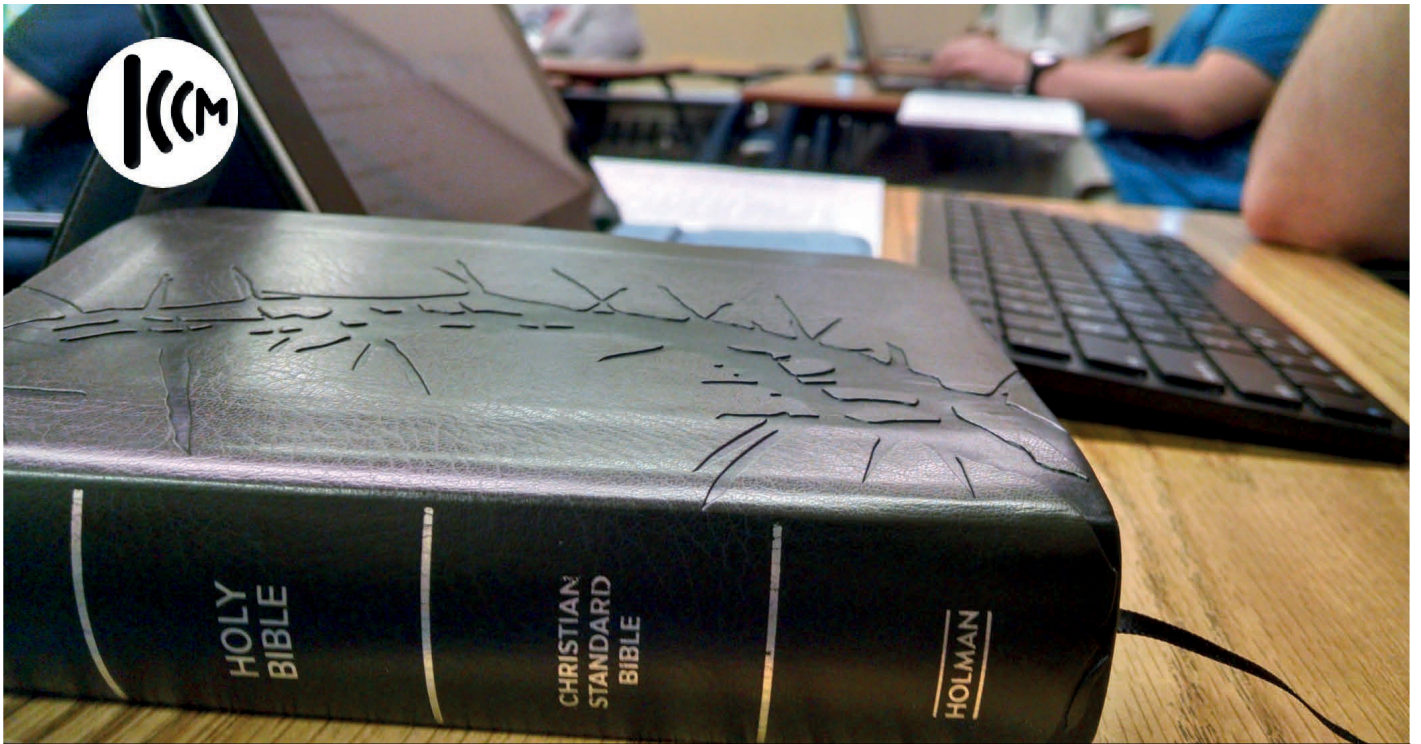


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# The Great Commission: What is Our Goal?

When my wife and I arrived in Indonesia in 1978, at its core our sending mission agency identified three Great Commission tasks. The three were summed up with the acronym EDP: Evangelism, Discipleship, and Planting the church. Engaging in the three would lead to the over arching goal of World Evangelization. At that time, those were the elements and the terminology that defined mission—that most evangelical missions would have subscribed to in one form or another.

Subsequently, over the past forty years many other mission definitions, directions and goals have emerged. Some have helped to refine what constitutes the Great Commission task and goal. Others, however, have diverted from the essence of our calling, leading to what some have labeled as “mission drift.”

In macro-terms, mission endeavors performed today can be categorized into four groupings or sets. Each set contains subsets, for which there is not space to detail here. I prefer to call these larger categories “the Four E’s” of mission focus and goal.

**Evangelistic:** expressed in such terms as world evangelization, making disciples of the nations, church planting, and engagement of “people groups.” Related endeavors include, Bible translation, media outreach, literature distribution and such, that focus primarily on winning souls and maturing them in Christ. Human sinfulness resulting in spiritual alienation from God is mankind’s core problem. World evangelization is the expressed goal.

**Economic:** expressed in such terms as poverty alleviation, helping the disadvantaged, and a plethora of social concerns/works and holistic ministries. This grouping holds the belief that capitalism coupled with Christian values is the solution to economic inequality. We are called to “embrace wealth creation as central to our mission of holistic transformation of peoples and societies.”<sup>1</sup> Financial inequality is mankind’s core problem. Fiscal equality for all is the expressed goal.


**Environmental:** expressed in such terms as creation care, “planting churches and trees,” saving both souls and the soil, combating global warming, etc. It is the belief that environmental problems are a sin problem, rooted in selfishness, greed, and materialism. The solution to the dire “crisis in creation” today is to find a way to heal human hearts along with their environs, thus, making environmental engagement legitimate mission.<sup>2</sup> Fallen creation manifested in environmental chaos is mankind’s main nemesis. Helping humans become responsible stewards of God’s creation is the expressed goal.

**Evenhandedness** (for alliteration purposes), i.e. “Justice”: expressed in such ways as addressing political, social, and labor injustice, along with sexual exploitation. Combating societal evils such as human trafficking, sex trafficking, drug trafficking, slavery, child labor, land theft, and citizen rights abuse, are championed as the tasks of missions.<sup>3</sup> It includes rescuing the helplessly and hopelessly abused and downtrodden. Injustice is mankind’s core problem. Fairness and justness in every facet of society is the goal.

Granted there are crossovers among these sets; they are not mutually exclusive silos. However, that is not the issue here. The real question is, to what degree do these assorted tasks align with the ultimate goal Jesus gave the Church by way of the Great Commission? Unfortunately, the proliferation of the above-mentioned missional categories has resulted in a blurring of Great Commission definition, direction, task, and final goal.

Is it time to reexamine and reclaim the essence of the Great Commission? At Missio Nexus, we think so and are devoting our efforts in 2020 to bring focus back to it. As a part of that, the theme of our annual Mission Leaders Conference in September is **Focus 2020—The Great Commission: What is Our Goal?** Ted Esler, president of Missio Nexus, expresses why engaging in this topic is so important:

We live in a time in which the entire foundation of Western worldview is shifting under our feet. Long trusted foundational ideas, from identity to history, are being reconsidered and redefined. Some are swept away in a matter of months while others stubbornly hang on. Both theology and missiology are being challenged and reshaped by the deconstruction brought on by post-modern thought and post-Christian philosophy. As these shifts occur, how do we understand the Great Commission and obey it?<sup>4</sup>

This edition of *EMQ* will barely touch on this topic directly. Instead you will find a potpourri of articles presenting current topics that are shaping mission thought. From Wu’s article on persecution, to Santos’s on economic migrants, to Cole’s on rapid kingdom advance, a wide range of interests is represented. Together they help sharpen our grasp on various tasks being undertaken in the name of the Great Commission. 



**Marvin J. Newell**, D.Miss  
Editorial Director

## Notes

1. <http://www.lausanne.org/content/wealth-creation-manifesto/>.
2. <http://www.careofcreation.net/what-creation-care-is-all-about/>.
3. <https://www.ijm.org/our-work>.
4. <https://missionexus.org/focus-2020/>.

# “They Will Reign with Him for a Thousand Years”: Exploring the Missiology of Persecution

J. Wu

At the end of 2018, my attention was piqued by a news report covered by the mainstream media. Less than a week later, the incident was being reported in almost all international news outlets. A young American missionary had been murdered on a small remote island. I was a little surprised by the amount of attention given to a martyred missionary by the media—though their intentions seemed more hostile than benign.

Then something shocked me. As I looked at this young brother’s picture and read up more on his background, I realized that he closely resembled the son of a couple whom I had known more than ten years previously in a medium-sized Evangelical Chinese church in Vancouver, Washington. After contacting some former church friends, they confirmed that, indeed, John Allen Chau was the son of that couple.

Suddenly, I found myself impacted by this incident from three different perspectives. First, personally, because he was the son of my former church friends. Second, I related to him because my husband and I also serve in countries that are dominated by a worldview/religion that is hostile to the Gospel. It is not unusual for some to consider us crazy (or even foolish) to serve in such places. Third, in the past year, many of our fellow missionaries have experienced persecutions and sufferings in hostile contexts such as the Middle East and China.

## The Problem of Suffering Missionaries

The death of John Allen Chau has provoked a variety of reactions from Christians. Some Christian pundits and missiologists have sought to analyze this incident, as well as the method and the approach of the martyred missionary, in order to figure out “what went wrong.” During the time of Jesus, when the disciples saw someone born blind sitting by the street, they were eager to figure out “what went wrong” or “who was to blame.” However, Jesus did not view tragedy and suffering as we often do. He answered, “Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him” (John 9:3). Our Lord’s response reveals the tremendous difference between God’s

perspective and a human perspective on tragedy and sufferings. God did not see it as “something that went wrong,” but as a way to display His work. Nothing surprises our Almighty God. In his book, *The Messenger, the Message and the Community*, Roland Muller sought for what made missionaries fruitful, and the one common quality that he found was that they all had a “cross experience.” This was an experience of personal suffering that brought “death to self” and forced these missionaries to “cast themselves onto God.”<sup>1</sup>

I have witnessed firsthand sufferings and persecutions of some of my fellow missionaries as well as new converts on the field, and how God manifested His glory through these sufferings. I have personally experienced God’s presence through sufferings in my own life and ministry. As Joseph told his brothers, “You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives” (Genesis 50:20). Suffering is a mystery beyond human comprehension.

Thus, I was deeply troubled when I saw the ridicule and insult toward John Allen Chau from the media and its readers. This unsettled me even more than the tragedy itself—especially when such ridicule came even from Christians. It reminds me of what the Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthian Christians, “We are fools for Christ, but you are so wise in Christ! We are weak, but you are strong! You are honored, we are dishonored!” (1 Corinthians 4:10). As some Christian writers have argued (for example, Stetzer<sup>2</sup> and Kidd<sup>3</sup>), this kind of negative, critical attitude from the media and public opinion may reflect how our culture has changed. To an extent, I agree. Yet as early as the 1970s, theologian J.I. Packer pointed out in his book *Knowing God*,

We are unlike the Christians of New Testament times. Our approach to life is conventional and static; theirs was not. The thought of “safety first” was not a drag on their enterprise as it is ours. By being exuberant, unconventional and uninhibited in living by the gospel they turned their world upside down, but you could not accuse us twentieth century Christians of doing anything like that.<sup>4</sup>

If that is the case, then the negative response of some contemporary Christians to Chau’s martyrdom is not merely the influence of postmodern secular culture shifts. It may also come from a lack of biblical understanding of the nature of mission work and the inevitable persecutions and sufferings as we follow and witness for Jesus (see Matthew 5:11, Luke 21:12–19, John 15:18). Perhaps evangelical theology and missiology has not dealt with the topic of persecution and sufferings as deeply as it should have. If we wish to remedy this situation, there is no better place to look than the book of Revelation.

## A Missiology of Persecution Based on Revelation

There is much that the book of Revelation teaches us about the sufferings and persecutions of believers as they carry the witness of the Gospel. In the letters to the seven churches, some are praised and some rebuked. What is remarkable is that most of the commendations to the churches are based on their perseverance in suffering:

To the church in Ephesus: “I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance.... You have persevered and *have endured hardships for my name*, and have not grown weary.” (2:2–3)

To the church in Smyrna: “I know your afflictions and your poverty—yet you are rich! ... Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you life as your victor’s crown.” (2:9–10)

To the church in Pergamum: “I know where you live—where Satan has his throne. Yet you remain true to my name. You did not renounce your faith in me, not even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness, who was put to death in your city—where Satan lives.” (2:13)

To the church in Thyatira: “I know your deeds, your love and faith, your service and perseverance, and that you are now doing more than you did at first.” (2:19)

To the church in Philadelphia: “I know your deeds. ... I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name. ... Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come on the whole world to test the inhabitants of the earth.” (3:8–10)

In addition to perseverance in suffering, there is another important theme to observe. Revelation vividly portrays the nature of the expansion of the Kingdom of God as warfare, as a fierce battle between the darkness and the light. In Revelation 12 we can see the ferocity in this war. The chapter begins with a woman who gave birth to a child (12:1–6), and is followed by a war taking place in heaven (12:7–9). Then a loud voice in heaven says:

Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Messiah. For the accuser of our brothers and sisters, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down. *They triumphed over him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.* (12:10–11)

The spiritual army triumphed over the enemy not by wealth, fame, political power, or even successful ministry, but by “the blood of the Lamb and by the word their testimony.” These brave warriors *did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.* Every time I read

this verse, the names or faces of martyred Christians come to my mind. In the book of Acts and in the history of mission, we see how God’s Kingdom expands through the blood of His witnesses.

This book foretells not only warfare and judgment, but also glory, honor and reward. In chapter 7, we see a “great multitude in white robes.” These people “have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (7:14). Therefore, “they are before the throne of God and serve Him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence” (7:15). Later, in chapter 20, we read:

I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony about Jesus and because of the word of God. ... They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. ... Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years. (20:4–6)

According to the clear wording of the text, those who are killed because of their testimony about Jesus and because of the word of God, will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years! This shall be the greatest honor any human being can ever receive, and this honor is not given to the powerful, famous or wealthy. It is given to the martyrs.

### An Ongoing War

As we rage in war against our enemy, there are going to be casualties. God’s mission is fundamentally an action of war against Satan to rescue souls and reclaim a lost world, and missionaries are among the frontline combatants.

During war, the first group of troops that land in occupied territory always suffer the severest casualties. I remember a scene from the new World War I documentary, *They Shall Not Grow Old*, where a large group of young soldiers are smiling at the camera as they prepare themselves to be the tip of the spear of a fierce battle. In a post-film segment, the director Peter Jackson explains that this scene may have captured one of the last moments of their lives, since all these young

soldiers died in the action that followed. This explanation from the director was a sober moment for all of us in the theater to ponder the brutality and gravity of war. Yet none of us will condemn, ridicule or mock this group of young soldiers for their action of going to battle as “being foolish,” “lack of preparation,” or “stupid method approach.” They were simply obeying their commanders! They died because they were loyal to their country, faithful to their task, and submissive to their commanding officers. Only the fighters and citizens of hostile countries would mock these brave warriors. Attitudes toward fallen soldiers might reveal whether or not people are true allies.

Missionaries who work among people whose cultures or religions are hostile against Christianity or against foreigners, are in a war no less fierce than World War I and World War II. No missionary should be sent to this kind of field if they have not counted the cost of the Kingdom of Heaven. If missionaries die because of obedience to their Great Commander, they are faithful servants of our Lord.

Gregory E. Lamb wrote in his article about his careful study of John Allen Chau’s journals and his letters to his family, that he found evidence that John had fully counted the cost and was completely obedient to the Lord.<sup>5</sup> In the book, *Effective Discipling in Muslim Communities: Scripture, History and Seasoned Practices*, Don Little relates a story from when he and other young missionaries were preparing to go to the mission field. They had an opportunity to converse with Charles Marsh, who had served in Muslim countries for decades. This veteran missionary told them,

You have no right to even begin to speak to Muslims about Christ unless you have yourself first settled to die for the sake of Christ. I challenge everyone of you listening to me today, have you settled this with Christ? If you have not surrendered to him completely, then I repeat, you have no moral right to talk to Muslims about Christ, since your proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ to a Muslim may result in that person’s martyrdom. Only one who is willing to die for Christ has the right to ask someone else to die for Him too.<sup>6</sup>

Indeed, there is a risk for those who bring Muslims to the Kingdom of Light as well as for Muslims themselves who change their



faith. Yet if we truly believe every word of our Lord, we will not consider missionaries working among Muslims, nor believers from Muslims background, to be foolish, since they risk their lives to proclaim Jesus Christ as the Lord.

### Reflections for Contemporary Culture

I am fascinated with how the Orthodox church honors martyrdom. Years ago, when touring Greece, my husband and I visited many Greek Orthodox churches and monasteries built between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries, and I saw dozens of paintings which portrayed the detailed stories of martyrs. Once I heard a preacher say that in our culture the things we value and are proud of most are the things we post on social media. Through the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries, there was no internet or social media, and so the church walls were probably the only place Christians could “post” those whom they honored and were most proud of. I cannot help wondering, if we lived in their time, what kind of things would Christians “post” on the church walls? Celebrity preachers? Megachurch leaders? Or political figures endorsed by Christians? I wonder which church’s “posts” agree more with the teaching of the Bible. As we study Revelation carefully—a book speaking of the final judgment of all human beings and all churches—we may be surprised that there is no mention of reward to those who build large congregations/organizations, or to those who possess great influence, fame, power or wealth. Actually, we find condemnation toward the latter, when the Lord

rebukes the church in Laodicea: “You say, ‘I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.’ But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked” (3:17–18).

In recent days, I have often recalled the time when I was in the same fellowship group with brother John Chau’s parents. They seemed to have genuine love for God’s Word. I was most impressed by his mother’s gentle and submissive spirit. Their children were teenagers at that time, and I did not know them as well. But recently, when talking with the son of some old church friends, I learned that as a young adult John taught lessons in the youth Sunday School. Another church friend of mine shared a precious memory about John on social media, “... Even then he was loving and humble as ever—when he spoke with the youth group he barely mentioned about his amazing adventures. He focused on how much Jesus loved those who haven’t heard about Him and encouraging the youth group teens to follow Christ.”

I believe God’s name will be glorified one day through John Allen Chau’s martyrdom. At least now, many Christians who had not heard of North Sentinel Island might start to pray for the salvation of the people group dwelling there. The Lord alone has the authority of our lives. He can use the life of missionaries as well as our death. As our Lord says,

Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who

hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. (John 12:24–25)

On the last day, I look forward to greeting brother John along with many other martyrs in the New Heaven and New Earth and seeing them wear their white robes before of the throne of God. [\[E\]](#)

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### Notes

1. Roland Muller, *The Messenger, the Message and the Community* (CanBooks, 2013), 17.
2. Ed Stetzer, “Slain missionary John Chau prepared much more than we thought, but are missionaries still fools?” *Washington Post*, Nov 28, 2018.
3. Thomas Kidd, “Incomprehensible Evangelicals and the Death of John Allen Chau,” *The Gospel Coalition*, Nov 26, 2018.
4. J. I. Packer, *Knowing God* (InterVarsity Press 1973/1993), 269.
5. Cf. Gregory E. Lamb, “The Art of Dying Well: Missions and the Reality of Martyrdom,” *EMQ* 55, no. 1 (January–March 2019).
6. Don Little, *Effective Discippling in Muslim Communities: Scripture, History and Seasoned Practices* (InterVarsity Press, 2015), 181–182.



# How Economic Migrants Can Be Engaged in Mission

Narry F. Santos

Global migration plays a key role in transforming the ethnic and religious landscape of nations. The United Nations estimated that as of 2017, there were 258 million international migrants globally. This number equals 3.4 percent of the world population—compared to the 155 million as of 2000, or 2.8 percent of the population. Many of these international migrants leave their homeland for the purpose of employment. In fact, one analysis found that there were 164 million migrant workers in 2017.<sup>1</sup> This reality brings major implications for mission engagement among and through economic migrants. Before we observe how economic migrants can be engaged in mission, it is important to first define and briefly describe the different types of migrants whom we seek to reach.

## Definition and Types of Migrants

The International Organization for Migration defines temporary economic migrants as “skilled, semi-skilled or untrained workers who remain in the receiving country for definite periods as determined in a work contract with an individual worker or a service contract concluded with an enterprise.”<sup>2</sup> According to Lewellen, there are nine types of migrants; namely: (1) internal migrants (those who move within the country); (2) international migrants (those who travel to different countries multiple times and return without making a significant social investment); (3) immigrants (those who leave the country of citizenship to live permanently or for a long time in another country); (4) transnational immigrants (those who continue to maintain contacts in both country of origin and host country through social, cultural, economic, and political networks); (5) diaspora (those who are dispersed from a homeland to multiple countries); (6) refugees (those dispersed through war, political repression, famine, or earthquake); (7) step migration (migratory pattern usually from rural to urban); (8) migratory chain (formation of a complex network so any migrant can follow the network); and (9) circular migration (routinized migration away from and back to the home community for agricultural or labor purposes).<sup>3</sup>

Gardner also proposed two types of migrants in the Gulf States: transnational proletariat (non-skilled working class) and diasporic elite (highly skilled professional class).<sup>4</sup> These two types occupy the two ends of the labor spectrum, with different migrants occupying multiple positions along the continuum. Skill level, tenure, employer, type of visa, migration network,

family reunification, ethnicity, and religion determine the migrant social location along this continuum.<sup>5</sup>

Labor migration can alter the ethnic demography of a region.<sup>6</sup> For example, among the expatriate labor population in Kuwait, non-Arab Asians account for the highest proportion of the labor population with 65.3 percent, followed by Arabs from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), accounting for 30.95 percent. Migrants from Europe, America, and other regions comprise the remaining four percent of the labor population.<sup>7</sup> The top migrant-sending countries in 2003 were India (300,000), Egypt (260,000), Bangladesh (170,000), Sri Lanka (170,000), Pakistan (100,000), Syria (100,000), Iran (80,000), Philippines (70,000), and Jordan/Palestine (50,000).<sup>8</sup>

Labor migration can influence not only the ethnic demography of a nation but also its religious landscape. In fact, host and migrant churches can leverage these labor migration realities to reach out to the economic migrants whom God is bringing to their land. On the other hand, Christian economic migrants can use their temporary work context in order to be engaged in global mission.

How then can economic migrants be engaged in mission? Mission engagement happens among (or to) and through the economic migrants. To appreciate such mission, we need to understand the theological perspectives that move and motivate us to engage with the migrants and to actually take the steps to minister to them.

## Mission Among (or To) the Temporary Economic Migrants

Gaining theological perspectives on migration yields more passion toward our mission

among (or to) the temporary economic migrants. Here is the first theological perspective that can lead to more intentionality in ministering to them: the God of the Bible is a migrant God. “This is first and foremost born out in his migration from a non-accessible light to creation.”<sup>9</sup> Saman also depicts Jesus as an asylum seeker, refugee, and migrant,<sup>10</sup> becoming incarnated and pitching his tent in the neighborhood. Thus, God can be seen as the one who initiates crossing borders, overcoming barriers, and bringing people into reconciliation with him through Christ and with one another.

Moreover, mission among (or to) the economic migrants needs to be intentional because of another theological perspective: God’s people are pilgrims, migrants, and refugees.<sup>11</sup> Since Christianity is a migratory religion, and since migration movements have been a functional element in its expansion,<sup>12</sup> we need to reach out to the economic migrants.

The means to do mission among (or to) the migrants<sup>13</sup> is by building relationships of trust with them. To develop trust, the church needs to become a learning community. Becoming a learning community involves wanting to know them, their culture, hopes, dreams, struggles, faith or spirituality, human rights, and their basic human issues. Learning how to become in community with them implies the willingness to let go of the “stereotyping of migrants as social, economic, and criminal threats”<sup>14</sup> to their host country, and the determination to look beyond their differentness and to understand that in their marginalization they feel discomforted, distressed, and homeless. Such openness of mind and heart leads the church to know the migrants beyond the surface and



to guard against unwarranted hostility and xenophobia.

In seeking to become a learning community, the church can discover how to work for justice and rights, and to welcome those who are newcomers and strangers in our midst.<sup>15</sup> The point of departure in ministering to migrants is a comprehensive and holistic understanding of mission that includes witness, worship, justice, dialogue, inculturation, and reconciliation under the basic attitude of humility and boldness. With this holistic approach in mind, we can view migration as a pastoral, ethical, and missiological challenge to engage the economic migrants.<sup>16</sup>

### Mission Through the Temporary Economic Migrants

Aside from missions among (or to) the economic migrants, we also need to be engaged in mission through the economic migrants or what has been called the “mission of migrants” (with migrants as subjects of mission, not just as objects of mission).<sup>17</sup>

The theological perspective that guides us to engage in such mission is this: migrants are missionaries, especially in the context of reverse mission. Reverse mission refers to the “historical shift, with Christian missionaries now coming from countries that were traditionally receivers of mission to work in countries, which traditionally were senders of mission.”<sup>18</sup> According to Hanciles, Asian and African migrants are especially effective and capable missionaries, due to their intercultural competency and experience of multi-religious contexts.<sup>19</sup>

How do we do mission through temporary economic migrants (especially in reverse mission contexts)? It is through the biblical concept of hospitality.<sup>20</sup> This approach works most especially with the help of Christian senior migrants with long tenure, who can serve as hosts to the newer migrants, who can invite friends in their social network and social capital, who can help meet the migrant necessities of housing, food, cell phone, and driver’s license. These senior migrants can also serve as local experts

and guides in the new diasporic location, providing benevolent service of compassion and care—especially for migrants who face work difficulties in visa, residency, economic exploitation, physical and emotional abuse, and in the withholding of their salaries.

Along with senior migrants, host and migrant churches can also extend love to the new migrants by taking special collection, providing friendship and spiritual support, and rendering service to the homeland through the transnational flows of remittance support. This kind of remittance support can be exercised in order to help the poor, build homes for widows, and support the education of migrants’ children and the ministry of orphanages in their homeland.

On a weekly basis, host and migrant churches can also extend encouraging points of prayer and intercession on behalf of the migrant community. Their personal and corporate prayers can encourage the migrants who are exposed to employment difficulties, like visa complications and family needs in the homeland. Through

prayer and hospitality, the church becomes a caring community that seeks to serve the migrants in the context of their needs and vulnerabilities.

On the other hand, Christian temporary migrant workers can engage in mission during their migration journey through story. This engagement in story relates to their narrative or testimony of joy and suffering, strength and weakness, peace and pain in the midst of their temporary work migration. Their stories can be a starting point to share their migration narrative and the story of the migrant God, who understands all suffering, weakness, and pain, because Jesus, the Refugee, went through similar suffering, weakness, and pain, yet was able to bring joy, strength, and peace to those who sought rest in him.


