In addition to our regular articles covering topics ranging from BAM to translation to mobilization, I want to draw your attention to our “Unsung Heroes” segment, which offers you glimpses of seventeen women and men from around the world who faithfully serve Christ without caring for public acclaim or distinction. Our intention is to honor the normal missionary who has simply served Christ using the gifts and talents he has granted him or her. The lesson I have relearned is that God uses ordinary people living ordinary lives of faith to accomplish his missio Dei.

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT

With this issue, we announce a coming change that will shape the future of EMQ. Our July issue will be our final print version. We have entered a world in which print journals are struggling to survive and EMQ is no different. After over a year of wrestling with a variety of options that would strengthen our bottom line, we have come to the hard decision of shifting from a print/online journal to an online-only journal. This choice was forced by the simple fact that if we were to keep our print version going, we would have to increase our current print subscription price by almost sixty percent just to break even with the costs.

For those of you who have a print or combo subscription, we will convert it to an online subscription after July or extend your current online subscription. We covet your prayers as we walk through this transition. Although the print version is ceasing, we are more committed than ever to providing quality, thoughtful articles to equip you to serve God to the best of your ability.

EMQ has faithfully served the missions community for over fifty years; our hope is that we can continue serving you for another fifty.

A. Scott Moreau, Editor
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Worthy Risk

Every undertaking imaginable entails risk. Risk is everywhere, but it’s not all the same: Some is avoidable; some is not. Some is necessary, even if it is avoidable. Some is worthy; some is not.

Jesus speaks forthrightly about the risk that comes with following him: “You will be betrayed even by parents, brothers, relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death” (Luke 21:16). He does not say that all will be put to death, but some will. That is the nature of risk—not knowing the outcome.

Risk discussions in missions that begin with the task start at the wrong place. One must begin by understanding that risk comes with simply being a follower of Jesus Christ. Every believer is subject to the same dangerous calling: “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it” (Matt. 16:24-25). It follows then that:

1. Risk is part of everyone’s life and can never be avoided completely.
2. Christians face additional risks simply because they are followers of Jesus Christ.
3. The risks that missionaries face are not different from those of other Christians, but may be different in frequency and intensity.

Given then the universality of risk and its significance in the lives of all Jesus’ followers, what models does the Bible provide for handling risk? Examining some of them will help us differentiate between risk that is worthy, and risk that is not.

Old Testament examples of risk handled well include the story of Joab and Abishai leading the army of Israel against the Ammonites and the Assyrians (2 Sam. 10), the story of Queen Esther boldly entering the king’s presence in order to plea for the lives of her Jewish people, and the story of the three young Jewish slaves at King Nebuchadnezzar’s court, who entered the
fiery furnace rather than bow to an idol (Dan. 3).

In each case, there was trust in the power of the sovereign God to save, combined with an absolute trust in his wisdom should he choose not to do so.

- **Joab to Abishai:** “Be of good courage, and let us play the man for our people, and for the cities of our God; and may the Lord do what seems good to him” (2 Sam. 10:11-12) [emphasis added].

- **Esther to Mordecai:** “Go gather all the Jews to be found in Susa and hold a fast on my behalf, and neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day. I and my maids will also fast as you do. Then I will go to the king, though it is against the law; and if I perish, I perish” (Esth. 4:15-16) [emphasis added].

- **“Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego** answered the king, ‘O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace; and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image which you have set up.” (Daniel 3:16-18) [emphasis added].

One could go on to recount the incredible life pattern of the Apostle Paul. He recounts in 2 Corinthians 11:24ff all that he suffered as a result of risks taken to achieve God’s purposes. He never knew where the next painful challenge would come from, yet each new day he risked his life for the cause to which he was so totally committed.

Joab and Abishai, Esther, the fiery furnace threesome, and the Apostle Paul are shining examples of how right and how glorifying to God it is to risk for the sake of God’s purposes. A counter example from Numbers 13 and 14 is the story of the twelve spies, and the refusal of the people and of all of the spies except Joshua and Caleb to go forward. Their murmuring against their leaders and desire to pursue the illusion of safety back in Egypt was a rebellion against God, and led to death in the wilderness.

These biblical examples reveal additional principles for knowing and responding well to worthy risk:

4. It is right and God-glorifying to take risks to further God’s purposes.

5. Even the prospect of death should not deter such risk-taking, because God’s glory and our good are guaranteed.

6. Pursuing the myth of security (when risk-taking for God’s glory is called for) is to travel the path of disobedience and disappointment.

