

*Foreword by Rob Bell*

POVERTY

DISEASE

TRAFFICKING

# WHAT CAN I DO?

MAKING A GLOBAL DIFFERENCE  
RIGHT WHERE **YOU ARE**

POLLUTION

DAVID LIVERMORE



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MAKING A GLOBAL DIFFERENCE  
RIGHT WHERE YOU ARE

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For Grace and Emily  
I love you more!



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I never used to read the acknowledgment pages in books, until I started writing myself. Now I better appreciate that no good book is possible without the collective efforts of many people. I wouldn't even know how to go about doing something like this alone. The people who have played a role in this project far exceed those I can list here, but I do need to name a few:

First, my thanks goes to the many individuals who allowed me to share a brief snapshot of their lives as compelling examples of what it means to live as we were created to live. Without their stories, this book would have remained a bunch of abstract ideas. More important, I'm thankful for how they inspire me to make a difference in the world.

Second, I want to say a particular word of thanks to my former student Julie Slagter. Julie was especially instrumental in helping me gather the many stories, ideas, and research gathered for part 2 of the book. If Julie had her way, every page would have included an example of human trafficking, because that's the cause that's captured her heart and life. This is a better book because she joined me in the rigorous work of pulling it together and worked with me on some of the earliest drafts.

Next, thank you to the friends and colleagues I subjected to a really rough version of this manuscript. Steve Argue, Jeanette Banashak, Rob Bell, Dave Horne, Marsha Johnson, Grace Man, Steve Mayer, Graham McKeague, and Julie Slagter made this a much better finished product.

Thanks to Ryan Pazdur, my editor at Zondervan, for sharing my enthusiasm for communicating this message and for the many value-added suggestions and gracious critiques along the way.

And to Linda, Emily, and Grace: There's little that matters to me in life that isn't connected to you. You've endured another round of my obsessing about what to include, what to leave out, how to say it,



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and when to squeeze in the time to get it all done. More than that, I love that together we're on our own adventure to make the world a better place, one day at a time.

# FOREWORD

There's a reason why Dave's book is so important. But first, a story.

There is a legendary rabbinic tale about a rabbi from Cracow. He has a dream in which he sees that there is great treasure buried under a bridge in a far-off city. When he wakes up, he decides to journey to that far-off city to get the treasure that he's seen in his dream. He arrives at the bridge only to discover that it's guarded by police, and so he hides in the bushes, trying to figure out how to get the treasure.

One of the guards sees him and says, "You there! What are you doing?"

The rabbi steps out of the bushes and says, "Well, I had this dream in which I saw treasure under this bridge . . ."

The policeman laughs. "You believe in dreams like that? If I did, then I would believe in the dream that I had, that there's treasure buried under the bed of some rabbi in Cracow."

The rabbi thanks the policeman and races home.

So what does that story have to do with this book?

Dave writes here about a life that is right in our own backyard. He's not saying that the action is somewhere else, with someone else. He's not telling you to quit your job and move to Africa if you want to really live. He's not teaching that you need more resources so that you can really make a difference. He's writing in this book about how each of us can turn the tide from exactly where we are.

This is a powerful truth we need now more than ever.

What I so deeply appreciate about Dave is how wide open his eyes are. He sees possibility and potential all over the place. Every time I hear him speak, I am inspired by what's right in front of me.

But this book isn't just inspiring; this book is as practical as it gets. Business, art, justice, education—Dave shows us what daily engagement with the great causes of our time looks like, wherever we find ourselves.

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He helps us wake up, as if from a dream, discovering that what we've been looking for is not under a bridge in a far-off city.

It's been here, the whole time.

—*Rob Bell*

# INTRODUCTION

Yes, you. The one who thinks it's Bono's job to save the world.  
Yes, you. The one trapped in cubicle world who goes to church, hears about all the great things *others* are doing, and feels even more disconnected.

Yes, you. The one who has no desire to hop on a plane or learn a foreign language.

Yes, you. The one who would love to hop on a plane but can't see how that really meets the world's greatest needs.

Yes, you. The one who just picked up this book to read. God is inviting you to be part of making the world a better place. And now you're going to read about all sorts of people just like you doing their part.

My wife, Linda, and I often discuss what it means for us to make a difference in the world. More and more, our daughters, Emily and Grace, join the conversations with us. But we often have moments when it's hard to see beyond the immediate stresses of our own fast-paced lives.

One night after the girls went to bed, Linda and I got ready to watch the movie we had rented. We had heard so much about *Hotel Rwanda*, a visceral account of the Rwandan genocide, and at last we had a chance to watch it. We made the popcorn, closed the blinds, and got comfortable. Two hours later, the credits were rolling, the popcorn remained untouched, and we sat in silence. We didn't know whether to feel enraged, numb, guilty, or inspired by what we had just watched.

A guy like me *should* know what to do. I've spent the night in villages along the Amazon, Nile, and Pearl rivers. I've visited the killing fields in Cambodia, former concentration camps in Europe, and refugee camps in Sierra Leone and Ethiopia. I'm in Africa and Asia almost as much as I'm home in Grand Rapids, Michigan. My work is devoted to helping leaders see and effectively engage with global

issues. But for some reason, I was unusually paralyzed sitting in my own living room after watching Don Cheadle's compelling portrayal of Paul Rusesabagina, the hotel owner who stayed behind to save as many as possible. I sat there thinking, *The Rwanda genocide is over, but this same thing is going on right now in many other places. But what can we possibly do about it?* My head hurt, and part of me just wanted to crawl into bed and move on with the assembly line of life. But I couldn't. Slowly Linda and I started to process it together. For the next several days, we deliberated the implications for us and for our relatively comfortable existence as a family.

I rarely encounter someone who doesn't give a rip when faced with the reality of life for the poor and oppressed. Most people I know feel an urge to do something when they hear about the high death rates among kids in Sub-Saharan Africa, see a documentary on women trafficked for sex in Southeast Asia, or watch news reports about people running for their lives in war-torn regions. But many of us don't have a clue what we can really do about it.