Christian migrants can also create bridges of migration connections by connecting this theological perspective to their own migration story: the Bible is a book of stories, which discusses life-changing narratives of migration (like the Abrahamic migration stories, Israel's exodus from Egypt, the captivity of God's people in Babylon, and the disciples of Jesus being on the way, living as aliens in the world). When the migrant believers (or host believers) share the good news of Christ's love in the midst of their migration journey, the church becomes a celebrating community, seeking to share God's love for all the nations through the good news of Jesus Christ, the Migrant, who incarnated among us, so that we may have life and its fullness.

It is worth noting that mission through the economic migrants can yield long-term fruit in the future. More fruit can come when the migrants return to their homeland, when they move to a different country for another work contract, when their contract is renewed in the same country, or when they move to North America, Europe, or Australia for immigration. In all these potential settings, the economic migrants can continue to strategically share their God stories of

mission in Christ and God's migration stories from the Bible.

## Conclusion

In summary, the temporary economic migrants can be engaged in mission by challenging the host church to become a learning community toward the migrants (learning that God is a migrant God and that they are a migrant people seeking to discover the other and to build relationships of trust with the migrants), to become a caring community (loving and serving the migrants as our neighbors through hospitality), and to become a celebrating community (sharing the good news of Christ, our Asylum-seeker, Migrant, and Refugee, who despite his suffering, weakness, and pain, brings joy, strength and peace in the midst of the temporary workers' migration journey).

Similarly, both the senior migrants in the host countries and the new migrants who are followers of Jesus can be engaged in mission. They can share their own stories of migration and the biblical migration stories that can bring hope (despite hardship) to other migrants and to members of their host nations. Thus, the host and migrant churches (as well as Christian migrants) can continue to build God's Kingdom together by intentionally being engaged with the economic migrants for global mission. 

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# Rapid Kingdom Advance: How Shall We View It?

Dave Coles

In his 2004 book *Church Planting Movements: How God Is Redeeming a Lost World*, David Garrison defined a Church Planting Movement as: “a rapid and multiplicative increase of indigenous churches planting churches within a given people group or population segment.”<sup>1</sup> Since then, much has been written about Church Planting Movements (CPMs).<sup>2</sup> The global body of Christ is presently experiencing a missional season of remarkable growth. Those celebrating the rapid and multiplicative increase of indigenous churches planting churches with greatest joy include those *experiencing* the phenomenon—especially those newly coming to salvation in Christ and those observing it firsthand.

At the same time, the description of rapid increase brings cause for concern among many, including some missiologists and experienced missionaries. Of all the elements in Garrison’s definition, perhaps the greatest stumbling block is the word “rapid.” The most common concerns expressed about rapid multiplication include:

1. Scripture gives no promises that reproduction will be rapid.
2. Rapid growth is an unbiblical and unhealthy goal.
3. Rapid growth can lead to superficial and fragile faith. Is there adequate follow-up and discipleship? Or are CPMs laying a foundation a mile wide and an inch deep?
4. Desiring rapid growth may bring temptation to take shortcuts, in order to see fruit happen quickly.
5. Stress on rapid growth may add temptation to claim large numbers.
6. High expectation for rapid multiplication of new churches gives workers little patience for the hard slogging in evangelism and discipleship needed to launch a movement. If they don’t see similar fruit, they will lose enthusiasm and hope and want to give up.”

Each of these concerns deserves serious consideration.

## How does the Bible view rapid kingdom advance?

How did the inspired writers of Scripture view rapid kingdom advance? We note

that as Creator, Sustainer, and Sovereign, God could do *everything very quickly*, if he so desired, including the whole of salvation history. He chose instead to work through processes that have taken many thousands of years so far.<sup>3</sup> God is not in a hurry. Jesus as a human never seemed in a hurry.<sup>4</sup> We need to guard against being hasty in our actions, which can result in missing the right way (Proverbs 19:2) and sharing in the sins of others (1 Timothy 5:22).

As we consider Scriptures related to rapid advance in kingdom purposes, we see in 2 Chronicles 29:36 that “Hezekiah and *all* the people rejoiced at what God had brought about for his people, *because* it was done so quickly.”<sup>5</sup> The speed with which God acted in that time of spiritual revival gave ample grounds for righteous rejoicing among *all* his people.

The Psalms reveal at least a dozen verses<sup>6</sup> calling on God to act *quickly*. In light of Jesus’ command to love our neighbor as ourselves, these model prayers for personal rescue can rightly be applied in praying for salvation to come quickly to the lost.

In the parable of the sower, Jesus sounds a note of caution about the danger of shallow discipleship: “Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow... But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away” (Matthew 13:5, 21). Clearly not all rapid growth is healthy growth. Yet it doesn’t logically follow that all rapid growth is *unhealthy* growth. Health is *determined* by adequate roots and *manifested* by endurance in Christ. The seed falling on good soil “produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown” (Matthew 13:8b). Such abundance in one generation would be considered very

significant—and rapid.<sup>7</sup>

Luke spoke positively of rapid growth and large numbers: “So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem *increased rapidly*, and a *large number* of priests became obedient to the faith” (Acts 6:7). Paul commanded the church in Thessalonica: “Pray for us that the message of the Lord *may spread rapidly and be honored*, just as it was with you” (2 Thessalonians 3:1b). Acts 19:10 says all the Jews and Greeks in the province of Asia (an estimated 15 million people) “heard the word of the Lord” in two years. Not all heard *directly* from Paul or the twelve initial disciples in Ephesus. The message apparently spread quickly through generational multiplication of disciples.

In Romans 15:19, 23 Paul states that from Jerusalem all the way to Illyricum there was no place left for his pioneering work. How could sufficient leadership be developed and adequate spiritual grounding and discipleship happen among so many in such a short time? We see a clue in 2 Timothy 2:2. “And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others.” Paul describes here multigenerational discipling of *groups* of leaders. We see four generations described: Paul, Timothy plus “many witnesses,” “reliable people” and then “others.” Paul applied a reproducible approach to leadership training. “Reliable people” who may have never even met Paul could quickly become “qualified to teach others.”

How was Paul able to start a church, leave it three weeks later and have it become healthy and reproduce? He came back six months to a year later, wrote a few letters, and those churches changed the world. As he wrote to Timothy: “What you heard from me, keep as the pattern (*hupotupōsis*) of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus”

(2 Timothy 1:13). He urged others to imitate him and his “way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church” (1 Corinthians 4:17b). He gave thanks to God that the believers in Rome had, “come to obey from your heart the pattern of teaching that has now claimed your allegiance.” (Roman 6:17b). Paul had a pattern of teaching that he used in every church: a simple reproducible pattern backed up by sound leadership training and grand vision. This enabled rapid reproduction. Modern CPMs likewise generally develop an easily reproducible pattern of instruction for discipleship.

We see in Acts 14:23 that Paul’s appointment of elders in certain churches did not depend on lengthy theological education. Scripture does not present theological education as a *prerequisite* for all spiritual leadership. Criteria found in 1 Timothy 3, Titus 1 and 1 Timothy 5:22 should be applied contextually in every situation.

God does not promise that reproduction will be rapid in every situation. Sometimes he chooses to work slowly. Yet Scripture encourages us to *rejoice* at rapid kingdom advance and pray for it.

### The commentary of two mission leaders

Zane Pratt wrote: “gospel urgency makes rapid multiplication something we should desire. . . . Our passion for the glory of God in the gospel and our love for our lost global neighbor compels our desire for the gospel to advance as rapidly as God will bless.”<sup>8</sup>

Steve Smith illustrated the interplay of human methodology with God’s sovereign choice in the advance of CPMs:

Think of it this way. As a sailor, I can work on all of the controllables: making sure my sails are up, the tiller is in the right position, the sails are trimmed correctly. But until the wind blows, my sailboat is dead in the water. The wind is the uncontrollable. Or if the wind is blowing, but I as a sailor fail to raise the sails or trim them to catch the wind, I go nowhere. In this case, the wind is blowing but I don’t know how to move with the wind. Jesus [said] “The wind blows where it wishes. . . .” The Spirit blows in ways we cannot forecast, but blow He does. The question is not whether He is blowing. The question is: “Is my ministry positioned to move the

way He blows so that it can become a movement of God?”<sup>9</sup>

Right methods don’t guarantee rapid kingdom advance, but they play a role in preparing the way for God’s Spirit to work mightily. Ultimately, we surrender all sacrificial effort invested in any missionary approach into the sovereign hand of our loving Father.

### Is rapid growth a goal of CPM?

Rapid growth is not and should not be a goal per se. Rapid multiplication in CPMs results naturally from God blessing appropriate means for making disciples and planting churches. These usually include reaching groups (rather than individuals), consistent evangelism by all believers, involvement of all believers in studying and applying God’s Word, and empowering local leaders. Simple low-cost approaches multiply much more quickly than approaches requiring large investment of resources. Applying CPM-oriented patterns often *naturally* results in rapid multiplication. However, the early stages of catalyzing a CPM rarely happen quickly. Learning a new language and culture, finding a person of peace, and having Discovery Groups continue to the point of decision to follow Christ can take many years. CPM principles are not a recipe for quick success.

### Does rapid growth lead to superficial and fragile faith?

Most accusations of shallow faith seem based more on fear<sup>10</sup> or non-movement cases<sup>11</sup> rather than data from over 1000 Church Planting Movements known to the 24:14 Coalition. Numerous actual case studies, assessments, articles and books<sup>12</sup> describing Kingdom movements illustrate the faith of ordinary believers: passionate, well-grounded and thriving *despite* persecution (the acid test mentioned in the Parable of the Sower).

A full assessment of the 73 million disciples currently involved in CPMs globally has not been attempted. However, all existing evidence suggests that their doctrine stands up quite well when compared (for example) to American evangelicalism. The LifeWay Research survey found that a majority Americans with “evangelical beliefs”<sup>13</sup> say: “Most people are basically good (52%); God accepts the worship of all religions (51%); Jesus was the first and greatest

being created by God the Father (78%).”<sup>14</sup> In contrast, in a South American CPM: “There was an overwhelming consensus among them that Jesus is God.”<sup>15</sup> An outside team assessing a CPM in Africa found “a quality of discipleship that is producing solid new believers who understand basic doctrines and sacrificially follow Jesus. . . . The new believers had a good understanding of basic doctrines like salvation, Jesus, Holy Spirit and even baptism.”<sup>16</sup>

Every CPM has some pattern for follow-up and discipleship. Many have thorough curricula designed to equip believers with firm doctrinal foundations for their life in Christ. By definition, a CPM has four or more generations of churches reproducing churches.<sup>17</sup> Those fearing doctrinal shallowness usually envision (or cite examples of) first-generation converts won through traditional methods rather than believers within a multi-generational movement. It turns out that rapid growth in the context of a healthy multi-generational movement tends to produce disciples with a more passionate, internalized, and contagious faith than the slow growth to which most of us are accustomed.

### Does desire for rapid growth bring temptation to take shortcuts in order to see something happen quickly?

Temptations to take shortcuts exist among *all* servants of Christ – both in traditional approaches and in movements. Yet as shown above, the specter of shortcuts in discipleship dissolves in the light of actual data from CPMs. Jesus said, “by their fruit you will recognize them.”<sup>18</sup> Our questions receive more accurate answers when we look at the fruit being borne in movements rather than fears based on *a priori* assumptions or occasional anecdotes.

### Does stress on rapid growth add temptation to claim big numbers?

Those catalyzing movements and within movements do not put “stress on rapid growth.” They focus on loving God and immediately obeying what he tells them through his Word. The immediacy of obedience (along with application of other CPM principles) tends to result in rapid growth.

Rather than assuming falsehood or bad motives among our brothers and sisters, we can check with reliable sources who can


support or suggest caution concerning various reports. Justin Long, Director of Research with BEYOND and Research Team Leader for the 24:14 Coalition, has summarized the criteria used by the 24:14 Coalition<sup>19</sup> to accept a movement report as credible.<sup>20</sup> Sources such as the 24:14 Coalition or the books listed in endnote 12 offer carefully weighed reports from movements around the world. Many CPMs also track other categories of fruit besides numbers of disciples, including all the major elements of church life found in Acts 2.

### Does high expectation for rapid multiplication of new churches give workers little patience for the hard slogging in evangelism and discipleship needed to launch a movement?

Does it increase their likelihood of discouragement if they don't see similar fruit? CPM principles *don't* promise quick results. The early stages of catalyzing a CPM rarely happen quickly or easily. Much prayer, hard work, and interaction with local people (both believers and unbelievers) in a focus context are needed to lay a solid foundation. CPM trainings often share the maxim: "Go slow to go fast." It normally takes much *longer* to find a person of peace who opens their household than to find just anyone who is open to the gospel. It takes longer to discover others who resonate with a vision—enough to pursue it without pay—than to hire local believers as evangelists. The greater danger is that workers may start out aiming to catalyze a movement and over time begin to settle for traditional methods because they are *initially quicker and easier*. This might include just reaching individuals instead of groups, hiring local evangelists,

paying for transportation so seekers can attend gatherings, and other methods that can yield traditional church planting fruit but be unlikely to result in a movement. It turns out that a high level of vision and expectation inspires the perseverance in useful steps that more often *do* result in movements.

God has done and continues to do mighty things. "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever."<sup>21</sup> We stand by faith in him, with William Carey who said, "Expect great things from God; attempt great things for God." God has moved powerfully at many points throughout church history, and many CPM principles consist of the best wisdom of past missions work being re-launched. God does not guarantee a specific set of methods will yield abundant or rapid fruit. We know that all our best effort, using any method, is subject to his sovereign choice to bless. We also know he blesses the use of appropriate means to advance his kingdom.

We can join the early Thessalonian believers in obeying the Lord's command to: "Pray for [gospel messengers] that the message of the Lord *may spread rapidly and be honored*, just as it was among [the first Thessalonian believers]." And when the Lord is pleased to answer such prayers with rapid kingdom advance, we can rightly join the psalmist in saying: "For you make me glad by your deeds, Lord; I sing for joy at what your hands have done."<sup>22</sup> 

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## Notes

1. WIGTake Resources, 21.
2. Other closely related or synonymous terms have been used, such as "Disciple Making Movements" (DMM) and "Kingdom Movements." For clarification of the overlap in meaning of these terms, see [24:14 - A Testimony to All Peoples](#), Ed. Dave Coles and Stan Parks (24:14, 2019): "Appendix A: Definitions of Key Terms," 314–315. In this article I use CPM as the best-known and most inclusive of these terms.
3. Noting, as Peter reminded his first readers: "With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day" (2 Peter 3:8b). Except where otherwise noted, all Scriptures in this article are quoted from the NIV.
4. Note, for example, his seemingly casual response to his friend Lazarus's fatal illness (John 11:6, 17, 21–23).
5. Italic font within any Scripture references in this article has been added for emphasis.
6. Psalm 22:19; 31:2; 38:22; 40:13; 69:17; 70:1,5; 71:12; 79:8; 102:2; 141:1; 143:7
7. I recognize that not every detail of parables is intended for specific interpretation, yet it seems clear that Jesus' intent is very abundant harvest from the good soil.
8. In "[What Should We Think about Rapid Church Multiplication?](#)" Posted September 26, 2017; accessed 10/4/2019. This quotation of Pratt does not constitute an endorsement of all the contents of this article.
9. In "Kingdom Kernels: CPM Essentials On a Napkin," *Mission Frontiers*, July–August 2013, 29
10. For example, in the 36-minute podcast "[Are Explosive Disciple-Making Movements Really Healthy?](#)" Zane Pratt uses the word "fear" five times to describe his perspective on various aspects of Church Planting Movements, including rapid reproduction. (Published July 2, 2018 by Alex Kocman; accessed 10/3/2019.)
11. For example, Pratt (*ibid*, minute 9:46–12:20) cites numerous cases to illustrate his concern about the danger of syncretism. None of the examples he cites claims to be a Church Planting Movement.
12. See, for example, *Church Planting Movements* – David Garrison (WIGTake Resources, 2004); *T4T: A Discipleship Re-Revolution* – Steve Smith with Ying Kai (WIGTake Resources, 2011); *Miraculous Movements* – Jerry Trousdale (Thomas Nelson, 2012); *A Wind in the House of Islam* – David Garrison (WIGTake Resources, 2014); *The Kingdom Unleashed* – Jerry Trousdale and Glenn Sunshine (DMM Library, 2018); *Focus on Fruit!* – Trevor Larsen ([www.focusonfruit.org](http://www.focusonfruit.org), 2018); *Bhojpuri Breakthrough* – Victor John with Dave Coles (WIGTake Resources, 2019); 24:14 – *A Testimony to All Peoples* – Eds. Dave Coles and Stan Parks (24:14, 2019)
13. For definition used, see "[What Is an Evangelical? Four Questions Offer New Definition](#)," by Bob Smetana, *Christianity Today*, November 19, 2015. Accessed 10/4/2019.
14. As quoted in "[Christian, What Do You Believe? Probably a Heresy About Jesus, Says Survey](#)" by Jeremy Weber, *Christianity Today*, October 16, 2018. Accessed 10/4/2019.
15. Confidential assessment of CPM among the K people of Guatemala, 2005.
16. Confidential assessment of a movement in Africa, 2018.
17. As defined in "Appendix A: Definitions of Key Terms," in 24:14 – *A Testimony for All Peoples*, 315
18. Matthew 7:20
19. For more information on the 24:14 Coalition, see [www.2414now.net](http://www.2414now.net).
20. Listed in "Kingdom Movements: Are you 'Out of your Mind' or 'Overjoyed'?" *Mission Frontiers*, January–February 2020, 40–41.
21. Hebrews 13:8
22. Psalm 92:4

# Finances and Faith in Mission

Gene Daniels

I am at one of those wonderful stages in life: two of my adult children are thinking about how they will launch out into their own callings to reach the nations. Like their mother and I, both of them feel called to reach Muslims, and they also want to walk a similar path of “faith missions.” We believe in modeling the ministry, so Linda and I have tried to walk-out our ideas of ministry in front of our kids; pursuing God, loving people, cultural appropriateness, etc. However, I’ve come to realize that some things need to be said explicitly, explaining what we do and why, otherwise currents in society will “fill in the blanks” in ways we did not intend.

One of the things which needs to be explicitly communicated between generations of missionaries is the matter of what it means to “live by faith.” We use this term a lot in Evangelical mission circles, but I fear the meaning has become diluted by trends and fads of the wider culture. It certainly has taken on connotations that earlier generations of missionaries did not know. There are probably many reasons for this, but one that stands out has to do with a particular social trend in Western civilization: “financialization.”

Over the past several decades we have witnessed a marked increase in the size and importance of the financial sector in the economies of many countries. For example, the financial sector of the United States economy has grown from 10% of the total in 1950 to over 20% today.<sup>1</sup> This has had a huge impact on our entire society. As much as we hate to admit it, the missions community has not been immune from this trend. In the more than twenty years I have been a part of faith missions, I have seen what can only be called a “financialization” of our thought. This has been manifested in many ways, but one of the most noticeable is a shift in the way we talk about ministry support. Today it seems missionaries talk a great deal about the money we need to raise and how that might be done, and very little about the kind of faith required to be able to say along with Paul:

I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me (Philippians 4:12-13 ESV).

Paul’s focus on the sufficiency of Christ, despite times of lack and need, seems completely antithetical to the current trend of financialization in mission. The problem I am trying to flag is this creeping change that has

slowly made “support raising” a synonym for the “living by faith” Paul modeled.

Certainly there are many authentic ways to raise the support required to conduct effective mission ministry, but none of them should run afoul of Jesus’ words recorded in Matthew:

So do not worry, saying, “What shall we drink?” Or “What shall we wear?” For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well (Matthew 6:31-33).

I fear that in the concrete world of paying bills, many missionaries have subconsciously replaced “seeking first his kingdom” with seeking financial support. And rather than cherishing the fact that our heavenly Father knows what we have need of, we feel urged to make sure our supporters do. However, a little criticism goes a long way. It is easier to be a critic than to offer constructive critique, a trap I want to avoid. So as I think about my own children’s calling to the nations, I want to offer their generation some things to reflect on which might help them focus on faith, *not* finances.

## Faith and Work

One of the persistent fallacies about walking by faith in missionary finance is that it excludes having a paying job. We see this in the way that most agencies have a very difficult time fully integrating bi-vocational missionaries into their organization. I would even say there is significant misunderstanding about the idea of integrating ministry and a paying job. For example, when we refer to vocational ministry with terms like “full time,” we inadvertent imply that the missionary

who is bi-vocational is somehow doing less.

This seems quite ironic considering who caused the term “tentmaker” to be coined in the first place. An objective reading of the Apostle Paul’s communication with the churches shows that he gave very little if any thought to “raising support” for himself. For example, his well-known words in chapters eight and nine of second Corinthians are about raising money for the poor believers in Judea, not for his personal support.

What we do see, with great clarity, is that Paul was singularly focused on completing the task for which Christ called him. That meant that in some locations he worked at a job (Acts 18:1-4), and at others he was supported by financial gifts (Philippians 4:14-19). There were probably locations in his missionary travels where he was supported through a combination of the two. This great man of faith saw no dichotomy between “living by faith” and working for a living whenever needed.

Therefore, I believe it would do us well to remember that the life of faith missions is not in any sense opposed to having a secular, paying job. This is driven home by the fact that it was sweaty “handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched his skin” which were carried from Paul’s workplace and laid on the sick to bring about healing and exorcisms (Acts 19:12).

This did not end with the apostolic era; in fact, bi-vocational mission was part of launching the modern Protestant missions movement. Despite being known for starting the first missionary support society, William Carey had his own pattern of bi-vocational ministry. First it was the time he worked as a cobbler to support his first pastoral ministry in England, then again in his early years on the field where he and other missionaries worked at an Indigo factory. I think it is safe

to say that both Paul and William Carey were quite pragmatic about how they supported themselves. Their focus was on fulfilling their calling, not on how to come by the money to pay the bills. Yet I realize full well this is easier said than done.

My wife and I have been bi-vocational for about half of the twenty-five years we have been in ministry, although to be honest, we started on that path due to the force of circumstances rather than any particular conviction. At times we have been “fully supported” missionaries; albeit often not “fully funded” in the way most agencies use the term. Other times, one or both of us have needed to work to supplement the financial support we received from our church and gracious friends.

Yet no matter where our financial support has come from, my wife and I have been in “full time” ministry all these years. We have never done less ministry because of our paying work, nor have we done more because we reached a certain level of mission support. Currently that means as a part-time college instructor I often grade papers late at night after a full day of ministry, or answer students’ emails during layovers between flights. And when I am tempted to complain, I remember my national friends in the Muslim world, many of whom must work full time while leading churches or evangelistic ministries.

This financial pragmatism is a polar opposite of the ministry financialization to which we have become accustomed. We think nothing unusual about a missionary spending large amounts of their time “raising support.” I remember talking to a friend and colleague about a serious shortfall in their ministry budget. I suggested he look for an adjunct instructor position like I have since he is also qualified to teach at the college level. His reply was illustrative. He told me he could not take even a part-time teaching job because of the time it would take him away from “full time ministry.” Yet the intensive support raising plan he was following was itself a part-time job! If we are to avoid the continued financialization of mission, we may need to change our attitude toward paid employment but, more importantly, we probably need to change our attitudes toward financial support itself.

### Financial Contentment

The epistle of Philippians was written by Paul to some of his most loyal supporters, and in it he says something quite profound about his

relationship to the support they gave him:

“I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me. You were indeed concerned for me, but you had no opportunity. Not that I am speaking of being in need, *for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content*” [emphasis added] (Philippians 4:10–11).

For some unknown reason, the church in Philippi had been unable to help Paul for a lengthy period of time. Translate this into contemporary mission language. Paul was on the foreign field, in the midst of a busy ministry, when his support budget suddenly had a big hole blown in it. It is reasonable to assume this would have caused a significant financial crisis for his ministry. Yet, when put in these terms, the Apostle’s response is even more remarkable. He simply focused on being content.

Now let that really sink in. Paul was content, meaning he was satisfied with things just as they were. He did not start an anxious letter-writing campaign to apprise his supporters of the situation. Paul demonstrated that it is possible to live calm and stress-free in whatever circumstances we find ourselves. In all areas of life this is a challenge, but contentment with regards to finance is an absolute necessity for the missionary who aspires to “live by faith.”

Walking this path means the missionary must deeply believe that what God has provided is enough—even if it does not feel that way. It might not be as much as other missionaries around us have. It may not even meet “our budget.” But contentment means learning to accept what God graciously provides, as enough, precisely because of who it is that is doing the providing. I would imagine Paul’s thoughts were rooted somewhere in the words of Jesus, perhaps something like: “... your Father knows what you need before you ask him” (Matthew 6:8).

I am not pretending this is easy, even Paul had to *learn* how to be content. But that he did. And it is worth considering that few of us have ever faced the severity of hardship and deprivation Paul did. If he could persevere to learn that lesson in the First Century, we should be able to do the same in a much more comfortable Twenty-first Century. On the other hand, he did not wrestle with something that constantly attacks the contemporary missionary: consumerism.

One of the natural by-products of the

financialization of our society is the development of an entire industry which aims to rob us of our contentment: advertising. Everyone from banks to shoemakers spend billions of dollars each year to stir-up the public’s discontentment, so that people will spend more money. Although we are loath to admit it, this affects missionaries like everyone else. Without realizing it, this can impact how much financial support we think we need.

This raises the issue of the difference between *need* and *want*, something each of us must be careful to discern. No one can say exactly where this line falls for someone else. Nevertheless, if we are practicing a deep sense of contentment in the Lord’s provision we will probably find there are many things we can do without. We might conclude that our old computer is really not that slow, or that yearly trip home to visit supporters is not necessary. It is amazing how much we can do without if we are focused on being content with what God has provided rather than how we can raise the money for more. Contentment also lifts our spiritual eyes off the things we think we need, and toward the giver of all good gifts.

### Trusting the Lord, Not Technique

One of the characteristics of financialization is a focus on developing specific techniques for optimizing returns, rather than strengthening the economic fundamentals of a society. Economists are just beginning to recognize the adverse effect this has had on the US economy as it hollows-out many of our core activities. In a similar way, an unhealthy focus on “support raising” causes missionaries and agencies to put too much emphasis on the techniques and methods of funding rather than on the structural bedrock of missionary finance—an unshakeable confidence in the God who sends.

