



Gap

The

# Our Premise Is God's Promise: God's Word Accomplishes His Purposes

“...As the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater...

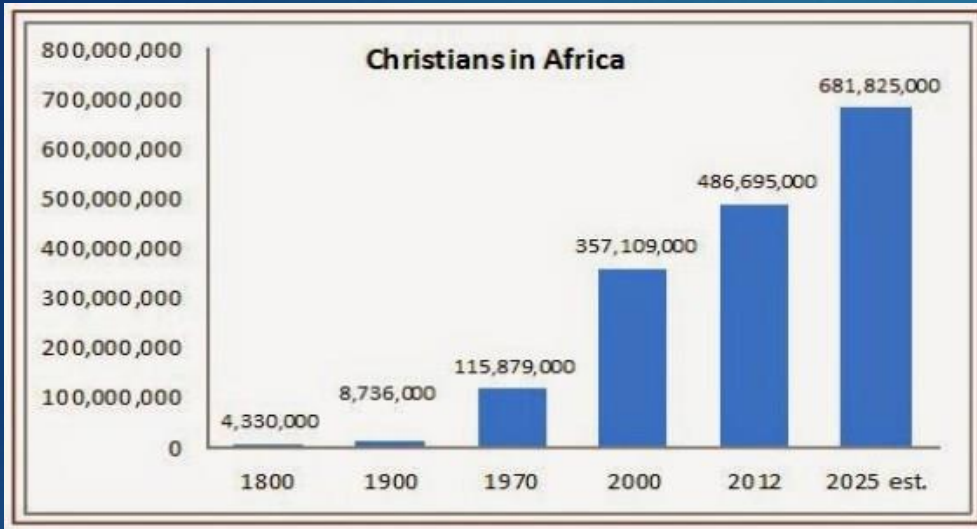
so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.”

Isaiah 55:10-11 ESV

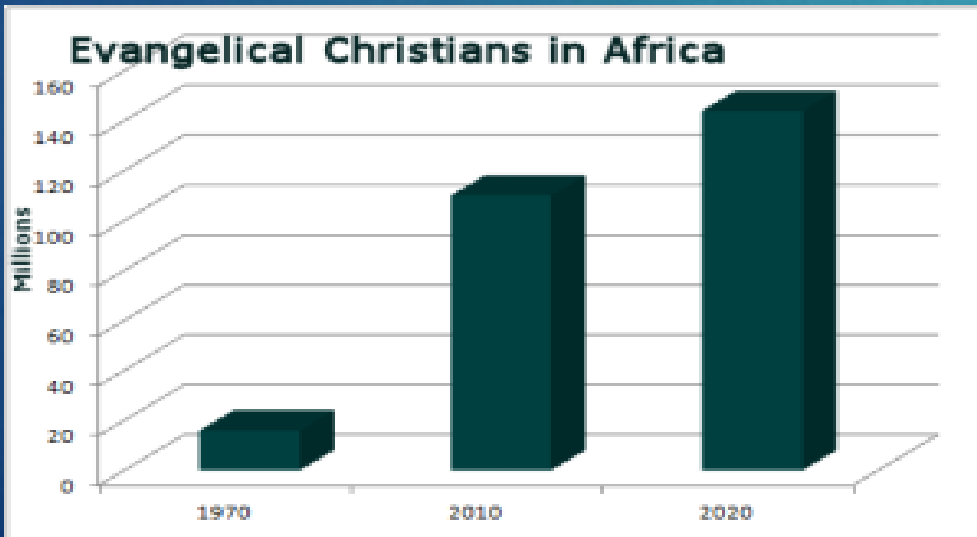


Our Dilemma:  
It *Appears* That God Isn't  
Keeping His Promise

# Case In Point: Africa



African Christianity's Exponential Growth:  
(number in millions)  
1900 – 8.45 Million  
1970 – 113.51 Million  
2000 – 359.64 Million  
2018 – 598.99 Million  
2025 – 721.43 Million  
2050 – 1.25 Billion



**(Source:** Todd M. Johnson and Gina A. Zurlo, eds. World Christian Database (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed July 2017 [www.worldchristiandatabase.org](http://www.worldchristiandatabase.org))

# In Spite Of Such Rapid Numerical Growth, Africa's Reality Is:

- ▶ Prevalent Corruption
- ▶ Destructive Tribalism / Periodic Genocide
- ▶ Persistent Political Turmoil
- ▶ Economic Poverty
- ▶ Widespread General Instability
- ▶ Theological Weakness Leading To Cultic Activity
- ▶ Pervasive Morality Challenges



# Insight On One Moral Challenge: The Prosperity Gospel



“The plagues of the prosperity gospel and false converts are not at the heart of the problem for the African church. They are mere symptoms of a more fundamental problem. God wants the local church to be built up so that it can withstand different winds of error. It might be prosperity gospel today and gnosticism tomorrow. Focusing more missionary effort on building healthy churches will help protect the gospel for our generation and for the one yet to come.”