The atrocities continue right this minute. Tribes are feuding, suicide bombers are plotting, and people are dying. There's something desperately amiss in the world. But if all we do is keep talking about the problems, it's too reminiscent of our parents telling us to finish our dinner because there are children starving in other parts of the world. Most of us were willing to FedEx our leftovers to anyone who would take them. But somehow we knew that wouldn't make any difference. And what can we do about enslaved children, dirty water, and entire cultural groups who have never encountered Jesus?

Actually—quite a bit!



I've organized this book into three parts. Part 1 starts with the big picture. The first chapter describes the global issues facing our generation, and the second one looks at the invitation to join God in redeeming the world. Chapter 3 offers some immediate big-picture strategies for making a difference today.

Part 2 has several chapters of stories and ideas about people in lots of different professions and fields who are serving globally. A few of these examples involve people traveling overseas, but most

of these stories take place closer to home. You'll meet business leaders grappling with the ethics of globalization in a way that neither provides simplistic answers nor shrugs off exploiting the poor to the advantage of the rich. You'll learn from schoolteachers, aunts, uncles, parents, and siblings influencing kids to improve life for more people on the planet. I'll introduce you to scientists doing innovative research to discover solutions to malaria, HIV/AIDS, and global warming. And you'll encounter filmmakers, performers, and composers creating art that exposes us to the issues, concerns, and causes of our day. The stories in this section come from people I've encountered along the way and from data gathered in the Global Service Project—research which examined ways North Americans invest in local and global activism from home. Most of the stories were gathered through focus groups and interviews. Part 2 ends with a few cautions that, when heeded, will improve your effectiveness in making a global difference.

Part 3 will guide you into the next steps of this journey. I've included a discernment process in chapter 10 to help you identify ways to get involved, and chapter 11 helps you do this with a group (families, small groups, churches, and so on). The appendix includes some frequently asked questions (FAQs) you might want to peek at now (or anytime along the way).



I realize your life isn't exactly a cakewalk. We all have our share of problems and struggles. But for most of us, our personal problems pale in comparison with worldwide tragedies like poverty, civil war, and disease. Yet they weigh on us just the same. Whether it's figuring out how to make the next mortgage payment, caring for our aging parents, deciding where to go to college, or (fill in the blank), our lives are not exactly picture perfect.

Yet we know we can't just shrug off the needs of the world and go on with life. The causes are too important and the situations too tragic. Join me to learn how you can orient your interests, skills, and relationships to meet some of the most pressing needs of our day. God is ready to use you to make a global difference in the world—right where you are!





PART 1

# A BIG (INSPIRING YET OVERWHELMING) PICTURE

Real change happens as each of us chooses to make a difference right where we are—in our neighborhoods, factories, classrooms, offices, and homes. But if we begin by plotting strategies to make the world a better place without first seeing and understanding the big picture of God’s purposes, we will inevitably end up disoriented and burned out. So let’s begin with a thirty-thousand-foot view of the world.

Our aerial perspective begins above a hypothetical “global village.” This kind of big-picture perspective on the differences and similarities between people is necessary to inform a thoughtful and nuanced response to the problems and challenges we face today. After looking at the world, we’ll take a wide-angled view of the Scriptures—from Genesis to Revelation—to hear God’s repeated invitation to make our world a better place. And we’ll conclude this section with some big ideas about how we can make a difference—starting today.







## CHAPTER 1

# WELCOME TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD

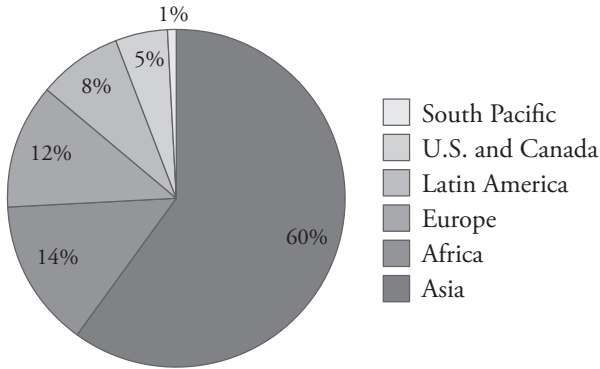
## YOUR GLOBAL VILLAGE

Imagine you've just moved to a town of one thousand people. It's an unusual place because it's been designed as a microcosm of the world. The ethnic and economic diversity across the globe can be seen and experienced right here in your new community. Disease, literacy rates, and access to things like electricity and water are all present in this village. It's as if the worldwide population of 6.7 billion people has suddenly shrunk to this single town of a thousand people. Now that you've moved here, you have a unique opportunity to see what life is like for people all over the world.

At first it might feel like you've moved to Chinatown, because 600 of the 1,000 community members are from Asia, most of them of Chinese descent. Another 140 are from Africa, 120 from Europe, 80 from Latin America, 50 from the United States and Canada, and 10 from the South Pacific, including places like Australia and New Zealand (see figure on p. 20).

## World Population by Region

Unicef, “The State of the World’s Children 2009,” [www.unicef.org/sowc09/report/report.php](http://www.unicef.org/sowc09/report/report.php) (April 28, 2010).



There are 510 males and 490 females. Sadly, girls are more likely to be aborted than boys in places like India and China because of the “noble” honor of having a son in these cultures, particularly if you’re allowed only one child.

- 330 kids under the age of eighteen live in this global village, half of whom have received immunizations against preventable diseases like measles and polio.
- 20 new babies are born every year here, so the town is growing. One of these babies will die before his or her first birthday.
- 9 people die every year, 3 from hunger and 1 from cancer.
- 60 senior citizens (age sixty-five and older) live in the village.
- 500 people are malnourished. If you have adequate food and nutrients, chances are your neighbors on either side do not. That’s the way it is—fifty-fifty. One person has proper nourishment; one doesn’t.
- 800 of the people in this town live in substandard housing.
- 670 people can’t read. If you’re reading these words, you’re obviously among the privileged minority.
- 330 are without access to a safe water supply.

