

How We Will Collaborate for the Great Commission

By Rick Warren

A  finishing the task White Paper

Finishing the Task is a coalition of thousands of believers, churches, denominations, and organizations coming together to fulfill the Great Commission. It's a call to mobilize all of Christ's church, to do all Christ commands, with all people, in all places, using all of God's gifts, all for God's glory by 2033, the 2000th anniversary of the instructions given to us by Jesus:

The Great Commission

*Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."
(Matthew 28:18-20)*

Finishing the Task is not an organization, congregation, or denomination. It is a network of networks and a shared commitment to a set of goals designed to help us fulfill the Great Commission in our generation. Over the next ten years, millions of believers, churches, organizations, and denominations will work together to towards a set of goals designed to help us fulfill the Great Commission for our generation.

These goals beg the questions: why have previous efforts toward fulfilling the Great Commission been unsuccessful thus far? How do we learn from the lessons of the past?

The Need for Unity

As I've researched why the church hasn't yet completed the Great Commission, I've found that one of the greatest reasons is that Christians don't know how to collaborate with each other.

Some of that is because of divisions in the body of Christ. I honestly don't think God wants us all to be the same denomination. I think God loves diversity. Look around. There's not anybody in the world who looks like you. That's intentional. When God made you, he broke the mold.

When God made beetles, he made over 6,000 different varieties. You would've thought 300 or 400 varieties would've been enough. No, God overdoses on variety. He made 6,000 kinds of beetles. The only way to have unity is to love diversity.

God wants unity; he doesn't want uniformity. Twice in John 17—which is Jesus's prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane before he goes to the cross—he prays for unity so that the world will believe. He says, “I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one . . . so that the world will believe you sent me” (John 17:21 NLT). And then he continues, “May they experience such perfect unity that the world will know that you sent me and that you love them as much as you love me” (John 17:23 NLT). Unity is the key to the Great Commission. Although the body of Christ comes from many different backgrounds, languages, countries, and denominations, it is in the unification that we work together and learn to collaborate.

We are going to disagree on doctrine for the rest of our life, but on the essentials—who Christ is, what his church is, what he told us to do, and the fact that he's coming back—we're all on the same page. When you get to heaven, God is not going to say, "What was your denomination?" He's not going to say, "What did you believe about baptism? The Lord's supper? Mary?" He's going to say, "Did you love my Son?"

If you love Jesus Christ, I don't care what denomination you are—we're on the same team.

We'll have to re-evangelize some Christians because a lot of them are cultural Christians, Christian in name only. But it's not as if we're trying to convert somebody from a different religion. They already say, "I believe Jesus is who he claimed to be."

If one out of every three people already says, "I believe Jesus is the Son of God," what if we get those people to talk to two others? The job's over. We might be thinking we're going to push a big boulder up a hill. No, we just need to reactivate and re-energize and unify the church around the task of evangelism.

We're never going to unify around doctrine. We're never going to unify around worship styles. We're never going to unify around how you do baptism. But one thing we can unify on is this: "Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so." That's the Good News.

Networking and Cooperating Versus Collaborating

Christians are not good at collaborating. If we were, we would've already won the world to Christ. Now, there are differences in networking and cooperating and collaborating. These are different levels of association.

Christians are great at networking. We'll all go to a Christian concert together. We'll all go hear an evangelist like Billy Graham preach. We'll go to a fellowship with pastors in the area, and we'll have breakfast with them. We network and fellowship together—but we don't work together.

We cooperate. If something comes to town—a Christian seminar, a Christian concert, an evangelism revival or crusade—we'll cooperate on that. But as soon as it's over, it's done.

Collaboration is at a much, much deeper level. It means sitting around a room and looking at a people group that doesn't yet know Jesus and saying, "Who's going to take that group and assume responsibility to win them to Christ?" It's looking at an area on a map and saying, "Who's going to put a church there?" It's looking at a group that's not being reached for the gospel—like prisoners in your country or deaf people in your country or business leaders in your country or mothers of preschoolers in your country—and saying, "Who's going to go after that group?"

There's a lot of reduplication in our ministries, but there's also no cooperation or collaboration in our ministry. But God's Word teaches the basic principles of collaboration that you need.