*Ken Mbugua, pastor of Emmanuel Baptist Church, Nairobi, Kenya*

# Is The Fundamental Weakness Of The African Church A Question Of Access To God's Word?

Study done in Angola, Central African Republic and Kenya reveals that only 6% of believers said their church did not provide adequate access to God's Word.

When asked how many of these believers read their Bibles daily:

Angola: 60.1%

Central African Republic: 58.9%

Kenya: 64.2%

(Source: Tyndale House Foundation: Africa Leadership Study [www.africaleadershipstudy.org](http://www.africaleadershipstudy.org))

(See Also: Missio Nexus <https://missionexus.org/african-readers-mark-their-place/>)



If There Is Ample Access To  
God's Word And If God's Promise  
Is True, *What Is Africa Missing?*



What Is Missed Is Our Failure To  
Adequately Address

Gap

The

# Defining The Gap

**The Gap** is the breach  
between the point of salvation  
to transformation into  
the likeness of Jesus Christ



**It's Not Just An  
African Problem**

# The Gap Is A Pervasive Global Problem



John Stott assessed the growth of the Global Church in 2006 and essentially identified **The Gap** as being quantitative growth without qualitative depth:

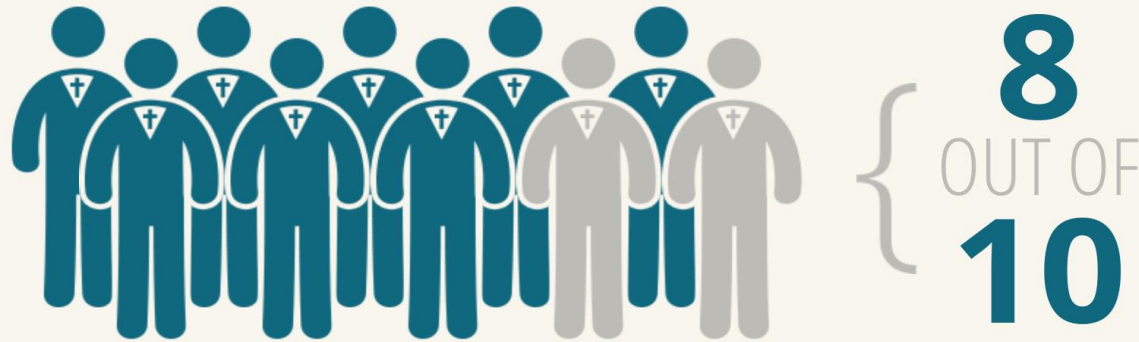
"None of us wants to dispute the extraordinary growth of the church. But it has been largely numerical and statistical growth. And there has not been sufficient growth in discipleship that is comparable to the growth in numbers."

(<https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2006/september/42.32.html>)

# Compounding The Gap Problem

## Why it is Needed

It is estimated that more than 80% OF PASTORS around the world have little or no biblical training – that's more than 2 MILLION PASTORS that are not equipped to help believers in their churches understand and apply God's Word.



**Globally That  
Equates To Over  
2,000,000  
UN-equipped  
And/Or  
ILL-equipped  
Church Leaders**

Source: Langham Partnership (a John Stott ministry)



# The Gap In The European Context

- ▶ **People are losing the big picture and purpose of the Bible**

*“Many people never read big chunks of the Bible at all, they just return again and again to the bits they experience as inspiring or comforting” (Ruth Perrin-Researcher)*

- ▶ **The way the Bible has traditionally been taught in our churches does not encourage people to share, discuss and learn in community**

*“Creating a collaborative environment – in small groups or the such like - where people are encouraged to share, speak out, learn together rather than expecting an expert to bestow ‘the answer’ is also life giving”. (Ruth Perrin)*

Source: Biblical illiteracy among European Millennials, a challenge,

[http://evangelicalfocus.com/lifetech/2433/ruth\\_perrin\\_Biblical\\_illiteracy\\_among\\_European\\_Millennials\\_a\\_challenge](http://evangelicalfocus.com/lifetech/2433/ruth_perrin_Biblical_illiteracy_among_European_Millennials_a_challenge)

# The Gap In The European Context

- ▶ **The Bible is losing its authority--even among Christians** <sup>1</sup>

*Only one-quarter of Christians (24%) describe the Bible as “Truth”*

- ▶ **People do not know how apply what they do learn –or—Know but choose to not apply it** <sup>1</sup>