- 240 don't have any electricity. Of the 760 town members who do have electricity, most are able to use it for only a couple hours at night.
- Only 70 people have access to the internet. Social networking, email, and the World Wide Web aren't the answer to everything. Only 7 percent of the world has access to them. That number grows daily, but we still have a long way to go.
- 10 people, 1 percent of the world, have a college education.
- 10 individuals have HIV/AIDS, and most of them are women and children.
- 400 people have never heard of Jesus. Forty percent of the people in your new town don't have a clue who Jesus is.
- The town has 5 soldiers, 7 teachers, and 1 doctor. The doctor keeps pretty busy but primarily treats those who can afford to pay. The 7 teachers have their hands full, although 25 percent of the kids go to work every day instead of school.

One hundred people, 10 percent of the population, control enough explosive power in nuclear weapons that they could blow up the entire civilization many times over. The other 900 people watch with deep anxiety, wondering if the 100 can get along well enough to avoid using the weapons. These 900 wonder if the ones who control the weapons might inadvertently set them off. Or if they ever decide to dismantle the weapons, where in town will they dispose of the dangerous radioactive materials used to make them? The newspaper in town never seems to include this perspective, however.<sup>1</sup>

The only part of this scenario that doesn't exist in real life is the actual 1,000-member village. But if you were to expand the population of this imaginary village to 6.7 billion people, all of the above realities and proportions would apply. This *is* the village where we live. These *are* the issues facing us. These are the inequities of life in the twenty-first-century world. We no longer have the luxury of viewing the wants and needs of our family and community apart from those living in the rest of the world. The shoes we wear, the food we eat, and the companies we work for are all intertwined with our fellow village members scattered across the globe.

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Far too many books and documentaries stop here. We read the alarming disparities with little guidance about how to respond. I've promised you a more solution-oriented, hopeful picture, and I assure you—the rest of this book is oriented that way. But before we respond, it's helpful to understand seven of the most important realities facing our neighborhood. Let's start with the first one—money.

### **ECONOMIC IMBALANCE**

Back in our 1,000-member village, there are 5 *extremely* wealthy people who control most of the money. And 200 town members, one-fifth of the village, own 74 percent of all the financial assets.

Imagine how different your life is if you are privileged to be among the top 20 percent. Those in the top 20 percent of the village live on about seventy dollars a day, while those in the bottom 20 percent live on about one dollar a day. If you're among the bottom 20 percent, or even among the majority in the middle, you'll need to think creatively about how to feed your loved ones today. You are largely dependent on the generosity of your wealthier neighbors.

Keep in mind that these are more than numbers and statistics. The implications of these numbers can be very personal when you begin meeting people from other parts of the world. The first time I taught a weeklong course in Liberia, a small coastal country in West Africa, I asked my host when we should break for lunch. He hesitated before responding, and then he said, "Well, most of us eat only one meal a day. While we're in class today, our spouses and children will work to earn some money by selling things like rice, water, and vegetables. Hopefully, they'll get enough money for us to have a small meal together tonight when we get home." Then he looked at me and said, "But feel free to eat your lunch whenever you wish. I'd be happy to take you somewhere." Needless to say, I lost my appetite and decided I could easily go without lunch for a week. I spend my life talking with people about these issues and helping them see how their lives compare with the lives of others, but I'm still caught off guard by the chasm between my economic realities and those of so many other people.

The economic issues of our day are further complicated by globalization, the expansion and integration of international manufacturing and business. Stop reading for a moment and look at the label on your clothes or shoes. Where were they made? The shirt I'm wearing says, "Made in Bangladesh." While I sit in the comfort of my home, it's hard for me to envision the worn faces of the people whose hands fed this fabric through the industrial sewing machines in Dhaka. I'm rarely conscious of the tired crew on the cargo ship that transported my shirt across the ocean, nor do I think about the fatigued customs official who got involved in the shipment. What truck drivers spent time away from home to deliver this shirt to the big-box store where a second-shift worker neatly folded it on a shelf for me to buy? But these people are my neighbors in our global village. I'm repulsed at the thought that my shirt might have been made by a child who works in a factory in Bangladesh rather than attending school.

Before we go too far down the path of offering pat answers or simplistic solutions, let's agree that there are *no easy answers* to most of these issues. I've promised a more solution-focused response, and we'll get there. But for the time being, we're simply trying to get a glimpse of the needs in our village. If you want another, more personalized perspective on all this, take a moment to check out your economic place at [www.globalrichlist.com](http://www.globalrichlist.com). You may be surprised to learn that someone who earns fifty thousand dollars a year is among the top 1 percent of the richest people in the global village! Maybe you're a recent high school or college grad making only twenty thousand dollars a year? You're still in the top 11 percent. The economic disparity between the rich and the poor, and even between the middle class and the poor, is often bigger than we think. It's an issue that demands the attention of consumers, business leaders, economists, and leaders in the church. Our response to these dilemmas will often be misguided if we fail to get our bearings and grasp some of these larger global concerns. The massive economic imbalance we see in our world today is one of the most challenging and ghastly realities facing us in the twenty-first century.

## DISEASE AND OUR GLOBAL HEALTH

Many of the same people struggling to survive on a dollar a day are also the ones most susceptible to fatal diseases. While life expectancy has been going up for most people in our global village, HIV/AIDS and malaria continue to reverse that trend, particularly for our neighbors from Southern Africa, parts of Southeast Asia, Latin America, and certain pockets within Russia.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, for example, HIV/AIDS is the leading cause of death. Most *victims* of HIV/AIDS globally are women and children, not promiscuous men.<sup>2</sup> It is estimated that in certain tribal groups in Southwest China, half the population is infected with HIV/AIDS, and this percentage may be even higher in reality. In India, many Punjabi truck drivers sleep with different women all the way up and down the country during their monthlong journeys, infecting each woman they meet along the way, as well as their unsuspecting wives once they're back home with the family.

Or how about malaria? For me, a mosquito bite is usually a mere annoyance. But for many people in our village, a mosquito bite easily leads to malaria. At "best," getting malaria means experiencing an awful case of the flu, including a high fever and chills. Left untreated, it frequently leads to death. Nearly one million people in the world die from malaria every year, mostly young children. There *are* cures for malaria. These children could be spared by simply getting them the right medicine.

