OCTOBER–DECEMBER 2019 | VOLUME 55 ISSUE 4

EMQ

Contents

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EMQ

October–December 2019, Volume 55, Issue 4

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Making Disciples of the Nations—10 Years After 2010

Marvin J. Newell

This is the final edition of EMQ for the decade. Many readers may recall the way the decade began. The year 2010 was unprecedented for mission gatherings, as it was the year of four global mission conferences. Each conference commemorated the 1910 World Missionary Conference held in Edinburgh a century earlier. Perhaps you attended one or more of these:

- Tokyo: Global Mission Consultation & Celebration—From Edinburgh to Tokyo: Celebrating the Past and Embracing the Future (May 2010)
- Edinburgh: Witnessing to Christ Today: Centenary of the World Missionary Conference (June 2010)
- Cape Town: Third Lausanne Conference on World Evangelization: God in Christ, Reconciling the World To Himself (October 2010)
- Boston: The Changing Contours of World Mission and Christianity (November 2010)

Besides commemorating Edinburgh 1910, one of the overarching purposes of these conferences was to seek new directions for missions for the decade that lay ahead. That decade has now come to a close. As we look back over the past ten years, it is appropriate to ask ourselves, "How have we done in making disciples of the nations?"

Certainly new and/or more strongly promoted directions have either emerged or blossomed. Here are some easily identifiable standouts: Disciple Making Movements (DMM), the Orality Movement, the Honor/Shame paradigm, diaspora/refugee ministries, the surging Majority World missions movement, Business as Mission, the new label "Frontier Peoples," and intensified efforts by churches and agencies in partnership/collaboration.

But have we come any closer to making disciples of the world's inhabitants? In 2010 the world population was 6.93 billion. As we enter 2020 it is closing in on 7.75 billion. There were 2.2 billion adherents to Christianity (31%) in 2010.[1] Currently, there are 2.5 billion Christians (32.4%). According to Lifeway research, Christianity is growing faster than the world population. Globally, Christianity is growing at a 1.27% rate while the world's population is growing at a 1.20% rate.[2] While this is encouraging, it should not be the only metric referenced, considering the label "Christian" takes into account every brand and stripe of Christianity.

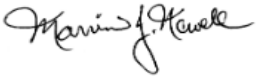
Another measure is to look at those considered "unevangelized." The percentage of the unevangelized is shrinking. More than half of the world's population in 1900 (54.3%) were unevangelized. By 2010 it was about 30%. That percentage continues to shrink, dropping to 28.4% in 2019.[3]

When it comes to Unreached People Groups (UPGs), the decade has seen a refinement of data. In 2010 Joshua Project reported that there were 16,302 ethnolinguistic people groups globally, with 6,649 (40.8%) considered unreached. Today that same source reports that there are 17,060 people groups with 7,096 (41.6%) considered unreached.[4] That may seem like a regression, except for the fact that due to the untiring efforts of mission researchers the data today is more accurate than it was ten years ago.

Another useful lens in helping determine mission progress is to highlight what has become known as "finishing the task." At the beginning of the decade, there were approximately 1,850 Unengaged, Unreached People Groups. Meaning, those groups over 500 in population and considered beyond the reach of the gospel of Jesus Christ, with no church or mission agency that had taken responsibility to engage them in gospel witness. Today the number has decreased to 269 groups! These people are at the very heart of the unfinished Great Commission task.[5] Recently it was reported that every one of these remaining groups have been "adopted" by some committed church or group, although engagement may still be distant.[6]

Thus, the most common metrics used in the world of mission indicates a mixed bag of efforts and results over the past decade. However, it has clearly been a decade of advance for the gospel. There are more disciples of Jesus in the world than in any time since the day of Pentecost. Jesus is indeed building His Church just as he promised. Making disciples of the nations continues unabated. The numerical results may not be as astronomical as attendees of the four global conferences at the beginning of the decade optimistically envisioned. Nevertheless, we salute the steady progress that has been made by the hundreds of thousands of message bearers who have labored cross-culturally so creatively, sacrificially, and faithfully over these past ten years.

This issue of *EMQ* helps push missiological thinking and practice forward. A wide-range of topics are addressed by competent writers who deal with various aspects of the task at hand. There is something here for most anyone engaged in making disciples of the nations.



Marvin J. Newell, D.Miss
Editorial Director

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1. https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2015/04/02/397042004/muslim-population-will-surpass-christians-this-century-pew-says.
2. https://factsandtrends.net/2019/06/11/7-surprising-trends-in-global-christianity-in-2019/.
3. ibid.
4. https://joshuaproject.net.
5. https://www.finishingthetask.com/index.html.
6. Paul Eshleman, Finishing the Task newsletter, June 14, 2019.

Article

Fundamentals of Missionary Leadership: What We Know with Reasonable Confidence

David Dunaetz

Missionaries often find themselves needing to provide leadership in one way or another in many of the organizations that they start or join, whether it be in a pioneer church plant, a missionary team, a mission organization, an association of national churches, or even perhaps a sending church. Sometimes these attempts at leadership go well, but other times, there are less than optimal results.

Because providing leadership in any field is so difficult, much research has focused on this topic, both from secular and Christian perspectives. But when studying leadership, it is often difficult to distinguish between opinions based on anecdotal evidence and trustworthy conclusions based on empirical evidence. Even in the academic literature, leadership theory is often fuzzy with little evidence to support some of its claims.

The Bible presents qualifications for church leaders (e.g., 1 Timothy 3, Titus 1) as well as some leadership principles concerning the importance of humility, serving others, and the dangers of dominating one's followers (e.g., Matthew 20:25–26, Mark 10:44–45, John 13:12–14). For several generations, the behavioral sciences have been studying specific aspects of leadership behavior that make leaders more or less effective. Several principles have emerged over the years that we know with relative certainty increase leadership effectiveness (Riggio 2008). They are not applicable in every situation or in every culture, but they yield positive results in such a wide range of situations and cultures that they are worth considering in whatever context we find ourselves.

Missionary Leaders Must Focus on Both the Task and Relationships

Many, if not most, missionaries view their task as contributing to the achievement of the Great Commission, typically by making disciples, forming communities of Christ followers, or training others to contribute to fulfilling the Great Commission. More and more, missionaries also see social work as an element of their task. Since missionaries have a task, they need to focus on accomplishing it, even if they are not naturally goal-oriented.

Like all large tasks, accomplishing the Great Commission is dependent on a large number of smaller tasks, nested within each other. To accomplish the Great Commission, a church needs to be established in Town X. In order for a church to be established, there needs to be a children's program to teach the basics of the faith. In order to have such a program, teachers and assistants need to be trained. These are all important tasks, but they also all involve other people, all of whom have needs, feelings, hopes, and aspirations. Since love lies at the center of the gospel, missionaries tend to understand the importance of strong and healthy relationships.

In any leadership role, behaviors focused on accomplishing the tasks and developing relationships are both important (Yukl, Gordon, & Taber 2002). Suppose Ashley is a missionary in a young church and is responsible for developing the children's program. Research shows (Yukl 2012) that her task-oriented behaviors (such as clarifying the goals of the programs, defining the processes used to achieve these goals, training church volunteers, monitoring the performance of volunteers, and solving problems as they arise) will have a number of positive effects: progress on achieving the goals of the children's program, understanding better how to achieve the goals in her specific context, better coordination of the church volunteers working toward the goals, and a more efficient use of the church's limited financial, material, and human resources.

But research also shows that her relationship-oriented behaviors (such as eating with the volunteer staff, providing encouragement, asking for other people's opinions, recognizing others' contributions to the children's program, and expressing concern for others' families) will also create positive outcomes that lead to accomplishing the overall goals: volunteers will be happier with their work and role in the church, they will work better together as a team with fewer insurmountable conflicts, and the volunteers will have a stronger overall commitment to the church.

The Best Missionary Leaders Will Pay Attention to Their Decision-Making Processes

If missionary leaders want to make rational, high quality decisions, they must generate various options concerning a course of action to take and then thoroughly evaluate each option in order to choose the best (Greenberg & Baron 2003). They must also decide how they will generate and evaluate these options and how a final decision will be made. The process can range from completely *autocratic* (when the leader generates options, evaluates them, and decides without any input from those under his or her leadership) to completely participatory (where those under the leader generate options, evaluate them, and make a decision, perhaps with little or no input from the leader). In order to make the best decision, the one which will have the best results for the organization and its stakeholders, the missionary leader needs to determine the degree to which the process will be autocratic or participative (Vroom & Yetton 1973).

Suppose Zach is a missionary in a young church and is responsible for the church's evangelism program. He wants to plan an evangelistic event during the summer when everyone is on vacation. In order to choose the best type of event and how to carry it out, he has to decide to what degree he will make decisions and to what degree the

church leaders will participate in the decision making progress. Factors that indicate that a more autocratic decision would be best include:

1. The need for a quick decision.
2. Zach's own expertise in planning evangelistic activities in the cultural context relative to the church leaders' expertise.
3. The willingness of the church leaders to unquestionably accept Zach's decision and implement it.
4. The degree to which church leaders have goals which are opposed to Zach's goals.

However, there may be factors that indicate that more participative decision-making would be best. These include:

1. The need for a high quality solution.
2. The need for a creative solution.
3. The expertise of the church leaders concerning evangelism in their cultural context
4. The likelihood that an autocratic decision would create conflict.
5. The church leaders' reluctance to support and implement an autocratic decision.

Zach needs to weigh all these factors carefully before choosing how autocratic and how participative the decision making process will be. Although a missionary's goal may be to enable a young church to make all of its decisions by itself, oftentimes additional training is more appropriate than using a participative decision process when those involved lack either the expertise needed to make the best decisions or have interests that run counter to the gospel.

Effective Missionary Leaders Set Goals and Monitor Their Achievement

A good leader will monitor the performance of everyone in the group that he or she is leading, even if it can be a bit exhausting. People generally want their performance to improve, especially if they are working in a values-driven organization such as a church or a mission. However, if no one expresses an interest in the quality of their work, the quality may go down since it does not seem important to anyone. If they lack the knowledge and the techniques to carry out their responsibilities, the quality of their work will be lower than it should be. If they do not understand that the quality of their work could be better (i.e., they have a blind spot), it is unlikely to improve. For these reasons, missionary leaders need to provide feedback to the people whom they lead concerning the quality of their work.

This feedback needs to be both supportive and constructive in order to have positive consequences. Suppose Richard is the field leader for a group of missionaries working with a large unreached people group in an urban setting. Supportive interaction with the missionaries for whom he is responsible will demonstrate that he is concerned about the other missionaries' well-being and that he wants to see them succeed in all areas of life. This requires warmth, empathy, and desire to learn about and understand the reasons for less than optimal results. Richard's feedback should also be constructive. It should provide specific information on how to improve performance. For the feedback to be constructive, Richard must also be willing to change the evaluation of a missionary's work when he receives new, relevant information concerning the missionary's exact situation and circumstances.

One of the best ways leaders can help those whom they are leading to become more productive is by setting challenging, measurable goals and monitoring the progress made in achieving these goals (Dunaetz 2013; Locke & Latham 2006). Suppose one of the missionaries that Richard supervises, Joshua, is responsible for a training program in a national network of churches. A goal such as presenting the training program to twenty different groups in the next two months can be useful for several reasons. It will help Joshua stay focused. He knows he needs to meet with twenty groups, so he is motivated to organize his time to reach this goal. The goal also provides information about the effectiveness of the approach he uses to accomplish it. If, after a month, he has only been able to schedule five group meetings by meeting individually with leaders, he will be motivated to creatively think of other ways to meet his goal of twenty group meetings. In general, having goals motivates hard work and creativity in missionaries by influencing the choice of how they will spend their time, the effort that they will spend on the task, and their persistence when they run into obstacles.

But not all goals increase productivity. For Joshua's goals to be effective, they must be in alignment with the overarching goals of his mission organization. They must also be specific and measurable; studies show that "do your best" goals usually lead to lower results than goals with a specific target. The goals must be challenging, yet realistic; they should help keep Joshua focused on the task so that he works to his full potential. Perhaps most importantly, especially in missionary contexts, they should focus on missionary behavior, not on the behavior of others. Achieving the goal should be within the control of the missionary, not something that depends primarily on what others or God chooses to do. Goals that set targets for conversions are especially dangerous. Goals must focus on specific tasks that missionaries can accomplish, such as sharing the gospel a certain number of times or organizing a certain number of meetings by a target date.

The Most Effective Missionary Leaders Delegate Appropriately and Use Delegation as a Form of Training

Delegation in missionary contexts can be defined as a "power-sharing process" that occurs when a missionary gives the responsibility and power to a person to make decisions that were previously made by the missionary (Yukl 2012, 87). Delegation is a common biblical theme, exemplified by Jethro encouraging Moses to delegate some legal decisions to capable leaders (Exodus 18:17–26) and Paul delegating to Titus the responsibility of appointing elders in Crete (Titus 1:5). Delegation involves not just giving people new responsibilities, but also the power or authority to make the necessary decisions as to how to carry out these responsibilities.

Delegating can be scary, especially when missionaries are trying to maintain the quality of an already shaky program or when they are having difficulty establishing their own identity and role in a culture. However there are excellent reasons to delegate, as well as reasons to not delegate (Yukl & Fu 1999).

Reasons for Missionary Delegation

When missionaries delegate to others, they have an opportunity to develop new skills in others who can use them more efficiently in the future. This often means that the missionary will have to invest additional time into training the people who receive new responsibilities and monitoring their progress, providing sufficient feedback to ensure their success.

Delegation to others enables some problems to be addressed more quickly by people better equipped to deal with them. Once again, this depends on the training that the person receiving the new responsibilities

has received, as well as the context in which the problems arise.

Delegation can save missionaries time if they feel overloaded. Less important ministry-related tasks can be delegated to others who are able to do them, freeing the missionaries for more important projects. If this is not possible, training people for ministry should be a higher priority.

Yet at the same time, delegation can create more problems than it solves. Missionary leaders need to understand when to delegate and when not to delegate.

Reasons Not to Delegate

A missionary should not delegate a task to a person when that person does not have the quality relationships with stakeholders that are needed for successful completion of the task. In this case, the missionary leader needs to help those under him or her to develop the necessary network of quality relationships.

Missionaries should not delegate tasks which are too difficult for a person. The people whom a missionary is training are only likely to do a task well, or to at least learn from being delegated a task, if it is within their ability. Even if they have received training, people should not be given responsibilities that require abilities that they do not possess. Rather, people should be given tasks that are progressively more difficult until it becomes clear that the next level is likely to be too difficult.

Successful Missionary Leaders Are Flexible and Willing to Change

The ability and willingness to adjust one's ministry in light of changes, either external or internal to the organization, is crucial for missionary leaders to lead people to where God wants them to be. If task-related behavior and relationship-related behavior are the two principle categories of what leaders do, change-related behavior is the third most common (Yukl, et al. 2002).

Some of the most important change-related behavior involves paying attention to changes in one's ministry context, both local and general cultural changes. Effective missionary leaders will analyze these changes, seeking to find and understand the threats and the opportunities that develop. They will modify existing structures and programs to protect from the threats and develop both new and existing ones to take advantage of the opportunities.

For example, if some current event causes debate on a culture's view of sexual ethics, the missionary may provide a series of studies on sexual ethics from a Christian perspective. As for the structure of a program, the missionary will experiment to see what works, monitoring the results closely and will abandon attempts that do not lead to the desired outcomes. In addition to understanding the threats and opportunities that develop, missionary leaders need to continually communicate these to the people whom they lead, reframing the changes as an opportunity to see God work if they are willing to respond to them in faith (cf. Dunaetz 2010).

Missionary leaders who are open to change will also study Christian leaders who are experiencing success in order to discover ideas that will help them achieve their own goals in a given context. These missionaries will ask difficult questions in order to determine if the successful ministry is effective because of the reasons given and to determine if the strategies used are likely to be effective in their own context.

Change-oriented missionary leaders must also look for opportunities for change and growth that exist among the people whom they are leading. Missionary leaders need to understand people's strengths and seek to build upon them. It is especially important to recognize and develop emerging leaders, providing them with opportunities to maximize their spiritual growth and develop their skills. Feelings of jealousy, insecurity, or disdain for young, emerging leaders are often signs of misplaced priorities.

Being a missionary leader is not easy. Knowing and reflecting upon some of the key principles that are necessary to provide effective leadership can help, but the difficulties of specific situations often make putting these principles into practice very difficult. For this reason, dependence on the Lord through prayer and his Word is all the more important if missionary leaders wish to fulfill the ministry to which he has called them.

David R. Dunaetz is Assistant Professor of Leadership and Organizational Psychology at Azusa Pacific University. He was a church planter in France for seventeen years with WorldVenture where he planted two churches and helped a third move beyond missionary dependence.

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Article

Coming Into Alignment

Ryan Shaw

We are living in extraordinary times–when the Holy Spirit is highlighting the possibilities of the fulfillment of the Great Commission in our day. Never before has the global body of Christ been larger nor more ethnically diverse. Never before has a potential harvest force from every continent and region been readied and prepared by God to engage directly with His Great Commission. Simultaneously, it's a transition time when the Lord intends to bring alignment in global, cross-cultural mission through paradigm shifts from what 'has been', to what 'is coming.' To be effective, we align with the Spirit, aware of what is taking place, discerning and embracing His shifts to see global harvest among unreached and unengaged people groups.

Several years ago, I was driving near my home in Chiang Mai, Thailand when the Lord spoke clearly to me. It came with authority accompanied with peace. The Lord said, *"I am changing the face of missions."* I immediately discerned that God was orchestrating a massive alignment from the traditional way the body of Christ has done missions to biblical, Spirit-led strategies and means. Seeing the realization of the psalmist's proclamation accomplished, "All the peoples will praise you, O God, let all the peoples praise you! (Psalm 67:3)," requires that the global Church's current, "business as usual," approach to mission and mobilization give way in order to become aligned with Jesus' own. Traditional approaches of five, ten or fifty years ago produce some fruit yet are not sufficient for where the Holy Spirit is taking the global Church toward the literal fulfillment of Jesus' Great Commission.

On a ministry level, the Holy Spirit has been leading SVM2 (Student Volunteer Movement 2) into our own season of alignment. An important aspect has been considering if the name continues to serve us effectively. In August of 2002, when first organizing as a mobilization ministry, we took the name Student Volunteer Movement 2 (SVM2). We believed God wanted to raise up a massive, global, mission mobilization movement with the same spirit as the original Student Volunteer Movement. We still believe this. In fact, this passion has only grown, becoming more mature as it has been tested over time. The historic Student Volunteer Movement was an inter-denominational movement that lasted more than forty-five years, from 1886–1935, raising more than 20,000 new long-term laborers for the nations. The name "SVM2" served us well for sixteen years. Yet the work has evolved, serving the global Church and no longer primarily revolving around the student generation.

During a trip to Lilongwe, Malawi in September 2018, a SVM2 colleague from Malawi listened as I described SVM2 as an "international mission mobilization initiative made up of national mobilization initiatives." After the meeting, he excitedly suggested a new name: Global Mission Mobilization Initiative, *or GMMI* for short. It came with authority and seemed to check the important boxes. Subsequently, as of August 15, 2019, SVM2 officially became GMMI.

Alignment refers to "the right positioning of parts in relation to one another." The purpose of alignment is to produce streamlining for effectiveness. What are core areas of alignment in global mission the Lord is orchestrating for a greater harvest among the unreached, toward the literal fulfilling of the Great Commission? These alignments are long-term, wide-ranging and largely provable through considering various growing evidence in the mission movement. I have observed the beginnings of these areas of alignment in my seventeen years of serving the global church in mission mobilization ministry.

The Foundational Calling of Mission Mobilization

God is growing a focus on mission mobilization in His global body today. Over the last decade many mobilization courses, trainings, tools, and networks have sprung up that were not around before. Mission mobilization momentum in every national church globally will grow and mature in the years and decades ahead as the Holy Spirit sounds the trumpet. Ralph Winter, founder of the US Center for World Mission (now Frontier Ventures), once said mission mobilization is the most strategic role in the missionary movement as it keeps God's mission purpose of the Church before the Church in a proactive way.[1]

While it is the nature of the Church to be moving out with God in mission, it is rarely, if ever, natural and automatic that believers and local ministries move into costly mission endeavor without the teaching, challenge, counsel, and encouragement of other followers of Jesus.[2] The work of mobilization is normal and essential—as important as discipleship or spiritual formation. So, what is mission mobilization? It is sounding a rallying cry, working to see believers and entire local ministries educated, inspired and activated in the Great Commission. Mission mobilization awakens local ministries and believers to the fact that God's global mission purpose, a key thread in Scripture from Genesis to Revelation, is the primary assignment of the body of Christ between Jesus' first and second coming.

The Global South in Cross-Cultural Mission

The Lord intends the body of Christ in every nation to intentionally engage in His Great Commission – no matter the national percentage of believers, status, poverty, or any other external factor. The literal fulfillment of the Great Commission will be realized as the result of a global prioritizing of cross-cultural mission and involvement of every national body of Christ. We are well aware of the growing body of Christ in the global south

(nations in Asia, Africa, and Latin America). This numerical and spiritual growth is turning into greater vision, understanding, and obedience to Jesus' Great Commission. This is only going to increase in the coming years. For the first time in history, we have a global Church realistically able to significantly contribute to cross-cultural mission.