Worthy risk, then? It is what the Spirit of God is calling us to for his glory. Knowing it, like knowing the will of God in other matters, will require knowledge of his word and purposes, and a prayerful submission to the Spirit’s still, small voice. And it will almost always be scary, requiring focus on the assured presence and loving purposes of God.

**Gary Corwin** is staff missiologist with the international office of SIM.
INCE THE MID-1990s when the term was first coined at a missions conference, “Business as Mission” (BAM) has gained wide acceptance in mission circles and generated much excitement as the new paradigm of missions for the twenty-first century. Proponents assert that BAM is a “calling to be prized” (Tunehag 2004, 9) and has “the highest potential for effecting sustainable, transformational, holistic kingdom impact to a hurting world” (Johnson 2009, 22).
Indeed, BAM offers a number of benefits in today’s context for mission, such as easier access to some countries where traditional mission work is not allowed (Yamamori 1993) and liberation from dependency on overseas financial support. Moreover, with recent rekindling of vocational theology that challenges the sacred-secular divide, there is a growing recognition of business as a legitimate vehicle and site of ministry among evangelicals (e.g., Stevens 2006; Nelson 2011; Grudem 2003; Volf 1991; Yamamori and Eldred 2003).

BAM, however, is not without its critics. Some caution that BAM entrepreneurs can become too immersed in a capitalistic mindset and promote capitalistic values and prosperity rather than biblical values and the gospel
(Little 2014). Some also worry that the urgency of running a business may easily take front seat in BAM missionaries’ lives, while ‘ministry’ gets pushed to the sidelines.

In practice, while there are many successful examples of BAM, there are also some cases where BAM produced negative outcomes (Cuartas 2011). To be sure, proponents of BAM are aware of the challenges and recognize BAM as a very difficult mission strategy (Johnson 2009; Rundle and Steffen 2003). The goal of BAM organizations is to bring about holistic (i.e., spiritual, social, economic, and environmental) transformation of individuals and the communities that are involved. As such, it is an inherently multi-dimensional effort that requires a complex balancing act and solid theological grounding.

In this article, we attempt to outline some theological and practical guidelines for creating holistic and transformative BAM organizations. We first introduce a case study of a BAM that employs formerly trafficked women in India and how it brought about holistic transformation of individuals and of the community. We then discuss the vision of BAM as modeling after Christ’s missional act of incarnation. Finally, we comment on some of the practical considerations faced by BAM practitioners.

**Freeset: A Case Study of a BAM Organization**

Freeset is a fair trade business that offers alternative employment for women forced into the sex trade. Freeset is strategically located in Sonagachi, the largest red light district in Kolkata, India, and one of the largest red light districts in Asia. Within a few square miles, it contains several hundred multi-story brothels with more than ten thousand women working in the sex trade.

Many are trafficked from Bangladesh, Nepal, and rural India, while others are sold or forced into the trade due to abject poverty. Kerry and Annie Hilton, who founded Freeset in 2001, have a vision of seeing the ten thousand sex workers in their neighborhood empowered with a choice of leaving a profession they never chose in the first place. Freeset first started as a bag manufacturing business and hired twenty women. Currently, Freeset hires about two hundred women to make quality jute bags and organic cotton t-shirts that are exported to other countries such as the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand.

When the Hiltons moved from New Zealand to India in 1999, they signed their apartment lease during the day only to realize at night that the apartment was located next to a red light district. Instead of moving away from the community, however, the Hiltons decided to meet some of their neighbors.

As they got to know the women working in Sonagachi, they learned that quite a few were trafficked because of poverty, and they stayed in the sex trade because of a lack of alternate options. By opening a factory at the center of the red light district, the Hiltons offered an alternative employment opportunity to the women.
Lack of job opportunities is one of the most prominent causes of poverty around the world. The Hiltons recognized that building a sustainable BAM can provide much-needed job opportunities to the poor and the vulnerable, allow them the dignity of earning their own living instead of just receiving handouts, and enable them to gain valuable, transferable skills while on the job.

Freeset recognizes that the task is more than just providing a job and ensuring a certain level of financial stability. The needs of the women are broader and deeper. Most of the women have fewer than five years of formal education, and they do not have basic literacy skills or financial literacy skills. Therefore, as part of the three-month training that all employees receive, the women are taught basic life skills such as budgeting, opening a bank account, creating a savings plan, and literacy education.

