world evangelization seems achievable.

The goal in adopting a people is to:

1. Find out all you can about a particular group of people.
2. Accept responsibility for seeing this people group reached with the Gospel.
3. Come up with specific strategies to reach these people.
4. Effectively minister among these people until there is a community of believing Christians with adequate numbers and resources to evangelize their people group without requiring outside/cross-cultural assistance.

Following is information on the two major Adopt-A-People organizations. Although these two ministries work together, their focus differs somewhat.

The Adopt-A-People Campaign is a department of the U.S. Center for World Missions in Pasadena, California. Their goal is to educate the church in the general concept of “adopting a people group” and to encourage people to

work together with missionary or denominational organizations. They do not necessarily encourage individual unreached people research projects, because they believe it is more effective to work with established mission organizations.

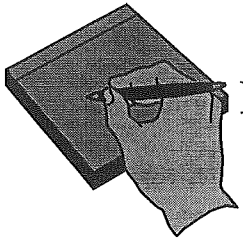
Because the Gospel is spreading at a rate unprecedented, Adopt-A-People Campaign sees library research as sometimes inaccurate and outdated. Although they believe it can be of great benefit to the individual, they stress that the information gathered may not be able to be used by others. Included in this chapter are four pages from this ministry explaining the concept of Adopting-A-People. To become further involved, you can call them and request a current list of organizations and ministries to work with.

The Adopt-A-People Clearinghouse is a ministry based in Colorado Springs, Colorado. Their goal is to help individual groups or churches select, research, and adopt an unreached people group. They see that some individuals and churches go beyond their denominational headquarters or their affiliated ministries in their understanding of unreached people groups. They encourage people group research projects and have a clearinghouse of people group profiles for information and ministry planning.

Call this organization for assistance in selecting a group to research, or pick one group from the list included in this chapter. Begin by asking yourself the following questions:

1. Do you have a burden for a particular area of the world or a particular country?
2. Do you have a burden for a people in a certain religion?
3. Do you have a desire to adopt a people group in a certain social category?

I encourage you to spend several days in a large city or university library to research a particular people group. Challenge your children to be detectives searching for secret clues about a particular “hidden” or unreached people. This information can be the starting point for prayer and action. Search for particular characteristics of this group which would affect the way you would approach them with the Gospel.



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