Some questions are necessary. Should Global South churches and organizations embrace western financial support models to do mission? Do they need to join western organization mission teams? Will indigenous organizations operate like international mission sending organizations? Do they need to speak English? The clear answer from the Holy Spirit to all of these is an emphatic, "no."

GMMI has dedicated itself to strategic mission mobilization among Global South national churches, aligning with this growing shift of the Holy Spirit. This exciting fact does not mean western mission organizations are no longer needed. The whole global church together contributing to Jesus' global harvest is necessary and the Biblically accurate approach. We need all hands globally involved, each in our assigned roles, and we are in a day when this could be realized.

Mission Rooted in "Abandoned Devotion" to Jesus

Bearing His message among ethnic peoples in our human strength is impossible to sustain and produces burnout. This is an all too common problem in cross-cultural mission. Many serve out of pity for others and their conditions. This appears noble and right yet is produced by human emotion. Jesus wants genuine compassion for others burning in us, motivated by His love. We love Him, and out of the reservoir of this love, obey His commands to go and serve. We do not love others first. The Great Commission is the natural outflow of a life marked by the Great Commandment, "Jesus said to him, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind and your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:37). The foundation of mission is obedience to our Master who gave the Commission in the first place. True mission vision emerges from seeing what He sees and hearing what He hears. We hear His call, surrender all to Him, allowing His will to be done in and through our life. It is then, "out of his heart will flow rivers of living water (John 7:38)" for the nations.

In GMMI circles we call this "Abandoned Devotion" to Jesus. Consider these words for a moment. Abandoned means forsaking someone or something. Devotion refers to profound dedication or consecration. Abandoned devotion then is to forsake all in pursuit of Jesus alone. We abandon what is dear yet interferes with wholeheartedly following and obeying Jesus. *Abandoned* describes the totality and extent of our *devotion*. Devotion is no longer casual, comfortable, or convenient. Devotion calls us to dedication costing time, money, security, friends, and family. Living this way produces the greatest measure of true freedom and satisfaction. The Holy Spirit is aligning the global Church with mission practice rooted in abandoned devotion to Jesus.

Mobilizing and Equipping Entire Local Ministries

It is common in mission mobilization to focus on mentoring one or two people who may have a leaning toward mission. We have tended to take an individualized approach to mobilization. In doing so, we have made a fundamental mistake of overlooking the big picture nature of the Great Commission in the redemptive purpose of God. It is not just for a few specialized believers, but every born-again follower of Jesus.

What if every local ministry made cross-cultural mission an integral part of their focus on an ongoing basis? What if whole denominations motivated each local ministry under their umbrella to do so? Historically, the greatest cross-cultural ministry impact has come through entire local ministries/denominations mobilizing and equipping their members for cross-cultural mission. This does not mean every member becomes a cross-cultural message bearer (alternative term for missionary). Yet they do identify their unique roles in the Great Commission, engaging in them with all their heart.

Multitudes of entire local ministries in every nation mobilizing and equipping their own is a foundational strategy of the Holy Spirit in fulfilling His Great Commission. They emphasize "abandoned devotion" to Jesus in their discipleship, while implementing Great Commission vision using proven tools within the life of the local ministry. A result is every member over time becoming activated in their unique roles. A second result is that local ministry executing a sending strategy of message bearer teams to the unreached. Imagine millions of local ministries of 50–200 members globally engaging with Jesus in this way. Imagine your local ministry prioritizing mission in this way. We would see a tremendous push in mission mobilization globally.

Embracing the Scattering Principle

A growing shift is happening from traditional message bearers (alternative term for missionary) to regular, everyday disciples being scattered from local ministries in teams with the gospel. Traditional message bearers will continue, yet these "scattered" message bearer teams are growing significantly. They relocate homes, families, and jobs to unreached peoples for Kingdom purposes. They are financially sustained differently from the traditional support model—through careers, professions and other self-sustaining means, as the apostle Paul was. They may not have a Bible college degree yet possess experiential knowledge with God, having on the job training as a witness in their home community. This global scattering of hundreds of thousands of message bearer teams is a growing shift in missions and is needed to see the fulfillment of the Great Commission.

Most of these will go to "near culture" unreached peoples, even within their own nation, where they share cultural similarities, language, and overall understanding. Finding pockets of unreached in "near" cities, these message bearers live and work among them, incarnating Jesus and His Kingdom. A minority are scattered to "distant culture" unreached people groups, with a completely different culture, not knowing the language, crossing many national borders to get there. This global scattering of everyday disciples is a key Biblical emphasis often overlooked in favor of the traditional, professional missionary model. Jesus intends many more to be "sent," or "scattered," to both near and distant cultures than is presently being done. Most of our current sending models don't allow for the widespread, financially sustainable, scattering type approach. This will be a great shift in the coming years.

Multiplying Church Planting Movements

The Holy Spirit is stirring the vision of a church for every town and village among unreached and unengaged peoples. How will this be realized? Scattered message bearer teams do not see evangelism, nor justice types of ministry, as an end. Neither do they see individuals becoming born again

Chiang Mai, Thailand

as an end. They bear the message toward the gathering of simple, New Testament-style churches multiplying among a group. The sowing is accompanied by purposeful reaping. Reaping implies ingathering into simple groups called churches. All true ministry gathers peoples into simple, reproducible, culturally relevant, fellowships of believers. The Holy Spirit intends a spiritually vibrant,

wholehearted, reproducing, fellowship of believers within walking distance of every person globally. Seeing this realized requires aligning with the Holy Spirit's paradigm of church planting movements.

A simple definition of "church planting movements" is, "a rapid and exponential increase of indigenous churches planting churches within a given people group or population segment."[3] Another definition is, "a rapid reproduction of culturally relevant, simple churches which reproduce themselves within the culture over and over again." In other words, they are disciple-making movements where obedient disciples make obedient disciples and reproducing churches make reproducing churches. A church planting movement begins with the idea of seeing a multiplication of many simple churches happening across a people group. This is entirely possible, happening presently in various places. David Garrison and David Watson have helped the mission movement immensely in their teaching on this subject over the last few decades. Yet many are still holding out. Seeing that all ministry flows toward the ultimate goal of sustainable, reproducible communities of disciples being multiplied is a shift the Spirit is orchestrating globally.

Pursuing "People Movements" to Christ

As we know from Scripture, God sees humanity, not as geopolitical nations such as Thailand, the United States, or Germany. The Psalms are full of declarations of the "peoples" declaring the adoration, worship, and praise of God. The Lord sees the many myriads of ethnic people groups that make up these geopolitical nations. In India, for example, there are around 950 distinct ethnic groups throughout the whole country. God sees each as an individual people sharing culture, customs, language, history, and traditions. It is His will that every one of these distinct "peoples" has opportunity to experience His redeeming power, set free from the darkness of spiritual bondage, restored into all the benefits, blessings and inheritance purchased for them through Jesus' death and resurrection.

Yet how will all these "peoples" experience that transformation? This is a key question needing Holy Spirit revelation and not cliché answers. Is Jesus really asking message bearer teams from every nation to scatter, crossing cultural barriers and individually communicating the gospel to every person on the planet? Probably not, as that is an individualistic, western cultural outlook. Instead, He seems to be identifying a different target, providing a different strategy. He is asking the global Church to target "peoples" among the unreached, not merely individuals, igniting "people movements" to Christ. The gospel runs most swiftly along "peoples" lines of relatives, neighbors, coworkers, trusted friends and subcultures. Donald McGavran and Ralph Winter were major advocates of this concept in the 1960s and '70s yet it generally still has not taken root in the mission movement, relying instead on a one-by-one individualistic approach to evangelism.

Most cultures of unreached, frontier peoples are communal—not individualistic. Most consider their families and relatives before making decisions impacting their lives. They decide as a group, not on their own. In these societies, an individual does not think of themselves as a self-sufficient unit. They are part of a group, their business situations, marriages, or problems are settled through the group finding solutions.[4] And this is exactly how God created them, moving together in unity as they come to faith in Christ, growing as a community of disciples. To reach all ethnic peoples we must align with the Holy Spirit's purpose of igniting "people movements" to Jesus among unreached and unengaged people groups.

Announcing the Full Range of the Gospel of the Kingdom

Jesus declared in Matthew 24:14, "and this *gospel of the Kingdom* will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come." He reveals the message we bear among all ethnic people groups—the gospel of the kingdom. The gospel of the kingdom provides a clear roadmap for experiencing God's fullness for every human being as intended in the heart of God. Yet we tend to reduce it in its scope, making it appear vague. Is our message among the nations consistent with the biblical, New Testament gospel, culturally relevant to the hearer—or something altogether foreign to Scripture and hearers alike?

Jesus taught more on the kingdom of God than any other topic, using that phrase over one hundred times. His very gospel was the message of the kingdom (Matthew 4:23). He focused on the kingdom in his parables (Matthew 13) as well as in his major discourses—the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7) and Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24–25). Throughout his life and ministry, the kingdom of God was the master passion of Jesus' life.

The Kingdom was also Paul's primary message. Acts 19:8 reveals, Paul "went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God." Since the kingdom was the essence of Jesus' and Paul's message, we must ask if his kingdom is also our primary motivation and message among unreached and unengaged peoples? The Spirit is bringing an alignment related to our core message, enabling his global Church to engage all peoples with the fully-orbed gospel of the kingdom, not merely the gospel of eternal salvation.

Summing Up

To progress in our corporate work of reaching all peoples for Christ we need to align with biblical, Spirit-led wineskins. Aligning with these eight specific shifts in mission, organizations, and denominations as well as seminaries and ministry training schools will take us far. We need focused effort in cross-cultural mission, not merely shot in the dark approaches. The Holy Spirit has laid out his plans, patterns and ways in his Word. It is high time we allow him to truly be the "director of mission" that he is, leading us into his ways, not simply those of tradition.

Ryan Shaw is International Lead Facilitator/President of Global Mission Mobilization Initiative (GMMI) (formerly SVM2). A fourth generation message bearer, Ryan graduated from Azusa Pacific University with a BA in ministry and Fuller Theological Seminar with a Masters in Intercultural Studies. Passionate about spiritual awakening in the body of Christ and global harvest among unreached and unengaged people groups, Ryan and his wife Kelly live with their two children in Chiang Mai, Thailand where GMMI has its Great Commission Equipping Center.

Notes

1. Traveling Team Article, http://www.thetravelingteam.org/articles/mobilization.
2. Steve Hawthorne, self-published article, "Mobilizing God's People For God's Mission," May 8, 2015.
3. Garrison, Church Planting Movements booklet, 7.
4. McGavran, *Bridges of God*, 12.

Article

The Contexts of Contextualization: Different Methods for Different Ministry Situations

Brian A. DeVries

Which method of contextualization best serves the ministry situation in which you are serving? The field of contextualization is broad, with a vast diversity of definitions and models and methodologies. Evangelicals have accepted the term *contextualization* and have carefully refocused its meaning. There are now many useful models of contextualization from which to choose. For example, in his definitive book on the subject, A. Scott Moreau surveys 249 evangelical models and proposes a map for understanding and assessing this radically diverse collection of contextualization methodologies.

Thus, a wide variety of helpful contextualization models are now available for gospel ministry. But, clearly, there is no one-size-fits-all solution; the diverse collections of options are not equally valid or useful or effective in all contexts. Many methods are specific to the context in which or for which they were developed. Furthermore, not all contextualization methodologies are equally acceptable or faithful to Scripture and gospel witness. The present ongoing debates among evangelicals, and the recent contributions of questionable non-evangelical contextual theologies, demonstrate that more research and much more discernment is needed in this important area. The question of this article, however, is more practical: how does one choose the best method for his or her ministry situation?

From a practical perspective, the ministry context or situation is a key determining factor in choosing the most effective contextualization method for a specific application. The constraints of each specific ministry context must significantly influence the choice of methodology. It is helpful, therefore, to organize the various contextualization models and methods based on the ministry context for which they are designed. The purpose of this article is to consider six distinct ministry contexts, each of which require a different contextualization methodology. Admittedly, this is a deductive approach with a very practical orientation; I will not attempt to include representatives for all models. Rather we will create a practical functional framework—based on the contexts of ministry—for organizing and assessing the vast array of contextualization models and methods.

X-1: Incarnational Contextualization

The first context to consider is also first in the logical order of missional ministry progression: the incarnation of gospel witness in a missional context. This type of contextualization is common in at least two significant cases: (1) the Word become flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14); and (2) as Christ was incarnated into the human context, so we who are called into cross-cultural ministry also seek—in a less radical and less amazing manner than our gracious Lord—to be incarnated into the sociocultural context of the people group to whom we are sent. Like Christ (the Word), we (sent ones) leave our natural contexts (sending culture) and go into other contexts (receiving culture) to share the gospel. In both cases, we call this incarnational contextualization.

Let's analyze the underlying concepts of this mode of contextualization: the agent of contextualization is the missionary who is called to live cross-culturally in a context different from their own. The object to be contextualized is the person of the missionary—her lifestyle, language, thinking, and even values and emotions; in short, every aspect of the worldview must be contextualized at least in part. The stage for this activity of contextualization is the sociocultural setting in which the missionary serves, especially the new audience for gospel witness. The flow of this contextualization is linear and one-way; the missionary adapts her practice to the culture of her audience.

An example in the Bible of X-1 is explained with the apostle Paul's familiar words: "To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews." The ultimate goal of X-1 is to "win" people for Christ from among all nations, to be used by the Spirit to "save some," and to participate with the nations in the blessings of the gospel (1 Corinthians 9:19–23). Missionary biographies covering the past two millennia are replete with excellent examples of how faithful men and women have followed Paul in so far as he followed Christ in X-1. The literature gives us many faithful models for X-1; the struggle is usually not *how* to do it but rather with our need for grace to be faithful as we do it.

X-2: Missional Contextualization

For the missionary to be faithful to the message of the gospel, a second mode or context of contextualization must immediately follow the first. So X-1 is logically followed by missional contextualization, which I have labeled X-2. This mode of contextualization takes place within a missional context, and it requires what has been called third-horizon hermeneutics. It involves the communication of the gospel message (the Word) by the missionary (sent one) to a person (receiver) in the local sociocultural context (receiving culture).

The underlying concepts of X-2 are well known: The agent of contextualization is again the missionary who is living cross-culturally. The object to be contextualized is the message of the gospel. The stage for this activity is the sociocultural setting in which evangelism of non-Christians and discipleship of new Christians takes place. The flow of this contextualization is also linear and one-way; the missionary speaks the eternal unchanging Word in a specific and changing local context. In practice, however, this official one-way gospel proclamation is greatly

aided by a dialogical two-way conversation between the Sent One and the Receiver.

The goal of X-2 is to accurately communicate the gospel, within a different language and sociocultural context, in such a way that is understandable and without any unintended distractions or misapplications. Biblical examples of X-2 (and its challenges) include the preaching of Paul at Lystra in Acts 14:6–18, communication that was at first misunderstood. This incident highlights the importance in X-2 of third-horizon hermeneutics and faithful Bible translation. Evangelical literature abounds with faithful models for and insightful reflection on X-2. It is helpful, however, to keep in mind the crucial distinction between X-1 and X-2: in X-1, the *person* of the missionary must be incarnated and adapted to fit into a new culture, while in X-2, the *truth* of the Bible must be translated unchanged into a new language.

X-3: Ecclesial Contextualization

When the Lord blesses cross-cultural missional ministry, a third mode or context of contextualization will logically follow. New believers are gathered into local churches and faithfully discipled so that, by God's grace, a maturing church is established in a new sociocultural context. Evidence of the new church's spiritual maturity includes the practice of self-theologizing, the confessing and teaching of biblical truth (Word) by indigenous people within the local church (receiver) in the language and worldview of the local context (receiving culture). This modified context requires a modified method of contextualization, which I've called ecclesial contextualization since it happens within the thinking and teaching of a local church.

In ecclesial contextualization, the agents who engage in contextualization are indigenous Christians from the local culture, ideally guided by the spiritual leaders of the local church. The object to be contextualized is still the message of the gospel, motivated by a sincere desire to improve the local teaching and confession. The stage for this activity is within the church, often by second or third generation believers. The flow of this contextualization is cyclical, as a hermeneutical spiral. In this way the indigenous church refines its collective Bible knowledge and confession of the gospel.

The goal of X-3 is to improve the accuracy of the local understanding and application of biblical truth (theology), to answer to local questions that challenge biblical thinking (apologetics), and to confront the sin of local traditions (prophetic preaching). The church in Berea, after being planted by the Apostle Paul, is a biblical example of X-3 (Acts 17:10–12). Evangelical literature also abounds with faithful models of X-3. It is important to note the vital distinction between X-2 and X-3: while X-2 logically precedes in ministry progression, X-3 is an indication of a more mature ministry environment. The missionary is no longer directly involved in X-3, and so the process no longer involves third-horizon hermeneutics.

X-4: Reformational Contextualization

The fourth context of contextualization involves the outward-facing ministry of a local church. When a church is faithful, its members will engage in gospel witness—both by words and deeds—within their own community and public space. This missionary activity of the local church in its own particular sociocultural context is different from X-2, the cross-cultural gospel ministry of a missionary. So it requires a different method of contextualization, which can be called reformational contextualization.

In reformational contextualization, the agents are faithful members of the local church who are guided—again, ideally—by their spiritual leaders. The object to be contextualized is the public witness of the church in the world, which is tailored to the specific needs and issues within its particular sociocultural context. The stage for this activity is the public space and community surrounding the church. The flow of this contextualization is both linear and dialogical: it is dialogical as a prophetic conversation between the indigenous believers and the local culture; but it is also linear as a prophetic proclamation of the gospel's truth claims to local unbelievers and their unchristian cultural practices.

The goal of X-4 is to speak against sin in the culture and social structures of the local community, to answer contemporary challenges to the claims of the gospel, to preach the gospel in the language of contemporary culture to the felt needs of people in that context, and to be used by God to reform local society and rebuild it on a gospel foundation with a Christian worldview. The church in Rome is a biblical example of X-4; the Apostle Paul thanks the Lord that their "faith is proclaimed in all the world:" (Romans 1:8; cf. 1 Thessalonians 1:6–10). There are other excellent examples of X-4 in church history, including many Protestant churches during the European Reformation of the sixteenth century, and the revivals in England and America during the Great Awakenings that eventually led to an end of the Atlantic slave trade and the great century of Protestant missionary expansion.

X-5: Reflectional Contextualization

A fifth mode of contextualization is often the byproduct of faithful X-1 and X-2 that is motivated by X-3: it describes the changes that take place in the missionary's own worldview. The worldview differences in cross-cultural ministry, which may initially cause culture shock and other reactions, should lead to careful and humble reflection by the missionary (sent one) about his own worldview (sending culture) and the sociocultural context in which he is ministering (receiving culture). This contemplation is a feedback mechanism, usually resulting in some changes in the missionary himself, which can be called reflectional contextualization.

The underlying concepts of X-5 are different from the modes of contextualization already considered. The agent in X-5 is again the cross-cultural missionary himself. The object to be contextualized, as in X-1, is the person of the missionary. But unlike X-1, this reflection and the resulting changes are often much deeper within the missionary's worldview due to a more mature understanding of both his sending culture as well as the receiving culture. The stage for X-5 is usually very personal—within the missionary's thinking and perhaps his family—and it often causes tensions such as reverse culture shock. The flow of this contextualization is again linear as the missionary adjusts his worldview and becomes multicultural.

The goal of X-5 is to grow in our understanding and application of biblical truth and to mature in multicultural ministry. The Book of Acts gives much attention to X-5: a relatively large number of verses are devoted to explaining how the Apostle Peter, together with the whole New Testament church, learned that the gospel was for both Jews and non-Jews (Acts 11:18, cf. Galatians 2:11–14). A classic example of X-5 in evangelical literature is Paul Hebert's "Flaw of the Excluded Middle."

Note that X-5 could be grouped as a subset of X-6, global contextualization, the final context of contextualization to be considered next. But I decided to keep it separate and place it first for several reasons: (1) it is vitally important in our missional practice as

an antidote to ethnocentrism in practice, (2) it logically precedes global contextualization and is often the precursor to effective X-6, (3) it is a linear flow as a feedback mechanism rather than being a dialogical or organic process of contextualization, and (4) it changes the missionary (sent one) and not necessarily the missionary's culture (sending culture) as in X-6. So it is better to keep X-5 distinct and consider it first.

X-6: Global Contextualization

The humble conversation among many mature churches from various cultures results in global contextualization, the final context for us to consider in our functional framework. This conversation takes place in many ways:

1. When sending churches humbly listen to receiving churches to learn from them how to be more faithful and effective in gospel ministry (similar to X-5 but on a broader scale).
2. When all churches wisely reflect on church history, carefully learning from the experiences of those gone before, humbling correcting the mistakes and weaknesses, and thus standing on the shoulders of others and they continue to serve Christ in their generation.
3. When networks of churches from various sociocultural contexts engage each other in order to further refine the collective understanding and confession of the gospel.

In global contextualization, the agents are believers within the international church community. The object to be contextualized is the aspects of each of our own sending cultures and the gospel message understood and confessed within it. The stage for X-6 is global, ideally the whole body of Christ everywhere in every local church. The flow of this contextualization is cyclical and organic, the conversation among Christians within all cultural contexts.