Developing a faith lifestyle as a missionary is about growing in confidence toward our heavenly Father who graciously provides, not learning the best ways to ask for money. Fund raising techniques can easily distract us from what is really important in the matter. In some ways they are like the use of technology in evangelism. There are many Twenty-first century technologies that are useful for reaching the lost, but they are not the substance—the gospel is. In the same way, learning different approaches to mission funding can be helpful, but these methods should never become the substance of how we view mission finance. This particularly



relates to a very common missionary activity—writing newsletters.

The people who share in our ministries—whether by giving, praying, or simply loving us—want to know what we are doing. The modern missionary newsletter is an easy way to inform them about the news from the field. Whether it is paper, electronic, email, short videos, or a combination of all the above, missionary newsletters are a proven way to communicate vision, purpose, and ministry results to those who care.

However, one evidence of the financialization of mission is that many contemporary newsletters contain almost as much “fund raising” as they do actual missionary “news.” This is not to say it is wrong to ask directly for financial support. Missionaries need many things to fulfill their callings, finances, prayer, logistics, etc., and a newsletter can be a great way to clearly invite people to get involved.

On the other hand, the next generation of missionaries will do well to remember that many who pioneered the concept of “faith mission” not only rejected a guaranteed salary, but also refused to mention their financial needs to anyone but God. We have powerful examples in men like Hudson Taylor and Robert Morrison in China, or Peter Cameron Scott in Sudan. They understood that when James wrote, “You do not have because you do not ask” (James 4:3), he was referring to prayer, not communicating with supporters.

What’s more, their enormous contribution to world missions cannot be understood apart from their stance on mission finances, which was only one of the ways they demonstrated an invincible, stubborn faith. This is something that all missionaries can learn

from, even those who do not chose to walk exactly the same financial path as they did.

## Conclusion


After many years of watching the Lord provide for our ministry, I want my children to know they can trust the Lord in the same way. I also want them, and others in their generation, to know that when missionaries take the route of faith missions, they are choosing to walk a path that is out of sync with the world around them. Among many things, this means they must turn away from an unhealthy trend in our society which places an inflated importance on money, while diminishing other fundamentals of life.

One way this has affected the modern missions movement has to do with how we support our ministries. It seems to me that many missionaries, and their agencies, have shifted focus from the God who provides to financial strategies, and from fulfilling their calling to increasing the donor base. Some people seem to have the mistaken impression that “faith missions” is little more than a euphemism for “raising support.”

The next generation of missionaries can turn this tide by carefully thinking about some of the things they previously accepted without challenge. For starters, they may need to reconsider the way they view salaried work. Taking a job in order to support oneself in mission does not mean someone “lacks faith,” rather it is evidence of a singular focus on their calling instead of being distracted by how much money they can or cannot raise. Next, contentment needs to be restored to its rightful place in the missions vocabulary. Perhaps younger missionaries can crush the materialistic discontent that

my generation allowed to creep into our devotion to Christ and his cause. And finally, I pray that my children will set their hearts to fully trust in the Lord, and lean not on the techniques or technologies of fundraising.

Nevertheless, this is a good place to make it clear that if there was only one right way to generate the financial resources needed in mission, then the Scriptures would have told us what it was. Without a doubt, there is room for a variety of approaches. That said, I don’t believe we should accept the creeping financialization of mission thinking which gives fund raising center stage and pushes other much more important things to the side.

Faith missions is about deeply trusting God to provide everything we need for life and godliness, not about how we pay the bills. And I believe this is something that my kids, and their generation of missionaries, need to hear clearly and explicitly from those of us who have walked this path before them. 

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**Gene Daniels** (pseudonym) and his family served in Central Asia for twelve years. He is now the director of Fruitful Practice Research, studying how God is working in the Muslim world.

## Notes

1. “How Wall Street became a big chunk of the U.S. Economy.” Witko, Christopher. Washington Post, Online edition, March 29, 2016. Accessed at Stable URL: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/03/29/how-wall-street-became-a-big-chunk-of-the-u-s-economy-and-when-the-democrats-signed-on/>

# The Global Professional in Today's Mission

M James

In June 2019, Lausanne Global Workplace Forum (GWF) focused on marketplace ministry and its necessity to expand the 1974 objective of world evangelization. As such, GWF hosted speakers, devotionals, and table discussions on the integration of church-marketplace ministry and priesthood of all believers. Speaker Bishop Efraim Tendero stated that in order to fulfill the Great Commission, every believer needs to be a minister and every workplace a place of ministry, and that the mobilization of laypeople is the greatest missing link of world evangelization. The GWF advanced paper on marketplace ministry stated that, “the opportunity for the global church is no longer to send just a few full-time missionaries but to take advantage of globalized work, where people move from everywhere to everywhere, to disciple, equip, and commission an entire generation of missionaries to schools, offices, factories, fields, retail malls, farms, hospitals, stock exchanges, parliaments, governments, courts, to be full-time missionaries, and to adopt their workplace as their mission field and a place to honour God with their giftedness.”<sup>1</sup>

The 2019 GWF focus of marketplace ministry was exemplified in the Bible by exposition on Daniel, the civil servant to the king. In a similar fashion, William Carey, the father of modern missions, stated that every missionary should maintain a trade and himself managed an Indian indigo factory in 1794 while language learning and translating the Bible. In 1997, the International Journal of Frontier Missions focused on *tentmaking* and the editorial for the issue acknowledged that though tentmaking is not a new concept, perhaps it is just now being realized as an important strategic development by which the unreached peoples of the world can be reached by the Word of God. In 2007, *Christianity Today* echoed this and stated that tentmaking is considered the magic bullet of Western missions.<sup>2</sup> Of course this is not true and while I was resident in the Arabian Gulf, various mission agencies attempted to mobilize the thousands of expatriate Indian and Filipino evangelical Christians for cross cultural ministry in 2000, 2004, and about every four years thereafter to the present day.

## Definitions and Distinctions

Marketplace ministry, tentmaking, business as mission (BAM), and global professional (GP) are terms for various integrations of ministry, employment, and business. The 2004 Lausanne Forum for World Evangelization sought to define terms by noting that BAM is synonymous with transformational business, great commission companies, and kingdom business. Specifically, the 2004 Lausanne Occasional Paper<sup>3</sup> noted that BAM is related to but different from tentmaking,

which refers principally to the practice of Christian professionals who support themselves financially by working as employees or by engaging in business. The paper further states that like BAM, tentmaking infers the integration of work and witness by lay personnel instead of clergy and ministry professionals. However, BAM is holistic in its approach while the tentmaker may view employment as a means to facilitate ministry. Furthermore, the paper noted that BAM often expands beyond a workplace based ministry and often has an objective to utilize the power and resource of business for an intentional impact in the nation.<sup>4</sup> As a result, BAM has been further defined as (1) profitable and sustainable businesses, (2) intentional about Kingdom of God purpose and impact on people and nations, (3) focused on holistic transformation and the multiple bottom lines of economic, social, environmental and spiritual outcomes, and (4) concerned about the world's poorest and least evangelized peoples.

Global Professionals (GP) are defined as employees who are able to easily transition from company to company, location to location, and nation to nation. These employees are highly sought after as they possess skills that straddle various job descriptions for enhancing. As an example: government operations, business efficiency, and academic quality. In relation to ministry, Pioneers International invites people to, “Take your profession to the unreached.” IMB highlights the need for professionals to be *working among those who have not heard the good news about Jesus*, and TEAM asserts that *working as*

*a professional in another country can open doors for ministry that traditional missionaries never have!* This assumes a traditional missionary is a cross-cultural worker whose salary is sourced solely from support donations. Personally, I view a GP with intentional ministry as synonymous to a tentmaker involved in marketplace ministry.

Though both are types of marketplace ministry, there is a significant distinction between BAM and GP ministry. The BAM professional owns and manages the company, division, branch, or franchise, and is responsible for establishing the business environment whereas the global professional joins an established business that is managed by someone else. Therefore, BAM professionals feel more in control of their circumstances, better able to establish influential relationships, and have an increased ministry impact. However, BAM professionals also carry extensive responsibilities that stress resources for meeting ministry objectives. The BAM professional is accountable for investors, employees, government regulations, public image, and anything else related to the company. These require business skills that are often beyond the capability of most professionals. Actually, joining and turning around a failing company is far easier and less stressful than establishing a new business, which requires significant finance, new employees, government permissions, and relational marketing. As such, though BAM has the potential for a company-wide, Kingdom impact, most global accountant, doctor, engineer, nurse, and teacher GPs are better suited to engage in marketplace

ministry through employment than business management. Even so, the rural / urban context may dictate a need for BAM due to the unavailability of employment.

Considering part-time employment and the equivalent of part-time BAM, it is noted that part-time often results with insufficient finances for livelihood and a company that does not actually provide real economic value. Consequently, this requires external funding and can attract curiosity as to the

*real reason* for the GP or business. In fact, undisclosed income is more likely to elicit investigation than evangelistic ministry, and often demonstrates to new believers that Christians do not need to earn a salary. The assumption becomes that donations for livelihood are available from the Church, much like government aid and welfare.

Like supported missionaries, cross-cultural BAM and GPs are called by God to extend his kingdom through evangelism, discipleship,

and church planting ministries. However, their preparation and path to the ministry context is often quite different. Table 5.1 compares the pre-field preparations, on field work, and post field return for typical salary-supported missionaries (SSM) and GPs. In general, the SSM completes over a year of fund raising, cultural learning, and language acquisition before entering the field, while the GP is able to transition quickly to new, foreign employment. While on the field, the

**TABLE 5.1 COMPARISON OF TYPICAL EVENTS OF THE TRADITIONAL, SALARY SUPPORTED MISSIONARY, AND GLOBAL PROFESSIONAL**

	Salary Supported Missionary	Global Professional
<b>Pre-Field preparation</b>	Feel a calling from God Join a sending agency Complete agency specified training Complete financial support raising Establish a prayer support team Sent out from the home church	Feel a calling from God Accept cross-cultural employment Sent out from the home church (maybe)
<b>Field Assignment</b>	Full-time language and cultural training Agency field-based supervision Team ministry among the people Field-based ministry projects Field-based training and conferences Agency annual evaluations Agency-sending church communication and reports Four-year home assignments	Full-time employment among the people Part-time language and cultural training Possible membership in a ministry team Consideration of joining a sending agency Month long opportunities for time and possible training in the home country (during employment vacation)
<b>Post-Field Return</b>	Agency end-of-term evaluation Re-entry care Possible retooling for next assignment	Full-time employment back in the home country

**TABLE 5.2 SWOT ANALYSIS OF GLOBAL PROFESSIONAL**

Strengths	Weaknesses
God is raising up many GPs from a wide range of nations with visions for evangelism, discipleship, and church planting. There are a number of sending agencies with good connections to churches, colleges, and conferences to mobilize professionals. There are mission agencies and international training organizations able to instruct on cross cultural relations, church planting, and language learning. GPs are naturally located in the marketplace of the nation. GPs are more easily placed in unengaged and unreached urban settings. GPs require less financial support to relocate in a cross-cultural setting.	GPs often do not comprehend the benefits of a sending agency and training before being placed on the field. GPs often arrive on the field without knowledge of the ministry situation, team needs, and skill requirements for effective ministry. Sending agencies often have insufficient placement networks and strategies to recruit and training global professionals, especially those on the field. In consideration of time commitments to family and employment, global professionals have reduced margins for ministry.
Opportunities	Threats
Successful ministry teams consist of a community of members with complementary and coordinated skills. Sending agencies and international training organization are available to instruct, coach, and mentor global professionals in cross-cultural ministry, cultural adaption, and language learning. Sending agencies are aware of ongoing field ministry and able to coordinate possible team membership and member care. GPs are able to initiate new ministries in nations with relatively difficult access.	Sending agencies and training organization not cooperating and coordinating strengths. GPs feeling membership in a sending agency is a security threat. GPs not valuing the accountability, field administration, and training available through a sending agency. Agencies and global professionals continue to operate independently and without ministry cooperation and coordination.

SSM has resources for continuing education, ministry evaluation, and home assignments. The GP may participate in some of these activities though home assignment usually means loss of employment. And at completion, the SSM has resources for re-entry care and retooling for another assignment, while the GP is often stressed in the search for new employment.

### Some Comparisons

Even so, international marketplace ministries like BAM and GPs are on the rise and there are a number of advantages over the traditional, salary-supported missionary. Table 5.2 is a SWOT analysis of the GP in relation to cross-cultural ministry. In general, the GP has strengths in finances and a natural connection to the community. GPs have easier access into difficult to enter nations and sending agencies are recognizing this ministry potential. Unfortunately, GPs tend to enter cross-cultural ministry with little preparation, skills for engagement, or connection to ongoing ministries. Limited time and non-salary resources may also inhibit on-the-field training and improvement. However, on-field training is available and even in 1998 Sells discussed the importance of on-field training for both the *professional* [salaried] and *amateur* [non-salaried] [GP] missionary.<sup>5</sup> As such, sending and training agencies, like those listed in Table 5.3, are continuing to develop and offer relevant, practical, ministry training for GPs that considers their employment context.

Personally, I consider myself a hybrid professional. After completing a graduate degree and working a few years in industry, my wife and I were sent out from our home church through a sending agency to the

field. In order to prepare for this assignment, we completed the Perspectives course, our church-based training program, and a MATS qualification with a missions emphasis. Beyond that, we traveled to other churches and met with individuals to highlight the vision and call God placed on our lives for ministry and church planting among the unreached. Upon arriving on the field, we focused solely on language and cultural training for two years before relocation to a ministry team. There, I accepted a faculty position at a university, which covered our housing, travel, and salary needs. That freed our ministry funds for support of ministry needs such as literature distribution, on-field training, conference attendance, translation projects, and even video production.

During our subsequent twenty years of service, we experienced many GPs come and go with frustrations in language acquisition and cultural understanding. One national seeker expressed joy in meeting me, as he was frustrated with my GP colleague's use of Google Translate to explain Christianity. I experienced a similar frustration with GPs who arrived, lived, and worked as a typical Western Christian, which in our context, was often viewed as secular and even risqué.

### Conclusions

God is extending his to church to every tribe, tongue, and nation. He has promised this and since the day of Pentecost, God has been raising up his people to go and make disciples among the nations. As the master coordinator, God uses a multitude of professions and methods to spread his glory. In recent years, God is raising up an extraordinary number of GPs and business entrepreneurs to extend his reach through marketplace

ministries. In order to be better used by God, sending churches and coordinating agencies need to further innovate relevant methods for enhanced preparation, mentorship, training, supervision, and care of those involved in marketplace ministry. Similarly, the GP needs to better value the importance of being sent out though enhanced accountability, prayer support, and financial connections for training and ministry. Together, we are a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession who strive together to proclaim his excellencies among the nations. 🇺🇸

**M James** and his family were sent out to serve for more than twenty-five years in the Arabian Peninsula, where he was employed in higher education. Together with a team, they co-labored to minister to seekers, disciple believers, and, by God's grace, establish churches.

### Notes

1. Liu T and Harp R, Workplace Ministry Advanced Paper, Lausanne Global Workplace Forum, Manila, Philippines, June 2019
2. Guthrie S, Tentmaking Movement Puts Down Stakes, *Christianity Today*, June 21, 2007.
3. Claydon D, et el, Business as Mission, Lausanne Occasional Paper No. 59, Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, 2004
4. Sharp L, "Business as Mission and the Planting of Churches," *EMQ* 55, no. 1 (January 2019): 23-25.
5. Sells B, Horizon Three: Re-thinking Mission Education, The Breakthrough for On-Field Mission Training, *Mission Frontiers*, September 1998.

**TABLE 5.3 PARTIAL LIST OF GLOBAL PROFESSIONAL SENDING AND TRAINING ORGANIZATIONS**

Agency
Crossworld: <a href="https://crossworld.org">https://crossworld.org</a>
Global Intent: <a href="https://intent.org">https://intent.org</a>
IMB: <a href="https://www.imb.org/training-for-professionals">https://www.imb.org/training-for-professionals</a>
Operation Mobilization: <a href="http://omusa.org/work">http://omusa.org/work</a>
Pioneers International: <a href="https://pioneers.org/2018/02/28/take-profession-unreached">https://pioneers.org/2018/02/28/take-profession-unreached</a>
Professionals Global: <a href="https://professionalsglobal.org">https://professionalsglobal.org</a>
Scatter Global: <a href="https://www.scatterglobal.com">https://www.scatterglobal.com</a>
TEAM: <a href="https://team.org/lengths-of-service/kingdom-professionals">https://team.org/lengths-of-service/kingdom-professionals</a>
Tent International: <a href="http://tentinternational.org">http://tentinternational.org</a>

# I Am a TCR (Third Culture Retiree)

Cam Arensen

Let me introduce myself: I am a TCK. For the uninitiated, that stands for Third Culture Kid. I was born in Tanzania to missionary parents, and grew up in Tanzania and Kenya until I completed high school. We were referred to as MKs (Missionary Kids) when I was growing up. But in the '70s and '80s it was recognized that MKs shared a significant overlap of experience with the children of parents with other occupations (military, international business, foreign service, etc.) who lived and worked in other countries. The key to the definition is that we grew up in countries other than our passport country. A significant body of helpful literature grew up around both the challenges and advantages of being a TCK and how that experience shaped the kind of adults we became.

One of the most significant challenges of being a TCK is answering the question, "Where is home?" As an American citizen, I enjoyed our "home assignments" in the United States, but I have to confess it never felt like home to me. I was always anxious and ready to return to Africa. At the same time, I knew I was not a Kenyan. As TCKs we lived somewhat separated from the local culture. My true peers were the other missionary kids. Together we created a kind of "third culture" (hence the term Third Culture Kid). But here's the problem; when we stepped on the plane to return "home," we scattered. That third culture disappeared and we became isolated from our identity. We lost our true home and had to begin again to create a new identity and find a new home. In my experience, most TCKs do that successfully and go on to fruitful and fulfilled lives, drawing on our unique growing up experiences to make significant contributions in a wide variety of fields.

## What is a Third Culture Retiree?

I say all of that to introduce the real subject of this article. While I am still a TCK, in 2016 I also became a TCR. What is a TCR, you ask? It stands for Third Culture Retiree. In addition to my eighteen years growing up in Africa, I spent almost thirty years as a missionary/pastor outside of the United States, four years in Nairobi, and over twenty-five years in Abu Dhabi, the capital of the United Arab Emirates. In 2016, my wife (also a TCK) and I retired and returned "home" to America. We became TCRs.

I haven't seen anyone else use the acronym or designation. I coined it after some significant discussions with other TCRs, so maybe it's an original. Why did I do it and why is it significant? Do we really need

another acronym? Maybe not, but I believe it does give us a helpful way to discuss a collection of feelings, struggles, and challenges that face a unique demographic.

Everyone who has spent a significant amount of time living and working outside their passport country will agree that the experience changed him/her. Worldviews expand, values change, the way we view ourselves and others is impacted. The longer we spend in our adopted home, the more profound the change. Then we retire. We return "home" to a country that no longer feels like home and hasn't for a long time. When we try to share our experiences and our perspectives we are often met with blank looks, incredulity, even hostility. We learn to keep our own counsel, keep our mouths shut, trying to blend in. Our homes often resemble museums of the places we visited and the homes we left behind. After a few polite token responses of interest from visitors, discussion reverts to the local weather and politics. Try to find news about things "back home" and you'll probably have to do some deep diving on the internet.

These experiences are common to all who have lived and worked in other countries. So why doesn't TCR refer to Third Culture Returnees? I debated this myself. Certainly, many of the issues are the same. But Third Culture Retirees face an additional set of challenges. These are issues common to all retirees. They include a loss of professional identity; If I'm no longer a missionary, who am I? With the loss of professional identity comes a loss of status or "place." We become one more anonymous old person. Psychologists have even come up with a phrase for it: role deprivation. When I don't go to work on Monday morning, where do I go? What

do I do? On top of that, retirement is also accompanied by numerous factors of aging; financial concerns, declining health and physical capacity; the aches and pains of our failing bodies.

As I said, these issues are common to all retirees. What makes TCRs different from other retirees is that they are facing these issues at the same time that they are facing the loss of their "other home." They are battling culture disorientation at the same time as they are dealing with role deprivation. At an age when learning new skills can be difficult, they are faced with learning to live in a new country and a different culture. Like the TCK, the TCR finds himself asking, "Where is home?"

## TCR Unique Stresses

We retired to Bend, Oregon. Bend is a growing community with many people moving here to enjoy the high desert climate and recreational opportunities. When meeting new people, the common question is, "When did you move to Bend?" This is followed by the next question: "Where did you move from?" The answer, "Abu Dhabi," elicits some interesting reactions. One question I dread is, "What was it like?" I appreciate the interest, but how does one condense twenty-five years of living into a polite conversation?

When these two powerful currents of change and adjustment converge on the TCR, we may experience a storm of uncomfortable emotions and accompanying stress. Following, are a few:

**Overwhelmed.** The required pace of change is too much! The water is too deep and the currents are too strong. It feels like the emotional equivalent of drowning.

**Isolated.** "No one understands!" is a common complaint. And they don't! They can't!



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They haven't walked in our shoes. Only those who have walked the same path can understand the host of emotions. But there aren't many (if any) of those people around in our new homes.

**Homesickness.** "Oh, for the taste of a good shawarma!" How often have I thought that? Shawarmas are one of the popular street foods of the Middle East. You can find them at a few Middle Eastern restaurants in the United States, but they're not the same! Picturing the home, life, friends, and tastes left behind can give rise to an almost unbearable ache.

**Useless and Incompetence.** A busy life of productivity and competence can give way to a feeling of uselessness. Carefully and painstakingly acquired skills of language and cultural understanding (knowing how things work) no longer have any value in the new environment.

**Boredom.** It is a feeling that there is nothing to look forward to. Throughout my overseas career, there was always some change, some event on the horizon to look forward to that helped me through the rough spots; the next home leave, the return to Abu Dhabi, the next international conference. Changes

were always happening. We get used to that adrenalin. Suddenly it may feel like the path spreads out before us in unending sameness, with the only anticipated changes being unwelcome ones (like getting older).

**Anger.** Psychologists tell us that one of the most common sources of anger is unfulfilled expectations. Blocked goals are another source. When things don't work the way we expect and people don't act and respond the way we would like, and we can't figure out how to get things done, we can easily become angry; angry at people, angry at a community, a society, a whole country! "What's gone wrong with America!" we ask.

**Depression.** This is an obvious catch-all that summarizes the accumulated feelings in the above list. I am talking about situational depression, not clinical depression. Whatever the label, it can make it hard to get up in the morning.

This is just a suggested list. I am sure, if you are a TCR, you can make your own additions. So, are we depressed yet? Why even make a list like this except to feel sorry for ourselves? I believe there is a certain value. If you have felt any (or all) of the emotions on the list, it can increase your sense of isolation. It is

a sense that you are alone and the only one who is feeling these emotions. You may not even realize the source of some of your feelings. "What's wrong with me?" may be a question that's running around in your head. Just knowing that you are not alone and that others have felt and are feeling many of the same emotions and that there is a strong factual reason for the feelings can bring a sense of relief. No, you're not crazy (or at least no crazier than you were before)!

### Some Commonsense Suggestions

However, description and group therapy can only take us so far. What about prescriptions for weathering the storm? I'll be honest with you here. I have decidedly mixed feelings about such prescriptions and self-help articles. I often feel like my intelligence is being insulted, and the offered help is no more than common sense or that I'm being offered band aids for a serious wound. However, it doesn't feel right to simply identify and describe a problem without making some attempt to offer some ideas for coping with the very real challenges. It is also my observation that common sense isn't always that

common. So, at the risk of offending you the way I have often been offended, here are some commonsense suggestions.

### **Approach your retirement and resettling as one more cross-cultural adjustment.**

Some years ago, the sociologists and missiologists came up with the term “culture shock.” If you’ve spent much time living internationally you have experienced at least some degree of culture shock; the disorientation that comes from living in a foreign culture. Then a few years later they came up with another helpful term: reverse culture shock. It refers to the disorientation and distress that comes from returning home and finding that it has become a foreign culture. That’s what we are talking about here. But we can ameliorate the distress by expecting it; realizing that not only has our home culture changed, but so have we. Rather than expecting everything to be the same, we can become cultural observers and adapters. There will be things we don’t like. There were things we didn’t like (or understand) in our adopted culture, but we adapted and worked through them to a point of understanding if not enjoying. We need to bring that same mind set to our return home.

My life has been spent in church ministry. Church cultures vary. So does church music. (Whoever said that music is the universal language hadn’t lived very long or traveled very far!) When I worship in a church in India, I don’t expect their music to be like the music in my church. I don’t expect to even like it (I don’t!) And I don’t expect them to adapt their music to my tastes and preferences. But I can still appreciate the opportunity to worship with fellow followers of Christ. I can bring that same non-judgmental mindset to bear when the music in my new church in Bend isn’t always precisely to my liking.

### **Embrace and enjoy the good things in your new reality.**

After forty years in church ministry and being responsible for the running of a church, I have relished the anonymity and lack of responsibility of being just a member of a congregation. It took a little while to get used to it, but it feels good to slip in (sometimes late!) and sit in the back row. I enjoy sleeping in when I feel like it, and enjoying a leisurely cup of coffee in the morning. I like setting my own schedule and not being driven by work or others’ demands and expectations. I can take a walk when the weather and my inclinations converge. It’s a lot like being

on school vacation, only September has been cancelled! Don’t get me wrong. I do miss many of the ingredients of my former life. I am just learning to enjoy aspects of my new life.

### **Make new friends.**

This doesn’t need to happen in a hurry but be open to the new people around you. We have found it especially helpful to seek out others who have lived or worked internationally. They may be other retirees or simply returnees, but people who have lived outside of the US often share a common bond of experience. Sharing experiences can be refreshing and reinforce the fact that we are not alone. One couple in our church who had lived and worked in Uganda began hosting occasional get-togethers of people with international experience. Just sharing our stories with one another made for some delightful evenings.

### **Keep up with and visit old friends.**

We can go overboard on this one. I am not suggesting spending hours every day on Facebook. But selectively communicating and visiting (or being visited by) friends from your international life helps maintain a sense of your history and identity.

### **When finances and health permit, plan a trip back to your international home.**

I don’t think it should be too soon, as it may simply feed your sense of dissatisfaction with your new life. But making plans for such a trip gives something to look forward to. Such a visit may also give you a reality check that your international life was not as rosy or problem free as you remember. Nostalgia tends to paint in pastel colors! I love Africa. When I land at the airport in Nairobi and draw a deep breath of Kenyan air, I still get a strong sense of “coming home.” I love to visit. But after a few weeks of bumping over Kenyan roads and fighting Nairobi traffic I am ready to get back on the plane.

