

Anticipating the Seventh Edition of OPERATION WORLD

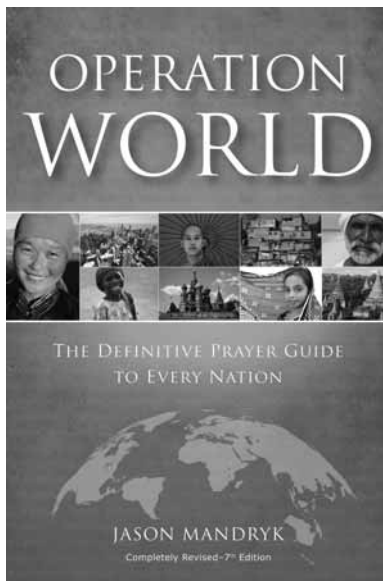
Having worked alongside Patrick Johnstone for years on *Operation World*, Jason Mandryk knew the challenges of compiling its latest edition after Patrick retired. Jason was “stepping into big shoes.”

“Since 1974, as many as 2½ million copies of *Operation World* have been sold in all language editions,” Jason said. Furthermore, God has used *Operation World* to touch millions of additional people because of its use in small and large groups, congregations and conferences. Missionaries, mission-minded congregations and pastors throughout the world have used this prayer handbook to spread a passion to reach the nations – and the task is not yet finished!

Although interest in missions and the Great Commission is growing in unprecedented ways in the non-Western, Majority world, material that aids mission-minded Christians in understanding and praying for the nations is limited, even in English. That’s why *Operation World* continues to be the first resource to which many people turn. This reality challenges Jason and his team to maintain the high standards of accuracy that Patrick established.

“Today there is more readily accessible information than ever before,” he said. “Our challenge is no longer solely trying to find information; it is to separate accurate information from the dross, to sift through the massive volume of noise to get to the signal.”

Thus the *Operation World* team collaborates with thousands of people worldwide, including expatriate missionaries and indigenous Christian leaders. “Expat missionaries provide external perspective



to issues that is informative and helpful,” Jason stated. “We also cherish input from the national believers, who bring an insider’s perspective regarding which issues need to be prayed for. This helps to keep our prayer points relevant and strategic. As these different perspectives come together, we get closer to achieving an accurate picture of what’s happening throughout the world.”

Although *Operation World* covers statistical issues from an evangelical, missions-minded perspective, Jason quickly added, “The purpose of this effort is not simply to compile a body of knowledge but to spur people on to prayer and mission. Our

inevitably imperfect and incomplete data can still accomplish that goal. The nature of why *Operation World* has been able to accomplish what it does is as much about the relationships that have formed as it is about the statistics.

“Today communication is much easier, and most Christian workers have a more collaborative mentality. Thousands of people from nearly every country are involved in *Operation World*. The sheer amount of collaboration occurring for this latest edition was many times more than what we were able to achieve in the past.”

A Reality Check

People—particularly in the Western World—are fixated on instant culture and up-to-the-minute information. However, the very nature of good research and information means that any statistic in print or on a monitor is already outdated. And there are places, areas, and regions of the world where it is difficult to obtain any information. “We don’t

pretend to have up-to-the-minute statistics,” Jason said. “We attempt to trace the movement of God’s harvest force and his work among the nations through the years up to the current day. Reaching and discipling the peoples of the world is not achieved overnight, accomplished during a ten-day mission trip, or even during a ten-year period of missionary service. It



requires generations to achieve. *Operation World* is just a small part of that. We try to take a ‘snapshot’ in each period of time to measure progress and see where we are at currently. In our research and within the unfolding of God’s big plan for humanity, we necessarily must maintain a long-term view.”

Since the previous update of *Operation World* in 2001, the world has changed dramatically, signaling the need for a new edition. “It is a frustration that we can only produce a volume every few years,” Jason said. “Since 2001, God has been doing amazing things. For example, hundreds of previously unengaged people groups now have believing communities in their midst. We’ve seen the growth of the mission-sending movement from just about every corner of the Majority world and the emergence of a truly global evangelicalism.”

God Calls—and Provides Affirmation

When asked about the sheer amount of work involved in compiling *Operation World*, Jason replied, “I’m grateful that God has called me into a ministry that is an ideal combination of the temperament, skills and gifts that he has given me. I feel like I am really in the right place—a place where he is using me. It is a privilege that every day I am able to hear and read about how God is at work, using his church to bring every nation into a saving knowledge of and relationship with himself.”

While visiting a ministry to street children in Ukraine, Jason still faced a time of questioning. “I saw a man on the frontlines, loving and reaching out to throwaway street kids who had never experienced Jesus’ love. I thought, *What good am I really doing? In my normal ministry, I sit in a comfortable office and crunch numbers and write prayer points. Compared to someone like this who serves on the leading edge, I’m*

doing nothing. During a subsequent conversation with this fellow, I found out that God had called him into his ministry to street children through *Operation World*. When he saw that prayer point, God touched his heart and called him to Ukraine. That’s when I realized that although I am not on those frontlines in the same way that he is, the calling God gave me

nonetheless is impacting the frontlines. That really encouraged me.”

Almost everywhere he goes, Jason comes into contact with people who are, or have been, missionaries serving in their field as a result of using *Operation World* to pray. “I’m continually interacting,” he said, “with people who tell me, ‘I became a missionary here because of praying through *Operation World*.’ Country by country, agency by agency, region by region, I hear this testimony again and again.”

Jason has recognized something else about his calling and its impact. “In contrast to some of the amazing interceding saints I have encountered who have been filling up the bowls of prayer faithfully for years, I have been met with a conviction that I could be a much more prayerful person. Despite this, I don’t feel obligated to be the world’s most committed intercessor in order to deliver an excellent version of *Operation World*. God calls us all to a greater life of prayerfulness, yet I think he has clearly gifted some people in prayer. He has also gifted people in the *Operation World* team, including me, to serve as a resource to the global Church. Yet one cannot help but pray daily for issues related to the Great Commission when you are constantly engaging with such information. God really does hear our prayers and answers them in ways that are at times mysterious to us but no less powerful or profound. On a weekly basis, I encounter people using *Operation World* who have gone out to serve as answers to their own prayers.” f

Biblica Publishing

Anticipated availability: Fall 2010

Hardback \$34.99 (ISBN: 978-1-85078-861-4)

Paperback: \$24.99 (ISBN: 978-1-85078-862-1)

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