The goal of X-6 is maturity and unity in the worship and witness of each local church. We desire that all churches "attain to the unity of the faith" and knowledge of Christ (Ephesians 4:13, cf. 1–16). This process of X-6 will guard the Church—both locally and globally—as it continues to think God's thoughts after Him and practice His deed more faithfully. The classic biblical example of X-6 is the gospel defense by the young multiethnic Antioch church at the Jerusalem Council (Act 15:1–31). Delegates from this church argued against those who insisted that non-Jewish believers must keep Jewish traditions; the Antioch delegates argued that justification was by faith alone (cf. the message of the book of Galatians). Thus the Holy Spirit used Antioch's gospel defense to refine the theology and confession of the whole church.

Using the best tool for the job

Evangelical missiology does not need another new method for contextualization. We are not looking for another golden key to unlock an envisioned door that seemingly hinders the rapid progress or massive success of our gospel ministries. The challenge in our ministry practice is usually not with deciding if or when to contextualize, but rather it is often more practical: the challenge of choosing the best method for my unique ministry situation. We can often feel overwhelmed by the available options. While certainly more work must be done to refine some of the existing contextualization methods, there are already enough good options available to us. Furthermore, this refining work (by research, in practice, and with spiritual discernment) will be greatly aided if the present methods can be better tailored to suit the particular context of ministry in which they are employed.

When I was younger and helping at home, my father taught me the value of using the right tool for each specific job. The right tool is helpful, not only because it often makes the job easier, but also because it usually produces a better result. With this analogy in mind, the available collection of contextualization models and methods can be seen as a toolbox of instruments that all should serve to assist us in gospel ministry. But the various contexts and situations each call for a specific tool, a specific methodology. Thus it is wise to identify carefully the right tool for the specific task at hand.

The choice of a tool (i.e. which methodology for the specific context) depends on several factors. There are essential criteria: is it biblical (is it faithful to God's Word and biblical hermeneutics)?; is it ethical (does it promote Christian witness and Christian values)?; and is it missional (does it support the cause of my specific calling within God's mission)? There are also functional criteria (is it useful?), both conceptually for personal understanding and teaching others, and practically for ministry practice and guiding local Christians. Our choice of methodology seeks faithfulness and functionality for the specific circumstance in which the specific work needs to be done.

Which tool is best for the work you are doing? Or to repeat the initial question of this article: Which method of contextualization best serves the ministry situation in which you are serving? We don't need another new method for contextualization. Rather, we just need to reorganize the toolbox, hopefully in a more helpful way, so that we can more carefully choose the best tool in order to be more effective in our ministry work.

Brian A. DeVries (PhD) serves as Principal and Senior Lecturer at Mukhanyo Theological College in KwaMhlanga, South Africa. He has planted three churches in Pretoria, South Africa. He also serves as Visiting Professor in Missiology at Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids, United States, and as Senior Lecturer at North West University in Potchefstroom, South Africa. He and his wife Lanae have four children.

Notes

1. For several well-known classifications, see Robert J. Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1985); Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992); Dead S. Gilliland, "The Incarnation Matrix for Appropriate Theologies," in *Appropriate Christianity*, ed Charles Kraft (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2005), 493-519; and Charles Van Engen, "Five Perspectives of Contextually Appropriate Missional Theology" and "Towards a Contextually Appropriate Methodology in Mission Theology," in *Appropriate Christianity*, ed Charles Kraft (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2005), 183-202 and 203-226.

2. For a concise summary of this history, see several related articles in *Evangelical Dictionary of World Mission*, ed. A. Scott Moreau (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000): Dean Gilliland, "Contextualization," 225-227; Harvie M. Conn, "Indigenization," 481-482; and John Mark Terry, "Indigenous Churches," 483-485.

3. A. Scott Moreau, *Contextualization in World Missions: Mapping and Assessing Evangelical Models* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2012. This book is very helpful, not only for its comprehensive scope, but especially for its academic reflection on the history of this field and various factors in the discussion.

4. Two prominent examples of this debate are (1) the differing evangelical perspectives represented in the views of Charles Kraft and Paul Hiebert, summarized well in Moreau, "Contextualization" (2012), 77-98; and (2) the extended discussion of "how far is too far" in Muslim evangelism, summarized well in Timothy Tennent, *Theology in the Context of World Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 193-218.

5. Consider, for example the divergent contributions surrounding missions and wealth as reviewed in Henning Wrogemann, *Theologies of Mission*, Intercultural Theology, vol. 2, trans. Karl E. Bohmer (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2018), 293-305.

6. Moreau has already made a thorough and definitive inductive study in this field: "Contextualization" (2012). This article builds on Moreau's study, as well as the work of several other helpful evangelical categorizations of contextualization methodology: David J. Hesselgrave and Edward Rommen, Contextualization: Meanings, Methods, and Models (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1989);

Marc Cortez, "Context and Concept: Contextual Theology and the Nature of Theological Discourse," in *Westminster Theological Journal* 67.1 (2005): 85-102; and Marc Cortez, "Creation and Context: A Theological Framework for Contextual Theology" in *Westminster Theological Journal* 67.2 (2005): 347-62.

7. "The first horizon is that of the biblical documents or, as some would have it, of the first generation of Christian believers as that perspective is preserved in the New Testament. The second horizon is ours—i.e. that of established Christians who seek to understand the Scriptures. … Contemporary discussion of mission, however, goes a step farther and deals with the 'third horizon'—viz, the horizon of understanding of the group or people being evangelized." Donald A. Carson, "Church and Mission: Reflections on Contextualization and the Third Horizon," in *The Church in the Bible and the World*, ed. D. A. Carson, 213-57 (Exeter, U.K.: Paternoster Press, 1987), 218.

8. For further discussion about this distinction between one-way gospel proclamation and two-way evangelistic dialogue, see Brian A. DeVries, "Witnessing with the Holy Spirit: Pneumatology and Missiology in Evangelistic Theory" (Ph.D. diss., Southern Seminary, 2007), 291-294.

9. A favorite book for many missionaries is David J. Hesselgrave, *Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally*, 2nd rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 1991).

10. Much has been written about the so-called fourth self: self-theologizing. Paul Hebert's critical contextualization works well in this context.

11. For more on this distinction, see Brian A. DeVries, "Towards a global theology: Theological method and contextualization" in *Verbum et Ecclesia* 37.1 (2016), 8-10.

12. I've used the term *reformational* since the result of this activity is the social and spiritual reformation of the local community. It could also be called *transformational contextualization*, but the words *transform* and *transformation* are often used more broadly and could confuse the precise focus of X-4.

13. Paul G. Hiebert, "The Flaw of the Excluded Middle," in *Anthropological Reflections on Missiological Issues* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994), 189-201.

14. As Hiebert teaches, "Just as believers in a local church must test their interpretations of Scriptures with their community of believers, so churches in different cultural and historical contexts must test their theologies with the international community of churches and the church down through the ages," Hiebert, Anthropological Reflections (1994), 103; see also Paul G. Hiebert, "The Missionary as Mediator of Global Theology" in Globalizing Theology: Belief and Practice in an Era of World Christianity, eds. Craig Ott and Harold A. Netland, 288-308 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), 305-308.

15. Note that faithful X-6 does not lead to further fragmentation and confusion, but rather a "unity of the faith" and maturity in Christ (Eph 4:13). As D.A. Carson argues, "Instead of appealing to the principles of contextualization to justify the assumption that every interpretation is as good as every other interpretation, we will recognize that not all of God's truth is vouchsafed to one particular interpretive community—and the result will be that we will be eager to learn from one another, to correct and to be corrected by one another, provided only that there is a principled submission to God's gracious self-disclosure in Christ and in the Scriptures." Donald A. Carson, The Gagging of God: Christianity Confronts Pluralism (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 552; see also DeVries, "Towards a global theology" (2016), 10-11.

Retention and Onboarding: Are We Ready to Ask the Hard Questions?

Elliot D. Stephens

Has anyone noticed recently if we are improving in our retention of workers overseas? Are the attrition numbers still staggeringly high? Can we turn this ship around and keep our people on the field longer today?

Attrition and Retention of Workers

Ever since the ReMAP I research done 20 years ago, mission leaders have been quoting the discouraging attrition rates of workers leaving the field prematurely: 47% of career missionaries leaving by year five, with 71% leaving over preventable character issues.[1] ReMAP II gave some encouraging signs of improvement in retention, while also indicating that low retention agencies were still witnessing higher attrition over preventable reasons.[2] Taylor concluded from the ReMAP I research that "This attrition topic is a massive and dangerous iceberg that has to be dealt with in the right way and with the right tools."[3]

Are we making any progress in this fight for retention?

I always thought my agency was marked by excellent retention. When I joined 37 years ago, we were a young agency of about 25 adults. Today we number around 3,500. Surely that must mean we are experiencing high retention.

I decided to find out. I conducted an in-depth qualitative PhD research dissertation project, guided by Dr. Duane Elmer as my first reader and mentor, focused on discovering the factors for retention. I interviewed workers and leaders who had passed the 9-year mark on the field, since over 70% of our field workers who had resigned were leaving before reaching the 8-year mark. I also kept in mind Patrick Johnstone's research, indicating that most church planters are more effective starting in year eight.[4]

I also consulted with our US team to dig deep into our attrition statistics to discover the facts. I quickly learned that we were on par with the ReMAP research projects. Our annual attrition was around 6%, which means we were losing personnel at the same rate as many other agencies.[5] Some years we would average a bit better than the ReMAP stats, but overall, we were not looking as good as I expected.

Retention and Onboarding

Our average number of years of service was 7.99 years for field personnel. Low retention agencies average below 8 years, while high retention agencies average 17 years.[6] ReMAP II discovered that the average length of service on the field was 12 years. Though our overall retention was 7.99 years on the field, the median was 5.0 years. That's when I realized that if our median was 5.0 years, 50% of all our US personnel were in their first five years on the field. I also discovered that our highest years for attrition were during the first five years on the field. Nearly 60% of our attrition was happening in those first five years. We were facing a significant challenge of high attrition for many of our new arrivals.

This was a massive wake-up call to the challenge and stewardship of both the new workers joining our teams and the funds invested by the church to send them. People had given up so much to come to the field as career workers. GMI's research suggested that it cost $500,000 to mobilize, select, train, send, and keep a worker on the field for four years of service. Stewardship of lives and funds seemed paramount. Patrick Johnstone's words hit home afresh: "Anything that local churches and mission agencies can do to keep missionaries in the field and lengthen their useful ministry is a good investment."[7] How could we retain our workers past the 5-year mark?

While the research revealed these insights, interviews with field leaders and church planters yielded some startling realities clearly indicating that the early years on the field were the make-it-or-break-it years. At the time of the interviews, we were not yet aware of the data coming from our US office, which underlined the penetrating and insightful nature of these comments from the interviews.

One Area Leader shared his thoughts about new arrivals: "It's their most vulnerable time … and probably the biggest thing that would help is giving more attention during those first few years. Getting people solid, off the ground."[8]

The interview with the International Director echoed the same conviction: "As it stands now there is a giant … gap … There's this one to three-year window that I think we could do much more … I wonder if we could … celebrate the reallocation of some leadership energy toward formation of new arrivals. The development, mentoring and life, spiritual ministry, personal and emotional life formation."[9]

GMI's research on retention, the Engage studies published in 2016, also confirmed what we were learning. "Only 50.6% of the respondents agreed that their organization has an on-the-field orientation/onboarding process that helps new staff thrive in their new setting."[10] That is not a passing grade! So 50% of agencies are not receiving their new arrivals in a way that helps them stay and thrive. And agencies are losing 50% of their workers by year five. Engage research also discovered that only 38% of missionaries felt their agency was able to equip those struggling for

effectiveness in ministry. Some, if not most, of those struggling were probably among the first termers since attrition rates were highest during the first five years on the field. The issue was becoming clear.

So what should shape those first years on the field to help new arrivals thrive and last the long haul? What should characterize the onboarding process for new workers?

Onboarding for New Arrivals

We asked our field leaders and workers what they would include in an onboarding experience that would help new people thrive on the field and stay the long haul. Here are the components they described.

Foundational to the onboarding process would be selecting a leader with the right kind of posture. Leaders were not meant to be "holding hands" or getting in the place of God as the rescuer to help new arrivals have an easier landing. Instead, leaders were meant to be "unhurried" as they walked the journey with new people, building trust with them by shepherding, modeling, equipping, and praying with them.

The second foundational element that would mark the entire onboarding process was a life-on-life mentoring experience, focused on both spiritual formation and development of ministry skills. The mentoring would last for at least two years, as the new arrival was equipped for stepping into a church planting focus.

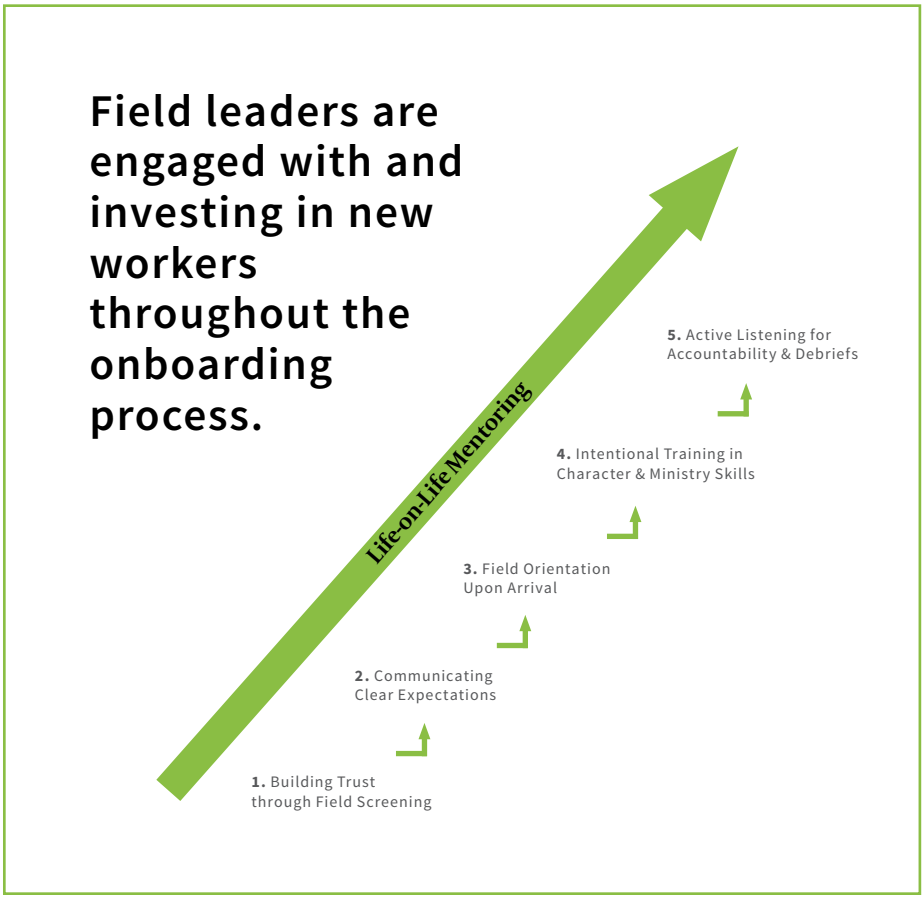
Thirdly, existing church planting teams would designate a member of their team, or their team leader, to receive and onboard new members. Or the field would establish new teams fully dedicated to receiving new arrivals, mentoring and equipping them for a two-year period before they would be launched onto long term church planting teams.

Finally, a clear process would be mapped out for each new arrival. That process would include these steps:

1. Building trust through initial screening or evaluation to determine "fit" between the candidate and the onboarding field leadership or team.
2. Communicating clear and realistic expectations through initial Skype calls, email communication, a survey trip, and a team covenant.
3. Field Orientation for the new arrivals' first week in country to learn survival information and to help them settle into life on the field.
4. Intentional equipping in both spiritual formation and ministry skills. Three key areas of content would make up this equipping stage: spiritual vitality, relational maturity, and ministry effectivity.[11] We will discuss these three areas later.
5. Active listening for encouragement and accountability through periodical debriefs would help to evaluate the progress of the new arrival through the process of being equipped and prepared for launching into their church planting ministry.

Figure 4.1 helps to see the onboarding process in a glance.

Figure 4.1
Process for each new arrival



Does Pre-field Training Help New Arrivals?

The immediate pushback from some is: "Should not workers come with these areas already covered?" Yes and no! Ideally, yes, workers should come as well prepared as possible. ReMAP confirmed the high correlation between pre-field training and retention.

But in reality, field leaders are seeing something different today. Field leaders agreed that new workers come to the field today less and less discipled. The exception is normally seen in those who have completed a non-formal program of training, similar to the program with International Project in New York City. "Non-formal, pre-candidate training that looks at character, interpersonal skills and initial cross-cultural entry attitudes and skills is the single most effective way to minimize attrition potential."[12]

This phenomenon is being felt across the Global North and the Global South. A respected leader from Africa shared his feeling that new workers are coming today with no understanding of discipleship. When I asked him to clarify, his heartfelt response was: "You are asking a difficult question. Yes, I feel that the responsibility should be laid at the door of the local church … I believe it's not being fair. Before people arrive on the field, the local church, the theological institutions, and, if possible, the mission organizations ought to have done that homework of

discipling, disciple-making, so when they get to the field they will be able to perform."[13] Growing weary of this evolving trend, this leader started his own discipleship initiative for new workers.

One Bible college dean, from a well-known school for training missionaries, told us they ceased being a spiritual boot camp years ago and are today a spiritual hospital.[14] A Bible college president commented that they do not prepare people for ministry; rather, their focus is to teach knowledge. The ReMAP II research brought bold clarity to the need for change in how Bible colleges and seminaries are preparing workers. Rob Hay concluded that formal training "is certainly not an adequate training for someone about to embark on cross-cultural mission."[15]

Though there is still validity in preparing workers with theory and a foundation in theology and missiology, it appears that Bible colleges and seminaries are not using reflective and experiential training necessary for effectively preparing future missionaries. Only 62% of those interviewed in our research gave credit to their formal training for retention on the field, while 90% cited their non-formal training events as critical, and 100% of interviews referred to mentoring in informal training as a factor for longevity on the field.[16] Even those who gave some credit to their formal training qualified their comments by saying it was the life-on-life time spent with professors outside of the classroom that really made the difference.

Are Bible colleges and seminaries hearing these concerns? They can still play a vital role in preparing future workers, but they will need to change their approach if they want to stay on the cutting edge of mission training for the future. "Many of us have become convinced that training new workers in their home land is the most effective way to alleviate these problems. However, this requires a significant shift in attitude by all parties."[17] As an adjunct professor at a Bible college, I'm taking these challenges to heart and I am making the necessary changes. I hope others will also.

Content for the Onboarding Process

Our research suggested three areas of equipping necessary for shaping content for the onboarding process. First, clinging fiercely to God because of His pursuit of us, which I'll call spiritual vitality. Second, learning how to build healthy relationships in all directions, which is relational maturity. Third, learning how to do effective ministry in context among the unreached, or ministry effectivity.

The research pointed to a new dynamic that mission leaders are realizing today. We can no longer assume that new arrivals will come to the field equipped in these three areas of content. Since character issues are causing people to leave the field prematurely, then we must focus on spiritual vitality and relational maturity while training new workers in ministry skills.

Spiritual Vitality: Cling Fiercely to God

Many people come to the field with their own definition or understanding of God and when their experiences don't line up as expected, they leave. Death to self is a new topic for many.

The highest factor discovered in our research for retention was a deep pursuit of God with a rich understanding of His character. Spiritual disciplines are critical, but even more critical are the motives behind those disciplines and the goal for the time spent with God. Many of those who have lasted the long haul mentioned "clinging fiercely to God" because of His pursuit of us. There is no place for coasting. This was evidenced by a healthy desperation for the grace of God, and fluency and delight in his Word. Also, workers referred to a rich theology of suffering and a solid understanding of his goodness in the face of impossible trials and setbacks. Finally, they also shared about a true expression of prayer as a mark of integrity of the soul that longs for God, and an obedience to the call of God, no matter where that may lead.

This awareness of the character of God produces the highest character trait for retention in the lives of missionaries, which is a posture of heart in humility and teachability. Some teams and bases look for teachability as the most important character quality when screening for new workers. Field leaders have rejected well-trained candidates because of their lack of teachability. One African base sends candidates to the field for six months and will only accept them if the field leadership sees teachability.

Clinging fiercely to God with a heart of humility *way* outnumbered every other factor for retention on the field.

Mission leaders have been stressing for years that we must stop assuming that missionaries are doing okay spiritually.[18] The Engage research discovered that 58% of missionaries are not asked on a regular basis about "the condition of their soul."[19] The ReMAP II research found that workers find it difficult to maintain a strong spiritual life.[20] The first term pushes workers past their normal levels of stress, causing the baggage or personal issues in their lives to surface and send some of them home.

The reality of the challenge began to sink in as my interviews continued. All of the interviews showed that the leaders were in full agreement that the most important factor for retention was a vibrant and robust encounter with God. But the startling realization emerged that field leaders must embrace their role in discipleship with new arrivals. They must teach many new arrivals to read and study the Word, and they must help them to learn to pray again in complete dependence on God.

Relational Maturity: Love One Another

The second area of equipping during the onboarding stage is relational maturity: learning to love one another in every relationship. The challenge of healthy relationships on the field remains extremely important. One agency reported that their top reason for attrition was broken marriages. Parenting challenges have also led to early departures from the field. Others have reported the breakdown of relationships on missionary teams or with national workers.

Building healthy team dynamics while also learning how to build close friendships within the new community is only possible when workers understand and practice relational maturity. Learning how to handle conflict on the field with others is critical. Multiple tools are available to help with this area of equipping.