The above list of suggestions is just that: a list of suggestions. You can undoubtedly make your own list or add to mine. There is an additional list of helpful suggestions that I have deliberately omitted. They are suggestions that apply to all retirees who are dealing with role deprivation; suggestions like: find a hobby, get a part time job, volunteer, etc. They are good suggestions, but such lists can be found in almost any publication for retirees. I have sought to limit my list to ideas specifically for TCRs: those who are concurrently facing both issues of role deprivation

and cultural dislocation.

By way of application, here are some questions you might want to ask yourself:

1. Which of the list of emotions listed above have I felt? Which ones am I currently feeling?
2. What aspects of my home culture (local or national) do I find most peculiar? Has the culture changed or am I the one who has changed?
3. What do I miss most about the culture of my adopted (international) home? What don’t I miss?
4. What are the good things I enjoy about my new home, role and life?
5. What new friends have I made? Have I made any new friends who can share and understand international experience? What “old” friends am I still connected to?

## **Conclusion**

Of course, as followers of Christ, we have another reality that is deeper and stronger and another perspective that provides resources and strength for facing the challenges of life as a TCR. This reality is that our true identity is not bound up in passport or occupation or role. Our present and future are bound up in our identity as followers of Christ. We have a lot to look forward to!

Oh, and one final word of a personal nature. I spent my first year of retirement undergoing treatment for cancer. I don’t recommend it as a strategy, but it certainly puts the challenges of being a TCR into perspective! 📧

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# Helping New Believers Find Identity Through Belonging

Richard and Evelyn Hibbert

When people from strongly group-oriented cultures put their faith in Christ, they often experience a period of intense struggle to work out their new identity. Missionaries from the West sometimes do not appreciate the depth of this struggle. We can be tempted to insist only that new believers declare their allegiance to Christ and pay the cost of following Jesus but pay no attention to the effects this may have on their sense of identity and belonging. This is an overly simplistic response to a complex challenge.

## The Perception of Betrayal

In tightly knit societies, people who leave their religion and become Christians are often understood to be betraying their family and their people group. In our ministry among Turkish people, for example, we discovered that deeply embedded in their mindset is the idea that to be a Turk is to be a Muslim. Becoming a Christian is seen as a betrayal of Turkish-ness. This thinking continues to influence new believers. A new believer from a Muslim background in Bulgaria, for example, recently said: “I know I am a Christ-believer now. But as a Turk I am still a Muslim, right?”

Not only Turks, but people from many other people groups struggle to work out their new identity once they begin following Jesus. One reason for this is that their families and communities interpret becoming a Christian as a rejection and betrayal not merely of their religion but of their ethnicity and culture. Much of this sense of betrayal comes from their perception of Christianity as a foreign religion. Their perception that Christianity is alien is based on much more than the fact that it is new or unfamiliar. In their eyes, becoming a Christian equates with becoming a foreigner. This is because people in many parts of Asia and the Middle East associate being Christian with being Western. In pre-Communist China, this gave rise to the saying “One more Christian; one less Chinese.” Christianity is seen as something that promotes Western values and a Western lifestyle, which in many people’s minds includes things like sexual “freedom” (read immorality) and lack of respect for elders.

This article explores ways we can help new believers navigate their families’ and communities’ sense that they have been betrayed and rejected.

## Three Possible Pathways of Identity Negotiation

As new believers work out their new identity as followers of Jesus and part of the body of Christ, they tend to go down one of three paths:

1. They let go of the ties they have with their family and community. This is partly because they are rejected by their family and friends, and sometimes also because they (unnecessarily) distance themselves from their community by their actions. This often creates a huge vacuum of identity in which new believers feel isolated, confused, and depressed.
2. They minimize their contact with other believers because they want to remain close to their family and friends. They keep following Jesus but decide they cannot join an established church, often because the lifestyle of Christians and the forms of worship in these churches are jarringly foreign in relation to the local culture. This path deprives them of the support and encouragement of the church and deprives the church of their participation and gifts.
3. They synthesize a hybrid identity out of their identity as a member of their birth community and as a member of the body of Christ. They find a way to live out their faith among their own family and friends and they also participate in a community of fellow believers.<sup>1</sup>

The third pathway is the ideal to aim for. It is the best outcome for the new believer and their family and provides the opportunity for the gospel to spread through the new believer to their community. But taking this

path is not easy.

Forming a hybrid identity is a complex process that can take many years. Mazhar Mallouhi, a follower of Christ from a Muslim background, explains that he went through a “deep internal struggle” and faced “a profound crisis of identity” as part of his journey of faith. It took many years before he finally came to rest in a new hybrid identity. For him, this new identity was to be culturally a Muslim and spiritually a follower of Jesus.<sup>2</sup>

Taking the third pathway is often a drawn-out process in which it can seem like the believer is oscillating between two identities—that of their community of origin and that of the church. They may seem to present two faces to the world: their previous religion’s (e.g. Muslim) face towards their families, and a Christian face towards the church and anyone discipling them. The disciple’s task is to work out how to “marry their two faces” so that they can be part of both a group of believers as well as live out their faith among their own people, helping them to see that following Jesus is an honorable path.<sup>3</sup>

## How to Help Disciples Towards a Settled Sense of Identity and Belonging

There are three main ways that cross-cultural workers can help new believers move towards a settled sense of identity as both a member of their birth community and a member of God’s people.

### Help Disciples Maintain Relationship With Their Families and Friends

The first way is to help new believers maintain warm and respectful relationships with their family and friends. Strategies to help lessen the likelihood that disciples will be expelled from their communities of origin



include our doing everything possible to get to know the disciples' families. We should act in a respectful and friendly towards them. We can reduce the risk that disciples will be rejected by their families and friends by our and their being a good example of living virtuously according to local cultural norms. This can help them come to terms with the family member's new faith.

On the other hand, unwise actions on the part of a Christian worker can precipitate the expulsion of disciples from their birth community. Mazhar Mallouhi, a Muslim who came to Christ and joined the Christian community in Lebanon, was encouraged by his Christian friends to leave his cultural past behind by changing his name to a "Christian" name and by cutting off contact with his Muslim friends. Wanting to be accepted by his Christian friends, he did just that, and consequently damaged his relationship with his Muslim friends.

Another way we can inadvertently cause disciples unnecessary angst about their new identity and broken relationships with their birth community is to urge them to do things that are taboo in their culture or religion and which are not essential to being a Christian. This is often done in the mistaken belief that doing these things will help them express their freedom in Christ. Mazhar Mallouhi's friends, for example, suggested that he stop fasting during Ramadan, that he pray using a new posture, and that he eat pork to prove he was a Christian. He followed their advice but then struggled for years with the feeling that he was betraying his heritage and his Muslim family and friends.<sup>4</sup> We know several other Muslim-background believers who have been similarly pressured. As a result, some were cut off from their families. Along with being confused about their identity, they have experienced a deep loneliness and sense of isolation.

The way that intercultural disciplers teach new disciples to share their faith can also influence whether or not their family and friends see their faith as a betrayal. It is vital that disciples share their faith with gentleness and respect (see 1 Peter 3:15). They should not be rushed into a public confession of faith but allowed to let their witness unfold as they grow in their faith. Their family and friends often need to see evidence that their lives have changed for the better before they will listen to their new beliefs (see 1 Peter 2:12; 3:15-16). One intercultural discipler working in India, where disciples from a Hindu background in a rural area experience a lot of

opposition, advises:

A new believer should be warned against making an abrupt announcement to his or her family, since that inflicts great pain and inevitably produces great misunderstanding. Ideally, a Hindu will share each step of the pilgrimage to Christ with his or her family, so that there is no surprise at the end.<sup>5</sup>

Don Little, a missionary to North Africa, tells how a new believer there winsomely shared his faith with his Muslim family. Rashid had been an army officer and had for years treated his mother and sister terribly. But when he came to faith in Christ his behavior towards them began to change dramatically.

Finally, one day, his sister followed him into his room, locked the door and told him that she would not let him out until he told her the reason for his character transformation. She was astonished that Rashid had been treating her and their mother with gentleness, respect, and love for months. She absolutely loved her "new" brother and insisted on having an explanation. In response, he took out a Bible, laid it on the coffee table in front of her and said, "This book has changed my life. Read it and you will understand." He then left the room and did not talk to her about his faith for quite a long time, until she had read in the Bible and had questions for him.<sup>6</sup>

Another way to help disciples maintain good relationships with their family and friends is to support group conversions. Sometimes cross-cultural workers encounter a whole community who wants to follow Jesus together. This corporate rather than individual way of making decisions occurs in some tightly knit societies. When the group agrees to follow Christ, it is not that everyone immediately is born again (though some may be). Rather, as they learn more of what it means to follow Jesus, individuals in the group come to personally share in the group's decision and give their lives to Christ. We must not look down on these group conversions. People are taking their first steps of faith as a group, and, in time, many will make personal commitments to Christ. We need to encourage them and teach them so that they can each commit to following him together.<sup>7</sup> A similar dynamic

may have been at work in the New Testament when heads of households, such as Cornelius and the Philippian jailor, became believers and their whole households converted with them (Acts 10; 16:25-34). Even if not everyone in the group ends up believing, as a group, they respect and support those who do.

### **Help Disciples Develop Strong Relationships with Fellow Believers**

Helping disciples develop a strong sense of belonging to a community of believers is very important to their wellbeing and spiritual formation. Through the local church community, new disciples are encouraged and strengthened in their faith. As they participate in a church they learn from the teaching and example of more mature believers and leaders (Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12; 1 Timothy 4:12; Hebrews 13:7). They are able to share their needs, be prayed for, talk about what they are discovering, and learn to serve others (1 Corinthians 14:26; Colossians 3:12-16; James 5:13-16; Ephesians 4:1-5:2). Disciples who do not become part of a local Christian fellowship usually find continuing to follow Jesus very difficult. According to one worker in the Middle East, "The growth of a new follower of Jesus depends more on his/her warm personal relationship with a mentor and with fellow believers than on the particular teaching content of the discipleship program."<sup>8</sup>

Christian workers should also do all they can to help people who are considering following Jesus to experience what being part of the community of believers is like. One of the hidden questions potential disciples have is "If I become a Christian, what kind of group will I be part of?" They want to experience what it is like to be a Christian, including what Christian community is like, before they commit themselves.

An Australian friend who visited a church in China describes how that church enabled a Tibetan newcomer who was not yet a believer to feel what it is like to belong:

At a BBQ at the leaders' home one day, one young lady openly admitted that she didn't know Jesus yet, but obviously felt she belonged—that she was part of the community. The following day, the leaders announced that there would be a prayer meeting that night in their home for the church. People came in dribs and drabs. As people arrived, they got fed. There was a knock on the door and the lady on the doorstep was invited in. She

said, “I heard about this group. I’m not a follower of Jesus but I want to know more.” They invited her in. She was fed. The prayer meeting started. There was sung worship. People shared about what Jesus was doing in their lives. And this lady herself actually felt free enough to tell her story—that she didn’t know Jesus, that she wanted to know more. It was quite obvious that she already felt part of this community. And the community loved her and treated her as one of them.

Another way we can help disciples feel they belong to the church is to encourage local believers to create a process or ceremony to mark various turning points in disciples’ journey of faith. Examples include a formal welcoming ceremony to mark the incorporation of a disciple into the church, baptism, and a clearly defined pathway for disciples to learn about the beliefs and practices of Christians. In addition, we and the church can help disciples with practical needs that their family and friends may no longer be willing to help with. They may need to find new friends or a new job, and they will need social activities, education, marriage partners, and care in their old age.

It can be quite traumatic for disciples with no previous exposure to Christianity to attend a Christian meeting. There is no doubt a spiritual dimension to this fear, but some of it stems from simply being in an unfamiliar group of people who do things they have never done before and that they have been taught all their lives are bad or wrong. We have observed people from non-Christian backgrounds coming to a church for the first time and trembling violently because of the distress they feel at being in such an unfamiliar environment.

If disciples find coming to church meetings too uncomfortable, they may find a seekers’ group to be a helpful bridge to the church. When a disciple joins a group of seekers and fellow disciples on their journey to faith in Christ, even if only one or two of them have committed their lives to Jesus, it is often a catalyst for that disciple coming to faith. After some time of following people up one-on-one in North Africa, Don Little formed such a group. They used to sing together, do an inductive Bible study, share their needs and pray together. He points out that for newcomers to the group “the power of corporate worship, honest and vulnerable sharing and caring and praying for each other was often a stronger attraction to Christ than weeks or months of one-on-one

conversations and individual discipling.”<sup>9</sup>

### Help Disciples Express Their Faith in Local Cultural Forms

The more that disciples are able to express their new faith in familiar cultural forms, the more readily their family and friends will be able to appreciate this new faith. This also makes it easier for disciples to come to a settled sense of identity in Christ. For example, some Hindu background believers feel they cannot join the established churches because they are culturally too alien in the ways they worship and live. For them, joining these churches would be like joining a foreign culture. Not wanting to be alienated from their families and hoping that by staying with them they might win them to Christ, they meet in small groups that use familiar cultural forms instead.<sup>10</sup>

The symbol of the cross, for example, leaves many Turks feeling cold because of its association in their minds with the Crusades and foreign imperialism. Insisting on using this symbol, rather than other alternative symbols of what Christ has done for us, is unwise. Another example of this occurs when Christian workers give new believers a “Christian” name, reinforcing the perception that Christianity is a foreign religion.

### Conclusion

Working out how to find appropriate cultural forms to express Christian meanings is not a new challenge. The very first Jewish and Gentile believers had to work out the role that circumcision and Mosaic law should play in their lives. Some Jewish believers insisted that Gentile believers become circumcised and keep the Old Testament law. If this was adopted, it would have miscommunicated the basis on which people are made right with God, but it also could well have meant that new Gentile believers could be rejected by their families on the basis that they were betraying their Gentile identity to become Jews. Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, insisted that Gentiles must be able to become Christians without having to become Jews first, and eventually the church leadership agreed (Acts 15).

Like those first Christian leaders, we must allow disciples from many backgrounds to become Christians without having to adopt our culture first. One of the greatest mistakes a cross-cultural discipler can make is to insist that new disciples must reject their own culture and adopt the discipler’s in order to be a Christian. [\[E\]](#)

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# What Churches Want: Two Mission Agencies Respond to Congregational Priorities in International Missions

Steven Van Zanen

Mission agencies exist to assist churches in fulfilling their global mission mandate. To serve them well requires that agencies know what congregations want and need from the agencies. This article will describe then contrast two Doctor of Ministry major projects that explored this topic, and then it will conclude with observations and recommendations.

## The Two Projects Described

The major projects used were *Helping Evangelical Baptist Missions Serve Churches in Global Ministry* (2007) by Don Whipple, DMin, and *Local Churches in Global Missions: Developing a Strategic Plan to Help Christian Reformed Churches to Engage in International Missions* (2014) by Steven J. Van Zanen, DMin. In both projects, an agency board member and an agency office staff member gained input on this question from a set of congregations that their agencies were trying to serve. The major projects then addressed the ways in which the two mission agencies could respond to the priorities of congregations in how they go about international missions. The two studies used different methodologies and focused on congregations in different theological traditions. Attending to their similarities and differences could lead to additional fruitful study of what churches may want and need to advance their work of international mission.

Both projects responded to trends observed in the way that local congregations<sup>1</sup> engage in missions. A generation or two ago most American Protestants had a relatively clear idea of what was meant by the term *missions*, and what the role of their congregation was in that endeavor. Missions meant the selecting and sending of missionaries who would serve overseas, preferably for the rest of their working lives, in communicating the Gospel in a land where most of the people were nominal or non-Christians. They might do this in quite a number of ways. Bible translation, literacy work, education, medical work, agricultural improvement, evangelism, and church planting were all part of the program. The role of the congregation was understood to include prayer, funding, and the provision of personnel who would carry on the work. A successful congregational missions program was measured in terms of increases in each of these three categories.

The trust that “First Baptist” had to place in their missionaries in 1950 was not much different from the trust that the Antioch congregation had to place in the Pauline band in AD 50. The missionary band, monastic order, and mission society were empowered to conduct mission work using their expertise. Communication was difficult. Visits by church members or even supervisory personnel were infrequent. Reports were irregular. Congregations were compelled to place their confidence in agencies or missionaries and could not get deeply involved in mission affairs. By 2000, the situation was radically different. Technological advances opened connection to missionaries and international communities at the click of a mouse. Increased disposable income and ease of transportation allowed visits by congregational members on a regular basis. The idea that mission required expertise in language and culture was not always embraced. Currently many congregations struggle to know their role in missions or even what mission is and how international mission activity relates to congregational ministry. It is the conviction of the writer that congregational engagement in mission is essential to congregational health and vitality. As Pope John Paul II writes, “Missionary activity renews the Church, revitalizes faith and Christian identity, and offers fresh enthusiasm and new incentive. Faith is strengthened when it is given to others!”<sup>2</sup>

These technological changes, along with the decline in denominational connection, are leading many congregations to more active involvement in international missions. Some congregations with worship attendance of more than two thousand are now acting as their own mission agency—employing and sending long-term missionaries directly.<sup>3</sup> Much smaller congregations are bypassing agencies when sending short-term teams. It is still true that

“Most local congregations simply do not have the resources, personnel, experience or infrastructure needed to train, send, support and supervise foreign missionaries on their own.”<sup>4</sup> However, even moderate sized congregations are moving in the direction of direct action.

Short-term mission experiences have exploded in recent years. Robert Priest’s survey of mega churches shows that 94 percent organize international mission trips<sup>5</sup> and 85 percent have church to church partnerships.<sup>6</sup> Over time these trends are likely to include increasing numbers of smaller congregations. Ralph Winter’s argument that function predominates and form must follow<sup>7</sup> pushes us in the same direction as Bruce Camp’s argument that the congregations must be seen as the primary agent of God’s mission.<sup>8</sup> The implication, according to Whipple is that regardless of one’s theological orientation regarding the role of congregations and agencies, “Helping churches do missions better should be the stated mission of every agency.”<sup>9</sup>

Statements about what churches want in missions are almost always true of some congregations, but not all. Congregations are extremely diverse. Even within one denomination, demographic or geographic area, the dissimilarities are every bit as notable as the similarities. Typically, when broad statements are made, the speaker is trying to say that all or most churches are like his or her church in their perspectives. Usually there is some anecdotal evidence to support the claim. As a result, these statements can be persuasive without representing the whole truth.

Both the Whipple project and the Van Zanen project addressed the question of how a mission agency can respond to congregational needs and priorities so as to serve them in preparation for developing a plan to address them. The two major projects

include a number of important differences in what subset of congregations was engaged, how information was gathered and processed, the researcher's role and conviction about the place of the congregation in mission, as well as what plans resulted from the study. Whipple looked at independent Baptist congregations and specifically in relationship with Evangelical Baptist Missions. He gathered information from five selected congregations using the Nominal Group technique<sup>10</sup> to assess the priorities of the congregations' mission committees. Van Zanen conducted a survey of a sample of congregations in the Christian Reformed Church in North America. The Delphi Method<sup>11</sup> enabled him to gather information from 49 of the 60 pastors chosen at random, then a group of six pastors helped interpret the data. Both studies produced a plan of action for the mission agency based on the input gained.

### The Two Projects Contrasted

The Nominal Group Technique which Whipple used, tended to balance participation and influence of individuals while producing both quality and quantity ideas. An environment of partnership and satisfaction is created as both agency and church participate together in a problem identification and solving process.<sup>12</sup> A list of all the challenges identified was developed by giving five points to the top-most challenge going down to one point for the fifth challenge.

The top challenges identified by these five congregations' focus groups in order of significance were:

1. Developing accountability with missionaries
2. Mobilizing and involving the congregation
3. Developing a strategic, proactive approach
4. Qualifying and developing potential missionaries
5. Training for mission committees.<sup>13</sup>

The Delphi Method, used in the Van Zanen study, worked through a series of surveys to understand the most common perspectives within a particular group of people; in this case, pastors of Christian Reformed congregations. Van Zanen's random sample survey process revealed that Christian Reformed Church pastors believe their congregations need:

1. Communication from missionaries
2. Connection to them
3. Improved relationships between their churches and communities overseas

4. Learning and doing opportunities
5. Help in connecting global and local mission.<sup>14</sup>

The core response which Whipple suggested, and the leadership of Evangelical Baptist Missions embraced was the idea of beginning a new division of the agency focused on resourcing churches for mission, particularly in the area of Consulting and Mentoring.

C&M will have the flexibility of meeting both short-term and long-term needs of the church by offering at least three levels of involvement. One, at the very least, there will be tools available through the web for self-study and evaluation that can begin a church down the road of more effective ministry. Two, at a mid-level involvement, there would be weekend consultations with trained leaders, provided by EBM that would help a church take their next steps in global ministry and impact. Three, a more long-term program of coaching would also be available that would allow for a consultant, or consultant team, to coach a church over a period of 12-18 months toward more strategic ministry.<sup>15</sup>

Whipple also suggested linking to existing ministries that could augment anything that EBM could not do on its own. Following is the list of five of the ten agencies that Whipple identified, plus one that began in the years since he completed his work: Antioch Network, davidmays.org, Dual Reach, Reach Global, Sixteen:Fifteen and Catalyst Services. Each of these organizations provides resources, training and/or coaching with the goal of serving congregations in their ministry of global mission.

### Final Observations and Recommendations

The plan which Van Zanen developed for Christian Reformed World Missions had many specific items to add to the work of that agency. It anticipated more and better electronic communication especially from missionaries as opposed to the agency. This would require agency personnel to support missionaries in becoming more digitally literate, using social media and video, etc. Deepening relationships between congregations and missionaries would require limiting the continual increase in the number



of partner congregations with which each missionary must connect and increasing contact with congregations beyond a Sunday morning visit.

Deeper relationships would require ensuring meetings with mission committees, pastors and others within the congregation. Church to church relationship opportunities could be enhanced by helping congregations learn how to help without hurting, emphasizing reciprocity and avoiding dependence. Congregations can be assisted in a move from one-off short-term mission trips to seeing short-term travel as part of a long-term relationship with an international congregation or community. This means prioritizing pastors as travelers to and from the international community. Opportunities to learn and opportunities to serve should be more clearly highlighted. Missionary home service or home assignment visits should include interactions with supporting congregations that help them engage in local outreach (especially cross-cultural outreach).

Both of these projects represent a much-needed move by mission agencies to get a better understanding of the congregations with which they are attempting to connect and serve. Congregational priorities are varied and rapidly changing. They differ by the size, setting, age and makeup of the congregation as well as by theological tradition and experience with missions and missionaries. Agencies need to get better acquainted with those congregations which their agency attempts to serve. Both focus

groups, using the Nominal Group Technique and surveys using the Delphi Method, offer promise for deeper knowledge of what congregations and their leaders are currently like. Such knowledge will be vital for effective decision-making.

### Summary

This article considered what two mission agencies have done to get a better handle on what congregational priorities are. The two groups of congregations addressed have significantly different priorities. One important avenue of further study would be to use the Nominal Group Technique or the Delphi Method to get at the priorities and interests of congregations in other denominations and traditions. Of course, these approaches don't address the issue of mission from the perspective of those communities that receive mission personnel from elsewhere. Those perspectives might well push in significantly different directions. ☒

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### Notes

1. Because of the variety of understandings of the word "church" I will use congregation to refer to a local church.
2. John Paul II, *Redemptoris missio* (The Mission of the Redeemer), encyclical letter, Vatican website, December 7, 1990. [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_enc\\_07121990\\_redemptoris-missio\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_07121990_redemptoris-missio_en.html).
3. Robert J. Priest, Douglas Wilson, and Adelle Johnson, "U.S. Megachurches and New Patterns of Global Mission," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 34, no. 2 (2010): 100.
4. Craig Ott, Timothy C. Tennant, and Stephen J. Strauss, *Encountering Theology of Mission: Biblical Foundations, Historical Developments, and Contemporary Issues* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2010), 214.
5. Priest, Wilson, and Johnson, "U.S. Megachurches," 98.
6. Priest, Wilson, and Johnson, "U.S. Megachurches," 100.
7. Ralph D. Winter, "The Two Structures of God's Redemptive Mission," *Missiology* 2, no. 1 (1974): 121-39.
8. Bruce K. Camp, "A Theological Examination of the Two-Structure Theory," *Missiology* 23, no. 2 (1995), 197-209.
9. Don Whipple, "Helping Evangelical Baptist Missions Serve Churches in Global Ministry" (DMin major project, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 2007), 4.
10. Randall Dunham, "Nominal Group Technique: A Users Guide," *Organizational Behavior*, University of Wisconsin School of Business, 1998, <http://instruction.bus.wisc.edu/obdemo/readings/ngt.html>.
11. Harold Linstone and Murray Turoff, *The Delphi Method: Techniques and Applications* (Glenview, IL: Addison-Wesley Educational Publishers, 1975), digital scan, accessed September 19, 2013, [s.njit.edu/pubs/delphibook/delphibook.pdf](http://s.njit.edu/pubs/delphibook/delphibook.pdf).
12. Whipple, "Helping Evangelical," 44.
13. Whipple, "Helping Evangelical," 50-51.
14. Steven J. Van Zanen, "Local Churches in Global Missions: Developing a Strategic Plan to Help Christian Reformed Churches to Engage in International Missions" (DMin major project, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 2014), iv.
15. Whipple, "Helping Evangelical," 99.

# Dreams in Animistic Cultures in Thailand

Hans-Christoph Baer

When I was a young missionary living in the Karen village of Sop Lahn, a young Christian lad came up to our house and told me about a dream he had. He was very concerned about it. I could not understand everything about the dream due to inadequacy of language at the time. But I answered him, quoting Jeremiah 23:28 where it says: “Let the prophet who has a dream tell his dream, but let the one who has my word speak it faithfully. For what has straw to do with grain? declares the Lord.” Was this an appropriate answer? How should Christians respond to the high significance of dreams in some cultures?

For me dreams did not have much significance so I ignored them. Traditionally, Karen would not go out to work for one day if they had dreamed a bad dream. I advised them to pray and go out anyway. With this attitude I had not too many people coming anymore to tell me about their dreams. Some years later I heard that a Christian clan was thrown out of a village we worked in because the head of the clan was accused of having cursed people to death in the village. I asked them how they knew. Their answer: Two people in the village have dreamed that he has done it. If in a dream a person gives meat to another person the giver of the meat is the sorcerer who has cursed to death the receiving person. I was shocked to hear about such influence of dreams in their lives. This gave me the impetus to do research about dreams among animists and in particular among the Karen in the Omkoi district of North Thailand.