How to Plan and Collaborate With Each Other

The classic chapter on collaboration in the Bible is Genesis 24. It is a biblical model of collaboration—how to plan a project and succeed at that project when it takes other people to succeed. It is the story of Abraham finding a wife for his son Isaac. Abraham sends Eliezer back to Abraham's homeland, which is modern-day Iraq, where Abraham came from before he came to the Promised Land. And it is a story of Eliezer planning on how to find a wife for Isaac.

Out of it, we get nine principles of collaboration that we're going to have to build everything on as we work together to finish the task.

Step 1: Describe our present condition.

Let's say I was coming to your house and I called you on the phone and said, "I need directions to come to your house." The first question you would ask would be, "Well, where are you now?" Until you know where I am now, you can't tell me how to get there.

That's the first principle: Describe our present condition. This answers the question, "Where am I now?" You ask yourself things like: "What is our present condition in our region? What are our strengths and our weaknesses? What are we good at? What are we not good at? What's working in our area? What's not working in our area? What's good about what we're doing in translation? What's good about what we're doing in evangelism? What's good about what we're doing in church planting? What's not good? What's not working? What's weak?"

As a collaborating team—whether you're working on church planting, prayer, Bible distribution, Bible engagement, or evangelism—you can boil this down to two questions: "What are our strengths and weaknesses?" and "What are our obstacles and opportunities?"

Let's go back to Abraham and Eliezer. God has promised Abraham that he's going to be a father of a great nation, but now he's very old. Isaac was born, but he doesn't have a wife. How's Abraham going to be the father of a great nation if his son doesn't have a wife? God's promise is determined by this: Does Abraham find the right wife for Isaac?

The Bible says this: "Now Abraham was old, well advanced in years. And the LORD had blessed Abraham in all things" (Genesis 24:1 ESV). That's his present condition.

The other thing about his present condition is that Isaac doesn't have a wife. But time's running out for Abraham, and Abraham thinks, "I need to get moving." Whatever you intend to do with your life, you should go ahead and start doing it now because we don't know.

You may think, "I'm too old to change," or "I'm too old to do this." Abraham didn't, and he was a whole lot older than you. He was 175 when he died. Now, at 115 years old, Abraham is still setting goals. You're never too young, you're never too old, and as long as you're alive, you need goals in your life.

You start with saying, "Where am I now? What's my present condition—the good, the bad, the ugly?"

Step 2: Define our purpose.

Step two is this: Define our purpose. When you get together with a group to collaborate, you ask questions like, "What's our purpose as a prayer group? What's our purpose as a Bible group? What's our purpose as a church planting group? What's our purpose getting the Gospel out to every unbeliever?"

As you define your purpose, don't be vague. This is important: first, you agree on what your purpose is. But in defining your purpose, you also define what you don't do. Superfluous things will cause you to get distracted from your purpose.

Don't hang other projects, goals, and themes onto FTT (Finishing The Task). There are countless good causes like climate control or healthcare, but they're not the Great Commission. As we define our purpose, we say what we're going to do and what we're not going to do. We say what's our business and what's none of our business.

Light diffused has no power at all, but light focused has great power. I remember as a little kid I'd get a magnifying glass, focus the sun on grass and make it burn small items. The more focused your life is, the more power it will have. If you're a laser, you can cut through steel. There's power in focus.

The Bible says in Acts that the Lord added daily to the church. "Added daily" means at least one a day. I'm sure there were more than that in the church of Jerusalem. Wouldn't it be great if every church added daily—365 a year, one a day every year? At Saddleback, In the 43 years I was pastor, we baptized 57,000 and led to Christ over 109,000. That's five baptized every day of my ministry and seven saved every day of my ministry at Saddleback for 43 years. Why? I was focused. There are a lot of things I would not do; there were a lot of things I said no to. Saying "no" will keep you focused on the Great Commission.

Abraham paints a pretty clear picture for Eliezer his servant so Eliezer knows precisely what his purpose is: "He said to the senior servant in his household, the one in charge of all that he had, ' . . . I want you to swear by the Lord, the God of heaven and the God of earth, that you will not get a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I am living, but will go to my country and my own relatives and get a wife for my son Isaac" (Genesis 24:2-4 NIV).