This whole arena of relationships becomes even more complicated when we bring in the challenge of internationalization. When more than one culture is represented on a team, cultural intelligence becomes vital. There must be a significant measure of grace to receive and love one another, especially when communication is difficult and worldviews clash.

Ministry Effectivity: Making Disciples and Planting Churches

A third and vital part of equipping is ministry effectivity. This involves both character and skills formation. For example, language learning requires self-discipline and deep humility, as a foreigner spends sometimes years to gain a level of fluency that opens the door for ministry. Bonding and becoming

embedded in a new culture and community also requires humility and patience. Exchanging one's former community for a new one and developing deep friendships in a new context can take years. The goal is to understand a new worldview through ethnographic studies. And for new arrivals to realize that culture shock is more rightly described as "self" shock as they come to see their own pride in the face of new cultural values that they must embrace if they are going to ever call their new location "home."[21]

When does equipping in ministry begin? Some workers have been blessed to see a church planted during their initial two years on the field—during the onboarding process. Church planting principles should begin to be taught in the first week of orientation, helping missionaries to learn how to live their faith out loud. This "DNA" will mark their entire time on the field for seeing churches planted. As the missionary gains fluency in the language and becomes embedded in the culture and community, more church planting training will equip them for the long term vision of ministry on the field.

Conclusion

The high correlation between retention and onboarding became clear in both the general research and in my interviews with leaders and field workers. God has given us, the mission community, the responsibility to be good stewards of both the lives and finances invested to our care for the worthy cause of equipping new arrivals for seeing the Gospel reach all nations.

As an agency, we are committed to turning this ship around. Team leaders of our church planting teams are being resourced and equipped for receiving new workers. Also, nearly thirty teams are positioned around the world exclusively focused on onboarding new arrivals. A global summit, with representatives from fifteen nations, met together this year to tackle the challenge of receiving, mentoring, and equipping new arrivals to the field. Our agency is starting to see improvement in retention.

The driving motivation behind our commitment to helping new arrivals thrive is the Great Commission. To see new workers lasting the long haul, experiencing retention, and joining the ranks of those who have had the honor of watching God reach a people for his glory.

Are you ready to take another look at how you are receiving new arrivals on the field? Are you ready to mentor and equip them towards thriving overseas? Are you ready to ask the hard questions about how your agency is really doing with onboarding your new arrivals?

It might be hard, but it's worth it.

Dr. Elliot D. Stephens (pseudonym) has served in Oceania and South/SE Asia in church planting, leadership, and training since 1982. He has recently completed his PhD research on factors for retention in missions today.

Notes:

[1] Rob Hay, *Worth Keeping: Global Perspectives on Best Practice in Missionary Retention* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2007), 12.

[2] Jim Van Meter, US Report of Findings on Missionary Retention, 2003. Retrieved from http://www.worldevangelicals.org/resources/source.htm?id=95, 3.

[3] William Taylor, *Too Valuable to Lose* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1997), 358.

[4] Patrick Johnstone, *The Future of the Global Church: History, Trends, and Possibilities* (Milton Keynes, United Kingdom: Authentic Media Limited, 2011), 227.

[5] Elliot Stephens, *Factors Contributing to Missionary Longevity* (Doctoral Dissertation, Retrieved from ProQuest: https://secture.etdadmin.com/etdadmin/files/863/631141_pdf_A0B90150-FE57-11E8-A62E-E84959571AF4.pdf), 2018, 3.

[6] Rob Hay, 3.

[7] Patrick Johnstone, 227.

[8] Elliot Stephens, 217.

[9] Elliot Stephens, 218.

[10] Ken Harder & Carla Foote, *Help Your Missionaries Thrive: Leadership Practices that make a Difference* (Colorado Springs, CO: GMI, 2016), 74.

[11] Effectivity is a word! I chose to use "effectivity" over "effectiveness" because it flows better with spiritual *vitality*, relational *maturity*, and ministry *effectivity*! Also, there is a slight difference in the nuance of meaning. Effectivity focuses more on the ability to be effective (https://wikidiff.com/effectiveness/effectivity).

[12] Jonathan Lewis as quoted by William Taylor, Revisiting a Provocative Theme: The Attrition of Longer-term Missionaries (*Missiology, 30*(1), 2002, Retrieved from: https://doi.org/10.1177/009182960203000105), 79.

[13] Elliot Stephens, 208.

[14] Elliot Stephens, 34-35.

[15] Rob Hay, 108.

[16] Elliot Stephens, 214-215.

[17] Roger Dixon, *Framing a New Model for Training Cross-cultural Church Planters.* (Mission Frontiers, May 2013, Retrieved from: http://www.missionfrontiers.org/issue/article/framing-a-new-model-of-training-cross-cultural-church-planters).

[18] Elliot Stephens, 34-35.

[19] Ken Harder & Carla Foote, 10.

[20] Rob Hay, 133.

[21] Roland Muller, *Tools for Muslim Evangelism* (CanBooks: 2016, Retrieved from: https://www.smashwords.com/books/view/619104), 19.

Pillars of a "Theology of Teams"

Dr. A. Matthews

Do we really need another theology of something? These days we are developing or advocating for theologies of all sorts. A quick Google search will reveal proposed theologies of biblical counseling to theologies of communication, from theologies of sex to theologies of LGBTQ integrity. The amount of theologies being bandied about raises questions about whether we really understand what we are talking about when it comes to a developing any sort of theology. This article proposes that especially when it comes to cross-cultural missions, we do, in fact, need another theology: a theology of teams.

Why do we need a theology of teams? Because too many times, we are failing in our church planting; not because of some fault in the church planting strategy or methodology. It's not merely a fault of training or education or spirituality. Too many times, church planting endeavors fail because of people not getting along with each other and, more often than not, that dynamic plays itself out most acutely on church planting teams. In his book, *Global Church Planting*, Craig Ott writes, "Our observation is that planters are just as likely to fall short because of personal inadequacies or an inability to work on a team as they are because of a flawed strategy."[1]

Not only do we need a theology of teams because we can do teams better, but also because the mindset we adopt going into a teaming situation has the potential to set us up for failure or success. Everyone joins a team with some preconceived notions of what that experience will look like. I remember when I first went to the field. I came out of a secular work environment and eagerly looked forward to working with and partnering with fellow believers to see the kingdom of God advance in dark places. I should have known better—I grew up on the mission field. But still, I had a preconceived notion that working with believers would be such an exciting and positive experience. It came as quite a shock, then, when in one of our first planning meetings, tempers flared, harsh words were said, and lines were drawn in the sand. All of a sudden, I found out that even believing followers of Christ can get quite ugly in such situations.

Developing a sound theology of teams could enable people to join teams with a healthy mindset. The Scripture often talks about our minds and mindset. As the Apostle Paul implores the Philippians: "In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:5, NIV). Our mindset has a powerful ability to influence how we act. This is why Paul exhorts us to take every thought captive (2 Corinthians 10:5) and to be renewed by the transforming of our minds (Romans 12:2). Our mindset can set us up for success.

A strong and constructive theology of teams would allow us to see more teams interact healthily and as a result, potentially more churches planted. If we accept the notion that church planting is a key component of what the church is called to do in this world, it is too important a topic to get wrong. We owe it to ourselves and ultimately to Christ, the head of the church, as good stewards, to evaluate how we do our church planting and to see if there are things we can do better. It is my contention that developing a healthy, biblical theology of teams, could be just one step in helping us do church planting more effectively, both at home and abroad.

What, then, would comprise our theology of teams? What biblical and theological concepts would help us better handle our intra-team relationships and would help us more readily succeed at a team-based approach to church planting? I would like to suggest that three pillars must lie at the foundation of our theology of teams.

Pillar 1: Not Allowing the Means to Justify the End

The first pillar is the understanding that the way we do mission matters. It can be easy to lose sight of this fact when we become focused on the task before us. When the vision is grand and God is moving and we're driven to fulfill what we believe is God's calling for us, the ends can justify the means. We can become vision-obsessed and driven. But Christopher Wright reminds us of the importance of not allowing the means to justify the end; of not allowing the mission to become all-consuming.

> Unfortunately, there is a danger that the expression "the whole church taking the whole gospel to the whole world" turns the church into nothing more than a delivery mechanism for the message. All that matters is "getting the job done"—preferably as soon as possible. And sadly there are some forms of missionary strategy and rhetoric that strongly give that impression. The Bible, in stark contrast, is passionately concerned about what kind of people they are who claim to be the people of God.[2]

It's not enough to just get the job done. The way we go about it is vitally important. We must fulfill the mission in such a way that reflects the kingdom we serve in and the king we serve.

This means that we must seriously consider how we treat the people we serve alongside of, the people on our team, and even how teams are formed and supported by their organizations. Allowing people to suffer on poorly constructed teams or to languish on teams with poor leadership or allowing unrestrained conflict to consume team members is not to reflect the truth that the way we do mission matters. We cannot accept a viewpoint that burns through people, essentially

accepting the notion that people will leave and more people will replace them.

This means that the talented, gifted, but hard to get along with person is not worth putting up with on a team. This dynamic is often seen in ministry. I frequently hear people say that so-and-so is prickly or that person is known to be proud or known to be unpleasant to work with, but this is overlooked because they are a great communicator or a great leader. If the way we do mission matters, then team skills and interpersonal skills and emotional maturity matter as does getting along with other people and treating them as Jesus calls us to treat them.

I well remember visiting a team that was having internal issues. Their people were not getting along, but the ministry was apparently moving ahead. People were being served and the gospel was being preached. They knew they had internal issues, but figured those things were kept just between themselves. It came as a great surprise then when I overheard two of the people group they were serving talking to each other saying, "Oh, we know these people don't get along. They can't stand each other." The people we serve are not blind to the way we treat others on our teams and the way we treat others on our teams reflects on our King and on our mission. The way we do mission matters!

Pillar 2: A Team is Not an End in Itself

The second pillar that must comprise our theology of teams is the reality that teams are not an end to themselves. Anytime we reflect on teams or the way we do teams, it can be easy to lose sight of the fact that the team we serve on has a greater purpose. Realizing this greater purpose for which we join a team is crucial to properly shaping expectations.

When I have asked people what metaphors come to mind when they think about their cross-cultural church planting teams, metaphors like family and church are some of the first ones that emerge. While all metaphors have their limits, these predominant mental images powerfully shape the expectations of team members when they join teams. Team members who expect their teams to serve as families have perceptions —some positive and some negative—of what that looks like and how the team will interact with each other. When team members talk about their teammates being a church, that shapes the expectations of what team meetings will look like. It's not so much that these metaphors are wrong (in fact, as we will see below, some elements of these metaphors are important for us), but that they are incomplete. Metaphors like families and churches tend to create an inward-focused mentality where we care deeply for each other and the temptation becomes that we begin to exist for each other.

The cross-cultural church planting team, however, does not exist for this purpose. To use Ralph Winter's terms, the cross-cultural church planting team is a sodality, not a modality.[3] As such, the sodality has an outward focus and that focus is the aim of seeing people encounter Christ and be joined to his kingdom. Cross-cultural church planting teams cannot lose sight of the purpose to which they are called.

The good news is that having a purpose, especially a challenging purpose—like the establishment of churches in a specific region or among a particular people group—can serve to unify a team. In their book, *The Wisdom of Teams*, Katzenbach and Smith call this a "demanding performance challenge" and point out that this challenge is what catalyzes the team to become a team.[4] In fact, Katzenbach and Smith see this performance challenge as being part of what makes for a real team as opposed to a "pseudo-team." It serves to unify the team as they all share this burden to accomplish the objective.[5]

While the way we do mission matters, we cannot be focused only on our teams and creating strong team relationships. The way we do the mission and the purpose for which our team exists must be held in constant dynamic tension. The mission does matter and we cannot lose sight of our ultimate goal in mission.

Pillar 3: God Uses Our Team to Shape Us

The third pillar that ought to comprise our theology of teams is the reality that God wants to use our team to shape us. From Scripture, we know that, if we let him, God can use anything to shape us. Romans 8:28, while often being a verse we quote in hard times, is really about this very principle. God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. To what end? What is the "good" of those who love him? Verse 29 tells us so that we might be conformed to the likeness of his Son. As C.S. Lewis writes, "the Church exists for nothing else but to draw men into Christ, to make them little Christs."[6] This is God's purpose and aim in our lives. He is the potter; we are the clay. He wants to shape us to be more like him.

What if we truly believed this? What if we not only believed this but then translated it into how we do teams? What if we began to see our team as the instrument God wants to use to shape us into being "little christs?"

On an intellectual level, we comprehend this and we may even accept it but on a practical level, it is much more difficult to actually live this out. One of the challenges of serving on a cross-cultural church planting team is that often church planters serving in these contexts have little or no local church involvement. As the kingdom continues to spread to harder and harder places among more resistant peoples, the presence of a local church, at least when the team launches, will be even less likely. This will mean that one of the primary shaping forces God uses on people, our church community, does not exist for many serving in pioneer missionary contexts.

While the metaphor of a team being a church is not wholly accurate, a team can play a church-like role in our spiritual formation. Whether a team meets together as a church or not, how would it change our perspective to think that perhaps God has put us on this team, not because of some grand design he has for this team to accomplish a mission, but because he wants to use this community to shape us to be the people God has called us to be?

What if instead of popping off at John because he's always late for team meetings, you wrestled with what God is trying to teach you through John? What if instead of shooting daggers at Kim in team meetings because she goes on and on and on and never seems to shut up, what if, instead, you asked the Lord to show you what he needs to change in you because of how much Kim annoys you? What if, instead of passively-aggressively making subtle digs at Tim because he's not a very hard worker, you spent time with the Lord asking him to show you what is going on in your heart and how he wants to use this to shape you? I am convinced that God is far less concerned with what he has sent us to do than with what we are becoming.

I am convinced that if this were genuinely applied, it would change our teams completely. As we embraced the activity of God through our teams to transform us and to change us, we would become increasingly like Jesus, and the mission to which we are

called would advance all the more because of our submission to the work of God in our lives.

Conclusion

I recently completed my dissertation studying cross-cultural church planting teams across our organization. There have been many articles in this periodical about teams and how we do teams. Some have been positive and some have been negative. As Sedlacek points out, there is a need for continued studies on the topic.[7] While we will never create perfect teams because teams are comprised of fallible people, we can create better teams and it is worth our effort and attention to make our church planting teams better.

While it is true that there are skills that can be developed and resources that can be made available and trainings that can be done to help improve our teams, I propose that helping team members reflect on a theology of teams could also have a powerful impact on our approach to teaming and working together to see the Great Commission fulfilled. These three pillars form only an initial foray into developing a sound theology. There are surely more pillars that can be added. The mission is so great and so important that it merits further reflection.

Dr. A. Matthews (pseudonym) is a missionary with the Christian and Missionary Alliance living in the Middle East since 2004. He directs a community center that provides free medical care and refugee assistance programs with the aim to plant churches. He also leads a church planting team that aims to initiate a movement of reproducing house churches. He holds a Doctor of Ministry degree from Asbury Theological Seminary.

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Article

Helping New Believers Deal with Unseen Powers

Evelyn and Richard Hibbert

When missionaries engage in the process of making disciples of people from cultures other than their own, they soon discover that new believers face challenges that they themselves have not experienced. They can easily feel overwhelmed or inadequate to help in these areas. Especially challenging for Western-educated missionaries is disciples' experiences of unseen spiritual powers.

Westerners are generally taught to be skeptical about claims of unseen powers at work in this world. As a result, for many Western missionaries, the existence of spirits at work in this world is hard to accept. This blind spot is like a vacuum in the Western worldview—a vacuum that missiologist Paul Hiebert named "the excluded middle."[1]

In order to deal with this blind spot, Western missionaries need to learn about the experiences, beliefs and assumptions of those they are discipling concerning unseen spirits and forces. Then they need to make connections between these and the Bible's teaching about such unseen powers. Finally, they need to work with disciples to articulate a biblically faithful response.

The Challenge of Unseen Powers for Western Missionaries

People from non-Western cultures frequently engage with spiritual forces and beings that are unfamiliar to the Western missionary. They perceive a range of beings such as spirits and ghosts, and forces such as fate, karma, and the evil eye. Some wear amulets or chant certain mantras for protection from evil spirits and forces. Others seek blessing by going to pray at places of special power such as a saint's tomb. Still others want to discern the unknown or what will happen in the future and so they try to interpret dreams or the pattern of coffee grounds left in a cup.

Supernatural powers often play a role in the conversion stories of people from other cultures. Many Muslims, for example, come to faith in Christ in response to dreams or miraculous healing. We worked in Bulgaria among the Millet, the Turkish-speaking Roma, for many years. Early on we discovered that they instinctively turn to spiritual powers to help them with the problems of everyday life. Fatme,[2] one of the first Millet women who came to faith in Christ in the town we lived in, was oppressed by an evil spirit. She frequently wandered around the town at night, shouting and confused. Her husband took her to several spirit practitioners who tried using all kinds of remedies to help her. Eventually, he took her to a church in a nearby town where the believers prayed for her and she was freed.

Like Fatme, many believers' stories of coming to faith in Christ are marked by encounters with spirits. Spiritual forces and beings, and the confusion, deception, and fear that they cause are a major hindrance to disciples' growth towards maturity in Christ. Among believers from a Muslim background, for example, spiritual oppression has been identified as one of the most important hindrances to their growth.[3] Some believers continue to trust in magical practices or objects for protection or blessing, instead of relying wholly on the Lord and his sovereign power. Others experience oppression from evil spirits that hinders their growth as a Christian.

Despite the significant obstacle to spiritual growth that unseen powers pose, Western disciplers sometimes ignore disciples' ongoing encounters with them. They may even dismiss them as unimportant or misleading. Although we may acknowledge that these encounters with spirits are real, fear or feelings of inadequacy can prevent us from engaging with these spiritual realities. Steeped in a Western worldview, as Western missionaries we have a rationalistic faith that readily engages with analytical Bible study but tends to downplay spiritual dimensions and expressions of our faith. We are confident with words but not with power that is beyond our intellectual understanding.

To be effective in making disciples across cultures, intercultural disciplers need to learn about and engage with the spiritual realities faced by those they disciple. If we ignore this aspect of disciples' lives or fail to help them with it, they will be left on their own to find solutions. If we do not actively help them with the spiritual opposition they face, they may feel they have no option except to develop a "split-level" Christianity in which they turn to God for eternal life, but resort to amulets, charms, and other spiritual forces for help with everyday issues such as sickness or misfortune.[4] Disciples may conclude that God has nothing to say about this area and that Christianity is powerless to deal with problems caused by spiritual forces. In some cases, new Christians have returned to their former religion simply to find relief.

Three Steps to Helping Disciples Deal with Unseen Powers

How, then, can we help disciples respond to the challenge of unseen spiritual powers? We suggest three steps.[5]

Step 1: Listen to disciples

First, we must be open to what disciples tell us they are experiencing. This means being open to learning about things that are beyond our own experience. We also need to listen carefully to what disciples believe about what they are facing. These beliefs may or may not be correct, but it is vital that we learn what they are so that we can make relevant connections with biblical teaching.

We also need to be careful to listen carefully as we may be slow to discern when spiritual forces are at work. One Millet man, Adnan,[6]

who was attending a meeting to learn about Christianity, told us that a "young man" kept appearing to him. On one occasion this "young man" had put some money into Adnan's bag. On another occasion, he had stopped Adnan falling off a bridge when he was drunk. At first, we thought this "young man" must be a particularly helpful person. Later we guessed he must be an angel. Finally, though, when Adnan told us that he could not follow Jesus because he was so attached to the young man, we realized that this "young man" was an evil spirit. We learned that Adnan had set aside a special room in his house for this being and left food out for him.

It took us several years to understand that, like Adnan, many Millet are bound to spirits like this. They leave food out for these spirits, set aside a place in their house for them, occasionally build shrines to them, and seek help from them. Becoming aware of this dimension of Millet life meant that we could be alert for signs of it in new believers' lives and homes.

Step 2: Help disciples make connections between their experience and the Bible

Second, we must do our best to understand what disciples believe and do in relation to unseen powers. We need to see things from their perspective so that we can affirm what is consistent with the Bible and identify what needs to be challenged by Scripture. Our goal is to help new believers make concrete connections between biblical descriptions and their experience.

It is important to explore with disciples how people in their culture interact with and try to appease or manipulate both supernatural beings and forces. The folk Muslim Millet, for example, use charms for protection and healing. When they started following Jesus, some Millet began to treat the Bible like a magical charm. When they were sick, they would put the Bible over the place they felt pain and expect to be healed. It was important for us to learn their beliefs about charms in order to address this incorrect use of God's word.

If we are not careful to both explore the meaning of disciples' experiences and to examine what the Bible says about these experiences and their meanings, we run the risk of disciples making incorrect assumptions. For example, childless Millet women were used to seeking out spiritual power to help them conceive because of the great shame they endured when they did not bear a child in their early years of marriage. They observed that new Christian believers often had success in conceiving and they assumed that this was because believers had been baptised. They interpreted baptism as a ritual washing infused with spiritual power. Some women came to church seeking this power encounter through baptism but were quick to abandon God once he gave them a baby.

Step 3: Respond in a way that is biblically faithful and culturally appropriate

The third step for us to take as disciplers is to help those we disciple to respond to their experiences of and beliefs about unseen powers in a way that is both faithful to the Bible's teaching and appropriate to the local culture.