## The Significance of Dreams Among Animists

Many animists consider dreams as real as their physical life. “In animistic cultures dreams are considered literal representations of reality, although they may be encased in symbols that need to be divined.”<sup>1</sup> A dream is often seen as a window into the unseen but real spiritual world. “Dreams may therefore be used as evidence in the traditional court. For example, if a man dreams he has committed adultery with another man’s wife, he is liable to pay the same fine as for an offence committed while awake.”<sup>2</sup> Dreams are one of the most significant resources for a human being to be able to receive messages from the unseen world.<sup>3</sup>

Since I started to take an interest in the dreams of the Karen, they tell me freely about their dreams and how they interpret them. The Karen know many interpretations of dreams. You could almost call it an oral

dreambook. Only in serious cases (like the one mentioned above) will they also go and ask the spirit doctor. There is still a lot of fear about bad dreams. From around seventy people I interviewed about 70 percent of dreams were bad dreams. Everybody said that they do not like dreams and if they could they would stop them.<sup>4</sup>

One of the best known Karen speakers in Thailand, pastor Loue Po, started his Christmas message in front of hundreds of people with the statement that God had shown him in a dream that the Karen Christians in the area had been adulterous in their relationship with God. Adultery is one of the severest sins in Karen culture. Whenever it happened in olden days, the couple might have had to leave their village. Pastor Loue Po then preached a powerful message about Hosea and some passages from Ezekiel. That fact that he had dreamed about it gave the message a very current and serious note.

## The Benefits of Doing the Research on Dreams

- Dreams and culture tend to be interconnected. Usually people dream about things which relate to their culture and fears. Some Christians have testified that their dreams have changed since they committed their lives wholeheartedly to Christ. I have gained a deeper understanding of Karen culture through people telling me their dreams and giving me the opportunity to ask questions.
- When Karen come together from different villages, they talk a lot about their relatives and friends. As a foreigner I used to tell my own story quite quickly, wondering what else I could say apart from the Bible message. But talking about dreams has given me an opening to talk to anybody, from committed Christians to the spirit doctor and it has ignited

lively discussions.

- It has given me many opportunities to share the gospel with people of all walks of life. For example one man told me that he dreams about light quite often which is a nice dream. I said, it seems that you are longing for light. I know the light, Jesus Christ. He answered, “I wonder whether I should become a Christian.”
- Through this research I started to reflect more on my own dream experiences. This caused me to do a theological study on dreams,<sup>5</sup> which has laid the foundation for a biblical critique aiming to transform the worldview on dreams by Karen Christians.

## Redeeming the Experience of Dreams

The Karen themselves have ways to redeem the experience of bad dreams. After a Karen animist has had a bad dream, the most common practice is to stay at home for a day in order not to endanger his life. It is a kind of taboo. But this is not always practical or possible. Therefore, if an animist has to go out, he will ‘yo hpe yo blo’ or ‘yo hpe hoko’ that is, he will stamp the ashes or stamp the earth so that the spirits will not see where his feet go.

When Christians experience a bad dream they usually pray and commit the dream into God’s hand. They ask God to redeem them from the bad or evil the dream may predict. Leaders in the Christian community also go to pray with other Christians who have had a bad dream. One Christian mother said that she dreams less when people come to pray with her. Christians pray that God will protect them. While some pray not to dream bad dreams, one thoughtful evangelist asked God to change his bad dream, and God did. A lady leader said, “We must remember that God is bigger than anything, God can change evil into good.” The same lady sometimes

refuses to accept a bad dream in the name of Jesus. She also has fasted to get rid of her evil and disturbing dreams.<sup>6</sup> When she and her husband finished building a new house, she got involved in spiritual warfare. She said,

I took oil and declared God's reign and drew crosses on the wall and I prayed, 'In the name of Jesus Christ, devil disappear!' I drew crosses in each room. I asked that the blood of Jesus would come to reign. If there were any gods or any fornication, I asked God for forgiveness. Then when I prayed, there was a noise. I got a chicken skin and it was exactly midday. Then I knew that the devil still had had a stronghold. ... Then I dreamed at night. I saw the devil leaving through the curtain. Afterwards I was freed from the bad dreams.<sup>7</sup>

The interviews have shown that some Christians have dreamed very encouraging new dreams or have been released from disturbing old dreams.<sup>8</sup> Some Karen feel that there is no Christian to whom they can turn if they have experienced an exceptional dream. When none of the Christian leaders is able to interpret it or take it seriously then they go and consult the spirit doctor.

In the Old Testament, God gave the gift of interpretation to Joseph and Daniel. In dependence on God—because God is the interpreter of dreams—they could give the right interpretation, and by doing it they saved many people. In New Testament times we can expect that God gives the gift of interpretation and distinguishing between spirits<sup>9</sup> to some Christians in His Church. Surely, it is not in God's will that we leave the interpretation of dreams to spirit doctors, magicians or dream readers. Instead he wants us to seek Him earnestly.

The gift of distinguishing between spirits is necessary, too, when Karen Christians dream a so-called bad dream. Some do not go out, do not plant fields on that day, because they believe it is a warning from God. In the Bible some dreams are warnings from God, but those warnings are spoken very clearly. The Karen tend to have many bad dreams, so much so that if the Christians give heed every time they have had a bad dream and take it as a warning, they will be bound back into their old faith and fear again. It is important, therefore, to know when a dream is a warning from God or whether it is just another dream from a spirit who wants to draw them



back into their old beliefs.

The research has revealed some strong animistic undercurrents among Christians which have to be addressed. Could it be that dreams mirror how deeply the new Christian faith has taken root? The research has shown that this is the case to a certain degree. However, it is not only the dreams themselves, but also how Christians handle their dreams, which sheds light on their faith. Faith/worldview and dreams influence each other remarkably.

I am convinced that the more the Karen Christians are influenced by God's Word and the Holy Spirit working in them, the more people will receive dreams which will be helpful to them. Praying for a new dream will be a better way to experience this than ignoring or denying dreams. God wants us to be open to Him, accept all the ways He may communicate to us and yet be discerning about the source of dreams.

If people's faith is changing it can be expected that their dream world will change, too.<sup>10</sup> The research has shown that Christians, even children, who have been affected by a revival, started to have new dreams. The reverse is also true. We have discovered that many Christians view "old dreams" as a temptation to be drawn back into their traditional animistic faith. The following "Recommendations" section will show how this research can help to redeem the dreams of Christians coming from an animistic background.

## Recommendations

To the Karen Christian community:


- Do not ignore dreams nor talk dreams down. Dreams are like a vehicle which can be used by different sources to communicate from the unseen world. God has used them for his purposes even until today. Therefore, take dreams seriously, but do not give them the place of absolute truth.
- Dreams and their interpretation need to be checked against the revealed will of God in His Word. Dreams from God do not accuse others. The devil is the accuser.
- If you experience bad dreams and nightmares that recur, they may well be demonic.<sup>11</sup> Pray to God in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ to set you free.<sup>12</sup>
- Dreams from evil spirits or the devil are not to be trusted. Dreams interpreted by spirit doctors are not to be trusted either. Do not believe in them otherwise you will become a slave to them. "In the name of Jesus of Nazareth who came in the flesh", refuse those dreams and under His protection go out to do your work. If you are fearful, ask someone else to pray with you.
- Dreams from God may give warning, but often they are messages of encouragement.
- Pray. Not only not to have a dream or a bad dream, but pray for good dreams from God. Pray that God will speak to you clearly through dreams.<sup>13</sup>

To missionaries, Karen evangelists/pastors and theological institutions:

- As we have seen, there is a connection between faith and dreams. It is therefore important to teach God's Word and disciple Christians to become followers of Jesus in all aspects of their lives. If God's Word and the Holy Spirit penetrate and fill the Christians' lives, we can expect dreams to change as well.
- In or after church, give some time for dreams to be told and discerned together, as well as giving the opportunity to pray about them.
- Together with the dreamer discern the source of the dream on the basis of God's Word. Show to the dreamer the limits of dreams. God's promises are more important and trustworthy than dreams.
- In cases of sorcery leading to accusations, go and talk with the parties involved. If they are Christians, biblical teaching and a close spiritual walk with them is of utmost importance. You may have to get involved in spiritual warfare.
- Ask yourself whether there is a spiritual person in the church who has the gift of interpreting dreams. If there is, work together with that person in order to build up the church of God.
- Theological education institutions should think about how they can equip their trainees regarding dreams so that they will not be helpless when they are confronted with dreams in their community. Could a special seminar on dreams be planned?

- Another approach could be to integrate interpretation of dreams into a class about pastoral care or else as a regular weekly session. For instance, a dream could be told and discerned together—giving a practical lesson in contextualized theology—and providing an example of how dreams can be dealt with.

### Summary

In summary, it is crucial that the animistic mindset, which is infested with lies by evil spirits who also use dreams to hold people captive or to draw them back, be continually replaced with truth from God. The negative thoughts coming from their old beliefs and dreams have to be challenged continuously with the fact that God is their loving Father and His intention is to bless and redeem them and not harm them. As their relationship with God deepens, the power of evil dreams on their lives will loosen. The more the Christians understand the love, holiness and power of God and the more they learn to trust Him fully, the more freedom they will experience, and the better they will know the voice of God, even through dreams. 

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### Notes

1. Gailyn Van Rheenen, *Communicating Christ in Animistic Contexts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1991), 186.
2. David Burnett, *World of the Spirits. A Christian Perspective on Traditional and Folk Religions* (London, United Kingdom: Monarch Books, 2000), 49.
3. Cf. Philip M. Steyne, *Machtvolle Götter* (Bad Liebenzell, Germany: Verlag Liebenzeller Mission, 1993), 125. A translation of: *Gods of Power*. Houston, TX: Touch Publications, 1990.
4. There was one exception who said, if he has good dreams he does not mind dreaming.
5. The following book has been published about this research: Hans Christoph Baer, *Dreams in the Omkoi Karen Christian Context. An anthropological research combined with a theological study on dreams* (Nürnberg, DE: edition afem, mission academics 42, VTR Publications, 2018).
6. The Jewish Rabbi Rab (died 247) recommended fasting as the best remedy against bad dreams. Strack, Billerbeck, 55.
7. Mrs Noahmo, pastor Loue Po's wife.
8. "Formerly I dreamed about the 'plü' (land of the deceased) and it rained. I prayed to God about the bad dream, 'Please do not let me dream or give me better dreams.' So later I dreamed about the 'plü', but there was no rain, but all dry. The sun was shining. It really changed!" (Karen evangelist, Chilapa).
9. 1 Corinthians 12:10.
10. In his paper "The Role of Dreams in Religious Enculturation", Lohmann comes to the conclusion that "Dreams facilitated the reception of religious beliefs among the Asabano before, during and after their conversion to Christianity." (p.75). And he concludes: "It is possible that without the influence of dreams, it would not have been possible for the Asabano to absorb and internalize exotic Christian beliefs." (p. 97). In: Roger Ivar Lohmann, "The Role of Dreams in Religious Enculturation among the Asabano of Papua New Guinea" in *Ethos*, 28 (1) (2000).
11. Compare Job who had nightmares (Job 7:13–15) during the time when God had given him into the devil's hand (Job 2:6).
12. Mark Bubeck advises the following prayer before sleep each night in order to eliminate this problem: "In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, I submit my mind and my dream activities only to the work of the Holy Spirit. I bind up all powers of darkness and forbid them to work in my dream abilities or any part of my subconscious while I sleep." Mark I. Bubeck, *The Adversary. The Christian Versus Demon Activity* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1975), 145.
13. Richard Foster writes into a western evangelical context which is more skeptical towards dreams: "If we are convinced that dreams can be a key to unlocking the door to the inner world, ... we can specifically pray, inviting God to inform us through our dreams. We should tell Him of our willingness to allow Him to speak to us in this way. At the same time it is wise to pray a prayer of protection, since to open ourselves to spiritual influence can be dangerous as well as profitable. We simply ask God to surround us with the light of His protection as He ministers to our spirit." Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline. The path to spiritual growth* (London, UK: Hodder & Stoughton, 1980), 23.



# Two Churches, Shared Ownership, No Landlord: A Case Study of Amigos En Cristo Iglesia Del Nazareno Y Kenosha Family Church of the Nazarene

James R. Moore

How do we “do church” in a multi-ethnic world? Certainly, there is a biblical mandate, and “Sunday morning divisions”<sup>1</sup> are apparent. Many churches have met the challenge by: (1) *renting* to another ethnic group; (2) creating an *auxiliary ministry* to an ethnic group; (3) bringing on a staff member for a *separate ethnic ministry*, not to mention churches that explore and/or practice multi-ethnic congregational ministry.

*Amigos en Cristo Iglesia del Nazareno* and Kenosha Family Church of the Nazarene in Kenosha, Wisconsin practice another seemingly unique model. The two congregations maintain their separate identities but have built, co-own, and share a church building where they worship and gather for ministry.

This case study presents the history of a relationship originating in 2005, and explores how the pastors and boards of the churches describe that relationship; articulates what motivated the two churches to join in the common project; examines the current state of the relationship; and describes what the future might hold for the continued partnership. Present strengths, growth points, money, conflicts, ownership, and space are discussed.

## The Context

The Church of the Nazarene began a replant church work in the Kenosha community in 2000. District church officials initiated two simultaneous church plants—an English-speaking congregation and a Spanish-speaking congregation (primarily Honduran). The English-speaking congregation, Kenosha Family Church (KFC), rented space in a theatre, then in a local middle school to hold weekly Sunday morning worship services. The Spanish-speaking congregation, Amigos en Cristo (Amigos), rented space from a local Baptist church holding their services Sunday afternoon.

In Spring 2005, KFC began internal conversations toward building a facility on a 3.7-acre empty lot in Kenosha owned by the district church. At the urging of district church officials, the conversation quickly included representatives from Amigos. Both congregations were relatively small averaging fifty individuals in weekly attendance and fiscal factors appeared to be a

barrier toward building on their own for either congregation.

Conversations ensued between the two church leadership boards toward details, plans, and logistics of building a facility that would serve both congregations. While pursuing funding, the congregations learned two church names on the mortgage was novel enough that lenders did not wish to participate, so the district agreed to be the mortgage holder. Together in November 2008 ground was broken for a 6,000 square feet multi-purpose building and a joint dedication service was held in November 2010.

## The Case Study Research

The primary case study research was conducted in fall of 2015 through summer of 2016. Subsequent observations, conversations, and reviews enable the present article to provide current implementation of the field research. Meeting minutes were reviewed, separate interviews with the pastors of both Amigos and KFC churches, and meetings with the board leadership teams of each church were conducted. A joint presentation of the findings with opportunity for questions and follow-up was presented to the boards and pastors in July 2016.

## The Early Relationship Described

Early in the relationship Amigos asked, can two cultures really share one building? What will it cost both the cultures who do not understand each other? “We were worried, but the initiation of KFC toward us by inviting us in, enabled us to see the Lord helping it to work.” It was like putting a puzzle together. We felt the love of the Lord in our common board meetings, then among the members as they gathered together. Certainly, it is outstanding, it is “over-natural.” It was a good

idea then, and now as well.

KFC began with a partnership mentality viewing the relationship as kingdom unity and love. There was also efficiency in using the building together. Excitement in joining with Amigos, but some trepidation of how it would work was present. KFC feared “dominating” the relationship. Initial logistical concerns are now seen as a “side benefit” (for instance each church cares for cleaning and lawn mowing every other month).

The KFC pastor remarked, “[When I thought about building] I thought why would we be their landlords? We are sister congregations and we are the same denomination and everything. Why wouldn’t we just share 50-50?” Similarly, the Amigos pastor noted, “We started with a blessed Thanksgiving. Family used that to unite us.<sup>2</sup> Usually as Hispanics, instead of getting together with the Americans, we back away, because it is not our country, and whether we like it or not, there is no trust. But because Family tried so much to get close to us, the people of Amigos accept it.”

A KFC member noted, “I’d say in a round-about-way my expectations haven’t been met because there was the expectation that this could be really difficult, but that hasn’t happened.... I never thought about the potential positive aspects of it. So that certain unknown expectations have come about in a very positive way. It’s been way more positive than I could have imagined.” Both pastors and leadership boards describe the atmosphere of the two churches as one of mutual respect, oneness in Christ, a good and beautiful relationship, and genuine lack of problems.

Beyond the early stages of the relationship, the researcher sought to engage the pastors and leadership boards in describing the present relationship and growth areas,

particularly addressing potential challenges of money, conflicts, ownership, and space.

### Present Relationship

Both leadership boards described the present relationship in similar ways, leading with the idea of “partnership.” We are two cultures united for one purpose. Christian love is present. God is there. Jesus is the center and the head. We are an extended family, a marriage, united in Christ. We share in stewardship as a functional union.

Amigos noted, “I feel really good about it.” We are brothers and sisters with “NO complaints!” “On a scale of 1–10, I would mark it 1,000” one participant said. This is extra-ordinary, there are no problems another remarked. “Despite our cultural differences, Christ works in our relationship and we love and respect each other.” We are “like the Trinity,” united. We are committed to mutual support (Galatians 6.2), to the relationship, and a heart to talk together.

KFC felt they were “blessed” with an “easy and smooth” relationship. Mutuality in benefit and high mutual respect were noted. KFC sees a “lot more potential” in the relationship and it is “not as pro-active as it might be.” The language barrier was noted, as well as the “daughters” who assist in bridging that language barrier.<sup>3</sup>

### Strengths and Growth Areas

When asked about present strengths and growth areas, Amigos remarked “our strength is in Christ and we love each other and think well of Americans.” The churches shared doctrine was noted, while another mentioned a “shared history and it is ours” together with KFC. The more we are together we are getting closer, and there is a maturity of a growing relationship and a desire to know each other at a deeper level. One remarked it would be good to have more activities together such as seminars, teaching, and a family taco night.

KFC members noted the mutual appreciation and high respect for Amigos. Any shortcomings were described as “trivial.” We are “better Christians because of the relationship.” There is good communication and stewardship of the building. Challenges include some ownership/shared space tensions, facility calendaring<sup>4</sup>, and clutter. There was a call for more common activities, recognizing the language challenge and commuting distance that inhibits such gatherings.<sup>5</sup>

One Amigos member remarked, “The maturity of the relationship is strong. As the

years go by, both congregations are learning to accept each other. Even though we do not get to know every member of the church face to face, when one member comes, it is like we are the same [congregation], so we are getting to know each other as time goes by and we have learned to accept the differences that give us personality.” While the Amigos pastor said, “When we talked about getting together, our church responds very well, and they feel good. Actually, they feel VERY good when they see that Family is TRYING to get us close; and Family has done it. And that makes our group feel good toward Family.”

### Money

“So far, so good” was the remark from an Amigos board member. This is *our* church so we pay expenses together and share maintenance, yard, cleaning. The system we have is well organized and we work together with good communication. “God has put in Family’s heart to consider us economically” and “the Americans don’t think less of us because of our income.”

KFC perceived “equal authority; equitable responsibility” as a principle from the beginning. The concern is about *Christian* fairness, not just fairness. The money system is out in the open, works smoothly, and has never been an issue or disagreement about it.

The KFC pastor explained the financial formula: “We came up with a simple formula because situations change rapidly. Every three months Amigos gives Family an income report for the previous three months. The treasurer combines our incomes for the previous three months and sees what percentage of our combined income each congregation raised. Then any building related expenses are shared expenses. We each simply pay by that ratio. So if Amigos raises 1/3 of the total income, they pay 1/3 of the bills.” The formula generally results in somewhere around a 60%/40% split, though this percent has vacillated plus or minus 5% regularly.

### Conflicts

Amigos clearly stated, “love motivates us.” Prayer, conversation, dialogue, and very good communication both ways help to address any conflicts. “Problems don’t get to be real problems.” Though some voiced concern about “avoiding bad thoughts toward the American church.” The calendar “works very well.”

KFC also mentioned the helpfulness of the building calendar. They remarked there are “issues to resolve, but not conflicts” citing

the pastors as a conduit to the other church. “We all make sure both congregations are on board before ‘significant’ decisions are made” (such as installing a TV monitor in a classroom, purchasing a lawn tractor, installing an outdoor basketball hoop).

### Ownership

With two churches sharing a building in this way, the question of “sense of ownership” was investigated. Amigos indicated they have felt ownership from the beginning. KFC has emphasized, “we are co-owners,” and “we believe it; it is our church.” Two churches own the same place—100% and 100%.

KFC noted equal partnership and decision-makers with the same pride and mutual respect for each other. Neither group has “full ownership, but mutual,” a partnership with 100% stewardship on both sides. Ownership seems to be pretty high, mutual, and strong; however, KFC was concerned that they “take more liberty” and “are more proactive” while wondering if this was a cultural matter.

### Space

Amigos remarked that we are two families sharing one home, so it is crowded and there is a need for extra rooms. Space is used well, we feel freedom, though “we probably occupy more time” in the building. “The building of ours is comfortable because it is our house” was the remark. Concern was expressed for the use of the pastor’s offices they “should not need to be used” as they are used for class meetings by both churches. Again, the facility calendar was noted as helpful. KFC also noted more space could be used. What is presently available receives “high utilization.” The use of the building through scheduling has been mutually accommodating.

### Possibilities for the Future

“Fear, seminars, and food” was the summary for future possibilities shared by the churches. Fear in the sense of “moving forward incrementally” to “accomplish God’s [unknown] purpose.” Growth in people maturing in the Lord, love, unity as “Amigos and Family in Christ.” Getting to know each other’s cultures and increased contact between pastors, boards, and the congregations. The desire is for our two churches to be recognized in the city as have a “marriage that is working.” Our future includes further building, and the future will be good. We are *una familia amigable*.

## Follow-Up Report

Several post field research findings are noteworthy. Communication and relationship between the two churches continues to grow. A new joint relations team has formed and several initiatives have come out of that including a common visible logo created and posted in the welcome area. Communication between the churches also led to a car caravan to camp with children from both churches. There has been some meeting in the homes of members of the other church for a shared meal. Attempts have been made by some to bridge the language barrier. While some initiatives have begun, much more could be pursued.

## Challenges and Recommendations

Five challenges and five recommendations may be derived from the field research and its analysis.

Two of the challenges might be considered systemic, inherent in the situation. The language challenge was predominant in conversations with both churches. Amigos services are in Spanish, and many of their congregants have a limited understanding of speaking English. KFC members have an even more limited understanding of Spanish, though a handful of people either speak or understand at least some Spanish. Translation is imperative in most situations.

Second was a sincere desire to be sensitive to the other culture—whether Honduran or North American. Coupled with this was a genuine desire to understand and learn more about the other culture. This is a potential area for mutual growth between the two congregations.

The three additional challenges might be considered unknown—that is their potential future impact is not presently observable. First was the challenge of growth, whether that being one congregation numerically out-growing the other with a need for greater facility space, or both congregations growing to the point of needed expansion. Second is the continued uncertainty of life in the public civic sphere. Since the time of the field research, this matter in the national context has become even more acute. The climate related to immigration and its reality in church life make the concerns and fears around these matters apparent in board leaders' minds.

Third is the concern surrounding pastoral change. At the time of the field research both pastors faced difficult health challenges. Since that time the pastor of Amigos has transitioned to ministry outside the Amigos

church due to health reasons. The district is in the process of searching for an appropriate new culturally sensitive pastor for the church. One Amigos church member simply framed the dilemma this way—"The new Amigos pastor might be prejudiced to Americans; or the new Family pastor might not accept us."

Five recommendations or perhaps positive necessary ingredients for partnership clearly emerged in the study. First was the matter of "Christian fairness" in economics. While there is often an economic disparity in two cultures when they enter into a partnership arrangement, Amigos and KFC have deliberately addressed this matter with the shared arrangement for addressing building expenses and maintenance. It recognizes the economic differences in the church communities, yet places mutual responsibility in both. Ten years later, this arrangement continues to work with mutual satisfaction.


A second advantage was the early forging of the partnership at the onset of building planning. Both the process and the building itself is shared by intentional design. This is not an after-thought, driven simply by economics, or an attempt to "help out" a disadvantaged partner. It was an attempt from day one to seek unity for the common Kingdom cause.

A third criterion present is a shared denomination. Such enables joining together for further Kingdom work with those who share similar theological convictions. While the congregations "believe the same" that does not minimize cultural distinctives, but inevitably calls all to a common ecclesial understanding.

Open communication has marked the relationship. This comes with the recognition that responsibility lies with existing members, boards, and pastors to continue to articulate the nature and ethos of the relationship to those who become a part of either church family. Communication, particularly in the face of leadership change, is ongoing to address and enhance.

Finally, the study indicates the American church must move toward the minority culture church in such circumstances. The interviews clearly evidence that the extended hand of the KFC church toward inclusion enabled trust and positive response in the Amigos church. Those in majority church leadership must take the initiative in forming strong partnerships with other cultures.

Amigos en Cristo Iglesia del Nazarene and Kenosha Family Church of the Nazarene share something in common many other churches only dream about; however, the

ongoing goal of mutual love and high respect for each other in partnership is critically necessary. May God continue to bless the arrangement described by one member as *una familia amigable* (one friendly family). 

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## Notes

1. Most are familiar with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s 17 April 1960 statement on NBC's Meet the Press, "I think it is one of the tragedies of our nation, one of the shameful tragedies, that 11 o'clock on Sunday morning is one of the most segregated hours, if not the most segregated hours in Christian America" ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1q881g1L\\_d8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1q881g1L_d8) accessed 8 July 2019); or Michael O. Emerson's 2000 volume *Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America*.
2. It has been the annual practice of the two churches to share a Thanksgiving Dinner together since about 2003.
3. Several of the young women of Amigos regularly serve as translators in our joint meetings.
4. A common facility calendar that each church records its intended use on mitigates conflicts.
5. A number of Amigos members reside in an adjacent community necessitating a 15–20 minute commute to the church building.

# Righteous Deceit in Missions

Tabor Laughlin

Over the years I have frequently heard but do not agree with the statement that it is unethical for a missionary to not tell the entire truth about his/her intentions in a restricted access country. I have served in a restricted country for ten years and everything I have done as a missionary is illegal. In a previous school I had a professor who mentioned his brother having conversations with authorities in Muslim countries where he was able to clearly say that he's there as a Christian and part of being a Christian is sharing with people about his faith. This was a good situation for him to be in, but this has not been what I have experienced.

