

Untapped POTENTIAL

by Ellen Livingood

The concept of “untapped potential” is exciting! The words remind us of...

- ...a gift card to a favorite store,
- ...an uncashed check,
- ...a newly discovered vein of gold, or
- ...hidden treasure!

The untapped potential sitting dormant in every church is power ready to be released for the Kingdom of God. Yet too many times it is wasted, often because it isn't even recognized. In this issue of *Postings*, we want to help you identify some of the hidden treasure God has invested in your people for global outreach.

1. Dissatisfaction

What? How is dissatisfaction a form of untapped potential? We're talking about dissatisfaction that represents a deep spiritual longing for more—more gospel impact, more compassion extended to hurting people, more evidence of the Spirit changing lives. Have you had conversations with people in your church—not everyone, but at least individuals here and there across the congregation—who share a deep desire to see God use them in a more powerful way? Wonderful! You've got the most important type of untapped potential because the hunger to be used by God is the only essential for engaging all the other types of hidden resources.

2. Leaders with a Special Passion

Sometimes church missions leaders lament that instead of being enthusiastic about missions, their pastor and other leaders are passionate about some other aspect of ministry—perhaps Bible teaching, local compassion ser-

vice, discipleship, etc. Here's more buried treasure! Regardless of what it is, every pastor's passion is useful in global ministry. You just need to find the connection.

3. Effective Ministry

What does your church do well? Without a doubt, whatever ministry expertise you've developed could enrich global ministry too. Is your VBS the best around? Take it on the road—around the world. Your worship is phenomenal? Brainstorm how to use that universal language to communicate anywhere. You're known for being friendly? Your people are gifted to build friendships that can bridge cultural barriers.

4. People with an Unusual Gift or Vision

Many churches have members who commit a lot of time and energy to something quite unique. They may make quilts for AIDS babies, minister to drivers at a truck stop, write prisoners or...the possibilities are endless. Many “specialty” ministries can have an even greater impact somewhere else in the world. Look for connections!

5. Powerful Intercessors

What a tremendous treasure these folks are! As you contemplate how to better engage your church's resources, think about how to more fully utilize the dedicated prayer ministry of your intercessors as well as how to make their prayer commitment more infectious!

6. Professionals

People with professional expertise are in great demand in Majority World nations: university administrators and professors in any field, medical personnel, city planners,

chefs, government officials (one church's field partners set up a peer-to-peer visit for a group of law-enforcement officers; it launched relationships that the on-site workers could have never developed on their own). Any specialist can be a bridge to his/her peers in another country.

7. Members in a Life Stage of Special Opportunity

God can use people at any age, but during certain periods of life, people can more easily invest significant amounts of time in global ministry. **Gap year**—More and more teenagers are investing a year in missions between high school and college (a certain level of maturity required). **Recent college graduates**—While the recession has made finding a job difficult, young adults can invest time in overseas ministry, especially if their church will help with college loan payments. **Teachers**—Sabbaticals may be harder to snag, but most teachers have several months during the summer that they could invest in missions. **Businesspeople**—Today some of the highest-impact ministries are carried out by businessmen and women who can arrange their schedules to spend several weeks at a time, several times a year, in overseas ministry. **Retirees**—Since “70 is the new 50” for many senior adults, their potential productivity during retirement years is huge. Opportunities abound!

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8. Missionaries with a Big Vision

Consider the various missionaries your church supports or is connected to: Does your mind go to one or more who exude an infectious passion to see God do amazing things? Your relationship to such workers holds great potential for powerful engagement!

9. Former Missionaries or MKs

Whether they spent six months or 60 years as cross-cultural workers, former missionaries and MKs are a gold mine of knowledge about what it takes to work overseas. If health and circumstances allow, they will often be eager to return to the field as part of your church's efforts, and provide training and leadership for others on short-term trips.

10. Perspectives Fever

Have individuals in your congregation taken the “Perspectives on the World Christian Movement” course? Their understanding of God's overarching plan for the world, and their increased sensitivity to the needs of the unreached and the scope of missions are tremendous sources of untapped potential for your church. Often Perspectives alumni are eager to be involved more effectively but aren't sure how. More untapped potential!

11. People Who Have Lived or Who Travel Abroad Frequently

With a little research, you may find members of your church who have lived overseas due to military or diplomatic corps postings, job assignments, study-abroad programs, or other reasons. Some in your congregation may regularly travel to a particular location overseas for business. These can be God-given connections.

12. A Nearby Community Representing an Unreached People Group

Some of your church's untapped treasures may not be found inside your doors. Find out what ethnic groups are represented in your city or nearby. Many churches are surprised to discover that business connections have drawn a community from abroad, the government has resettled a particular group of refugees nearby, or for no obvious reason, immigrants from a certain country or people group have chosen to settle in their area. After one congregation developed a friendship with a nearby church of Haitian immigrants, people from both fellowships teamed up for work projects in Haiti.

13. A Nearby University with International Students

International students who have become a part of your church are a wonderful, often untapped, resource. They can help your people understand how to cross cultures as well as provide important contacts back in their home country. University staff who teach or work with internationals are also an untapped resource. Many develop lifelong friendships with internationals and have a great passion to share the gospel across cultures.

14. An Exchange Student Program in Your High School(s)

Is there an exchange program set up between schools in your area and those in another country? If so, you may have a number of young adults who have spent a semester or a year abroad. And some families in your church may have hosted exchange students. Their knowledge of, and burden for, that country may be significant.