Discover disciples' needs and biblical responses. Sometimes we are too quick to assume we understand what drives people to seek the help of unseen spiritual powers. As a result, we end up identifying the wrong thing as being sin and fail to address the root problem. In order to discover the needs that drive local people to seek spiritual power, disciplers need to sensitively ask what people do when they feel like they are powerless, afraid, or have no control over their lives.

Disciples usually have some idea of the powers and practices that trouble them. We can raise examples of incidents from the Bible and ask disciples if they can think of anything that might be equivalent in their own experience. We can also discuss with them similar practices in other cultures or in their own history. This can lead to a rich discussion of similarities and differences and bring further clarity about what the Bible instructs. Sometimes, there are no clear answers. In these cases, we need to trust the Holy Spirit in his people to help them discern what is best.

Pray with disciples. Disciplers should also pray for disciples concerning their struggles with unseen spiritual powers (cf. Ephesians 6:18). Praying with and for disciples who are experiencing oppression from spiritual forces is vital. Through these prayers they will experience freedom from oppression as together with them we apply Jesus' supremacy and his victory over Satan and every evil spirit to their lives. In this process we are also modeling to them how to pray when faced with oppression from an evil spirit in the future.

Some disciples say they feel an evil presence in their home and ask us for help. One of the most helpful things we can do for them is to go with them to their home, along with other believers. First, check whether there are any spiritual objects or dedicated spaces in the home. These will need to be acknowledged, repented of, and removed. Believers from the same culture will be aware of the kinds of things to ask about. Then, pray with disciples in each room of the house. Pray for any evil spirits to be cast out in Jesus' name and for cleansing through the blood of Christ. There is no formula for how to do this. Prayers like this can be followed by asking the Lord to protect the house with his presence and his angels. Pray that he will fill those who come into the home with peace.[7]

Encourage disciples to renounce objects associated with other powers. People from many cultures attribute power to certain objects. If the object does have some power associated with it, then that power is likely to adversely affect those who hold on to or participate in it, whether or not they believe in it. Objects that the local people believe are associated with spiritual powers other than God should be removed and disposed of. If charms or other power objects are not removed they can continue to exert their power in the disciples' lives. When God does bless disciples with healing or some other blessing, disciples who keep hold of these power objects may be tempted to attribute these blessings to the charm or object rather than to God.

It is important that new believers remove and dispose of the power object themselves. Just as in Ephesus it was the sorcerers and not the apostles who burnt their own scrolls, so it is disciples who should deal with their objects in a way that seems best to them (Acts 19:19). One of the reasons for this is that disciples will have to live with the consequences of removing what they once trusted in, so there must be no sense of coercion in what they do. They must own their decisions and actions.

Disciples who are truly born again can sometimes turn back to other powers for help. New Turkish believers, for example, sometimes continue or slip back into the widespread practice of placing blue beads on babies as a way of protecting them from evil. It can be helpful to work through with disciples lists of problematic practices as a way of checking whether they are inadvertently

doing things that dishonor Jesus. They can then confess and repent from any they have been doing that may have given Satan a foothold in their life (cf. the footholds of Ephesians 4:25–29). It is also helpful to discuss with disciples what to do instead of their old practice. This will help them to avoid reverting to it. In the case of believers going back to using blue beads to protect their babies, a possible replacement might be to say a prayer for the baby's protection and speak a blessing.

Mobilize the community of believers to help. When a discipler from an individualistic culture encounters a demonized person, they sometimes focus in purely on the individual and any sin that individual may have committed that might have given Satan a foothold. Doing these things is important, but it is also vital for us to recognize that demon-oppressed people do not exist in isolation from a community. Their deliverance and ongoing freedom must be secured and supported with the help of a community. The key role of the Christian community in helping believers live in continuing freedom from spiritual oppression is similar to the key role of the church in helping people find healing and forgiveness. This is explained in the last section of James chapter 5. Sick people are urged to call not for an individual but for the group of church elders so that they will pray for them and to hear their confession of any sins they have committed so that the sick person may be forgiven and healed (James 5:13–16).

Affirm Jesus' victory. Disciplers should also help disciples grasp foundational truths that will help them stand against evil forces using God's power (Ephesians 6:1–13). Three of these foundational truths relate to God's supremacy, Satan's continuing activity, and Jesus' victory. Each has implications for believers, as outlined below:

1. *God is supreme over all spiritual powers including Satan and demons* (Psalm 148; Ephesians 4:4–6). His power is far greater than the power of any other power or kingdom (1 Samuel 5:1–5; 1 Kings 20; Isaiah 40:12–31). This means that disciples can look to God for protection from evil powers, confident that he has the power to protect them (Psalm 27:1–6; 1 John 4:4).
2. *Satan and demons work against God by trying to deceive humans into joining their rebellion against him* (Genesis 3:1–5; Mark 1:27; 1 Peter 5:8; 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6). This means that every believer is involved in a struggle with Satan and evil spirits and needs to learn how to stand firm against their schemes (Ephesians 6:10–13).
3. *Jesus has conquered Satan and every evil spirit through his life, death and resurrection.* This means that Satan's grip on anyone who has put their trust in Jesus has been broken. God has given followers of Jesus "incomparably great power" to live for him and serve him (Ephesians 1:19; cf. Matthew 28:18). This means that believers can pray for demonized people in the name and authority of Christ and can command demons to leave the person in Jesus' name (e.g. Mark 1:25; Acts 16:18).

Cross-cultural missionaries play a vital role in helping new believers stand firm against and overcome oppression from unseen spiritual powers. To do this well, though, they must listen carefully to these disciples' experiences, work to understand them in the light of the Bible's teaching, and enable disciples to respond with the spiritual resources God the Almighty has given them.

Evelyn and Richard Hibbert were pioneer church planters among Turkish speakers in Bulgaria. They have been involved in discipling people from other cultures and training intercultural disciplers for more than thirty years. Richard is the Director of the School of Cross-Cultural Mission at the Sydney Missionary and Bible College in Australia.

Notes

1. Paul G. Hiebert, "The Flaw of the Excluded Middle," *Missiology: An International Review* 10 (1982).
2. This is a pseudonym to protect her identity.
3. Don Little, *Effective Discipling in Muslim Communities: Scripture, History and Seasoned Practices* (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, an imprint of InterVarsity Press, 2015), 178, 228.
4. Paul Hiebert and his co-authors describe the widespread problem of "split-level" Christianity in more depth and detail and suggest responses to it in Paul G. Hiebert, R. Daniel Shaw, and Tite Tienou, *Understanding Folk Religion: A Christian Response to Popular Beliefs and Practices* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1999).
5. The steps described here are based on the three steps of "critical contextualization" described by Paul Hiebert in Paul G. Hiebert, *The Gospel in Human Contexts: Anthropological Explorations for Contemporary Missions* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2009), 44-51.
6. This is a pseudonym to protect his identity.
7. More detail on how to pray for buildings is found in chapter 1 of Vivienne Stacey, Christ Supreme over Satan: Spiritual Warfare, Folk Religion and the Occult, (n.d.), http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.506.6870&rep=rep1&type=pdf.

Jesus on the Road to Emmaus: A Missions Perspective

Neal Pirolo

Recently the details of Jesus's encounter with two disciples on the road to Emmaus captivated my attention in a new way. Six things that Jesus did stood out like signposts. I saw a distinct parallel between His actions and the actions that every missionary should follow in their missions journey. Join me on this walk:

Working Alongside the Local Community

Jesus came alongside and walked with the disciples. In His glorified body Jesus could have levitated, appeared and disappeared, or passed right through their bodies. But He didn't. He came alongside and walked with them.

Today even the smallest people group can be represented in the forums of the world. This makes it more difficult for richer nations to exert their "privilege" to exploit those once considered "barbaric." In places where the principles of Christianity have taken hold, paternalistic patterns more common during the colonial era are not accepted..

Missionaries must recognize the worth of all people from the poorest to the richest, the least educated to the most highly trained. Then they must find ways to come alongside and work *with* them rather than *doing* for them. This is for their good as well as for the missionary. What sense of worth can one gain if others come and do everything for him?

Keeping a Low Profile

Jesus hid His own identity from these disciples on the Emmaus road. He did not say, "Look at Me. See My hands and feet; the wound in My side. Can you even imagine how much I have suffered for you?" He unobtrusively walked with them as if He were another traveler. He had the power to deny them the knowledge of His identity.

Keeping a low profile like this can, of course, be a bit more difficult for a missionary. A foreign passport is an identifier that can't be hidden. Missionaries generally come with resources—finances, people, and materials—that may also draw attention. But in acts of humility, the missionary can allow his or her presence to be in the background. If any names must be in the marquee let it be the names of people from the local community. Or, even better, let the Name of Jesus be the only one lifted up.

Understanding and Integrating the Needs of the Local Community

Though Jesus knew the needs of the disciples on the Emmaus road, He allowed them to verbalize it. Solomon said that only a fool says all; a wise man holds back until the right time. Jesus knew that these discouraged disciples needed to express their sorrow and sadness, process the thoughts and feelings they so recently experienced, and verbalize their disappointment: "We thought He was the Messiah."

Knowing the felt needs of a community and integrating those needs into ministry plans follows this example from Jesus. Sometimes missionaries put their focus on their own sacrifice and ministry strategies to the neglect of the people they serve. "After all," they may say, "we have given up so much to come to your country." Even when it's not said, actions can communicate this same sentiment.

We know the people of this world need Jesus to find purpose and fulfillment. For there is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart (or liver or spleen or throat) of every living person, which can be filled by none other than God Himself. But an entrance of a culturally relevant presentation of the Gospel—one that makes sense to the hearer—likely will take time. It will require listening, understanding, and empathy.

Pointing Others to Scripture

Jesus revealed Himself to the disciples on the Emmaus road through the Word. This is an awesome thought. The very Word of God went to the Scriptures to reveal Himself. Again, He could have just shown them His scars or told them a good story, or tried to cheer them up with a good joke. No! He went through the books of Moses, the Psalms and the Prophets revealing that the Messiah must suffer. This was the message they needed that evening.

Missionaries can increase their effectiveness by pointing communities to Jesus through the Word. The message of hope comes from the Bible. Whether it is by story-telling (a very good method in many cultures) or a verse-by-verse Bible study, the basis of every study must be found in the Word of God. What better do we have to offer? What do our "programs" stand on, if not on the Word? Recall that Peter's sermon on the Day of Pentecost was one Scripture after another, laced with a few words of his own.

Rekindling Passion

Jesus stayed with the disciples on the Emmaus road until their hearts were "burning" within them. A fire once engulfed in their hearts. Those flames had been all but extinguished by their interpretation of the events of the last few days, but a few smoldering embers remained. Jesus did not come with a *blast* of the Holy Spirit to blow away those smoking embers. Nor did he wait until he had "earned the right" to share the Truth with them. By the leading of the Spirit of God, he gently fanned those embers into a flame of fire.

Missionaries can follow this example by mentoring people in the local community until a flame burns brightly within them. When I was traveling in Europe, one of my board members asked me to visit a friend of his who was pastoring a church in one of the deadest denominations in Germany. I agreed dutifully but didn't really want to do it. I met the pastor on a Sunday. In the. afternoon when I had to catch a bus back to Western Europe, he insisted on walking me to the bus. Not until we saw the bus approaching,

did I see the "smoking flax" (see Matthew 12:20). In those last few moments he said, "Neal, I know I am pastoring a dead church. I spend my time going from the hospital to the mortuary. Can you send someone to help me with my youth?" The smoldering embers were there, but I with so little time left to talk with him I missed the opportunity to "fan a flame."

Turning Over Responsibility

When the disciples were able to minister on their own—running back to Jerusalem shouting, "He's risen! He's risen!"—Jesus left. He wasn't needed anymore. He had other work to do. He got out of the way.

Missionaries should anxiously look for opportunities to turn their ministry over to local believers. Often times this happens sooner than anticipated. Missionaries must "get out of the way!" A Chinese believer once said, "Missionaries, at best, should regard themselves as scaffolding to be taken down and shipped on to the next building site as soon as the church can stand on its own." Unfortunately the mission fields of the world are strewn with the "scaffolding" of well-intentioned missions. Paul seemed anxious for Titus to "get on with it" in appointing elders in Crete. He said that he knew that they were "slow bellies"—lazy! Their own poets had said so. But "let's get the job done that I sent you there to do," seems to be the tenor of those opening verses of Titus.

This, then, is the Emmaus road from a missionary perspective. It can help us focus our attention on the primary objectives of Christ's command: As you are going throughout the world, you will be witnesses unto me. Preach the Word; make disciples of all nations.

Neal Pirolo is the founding director of Emmaus Road International (ERI), an educational resource for cross-cultural ministry. He is the author of five books pertaining to missions. He and his wife, Yvonne, have ministered in the United States and in sixty countries around the world for thirty-five years through ERI.

Why Spiritual Direction and Missions Belong Together

Caprice Applequist

I've been training to become a spiritual director for the better part of the past two years. My faith has been stretched, expanded, and sometimes confused. At first, many of the things said in spiritual direction class felt contrary to my calling as a missionary, but I've begun to see the principles of direction as essential parts of my mission practice.

Being A Spiritual Director

As a part of my training, I wanted to provide spiritual direction to someone who does not identify as a follower of Jesus. Aisha is a nominal Muslim, who, in our first meeting, struggled to speak about God. When we began, she was dealing with some very difficult relationship issues. I desperately wanted to bring Jesus into the conversation. For me, Jesus is the only answer to suffering. Yet, as a spiritual director, it is not my role to bring Jesus into the conversation. The conversation is meant to be led completely by the thoughts, feelings, and experiences of the directee. My role as a spiritual director is to pray for them to find God and to create space for that to happen. As someone who is trained in traditional evangelical missions practices, this less direct approach was, and continues to be, a challenging approach for me.

I'm regularly asked to explain what it means to be a spiritual director. Quite simply, the practice of spiritual direction is about helping people find where God is present and working in their lives. We work to find the Holy in the mundane. I believe that every part of life is a part of our spiritual experience. Many have compared being a director to being a midwife—my personal favorite comparison. I, like a midwife, have the skills to recognize what's going on, but I don't actually do any of the work; I just encourage it. Contrary to the word "direction," it's not meant to be a very directive practice.

My basic thesis is this: a mission-minded spiritual director could be a valuable asset to urban mission strategy because of its unique approach to cultivating desire for God. Moreover, anybody can integrate the principles of direction into a ministry practice. Finally, direction is a helpful resource for ministers because of its focus on *being* instead of *doing*—a common point of contention for practitioners.

In this article, we will explore three helpful aspects of spiritual direction. First, the spiritual director focuses on listening. Next, she offers an experience of Jesus through her presence, which helps to cultivate a desire for God. Finally, a director is trained to find the places in people's lives where God is working.

Listening

Listening forms the foundation for spiritual direction practice. Directors are taught that one of the most important things to establish with a directee at the outset is her image of God. We all have different images for God. These often change and shift throughout our lives as we understand ourselves better and how God relates to that self. So, even with Christian directees, it is important not to assume that I know how they're relating to God. Maybe they really struggle to accept God as a father figure because of their own struggles with their human father. Maybe they struggle with God seeming masculine. Maybe they like to pray to the Holy Spirit more than Jesus. In other words, with Christians and non-Christians alike, it is very important not to make assumptions about how they think of, relate to, or approach God. In mission work, I wonder how often we might need to adjust our typical Gospel presentation to better fit how the recipient views God.

Being a Presence

In the earliest sessions with my Muslim directee, I asked her questions about how she perceives God. She answered by describing Islam to me. She talked about what she's supposed to do and how she struggles to do it. A lot of Christians do the same thing. I might ask them about God and how they relate to Him and they'll start quoting Scripture, saying what they should believe. They might talk about how Christians should pray, go to church, and do good things (whatever those might be). If anything is clear in the gospel, it's that God works with us as we are, not as we should be. So there's very little point in discussing the "shoulds" of our religious practices.

I asked Aisha how she would *like* to think of God. How does she think he *really* is, not what does her culture's religion say about him? She said she'd like to hope that he is truly compassionate and merciful, fairly unconcerned with whether or not she does her prayers everyday, has sex, or wears a hijab. I told her that was how I perceive God—that he is loving, desiring to have relationship with us regardless of what we do. So then we explored what it feels like to believe that God is like this. How different is it to think of God as loving and merciful instead of vengeful, waiting for us to sin? She felt like there was a lot of freedom in that. I encouraged her to explore what it would look like for her to treat God like he's not waiting to punish her. I can't help but wonder if this process of listening fostered more openness to Christ than if I had been quick to "preach the gospel."

Finding Where God is Working

It is so strange to not be allowed to share the gospel with someone when we're talking about spiritual things. I thought that would weigh heavily on my conscience. I'm not taking the opportunity! What if she dies in a car accident on the way home? Yet I am learning to trust God's good work in people.

I am learning how little power my words have with them. Through this training I have learned to listen, to really listen to people. I get to hear how God is beckoning them closer to Him, and then I get to encourage them to listen to Him. I get to tell them to listen to God instead of listening to me. Somewhere along the way, that started to feel like a substantially more comfortable place for my conscience.

My spiritual direction supervisor once told me a story she heard long ago about a little boy struggling to sleep at night. There was a storm and he was afraid. His parents put him to bed and prayed with him, asking that he would know Jesus is with him so he doesn't need to be afraid. In the night, he came and joined his parents in bed. When they asked why he was afraid since he knew God was with him, he replied, "I know God is always with me. But tonight I needed Jesus with some skin on. That's why I came to bed with you."

How many of us regularly need "Jesus with skin on?" What could be more biblical, since our bodies are declared to be the temples of the Holy Spirit of God? I often think about how loving and open and friendly Jesus must have been to get away with some of the stuff he said. There are a few things in the Gospels where he says things I would never say. Yet people felt so loved and accepted by him (everyone but the Pharisees of course). A part of my role as a director is being Jesus with skin on.

Sometimes, spirituality is complicated, because it's all unseen. We talk to God, whom we can't even prove exists. So I wonder how many people just need some sort of experience of the compassion and love and openness Jesus offers. Maybe if I sit in kindness with someone and listen to her struggle and pray for her, I am giving her a taste of Jesus. Maybe Jesus is a little like Doritos—once you taste one, you need to eat the whole bag. I wonder if maybe sometimes we hijack desire. We think if we can prove to someone that they are sinful and they need Jesus, then that will mean they want Him. But they often don't. Cultivating desire is an important aspect of mission strategy. I believe that God is beckoning all people to Himself, and in direction I have the unique opportunity to poke around in someone's life to find where that beckoning is taking place. In Aisha, we found Him in her suffering and struggles.

Outcomes

It has been incredible to see the giant shift in how Aisha's relating to God and allowing Him to be a part of her life after just four sessions—that's only four hours. She went from talking about God as a set of rules in Islam to talking about him as a place of comfort and security as she deals with her pain. She specifically told me how wonderful it's been to think of God as knowing everything about her and still offering his presence. She has even opened herself to practicing *Lectio Divina* with the Psalms.

As I hear her talk about God as potentially loving and accepting, I have a lot of things going on in my brain. Of course, I desperately want to tell her that Jesus is the embodiment of this God she desires—this God who gives up everything for relationship with us. I want her to understand that she has some distance from God because of her sin. I want her to know the fuller sense of freedom when you experience God through the gift of Jesus. But our spiritual direction sessions are not the place for that. As much as my missionary heart wants to stop everything and preach the gospel, I'm not allowed to, because it's not the right context.

All that being said, I see more movement toward an understanding of the gospel in her than in my friends whom I openly share about Jesus with. I see an increased desire for God and an openness to growing in relationship with him.

Personal Spiritual Growth

Finally, the context of spiritual direction has the potential to encourage missionaries toward health in their own inner life. Serving as a single missionary for several years, I can see how easy it is to start to find my worth in what I'm able to achieve for the cause of the gospel—and that's just with very limited time on the field. Missionaries develop God complexes so easily. It is not difficult to start thinking that you are capable of saving people. That you are the only way they are going to truly experience God. It's not true, but it is really easy to believe that either implicitly or explicitly.

As I sit with my Muslim directee, desperately wanting her to know Jesus, I have to trust that God is working in her. Through her time with me, she is learning to listen and be open to his work. I think she definitely needs to hear the gospel message laid out for her. So I am forced to trust and to pray, differently than I usually do, that someone will make it clear to her. God is big enough to use multiple people to bring someone to Christ. Actually, He almost always does! For this reason, I think it makes perfect sense to enlist a gospel-oriented spiritual director on your missionary team. If you meet non-believers who are open to exploring their spirituality, send them to that person who can provide space for that. You can work with them. You can be the person to explicitly share the gospel as the director works to help the person's heart soften and open to it.

Being a Witness

I hope I've said it enough times, but I'll say it again. People need to hear the Gospel proclaimed. I'm also saying that maybe that proclamation is only one piece of how God is working in people. For me, spiritual direction has given me new tools and training for guiding people to Jesus. It's not for everyone, but it seems helpful for some. The practice has also substantially grown my own faith in the sovereign work of God, and it forces me to a greater awareness of the small role I play in someone's salvation story. It's all about God's work. We just get to join.

Caprice Applequist lives and works in San Francisco, California. She loves connecting with the vibrant and diverse Muslim communities of the area and enjoys the food that comes with those connections. She recently began to practice as a spiritual director, but contemplative prayer practices have been nourishing her traditional Baptist spiritual life for the past five years.

China: Statistical Highlights

September 2019

Statistical highlights that give us a glimpse of the current political situation and status of religion in China. Explore the interactive content of this missiographic with virtual reality using the Zappar app.