The university where I teach (and all higher education foreign teachers must sign) requires me to sign a contract stating that I will not take part in any missionary activity. Each year I have signed that contract, though each year I have continued to do missionary activity. In fact, if I did not sign the contract, I would not be able to work at the school and I would not be able to have a visa or a platform in the city.

This article is about the idea of “righteous deceit”—that there are circumstances when it is acceptable to tell a lie, especially in regards to serving as a missionary in a closed country that opposes the gospel. First, we will look at a couple examples from the Scriptures, then see what others have written about the subject. I'll close with my conclusion on the matter.

## Scripture Example 1: Rahab Declared Righteous

In Joshua chapter two, Joshua sends two scouts to spy out the land near Jericho. The spies enter the home of Rahab, then the king of Jericho is notified of such. The king asks Rahab to bring the spies to him, but she had hidden them. She tells the king that the spies had already left and were no longer at her house. Rahab told an outright lie to the king, and thus the spies were able to escape. Later she says that the Lord had given the land to [the Israelites] and the fear of the Lord had fallen on all the people (Joshua 2:9). The spies vow that they will spare Rahab's life when the Jews conquer the city, and that is exactly what happens.

This story shows that Rahab was blessed as a direct result of her not telling the truth to the king. If she had told the king that the spies were at her home, they would have been caught and probably immediately executed. We cannot begin to speculate what

would have happened to Israel had Rahab told the truth. She saved the Jews by her deceit. And as we know, this is not the end of the story. In the New Testament Rahab is declared righteous for her actions: “By faith the prostitute Rahab, because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those who were disobedient” (Hebrews 11:31). All of this chapter in Hebrews is talking about how people in the Old Testament displayed their faith through their actions. Rahab is listed among that great list of godly people because the spies of Israel were spared as the result of her deceit. Her heart to save the Jews sprung from her faith in the true God that was leading them. James goes into this again, as he mentions that Rahab was “considered righteous when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction” (James 2:25). James is not simply saying that Rahab was declared righteous by her faith in God, but rather that her righteousness is associated with her displaying her faith in God by hiding the spies from the king of Jericho.

We not only see that Rahab helped deliver the Jews by hiding the spies from the king of Jericho, but also that the authors of the New Testament declared her righteous by her actions. They do not condemn her or mention that she sinned in lying to the king, but rather they praise her for her actions.

## Scripture Example 2: David and Achish

Another example of “righteous deceit” in Scriptures is the story of David and Achish in 1 Samuel 21:10–15. David was fleeing from Saul and he goes to Achish king of Gath. The servants of Achish warn him that before him is the David that songs were sung, telling of his great military conquests. This caused David to become very afraid of the king so “he pretended to be insane in their presence, acting

like a madman by making marks on the door of the gate and letting saliva run down his beard” (1 Samuel 21:13). David's tactic of escape worked as King Achish responded by declaring him insane and letting him go. In this story, David is saved by misrepresenting his mental condition by pretending to be crazy. If he had not done so, it can be guessed that he may have been killed or detained by the king.

However, this is not the end of the story. In Psalm 34 David is celebrating God's deliverance and provision for him as he escaped the grasp of King Achish by acting like a madman. In his account of the story, David says, “I sought the Lord, and he answered me; he delivered me from all my fears” (Psalm 34:4). He continues, “This poor man called, and the Lord heard him; he saved him out of all his troubles” (Psalm 34:6). So in commenting on his deliverance from King Achish, his main praise is that it was not David's own cleverness that saved him, but it was the Lord who delivered him.

If David's actions of not being honest were condemned by the Lord, it seems David would not have spoken as it being the Lord who delivered him. Then he says, “Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking lies” (Psalm 34:13). It is very interesting that David, in celebrating what happened to him when he deceived the king of Gath, says to keep your lips from speaking lies. The conclusion must be that David did not consider what he did a lie. Perhaps David would say that there was dishonesty, of course, and maybe deceit in his actions. But the point is that David does not consider himself to have sinned in this deceitfulness, so that he could still tell others to “keep your lips from speaking lies” without being a hypocrite. This means that there must be some kind of dishonesty that is not a sin, just like Rahab



lying about the spies and David deceiving Achish. This kind of dishonesty is what I am referring to as “righteous deceit.”

### Application to Missionaries

I have referenced the stories of Rahab and David to show that such deceit is not necessarily a sin. In addition to not being a sin, I would venture to say that it is necessary behavior for missionaries who must disguise themselves in order to proclaim the gospel and live in countries that are hostile to the gospel. I have friends that want to serve in my restricted access country, but once they realize that it is officially illegal for foreigners to teach about Jesus, their conscience rebukes them and they say that they cannot serve because they would be lying and thus sinning against God. This seems to me to be a lack of understanding of the Scriptures on the topic.

### Other Opinions: Supporting Views

There are missiologists and pastors who agree with this idea. An article on the *9Marks* website says that some think “Christian workers who enter a restricted country by

doing a secular job are somehow lying if their basic motivation for going is to share the gospel.” Then the writer goes on to say, “If a Christian worker never actually does what the visa application said he or she would do, then the charge of dishonesty would be accurate.”<sup>1</sup> The author uses the example from the Old Testament when God tells Samuel to not reveal the whole truth to Saul in order to protect David (1 Samuel 16:1–5).

Bill Commons agrees also when he writes in *ABWE* that if we only went to countries where missionary visas were granted, then we would be missing out on reaching the part of the world that needs the gospel the most. Connected with this is the position that it is not dishonest as long as the missionary does have a legitimate job in the country that they are actually doing with integrity. If this is the case, then the missionary does not necessarily need to reveal all the reasons why he is there.<sup>2</sup>

Keith Parks, former president of the International Mission Board, said that as long as you are doing what you are supposed to be doing there are no ethical problems being a missionary in a restricted country.<sup>3</sup>

Greg Livingstone is the co-founder of *Frontiers*, a mission that specifically targets Muslims. In an article in *Mission Frontiers*, he said that Jesus did not include in the Great Commission that we should only go to nations that will grant us a missionary visa. Livingstone says, “Is it ethical to go into a country to preach Christ without declaring it as your primary purpose? Of course!”<sup>4</sup>

Former director of *Global Opportunities* Dave English notes that there certainly are ethical issues in this topic, but he says that he “praises God for the determination and courage of missionaries to find another way into closed countries.”<sup>5</sup>

### Other Opinions: Opposing Views

In an interview with John Piper the question was asked, if it is ethical for a missionary to lie by signing a work contract that says he will not be sharing the gospel while working there. Piper responded by stating that he thinks it would not be appropriate to sign a work contract in a closed country that says that you will not share the gospel while there. He said that missionaries do not always need to tell the whole truth in every situation, but

that they should not have to sign any contracts that make it a breach of their contract if they share the gospel.<sup>6</sup>

In an article by Steven Haught in the Global Missions Network, he goes through many Scriptures that people use to support lying as a missionary. Basically his conclusion is that all of these are just attempted “loopholes” through the system, but should not allow missionaries to lie in any circumstances.<sup>7</sup> In a blog about Baptist mission efforts in closed countries, one blogger writes that being a “stealth” missionary “gives people in these countries the wrong idea that it’s okay to break the law as long as it’s for Jesus.”<sup>8</sup> In an article from Baylor University Liz Foreman says that laws in a country are made so that there may be order in the country. Therefore, it is unethical for a missionary to go secretly into a country. She says, “Missionaries who preach Jesus Christ’s ultimate message of truth, while simultaneously sidestepping laws and cultural values, send the wrong message.”<sup>9</sup>


## Conclusion

I think the understanding of Piper and many others is that we should not hide the fact that we are Christians if we are living in a closed country. I would agree with that as a general rule. However, it is not always as simple as that. Previously, I stated that every year I must sign a contract with the university to remain in the country. Included in that contract is the acknowledgement that I would not do any missionary work. But the only way I could have the job was if I signed the contract.

There seems to be three options: (1) The potential missionary follows his conscience to not lie and thus tells the government that he is there for missionary purposes, which likely will lead to being denied a job or visa and thus not able to live in the country. (2) The potential missionary refuses to go to

the closed country because it would require lying and sinning against God. (3) The potential missionary understands that there is another way. Though there is some dishonesty in hiding his/her purpose of spreading the gospel from the government, he/she is not condemned by God. We see the examples of Rahab and David and declare that there must be instances in which being deceitful is not condemned by God.

Additionally, the very nature of the Scriptures is that we are not even bound by the letter of the Law, but rather by the Spirit. This is what Jesus is saying in Mark 2:23–28 about David being able to enter the temple and eat the bread he was not supposed to eat. And at the same time Uzziah is condemned for entering the forbidden room to burn incense. It seems that the Lord looks at the intention of our heart to see if we are obeying what the Spirit is guiding us to do. It may vary in different circumstances.

Currently, it seems that many countries are officially closed to missionary activity. It is not like centuries ago when William Carey did not need a visa to serve in India or Hudson Taylor did not need a visa to live in China. May no one have a weak conscience and be prevented from serving the Lord in a foreign country just because he or she feels guilty in signing a work contract that says he or she will not share the gospel with anyone while there. These situations are often necessary in completing the Great Commission, and also can bring blessing from God. 

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## Notes

1. 9 Marks, “Lying, Hostile Nations, and the Great Commission” <http://www.9marks.org/journal/lying-hostile-nations-and-great-commission>
2. Bill Common, “Beyond Closed Doors: Understanding Missions in Restricted Access Countries” <http://www.abwe.org/news/beyond-closed-doors-understanding-missions-in-restricted-access-countries#Un6A7ihULCE>
3. John Pierce, “Use of Undercover Missionaries Getting New Scrutiny” [http://assets.baptiststandard.com/archived/2003/5\\_5/print/undercover.html](http://assets.baptiststandard.com/archived/2003/5_5/print/undercover.html)
4. Greg Livingstone, “Show Me a Closed Door, and I’ll Show You an Open Window” <http://www.missionfrontiers.org/issue/article/show-me-a-closed-door-and-ill-show-you-an-open-window>
5. Dave English, “Paul’s Secret: A First-Century Strategy for a 21st Century World” <http://www.globalopps.org/articles/>
6. John Piper, “Should Missionaries Intentionally Lie?” <http://www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/ask-pastor-john/should-missionaries-intentionally-lie>
7. Steven Haught, “Lying for Missions, Can it Ever be Justified?” <http://www.globalmissionsnetwork.info/lyingForMissions.html>
8. Hal Eaton, “Baptist Mission Efforts in ‘Closed’ Countries” <http://forums.baptistlife.com/viewtopic.php?f=2&t=3022>
9. Liz Foreman, “Undercover Missions Can’t Justify Breaking Laws” <http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-religion/2175755/posts>

# A Study on Scripture Engagement in DMMs

Frank Preston

This article discusses issues that impact scripture engagement in some Disciple Making Movements (DMMs) among Muslims.

There are many nuanced definitions of *scripture engagement*, ranging from incidents of consumption (i.e. number of times a person reads the Bible per week) to cognitive recall. Bettina Gottschlich defines scripture engagement in her dissertation as: *Effective Scripture engagement is seen in changed intentions, attitudes and resultant behavior of a person who “pleases God and man” based on a sincere conversion (Gottschlich, 2013)*. Her definition provides a level of observational measurement that is helpful for this research. Though intentions and attitudes are less observable than behavior, Fishbein’s research on planned behavior notes that intentions and attitudes are correlated with behavior (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Behavior, especially repeated behavior, can reflect a change in intentions and attitudes.

## Case Study: Disciple Making Movement Where Scripture Engagement is Observable

Pulau is located in Asia and has one of the highest concentrations of Muslim populations in the world with at least 175 Unreached People Groups and seventy-five Unengaged People Groups. The Focus on the Fruit (FoF) movement was reviewed by the author in February 2014. At the time the group was about 7,500 Muslim background believers in three streams, generally located within one unreached people group. Currently FoF has documented an excess of 12,944 churches comprising of five or more Muslim background believers per church with twenty-five local activist (apostles) reaching into forty Muslim Unreached People Groups in twelve countries. The leadership structure has three key local leaders and about fifteen stream leaders.

A few core principles guide this movement:

- **Scripture centric and not leader centric.** A national leader noted: “It is key to shift the focus from the teacher to group members discovering truth from God’s Word for themselves. We help people discover directly from the Bible first via an oral transformation dialogue series, then by reading and discussing the Bible with others using the Seven Question Model.” (Fruit, 2018).
- **Scripture centric in matching personal needs to scriptural solutions.** In the Quad coaching process noted below, the coaches develop Discovery Bible Studies that relate to issues that inhibit spiritual growth of their constituents (Fruit, 2018).
- **Focus on groups not individuals in**

**the outreach process.** One leader notes, “Making disciples in groups rather than just individuals greatly increases spiritual fruit multiplication. Locals on a spiritual journey need their natural groupings to become their support groups” (Fruit, 2018).

- **Outreach is group oriented with greenhouses as the mode of scripture engagement.** *Greenhouses* are outreach and discipling activities within their own small social groupings where local seekers read scriptures and discuss the text using the seven questions format.
- **Group leaders are coached to effectiveness.** Effectiveness is a measurement that is both qualitative and quantitative. Qualitative is based on character of the leader and is observed by Quad teams that function at each level of leadership. Training modules are then developed from the observations. Quantitative measurement is determined from groups that are multiplying generationally and leaders that are being developed at each generational level. Both formal and informal trainings are considered in quantitative measurements. Training should yield scripture engagement, demonstrating character development and reproduction of believers in the church.
- **Coach Team** generally consists of four roles to create a Quad Team: (1) Facilitator (2) Spiritual teacher (theologian) (3) Management and (4) Family coach, also called member care. A Quad Coach team functions at each level: **Clusters** (seven to ten linked small groups in three generations), **Mini Regions** (four to ten

clusters), **Regions** (four to ten Regions) and **Streams**. These classifications are somewhat fluid as FoF applies a Jethro principle from Exodus 18 to link leaders from different levels. The goal is to have peers who are in the Quad coach teams and to move away from *leader centric* and toward *word centric* spiritual dependency.

- **Roving coaches** cut across levels to provide specialty functions such as family counseling and financial assistance something akin to an alms role to help out those with needs. These too can help emerging leaders grow in their faith.

In an interview of the main national leaders of the FoF movement in 2018, I asked what the key indicators were to show that scripture engagement was occurring within the movement. This question was critical since the movement was both broad and complex, involving some 13,000 churches and in excess of 50,000 Muslim background believers, and was expanding in excess of fifty percent per year. One leader explained that he observes the data set for each quarter and determines if at each level of leadership, a Quad team exists. Then he looks at the quantity of formal and informal trainings that are occurring. If he sees that these two indicators are functioning, he feels assured that scripture engagement is occurring at all levels.

Though stated principles can be instructive, this research wanted to validate outcomes. To accomplish this, the research obtained four quarters of data from one calendar year on the 12,944 churches and 1,629 discovery groups comprised of mainly

seekers. At the time of the analysis, there were 5,734 local leaders and 3,216 local leaders in training. FoF classifies a church as having over 50% of the participants being confessed believers. Generally, the number of believers becomes 100% over time, especially as it reproduces generationally, and members are baptized. The mean of generations was between fourth generation with 2,775 churches and fifth generation churches at 2,595.

Observing 2015 data, FoF had 7,226 churches and 1,122 Discovery Bible Studies. Hence, church growth from 2015 to 2016 was 76%. Local leaders increased from 4,050 in 2015 to 5,734 in 2016, a 42% increase. Candidate leaders increased from 2,329 in 2015 to 3,216 in 2016, a 38% increase.

Correlations of the key variables are in Table 12.1.

Using training as the behavioral variable (training occurred because the Quad team observed character or skills that were needed and then arranged a DBS-based training), seeker groups were correlated 0.60 for informal training and 0.64 for formal training and both were statistically significant. Training and group were correlated 0.82 and 0.76 for informal and formal respectively. Candidate local leader was 0.89 and 0.79 for informal and formal training respectively and Local Leaders were 0.79 and 0.74 for informal and formal training.

What the correlations are saying is that training based on Quad Team observations resulted in group health and leadership development. Since training is tethered to scripture centric solutions (Discovery Bible Studies), one can ascertain that scripture engagement had a measurable correlation that was statistically verified.

### Literature Review

Scripture engagement is a contested term, ranging from incidents of consumption to cognitive recall. Fergus MacDonald, former General Secretary of the United Bible Societies, refers to scripture engagement as ways

that Christian leaders and communities “help people interact with the Bible as the Word of God” (Crockett, 2005). Crockett argues that the term “scripture engagement” refers to the “acquisition, development, or performance of abilities that facilitate or help other people interact with the Bible as the Word of God” (Crockett, 2005). Scripture engagement scholar Wayne Dye discusses eight conditions by which scripture engagement can be effective (Dye, 2009a). These conditions relate to the input side of a systems approach, but the process side is not discussed. The assumption is that if you have the right input, a desired output will normally follow. Other scholars argue for improved inputs such as digital Bibles (Cho & Campbell, 2015; Hutchings, 2017), orality (Margetts, 2013; O’Donnell, 2013; Ong, 2002), translations (Dye, 2009b; Federwitz, 2008; Margetts, 2013; O’Donnell, 2013), and removing copyright restrictions (DeVoss & Rife, 2015; Elkin & Seminary, 2013; Jore, 2013). Though these are important and informative, scholars rarely discuss the process side of the equations. The general consensus is that better inputs will lead to an output of scripture engagement, yet this has not yielded consistent results, as the International Mission Board and Gottschlich studies bear out (Global Research Division of the International Mission Board, 2017; Gottschlich, 2013)

Gottschlich (Gottschlich, 2013) observes in her research that even though the scripture engagement inputs were available, there were places where the population being studied did not have scripture engagement that included changed intentions, attitudes and resultant behavior of a person. She noted hindrances in distribution and weak leadership were possible culprits. The International Mission Board in their study of movements in Africa (Global Research Division of the International Mission Board, 2017) noted that under similar conditions, one group demonstrated scripture engagement and the other group showed significant lack of understanding of the scriptures. In one

group, it appeared that the interviewees deferred to the pastor whereas another group deferred to the scripture itself. The difference between the two groups appeared to be that in the first group, the leader was centric to the understanding of the scripture, but in the second group the scripture was centric.

### Micro-Meso-Macro Model

This research has been embracing a systems approach in observing the issue of scripture engagement. A simple system has an input, a process and an output. The literature on scripture engagement has been overwhelmingly biased toward inputs as a determinate of a successful output in scripture engagement. But it is necessary to observe the environment of observations. Environment involves three levels of abstraction (1) the individual level, also called the micro level (2) the community or group level, also called meso level and (3) the national/organizational/corporate level, also called macro level.

In literature on organizational research theory, especially in areas involving multilevel theory, considerations are given micro-meso-macro levels of abstraction (Klein & Kozlowski, 2000; Rousseau, 1985). A person’s behavior is often mediated or moderated by their immediate community. Communities are likewise mediated or moderated by national, organizational or corporate structures. Rarely does an individual influence macro levels, but macro strongly influences the individual level. Governments impose taxes and regulations that impact individual and community lives. Meso/communities become bodies of individuals that either adopt macro influence or resist it. Individuals within communities can influence community decisions in positive or negative ways.

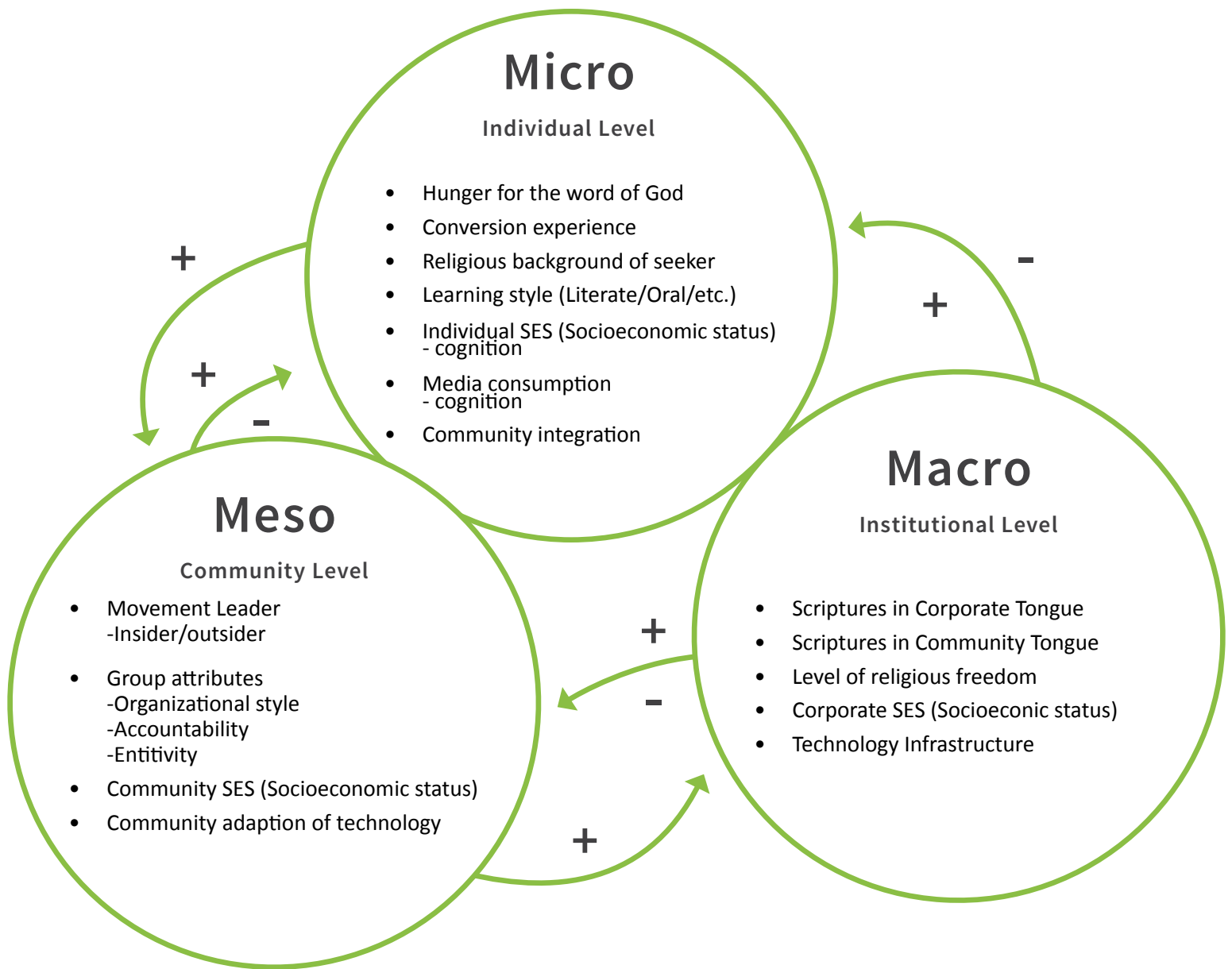
Figure 1 shows a model for this interaction related to the issue of scripture engagement. Note that at the individual level two-way interaction occurs only with the community, but the individual and community are impacted by macro dictates. Not all dictates are bad for the individual. For example, macro has the capacity to conduct a translation of the scripture or develop an app that aids in scripture engagement. But the *implementation* of innovations generally involves the community level in diffusion to the individual level. People learn of some products such as a Bible app from friends, mentors or religious leaders, and trust from community level confers trust to individuals that the item has credence.

**TABLE 12.1 TRAINING CORRELATIONS**

	Informal Training	Formal Training
Seekers / Discovery Bible Study	0.60	0.64
Group / Church	0.82	0.76
Candidate Local Leader	0.89	0.79
Local Leader	0.79	0.74
Note: Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed) using Pearson’s Correlation Coefficient method.		



**FIGURE 12.1 FORCES INFLUENCING SCRIPTURE ENGAGEMENT: MODEL OF INTERACTION RELATED TO THE ISSUE OF SCRIPTURE ENGAGEMENT.**



Scholars' critique of the macro level is that they generally do not engage the meso level as partners in program development (Unwin, 2017). It is not uncommon for macro organizations to develop a health campaign funded by institutions, and then engage the meso level to administer the products or programs to individuals. No doubt the macro's intentions were good and the help to the individuals was necessary, but the

lack of engagement at the meso level often supplanted a support system that is crucial to the community fabric.

When institutions develop a product or project, they may consult with meso/community level leaders, but often they don't truly partner with them (Van Riezen, 2015). Partnership involves power, discourse, interdependence, and functionality where collaborators find equilibrium in the exchange

(Morse & McNamara, 2006). When organizations make unilateral interventions, they may win a battle but lose the war by bypassing meso-level leadership engagement.

Macro proponents for scripture engagement could argue that community could be developed after a product is released. The early church in Acts could be seen as an example of new communities that arose from the context of Greek unbelievers. A confounding

factor to this logic is that of the twenty-one conversion experiences in the Book of Acts, nineteen were in groups. The exceptions were Paul and the Ethiopian eunuch. Hence some community preexisted before conversion, and the first converts knew each other and already experienced collective identity.

When macro organizations are considering scriptural engagement at the individual level, community or meso-level structures need to be a strong consideration. Implementation of a project should be within the community and by the community. This requires more work by macro organizations in the beginning but lays a foundation of sustainability.

### Summary

This study did not try to investigate all the locations where disciple-making movements were occurring and to determine if scripture engagement was happening in those locations. Constructs such as “What is a disciple-making movement?” lack agreement. “What is scripture engagement?” is likewise a contested construct. Even so, without those definitions, this research generally observes that the lack of scripture engagement appears to be determined at the meso level. Macro organizations are developing a plethora of products and options to resolve a micro-level problem of scripture engagement, but it appears that in the places where scripture engagement is occurring, it is often associated with meso-level leaders who have developed ways to support scripture engagement for their constituents. In places where scripture engagement was not happening, it appeared that macro and/or meso involvement hindered micro engagements with the scriptures.

In some places there was hindrance of distribution, but often engagement was hindered because of the lack of development of meso leadership. In some places local (meso) leadership sought to teach in a way that was appropriate for the meso leader but was not helpful to these constituents

for the long term. In others, the meso leader had constituents *discover* the scriptures, and these constituents were taught by passages they considered.

It is unlikely that leaders are “weak” as stated by Gottschlich (Gottschlich, 2013), but that their modeling and training may have encouraged them to *teach* instead of helping believers to become *scripture centric* via something like a discovery process. Even when it is apparent that pastors are discussing a Discovery Bible Study method, they are actually *teaching*; hence their disciples were becoming leader dependent.