But there's an epidemic killing even more people worldwide than either HIV/AIDS or malaria. In fact, this disease kills more adults in our global village than all other infectious diseases combined. Nearly half the world's refugees are infected with it. It's an ancient disease that was nearly wiped out a generation ago, but it's back today with a raging force—tuberculosis. Look around your town of 1,000 people. Three hundred and thirty people, nearly one-third of the world's population, have TB.<sup>3</sup>

These diseases are not limited to the developing world. They're also found in places like the United States, France, and Singapore. But the highest fatality rates are in the developing world. What can we do so that malaria, TB, HIV/AIDS, heart disease, and cancer

become history in our village? There are ways to lessen the impact of these diseases on our neighbors. We'll get there.

## ENVIRONMENT AND OUR NEIGHBORS

It's an embarrassment that Christians have often spent so much energy mocking "tree huggers" and generally downplaying their responsibility to be faithful stewards of the environment. Now, I'm well aware that a great deal of controversy remains over the issue of global warming and the degree to which our behavior can change this effect. But the Bible is clear about our responsibility to care for this planet. From the very beginning of time, part of what it meant to be made in God's image was to be a caretaker of the animals and our planet.

Six billion tons of trash end up in the sea every year. Take a walk along any beach in the world, and you'll find washed-up bottles, lighters, plastic bags, toothbrushes, and more. Much of the diverse animal and plant life on our planet lives in the sea, and many of the people who live in our global village rely on fish for a large part of their daily food source. When we pollute the water in our rivers and oceans, we pollute the fish. And when we pollute the fish, we put our neighbors at risk.

There are similar connections between the issues of climate change, energy use, and water consumption. Many of us have never really considered the degree to which our oil-dependent lifestyle affects the lives of people in Mozambique and Myanmar, by influencing the changing sea levels and increasing the susceptibility these people have to tropical diseases. We're in desperate need of Christian scientists, politicians, and consumers who can wrestle with environmental issues and offer us sustainable ways to address them. The best way for you to help your neighbors in the global village might be from a laboratory in rural Illinois or by organizing a recycling program.

## TRAFFICKING AND GLOBAL LUST

From street-level dealers to multinational empires that rival governments in size, the drug-trafficking business is the largest organized crime ring in our global community. Greed, power, and the need for a quick fix are what drive this worldwide industry. Places like



the “Golden Triangle,” a relatively lawless region at the intersection of Myanmar, Laos, and Thailand, are infamous for producing huge amounts of illicit opium. Drug use is rampant in the bourgeois, affluent suburbs of Chicago, Tucson, and Indianapolis. But make no mistake. There’s a clear correlation between socioeconomic status and drug use. Economically depressed people are the ones most susceptible to drug use.

Second only to drug trafficking is human trafficking, a thirty-two-billion-dollar slave industry built on forcing people to do things against their will. At any given time, somewhere between thirteen million and twenty-seven million people in the world are being forced to perform acts against their will. Most of those living in slavery are kids.<sup>4</sup> Some of the kids in your village are being held in slavery instead of going to school every day. They’re often abducted from their homes and forced to sell their bodies, fight in wars, and work night and day making bricks, tending land, and cleaning people’s homes. You don’t have to look very far around our global village to see the “winners” and losers of human trafficking.

On a recent trip to Liberia, I met Jimmy, a sixteen-year-old who loves school more than any teenager I know. But to understand his love for education, you first have to understand Jimmy’s childhood. While some of his peers around the world went to Little League, Jimmy was aiming a machine gun at anyone who walked by. By the time he was eleven, he had lost count of how many people he had killed for the rebel army that had abducted and trained him. Then one day, a U.N. worker coaxed Jimmy’s weapons from him in exchange for schoolbooks and an education. Estimates vary widely, but it’s believed there are more than three hundred thousand child soldiers in the world. Boys like Jimmy, as young as six years old, are forced into local armies where they’re trained as soldiers for guerrilla warfare. In addition, their forced military service usually involves providing sexual services to the men in the army.

Let’s take a closer look at something as wonderful and seemingly innocent as chocolate. Thirty-five percent of the chocolate available for purchase in our village is made from cocoa beans harvested by slaves. In Côte d’Ivoire, the largest producer of cocoa beans in the world,

young boys are subjected to extreme abuse and inhumane conditions while being forced to harvest the beans from which chocolate is made.<sup>5</sup>

The most prevalent form of trafficking is the coercion of women and children into the sex business. Some are lured into the trade through the promise of a good job in another country or through a false marriage proposal that turns into a bondage situation. Others are sold to a sex lord by their parents, husbands, or boyfriends, and many are kidnapped. Sex traffickers frequently subject their victims to a fictitious debt that never seems to be reduced no matter how many sexual services are performed. Victims endure starvation, confinement, physical abuse, gang rape, and threats of violence to their families and against them personally. Many of them are forced to take drugs. You can find these trafficked girls at a brothel in your village, but you might also find them at a nearby nail salon or the local truck stop.

The traffickers aren't the only ones who benefit from these abominable practices. Other beneficiaries include weapons manufacturers, chocolate sellers, the taxi drivers who drive customers to brothels, and fast-food restaurants that supply food to traffickers waiting for their "product" to be sold on a cold, dark street corner. In many situations, local police also make a profit from this trade by receiving bribes to look the other way. To a certain extent, you and I unconsciously "benefit" from many of these industries. Yet in another sense, we don't. Ultimately, no one benefits from a village that allows some of its members to be dehumanized, abused, and tortured for the sake of financial profit and personal pleasure. The number of people being trafficked is beginning to lessen because more people are standing up and saying, "Enough!" Much remains to be done, but some are hopeful we may see this atrocity eradicated in our lifetime.

## WAR AND THE ABUSE OF POWER

What about war? The tragedy of war is ancient, but there's a new dynamic to war in the twenty-first century, one that includes weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, and suicide bombers. Among the many lessons that emerged from 9/11 is the reality that we live in a world where a small number of people can kill masses of people very quickly. Even first-rate intelligence services like those of the

U.S. government cannot ensure there won't be further attacks using airplanes, bombs, anthrax, chemical weapons, and dirty bombs.