China 中国

Statistical Highlights that Give Us a Glimpse of the Current Political Situation and Status of Religion in China.

INTERACTIVE MISSIOGRAPHIC
Explore the content of this missiographic with virtual reality using the **Zappar app**. Find it on the App Store or get it on Google Play.

SPIRITUAL DEVOTION 精神奉献

millions of religious worshipers

- Religiously Unaffiliated **700.7**
- Folk Religionists **294.3**
- Buddhists **244.1**
- Protestant Christians **58.0**
- Muslims **21.7**
- Catholic Christians **9.0**
- Other Religions **9.1**

1.42 BILLION
TOTAL POPULATION
live in China based on 2019 United Nations estimates.

18.4% of the **total world population** live in China.

72.6% of all **professing folk religionists** live in China.

50.1% of all **professing Buddhists** live in China.

3.1% of all **professing Christians** live in China.

SACRED TEXTS 圣经的文本

religious writings in China

- **63,000 BUDDHIST SUTRAS** printed in Chinese, Sanskrit, Tibetan, and English

160 MILLION BIBLES printed in China — over one hundred languages

80 MILLION Bibles printed in Chinese

MUSLIM QURAN published in Chinese, Uighur, Kazakh, and Kyrgyz

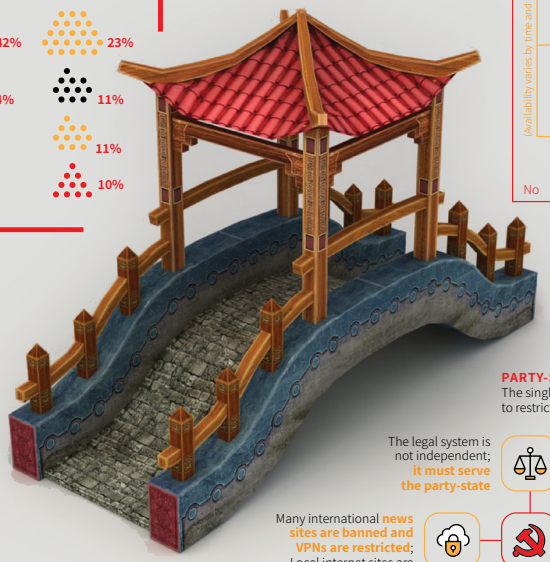
RELIGIOUS VENUES AND EDUCATION 宗教集会点和教育

	144,000 PLACES OF WORSHIP	91 RELIGIOUS SCHOOLS
Buddhist 33K Temples	23%	45%
Protestant 60K Churches	42%	23%
Muslim 35K Mosques	24%	11%
Daoist 9K Temples	6%	11%
Catholic 6K Churches	4%	10%

500,000 PROTESTANTS ARE BAPTIZED in China each year.

圣经 CHINESE UNION VERSION

is the dominant and most popular translation used in mainland churches, both registered and unregistered. It was first published in 1919.



Where to get a Chinese Bible…

Do you live in mainland China?

Yes (Availability varies by time and place)

- Purchase a Chinese Bible from any registered **CCC/TSPM Church**
- Download the Chinese-English Bible at **ccctspm.org/bibleload**
- The **YouVersion** Bible app has some of its most rapid engagement in China
- Access 9 different Bible versions in the WeDevote Bible app: **app.wedevote.com**

No

- Choose from 6 different Chinese Bible versions at **afcresources.org**
- Find Chinese audio bible versions on **biblegateway.com** and **amazon.com**

> "It is necessary to adhere to **THE LEADERSHIP OF THE PARTY OVER ALL WORK.** Among the party, the government, the military, the people, the academia and all circles, **THE PARTY LEADS ALL.**"
>
> —Xi Jinping, 2017

PARTY-STATE CONTROL

The single-party system in China continues to restrict civil rights and religious freedoms.

- The legal system is not independent; **it must serve the party-state**
- **University teachers** are supervised to build party loyalty
- Many international **news sites are banned and VPNs are restricted**; Local internet sites are monitored and censored
- **Tight control over economy** after decades of loosening control
- Public Security Bureau **directly oversees** domestic & foreign NGOs
- Decades of a **One-Child Policy** has led to serious social problems
- **Supervision of religious affairs** is managed by a Party department; Unregistered religious venues are heavily restricted

CHINA'S TIGHTENING GRIP ON CIVIL SOCIETY

the early 1990s the Party-State in China began to relax its grip over Chinese society, allowing for the emergence of a nascent civil society. This allowed for more openness (if not actual freedom) for various sectors of society, including religion. Since Xi Jinping came to power in 2012, he has been working to reestablish Party control over civil society. This is the origin/genesis of the various crackdowns we have seen over the past 5 years. It is the Party's re-assertion of control.

- **1949** Communist Party establishes Peoples Republic of China
- **1952** Government establishes Three-Self Church
- **1958** The Great Leap Forward closes 90% of churches; Anti-religious atmosphere
- **1966** Religious persecution intensifies during the Cultural Revolution
- **1980** Protestant church services resume
- **1982** Regulations allow for state-sanctioned religious activities
- **1989** Disillusionment following Tiananmen Square crackdown leads to openness to the Gospel
- **2004** Revised religious regulations identify legal and illegal religious activities
- **2014** Demolition of "illegal" churches and crosses in southeast China
- **2018** Revised religious regulations tighten restrictions on unregistered house churches, forcing some to close or break into smaller groups

6.4% (90 MILLION) of China's population are **Chinese Communist Party** members, making it the world's largest political party.

Jesus loves you. 耶穌愛你

Missionary Aging: Dynamic Choices Versus Shriveled Soul

Paul Borthwick

An older colleague I consider a modern-day missionary hero wrote me a note I received last week. He wanted to renew our acquaintance so that, as we age, we could write to each other as an encouragement "as we both sprint towards the finish line."

The letter and the writer struck me—he's now over 75 years old. His family has struggled with chronic illness. In his younger years, his boldness resulted in reaction from older colleagues, imprisonment in North Africa, and some self-created tensions with other missions.

But here he was in his late 70s inviting mutual encouragement as we "sprint" towards the finish line of life. He illustrated to me a leader committed to making dynamic choices in the face of the challenges of life.

When a younger man, I heard someone say that life is the accumulation of one's choices. Now I believe it. I see in myself good things and bad that are the result of repeated choices over the days, weeks, months, and years of my life. I am indeed reaping what I sowed—for good and for ill.

Sometimes this thought scares me, but more recently it has motivated me to start looking at older men and women to examine what choices and patterns have made them what they are.

So far I've noticed two types of prominent patterns in my observations. On the one hand, I notice the vibrant, resilient older folks—like the older brother who wrote to me. These are the people I call "Calebs" because they, like Caleb in the Old Testament (Numbers 13 and 14; Joshua 14), live life to the fullest. They maintain a faith-based optimism, a give-me-this-mountain attitude, and a soft heart of gratefulness and servanthood. They have spent a lifetime living out Psalm 119:32—running the ways of God's commandments—so that now they have "enlarged hearts" towards life. I want to be like these people.

But I fear becoming like the other type of person I see. I don't have a personal name for these folks; I just call them shriveled souls (I think I got the image from a C.S. Lewis novel). Unlike the "Calebs," these people never developed the disciplines and attitudes that expand their souls. Rather than demonstrating a spiritual resilience and vitality, they seem withered by life's hardships.

Observing the two types of people, I have developed a list about the long-term choices these folks have made concerning character, attitudes, and behavior. I call the list my *Ten Characteristics for Avoiding Shriveled Soul Syndrome.* Having perceived them, I am now trying to live them out with Caleb-like positive responses, "following God whole-heartedly" (Joshua 14:8).

Avoid Gossip

"Caleb"-like people try to find good news about other people. They believe the best rather than muck around to assume the worst. They spread good rumors and avoid judgmental condemnation. Gossip shrinks our souls by diminishing our self-worth because we're living at the expense of others. We build our identity by tearing others down and saying, in effect, "I may not be much, but at least I'm not as bad as that guy."

Release Bitterness

Bitter people shrivel spiritually as they walk through life under the weight of "apologies owed me." Everyone else is to blame. Caleb took responsibility for his own life (note in the biblical account that there is no record of Caleb or Joshua living the "if-only" life). They could have exhausted themselves in bitterness by blaming the 10 disbelieving spies ("If only they had believed God, we wouldn't be walking around this stinking wilderness"). They released the people who hurt them and forgave without being asked, and in so doing, they liberated their own souls!

Take Risks

Caleb gave the report, "Let's go for it"—"we can certainly take this land" (Numbers 13:30). The others cowered in fear of exaggerated giants. Expanded souls step out in faith. Shriveled souls run when no one is pursuing. Expanded souls believe God and take risks. Shriveled souls take no risks because they choose to live in fear of "what might happen."

Trust

Living a life of worry guarantees a shrinking soul. Expand your soul by checking out the Twila Paris song *"God Is In Control"* on YouTube[1]. When we try to be God by having everything under control, we shrivel because we cannot bear the weight. Enlarged souls live comfortably with the unknown because they choose to trust God.

Don't Live for "Stuff"

Keep the rampant materialism of our Western world in check. Those who live for the accumulation of things (either by purchasing these things or by constantly complaining about unfulfilled coveting—which is more likely in the case of those of us in ministry) easily degenerate into shriveled souls.

Master Your Appetites

A person controlled by cravings will shrink their spiritual capacity because food, lust, or other unchecked desires will take over. The "Caleb" person attends to physical as well as spiritual discipline; how else could Caleb have said, "I'm just as strong today as when we left Egypt 45 years ago." (Joshua 14:11)?

This article is adapted from an article that has appeared in various forms, most recently in Fellowship of the Suffering: How Hardship Shapes Us for Ministry and Mission by Paul Borthwick and Dave Ripper (InterVarsity Press, 2018), 113-115).

The full list can be seen at http://www.finishingthetask.com/downloads/FTT_UUPG_List.pdf.

Grow Deep

Enlarged souls think about the meaning of life. They look for purpose. They struggle to understand and live life based on a philosophical and theological foundation. Shriveled souls get pre-occupied with drivel. They burn up their intellectual energies on monumental facts like sporting scores or the weather, and then they find their conversations filled with superficiality.

Be Generous

Stinginess might enlarge our bank accounts, but it shrinks the soul.

Celebrate the Past, Embrace the Present, Anticipate the Future

Enlarged souls learn from the past but don't live there; they recognize that the "good old days" are mostly old. They live today and—like the wife described in Proverbs—"smile at the future." Shriveled souls dwell in the past, dislike the present, and tremble at the future.

Think Globally

Enlarged souls follow the Lord of the nations, the Lord of the universe. Shrunken souls want a village God who attends to their whims. Enlarged souls celebrate the diversity of God's creation. Shrunken souls want a world just like them. Enlarged souls see their role in serving the world. Shrunken souls make *their* world the whole world.

John Henry Jowett exhorted people to live life to God's fullest and to avoid the shriveled soul syndrome. He wrote:

> It is possible to evade a multitude of sorrows through the cultivation of an insignificant life. Indeed, if a person's ambition is to avoid the troubles of life, the recipe is simple: shed your ambitions in every direction, cut the wings of every soaring purpose, and seek a life with the fewest contacts and relations. If you want to get through life with the smallest trouble, you must reduce yourself to the smallest compass. Tiny souls can dodge through life; bigger souls are blocked on every side. As soon as a person begins to enlarge his or her life, resistances are multiplied. Let a person remove petty selfish purposes and enthrone Christ, and sufferings will be increased on every side.

David anticipated an enlarged soul when he stated, "I will run the way of Thy commands, for Thou wilt enlarge my heart" (NASV) Psalm 119:32. My older mission colleague illustrated his enlarged soul when he referred to "sprinting towards the finish line." God's people allow him to set their hearts free, and in so doing, avoid the shrunken soul syndrome.

Paul Borthwick (DMin, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary) is senior consultant for Development Associates International and teaches global Christianity at Gordon College in Wenham, Massachusetts. His books include *Western Christians in Global Mission*, *Six Dangerous Questions to Transform Your View of the World*, and *Great Commission, Great Compassion*.

Notes

1. Twila Paris' *"God Is In Control"* can be found on YouTube at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V-lwbgOFPu4

The Right and Wrong of the 'Presence' Idea of Mission

Donald McGavran

EMQ ARCHIVES
Volume 6, Issue 1, January 1970

For over a hundred years Christian mission has been understood to be very largely proclamation. A major board has declared that "the supreme and controlling purpose of the Christian mission to the world is to proclaim Christ as divine and only Saviour," and this declaration is typical of those made by scores of missionary societies.

Recently, the word *proclamation* has seemed to some in ecumenical circles "too harsh, direct, and ineffective," and they have begun to use the word *presence*. "Proclamation" needs little explanation, for it is thoroughly biblical and its meanings are clear. "Presence" on the contrary, is so new and so fashionable that it is used in many ways and with many meanings.

"Christian Mission," too, has come to be an ambiguous term. Its meaning thirty years ago was clear; but today, in the process of being captured by one wing of the church, it says many, many different things. Both presence and mission need careful definition.

I use mission in the classical sense—namely as that complex of activities whose chief purpose is "to make Jesus Christ known as Lord and Saviour and persuade men to become His disciples and responsible members of His Church." This has been its well-nigh universal meaning. Whether by European or Asian Churches, as long as the purpose was to invite men into a redemptive relationship with God through Jesus Christ, the activity was called mission.

The unfortunate turn of events of the last twenty years, by which mission is taken by many to mean "everything Christians do outside the four walls of their church," contributes nothing but confusion. Today, according to these apostles of obscurantism, the church doing anything at all which may be considered the will of God is dubbed "the church in mission." What our fathers called simply "doing God's will" is today in grandiose phrase called "sharing in the missio Dei."

Coming now to the word presence, many are using it. Its twin sister dialogue is even more common. Presence-dialogue is a coat of many colors. No other use, however, is as well-described and as consistent over several publications as Canon Max Warren's. None has sought so faithfully to be true to classical mission. Consequently, I concentrate on his definition.

Back of the presence school of thought, says Warren, lie three great challenges being thrown out by the peoples of Asia and Africa in their revolt against domination by the West. "First, a critical evaluation of the Christian religion… as something inherently Western … Second, can Christians of the West accept the fact that the expression which Christianity will receive in its Asian and African forms … will be very different from what we know in the West?"

Challenges one and two are background. I, therefore, pass them by. Challenge three-the matrix of presence-asks: Can the Christian church coexist with other religions? Warren in his introduction to Taylor's "Primal Vision" says:

"The Christian Church has not yet seriously faced the theological problem of 'coexistence' with other religions. The very term seems to imply the acceptance of some limitation of the universal relevance of the Gospel. Can that be accepted? … the answer must be 'no'."

Canon Warren then goes on to say:

"Are we then shut up to … what in some disguise or other must be an aggressive attack on the deeply held convictions of those who live by other faiths than our own?"

This question is the mother of presence. One way or another, this underlies the concept and all of its related concepts. As we meet other religions, are we shut up to aggressive attach? Canon Warren says no and proposes the complex way of presence, as the via media lying between aggressive attack and coexistence.

Advocates of presence are pleading for a respectful approach to non-Christian religions. They plead from several different grounds:

1. That presence is the Christian attitude toward other religions. One must be scrupulously fair to others. Only as Christians put themselves in another man's shoes can they really understand the depths of his religion. Until they feel the reasonableness and the attraction of the secularist's position, for example, they do not really understand secularism. Until they look at Islam through the eyes of a Moslem and permit themselves to glory in its grandeur, they have not been "Christian" toward it.
2. Others plead for the respectful approach from pragmatic grounds. When Europe ruled the world, they say, we might count on our

ideas being accepted, but when we look out at more than a hundred sovereign non-Christian states, we must avoid setting ourselves over against them. We must not appear to them to be a hostile camp from which we shout out the Gospel. If we appear to occupy that position* non-Christians will automatically reject our message, because it comes from the enemy. Running through much of the presence and dialogue apologetic is the pragmatic need to maintain communication, as essential to any transmission of the Gospel.

3. Some missiologists advocate presence as the only safe stance. Christians are tiny minorities in many lands and will remain so—they think—for generations. They will not be permitted to proclaim the Gospel. They can speak of Christ—if at all—only in the veiled form of dialogue or presence.

It is noteworthy that a very early user of presence was Charles de Foucauld, a Roman Catholic missionary to North Africa. He defined a missionary as "one who is there with a presence willed and determined as a witness to the love of God in Christ"—a very good definition of mission, too, in Algeria where your throat will be cut before morning if you preach effectively for conversion. I call this the prudent ground for advocating presence.

Evangelicals see no problem in presence on any of these three grounds. As long as the goal is not coexistence in any form or disguise, as long as the goal is that Jesus Christ according to the Scriptures be accepted, and the respectful approach is a means to that end, it is acceptable. The Christian attitude to other religions, the use of methods which offer maximum communication, keep Christians from preaching the Gospel at others, and give Christians a chance to live long enough to preach it effectively, are all defensible. It would be easy to illustrate each from the history of mission. I endorse presence when the goal is that Jesus Christ according to the Scriptures be believed, loved, obeyed, and followed into the waters of baptism.

Let us now take up the four "acts" which for Canon Warren comprise the way of presence.

The first is that we gladly accept "the new situation in which the Christian faith can everywhere be distinguished from its past historical association with Western political, economic and cultural aggression." I have nothing but cordial approbation of this. Much churchly life in Eurica is the Christian faith dressed in Eurican garments—which do not fit Afericasians. Christian mission should, indeed, require nothing of Afericasian Christians (or of Eurican Christians for that matter) but what can be proved from the Bible. Everything else is adiaphora.

The second act is "deep humility. We must lay aside all feelings of superiority of culture, race, or nation." Evangelicals agree entirely that the missionary must renounce all pride in his personal, racial, or national attributes. He has nothing but what God has given him, and there is no scientific reason to judge his race superior to others. All feelings of white superiority, educational superiority, or high caste superiority are sinful. All such pride and arrogance must go. But there is one point at which evangelicals demur. The treasure we have (in admittedly earthen vessels) is superior to everything that natural man possesses, whether he be white, brown, yellow or black. It is at this point that D.T. Niles' famous statement errs. Once the beggar has found food, he is no longer hungry; once he has found the treasure, he is no longer a beggar. While Peter remains a Galilean peasant, in Christ he is one of a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation. He has come out of darkness into God's marvellous light. To commend Christ to others, he must not falsely maintain that he is still in darkness. Is the Christian not in danger of being hypocritical if he protests that he is just one beggar telling another where to find food? How to speak of the vessel as we should, without demeaning the treasure—that is the problem.

In the third act Warren says, "We must approach the man of another faith than our own in a spirit of expectancy to find how God has been speaking to him and what new understandings of grace and love of God we may ourselves discover in this encounter.. . God was there before we arrived." I welcome what the presence school of thought seeks here to achieve.

Understanding of and appreciation for what may be true in ancient and modem religions is reasonable and necessary in the presentation of the Gospel, so that I do not see how anyone can object to it. But the presence school gives a theological ground for the appreciative attitude—and that is a different thing entirely.

For example, many good counsels and clear insights as to man and God can be found in Tulsi Das' Ramayan (which is the common scripture in the part of India where I was a missionary), but there is also much that is mistaken, some that is foolish, and a little that is gross. We Christians would never dream of teaching the Ramayan to our children as Scripture— what God has revealed. In what sense then can we sit down with our Hindu friend in a spirit of expectancy to find how the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has been speaking to him through the Ramayan. Does God speak out of both sides of His mouth? Is he the Author of double talk—affirming to the Theravada Buddhist that there is no God and to the Christian that God is and is intensely personal?

Let us see what biblical base there is for grounding our appreciation of other religions and systems of thought in an alleged revelation by God of Himself in those religions. Paul's address on Mars Hill shows clearly how he dealt with the matter. He announced the solidarity of the human family and affirmed that God is not far from each one of us, for in Him we live and move and have our being. He suggested that, "in the hope that men might feel after Him and find Him," God made man with religious longings.

After this Paul did not proceed to explore Socrates, Plato, and others to find what God had told them. Instead, Paul with magnificent honesty says, with a wave of the hand toward the temples that crowned the Acropolis, "We ought not to think that the Deity is like gold, silver, or stone, a representation by the art and imagination of man. The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands ail men everywhere to repent, because He has fixed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the resurrected and living Jesus."

Paul no doubt appreciated the noble principles, philosophical framework of Greek thought, and insights that eventually flowered into the sciences of the West; but Paul never gave his appreciation a theological ground. He never suggested that Greek religion had been revealed by God, nor that it was a witness to God. In the famous passage (Acts 14:17) where Paul says that "God has not left Himself without witness" he specifically does not mean "witness in the religions of mankind". These he sums up as "vain things," and as "men walking in their own ways." This witness passage should always be read in the light of its later clauses: "Yet He did not leave Himself without witness for He did good and gave you from heaven rains and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness." What bore witness to God was the natural fruitfulness of earth, the rain and the sunshine. We have a similar passage in

Romans 1:18 and following:

> For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of men who by their wickedness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. Ever since the creation of the world His invisible nature, namely His eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse; for although they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks to Him, but they became futile in their thinking and their senseless minds were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man or birds or animals or reptiles (Rom. 1:18-23).

It is of first importance to read this passage aright. What God has revealed to man, that is precisely not what the religions say about God. What the religions say about God, Paul calls futile thinking. The propositions of the religions are propositions of senseless, darkened minds. What God was saying to men, what he has clearly shown to them, this they rejected entirely or distorted so badly that it elicited the sternest rebuke of which Paul was capable.