- ▶ **Christian parents and churches have not properly discipled the next generation** <sup>2</sup>

*A survey of 16- to 29-year-olds found the Czech Republic is the least religious country in Europe, with 91% of that age group saying they have no religious affiliation. Between 70% and 80% of young adults in Estonia, Sweden and the Netherlands also categorise themselves as non-religious.*

Source 1: Digital Millennials and the Bible, [https://www.biblesociety.org.uk/content/news/news\\_articles/2019\\_jan/Digital\\_Millennials\\_and\\_the\\_Bible.pdf](https://www.biblesociety.org.uk/content/news/news_articles/2019_jan/Digital_Millennials_and_the_Bible.pdf)

Source 2: Daily Mail, Losing our religion: Christianity in Europe is dying out as young people turn away from the church, research says, <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-5536431/Losing-religion-Christianity-Europe-dying-study-finds.html>

# The Gap In The European Context

- ▶ Christian leaders are not always able to adequately/biblically handle issues that relevant and important for people (e.g. justice, environmental issues, treating minorities, etc.)

## Variety of factors led Western Europeans to shed their religious identity

Among those who were raised in a religion but now identify as unaffiliated, % who cite \_\_\_\_\_ as an important reason they left religion

	Gradually drifting away from religion	Disagreeing with their religion's positions on social issues	No longer believing in their religion's teachings	Being unhappy about scandals involving religious institutions	Spiritual needs failing them in time of need	Religion failing them in time of need	Marrying someone outside their religion
Austria	66%	75%	44%	59%	32%	24%	12%
Belgium	74	51	70	40	31	21	8
Denmark	85	42	60	19	22	12	8
Finland	65	56	48	35	25	6	4
France	65	64	54	48	32	21	15
Germany	75	64	54	57	24	23	8
Ireland	69	64	54	58	21	17	6
Italy	72	64	35	60	30	23	6
Netherlands	72	55	60	43	28	31	14
Norway	68	58	58	37	20	11	7
Portugal	77	65	55	60	35	26	8
Spain	65	69	64	74	39	20	6
Sweden	60	33	57	15	19	7	6
Switzerland	59	56	46	56	26	24	15
United Kingdom	68	55	37	53	25	24	11
<b>MEDIAN</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>8</b>

Source: Survey conducted April-August 2017 in 15 countries. See Methodology for details. "Being Christian in Western Europe"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Source : PEW Research Center, Being Christian in Western Europe, <http://www.pewforum.org/2018/05/29/religious-identity/>

# Addressing The Gap:

- ▶ Recognize that growing numbers of believers are struggling because their hunger for discipleship has gone unsatisfied
- ▶ Commit to the next step following a salvation decision—which must be intentional, application-focused Bible study
- ▶ Empower indigenous leaders to address **The Gap** resulting in thriving national movements



# Some Values Contributing To Effective Bible Study:

- Prayer
- Trusting in God's Provision
- Inclusiveness
- Excellence
- Integrity
- Transparency
- Servant Leadership



# Effective Bible Study Essentials:

- ▶ **Individual Study:** Individuals are transformed as they personally engage with God in His Word
- ▶ **Encouraging Discussion:** Participants gain insight and confidence when they discuss the passage in small groups
- ▶ **Effective Teaching:** Trained teachers can highlight and illustrate Bible truths and practical application
- ▶ **Insightful Commentary:** Respected theologians help participants understand the context and content
- ▶ **Caring Community:** Caring leaders and participants pray for and encourage one another to grow and connect more deeply with each other and with God

# An African Perspective On Africa's Dire Need For **The Gap** To Close

Send us your power, O Lord, The guiding Spirit of truth.  
To teach us the law which has been written.

We receive salvation slowly, slowly,  
All of us together, with no one left behind.

God has come among us slowly, and we didn't realize it.  
He stands nearby, behind our hearts, shining his pure light upon us.

We ask you, our Father, Great Lord of peace in heaven,  
Who is calling us with a whisper.

Our Father knows the depths of the heart of humankind.

Our faith is weak; make us strong,  
That we may stand firm with courage,  
Until you reach us undeterred....

(source: *Dinka Christianity: The Origin and Development of Christianity among the Dinka of Sudan with Special Reference to the Songs of Dinka Christians*, Marc R. Nikkel, Paulines Publications, Nairobi 2001; poem translated by Nikkel)

The

Inductive In-Depth Study of  
God's Word Within a Context  
of Genuinely Caring Community

Gap



**COMMUNITY**  
**BIBLE STUDY**  
INTERNATIONAL MINISTRY