Abraham gives Eliezer a crystal-clear purpose: "I want you to get a wife, but it's got to be the same nationality, the same hometown, and the same faith." He's being very specific in his purpose.

Let me give you a key to collaborating with other people on a team. Teams never coalesce around vague goals. If we don't know what we're doing—if it isn't crystal clear we don't have any commitment to it; it has no attractive, drawing power. Nothing becomes dynamic until it becomes specific—clear, concise, and compelling.

Here are the questions you want to ask of any collaborating group you're part of: "What do we want to be? What do we want to do? What do we want to have?"

You must know, not just what you want, but why you want it—because that's the motivation. "Why" is always the motivation behind everything. What's the benefit? What's the reward?

Every project needs a benefit, a value, or a reward, or you're not going to be motivated. This is why Jesus constantly talked about rewards. Did you know Jesus talked more about rewards than he talked about heaven?

So what's going to motivate Eliezer? He's given this assignment; this is his "finish the task." What's his task? Go find a wife for my son Isaac. What's going to motivate Eliezer to do that? Four things: Isaac gets a wife; my master, Abraham, is pleased; God's will is going to be fulfilled; I'm going to get a reward. He knows his "why."

Do you know why you're doing FTT? Have you nailed down in your heart why you do what you do? When you know why you do what you do, God will always show you how. The why is always more important than how. You don't have to know how God's going to do this--not right now.

In FTT, we don't know where God is going to take us in the next ten years, but we're going to take the first step; then we'll take the second step; then we'll take the third step. We don't know what all our goals are going to be right now, but we're going to take the first step of faith.

So you must describe the present position—"Where am I now?" And then you must to determine your purpose—"Where do I want to be?" Define your purpose and let God figure out the why.

Now, once Eliezer hears this big difficult assignment, he starts worrying: "Okay, I've got to find a wife for Isaac and he's not even going to know her? And I've got to go back to another country to get her? Then I must convince her to come back with me to marry a guy she's never seen?" There are a lot of problems. It's not going to be easy.

You may be worrying about FTT. How in the world are we going to do this? How in the world is this going to happen?

Eliezer asks: "What if the woman is unwilling to come back with me to this land? Shall I then take your son back to the country you came from?" (Genesis 24:5 NIV).

And Abraham tells him, "No, never do that."

Now, let me explain something here to you. As a leader, never confuse decision-making with problem-solving. They're not the same thing--they're two different phases. You make the decision because it's the right thing to do and then you solve the problem. If you try to solve all the problems before you make the decision, you will never make the decision. Never confuse decision-making with problem-solving.

Eliezer says, "But master, Abraham, what if..." That's a worry question. Listening to "what ifs" will ruin your effectiveness for Jesus Christ. You can't listen to the "what ifs" of life. You just have to move past them because worry and fear paralyze. It's not the enormity or the size of what we're attempting that will paralyze us—it's the worry and fear about it. If you start "what-if-ing," then God's going to have to put you on the shelf, and you're sitting on the sidelines and you don't get to play in the game.

Step 3: Discover a promise.

Here's step three: Discover a promise. This is what separates Christian collaboration from secular collaboration: You discover a promise from God. This is a benefit that Christians have that unbelievers don't have in project planning; unbelievers don't have any promises to hold onto. What makes planning biblical and godly is when you do this: You discover a promise with God. There are over 7,000 promises in the Bible. Those are 7,000 promises for you to hook your confidence in. They're like blank checks waiting for you to claim. Find a promise for everything you do in FTT and hold onto that.

Why does God make these promises anyway? It's simple: so we'll learn to trust him. When you're in a collaborative group, focus on a promise, not just the problem. That way you learn to trust him.

In the 1990s, our church decided that we would be the first church in history to go to every nation. Jesus said, "Go and make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19 NIV). One day I said to our church, "I wonder if any local church in 2,000 years has ever gone to every nation. Well, I don't really think there has been. Why don't we be the first church in 2,000 years to literally go to every nation?" So we set a goal that by the end of the decade we would have sent members to every nation in the world. We came up with a program called the PEACE Plan: Plant churches, Equip leaders, Assist the poor, Care for the sick, Educate the next generation. Over the next 10 years, I sent out of our church 26,869 members who paid their own way to go overseas to 197 nations. On October 18, 2010—by the end of that decade—we went to nation 197. It was a little island in the Caribbean called St. Kitts—only 35,000 people. But we went there and planted a church.

