

The Far-reaching Bible School Program

By

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At the turn of the 20th century, a Bible school teacher stood in his classroom to give an assignment. Perhaps the students moaned and whispered, “Another assignment!” He reported, “I set the students at work studying out diligently what was the Bible evidence of the baptism of the Holy Ghost that we might go before the world with something that was indisputable because it tallied absolutely with the Word.”

Charles Parham left school for three days (faculty, don't get any ideas. Smile!) He returned the morning of December 31, 1900 to collect the assignments. He wrote, “To my astonishment they all had the same story, that while there were different things occurring when the Pentecostal blessing fell, that the indisputable proof on each occasion was, that they spoke with other tongues.” The next day one of the students at Bethel Bible School, Agnes Ozman, received the Holy Ghost as the Parham laid his hands on her. Within two days others students and the teacher himself had received the Holy Ghost. The Pentecostal revival began in a Bible school classroom and nothing will ever be able to stop it.

According to *Christianity Today*, twenty-five percent of the world's Christians are Pentecostal or charismatic with a world growth rate of about 19,000,000 per year. C. Peter Wagner in his book *Prayer Shield*, stated, “The most massive growth of churches is found in Pentecostal/ Charismatic traditions.” Estimates show that there are between 400 and 600

million Pentecostals worldwide—a half billion or more—not bad for a group that found its humble beginnings in a Bible school classroom and program.

Let's bring it closer to home. What is happening within the United Pentecostal Church International? We now have churches in 177 (or so) nations. Our work in the Philippines alone has over two thousand churches. Check out all of the UPCI's largest overseas works: India, Pakistan, Madagascar, Venezuela, Brazil, Ecuador, El Salvador, (the list could go on and on) and you will find a common denominator. Each revival, growth-oriented field has a strong and far reaching Bible school program. For example, over forty-four years ago when a young couple, Bennie and Theresa DeMerchant arrived in the city of Manaus, and the Amazon Basin, there was not one apostolic believer. Not one person had been baptized in Jesus' name. Today, there are over 650 churches there, and they now have over thirty-five Bible schools and over 1,000 students studying at any given time.

The UPCI is considered to be one of the fastest growing churches. What will our future be like? Rev. K. Haney, our General Superintendent is launching a bold plan called "Global Impact." He projects one hundred percent growth in every country during the ten year life span of the program. The Foreign Missions Division and our educational program have also caught this remarkable vision. GATS (Global Association of Theological Studies) is a cutting-edge effort to improve our Bible school programs around the globe. It is made up of six academic programs, in multiple languages, with a growing edge: certificate, diploma, associate degree, bachelor degree, distance education, and faculty development. It's a gigantic project encompassing nearly one hundred subjects that need to be revised, written, and translated into major world languages. This program is being featured in the Special Offering portion of our

upcoming Foreign Missions General Conference 2009 service. We firmly believe that each accomplishment will enable us to be far-reaching in scope.

I will shout it from any pulpit or avenue provided: teaching is the revival ministry of the church! It is an eternal investment. Teaching is visionary. When my friends speak of revival, global impact, and the move of God's Spirit in the last days, I'll remind them, with that twinkle in my eye, "It's because of the far reaching impact of the Bible school program!"