To a large degree, a bigger battle between tribalism and globalism has replaced the battles we used to see between one nation and another. The great divisions of our day center on vastly different views about how life should be lived. Greed for money and power are still the primary driving forces in war, as they always have been. But there's an additional force now, where one civilization is enraged by the behavior of another. And more often than not, these different civilizations are now living next door to each other. The fault lines between worldviews and civilizations have become the battle lines of our time.

Western civilizations are appalled that a state religion like Islam can mandate how the two sexes relate to one another. Islamic fundamentalists are furious to see American military bases built on their religious sites. Europeans lobby against the Hindu caste system. Many Eastern civilizations are perplexed at the syncretistic mix of Western religion with consumerism. Christians and Muslims target each other's populations as evangelistic pursuits. Christians who fight for the freedom to pray in school simultaneously protest the freedom of Muslims to wear religious head coverings at work.

Even those individuals who never leave their local village or city are encountering the clash of civilizations through what they see on the internet or on television. Eighteen-year-old men in Islamabad watch Brittany Spears erotically gyrating with a cross hanging around her neck. Fifteen-year-olds in Nashville see their peers in Gaza tying bombs to their bodies out of loyalty to their religion.

How will we respond to the issue of war in our generation? Will our churches allow room for the expression of different political ideals while uniformly centering on the person and work of Jesus? It's hard to imagine a more poignant picture of our desperate need for hope and redemption than the global problem of war.

## THE SHIFTING GLOBAL LANDSCAPE

Despite the endless news stories about the bursting emergence of China and India as key global powers, many still struggle to see beyond outdated characterizations of these ancient nation-states. I'm

often surprised to hear people talk about China and India as backward, poverty-stricken behemoths. Many are inclined to think of China as Pearl Buck described it in her best-selling book *The Good Earth*: a farming society with struggling peasants, greedy landowners, famines, floods, plagues, and poverty. Say “India,” and people often picture Dalits wading through mud in the slums of Calcutta. While there’s still a kernel of truth in these stereotypes, they’re extremely myopic perceptions of these rising tigers.

Over 200 of the 1,000 people in our imaginary village are from China. They may easily come from one of the twenty fastest growing cities in the world—all of which are in China. China’s economy has grown over 9 percent a year for more than thirty years. During the last couple of decades, nearly five hundred million Chinese have moved from rural communities to cities and from poverty to middle class. India is rising right next door with a similar-sized population. Stand at the first tee of the KGA golf club in downtown Bangalore, and you can see the glimmering towers of IBM, Microsoft, and Goldman Sachs.<sup>6</sup> This is not your grandparents’ India and China! Any responsible understanding of the twenty-first-century world must include an accurate, up-to-date understanding of the rising importance of China and India.

The statistics that come out of China simply boggle the mind. China is the world’s largest producer of coal, steel, and cement. It’s the biggest cell phone market in the world. Its exports to the United States have grown by 1,600 percent over the past fifteen years. China manufactures two-thirds of the world’s photocopiers, microwave ovens, DVD players, and shoes.<sup>7</sup> Yes, there are still many peasant farmers in China. Many minority people *are* struggling to survive and are oppressed by several realities already covered in this chapter, including poverty, disease, and trafficking. No one knows exactly how China’s emergence as a global superpower will play out over the next couple decades, but most leaders in economics, business, and political science agree that we’re wise to pay attention.

Another 200 people in our village are from India. India’s greatest resource is its human capital—a vast and growing population of entrepreneurs, managers, and business-savvy professionals.

Up-and-coming Indian professionals are buying lattes, iPods, washing machines, cars, and homes. India is the only country with a rate of consumption higher than that of the United States.<sup>8</sup> Unfortunately, the images of Dalits struggling in the slums are still just as much a part of India today. Even though the number of people in India's middle class now equals the amount of people in the entire United States—three hundred million—another seven hundred million Indians are living in desperate squalor.

India and China aren't the only emerging economies. Others are scattered across Central Europe, Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Brazil and Russia are often lumped in with China and India, forming the BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India, and China) economies. Many of us, particularly through our jobs, will continue to find ourselves dealing with the new opportunities these growing economies provide. Teachers, business executives, manufacturers, and medical professionals need to have a global, big-picture perspective to wisely respond in conversations and as they make decisions that relate to these emerging economies.

## THE FAITHFUL

Finally, there's a surging revival of religious faith occurring around the world. Brazilians are conducting exorcisms, Nigerians are fighting over Islam and Christianity, and Chinese executives are leading house churches. Nations like Russia, Turkey, India, and the United States are led by people who are unabashedly religious.

Here's how the world worships in your 1,000-member neighborhood. There's one Catholic church, one Protestant, and one Orthodox congregation. There's also a mosque, a Hindu temple, and a Buddhist temple.

About one-third of the people in our global village call themselves Christians. One hundred ninety-nine are Catholic, 99 are Protestant, and 42 are Orthodox.

There are 184 Muslims, 137 Hindus, 64 Buddhists, and 56 Animists. The remaining 219 people living in your town follow a variety of religions, including Judaism and Taoism. A few in this group identify themselves as atheists.

As the world becomes more mobile and interconnected, Muslims, Jews, Christians, and Hindus are increasingly living alongside each other. Islam is growing at a rate of 2.7 percent annually, Hinduism at 2.2 percent, and Buddhism at 1.7 percent.<sup>9</sup>

These statistics, combined with the depressing events covered in the evening news (and even many missions reports) can feel overwhelming to some Christians. But the Christian faith is also growing, faster than ever before in world history, at a rate of 6.9 percent a year.<sup>10</sup> On average, two people surrender their lives to Jesus every second. Most of this growth is happening in Latin America, Southern Africa, and Southern Asia, but it's also evident in places like Iran and the United States.

At the same time, 400 people in your village have never encountered Jesus. They aren't antagonistic and militantly opposed to Christianity; they've just never had the chance to accept or reject Jesus and know almost nothing about him.