True, idols are not all there is to non-Christian faith-and Islam passionately rejects idols of all sorts. Nevertheless, the existence of a passage such as this, and many other in the Bible, must give us serious pause in any attempt to give theological ground for appreciation.

In the fourth act, Warren says, "We have to ask what is the authentic religious content in the experience of Buddhist, Hindu, Shintoist, Moslem, or Marxist." Here again, the evangelical both agrees and disagrees. He agrees on two grounds. First, that in order to talk intelligently, we must have much knowledge of the other man's religion. Often in order to win the right to talk, we must demonstrate reasonable familiarity with the thought system of our friends.

Second, evangelicals agree that man is the great discoverer. He seeks to understand. He projects theories to explain the world in which he lives. He constructs ideologies, myths, theorems, and formulae. Many of his discoveries are correct. They adequately explain reality. Many others are ingenious or partially correct. They serve as working hypotheses, until later discoveries closer to the mark, supplant them. The evangelical has no difficulty in honoring man's religious longings or affirming that he is made in the image of God, fallen and defaced, but nevertheless in God's image. Evangelicals pay full respect to man the discoverer.

Many of his moral and some of his religious judgments come closer to the mark. Most religions, for example, inveigh against adultery, robbery, and murder. Many religions affirm man's need for some kind of God, for power greater than himself, or more mana than he possesses.

Hindu theologians discovered the two basic views in soteriology and expressed them in the cat and monkey theories of salvation. Therevada Buddhists probed deep into the psychological aspect of "salvation." If this is what is meant by "the authentic religious content of the experience of the man of other faith," then evangelicals have no difficulty in agreeing that we ought to find out as much about it as we can. Evangelicals disagree with the fourth proposed "act" on two grounds. First, if we define "authentic religious content of the experience of the man of other faith" as "the longing which is behind the myths and symbols"—as Warren does—then we flounder in ambiguity. The game of ascribing religious content to myths and symbols can be played by many different people. The content that Sigmund Freud ascribed would be one thing, that ascribed by Malinowski would be another, and that by some kindly missionary -seeking a little common ground with another faith, and generously resolving to put the highest possible interpretation on myth, dogma, image, and custom, would be something very different.

For example, there are some high meanings in suttee, for those few widows who deeply loved their husbands and were devoted to philosophical Hinduism; but for those who were dragged screaming on to the funeral pyre, suttee had low meanings. "Finding the authentic religious content" may become a hypocritical game in which Christians, to find common ground, adduce high and noble meanings to myths, dogmas, customs, and images, which on the whole are much less than ideal.

Second, if by "authentic religious content" we mean something that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has been saying to non-Christians, other than what he has revealed through the holy Bible, then the evangelical dissents. New light, to be sure, will always break forth from the Scripture. Over the door of Zwingli's church in Switzerland, I am told, is carved in stone the statement, "If you give the Word of God to the people of God, God will speak to His people through His Word, the message they need on that Day."

God is sovereign. His Word is sharp and living. The Holy Spirit guides men in the very different circumstances in which they live. But the Holy Spirit does not lead in a direction out of harmony with the basic revelation in Jesus Christ the Son, who was born of the Virgin Mary, was crucified, dead, buried, and rose again.

Leaving Canon Warren's four acts, let me now take up two aspects of presence that it shares with other mission methods. First, it should be selectively applied. We are likely to consider presence equally applicable everywhere. This it is not. Consider, for instance, the presence technique of "entering sympathetically into the pains and griefs, and joy and history of our non-Christian friends and seeing how these have determined the premise of their argument."

The presence mode of mission is required in the case of men of other religions who set themselves like flint against the Christian Gospel. As the Christian seeks for ways to proclaim the Gospel to such men, he must seek the genesis of the fears and hostilities that block understanding. He must imagine how he would feel were he in the other man's shoes.

With the responsive, the case is entirely otherwise—the main task is to give them the Gospel quickly. There is no need "to enter sympathetically into the pains and griefs and joys and history of our non-Christian friends" or to "find out how these have determined the premise of their argument against Christ." They are advancing no argument against Christ, They want to hear about Him. They want not a glorification of the faith they are leaving, but an introduction to the Savior they are accepting.

Second, presence (like all methods and means) should be used only to achieve a correct end. Presence has a great deal in common with identification. We use presence or identification to do something specific. Paul became all things to all men "in order to win some." He would have rejected the idea of becoming a Jew so thoroughly that the desire to win Jews to Christ was diminished. Identification is desirable to the degree that it "wins some" but should never be idolized. Evangelicals are particularly wary of a muddle-headed identification that destroys the very desire to win, or a genial presence that

leaves men outside Christ.

Four Conclusions

First, evangelicals agree with presence and proclamation as means, but reject them as ends. The end is that men accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and be found in Him, Evangelicals have always practiced both proclamation and presence as means and have always shied away from them as ends.

Proclamation can become an end. In Japan there used to be a band of missionaries whose members passed from town to town, set up a loud speaker, blared forth the Gospel for an hour, then put away their equipment and proceeded to the next town to "preach the Gospel." With these missionaries, apparently, voicing the words of Gospel was the end, and whether any lost son came back to his Father's house was immaterial.

Presence even more easily becomes an end in itself. The goal tends to become being humble, remembering that God was there before you got there, looking for the good in other religions, appreciating the religious longings in men of other faiths, and putting the most Christian interpretation possible on myths, images, doctrines and customs. And doing all this whether the man for whom Christ died becomes a disciple of His or not.

Frequently presence is inexorably transformed-even against the will of the Christian-from means to end. As the Christian resolves to be "present" with his non-Christian friend, he inches over into religious relativism. The process is as follows:

He starts out by saying, "I respect you. I want to understand you. I want you to understand me. God has been speaking to you. You tell me what He has said to you and I shall tell you what He has said to me. Let us be mutually edified."

But then by degrees the Christian shifts to a new position saying, "Of course, what God has said to you is as valld as what He has said to me," Finaily the Christian says, "Let us agree that the goal is not that you become a Christian or I become a Hindu. These both are ways to God."

Let me say bluntly that mission misconceives its end when it considers either proclamation or presence its basic task. The basic task is for the glory of God to bring men into redemptive relationship to Jesus Christ. The missionary yields himself body and soul to be the instrument of the Holy Spirit in winning men into a life-giving faithful relationship to the crucified and risen Lord. Neither proclamation nor presence, but that is Christian mission.

Second, both proclamation and presence suffer from excessive intellectual emphasis. Both imagine that men come to faith in Jesus Christ for exclusively ideological, theological or intellectual reasons. Populations like those at Lydda and Sharon, those on the day of Pentecost, those which have turned in great numbers, and will turn in still greater numbers, do not become Christian because they have considered all the reasons and find that ABC is more rational than XYZ. They are not argued into Christian faith. The hammer of logic does not beat them into submission.

Rather, all kinds of reasons—social, economic, political, religious, rational, and biblical—combine to lead them to place their faith intelligently on Jesus Christ. Again and again in the New Testament we read that it was the sign the Lord gave them, or the power which went forth from Him, that convinced them. The twelve apostles followed Him for three years largely because they expected him to drive out the Romans and install Himself as an earthly Messiah. Their patriotism and their hatred of the Romans, together with the signs which they saw, and the words of wisdom they heard, all combined to keep them close to His side.

We err when we consider proclamation and presence the sole modes of getting men to weigh the teaching of their own and the Christian religion.

Third, an objection, which cannot be leveled against proclamation, is that presence is not a biblical concept. The respectful approach to other religions is not found in the Old Testament. On many occasions God's messengers spoke and acted very roughly about the Baals and Asherahs. The word presence occurs nearly 200 times in the Bible, but never as a mode of mission.

Something much more direct was practiced by our Lord and His apostles. We do not see Peter on the day of Pentecost appreciating all that was good in the Jewish religion. Stephen was not making a sympathetic approach to the Jews. Paul before Agrippa, after telling about Jesus Christ, says bluntly that he wants all those noble, cultured, and powerful men who had gathered to hear him, to become Christians.

There is good reason for absence of the presence mode of mission in the New Testament. In those days the Gospel was being presented to receptive multitudes. Great people movements were going on. There was no need for the long, patient approach. New Testament Christians were not laying seige to rebellious peoples. Hence presence was not consciously used.

Presence is pre-mission. It is particularly useful to those who plough stony fields. Granting this, it is still a striking fact that in the Bible presence is notable by its absence. This must not be understood as condemnation, but should warn us that presence should be used with care, as servant, not master; means, not end.

Fourth, presence is used by new Christians. Without anyone teaching them to do so, they and their kinsmen talk endlessly about the new religion and the old religion. At that level, cross fertilization of religion by religion goes on ceaselessly. Cross fertilization went on during patristic days. Christianity, Gnosticism, Mithraism and other religions interacted and practiced "presence" for three hundred years in mutual efforts to win men and women to their ways of life.

As Christianity becomes the religion of more and more men across the world, we shall not have to stress presence. Presence will be there in every living church. As the church advances in each non-Christian sub-culture, she swims in a sea of presence.

What Christians must do is to remember that they are sent into the world to find God's lost sons and daughters. That is their task. God does not rejoice when lost sons and daughters hear the Gospel with their ears, experience it through social action, or sense it through Christian presence. God rejoices when lost sons and daughters walk back through the front door of His house saying, "Father, I have sinned; make me as one of your hired servants." He rejoices even more when the saved sons and daughters go b&ck out, and through proclamation, when that is fitting, and presence when that is fitting, bring sinners to a saving faith in Jesus Christ and membership in His church.

Donald Anderson McGavran (1897-1990) was an influential missiologist and founding Dean of the School of World Missions at Fuller Theological Seminary. He is known for his work related to evangelism and religious conversion. A third-generation missionary to India, he published numerous articles and books on Church Growth, most notably, *Understanding Church Growth* (1970). McGavran has become known as the "Father of the Church Growth Movement."

Faith for This Moment: Navigating a Polarized World as the People of God

By Rick McKinley

Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2018

182 pages

USD $14.99

Reviewed by **Jessica Handy Duisberg**, Assistant Director, Innovation for Vocation Project, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California.

Cultural crisis and political polarization have converged to create a unique moment of opportunity for the American church and perhaps for all Christians. Into this moment, seasoned pastor Rick McKinley asks a question that echoes beyond the pages of this book, "What does it mean to be the people of God now?" (22). What does faithfulness to Jesus look like at a time when the church has been privatized, compromised, and marginalized? How do communities of Jesus live when the best biblical image for the current context is Israel's exile in Babylon?

This timely book addresses a significant topic of coffeehouse and dinner table conversations. Pastors, congregations, and small groups seeking productive responses to current tensions may find it particularly valuable. Yet McKinley goes deeper than simply addressing current US social issues. He offers a discernment process for living faithfully as the people of God in any time or place where Christianity is not part of the dominant culture. Believers in any context who seek to meaningfully influence their neighbors and culture will find a helpful paradigm and tools here.

The first section of the book (chapters 1–6) focuses on the theme of exile. Christians, McKinley asserts, are experiencing "a sense of loss in three distinct areas right now: identity, place, and practice." This sense of loss is similar to what God's people experienced in seasons of exile throughout the Bible. During the most well-known exile, Jews in Babylon faced the question of how to live without a king or priests, a promised land, or a temple. Even living in Nebuchadnezzar's court, however, Daniel found a way to be faithful to God. He both resisted the false values of Babylon and blessed Babylon by recognizing the redemptive work of God among a foreign people. McKinley suggests it is possible for Christians today to similarly bless and resist the dominant culture.

While the first section of the book highlights a new way of seeing the church's role in culture, the second section (chapters 7–13) offers a new way of living in a time of exile. McKinley introduces the concept of "practices," ways to apply our beliefs in real-life situations. Then he describes a set of practices that could enable Christians to more fully embody the gospel in the public sphere. For example, as we embrace the unlovely, include outsiders, and serve our enemies, we recognize the wounding and oppressive realities of life in our culture (131). We both bless and resist the culture by "telling the truth about what and who really matter" (131). Hospitality is a prophetic act that makes public and visible the alternative culture of God's kingdom.

Some on either side of the partisan divide may take issue with McKinley's gentle political commentary, yet he manages to avoid comments that would place him into pre-established boxes. This is not merely avoiding the issues. Rather it is a difficult and necessary task if his book is to be taken seriously as a resource for a divided church. In this moment of crisis, McKinley offers a vision and practices that can be shared by Christians on the right and the left, in the US and beyond.

For Further Reading

Bass, Dorothy C. 2010. *Practicing Our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People*, 2nd ed. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Labberton, Mark. 2014. *Called: The Crisis and Promise of Following Jesus Today.* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity.

Refugee Diaspora: Missions Amid the Great Humanitarian Crisis of our Times

By Sam George and Miriam Adeney, Eds.

Littleton, CO: William Carey Publishing, 2018

296 pages

USD $14.99

Reviewed by **Bradley Cocanower** (pseudonym), PhD, who lives in Southern Europe doing evangelism, discipleship, and church-planting among Muslim background refugees.

> "Migration is a more significant factor in Christian history than the Reformation itself." —Andrew Walls (xxiii)

Refugee Diaspora helps Christians understand both the plight of refugees around the world as well as the significance of embracing diaspora communities with the love of Christ. The first section of the book focuses on the regions from where refugees are fleeing and includes several compelling first-hand accounts from people who have fled horrific situations. The second section looks at a variety of ministries around the world that are seeking to serve refugees. The final section provides insights and encouragement for believers who want to help refugees either at home or abroad. For those seeking to understand or engage the current humanitarian crises around the world this resource cannot be passed up.

In the introduction, George suggests that the current crises around the world present opportunities "not only to ignite faith in refugees but also to inject new life into the Christianity of the host nations" (xviii). Daniel Zeidan, who shares his insights from a ministry in Greece similarly concludes that "Europe's refugee crisis had created a historically unprecedented window of opportunity for sharing the saving message of the gospel with some of the least-reached people on earth—a segment of the world's population that would otherwise be in "closed" or "restricted access" countries hostile to the gospel and Christian mission" (89). Certainly, one of the greatest benefits of this book is its ability to provide a broad overview of how God is working through the movement of migrants and refugees around the globe, while simultaneously giving readers the opportunity to familiarize themselves with specific situations, ministries and perspectives. In fact, it is astonishing that such a wide range of information has been packed into this concise resource. Every region of the world is in some way represented and topics such as technology's impact on refugees, the importance of welcoming, and an Old Testament perspective on refugees help to provide a broad range of valuable insights.

Readers should be aware of two minor limitations of the book. First, the issue of politics is mentioned briefly, but no substantial insights are given for anyone interested in that aspect of the current humanitarian crises. Second, while brevity is certainly one of the advantages of this book, readers will need to look to other resources if they want any significant instruction on how to begin making a difference in Christian ministry to refugees. *Refugee Diaspora* certainly makes up for this by pointing readers to a plethora of excellent resources to help them go further. Miriam Adeney concludes the book by reminding readers that in Jesus "there is indeed a safe place, and it is one that is available to every refugee" (174). This book is certain to be an encouragement and inspiration to all believers, particularly those who already recognize the importance of responding to the humanitarian crises around the world with the love of Christ.

For Further Reading:

Bauman, Stephan, Matthew Soerens, and Issam Smeir. *Seeking Refuge: On the Shores of the Global Refugee Crisis*. Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2016.

Pocock, Michael, and Enoch Wan, eds. *Diaspora Missiology: Reflections on Reaching the Scattered Peoples of the World*. Evangelical Missiological Society Series 23. Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2015.

Tira, Sadiri Joy, and Tetsunao Yamamori, eds. *Scattered and Gathered: A Global Compendium of Diaspora Missiology*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2016.

When Women Speak

By Moyra Dale, Cathy Hine, and Carol Walker, eds.

Oxford, UK: Regnum Studies on Mission, 2018

203 pages

USD $8.99 (Kindle)

Reviewed by **Amit A. Bhatia**, PhD/ Intercultural Studies; Adjunct Professor, Trinity International University, Deerfield, Illinois, and Billy Graham Center for Evangelism Fellow.

The editors have observed that the voices of women in missiology often go unarticulated and hence unheard. In mission work among Muslims, despite the plethora of women with considerable practical experience who have done research, there are so few who have published their results that their perspectives seem almost nonexistent. *When Women Speak*, emerging from a 2015 colloquium in Melbourne, Australia, was published to correct this situation.

The book is organized around six topical essays, with two respondents who challenge as well as build on the keynote perspective. The tone of the interactions is one of dialogue, characterized by a sense of attentiveness which draws the reader into the dialogue. As those of us ministering among Muslims, whether as professors, evangelists, church-planters, development workers, or any other role, listen in on this discussion, we are struck by insights around six themes. First, the prevalent mission strategies focus their work on family networks and insider groups. This results in a marginalization of women rather than challenging the cultural views such as the *hadith's* perspective that women are deficient in religion and intelligence. Second, there is a need to understand the lives and faith of Muslim women who do not fit into traditional "categories of experience or identity," as well as the marginalization of women who do not have children. Third, the identity of a Muslim woman is shaped by a multitude of factors such as her closest role models, religious teachings, the music to which she has listened, and the community to which she belongs. Fourth, viewing Muslim women as "decision-makers and initiators" in their cultural context can build bridges that help lead women to Jesus Christ. Fifth, pain and trauma that women have experienced compels us to take a reflective look at the Bible's descriptions of the instances where God himself experiences pain and to ask how our own pain leads us into God's mission. Sixth, the varieties of violence and oppression that have served to silence women all over the world necessitates reflection on the different approaches to mission practiced by women as a response to their oppression.

The eighteen women who wrote this book come from diverse backgrounds. Some were raised Christian and others are first and second generation Christians from an Islamic background; they come from the United States, Canada, Australia, Iran, Argentina, and Pakistan; they are currently serving in Arabic-speaking countries, the United Kingdom and United States, North Africa, Philippines, South Asia, Madagascar; they are anthropologists, missiologists, church workers, evangelists, development and rural health program leaders; and they have been involved in teaching in academic settings, radio ministry, adult literacy, children's ministry, discipleship of women from Muslim backgrounds, etc. Some of the ideas presented in *When Women Speak* pose a much-needed challenge to the prevalent western view that Muslim women are universally oppressed. The book does not provide a concluding response to the prevalent perspective, but rather provides an invitation for further dialogue.

For Further Reading:

Lederleitner, Mary T. 2018. *Women in God's Mission: Accepting the Invitation to serve and Lead*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books.

The Peacemaking Church: 8 Biblical Keys to Resolve Conflict and Preserve Unity

By Curtis Heffelfinger

Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2018

176 pages

USD $15.99

Reviewed by **Daniel Dama,** PhD student focusing on peace-building between Christians and Muslims through the use of African metaphors and arts, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California.

Conflicts are inherently human, yet the discord among individuals who are believed to be children of God is bewildering. How can conflicts be prevented or resolved in the house of God? It is this arduous task that Curtis Heffelfinger undertakes. As a seasoned pastor and Christian educator, a father, and a peacemaking consultant, Heffelfinger is qualified to counsel churches on this matter. He creatively and strategically grounds his theory on Paul's discourse concerning peace and unity in Ephesians 4:1–6 and taps further insights from Ken Sande's peacemaking works.

The introduction describes the profile of peacemakers: full of love, ready to forgive, and Spirit-controlled. Chapters 1 and 2 discuss God's command for peacemaking, drawing from Ephesians 4:1–6. Chapters 3 and 4 address challenges in relationships and peacemaking from a doctrinal angle. Chapter 5 considers Jesus as a model of self-control. Chapter 6 discuses Paul's instructions to Christians who take their cases to courts where discords are not usually resolved by applying biblical precepts. Chapter 7 explores issues related to interpersonal conflicts. Chapter 8 provides practical guidelines for reducing the likelihood of conflict. Chapter 9 examines the relationship between leaders and their assemblies. The epilogue underscores the importance of unity among God's children. The common thread that runs through the book is "peace-unity," a model which involves mutual forgiveness and reciprocal love stemming from the Holy Spirit. Essentially, the author claims that reducing conflict, developing peace, and living in unity are feasible in churches if people abide by God's Word.

Reflecting on how conflicts over food distribution (Acts 6:1–7) and circumcision (Acts 15:1–5) shaped the early church missiologically and theologically, one may ask if all conflicts should be averted in the twenty-first century church. This book provides some useful insights.

The book's strengths include being deeply rooted in Scripture and its theme of the family as where peace begins. The former is particularly crucial given the present day secularism and disdain for the Bible that characterize many Western cultures. The latter is equally important, given how in the Euro-American civilization, family is decaying. Heffelfinger uncompromisingly articulates his commitment to Christian family values and his rootedness in the Scriptures. This makes his work credible. His "gospel-shaped guardians of unity" (36) is a compelling paradigm of how peacemaking and Christian unity are intrinsically linked to God's kingdom and its growth. Moreover, the book provides a novel interpretation of Matthew 5:9 and Ephesians 4:1–6, that is, one's experience as a child of God is not exclusively defined through faith and grace, but also through peacemaking.

This well-researched book is filled with insights that challenge the readers' imaginations and provides useful applications for peacemaking. The volume should be required material for church leaders and, especially, students preparing to lead the body of Christ throughout the world. While this publication is not primarily addressed to an African audience, it resonates with the African peacemaking concept *Ubuntu*, deeply rooted in the unity of human beings. This means that the book could be a great support for cross-cultural missionaries who wish to engage other cultures and practice biblical peacemaking.