One-on-one and group counseling are provided during the training period to allow the women to work through their trauma and any emotional or mental health problems, while recognizing that such a journey to healing and restoration is long and requires the grace and power of the ultimate Healer and Restorer. In 2011, Freeset also established a non-profit unit within the company called Tamar in order to provide more professional care for the women. Tamar specializes in caring for the physical, social, psychological, and spiritual needs of the women, while creating a safe environment for the women to share their concerns.

The Hiltons began Freeset with a vision of creating “communities of people who commit to following Jesus together by living in the same neighborhoods and sharing the journey of learning to love God, each other and our neighbors” (Roemhildt et al. 2013, 29). As such, the staff and volunteers at Freeset are very intentional in being part of the Freeset community. Many staff and volunteers live on the second floor above the factory in Sonagachi. They share equal responsibility in the upkeep of the factory. Although they are foreigners who moved to Kolkata, they identify with the women.

Women at Freeset often refer to others working at Freeset as ‘Paribara’ (a Bengali word for family). At Freeset, the women do not just work together as co-workers; they also laugh, celebrate, cry, and mourn together as friends and fellow sojourners. For many of the women, the community becomes an alternative family where they feel valued and where they belong.

For the last fifteen years, Freeset has made a significant impact on the lives of the women and the community in multiple areas—economic, social, spiritual, and even environmental. Based on our examination of Freeset’s practice and missiological research, we developed a theological framework that can form the backbone of BAM organizations.

**Incarnational BAM: Modeling after Christ**

Incarnation is the missional act of Christ, the second person of the Triune God, becoming flesh and dwelling among us (John 1:14). Incarnation is central
to understanding God’s work of salvation (Saint Athanasius 2011). C. S. Lewis even called the incarnation of Christ “the grand miracle” that is at the center of every other miracle (Lewis 2001, 173). As much as it is a deep theological truth, it also teaches us the way God engages the world. After all, incarnation is God’s chosen method of entering, engaging, and redeeming the world.

How can the BAM community embrace and live out this theological framework of incarnational ministry? We highlight four core elements of incarnational theology that are directly relevant to BAM.

**First, incarnation is an act of love.** As Athanasius reminds us, Christ came and became a human being “out of sheer love for us.” Incarnate mission must begin with love for the people who bear God’s image. The Hiltons may have moved to Sonagachi by accident, but they made an intentional decision to stay and develop relationships with people in the neighborhood. The Hiltons choose to love the women as their neighbors and try “to make a difference that would bring real freedom for these women” (Freeset 2015). This foundational mission shapes every aspect of the running of the organization.

**Second, incarnation manifests in humility (Phil. 2:6-8).** Missiologists Sherwood Lingenfelter and Marvin Mayers (1986) write that a significant fact about the incarnation is that Jesus came as a learner. He did not come as an expert who had already figured out the context and the needs of the people. Instead, he was immersed in and learned about the culture, and he paid attention to the needs of the people. Likewise, the primary stance of BAM should be that of a humble learner. The Hiltons began Freeset as a result of listening to the women’s needs.

Today, the women are encouraged to voice their opinions and help shape key business and ministry decisions. The women who have worked at Freeset for a good length of time and are further along in the healing and restoration process are empowered to do community outreach and be the face and voice of Freeset. The staff at Freeset is always ready to listen and learn from the people and community they serve and work alongside.

**Third, incarnation occurs in the context of a community.** Jesus was born into a family in a first-century Jewish neighborhood and became a full member of that community. Jesus’ public ministry included the creation of an alternative community into which he called his disciples, asking his disciples to follow him, eat with him, live with him, and serve with him. That community became a catalyst for the transformation of surrounding communities. Ultimately, Jesus’ incarnational ministry culminates in the creation of a community that transcends all boundaries through his life, death, and resurrection (Eph. 2:14-22).

As discussed earlier, Freeset’s primary objective is to create an alternative community “where Jesus is the master” (to use the words of one of the women who works at Freeset). Such an alternative community cannot fail to have an impact on its surrounding, wider community. The Hiltons believe that
“a community learning what it means to be transformed begins to have the courage to participate in the transformation of the wider community” (Roemhildt et al. 2013, 33).

For example, the physical presence of a Christian business inside a red light district necessarily prompts questions as to why it is there, questions that will be pondered by other women, customers of commercial sex, pimps and brothel owners alike. By helping women in Freeset gain freedom and restoration, the business also impacts the women’s families, especially the women’s daughters, who may otherwise have gone on the same path of being trafficked. As the women’s families are being affected, so too are the wider communities or villages from where they come.