Additionally, when meso leaders are empowered, they appear to find solutions at the local level to address scripture engagement for their constituents. Wesley did the same by offering three kinds of groups within a single context to address stages of spiritual growth, literacy, and class.

No doubt there are movements where no local language scripture exists, or alternatively where the lack of literacy makes mass consumption of scripture impossible. How can these be addressed? This is a challenge, but research appears to point to solutions having meso-level leaders find temporary solutions and build capacity to address the issue. Macro organizations can be of help when there is a partnership with meso participants. [\[9\]](#)

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# Should I Stay or Should I Go?

Greg Carter

“Should I Stay or Should I Go?” is more than a well-known song by the British punk rock band Clash.<sup>1</sup> At a critical point in Jesse de Pugh’s<sup>2</sup> ministry at Redeemer Church, he reviewed with the congregation his personal introspection on this question.

In his role as senior pastor at Redeemer, through its multisite approach, the church had made strategic moves, into several neighborhoods in Baltimore. In an era when gray-hairs populated most church pews, Redeemer’s various sites were overwhelmingly twenty- and thirty-year-olds.

Even as Jesse led the church’s expansion, there were other sheep in the periphery of his vision; he wanted Redeemer to see them as well. The goal was to be a strong missions church, but not necessarily in the traditional sense. Given the complexity of leading an eight-location multisite church, he needed a missions pastor who could lead the way on a less-traveled road in missions.

Already a member of the congregation, Teddy had been in Jesse’s sights for several years. Unfortunately, Teddy was happily employed at another ministry. Undeterred, Jesse pursued him, and a second request elicited a yes to a staff role.

Understanding that sending workers to the nations was a priority, one of the first questions Teddy asked his new boss was, “Can you tell me about this two-year missionary training process?” Well, ummmm. There was a lot of desire, but little substance and practice.

To get things moving, Teddy “threw some stuff together” by starting monthly meetings and finding mentors for those in training. Not many months into it, he recognized the program wasn’t all that good; it needed to be more challenging to be accepted. The result of the rework was a 15-page application, essentially the kind that a missions agency would use. This was something Teddy was familiar with from his most recent ministry.

Making it harder wasn’t necessarily the silver bullet. Within a few months twenty-five people had completed the application. And the mentor part? These wannabe missionaries couldn’t find mentors. Teddy winced when the only mentors who could be found were twenty-five-year-olds; thus revealing a hidden weakness of the church’s strategic tilt toward Millennials.

Teddy proposed to the staff and elders what he thought was a God-honoring goal: sending fifty workers into the harvest over the next seven years. The elders asked, “Where did you come up with fifty?” In his mind Teddy knew that he already had twenty-five in the pipeline; he had seven years to come up with twenty-five more. Convicted that he was doing what he felt he could accomplish, he asked God, “What would honor You?” “Trust Me for one hundred,” was the answer: an audacious goal, something that is impossible, that is, unless God does it.

Teddy was familiar with Training Ordinary Apprentices to Go (TOAG).<sup>3</sup> The approach utilizes a missional community format in its disciple-making structure. He was also aware of the incredible missionary sending history of The Austin Stone Community Church.<sup>4</sup> Understanding that they had sent one hundred workers in a seven-year period only added to his desire to learn more.

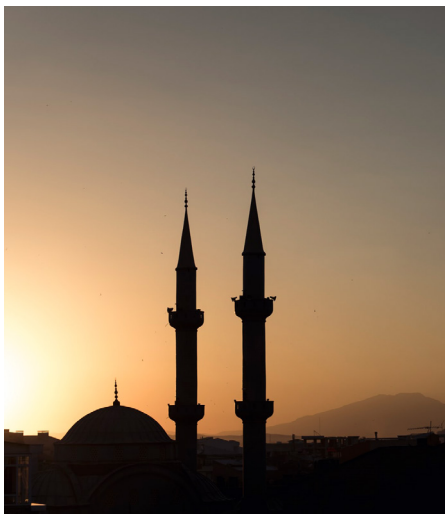
An on-site visit and lengthy conversations with staff of The Austin Stone enlarged Teddy’s vision and also revealed his negotiating skills. Through a partnership with Launch Global,<sup>5</sup> the church had ten supported staff who served as missions mobilizers.

They were the foundational element to the breadth of missions interest and action. Would the church be willing to let him recruit four of their staff to move to Baltimore and work as mobilizers at Redeemer? Within six months Teddy had his own support-raised staff members helping him transform the church into a bastion of missions activity. Today those four staff members number six. Each is a full-time staff member, with support raised through Launch Global.

Joshua Rolf, church relations coordinator with Launch Global, describes their unique role in the kingdom as helping churches send healthy workers to the harvest, particularly world areas that have limited access to the gospel. They especially desire to serve churches that have a deep commitment to church-planting movements/unreached people groups. Recognizing that many first-term missionaries struggle with conflict resolution skills, this is addressed in an intentional approach to character development.

In the fall of 2016 Redeemer launched its first missional community. Leading up to this, Teddy challenged his core group of potential missionaries to commit to a nine-month training process that would include intentional discipleship in a supportive environment, with a significant cross-cultural element. Knowing that proximity to one another is a huge factor (“optimal proximity” being defined as how far you would walk in your socks—two blocks became the standard), some members sold their condos and others ended their apartment leases. The Redeemer missional community group moved into the Little Pakistan neighborhood on Sheridan Road.

Having completed two iterations of the missional community, the process has evolved into the foundational sending process of Redeemer’s Kingdom workers. Each member raises some level of support to pay for materials, retreats, and assessments. Completion of *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*<sup>6</sup> is one of the required elements.



**Phase One** is ten weeks long and precedes the on-site missional community experience. Spiritual development receives the most attention. Each week members are expected to “spend three hours with Jesus” developing intimacy. With a partner they spend two hours sharing their faith, preferably in a cross-cultural setting. Missional community members schedule an hour in corporate prayer. A weekly group meal, with time for training and accountability, rounds out the elements.

**Phase Two** is the defining component of the global missional community experience: living in proximity in a neighborhood, members are still working or in school full-time. Beyond the assigned reading<sup>7</sup> a lot of time is invested with people. Believing that prayer is vital, the frequency is ramped up. One of the groups meets five times a week for prayer, scheduling it at 5:00 a.m. before members start their school or workday.

This phase includes two retreats: one focusing on multiplication evangelism; the second utilizing the peacemaker training on conflict<sup>8</sup> material. Launch Global conducts its own renewal conference, and most of Redeemer’s community members have attended.

Matt is one of Redeemer’s mobilizers; he and his wife, Marty, were two of the four original mobilizers who moved to Chicago at Teddy’s invitation. While living in Dallas, he took the Perspectives course and became aware of missional communities at Prestonwood Baptist Church. He participated in several sets, becoming a leader for the first phase. As his passion for global missions grew, he eventually left his career in real estate to become a staff member with Launch Global.

Matt describes his mobilization role with the discover, develop, deploy alliteration—part of the Launch Global training he brought to Redeemer. In Discover he helps believers discover God’s heart for the nations<sup>9</sup>, teaching the biblical basis of missions. He recruits for Perspectives, taking people through the Xplore study<sup>10</sup>, and hosting various events to capture the attention of missions-interested church attendees. All this falls within the structure of Phase One.

Develop continues into Phase Two: practicing disciple-making, becoming familiar with life on the field, understanding how to prepare for transition overseas, dealing with critical cross-cultural issues, basics of evangelism, sharing your story, helping people to follow Jesus. An invitation to the missional community is limited to those who are strongly considering moving overseas in the

next twelve to twenty-four months. Additional elements of the curriculum/equipping process include conflict resolution, a theology of suffering, understanding rhythms of life, how to establish leaders, sabbath rest, dynamic discovery of personality, spiritual gifts, personal assessment, enduring through tough seasons.

In Deploy, community members explore different opportunities for global service, narrowing options down to one or two. Matt facilitates the numerous calls to leaders and organizations, arranging for attendance at missions agency candidate schools, planning vision/confirmation trips to the selected field, coaching through support raising, overcoming roadblocks, and building resilience.

Commending the modeling aspect of Redeemer’s mentoring approach, Matt agrees strongly with the truism that more is caught than taught. The church has learned that if they are overly formal or systematic, and in the process become less relational, then zeal starts to flag. He also emphasizes the critical role of intercessory prayer. The intentional proximity of the missional community allows leaders to see red flags that need to be addressed: evidence of spiritual pride, general poor health, compulsive behaviors.

Matt acknowledges that receptivity and teachableness among team members has varied: some recognize how much they don’t know, some don’t see their arrogance and that they have a lot to learn. Seeing a teachable spirit is on the mentors’ radar.

Now parents of two preschoolers, Marty and Matt have a long-term goal to do church planting overseas, location TBD. For Matt geography is less important than team composition. While Southeast Asia (one of the focus areas for Redeemer) holds a lot of intrigue, they are maintaining an open-heart attitude. Departure is likely still three years off and they are committed to stay until Redeemer sees its one hundred workers raised up by the target date of September 2022.

Becka, another of Teddy’s mobilizers, is well-educated with a master’s in intercultural studies. She initially felt ready to go until learning that her rural California home church didn’t have a sending process in place. Through some self-assessment, and likely wisdom, she started looking for a church that could provide that. A friend at her home church recommended Redeemer. Though piqued by what she learned on Redeemer’s website, she wasn’t too sure about relocating to inner-city Baltimore. Her degree from the University of California, Davis, in sociology

gave her a theoretical understanding of the refugee crisis, but she had no practical experience. Redeemer was actively serving their needs. Anticipating joining that effort was enough to overcome her misgivings about living in the heart of the city.

She arrived in 2014 just as the elders had rolled out an informal preparation process, becoming a participant in the first missional community. That was such a positive learning experience that she readily agreed to lead one the following year. She describes the Little Pakistan neighborhood as a community where you can walk the streets and not hear English.

During this nine-month period, time is spent in personal discipleship, helping members address character issues, learning how to read stress, and healing of family of origin scars. One of Becka’s critical functions is modeling, showing that the real work is prayer, going out and meeting neighbors, how to respect culture, and still show boldness in conversation.

A practical role she plays is helping team members get matched with an agency, to secure a good fit. She describes one of her community members as a female doctor who wants to use her medical training living among Muslims.

Nate Carlson is a former missional community member who now has benefited from seeing his local church training implemented on the field. Tracing his conversion experience to a short-term missions trip, he had always imaged that missions would be part of his life; he couldn’t conceive of doing anything else. Attending Bible school was a natural decision as he followed Jesus.

His required internship was in the Philippines with missionaries doing Bible translation. Naively he thought he and his wife, Sonja, would be overseas within six months of his graduation from Moody Bible Institute. But while in the Philippines, they were encouraged to postpone departure until they found a strong sending church. They moved to Baltimore and began attending Redeemer.

Jumping immediately into church life, he contacted the missions pastor and was invited to join the global team. While part of Redeemer’s first missional community, he and Sonja completed support raising, but delayed their departure wanting to complete the training, both for their own benefit as well as serving the church through mobilizing.

Reflecting on his mentoring experience, Nate especially valued being taken out to meet with people two-by-two, learning to

share Jesus stories. He loved watching his mentor initiate contact, bringing the conversation around to spiritual topics, offering up prayer for people. Sometimes their trips into neighborhoods were just knocking on doors. Being an introvert, he would never have done that by himself, but that was one of his mentor's strengths. He talked with them naturally; he could just walk up to someone on the street and start talking.

The result was that he discovered more courage in sharing Jesus stories. Hearing exhortation from the pulpit, feeling the nudge from Holy Spirit, being nervous and afraid was all part of the learning. Nate found living and working with a group of people who modeled how a team works overseas—what they would be doing on that team—was excellent.

Once on the field Nate realized how much he had valued the missional community experience. Meetings with his on-field team had a different, though probably more typical, dynamic. They met as a team once a week for two hours; the leader would share a brief devotional thought, likely a reflection on what he had read in his personal “devos.” It was always done by the team leader (whereas in his missional community, the participants shared the leading). Nate adds that, to be fair, the team's focus was primarily Bible translation and, since their visas were not for religious workers, their work needed to fly under the radar. Thus, the team members exhibited a much more cautious approach to outreach, resulting in not a lot of focus on outreach.

Sonja especially chafed under their new setting. Naturally a people person, she had loved the missional community experience, seeing people coming to Christ, but now they were hearing far fewer stories of what God was doing. Having valued the bonding that was part of the missional community, she knew what she wanted/needed from their field team, but now she was feeling far less connected. This translated directly into team conflict becoming harder to resolve. If you felt close, then you knew they loved you; but relationships were not as deep and thus differences were harder to work through.

One of the saving graces to this normal tension was the foundation in linguistics that Nate received in Bible school; he understood the team's approach to ministry. It tempered his behavior from becoming judgmental. He balanced his accommodation to structure with gently bringing in practices from their missional community experience, such as inviting others to come with him

on his two-by-two visits. Nate intentionally modeled humility, trying to encourage and work toward a stronger team cohesion.

Back at Redeemer the global missions staff unquestionably dwarfs the size of other church ministries. Because each mobilizer raises his/her support, this influence comes without a financial cost to the church. While this unbalanced emphasis could potentially cause envy on the part of other staff, the opposite has been true.

Early on, Teddy admonished his mobilizers with several of his “rules.” They needed to be at every staff meeting; spread out; don't sit together. When the opportunity was given, “Do you have anything to share?” don't pass. Never, or you'll be in trouble with me. You must have a story to tell that occurred in the past week and the name of the person with whom you shared the gospel.

After two weeks of these stories, staff members started making their way to Teddy's office, asking, “Who are these people?” And, “Can they do a seminar?” Nope, these people are super busy, can't do a seminar. But they will probably be willing to take you out to share Christ with someone. The whole staff of the church has been impacted by the mobilizers. The overall response from other staff has been genuinely positive; there is lots of excitement about what God is doing globally with Redeemer.


Teddy quickly acknowledges the critical importance of having a senior pastor who affirms and supports the church's overall emphasis in missions. Part of that is confirmed by regularly talking about the “Redeemer 100,” the goal of one hundred global workers in seven years. The church schedules global weekend emphases several times a year. With nine campuses, each with live teaching, making this happen is a juggling act. Occasionally, Teddy will give the campus pastors a suggested outline for the global weekend message.

At the central campus site, Teddy had typically engaged a guest missions speaker once a year. Several years ago, he took a different tact; he asked Jesse to give the missions sermon. “No, people hear me a lot. They don't want to hear me again.” A week later Teddy asked again. No. He approached his boss a third time, no. Perhaps remembering his own reluctance to say yes, Teddy steadied himself and pressed a fourth time. “Okay, I'll pray about it.” Long story, short, was the “Should I stay, or should I go?” sermon.

The longer version is that as Jesse was preparing the sermon, God clearly said he should go. Fast-forward to September 2018

when Jesse announced that he would be stepping down from the role as senior pastor. He and his wife, Tris, would be moving to Turkey. In the past he felt he was called to stay; now he felt called to go. With emotion deep in his voice, he told the congregation that he wanted to be number 101.

Jesse and Tris, will soon be living in the Middle East, doing coaching and coordinating pastoral care for Redeemer's workers in the entire region. Their home will become a hospitality house and a welcome destination for field workers needing listening ears and understanding hearts.

*Have you asked yourself, “Should I stay, or should I go?”* 

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**Greg Carter** has served over thirty years in two churches (EFCA) directing global outreach. He leads Future Missionaries, an organization that trains local church missions leadership in equipping the next generation of global Kingdom workers.

## Notes

1. “[The RS 500 Greatest Songs of All Time \(1-500\)](#).” Archived from [the original](#) on 25 October 2006. [Rolling Stone](#). 29 December 2004.
2. Locations and names have been changed for security purposes.
3. Training Ordinary Apprentices to Go, <https://toag.org>.
4. <https://austinstone.org>.
5. <https://www.launchglobal.org>.
6. <https://www.perspectives.org>.
7. Participants read *Spiritual Multiplication in the Real World: Why some disciple-makers reproduce when others fail*, Bob McNabb, Dallas, TX: Multiplication Press, 2014).
8. <https://peacemaker.training>.
9. The curriculum they use is *God's Heart for the Nations*, Jeff Lewis (Colorado Springs: BottomLine Media, 2015).
10. <https://www.mobilization.org/resources/live-missionally/xplore/>.

As your church sends out and supports missionaries globally, they desperately need you to be engaged with them along the way. Send well, serve well, care well — simply steward them well. Believing in them, encouraging them, and standing with them through the ups and downs of ministry will aid them in being more effective gospel proclaimers. 📧

# Steward Your Missionaries

*Caring for Missionaries Around the Globe*



## Host a Video Call

Set up a video call with workers to encourage them directly. Let them know you are praying for them and willing to support them.



## Share with Your Congregation

Provide prayer points to your church for ways to support missionary partners. Give a broad perspective of what is happening globally.

## Encourage Engagement

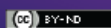
Provide your congregation with email and postal addresses for missionaries so they can reach out with letters of support and encouragement.



## Provide Resource Links

Send a list of resources and tools to your church body (prayercast.com, joshuaproject.net, etc.) so they can pray effectively for the countries where your missionaries serve.

Find more “Key Attributes of an Effective Church Mission Leader” in the *Church Missions Leader Survey Report + Analysis 2019*, <https://missionexus.org/church-missions-leader-survey-report-analysis-2019/>.



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# Fruit to Harvest: Witness of God’s Great Work Among Muslims

By Gene Daniels, Pam Arlund, Jim Haney, eds.


*Fruit to Harvest* is part of the story of God’s work among Muslims throughout the World. Its inspiration and content come from the Abide, Bear Fruit Global Consultation on Muslim Ministry which was held in Chiang Mai, Thailand, in 2017 and which brought together an intentionally diverse mix of both workers and Muslim Background Believers (MBBs) for the purpose of documenting the progress of the Gospel, evaluating current and proposed initiatives, and praying individually and collectively.

The book is a compilation of articles which cover a broad spectrum of ministry-related issues affecting Gospel progress among Muslims worldwide. The four sections (Harvest Trends, Harvest Field, Harvest Force, and Harvest Pathways) give voice both to mission practitioners and to MBBs, the fruit of such initiatives and now part of the Harvest Force.

The primary strength of the book is the broad range of perspectives provided by contributors of diverse ethnicities on current missional issues and experiences. The editors have given a platform to rarely heard voices who are well-positioned and equipped to discuss critical issues related to Muslim ministry and to provide a much-needed non-Western perspective on the challenges and outcomes of such ministry.

Of particular interest are the articles

describing the reality of suffering and persecution in Muslim ministry—whether in evangelism, discipleship or the forming of faith communities. Additionally, a number of articles address the changing role of Western missionaries in light of a growing number of theologically and missiologically mature MBBs. A final strength is the collective sense of celebration of what God has been doing among Muslims globally, combined with a sense of urgency to continue proclaiming the Gospel so that the rest of the sons of Abraham may have a legitimate opportunity to hear and respond to God’s offer of salvation.

If there is anything to critique in such a volume it may simply be that the strength of the work may also be its weakness. For whereas the editorial vision was to give voice to many who would otherwise not be heard on such complex matters, in some cases the material is a bit uneven in both depth and style. Topics such as migration/immigration, human trafficking, and slavery are highly complex issues and necessitate reflection and analysis beyond what a book like this can offer. And although the editors did not intend that this book be the end-all of discussion and reflection on such topics, the brevity with which they are addressed clouds the complex nature of such ministries. 

Littleton, CO:  
William Carey Publishing, 2019

285 pages

USD \$19.99, Paperback

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Reviewed by **Rick Kronk**, PhD,  
Scholar-Practitioner with  
Christar, Inc., Assistant Professor of  
Global Ministries, Toccoa Falls  
College, Toccoa Falls, Georgia.

## For Further Reading:

Garrison, David, A., *Wind in the House of Islam: How God is Drawing Muslims Around the World to Faith in Jesus Christ*, WigTake Resources LLC, 2014.

Woodbury, J. Dudley, ed., *From Seed to Fruit: Global Trends, Fruitful Practices and Emerging Issues Among Muslims*, William Carey Library; 2nd edition, 2011.

# World Mission: Theology, Strategy, & Current Issues

By Scott N. Callaham and Will Brooks, Eds.

Bellingham, WA:  
Lexham Press, 2019

376 pages

USD \$24.99

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Reviewed by **Geoff Hartt**, Executive Director of Hispanics for Christ (resourcing church-planting among Hispanics), Affiliate Faculty Sioux Falls Seminary, and Director of SFS Kairos Project-Spanish Program.


This very useful introduction to world mission, written by various authors, is structured in three sections covering the essential elements of global evangelism: theology, strategy, and contemporary issues. The majority of the content in these sections is foundational and well-presented.

In the first section, Callaham establishes the missiological importance of the Old Testament. Building on this foundation, Wendel Sun presents the New Testament as "...a collection of missional texts produced in the context of mission." (33). "A covenantal view of mission" (100) is presented as a basis for understanding God's mission. The third chapter is an introduction to this subject, much shorter than Christopher Wright's *Mission of God* or Kostenberger and O'Brien's *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth*, but appropriate for an introductory level text.

The flow of the second section is refreshingly simple. Chapters four through six argue for discipleship leading to baptism being a priority of mission work which should focus on "... all people without ethnic distinction scattered throughout the world" (147). This section ends with an argument for theological education to be another central part of mission work, to respond to the needs of new disciples, new leaders, and the missionaries themselves.

The final section of the book, "Current Issues in World Mission", discusses language, hermeneutical methodology, and oral learners. The chapters

on language and oral learners were useful, but the chapter on grammatical-historical interpretation could be confusing. It presents this as the ultimate hermeneutical methodology although it is accessible only to Christians who are able to use the appropriate hermeneutical tools. In contrast, ethnohermeneutics, as developed by Larry Caldwell and Enoch Wan, offers a practical and transcultural approach to interpreting and communicating the Bible cross-culturally. However, it is presented in the text simply as a tool to "confront and correct" (259) indigenous interpretations. It is clear that the authors believe an academic, western approach to hermeneutics is superior to that of oral learners who are presented as limited (247) in their ability to understand scripture without the grammatical-historical method of hermeneutics. The last chapter briefly looks at the Apostle Paul's missionary practices.

This last section, "Current Issues", misses some of the more pressing issues today in world mission, such as refugees, immigration, and cross-cultural work. Emphasizing the importance of the grammatical-historical method of hermeneutics and the role of the Bible itself clearly had the priority of place over current issues in mission, or a discussion of the role of Jesus and the Holy Spirit in mission. It would be difficult to use this as a stand-alone text without other readings to balance out a full understanding of world mission today. 



# Ethnic Realities and the Church: Lessons from Kurdistan (2nd Edition)

By Robert Blincoe

This present volume is a masterful interweaving of historical and missiological analysis, with an overview of the nineteenth and twentieth century history of mission among Kurdish people. A particular emphasis here is placed on the “Great Experiment” (35–41), in which American and European missionaries sought to reach the Muslim Kurdish and Turkish populations *indirectly*, by promoting revival among the ancient Neo-Aramaic and Armenian-speaking Christian communities in the region. The attempt was largely unsuccessful, in part due to what Blincoe describes as a “hoarding” of the blessing given to them by the local Christians, and the fierce animosity expressed by the Kurds themselves. Of course, not only were the local Christians reluctant to share their faith with their traditional enemies, but the same Ottoman regulations which prohibited the missionaries from seeking to directly evangelize the Muslim people similarly would have applied to the locals, if they had been inclined to make the attempt.

While the regulations became more varied in the twentieth century following the demise of the Ottoman Empire, in Blincoe’s telling, the inclination of the local Christian people to dedicate their lives to imparting the Gospel to the Kurdish people was not forthcoming. In addition to the aforementioned difficulties themselves, there was also the understandable resentment felt by many of these Christians in response to centuries of mistreatment and oppression by their Muslim neighbors. That they have held onto their faith in the face of such hostility for centuries itself presents an important lesson for us, though this is not the focus here.

This then brings us to one of the most valuable contributions of this book to the broader field of applied history of missions. As implied in the rather McGavran-influenced title of the volume,

the often facile manner in which some have suggested that the evangelization of the most unreached peoples in the world should be done “by the nationals” often misses a crucial element highlighted by Blincoe’s research here: We need to be clear in defining what we mean by “nationals” in any given case. This is brought to the fore in the preface by the author’s recounting of his own experience in entering the area in the 1990s (xiii); although there was a Christian population, they were ethnically and linguistically distinct from the Kurds, as well as in a historical and cultural adversarial stance toward them. When we seek to work “through the national church,” sometimes we need to recognize that this may not be the best solution, especially in the initial stages of such a work.

One final word of critique: This is a valuable book and something of a masterpiece of historiography, and as such, its wider availability through William Carey Library is to be welcomed. That noted, however, there is virtually nothing in this book which has been updated in this “second edition,” not even statistics or lists of Bible translations into the Kurdish language. There is nothing about the radical shifts on the ground since the Gulf Wars of the early 2000s, nor of the rise (and *hopefully* permanent fall) of ISIS in the region, who specifically targeted regional Christians (as well as Yazidis and some dissenting Muslims) for rape, enslavement, and death. There is nothing concerning more recent breakthroughs which *have* taken place among Kurdish people in some places. It is thus my own hope that a future edition of this valuable book might include these crucial updates, not only for the sake of statistics and history, but in deepening our understanding of what will necessarily be involved in seeing Gospel witness established among *all* peoples of this region. 📖

Littleton, CO:  
William Carey Library, 2019

270 pages

USD \$16.99

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Reviewed by **Matthew Friedman**, professor and program director for intercultural studies, Kingswood University, Sussex, New Brunswick, Canada, and Adjunct Professor at Asbury Theological Seminary.

## For Further Reading:

Hoskins, Daniel Gene. 2017. *Conversion Narratives in Context: Muslims Turning to Christ in post-Soviet Central Asia*. Portland, OR: EMS.

Knapp, Andreas. 2017. *The Last Christians: Stories of Persecution, Flight, and Resilience in the Middle East*. Walden, NY: Plough.

# Marks of a Movement: What the Church Can Learn from the Wesleyan Revival

By Winfield Bevins

Grand Rapids, MI:  
Zondervan Reflective, 2019

220 pages

USD \$17.99

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Reviewed by **David Greenlee**,  
Director of Missiological Research  
and Evaluation, Operation  
Mobilization, Tyrone, Georgia.