## UNDERSTAND THE BIG PICTURE

There are several challenges we haven't begun to address here, including orphans, refugees, abortion, literacy, access to clean water, education, and many others. Many of these problems are interconnected. And it's important to remember that all is not gloom and despair in the world. Alongside the inequities, evil, and heartache, there's hope. Per capita incomes and literacy rates are rising in almost every country. Life expectancy worldwide is sixty-six years, a record high. Hunger is in retreat in many parts of the world, smog is down 30 percent since 1970 (even though there are twice as many cars on the road!), and crime is in significant decline. Everywhere we look, we see signs that God is at work, reversing the curse of evil and ushering the cosmos toward a new reality. In some places, we can see evidence of God's redemption unfolding right before our eyes. Without question, though, there's a great deal left for us to do. HIV/AIDS is challenging the improved life-expectancy rate, terrorism is infringing on human rights, and most significantly, many people continue to die without ever encountering Jesus.

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The first step toward making a difference in the world is simply growing in our awareness of what's happening on our planet. Research demonstrates that *individuals who understand global issues and see themselves as global citizens most often feel a need to give back to society and work for the rights of others.*<sup>11</sup> It's difficult to orient our lives and our work around the needs of our neighbors if we don't know what they need. A growing understanding of life in our shrinking village can be one of the most powerful ways to inform how we can get involved.

The world is groaning for redemption. Fatherless children long to be loved. Trafficked women hope for freedom. Hungry families crave food. There's something desperately amiss in our world, but there's hope. A global perspective combined with your God-given interests, relationships, and experiences is a part of how Christ will redeem the world we share.

### BEFORE YOU TURN THE PAGE

Review the issues presented in this chapter:

- Economic Imbalance
- Disease and Our Global Health
- Environment and Our Neighbors
- Trafficking and Global Lust
- War and the Abuse of Power
- The Shifting Global Landscape
- The Faithful

What reality strikes a nerve with you the most?

Ask God to use this book to help you integrate your life, work, and giftings with addressing this issue.



## CHAPTER 3

# SPEAK UP NOW

## SEVEN STRATEGIES YOU CAN USE TODAY

Seeing the challenges faced by our global neighbors (chapter 1) puts things in perspective for us, and the invitation to partner with God (chapter 2) is an inspiration. But the fact remains: one billion people will still go to bed hungry tonight. Every minute, another person is being trafficked into the sex industry and other forced labor; and one-third of our global population has tuberculosis. How do we ensure that the statistics in chapter 1 and the ideas we looked at in chapter 2 actually make the world a better place?

I'm easily motivated by rock-star-like individuals who instigate sweeping reforms that garner a great deal of public attention. People like Mother Teresa, Nelson Mandela, Rick Warren, Bill and Melinda Gates, and Bono inspire me. But I'm even *more* excited by grassroots revolutionaries who make a difference without ever being noticed. These are people who aren't trying to change the world all by themselves. But neither can they simply turn a blind eye and go on with life as usual when confronted with injustice and evil.

I was recently reading the Old Testament story of Naaman, the Syrian general whose world came crashing down when he got leprosy (2 Kings 5). Pre-leprosy, Naaman had the ear of the king and was



living the high life. I imagine him hanging out on the equivalent of royal golf courses and being escorted by an entourage of servants wherever he went. He was in control of everything and everyone in his life. But then he was plagued with leprosy. Leprosy quickly turns even the most noble and powerful into social outcasts. Once word got out that he was a leper, he would quickly be uninvited from all the royal functions. And any media attention he received would be negative.

Visualize Naaman and his wife preparing for one more elaborate party, just before the public learns about his diagnosis. Perhaps “Mrs. Naaman” is in her private quarters primping for the banquet, with the realization that life as they’ve known it is about to end. Assisting the general’s wife is a young, respectful servant woman. Servants are the underdogs, but they are the ones who get an honest glimpse into the personal world of royalty. This servant girl knows what the public doesn’t—General Naaman has leprosy. She’s a lowly slave, but she cares about the general and his wife.

The only record of this woman’s existence are these brief words: “If only my master would see the prophet [Elisha] who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy” (2 Kings 5:3). That’s it! That’s all we hear from her. But the entire story of Naaman’s life changes because this God-fearing servant girl speaks up. Old Testament scholar Walter Brueggemann notes four things about this servant girl:

1. She attended to the need right in front of her.
2. She remembered her true identity and knew God could work through Elisha and her.
3. She spoke hope into sadness.
4. She opened up a new realm of possibility to the otherwise hopeless.<sup>1</sup>

This young girl was ready to act on God’s behalf, and she spoke up. She wasn’t paralyzed or discouraged by her lowly job. She took the opportunities she was given and had a larger view of what God could do (and did!) through her faithfulness.

I’m afraid I would have missed this opportunity. I often spend more time focusing on the future than on the present. In high school I couldn’t wait to get to college. Then, in college I was pining to get

out into the real world and make a difference, instead of just reading textbooks. The early days of my career were spent thinking about how much more I could do *someday* in a *better* job. I find that I'm often so obsessed with making a difference in the future that I easily miss opportunities staring me right in the face today.

Most of the remainder of this book is devoted to helping us think long-term about making a difference in the world through our varied jobs and interests. But before we go there, I want to suggest seven strategies each of us can begin practicing right now to speak up on behalf of our global neighbors.

## 1. BE AWARE

The first step is developing global awareness. Statistics by themselves don't make life better for anyone, but a basic understanding of what life is like for our neighbors near and far is essential. I don't expect that everyone has the time to keep up with all the latest figures on poverty and disease. But we should never forget that the numbers and issues represent real lives and circumstances.