We are the only church in history to go to every nation. We went as normal people doing normal things. Why did God have me to do that? As practice for Finish the Task. To teach you how to do it in your area.

It can be done, but you must discover a promise from God.

Abraham relieves Eliezer's "what if" fears. He says, "The Lord who brought me out of my native land spoke to me and promised me with his oath saying, 'I will give this new land to your descendants.' So I am sure that he will send his angel before you, and so you will be able to get a wife for my son there."

Notice the words "promised" and "sure." Abraham is confident. He's thinking, "God told me he's going to build a great nation. And to build a great nation, I got to have a married son who can have kids and grandkids and great-grandkids and great-great grandkids. So this is going to happen. It's a done deal. Eliezer, you've already won." He's found a promise from God.

Abraham says, "And I am sure that God will send an angel before you." If God promised to send an angel before you in FTT, would it remove all your fear? You don't need an angel; you have the Holy Spirit inside you. Abraham didn't have that. Isaac didn't have that all the time because the Holy Spirit didn't stay in people permanently in the Old Testament. You don't need an angel because Jesus said, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:20 KJV).

"I am with you." One plus God equals a majority. There's no need to fear when God is near. In 1980, I was 25 years old. I remember later in the first year of the church, we had 15 people in our church. I publicly announced, "We're going to have 20,000 members by 2020." There's a problem with that because it was too small of a goal, I later discovered.

I remember being asked by a reporter, "What in the world gives you that kind of confidence to say you're going to have 20,000 members one day? Who do you think you are, Rick Warren?" I said, "Wrong question. The issue is not who I think I am; the issue is who I think God is." You let the size of your God determine the size of your goal. If you have small goals, you have a small God. Puny goals, puny God.

Why are we going to go after the Great Commission? Number one, Jesus promised it's going to happen one day. It's just a matter of which generation's going to get to do it. We let the size of our God determine the size of our goal. You should always base your plans and your collaboration on the promise of God.

So here's the question to ask: "What promise can we claim together?" You may not come up with it in your first meeting. But when you're collaborating, get a promise—for church planting, for evangelism, for praying for the whole world, for Bible translation.

Step 4: Desire in prayer.

Now, once you've done these first three steps, here's the fourth: Desire in prayer. Is it okay to desire and pray for success when you're planning a project? Yes. Let me show you some verses.

In Mark 11:24, Jesus says, *"Therefore I tell you, whatever you desire to ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours."*

Notice the change in tense: "Believe that you have received it, and it will be yours."

"Wait a minute, you mean I must believe I already have it in order to get it?" you ask. Yes, that's called faith. When you say, "I hope it happens," that's called hope.

When you thank God in advance, that's called faith; faith is thanking God in advance. Asking is hope—but thanking God that I already have it is faith. The Bible says, "Believe that you have received it and it will be yours."

It's all right to desire in prayer. As Psalm 37:4 says, "*Delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart*" (ESV).

If you're delighting yourself in the Lord, your desires aren't going to be messed up. They're going to be godly desires. Seek first the kingdom of God—that's a godly desire.

Psalm 2:8 is a theme verse of *Finishing the Task*. "*Ask me for the nations, and every nation on earth will belong to you*" (CEV). God's saying, "I dare you. Ask me for the fulfillment of the Great Commission." Do you know why God built a great church in Saddleback? It wasn't because we're anybody special. We're not; we're just normal people. But God looked down at Saddleback and he found a group of people who were willing to believe God for just a little bit more than others chose to believe Him. That's a choice we're all given.

We don't have control over most things in our life. You didn't control who your parents were. You didn't control when you were born or where you were born. You didn't control whether you're male or female. You didn't control the natural gifts and the abilities that you were given. Those are all sovereignty factors—God chose those things. You had no control over the things that make you unique.