Movements to faith in Christ are reported around the world. Will they quickly fade, or will they last for centuries? In *Marks of a Movement*, Winfield Bevins points us to important lessons from the Wesleyan Revival and the resulting movement of churches—lessons that may help us address questions of longevity concerning modern movements.

Director of Church Planting at Asbury Theological Seminary, Bevins notes that John Wesley and the Wesleyan Revival are little known outside of Wesleyan circles. From Anglican roots himself, not Wesleyan, Bevins is convinced we desperately need to know more (18–19). Why? Wesley created “a disciple-making movement that equipped and empowered thousands of people to join in God’s mission,” (22) a movement with lasting global impact over 275 years since its inception.

After an introductory chapter covering general characteristics of movements, Bevins structures the following chapters around six themes, each a mark of the Wesleyan Revival:


- **Changed lives:** Movements begin as people’s lives are changed by a fresh encounter with the living God.
- **Contagious faith:** Movements become contagious when ordinary people share their faith with others.
- **The Holy Spirit:** Movements emphasize the person and work of the Holy Spirit in peoples’ lives.
- **Discipleship systems:** Movements develop systems for discipleship and spiritual growth.
- **Apostolic leadership:** Movements have an apostolic impulse—drawn from the models and methods of the early church—that empowers and mobilizes all of God’s people for mission.

- **Organic multiplication:** Movements have an outward missional focus that naturally leads to the multiplication of disciples and new communities of faith. (40–43)

Key lessons the book offers draw from Wesley’s basic ministry strategy of meeting “the needs of the *entire* person through a discipleship ecosystem,” a holistic approach that helped “move believers beyond themselves to reach out and meet the needs of others, both those in the larger ‘society’ or congregation who [were] hurting and in need, as well as unbelievers in the broader community” (117).

Preceding the Conclusion, the chapter aptly titled “Movements Can be Messy,” focuses on challenges the Wesleyan movement faced. One key lesson for today concerns the class meetings at the heart of Wesley’s strategy. These class meetings were abandoned in mid-nineteenth century North America, while at the same time, there was an increased emphasis on higher education of ordained pastors. Once this occurred, the vigor of the movement faded (171–173).

The book is affordable and clearly presented, attractive for a global readership, including those who speak English as a second—or fourth or fifth—language. I will be recommending it widely among my own colleagues and especially for training programs and for developing ministry approaches.

If Bevins is correct that “perhaps more than any other Christian denomination in the West, Methodism will be remembered as a multiplication movement, one that spread the gospel from England to the world,” (163) those of us interested in fomenting movements today should take notice and learn. 

## For Further Reading

Addison, Steve. 2019. *The Rise and Fall of Movements: A Roadmap for Leaders*. 100 Movements Publishing.

Kreider, Alan. 2016. *The Patient Ferment of the Early Church: The Improbable Rise of Christianity in the Roman Empire*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic.


# The Church on Mission: A Biblical Vision for Transformation Among All People

By Craig Ott

*The Church on Mission* provides a fresh and biblical understanding of the calling of Christians and the mission of the church. It compels the church to think about the contemporary issues facing our world. The book is based on the mission statement of the Evangelical Free Church of America (EFCA) to glorify God by multiplying transformational churches among all people. A series of biblical and theological lectures given by Craig Ott on this mission statement to ReachGlobal was at the origin of this book. It is biblically based and can be used by all evangelical churches.

The first chapter casts the vision of God's glory as the source and goal of transformation. Chapter 2 focuses on the church as a transformational community with a mission, a community which gives its members a foretaste of God's kingdom. Chapter 3 explains how this transformation happens through the power and truth of God's Word. Chapter 4 describes the influence the church should have in the world as salt and light. In chapter 5, Ott points out that the church's influence should extend to all people. He argues that the influence should embrace and transcend all ethnoreligious, socioeconomic, gender, and cultural divisions. The last chapter emphasizes the exponential potential of fruitful discipleship, multiplying churches, and transformational leadership. Such growth can allow the earth to be filled with God's glory.

In spite of its brevity, the book provides a simple yet comprehensive study of the word *transformation* from the first century New Testament reader's perspective, a study based on the word's usage in Jewish literature and in the New Testament. It challenges the reader to reflect and contemplate on the glory of God. The goal of missions is not mission itself but worship. The book highlights the missionary nature and role of the church as a community with the Great Calling (to worship the Lord), the Great Commission, and the Great Commandment. It discusses the role of the church as salt and light in the world. This role forces the church to have a transcultural barrier-breaking mission that encompasses all people. Ott discusses how the early church accepted the Ethiopian Eunuch into the church, providing a significant breakthrough in spite of the Semitic view of Africans during this era.

*The Church on Mission* can help churches and their leaders to review and reflect on their missional responsibilities to carry out the task God has given them. It is a good launching point for deeper theological discussion regarding our faith and our identity as a church. These discussions can result in renewed understanding of our mission. Whether in a Sunday class, a mission committee, or seminary class this book would be beneficial in reflecting on the nature of the Church's mission. 

Grand Rapids, MI:  
Baker Academic, 2019

144 pages

USD \$19.99

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Reviewed by **Tenny Li Farnen**,  
Chinese Baptist Church of  
Richmond, Virginia.

# Sacred Siblings: Valuing One Another for the Great Commission

By Sue Eenigenburg and Suzy Grumelot

Pasadena, CA:  
William Carey Publishing, 2019

163 pages

USD \$14.99

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Reviewed by **Birgit Herppich**,  
Affiliate Assistant Professor  
of Intercultural Studies, Fuller  
Theological Seminary, Interna-  
tional Membership Department  
Coordinator WEC International.

The intriguing title *Sacred Siblings* promises a fresh perspective on relationships among married and single missionaries. The authors, one single and one married, have a combined thirty years of cross-cultural mission experience. Like them, I have seen many books on being single in missions and many for those who are married, but hardly any material on relationships among married and single people working together on teams (155). The book presents the findings of a survey conducted in 2017 along with highly insightful reflections and recommendations.

The goal of the survey was to “identify challenges facing married and single persons working in cross-cultural ministry teams and to discover factors that would enhance these team relationships” (157). Of the 289 respondents, 69.2 percent were women, 55 percent were married people, and of those who were single, 80 percent were women (xxxiv). The authors acknowledge that the survey is probably more valuable for North American sending agencies because 76.8 percent of those who completed the survey were North American (xxxvi). However, as a European single missionary for many years in a large international mission, I find the insights extremely pertinent.

Issues raised by married missionaries are grouped into themes labeled *value* (including equality, voicing opinions, and feedback), *training*, *communication*, *relationships*, and *contentment*. Issues raised by single missionaries included (often unfulfilled) expectations of finding community and practical help, being considered mature, and spending more time together when there is less family. Viewpoints and experiences of both groups are discussed, as well as significant differences between the perspectives of men and women.


The authors report the survey results, reflect, and include insights from other authors.

Illustrations are plentiful, both from the authors' experience and survey responses. Throughout the book, the need for open and clear communication is emphasized and recommendations for improvement are made. Each chapter concludes with “Good Ideas and Helpful Tools” and “Application Questions.”

Two fresh insights struck me in particular. A Biblical Theology of Singleness calls for a foundational change of mindset about the eternal place of the married and single life and its spiritual significance (xxvii-xxx). In the New Testament, God-dedicated singleness is highly elevated and points to the profound theological truth that the people of God grow not through procreation but through disciple making. This spiritual family will last while marriage is temporary. “Singles thus serve as tangible reminders to the larger church of its anticipated future inheritance in the new creation, and the real mission to which it is called!” (Danylak 2006, 20).

Secondly, the title is developed in a key chapter against prevalent preoccupations with sexual temptation that can lead single women to “feel that they are seen or treated as possible threats to their married teammates” (82). Rather, in the eternal family of God, we are first and foremost brothers and sisters. As such, we view and relate to each other as *Sacred Siblings* worthy of care, love, and help.

Other significant chapters discuss questions of contentment in each marital status and how the perceptions of women, singleness and family in missionaries' host cultures can affect team relationships.

In sum, this is an extremely valuable resource for missionaries, teams, and mission organizations to grow in understanding, communication, and collaboration between single and married team members. 

## For Further Reading

- Danylak, Barry N. 2010. *Redeeming Singleness: How the Storyline of Scripture Affirms the Single Life*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway.
- Edwards, Sue. 2008. *Mixed Ministry: Working Together as Brothers and Sisters in an Oversexed Society*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel.


# The Marys of the Bible: The Original #MeToo Movement

By Boaz Johnson

The contribution that this volume makes to the global Christian conversation on sex slavery and the abuse of women cannot be overstated. With exegetical expertise, Boaz Johnson brings to life the realities surrounding the sexual abuse of women (and men and children) as a phenomenon addressed plainly in the Bible. Johnson takes the reader through an examination of the Scriptures in the original languages and offers his special insight into Near East cultures. He then carries that thread into the New Testament, and in doing so, serves the Church by examining the underlying issues involved in the systemic abuse of women. In the end, Johnson offers a biblical prescription for bringing healing to the Marys (the Bitter Ones) of today's hurting masses.

Beyond its solid theological substance, the book stands out as unique on several fronts. First, Johnson offers a male voice to speak against the injustice of human trafficking and especially the plight of vulnerable women. As well, Johnson brings a distinctly non-Western lens and his own engagement with the issues as one reared in the midst of injustices in a slum of Delhi, India. Third, Johnson does not shy away from engagement with the spiritual agencies that represent "a deep spiritual origin to social, economic, etc., maladies and evil" (134). He, therefore, offers a holistic, non-Western appraisal of the spiritual climate in which the Marys of our societies may be healed, as they were in the days of Jesus.

Johnson hails the revelation of God as it unfolds in the Bible as featuring the first voices of an original #MeToo Movement. He points to four women and their stories (Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Uriah's wife, Bathsheba). Johnson notes that these women stand out as illustrations of the extent of socio-cultural and religious depravity involved in sexual exploitation as recorded in the Bible. The fifth voice, that of the life of the virgin Mary, mother of Jesus, speaks as an icon of the hope to be found in *Yeshua*, the Messiah. "He will reverse all the years of injustice and evil against the poor, the orphans, the widows, and the strangers" (125). Jesus is the ultimate *Go'el* (Redeemer) able to deal decisively with evil, restore economies and societies, and bring about the recreation of a new woman (49).

Johnson's book is an important read for anyone concerned with the suffering of women and other vulnerable populations at the hands of sexual predators. But the text is *crucial* as a prophetic stimulus for the Church and a call to reform within and outside its walls. As well, no academic venue hosting a careful exploration of global Christianity as a movement today can afford to overlook this volume. First of all a theological treatise, Johnson's work is effective in calling the global Church to self-reflection, awareness, and action in regard to the worldwide devaluation of women and to the epidemic of human trafficking plaguing our societies. 

Eugene, OR:  
Wipf & Stock, 2018

164 pages

USD \$23.00

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Reviewed by **Anna M. Droll**, PhD candidate, Fuller Theological Seminary, professor of Global Christianity at South Florida Theological Seminary, and founder of Kairos Global Missions, an initiative for bringing hope to women and children of West Africa.

## For Further Reading

- Grey, Jacqueline. "A Prophetic Call to Repentance: David, Bathsheba and a Royal Abuse of Power," *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society of Pentecostal Studies* 41, no. 1 (2019): 9–25.
- Krueger, Liz. "Reinterpreting Eve and Mary: A Theological Anthropology for Women," *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society of Pentecostal Studies* 41, no. 1 (2019): 91–109.

# Christian Mission: A Concise Global History

By Edward L. Smither

Bellingham, WA:  
Lexham Press, 2019

202 pages

USD \$26.99

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Reviewed by **George F. Pickens**, Professor of Theology and Mission and Director of the Program in Peace and Conflict Studies at Messiah College, Mechanicsburg, PA. He previously spent fourteen years in Intercultural Ministry in Ivory Coast and Kenya.

The twenty-first century celebrates another era of world Christianity, and while a growing number of books describe and interpret Christianity in its multiple global contexts, few explain how and why it has become the world's largest religion. One such study is Edward Smither's concise global history of Christian mission, and it is one of the most compelling and inspiring explanations of Christianity's global growth and spread currently available. Smither's history succeeds where others fail because it largely avoids the pitfalls of the genre and offers an evangelical history of Christian mission that is broad, balanced, and accessible.

In six chapters and two hundred pages, a summary of the span of Christian mission unfolds chronologically from the early church to the majority world church of the twenty-first century. Each chapter includes inspiring details about significant missionaries within their broader cultural and ecclesiastical contexts. Chapters conclude with summaries of formative missiological themes, and these narratives are more global than most in this genre. The ancient stories of the eastern spread of Christianity from Persia into Central Asia and China are included, as are the stories of the rise of Christianity in Arabia, Ethiopia, and southern India. The book maintains this global focus by highlighting local missionaries who led in spreading Christianity in each period and place. Such a polycentric rather than Eurocentric narrative of Christian mission is commendable and rare.

This broad history of Christian mission is also

balanced in its interpretations. While the author offers an evangelical history of Christian Mission for an evangelical audience, he also fairly assesses the contributions of other Christian expressions and the influence of important historical events. For example, the oft-neglected but sacrificial and inspiring efforts of Church of the East missionaries are included, and Smither explains that the doctrinal conflicts between the Church of the East and the Western Church were more cultural than theological. Christianity's right to exist within the Islamic Empire is also acknowledged, and the author correctly notes that in some places the church actually fared better under Islamic rather than Christian (Byzantine) rule. In the twenty-first century, the author notes that more Muslims than Christians have suffered at the hands of Islamic militants, and that while Muslims have justified the use of force in spreading their religion, Christians have often done the same. Such consistent truth telling is commendable.

The book's presentation is engaging and widely accessible. The author demonstrates deep respect for Christian missionaries while helping readers understand their human contexts and limitations. This blend of readability, accuracy, and balance makes this history an excellent choice for undergraduate and advanced congregational studies of Christian missions and world Christianity. The global nature of the twenty-first century church requires a global approach to explaining its growth and spread. Smither's book is the best concise evangelical text for engaging this legacy. 

## For Further Reading

Irvin, Dale T., and Scott W. Sunquist. *History of the World Christian Movement*, Volumes 1 and 2. Orbis Books, 2012.

# The Reluctant Witness: Discovering the Delight of Spiritual Conversations

By Don Everts

As a life-long Bostonian, the feature that attracted me to Don Everts' latest book, *The Reluctant Witness*, was the advertisement that the book was a tool for evangelism in the post-modern context. In my region of the world, arguably one of the most un-Christian geographies of the United States, I am acutely aware of the obstacle that Everts identifies as "the Postmodern cat that's got our tongues." And often, I confess, it's got mine.

But in his chapter "Delightful Conversations—Debunking Five Myths About Spiritual Conversations", Everts released me to think afresh about what it means simply to converse with people—even and especially those who might be opposed to evangelical truth. In our approach to spiritual conversations, we don't need to be heavy (Everts highlights laughter as a great approach to conversations), or confrontive, or Ravi-Zacharias-intellect apologists with all the right answers. We can dismiss our stereotypes that "spiritual conversations with non-Christians were primarily about prosecuting a case—and winning" (79). In short, Everts encourages us to live as the title suggests—as conversationalists.


Perhaps the strongest encouragement comes in his chapter "Everyday Conversations: Exploring Four Simple Conversational Habits." Using illustrative stories and easy-to-read charts, he explains that "eager conversationalists" live first with a spirit of expectation (128). He invites us to live with a spirit of anticipation, looking for opportunities to engage people without being awkward or aggressive.

Second and third, he encourages us to "pursue and initiate conversations" (131) and "be open to sharing faith in a wide variety of ways" (137). As a frequent traveler, I started putting these

principles into practice in my conversations with my seatmates on flights. In any friendly conversation, there comes a moment of self-identification, "So what do you do?" Before reading Everts book, I would dance around this question referring to my working as a "cross-cultural trainer" or a "leadership development consultant"—both of which are true, but neither is likely to provoke a spiritual conversation.

Thinking of creative ways to initiate conversations and share my faith, I now answer, "Well, actually I'm an evangelical minister." After I let that phrase simmer in my co-traveler's mind for 30–60 seconds, I ask "So now that I've told you that, *what do you think I believe?*" The responses have been humorous ("Really? I never knew you folks really existed."), political ("So did you vote for..."), sad ("So are you carrying a gun?") and more, but my response starts a great conversation.

As Everts points out in his fourth conversational habit, I sometimes must "gently push through awkward moments" (142). Maybe we have to discuss complex questions raised by stereotypical news soundbites or respond to questions about the behavior of Christian leaders. But most of the time, my seatmate eventually asks, "So what does *evangelical* actually mean?" I try to explain with the hope that I can leave them thinking or asking questions.

Using research from the Barna Group as well as Everts' current ministry base, Lutheran Hour Ministries, *The Reluctant Witness* takes us in Everts' conversational way into an invitation and challenge to rethink our approach to personal evangelism and sharing our faith. If you're looking for a book that instructs us on how to talk about our faith in a natural way, this is it! 

Downers Grove, IL:  
InterVarsity Press, 2019

184 pages

USD \$17.00

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Reviewed by **Paul Borthwick**, Senior Consultant for Development Associates International and author of *Great Commission, Great Compassion: Following Jesus and Loving the World* (IVP 2015).

## For Further Reading

Everts, Don, and Doug Schaupp. *I Once Was Lost: What Postmodern Skeptics Taught Us About Their Path to Jesus*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press 2008).

Manley Pippert, Rebecca. *Out of the Saltshaker and Into the World: Evangelism as a Way of Life*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2019.

# Introducing Cultural Anthropology: A Christian Perspective (2nd edition)

By Brian M. Howell and Jenell Paris

Grand Rapids, MI:  
Baker Academic, 2019

304 pages

USD \$32.99

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Reviewed by **Michael Hakmin Lee**, PhD, ThM, assistant professor of Ministry and Leadership, School of Mission, Ministry, and Leadership, Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois.

As the title and subtitle suggest, *Introducing Cultural Anthropology* is an introductory level textbook on cultural anthropology that is written from “a Christian perspective.” This does not merely disclose the socio-religious location from which the authors write (both of whom earned their PhDs in anthropology and teach at private, evangelically rooted Christian colleges); the book intentionally and demonstrably surveys cultural and lived realities through biblical-theological, anthropological, and ministerial lenses. For example, the chapter on kinship and marriage examines how those constructs and realities vary and function within societies (which you would expect to find in any introductory cultural anthropology textbook) but also briefly explores the variety of family systems described in the Bible while explicitly inviting readers to consider the implications of adoption for personal Christian identity and conduct within the life of the church.

The first two chapters introduce the subdisciplines of anthropology, with a particular focus on the distinctives of cultural anthropology, chart the developments in the understanding of the culture concept within the discipline of anthropology, and explain key concepts like cultural relativism and ethnocentrism. The central chapters are arranged topically according to commonly recognized aspects or dimensions of cultural analysis within the social sciences. Chapter 3 compares and contrasts three fields of linguistics, with a particular emphasis on sociolinguistics, and considers the significance of language for societies and the human experience. Chapter 4 explores social structures and inequalities perpetuated along social categories like race, ethnicity, and class. Chapter 5 covers anthropological perspectives on sex, gender, and sexuality, including a consideration of how such perspectives can help the church address difficult contemporary disagreements related to human sexuality. Subsequent chapters cover economics (six), politics and power (seven), kingship and

marriage (eight), religion (nine), and medical anthropology (ten). The last two chapters explain the role of theory in anthropological research along with some key theoretical perspectives (eleven) and offers relevant and potential benefits of anthropology (twelve).

The second edition seems to be far from just a cosmetic makeover of the first edition (2011). The broader topics and chapter breakdowns have remained the same with the exception of the chapter on “Globalization and Culture Change” being replaced with a chapter on “Medical Anthropology,” a subfield of anthropology that has been growing in interest and attention; the exploration of globalization is interwoven throughout the book rather than being a focal point in one chapter. Also, each chapter has been revised, adding helpful features like discussion questions at the end and receiving a refresh in the way of contemporary examples and new materials. In short, for those that are already using the first edition, there are certainly enough worthwhile revisions to adopt the second edition. Suggestions for future revisions include adding a bibliography and suggested readings for deeper exploration, and more substantive missiological engagement in each chapter (e.g., highlighting the work that Christians on mission, informed by their Christian commitments and interdisciplinary understandings of human realities and social structures, are doing in these areas; supplementing each chapter with a case study to consider missiological implications).

Supplementary materials like active learning exercises, a test bank, and PowerPoint slides for each chapter are available for free download on Baker’s website. In my opinion, this continues to be the best textbook currently available for Christian educators who are looking for a thoughtful, interdisciplinary introduction to the culture concept that demonstrates a good balance of breadth and depth as a core undergraduate course text or a supplementary graduate course text. 



# Reading Romans with Eastern Eyes: Honor and Shame in Paul's Message and Mission

By Jackson W.

What happens when a person moves to another country, learns the local language, and immerses him or herself deeply into the culture? The person's perspective changes. This is one of the mysteries of Christian missionary service. One goes out with training and a message to deliver, but when one begins reading the Word of God from within the new cultural context, one reads the Bible differently. This is the process by which author Jackson W. came to read Romans with new eyes.


W. has written extensively on the topic of honor and shame in Chinese ministry contexts. He uses the honor and shame framework in contrast to a Western focus on innocence and guilt. A western emphasis on guilt focuses on penal substitution as the description of how sinful people are reconciled to God. On the cross, the guilt of humans is assuaged by Christ paying the price in their place, thus declaring them innocent of their sin. In contrast, shame dominates in a collectivist culture, where sin is seen as bringing dishonor to one's heavenly Father. This results in shame because the sinner has failed to give Him the glory He deserves.

According to W., the book of Romans is best understood from an honor and shame perspective. He summarizes the book of Romans as follows. Those who dishonor God feel shame. On the cross Christ experienced the ultimate shame, in the place of humans. This act allowed the Father to accept those who have been in this way justified and replace their shame with honor. Honor is also conferred by being unconditionally

welcomed into a community, the family of God. Honor-shame cultures do not neglect sin, but see sin as rooted in relationships more than rules.

In *Reading Romans with Eastern Eyes*, W. exegetes each chapter of Romans, building his case that the shame framework provides a needed complement to the concept of penal substitution, and resonates more directly with Chinese people's shame-based response to sin and separation from God. W. advocates for the honor-shame approach to redemption as a corrective, not a replacement, of the guilt-innocence framework of traditional Western theology.

*Reading Romans with Eastern Eyes* is thoroughly referenced, with copious footnotes within the chapters, 21 pages of references, three indexes (author, subject and Scripture), and a Discussion Guide with chapter questions. This book would be of interest to anyone ministering in a Chinese context. However, the new slant this book takes on understandings of sin, redemption, and the collective nature of the church, would be of interest to any students of the Bible. Most readers will benefit from reading the book with others and using the discussion questions.

Jackson W. is not without his critics, but he is to be commended for gazing upon Scriptures with Eastern eyes, to see if truths may have been missed due to an exclusively Western perspective. This book will challenge your assumptions and give you a more full-orbed perspective on reading Scripture and knowing God. 

Downers Grove, IL:  
IVP Academic Press, 2019

231 pages

USD \$20.00

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Reviewed by **Mark A. Strand**,  
professor, North Dakota State  
University, Fargo, North Dakota.

## For Further Reading

Bailey, Kenneth E. 2008. *Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes: Cultural Studies in the Gospels*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP.

Chan, Simon. 2014. *Grassroots Asian Theology; Thinking the Faith from the Ground Up*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP.

# Apologetics at the Cross: An Introduction for Christian Witness

By Joshua D. Chatraw and Mark D. Allen

Grand Rapids, MI:  
Zondervan, 2018

329 pages

USD \$18.99

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Reviewed by **Cameron D. Armstrong**, International Mission Board, Bucharest, Romania; PhD candidate, Biola University.


“Apologetics” is often construed as intellectual debate with carefully constructed arguments. Joshua Chatraw and Mark Allen, two professors from Liberty University, seek to alter that picture by leading Christians to look at the gospel first. By taking this approach, Christians can maintain an attitude of humble confidence that God will ultimately do the persuading.

The authors wrote *Apologetics at the Cross* as a textbook for Christian higher education courses. Comprising thirteen chapters, the book is clearly designed for a semester-length class. The authors’ goal is to mentally construct an “apologetics house” by integrating the multiple disciplines within apologetics and charting a way forward. Part 1 lays the house’s foundation by surveying biblical and historical examples. Chatraw and Allen demonstrate that the goal and ultimate example for Christian witness is the cross. Both biblical and historical testimony show that there are multiple ways to do apologetics. Part 2 transitions to the “cruciform” apologetic offered in the book. The authors begin by analyzing the four major apologetic approaches: classical, evidential, presuppositional, and experiential/narrative. *Apologetics at the cross* integrates these approaches but does so in a way that recognizes the need to witness with both word and deed to real people with real emotional and spiritual backgrounds. Part 3 puts the visible touches onto the apologetic house by outlining how Christians might apply apologetics at the cross. Chatraw and Allen advocate an “inside out” perspective,

wherein Christians sympathetically expose the assumptions of unbelievers and show how the gospel provides more plausible answers to worldview questions.

A significant strength of *Apologetics at the Cross* is the authors’ desire to humbly understand people in context. Because everyone comes to apologetic conversations with cultural and spiritual baggage, Christians ought to be good listeners who do not force a one-size-fits-all apologetics approach. With such an approach, unbelievers will be far more open to genuine conversation.

One weakness in the book is the authors’ tendency at times to rush through themes, thereby simplifying them in a way that could confuse readers. For example, from the biblical survey in Part 1, only two short paragraphs are devoted to explaining how bearing God’s image is fundamental to apologetic life and witness. Chatraw and Allen state that bearing God’s image means that humans “contain his very essence within us” (45). Such a statement blurs the differences between God and humanity, contradicts the Nicene Creed, and ought at least to be explained further, if not deleted.

Still, *Apologetics at the Cross* is an important textbook for the secularizing Western culture. Christians who are skittish about apologetic encounters will find in these pages confidence that apologetics is indeed for everyone. Instead of intellectual knockouts, apologetics simply makes room for unbelievers to look with new eyes at the cross. 

## For Further Reading

Smith, James K. A. *How (Not) to be Secular: Reading Charles Taylor*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014.  
Keller, Timothy. *Making Sense of God: Finding God in the Modern World*. New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2016.





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