

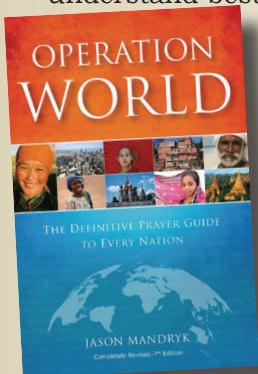
Big Numbers

by Becky Montpetit, Outreach & Missions

These past few weeks, I've been spending a lot of time thinking about big numbers. For example, I recently turned a big number: 30. Okay, so this might not be the biggest number for some, but it's the oldest I've ever been. Most of my thoughts about big numbers can be credited to what I've been reading about in regard to Bible translation, unreached people groups, and the un-evangelized.

Recent studies have estimated that by the end of 2011, the world population will be 7 billion. Estimates also show that the world population could reach 9 billion people by 2045. While keeping our world's population in mind, read the following statistics:

- There are 6,900 languages spoken in the world today.
- There are 2,100 languages where no Bible is available.
- There are only 457 language communities that have access to the Bible in the language they understand best.



Recently, I've been reading the newest edition of **Operation World**. This is the most complete prayer guide to nations available.

The author of this book, Jason Mandryk, recently gave a webinar where he offered even more in-depth statistics regarding the world's un-evangelized populations.

The top 5 countries with the largest Muslim populations are: Indonesia, Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, and Iran. Together the Muslim population of these countries is 756.6 million. That's nearly three quarters of a billion people in 5 countries alone.

In addition there are 166.4 million Buddhists in China. I heard that the non-religious population in China is nearly 600 million people. That's almost twice the number of people living in the US alone.

I certainly don't want to give you just discouraging information. Along with the large un-evangelized populations in the world, there is also some new intriguing data regarding the evangelical population worldwide.

If you were to guess which country has the highest percentage of evangelicals, based on the population of their country, what would your guess be? Would you have guessed Kenya? Kenya wins by a landslide with 48.92 % of their population as evangelical Christians.

And who would have ever thought that China would have more evangelical Christians among its borders than the U.S.? Research shows that there are over 100 million Chinese evangelicals with a strong emphasis in reaching their Chinese brothers and sisters for Christ.

Research has shown us that most Christians now reside in the Majority World (the continents of Africa, Asia and Latin America). It is called this as the majority of the world's populations lives on these continents. This is encouraging news, because The Majority World is also where the greatest populations of Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists and the un-evangelized live.

Hundreds of millions heard the Good News for the first time in the past century. It is an indication that the missionary efforts of



the past 200 years have borne incredible fruit, though at times it was slow in coming. Years and generations of prayer and faithful service to the un-evangelized world by both missionaries and indigenous Christians has not been in vain.

It's wonderful to hear the news that Christianity is growing, and the numbers are encouraging. But never before have I been so struck by the verse in Matthew 9 that we've all heard dozens of times: "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send workers into his Harvest field."

It is easy to get discouraged with the task at hand. It seems insurmountable. But then we remember another big number; a number that is too big to count and could never be pinpointed through tedious research. In Genesis 22:17, the Lord promises Abraham: "I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore... and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed because you have obeyed me."

I don't know about you, but that's a big number I can count on, that I can turn to when the task of evangelizing our world seems too large. Our God is a big God and no big number is too insurmountable to Him.

Operation World is available in the Christos Bookcenter. This is a fantastic resource for individuals, couples, and families alike. ♦