We North Americans, in particular, continue to fair poorly when tested for our global consciousness. Recent research among U.S. adults shows:

- Only one in seven can find Iraq on a world map.<sup>2</sup>
- Only 8 percent can name the prime minister of Canada.<sup>3</sup>
- 72 percent believe that all devout Muslims support killing non-Muslims (though the majority of Muslims around the world refute this statement).<sup>4</sup>
- Only one in five has a passport.<sup>5</sup>

You have to search beyond the mainstream news to get much of an understanding of what's going on globally. Events in developing countries make headlines only when another atrocity erupts or a disaster occurs. It's especially rare to hear *good* news about people and events in Africa. Where are the stories about the growing move away from dictatorships to democracy, the efforts of African institutions to combat disease and ecological degradation, and the commitment of many African governments to alleviate poverty? By ignoring

### Seven Strategies

1. Be aware
2. Inform and recruit others
3. Work it into work
4. Give
5. Shop responsibly
6. Invest/divest
7. Influence government and media

the positive news, much of the Western media sends the message that the entire continent is hopeless. Similar stories go unreported from other developing parts of the world.<sup>6</sup>

A few ways to enhance your global consciousness include:

- Visit BBC news (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/>) for one of the more robust purviews of world events.
- Check out [www.worldpress.org](http://www.worldpress.org) for a quick overview of current stories globally.
- Visit [www.languagemonitor.com](http://www.languagemonitor.com) to see the top ten words of the year.
- Tune into public broadcasting.
- Consume a variety of news sources to see how the “same” events get reported differently.

Increased global awareness is one of the great benefits of international travel, if the travel is done well. When we travel abroad and see firsthand what’s happening, CNN, Fox News, and missionary updates are no longer our sole informants. Be careful not to rush to judgment based on a brief encounter abroad, but use travel to enhance your awareness about life for our global neighbors. Opening our eyes to the needs around us is the first step toward action.

## 2. INFORM AND RECRUIT OTHERS

As you learn about various issues, weave them into your conversations. Don’t be the obnoxious global-chip-on-your-shoulder person who puts people on guilt trips at every turn. Instead look for ways to

interject stories about our global neighbors. When selling or buying a coffee blend from Ethiopia, reference how inspiring it is to see East Africans' resourcefulness despite ongoing war and poverty in the region. When caring for a group of kids who say, "We're hungry," gently describe what hunger means for many kids around the world. As you have lunch with a friend, talk about an underreported news story. When you're at a family gathering, speak up when a racist joke is told. Use a writing or speech assignment to learn about an issue and inform others in your class.

The organizationally savvy may want to go further by coordinating a walkathon to raise money and awareness for a particular cause. Or you might develop an online network to coordinate efforts to grow awareness, prayer, advocacy, and funding. Perhaps you could start a local organization that convenes around a concern or join other organizations already doing something like this. Check out [www.enoughproject.org](http://www.enoughproject.org) for an example of an organized effort to grow awareness and response to genocide and mass atrocities.

Don't underestimate the role of informing others. Amy Butler, a pastor at Calvary Baptist Church in Washington, D.C., made a commitment to mention the Sudanese crisis at every Sunday worship service for an entire season. She never had to suggest starting a church program for Sudan. The congregation naturally responded to their increased awareness, and a grassroots initiative began as a result.

What happens when there's a horrible crisis that requires global intervention, and not enough citizens make a noise about it? Nothing.<sup>7</sup> People can't be expected to care about something they don't know about. Recruiting others to join you in your service begins with increasing their awareness.

### 3. WORK IT INTO WORK

Most of us can speak up through our work, something we'll address more fully in part 2 of the book. But what about those who work at a blue-collar job? Our global village can't function if everyone sits behind a desk or wears a lab coat. Society is dependent on those who are willing to work long hours digging ditches, plumbing, installing heating units, and working along assembly lines.

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Some people working in manufacturing jobs might find little satisfaction in their work because they have a hard time seeing how the widget they produce fulfills their priestly calling. Maybe you work all day making some small part of an electronic device, and you wonder if what you do really meets a pressing need in the world. There *can* be redemptive value even in jobs like yours: doing your work with excellence, contributing to the larger provision of goods and services, praying for the people who will use the products, and recommending and implementing safety practices to improve the lives of fellow workers are just a few examples. There are people at your workplace whom you can love and encourage, and even more, your family receives the loving benefit of the income you earn from your employment.

Employees *can* influence their workplace to be an agent for God's work in the world. For example, my friend Adam works as a computer programmer for a large grocery store company. Most days he sits in a cubicle working on various projects for the company. He has observed the increased attention his company is giving to marketing and selling organic products. Since he is concerned about the environment and health issues, he celebrates this initiative. But he'd like to see the same kind of spotlight put on selling "slave-free" products. He's approaching management with some ideas about how they can be on the competitive edge of selling a line of products like this while also doing good in the world.

Whenever possible as you search for a job, look for an employer that practices corporate social responsibility. Find out about their international labor practices and their commitment to environmental responsibility. Ask whether they have a foundation through which they'll match employee contributions to charities.

There are countless other ways Christians can live out Christ's presence in the world through the work they do. There are lawyers doing pro bono defense work for those unable to afford it, politicians working for legislation that brings about redemptive change in cities and nations, and pilots safely transporting people from one side of the world to the other. There are third-shift factory workers who make parts of gadgets that make our lives safer, and while

they work, they relate graciously with their immigrant coworkers. There are retail associates dealing with cantankerous customers in ways that embody the grace of Jesus, and baristas who serve people with a smile and use their coffee shop as a platform for advocacy. Construction workers are taking into account how they care for the environment and fixing the homes of people in need. Military personnel, police officers, and firefighters are protecting us, farmers are feeding us, and truck drivers are getting goods to people near and far. Meanwhile many stay-at-home parents are working for love, sometimes *only* for love.<sup>8</sup> Look around you for creative ways to connect your global concerns with your work!

#### 4. GIVE

Donating money is the most common response we're offered when confronted with global needs. But giving money to a cause doesn't have to be something you do just on your own. Recruit your friends and family members to join you in raising money for a cause. Garage sales, benefit concerts, party fund-raisers, and walkathons are just a few of the many fund-raising strategies that your group can use. You won't have to look far for ideas and for initiatives you can join.

You can't fund everything, but you can get involved somewhere with the people and causes dear to your heart. Do a little homework to be sure your gifts actually reach the poor and oppressed. Look for groups that cut unnecessary spending and operational costs in order for your money to have the greatest possible impact.