15. People Trained in TESL

Almost everywhere on earth, people are eager to learn English. So actually, every native English speaker in your church has untapped potential in this area. But those with training in teaching English to speakers of other languages are particularly useful.

16. Bilingual Members

Many churches discover they have people with a “hidden” ability to speak another language. Whether they majored in Russian in college or had parents who emigrated from Argentina, these people have valuable language skills.

17. People with a Love for Drama or the Arts

You don't have to be Rembrandt, Streep, or Bono to make an impact for God using your arts/drama gifts in global outreach. These gifts can often be most powerful when used creatively in cross-cultural settings.

18. Children

Kids are probably not a hidden part of your church, but in far too many churches, their fantastic missions potential is unrecognized. Children care passionately for the hurting and will work, give, and pray. Children will motivate adults—their parents, grandparents, teachers, babysitters, and the whole congregation if you let them! With proper preparation, children can go—and effectively minister in ways that change their lives as well as others'.

19. Immigrants in Your Church

Those who have moved to your country from somewhere else have unique untapped resources. They know how to bridge cultures. They have empathy for displaced per-

sons. They often see life from a unique perspective that makes them good listeners and caring friends despite cultural barriers. Grateful for what they have received, they want to give back.

20. Individuals with Practical Skills

Almost any hobby, skill, or area of expertise can be a door opener in missions. Hairdressers. Scrapbookers. Auto mechanics. Little League coaches. Counselors. Computer geeks. Jugglers. Golfers. Knitters. Everything is useful somewhere!

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21. Those with Communications Skills

Do you have writers, photographers, videographers, graphic designers, marketing specialists, salespeople, editors, photographers, or social media experts attending your church? In our media-saturated world, these people have skills that are life changing when invested in missions and/or in building a case back home for how others can get involved.

22. Members Who Have Intentionally Rejected the American Dream

Most churches have some of these folks—the ones who could live in a McMansion but chose the little rancher instead and drive the 10-year-old car. You know, the ones who drop off groceries to the single mom instead of buying new shoes for themselves. The teenagers who asks friends to give to a clean-water project instead of buying them birthday presents. It's these folks who don't mind roughing it on a missions trip. And they will always find a way to give more when your church launches a major fundraising effort for your next global partnership.

23. Entrepreneurs/Problem-Solvers

Around the world today, businesspeople are opening doors for the gospel. Their ability to move into the workplace gives them entrées that the professional missionary will never have. Anyone with entrepreneurial gifts or

the ability to figure out the solution to a problem no one else can solve is a great asset in almost any location. Fortunately, in the 21st century we are waking up to the value of their contributions to the missions enterprise.

24. People without a Passion for Outreach

Huh? Yes, really! Christians who have passion to serve are probably already heavily involved. But those whose interest hasn't yet been ignited are reservoirs of untapped potential. Rather than focus on their lack of engagement, ask God for His perspective on how to spark their enthusiasm.

25. Individuals of Humility and Faith, Teachable, and Sensitive to the Spirit

In other words, any child of God with a willingness to serve wherever and however needed is a wealth of untapped potential. The quiet servants are the ones who make missions happen. Their potential is their availability—and their value is limitless!

Wow. Your church does have LOTS of untapped potential, right? Have you thought of other resources in your church? Write us at info@CatalystServices.org, and we will keep extending our list!

Are you ready now to determine how to better engage all of this new-found treasure? The **Your FOCUS on the**

World materials (see below) can point you to the next steps.



Ellen Livingood launched and leads Catalyst Services to further church/agency collaboration. She works with churches and mission agencies to unlock the untapped potential of "regular" Christians.

Interchange Postings

Catalyst's **Postings** e-newsletter is a monthly publication designed for mission agency personnel and local church leaders involved in collaborative global efforts. The practical articles highlight what churches and agencies are doing to mobilize believers, especially those of younger generations, to expand the Kingdom.

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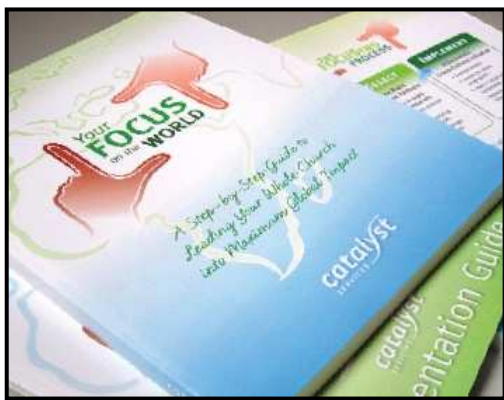
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YOUR FOCUS ON THE WORLD

This practical, step-by-step manual is designed to:

- ✓ Lead churches to DISCOVER their missions potential, SELECT the right partners, and IMPLEMENT a successful, cross-cultural initiative. Lots of real-life stories show how other churches have done it.
- ✓ Help churches already involved in a global initiative to strengthen their partnerships, and their peoples' excitement and involvement.
- ✓ Serve as a practical tool mobilizers can use to guide churches in expanding cross-cultural effectiveness.

The *Your FOCUS on the World* manual is \$19.99. Included with book purchase is access to a host of **online resources** including helpful samples and customizable forms. Order at www.FOCUShelp.org.