Finally, incarnation is inherently paradoxical. The core theology of incarnation is the fact that Jesus was fully God and fully human. John writes, “In Him was life, and the life was the light of men” (John 1:4); yet he became one of us. Incarnational mission is about immersing into a new culture and fully being the Church, the Body of Christ, in that context. Thus, Paul Hiebert (1995, 371) argued that “Christ remained fully God even when he became fully human. Missionaries, too, are to reflect this. They are both socio-cultural insiders and outsiders.” Likewise, BAM should hold this paradox at its core. A BAM organization can have significant impact only when it is fully business and fully mission. In the final section, we address some practical considerations that stem from these four principles.

Practical Considerations

First, understand the comparative advantage of the community. An entrepreneur who goes into a new market with a pre-conceived plan for business (e.g., what product to produce, how to produce it, and how to market it) is likely to fail. Entrepreneurship should always begin with listening to and understanding the market. Given that the purpose of BAM is not just about business transactions, but also life transformation, BAM entrepreneurs have all the more reason to begin with listening in humility.

BAM practitioners need to observe and learn from the local community what comparative advantage it possesses—namely, what skillsets people in that community have, what natural resources or physical endowments that community makes use of, and what cultural, economic, and political factors are at play in order to decide what products or services to produce and how best to produce and market the products.

Second, focus on the mission when making key decisions such as hiring, promoting, and firing. Freeset’s primary purpose is to give a choice and freedom to the women. Most business decisions stem from that objective. For example, Freeset does not hire based on skills or experiences. They hire “on the basis of a need to be free” (Pitts et al. 2014). Freeset decides its factory locations based not on rent or convenience, but on the proximity and ease of
access to the community where trafficked women lived.

For the Hiltons, starting and running the business is certainly an act of love. At the same time, however, Freeset must be a sustainable business. It must set and maintain a high-quality standard for their products and employee conduct. If an employee is always late to work and cannot sew a bag properly because she is still struggling with alcoholism, then Freeset would make the tough decision of suspending the employee until she is capable of working again. But while the woman is suspended from work, Freeset continues to support her through counseling and treatment. This is an example where grace and truth are practiced at the same time, with the good of the employee and the wider community in mind.

**Third, set fair and competitive wages.** Setting fair and competitive prices and wages can allow the business to be profitable and sustainable, while at the same time contribute to the well-being of the employees. However, determining what the appropriate wage is can be challenging. It is important to first find out both the cost of living in the community and the market wage for comparable jobs.

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**Paying employees** slightly above-market wages can lead to greater employee satisfaction and hence higher productivity and retention.

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Freeset pays a wage that is generous (slightly above the market wage) but not overly generous (so that the business can be self-sustaining without having to rely on outside donations). During the three-month training period, Freeset pays a portion of the wage even though the trainees are not yet working in the factory. This allows the women working at Freeset to see themselves as being valued as a productive member of society. Moreover, paying employees slightly above-market wages can lead to greater employee satisfaction and hence higher productivity and retention, which in turn will benefit the business in the long run.

**Fourth, care for the whole person.** It is important for BAM organizations to pay attention to and address the emotional and psychological needs of their workers, especially if they are serving vulnerable populations. For example, Freeset employs formerly trafficked women, most of whom have experienced assault, coercion, and threats, as well as sexual, physical, and psychological abuses. The resulting trauma leads to a wide range of mental health concerns, including depression, substance use, and post-traumatic stress disorder. The women’s emotional condition or use of maladaptive coping mechanisms can
impact their work negatively.

As such, BAM organizations need to take into account the mental health needs of their workers and provide appropriate psychological support services to allow them to flourish psychologically and spiritually. Moreover, it is important to consider the broader and deeper social needs of the people who are working in that community. Freeset, for example, sees that there is a need for childcare service for the women working in the factory, and a need for helping the children of the women get formal schooling once they get older. Therefore, Freeset initiated child sponsorship programs to support the children of their employees to go to school.

Fifth, strive for high-quality products. In order for the business to be sustainable, the BAM organization needs to produce products that customers are willing to pay for. From the beginning, the Hiltons recognized the importance of consistent quality for Freeset to be competitive in the export market. They had the vision that anything Freeset produces should be recognizable as a Freeset product even without a Freeset tag.