For Further Reading:

Gros, Jeffrey and John D. Rempel (eds.). 2001. *The Fragmentation of the Church and its Unity in Peacemaking*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

Rynne, Terrence J. 2014. *Jesus Christ, Peacemaker: A New Theology of Peace*. Mary Knoll, NY: Orbis Books.

Susek, Ron. 1999. *Firestorm: Preventing and Overcoming Church Conflicts*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.

Book Review

People Disrupted: Doing Mission Responsibly Among Refugees and Migrants

By Jinbong Kim, Dwight P. Barker, Jonathan J. Bonk, J. Nelson Jennings, and Jae Hoon Lee, eds.

Littleton, CO: William Carey Library, 2019

370 pages

USD $19.99

Reviewed by **Boaz Johnson**, Professor of Hebrew Bible and Theological Studies, North Park University, Chicago, Illinois.

The Korean Global Mission Leadership Forum is organizing some very creative and influential forums in Christian World Mission today. This volume is a collection of the papers presented at the 2017 consultation held in Sokcho, Korea. The subject of the consultation was "Migration, Human Dislocation, and Accountability in Missions."

As the title of the book suggests, it deals with a whole range of issues related to refugees and migrants whose lives are severely and irreversibly disrupted. Some of these issues are related to internal displacement; others are issues of people fleeing violence or injustice due to religious, racial, ethnic, political, or economic reasons.

The book is divided into 24 chapters. Each chapter is written by a specialist or missiologist/theologian who specifically engages with a particular "disrupted peoples" issue. Chapters 1 and 6 deal with North Korean refugee and migrant issues in South Korea. In chapter 2, Andrew Walls, the doyen of World Christianity, gives a treat with a description of "migration in Christian history." Chapter 3 deals with issues of human dislocation in African countries. Chapter 5 deals with complex issues related to Iraqi Christian refugees in other Muslim countries. Chapter 10 deals with issues of Somali refugees in the United States, especially a Mennonite approach to refugee issues. The Mennonites have been at the forefront of peace and reconciliation strategies for many years; this chapter provides a good overview of these strategies. Chapter 13 describes the education of Syrian children in Lebanon as a mission strategy among disrupted people. In Chapter 16, Ruth Padilla Deborst describes how the Church in Latin America is also engaging with refugee issues from a unique Latin American perspective. Chapters 18 and 19 provide perspectives from Europe and Central Asia. Chapters 11 and 15 describe how Filipino workers serve as a new model of mission done by disrupted people. Chapter 20 similarly describes the role of the Japanese diaspora in a new understanding of mission.

The closing chapters underscore that mission is changing. It is no longer just mission to the scattered people, "dislocated refugees and migrants," but also mission by the scattered people. The latter is the new face of mission.

This volume is a treasure trove full of information and ideas written by tested and tried thinkers. The "icing on the cake" of this treasure is the material written by the renowned expert of Missio Dei in the Bible, Christopher J. H. Wright. I have learned so much from this amazing biblical theologian, from my days as a student (and then as a colleague) at Union Biblical Seminary, Pune, India, and now through his writings. His chapters on Deuteronomy, Jeremiah, and Isaiah are by themselves worth the price of this amazing volume.

Praying for Your Missionary: How Prayers from Home Can Reach the Nations

By Eddie Byun

Downers Grove, IL:
IVP Books, 2018

168 pages

USD $16.00

Reviewed by **Birgit Herppich**, Fuller Theological Seminary, International Membership Department Coordinator for WEC International and former missionary in Ghana.

Nobody would deny the importance of prayer for cross-cultural missionaries. However, often these prayers are of a general "God bless all the missionaries in the world" kind. In his small book, Eddie Byun provides a very practical guide to more specific prayers. His twelve "areas of a missionary's life or ministry that need our prayers" quite comprehensively cover the experience of cross-cultural missionaries, from the unremitting need of such workers to their return to their home country.

Byun is a self-confessed very "white" Korean-American with many years of cross-cultural experience. He grew up in Chicago, studied in Canada, taught and planted churches in South Korea, Australia, and the United States, and is now the mission pastor of a church in California. In addition, he has led many short-term mission trips. This background gives him many good insights into cross-cultural ministry and numerous stories to illustrate his points.

I appreciated greatly that the topics are permeated with a spiritual focus, such as personal intimacy with God, spiritual protection, maintaining devotion to the will of God, and the need to keep focused on Jesus even up to reentry back into a missionary's home culture in order to finish the race well. Interesting and often neglected topics include healthy partnerships with churches and agencies.

Although "missionary" is never clearly defined, the illustrations assume missionaries move from a more affluent place to a "developing" country and from more comfortable conditions to economically deprived, politically insecure, and physically challenging contexts. While this is often true for cross-cultural Christian message bearers, it fails to recognize the reality of today's world where many missionaries come from exactly such contexts.

To me the weakest sections were those on "Singles, Marriages, and Families" and on "Incarnational Love for the Nations." The former is rather superficial and fails to address many of the complexities involved in single, married, and family life in cross-cultural contexts and multicultural teams. Prayers for "strength" are appreciated but remain general.

"Incarnational love" and cultural sensitivity are indeed crucial for missionaries in order to meet the needs of the people to whom we are trying to communicate the gospel. However, Byun's final story about orphans, trafficked children, single moms, and the offense he caused among Korean leaders perhaps reveals a lack of cultural sensitivity and fails to address the complexity of cross-cultural communication. Missionaries often face these kinds of dilemmas when conflicts arise between different core principles and convictions—in this case between cultural sensitivity and love for the people. We need prayers for wisdom and God's guidance in these complex situations, and we need to listen to the perspectives of local Christian leaders.

Having said that, this is a valuable resource and very practical guide, full of quotable ideas and memorable alliterated points. Every chapter ends with discussion questions, specific prayer points, and action steps that facilitate the use of the book in small groups and challenge the readers in their personal lives. The author also challenges readers to take specific steps to support missionaries. Having read this book, one's prayers for missionaries will flow out of a deeper understanding and appreciation of their life with its challenges and joys.

Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus: A Devout Muslim Encounters Christianity, 3rd ed.

By Nabeel Qureshi

Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018

373 pages

USD $19.99

Reviewed by **Hoon Jung**, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California.

Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus is an autobiographical essay by Nabeel Qureshi who converted to Christianity from Islam. After his conversion, the author served as a prominent Christian apologist, but died of stomach cancer at the age of thirty-four in 2017. The focus of this story is on his dramatic journey from being a devout Muslim to becoming a Christian. This third edition includes reflections on Nabeel's life by his wife and two friends.

There are many merits in this volume. First, it is easy to read and entertaining. Because this book is not a technical introduction to Islam, even people who are not familiar with this religion can follow the story easily. This book is as intriguing as a good novel because the author describes his journey chronologically from childhood to adulthood.

Second, this book is informative. Although not an academic work, this book introduces readers to Islam, and not in a shallow way. For example, dealing with the complexity and diversity of Islam, the author addresses details that even most Muslims may not know well (61). Also, the author describes his early experiences with Christianity from the perspective of a Muslim, a perspective not often found in Christian books. This perspective alone makes the book worth reading.

Third, one can gain insight relevant to some contemporary missiological topics. For example, the fears faced by immigrants and minorities are discussed. The author looks back at the fear and instability his family experienced when the events of 9/11 occurred. Also, he describes how his grandmother was mistreated during Operation Desert Storm simply because she was a Muslim. Such fear and instability are not limited to religious minorities in the contemporary world. These stories describe the suffering, sorrow, and real-life difficulties of all kinds that immigrants and minorities throughout the world experience, a major contemporary topic in missiology.

In addition, because Christian apologetics played an important role in his conversion, a series of apologetic essays written by various Christian scholars are included in an appendix. These essays cover topics which are relevant to the Christian-Muslim dialogue.

There is only one problem to note. Because this book is based on the author's personal experiences, readers may not agree with some of the generalizations he makes. For example, the author began with his spiritual journey through candid discussions with his best friend who was a Christian. Given his experience, the author seems to doubt the efficacy of street preaching (120). However, Christians who came to know the Lord through public preaching are likely to disagree with this conclusion.

The target audience of this book is very wide. This well-written, informative, and entertaining book is a must for everyone interested in Islamic studies or interested in mission to Muslims. In addition, Muslims who are seriously considering following Christ may find this book insightful and quite helpful.

For Further Reading:

Licona, Michael R. *Paul Meets Muhammad: A Christian-Muslim Debate on the Resurrection.* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academics, 2006.

Reisacher, Evelyne A. *Joyful Witness in the Muslim World: Sharing the Gospel in Every Encounters.* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academics, 2016.

Teaching Across Cultures: Contextualizing Education for Global Mission

By James E. Plueddemann

Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2018

168 pages

USD $20.00

Reviewed by **Marcus Dean**, Professor and Chair, Department of Intercultural Studies, Houghton College; former missionary in Colombia and Puerto Rico.

After reading *Teaching Across Cultures*, my initial reaction was that this is a must read for anyone who teaches others who are not exactly like themselves, which is of course everyone. James Plueddemann has given us a book that needs to be in the toolkit of every missionary and church teacher. This book is rich in practical experience as well as in educational theory. Yet it is written in a way that is easily understood by the person who does not have much background in education.

Plueddmann presents a clear survey of how culture influences and impacts approaches to teaching. Likewise, he helps us be aware of how culture shapes the way that students approach learning. One strength to this approach is that he is able to point out strengths and weaknesses of the primary classroom styles that one will encounter in different cultures. These styles are presented as various metaphors including production (turning out a student with a standard knowledge base) and growth (helping each student to grow according to their nature). The metaphor of choice in *Teaching Across Cultures* is that of a pilgrimage. In this metaphor Plueddemann combines what he sees as the best in each of the metaphors that he discusses. Further, he builds on the split rail fence model from Theological Education by Extension (TEE) a movement in missions education from the 1970s. This model presents the learner's experience and context as the bottom rail, the subject matter as the top rail, and life application as the posts. This gives a holistic approach to education.

One of the main points that Plueddemann makes is that all education is to lead to the development of the student, and especially to spiritual development or discipleship in the church. From this base, the book presents concise chapters on different aspects of teaching across cultures. Chapter topics are diverse and include how teachers can adapt their style, how cultural differences shape students, and how teaching needs to reflect cultural differences and values.

The overall aim of teaching is presented as leading students into spiritual growth and development, defined as loving God and our neighbor, a goal which will be manifested differently in different cultures. This outcome is to be accomplished through solid subject matter and by connecting to the students' experiences.

Throughout the book Plueddeman gives practical examples that help to illustrate his teaching approach. In essence the book is an example of his method. As a good educator he ends with a chapter on evaluation, to help each teacher think through being a better teacher. He ends with the encouragement that, while using this model does not give easily measured results like content teaching, God will help us see the transformation of students that he will bring through our teaching.

For Further Reading:

Lingenfelter, Judith E. and Lingenfelter, Sherwood G. *Teaching Cross-Culturally: An Incarnational Model for Learning and Teaching*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003.

Moreau, A. Scott, Campbell, Evy Hay, and Greener, Susan. *Effective Intercultural Communication: A Christian Perspective.* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014.

Tucker, Frank. *Intercultural Communication for Christian Ministry.* Adele, South Australia: Frank Tucker, 2013.

Book Review

Disabling Mission, Enabling Witness: Exploring Missiology Through the Lens of Disability Studies

By Benjamin T. Conner

Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2018

180 pages

USD $24.00

Reviewed by **Geoff Hartt,** local church pastor for over twenty years and executive Director of Hispanics for Christ, providing resources for church-planting among Hispanics.

"More than 25 percent of American families have at least one relative with a disability" (169). That statement alone from *Disabling Mission, Enabling Witness* is reason enough to read this book. The author addresses mission to and with a segment of our population with whom most Christians are not prepared to engage. The book helps the reader better understand how "people with disabilities can help the church to reimagine mission and witness" (27).

The book opens with an introduction to disability studies, giving the reader definitions and context for the various issues associated with disability. We are challenged to think about what disability means and does not mean, and how we can interact better with people with disabilities. Chapter two helps us view people with disabilities missiologically, integrating familiar concepts from missiology with disabilities studies. In addition, the author uses the concept of *missio Dei* to take a step back from missionary efforts to look at what God is doing among people with disabilities. The concepts of *indigenous appropriation, contextualization* and *Christian witness* all allow God's activity and witness among people with disabilities to be expressed in their "own terms and in ways that reveal new dimensions of the reign and rule of Christ" (43).

Chapter three focuses on deaf insights into theology and missiology by investigating the history of mission and evangelism in the United States to and with deaf persons. Deaf theologians and other voices help the reader to see that deafness can be a potential source of rich theological insight. Chapter four focuses on how people with intellectual and developmental disabilities can be more than passive recipients by actively bearing witness to the Kingdom of God among us.

In the final chapter, the author challenges our theological institutions to respond to the absence of disability studies and the lack of students with disabilities. He provides suggestions for improving theological education among people with disabilities, including many real-life examples.

The title of the book becomes clear after reading it. The goal is to move *from* missions efforts to a group of people (those with disabilities) *to* enabling witness of God's multifaceted kingdom work among this group. We all can benefit when we see God's work across the expanse of human situations.

For the Life of the World: Theology that Makes a Difference

By Miroslav Volf and Matthew Croasmun

Grand Rapids, MI:
Brazos Press, 2019

208 pages

USD $21.99

Reviewed by **Glendon Osborn**, DMin (Columbia International University), past President and Minister at Large with China Outreach Ministries.

This a theological book for theologians but should not be dismissed as merely academic. Volf and Croasmun address the current disconnect of theology and life. At the very beginning they state, "We believe the purpose of theology is to discern, articulate, and commend visions of flourishing life in light of God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ" (11). The term "flourishing life" is key to their treatise. By it, they mean the goodness and fullness of life that humanity strives for and desires. The most important human question is therefore "What is the true, flourishing life, and how can we live it?" (17). The book seeks to explain why and how theology should be concerned with this question.

The authors state that theology in the university no longer addresses the question of the meaning of life and what we should value. "Theology is in crisis, largely because it has lost its nerve and forgotten its purpose to help discern, articulate, and commend compelling visions of flourishing life in light of God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ" (34). The authors spend a full chapter describing this crisis. Waning interest in Theology results in a lack of opportunity and funding for research. Compounding this problem are theologians who focus on topics that interest very few people. Christian theology has moved away from what it should be and what it needs to be for the sake of the Gospel and the sake of the world.

The authors proposed solution is to make the purpose of theology to understand the "flourishing life," similar to Jesus' purpose to give us "abundant life" (John 10:10). They point to creation before the fall and the ultimate establishment of Christ's reign as times of fullness of life in right relationship with God and evidence of God's plan for us to have flourishing life. In addition, they emphasize the importance of theologians living out what they teach, describing in detail what that means and looks like.

Although this is very heavy reading, I was personally refreshed by the passion and commitment of the authors to theology serving all of humanity by speaking truth to the deepest felt need that God has placed in us all—the need for a flourishing life. This is a book I need to read again!

I was also encouraged by their commitment to Scripture, the Word of God made flesh in Jesus, and the working of the Triune God in those who respond to His grace. These authors live and move in higher academic settings which are often foreign to the truth that sets men free. As I read the pages, I could see how this work could be used of God in the personal lives of theologians, to bring to them the "flourishing life."

Always On: Practicing Faith in a New Media Landscape

By Angela Williams Gorrell

Grand Rapids, MI:
Baker Academic, 2019.

219 pages

USD $22.99

Reviewed by **Jonathan P. Case**, Professor of Theology, Houghton College.

Angela Williams Gorrell has written a gentle and practical book that explores the "glorious possibilities" (p.4) of living out our faith while submerged in new social media. She begins with the theological proposition that God is online, yet we also have to contend with profound brokenness found on the new media landscape. Christians must get past one-dimensional approaches to this media and risk what she calls "interested" conversation (34), that is, conversation interested in the questions that motivate our faithful living in our new media landscape and in the Spirit's leading in this changed context. As we traverse this new terrain, thinking in terms of a digital dualism marking a boundary between real life and life online is no longer tenable. Our reality is one of living "hybrid" lives and participating in "hybrid" communities, in which our online and offline lives have become integrated (47).

This new terrain is filled with peril. The dominant cultural narrative and its malformed vision of the good life (e.g., narcissistic self-expression, consumption, etc.) have guided the development of the new media and the way it hooks us, so we must counter with a more compelling vision. Not surprisingly, Gorrell finds clues to this vision in Jesus' ministry, in the way he *saw* and *related* to God (as a God of unconditional love), to his own self (in his identity established in relationship to God), and to others (the marginalized embraced by the kingdom). In the "moral space" (p.97) constituted by social media, Jesus would offer grace to broken people and advocate for others (actions consonant with his proclamation of the kingdom).

In view of the harmful ways social media can be employed, we need to practice discernment in detecting how malformed visions of the good life infect our own use of such media. Difficult questions and tasks abound here, ranging from holding tech companies accountable for their design to helping churches make difficult decisions about their use of media to asking people to tell their stories about their lives online. But this discernment process is necessary if we are to approximate the "glorious possibilities" offered to us by hybrid faithful living: that of sharing in and manifesting Christlikeness (offering mercy, advocacy, compassion, etc.). Our lives are so inextricably linked with social media that faithful living calls for nothing less than the development of a "New Media Rule for Life" (p.152), rules and routines for living in the new media landscape. St. Benedict would be impressed.

There is much to commend about this book. It could be easily used in Sunday School classes and discussion groups. Still, it's hard to avoid the nagging suspicion that the author has painted perhaps a too-rosy picture of social media and its "glorious possibilities." For years now, numerous theorists have warned us of personal and cultural consequences of the new media and its effect upon us. It's not just that new media has been developed in light of the malformed story told by the dominant cultural narrative; we have to attend to the unintended consequences of *a new textuality*, i.e., a new way of thinking about communication, the consequences of which are as momentous as those of the invention of the printing press. The reformulation of traditional textual roles (e.g., "author" vs "reader"), a decrease in the ability to concentrate and to read, and the democratization of expertise cannot be addressed by simply telling a new story while using the same tools. Those questions perhaps fall outside the purview of this book, but I wish they had at least been raised.

For Further Reading

Carr, Nicholas. *The Shallows: What the Internet is Doing to Our Brains*. W.W. Norton & Co., 2011.
Turkle, Sherry. *Reclaiming Conversation: The Power of Talk in a Digital Age*. Penguin, 2015.

Encountering China: The Evolution of Timothy Richard's Missionary Thought (1870–1891)

By Andrew T. Kaiser

Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2019

261 pages

USD $34.00

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

Many people interested in mission history are familiar with Hudson Taylor, founder of the China Inland Mission, but few are familiar with one of Taylor's contemporaries in China mission history, Welsh Baptist missionary Timothy Richard. Richard's impact on mission methods in China was no less significant than Taylor's. In this, his second book on China mission history, Dr. Andrew Kaiser has once again brought history to life.

Beginning his mission work in Shandong Province in 1870, Richard followed the *modus operandi* of the day, itinerant preaching. But by 1873 Richard grew restless. Having been disillusioned by the low number and low commitment of converts won by itinerant preaching, Richard determined to find a better method. His search began with spending more time conversing with people who were truly interested in spiritual matters, to go deeper with them, including understanding their own beliefs and values. Quoting a contemporary of Richard's, Kaiser writes, "the best way therefore for missionaries to meet such ideas as were under discussion, was to make themselves masters of the history of the false religions around them" (71). Richard believed that, through careful conversation, he could determine which of these individuals were the kind of people referred to in Matthew 10:11 as "the worthy." Richard was persuaded that such people were more ready for the gospel and would be in the best position to establish a Chinese church that was rooted in local habits and values.

A significant event in Richard's life was providing famine relief in Shanxi Province during the north China famine of 1876–79. This action alone was innovative for evangelical missionaries, who up to that time, considered such work a distraction from the business of evangelism. Driven by a deep empathy with the people, and moved by their suffering, Richard considered such work a manifestation of the kingdom of God, and natural proto-evangelism. In fact, his work in famine relief proved to be a seminal activity in the founding of the first church in Taiyuan. While Richard's approach was radical at that time, his combination of mercy ministries and evangelistic outreach is standard mission practice today.

Kaiser is a fine story-teller and has a keen eye for historical events which have particular modern relevance. For example, his description of the tensions that existed between the missionaries feels eerily modern, even though it was happening 135 years ago.

This book will satisfy both the academic and the casual reader. Kaiser avoids hagiography, allowing the reader to see the very human side of a mission luminary such as Richard. Each page contains footnotes documenting his sources and providing additional detail, but readers can still fully enjoy the book without the footnotes.

Every generation of missionaries has to wrestle with the degree to which they will accommodate mission practice to the local culture. In *Encountering China*, Kaiser provides critical historical insights into this issue. Whether it is the value of learning about local religions (68–71), or the role of mercy ministries in mission strategy (190–191), this book offers rich historical insights with penetrating application to current mission practice.

For Further Reading

Covell, Ralph R. 1986. *Confucius, the Buddha, and Christ: A History of the Gospel in Chinese*. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis.

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Myers, Bryant. 2011. *Walking with the Poor: Principles and Practices of Transformational Development*. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis.

Winter, Ralph. 2008. "How to Best Help China: The Story of Two Very Different Missionaries to China." *Mission Frontiers*. US Center for World Mission, Pasadena, CA, pp.12-14. Accessed May 13, 2019, at https://www.missionfrontiers.org/issue/article/how-to-best-help-china.

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