The one thing I do have control over is this: how much I choose to believe God. That's my choice, and that's your choice. Jesus said, "According to your faith, it will be done unto you" (Matthew 9:29 VOICE). God's saying, "You get to choose how much I bless your life." If you're going to believe for much, God will do much. If you believe for little, God will do little. If you don't believe God for it, God will do nothing.

When you get together with other believers in collaboration for breakthrough prayer, your prayers reveal two things: your desire and your dependence. If you desire it, you pray about it; if you don't desire it, you don't pray about it. If you want to know how much you depend on God, it's simple: Look at how much you pray. If you pray a lot, you're depending on God a lot. If you don't pray a lot, you're not depending on God a lot; you're depending on yourself.

Eliezer travels back to what is now modern-day Iraq, to the land where Abraham came from, and this is what the Bible says about Eliezer: "Then he prayed" (Genesis 24:12 NIV). Now notice what his prayer—his desire is: "'O Lord, God of my master Abraham, give me success today and keep Your promise to my master. Help me to accomplish the purpose of my journey.'" Promise, purpose, and success all in one verse.

By the way, this chapter uses the word success five times. This chapter talks more about success than any other chapter in the Bible. But it's always connected to what God wants us to do. "Give me success," he prays. Can you pray for success? Yes. "Keep your promise." Can you claim God's promise? Yes. "And help me to accomplish the purpose of my journey." He's showing his dependence on God. He prays for success.

You say, "Well, why should I pray for success?" What's the alternative? Failure? You don't have to pray for failure—that'll happen anyway. Failure is just what we do naturally being sinners.

This is not a selfish prayer when Eliezer says, "Make me successful." He says, "For my master's sake." And that's what you want to pray: "Lord, make me successful in this task of Finishing the Task for my master's sake, for Jesus' sake. Not for our glory—for God's glory." If anything will help others and glorify God, you ought to pray it will be a success.

Now, Eliezer's whole time is bathed in prayer. In verse 12, he prays at the start. In verse 15, he prays when he arrives. And in verse 52, he prays in front of Rebecca's family.

Step 5: Diagnose the problems

Now we come to step five. We now know where we are, know where we want to go, and have clarified it; we've set a goal and desired in prayer. Step five is this: Diagnose the problems.

You want to identify: "Why don't we have this already?" Make a list of the obstacles. Make a list of the barriers. Make a list of the challenges. Make a list of the roadblocks that are keeping us from church planting, translation, distribution of scripture, or personal evangelism around the world. Ask this question, "What's the biggest barrier?"

In Eliezer's case, there are a number of challenges. First, he must go to a country he's never been to. That's a challenge. Second, he must find the right woman, one whom he's never met. That's a challenge. Third, he must get her parents' consent. That's a challenge. And then he must convince the girl to come back home with him to marry a guy she's never met. That's a challenge.

This is the difference between hope and optimism. Optimism says, "Oh, the sun will come out tomorrow"—when the sun doesn't always come out tomorrow. Hope is realistic. Hope faces the problems. Hope says, "Yeah, it's bad. It's really bad. But I still have hope." Optimism is psychological; hope is theological. Hope doesn't deny and say, "Oh, everything's great." Everything is not great. Hope says, "But I still have hope." Hope is realistic.

Step 6: Design a plan.

Once you have completed these first five steps, the sixth thing you do with your team in collaboration is you design a plan. Eliezer's plan is covered in Genesis 24:10-14.

Break your plan into steps. Think through bite-sized progress. How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time. How do we reach the whole world for Christ? One step at a time.

Now, Eliezer designs a simple plan. It's well thought out; in fact, it's a masterpiece. Here was Eliezer's plan for his goal from Genesis 24:

"Eliezer took ten of his master's camels and he left, taking with him all kinds of good things from his master." These are gifts.

"And he made the long journey to the city where Nahor lived." Nahor was Abraham's brother. "He had the camel's kneel down near the well outside the town at the time of day that women go out to draw water." Pretty smart. He's thinking, "Where are women going to congregate that I could observe them?" So he goes to the well and he waits until the end of the day when they all the women of the village come out for water.

Next he prayed, "Lord, may it be that when I ask one of the women for a drink that the right one will say, 'Here, here's your drink. Let me water your camels too.' And then let her be the one you've chosen to be Isaac's wife."