When they first started the business, most of the women they hired did not have sewing skills or could barely use a pair of scissors. They responded by providing intensive training for the women and implementing a strict system of quality control. They did not compromise quality for quantity, and the average daily output was fewer than two bags in the early days (they now produce approximately one thousand bags a day). They also recognized that not everyone can sew. Thus, they created alternative job options (e.g., mixing paint or cutting fabric for t-shirt making) to accommodate women of varying levels of skills. This allowed the hiring of women with lower skills without sacrificing the quality of the finished product.

Finally, have a robust theology of work. It is important to remember that BAM organizations are not just investing in workers and preparing them for a livelihood. Instead, they are investing in persons created in the image of God and preparing them to live out a full and abundant life in relationship with their Creator. As such, it is important to have a robust theology of work and to instill it as the organization’s culture in order to help people see all work as God’s work and to see work as part of worship. There should be no sacred-secular divide in the workplace.

Conclusion

Missiologists Alan and Debra Hirsch (2010, 234) argue that “if incarnation is the most profound way that God engaged the world, then we, his people, must follow his footsteps.” Creating an incarnational BAM, however, is not easy. The Hiltons were very intentional in their approach and experienced many trials and errors. They maintained a clear strategic focus, which was the freedom of women through offering them alternative jobs in a competitive business.

This act of love became the foundation of their business and shaped their
business decisions and practices. In achieving that objective, Freeset continues to maintain the paradox of being fully business and fully ministry at the same time. It is a business in that it manufactures jute bags and organic cotton t-shirts for export. Just as any other for-profit business, it strives to maintain high quality, efficiency, and competitiveness. It is also fully a ministry that prioritizes holistic freedom of all the women. There can sometimes be conflicts and real tensions between these two objectives.

In order to be one hundred percent business and one hundred percent mission, Freeset created Freeset Trust, which is funded by the profits of the business unit. Money from Freeset Trust goes to the non-profit arm of the company, Tamar, the sole mission of which is meeting the social, physical, and spiritual needs of the women. Although Freeset still has shortcomings, the leadership continues to approach the business with humility and an open mind. They are willing to learn from the women in the community and to adapt. Through it all, they are building a redemptive community of faith and healing where the paradox of the strengths and shortcomings of business coexist with the generous, gracious, and sacrificial love of Christ.

References


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**Questions for reflection**

1. *What are the defining characteristics of a BAM that distinguish it from other businesses?*

2. *Tension is difficult to navigate. What can BAM entrepreneurs do to navigate the tension of being fully business and fully ministry at the same time?*
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Four Qualities of a Good Translation and the Divine Familial Terms Controversy

By Steve Doty
MY PURPOSE IN WRITING THIS ARTICLE is to assist both translators and non-translators in understanding the proper and traditional application of meaning-based translation principles to the translation of ‘Son of God’ and ‘God the Father.’ While meaning-based translation principles have been cited by some as the reason for adopting the non-traditional translations which have provoked much controversy, I believe it can be demonstrated that those translations were not following meaning-based translation principles, as intended by the architects of this approach to translation, namely Eugene Nida, John Beekman, and John Callow.

It is generally acknowledged that there are four qualities of a good translation—accuracy, clarity, naturalness, and acceptability. In this article, I briefly describe these qualities and show the kinds of problems that result when a translation fails to achieve one or more of these qualities.

Meaning-based Translation

What I refer to in this article as ‘meaning-based translation’ is one of the current names of an approach to translation first articulated by Martin Luther (Luther 1531, 189). Eugene Nida, formerly of Wycliffe Bible Translators and SIL, and later with the American Bible Society, developed detailed principles for translating the Bible. He called his approach Dynamic Equivalence. However, he later changed the name of his approach to Functional Equivalence when he realized that some translators were going beyond the bounds that he taught (de Waard and Nida 1986, vii-viii).

SIL’s translation textbook, Translating the Word of God, explained the same approach for an SIL audience, calling it Idiomatic Translation (Beekman and Callow 1974). The current name for this approach is Meaning-based Translation, but it follows the same essential principles as Nida’s approach.

Over the years, this approach has sometimes experienced unfounded criticism when those with a wrong understanding of it have produced misguided translations which were then called out. For example, this approach has been criticized for translating ‘lamb of God’ as ‘seal of God’ (Gentzler 2001, 59). However, Nida wrote,

The story has been widely circulated that the word ‘seal’ was used for sheep in one of the Eskimo translations. This is an intriguing story but without foundation in actual fact. A baby seal might be considered parallel to a lamb as far as general attractiveness and reputed ‘innocence’ is concerned, but after these features the parallel stops. Such an adaptation would be completely unsatisfactory. (1961, 136)
Nida’s point is that translations should not make such substitutions for key terms in the Bible, although for figures of speech such as ‘white as snow,’ such substitutions are sometimes allowable.

