

EDITORIAL COMMENT



Will Tokyo 2010 Be Remembered Like Edinburgh 1910?

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Every few years major global meetings of mission and church leaders take place in various locations around the globe. I have attended a number of them over the years. They have always been wonderful experiences and great opportunities to meet people, network and learn about how others are viewing the task of world evangelization. But do these global meetings move the cause of world evangelization forward? Do they move us closer to the goal of establishing a church-planting movement within every people and pocket of humanity so that every person has access to the transforming power of the gospel? Are these large meetings worth the time and resources they require? Literally millions of dollars are spent to make these meetings a reality.

This year we will have, not one, but four such meetings, each in its own way commemorating the Edinburgh 1910 World Missionary Conference. Many conferences have been forgotten, so what made Edinburgh 1910 so successful?

In this issue we report extensively on the first of these four meetings, Tokyo 2010, which took place May 11-14 with 967 delegates from 73 countries attending. It is our goal to let you know what happened at this meeting and why it matters for the future of world evangelization.

The Three Elements for Success

As Edinburgh 1910 demonstrates, not all global mission meetings are created equal. I suggest that the key elements that make the difference between a profitable global meeting and one that is perhaps a waste of time are *the focus,*

the follow-through and the delegates of the meeting.

The Focus

If the focus, vision and goals of a meeting are clear and dedicated to finishing the task of providing gospel access to every people and person and developing effective strategies to overcome every barrier to the spread of the gospel, then the meeting has the potential to be of great value. In the case of Tokyo 2010, there was a clear emphasis on reaching peoples and specifically completing the unique missionary task of penetrating peoples for the first time. The official theme of the conference was “Making disciples of all peoples in our generation.” They got the focus right. Notice the move from simple evangelism to discipleship. That is an important step forward in mission strategy.

The Follow-Through

Often the significance of a global meeting is not known for some time because so much depends on what people do as a result of the meeting. An important question is, “Does the conference establish effective structures and means by which there is ongoing planning, coordination and cooperation after the meeting, as Edinburgh 1910 did?”

Dr. Yong Cho, director of the Global Network of Mission Structures (GNMS), says on page 16-17, “The Edinburgh 1910 World Missionary Conference is remembered primarily for what emerged from it. For example, the International Missionary Council helped the mission movement network together for many decades, and facilitated the development of strong national churches with indigenous leadership, of which Korea is a shining example of success. We are the fruit of

healthy mission cooperation going back over a century.” Dr. Cho explains in his article that there are many mission leaders and organizations who have made specific plans for regular meetings for cooperation and coordination after Tokyo 2010.

Ralph Winter, recognizing the tremendous contribution of the International Missionary Council that resulted from Edinburgh 1910, brought together a small group of mission leaders from around the world in 2005 to discuss how to develop a global network of mission organizations that could foster the inter-mission cooperation that is essential in order to bring the gospel to every tribe and tongue. Out of this meeting, the Global Network of Mission Structures was born. The GNMS now has a major role in helping to foster inter-mission cooperation after Tokyo 2010.

The Delegates

Focus and follow-through are important, but so is the selection of participants for a meeting. If the people who attend have no power or influence to implement the vision of the meeting, then little will result long-term.

In 2009, Ralph Winter said about Tokyo 2010, “No one will be invited! All participants will be selected and delegated by mission associations and mission agencies. This is what happened in 1910, and that would seem to be one reason why the 1910 meeting has had such an impact across the years — the huge New York meeting ten years earlier that attracted up to 200,000 has been almost forgotten.” Apparently, it is quality, not just quantity, that matters.

Yong Cho reports about Tokyo 2010 in his article, “Almost all of the top leaders of the largest mission associations were

represented at Tokyo 2010, and they have agreed to begin meeting together regularly. In addition to these leaders, many international mission directors and regional field leaders were also present. A good number of these gathered together for the Global Coordination Task Force at Tokyo 2010, which looked at how to better tackle the issue of the unengaged and under-engaged, unreached peoples at the regional level.”

At Tokyo 2010 a list of 632 unengaged peoples, each with a population over 50,000, was presented to mission leaders, and 171 of these peoples were selected by the agency leaders for outreach in the next three years. This is real progress with the potential of making a major, long-term impact in the lives of these peoples. These mission leaders should be commended for their sacrificial decision to reach out to these unengaged peoples. Tokyo 2010 had enough of the right people to make a difference in missionary deployment.

The Right Vision for the Future
The most encouraging element about

Tokyo 2010 is the vision for the future expressed by the leadership that planned and carried out the meeting. Yong Cho was intimately involved in this process. As the director of the Global Network of Mission Structures, he is committed to fostering the ongoing global and regional cooperation and networking that is essential if we are to reach the unreached peoples.

Ralph Winter expressed last year why global cooperation is so important, “Because, like an avalanche, the peoples of the world are now more and more global in their location. That is the reason for the new Global Network of Mission Structures — to track peoples and offer to mission structures the data essential to an approach, people by people, that will take into account the location of the members of any given ethnic group in the entire globe. This kind of research cannot as easily be done by national or even regional associations of mission agencies.”

In Yong Cho’s article on page 16-17 he casts a sweeping vision, “Might we

for the first time in history develop a global strategy with wide inter-mission cooperation to finish the task? Can we work together to recruit, train and place 100,000 additional missionaries among the least-reached peoples in the next ten years?”

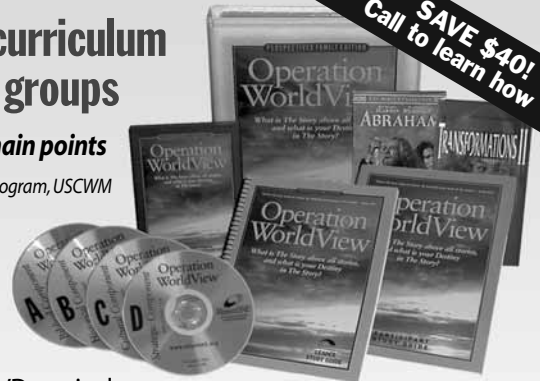
Let’s Do It!

Let’s continue what was started at Tokyo 2010. Let’s give our full support to the ongoing work of the Global Network of Mission Structures (GNMS). Let’s regularly bring together mission leaders from around the world to plan, strategize and deploy 100,000 new, well-trained missionaries in a coordinated way to all of the remaining unreached peoples, so that all have access to the gospel. Let’s set aside the promotion of our own kingdoms and work together to build His Kingdom in all the peoples of the earth. If the fulfillment of Dr. Yong Cho’s vision is the result of Tokyo 2010, then it will have been a great meeting indeed and one that is worthy to be commemorated 100 years from now. f

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