Now, do you know that a camel can drink ten buckets of water? He has ten camels. What woman is going to say to a stranger, "Oh, let me get you 100 buckets of water"? This is not, "Oh, here's a glass of water." It's going to take a lot of work. This is above and beyond sacrificial service.

His plan works. Look at the next verse, verse 15: "And before he had finished praying... " Of course, he's praying. "Before he had finished praying, Rebecca came out to the well with her jar on the shoulder, and she was the granddaughter of Abraham's brother Nahor."

Of course, Eliezer doesn't know she's Nahor's granddaughter, doesn't know that she's a relative. But Rebecca offers water to both him and his camels, just as Eliezer had prayed that somebody would do.

Verse 22 continues the story: "When the camels had finished drinking, he gave her a gold ring for her nose and two large gold bracelets for her wrist. 'Whose daughter are you?' he asked. 'Would your father have any room to put us up for the night?'"

This is the point where you must have a step-by-step plan. Notice his steps. Step one: go to the watering hole where women come at night. Step two: set up a test; he's looking for somebody who'll have a kind heart. Step three: give her some expensive gifts. Step four: ask her about her family. Step five: get invited to her home. Step six: he's going to share his purpose. Step seven: pop the question. He's thought this thing through.

Here are some questions you need to ask with your team: "What steps do we need to take?" This is how you develop your plan. Ask things like, "What steps do we need to take to win our city, our country, our nation to Christ? What steps do we need to take in prayer, in Bible translation and distribution? What steps in church planting? What steps in evangelism?" Another thing you might want to ask is, "How long is each of these steps going to take?" That's a timetable. You put a deadline with it.

Why have we selected AD 2033 as a deadline for Finishing the Task? It's just a date. It's not in the Bible. There's no eschatological significance to it. A dream without a date, a deadline, is just a wish; nothing's going to happen. You must have a deadline. Deadlines create urgency. When the year 2000 was coming up, over 2,000 Christian organizations around the world had a goal for evangelization by the year 2000. But that date came and went, and nobody's had a common goal since then.

Now, this is the year 2023, so it's been 2,023 years since Jesus was born in year 0. Now, the Bible tells us that Jesus started His ministry at age 3, in 30 AD. The Bible tells us that Jesus had a three- to three-and-a-half-year ministry. So that means Christ died on the cross in AD 33. Jesus was resurrected in AD 33. Jesus gave the Great Commission in AD 33. Jesus ascended back to heaven in AD 33. Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to start the church on the day of Pentecost in AD 33. That means the year 2033 is the 2,000th birthday of Christianity. It's the 2,000th birthday of the church, the 2,000th anniversary of the resurrection, the 2,000th anniversary of the Great Commission.

So why not use that year as our next date? When you set a deadline, it forces you to work faster. A goal with no end is not a goal; it's just a dream. A goal is a dream with a deadline. Let's do our best and let God do the rest.

Step 7: Be patient and persistent.

When we think through a course of action and what needs to be done in the next 10 years, it can be overwhelming. We start to think, "That's a lot of work." That's why most teams are ineffective—because it takes hard thinking; it's complicated. But just because something's complicated doesn't mean you don't try and make the effort. That's why we need step seven: be patient and persistent.

What we are attempting is so big it's not going to happen overnight. It takes time and discipline. FTT is a ten-year plan. Human beings tend to overestimate what we can do in one year; we tend to underestimate what we can do in ten years. What we do is set small goals and try to accomplish them too quickly instead of setting a big goal and giving the rest of our lives to it. Here's what you need to do: Set big a goal for your life and give the rest of your life to that goal.

Eliezer is an example of great persistence and patience. Verse 21 shows how he is patient in choosing the right woman. He quietly watches her. He wants to be sure that the Lord has made his trip successful. He's not impulsive. He's cautious, he's persistent, he's focused. In verse 33, at the supper with her parents, supper was served, but Eliezer said, "I don't want to eat until I've told you why I've come." Laban said, "All right, tell us your mission."