Most of us feel the enormity of our own financial pressures. But don't wait until you strike it rich to start giving and sharing. Start where you are and give a little. Then find ways to gradually increase what you can give.

#### 5. SHOP RESPONSIBLY

The sugar boycott in the late 1700s was one of the earliest examples of consumers using their purchasing power to bring about change. During that time, sugar was primarily produced on the backs of slaves. An enraged public boycotted sugar, and sales dropped by

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half! Some shops advertised goods that weren't produced by slaves and saw their sales increase tenfold over two years.<sup>9</sup> Similar efforts are occurring today through the fair trade movement and through groups like Stop the Traffik ([www.stopthetraffik.org](http://www.stopthetraffik.org)).

Take some time to learn more about the products you buy, especially those you purchase most regularly and the ones that cost you the most money. Ask things like:

- Where and how was this produced?
- What raw materials were used in its production?
- What impact did producing this have on the environment?  
(Visit [www.biggreenpurse.com](http://www.biggreenpurse.com).)
- What sort of ethical track record is behind the companies involved?<sup>10</sup>

Visit [www.shoppingforabetterworld.com](http://www.shoppingforabetterworld.com) for additional ideas and for help on wielding our power as consumers to extend God's reach.

## 6. INVEST/DIVEST

Examine the companies you invest in, in light of their labor practices and environmental commitments. We should see our dollars producing returns there as well. Socially responsible investing (SRI) is a growing movement that measures social and environmental practices of companies as well as financial criteria.

Assess the holdings of your investments to see if the companies involved reflect your values. Invest in "social funds," which function like normal mutual funds but institute social screens as well, barring certain types of companies (for example, cigarette manufacturers, major polluters, and so on), and seek out exceptional social performers based on their sustainability practices, community investments, no-sweat-shop policies, and other factors.<sup>11</sup> For help understanding the SRI movement, visit [www.socialinvest.org](http://www.socialinvest.org).

Hold your investment companies and pension plans accountable for divesting from funds that support corrupt regimes. Growing numbers of state pensions and investment companies are divesting from funds that directly or even indirectly support malicious dictators. The Khartoum government in Sudan is being starved

financially because of efforts like these. Activists are helping cut off the funding for the genocidal campaign in Darfur, particularly by divesting from many oil and energy funds.<sup>12</sup> Visit [www.sudandivestment.org](http://www.sudandivestment.org) to see what you can do. A few phone calls and transactions can be part of living out your role as God's partner in the ways your money is used for good and not evil.

## 7. INFLUENCE GOVERNMENT AND MEDIA

Finally, send a letter, stop a genocide. It sounds too simplistic, doesn't it? But Senator Paul Simon said that a mere one hundred letters to each member of Congress could have changed the outcome of the genocide in Rwanda. Congresspeople often say, "We have to hear from our constituents. Make as much noise as you can, scream bloody murder, force us to care!"<sup>13</sup> It's easy for us to become jaded by the corruption in the political system, but remember: not every government leader is driven by selfish motives. Writing letters to Congress, having face-to-face meetings with local officials, and sending letters to the editor of your local paper *can* raise public awareness of problems like genocide and human trafficking. In their extremely helpful book *Not on Our Watch*, Hollywood actor Don Cheadle and activist John Prendergast say that they want to see more and more people "nagging" their legislators to vote on behalf of those suffering from genocide. Cheadle and Prendergast write, "We need to tell [elected officials], 'We're mad as hell and we aren't going to vote for you anymore!'"<sup>14</sup> Then *affirm* those politicians who do act on behalf of the oppressed.

Our treatment of the media should be similar. It's easy to get revved up about how little airtime is given to these issues. But the media, like any business, simply respond to the interests and demands of viewers. The news media need to hear from citizens in order to prioritize news and programs and focus on those we care about. There's even something to be said for applying similar pressure on religious leaders and pastors who may have the attention of large groups of church attendees.

Here's a specific word to college students who might view their influence as limited or, at best, delayed until they graduate from



college. Historically, when governmental power has been threatened, it's usually the students who are feared the most. In the midst of a coup, dictators will often shut down the universities before doing anything else. Consider the revolutions that took place at the Berlin Wall, in Tiananmen Square, or during the 2009 Iranian elections to get a glimpse of the powerful ways that students can influence their governments and gain the attention of the news media. Don't view your time in school as merely biding time until you can get into the real action. Use your voice to speak up now.

## GET STARTED!

An injustice like extreme poverty requires the continued apathy of others to exist. Environmental decay will keep making life worse for people around the world if we simply ignore pressing problems. Feeling paralyzed by the despair of human trafficking does nothing to help those who are being trafficked. God is making his appeal through us, and it's time for us to "speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves. . . . Defend the rights of the poor and needy" (Prov. 31:8–9).

There are many ways you can speak up, show up, and stand up. Whatever our circumstances right now, the overarching question we can each ask is, *How can I use my power, technology, education, job, relationships, money, family, and skills in light of the needs of the world?* All of us, as citizens, family members, and friends, can speak up on behalf of our neighbors.

Don't discount what God can do through you. Every one of us can make a global difference. In the words of the late Senator Robert Kennedy, "Let no one be discouraged by the belief there is nothing one man or woman can do against an enormous array of the world's ills—against misery and ignorance, injustice and violence. . . . Few will have the greatness to bend history itself; but each of us can work to change a small portion of events, and in the total of all those acts will be written the history of this generation. . . . It is from the numberless diverse acts of courage and belief that human history is shaped. Each time a man stands up for an ideal, or acts to

improve the lots of others, or strikes out against injustice, he sends a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring, those ripples build a current which can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance.”<sup>15</sup>

Start right where you are. Respond to God’s invitation and speak up for your global neighbors.

## BEFORE YOU TURN THE PAGE

Review the seven strategies from this chapter:

1. Be aware
2. Inform and recruit others
3. Work it into work
4. Give
5. Shop responsibly
6. Invest/divest
7. Influence government and media

Identify one of these strategies you can use in the next week. How will you use it? What will you do? Be specific.

Identify an additional strategy you can use in the next month. How will you use it? What will you do? Again, be specific.