Sometimes to reach your goals you have to delay gratification. I started Saddleback Church on a forty-year plan. I didn't expect to do it overnight. I gave my life to grow that church. I gave forty-three years staying in one place. If you don't have integrity, it gets worse every year. During those forty-three years, there were lots of delays, dead ends, difficulties, and detours, but when those come upon you, you just keep going. You can do in forty years what you couldn't do in four.

In Habakkuk 2:3 God says, "But these things I plan won't happen right away. Slowly, steadily, surely, the time approaches when the vision will be fulfilled. If it seems slow, do not despair, for these things will surely come to pass. Just be patient! They will not be overdue a single day!" (TLB).

Why does it take so long? Well, one of the reasons is because, while you're working on your goal, God's working on you. God is more interested in what you become than what you do. So while we are working on FTT, God's going to be working on us—building your character, making you a godly woman or man, making you a person of faith. That's why it takes so long. You're not taking any accomplishment into heaven. What you're taking is you, your character.

Step 8: Depend on people.

Step eight is this: Depend on people. You have to trust them. All collaboration is built on trust. Eliezer enlists relatives for support—the parents, brothers, and other family members. He did everything he could to build collaboration and cooperation.

Many of us have heard that famous African proverb, "If you want to go fast, go alone. But if you want to go far, go with others." That's what we're going to do. We're going to do this together. We are better together. One drop of rain can't make any difference, but a million drops of rain can turn a desert into a garden. By myself, I can't do a whole lot for world evangelism. By yourself, you can't do a whole lot, but a million drops of rain will make a difference.

There are some things in your life that are never going to change unless you get other people involved in them. Some problems in your life will never be solved if you try to solve them on your own. The fact is, in the body of Christ, we need each other. Ecclesiastes 4:12 says, *“One standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back-to-back and conquer; three is even better, for a triple-braided cord is not easily broken”* (TLB).

Step 9: Make the investment.

Finally, we come to the last step in collaboration, and this is the one where we pay the price. Step nine: Make the investment. There's always a price tag for any dream, any goal, any project. Verse 53 says this, "Then Eliezer brought out the gold and silver jewelry and beautiful clothing, and he gave them to Rebecca. He also gave expensive gifts to her brother and her mother." Smart guy—gifts for mom too.

There is always a price tag for reaching every goal. Great causes require great sacrifice. Sacrifice of time, money, energy, or reputation. I can't honestly say to you this is going to be easy. It's not. It's going to require your sacred honor and everything you've got to fulfill the Great Commission and finish the task.

You have to make the investment. There's always a price tag. But I will also tell you this: You can't outgive God. Whatever you give in time, he'll restore in time. Whatever you give in talent, he'll restore in talent. Whatever you give in money, he will restore in money. God says, "Rick, let's play a game. You give to me, and I'll give to you, and we'll see who wins." And I've lost that game for forty-seven years.

To translate and to distribute and to engage people in the Gospel and the Bible is going to cost billions. To get the Good News to every person on the planet is going to cost billions. To plant churches all around the world where there is no church is going to cost billions. But the money's out there. It's just a matter of this: are we willing to sacrifice ourselves to be models? Not equal gifts, but equal sacrifice.

This goal will require more than anything in your life to this point. The question is, is the cause worth the cost?

Is the cause worth the cost?

If you know something more important, more long-lasting, more eternally significant than to bring people to Jesus, build them up to maturity, train them for ministry, send them out on their mission for the glory of God I invite you to tell me. Because I decided a long time ago, as a very young man at sixteen years of age, that I was not going to waste my life.

There is nothing more important than getting God's people into heaven. If you want the blessing of God on your life, if you want the power of God in your life, if you want the anointing of God on your life, you must care about what God cares about most. And what he cares about most is he wants his lost children found.

On the cross with arms outstretched and nail-pierced hands, Jesus said, "I love you this much. I love you so much it hurts. I'd rather die than live without you." That's what the world needs to know. That's why we must collaborate. That's why we have to work together.

ARE YOU IN?

Join a coalition of thousands of believers, churches, denominations, and organizations coming together to fulfill the Great Commission. Finishing the Task is a call to mobilize all of Christ's Church, to do all Christ commands, with all people, in all places, using all of God's gifts, all for God's glory by 2033, the 2000th anniversary of the instructions given to us by Jesus.

Learn more and get started at FinishingtheTask.com.