**Accuracy.** Accuracy is the most important quality of a good translation. An accurate translation is one that conveys the same meaning as the original, or at least it tries to get as close as possible to what has been identified as the main intended meaning. There are basically three ways in which a translation can be inaccurate—it can *add* meaning that was not intended in the original, it can *omit* meaning that the original author intended, or it can *change* the original meaning to something else.

**Finding exact equivalents** across languages is very challenging, especially where the concept is unknown in the receptor language culture.

In my experience checking vernacular translations of the Bible, one of the most common errors is omitting part of the meaning. Every verse has so many small facets of meaning that it’s very easy to inadvertently leave something out. One of the reasons translation teams are encouraged to compare their translation to a reliable major-language version is to double check that no meaning has been omitted.

Another very common error is inadvertently changing some of the meaning. For example, I recently checked a translation in which the original word meaning ‘opposed’ was translated as ‘persecuted.’ I questioned whether these two ideas were really equivalent. The general problem is that finding exact equivalents across languages is very challenging, especially where the concept is unknown in the receptor language culture. Yet, difficult as it may be, the translator strives to find the closest equivalent possible to convey the same meaning.

One of the principles that guided translators toward accurate translation had to do with expressions which had thematic value in the Bible. Nida wrote,

> No translation that attempts to bridge a wide cultural gap can hope to eliminate all traces of foreign setting. For example, in Bible translating it is quite impossible to remove such foreign ‘objects’ as Pharisees, Sadducees, Solomon’s temple, cities of refuge, or such Biblical themes as anointing, adulterous generations, living sacrifice, and Lamb of God, for these expressions are deeply imbedded in the very thought structure of the message. (1964, 167, original italics)

Thus, meaning-based translation teaches that important themes of the Bible should be retained and not substituted, as John Beekman and John
Callow confirmed:

There are certain metaphors, however, where other considerations are more important for the translator than a decision as to whether a given figure is live or dead. These metaphors may be considered as representing a thematic image, that is to say, one that is quite widely used in the Bible by a number of authors, and which has become part of general Christian vocabulary. Examples are the images of ‘light’ and ‘the body of Christ.’ In the case of such thematic images, the image is to be retained in the translation. (Beekman and Callow 1974, 137)

The principle is based on the fact that certain ideas in the Bible are so basic to its essential message that they must not be substituted. Furthermore, their thematic meaning is not based on only one occurrence, but is reinforced by a consistent association with other occurrences in the Bible. For example, Jesus compared our heavenly Father to earthly fathers (Luke 11:11-13), and this connection and meaning would be diminished if different words were used to refer to God the Father and earthly fathers.

**Clarity.** A good translation will make the meaning as clear as possible—that is, it will not be confusing or ambiguous. People will not read the translation and wonder what it means. An unclear translation will cause people to misunderstand. For example, readers of an unclear translation might wonder, “Was Jesus talking about himself or someone else?” Or readers will wonder, “Was Paul serious when he called those people ‘super-apostles’ in 2 Corinthians 11:5?” An unclear translation will cause people to guess the wrong meaning. A good meaning-based translation will be clear to those who use it.

An unclear translation will cause people to guess the wrong meaning. A good meaning-based translation will be clear to those who use it.

One of the most common adjustments translators make to increase the clarity of a translation is to change pronouns into proper names or noun phrases. For example, Jesus is referred to many times in the New Testament simply with the pronoun ‘He.’ When such references occur at the beginning of a chapter, most translators adjust this reference to ‘Jesus.’ Another common adjustment made to increase clarity is to use simple words rather than borrowed words that only a few people understand. For example, ‘Levite’ is translated as ‘temple assistant’ in the New Living Translation.

One of the ways translators make sure their translations are clear is by testing them with average readers in the community. A translator might have
someone read a section and then ask that person to paraphrase it in his or her own words. Or a translator might even ask a reader specific questions to check that the correct meaning is understood. Places where the wrong meaning is understood may need to be adjusted.

**Naturalness.** A good translation will be natural and will not sound like a translation at all. Readers will think that it sounds like it was originally written in the receptor language. Every language has natural patterns that make it sound beautiful. An unnatural translation will sound stilted and be hard to understand. People will not enjoy reading an unnatural translation, and they will quit reading or listening to it very quickly. A translator should try to make the translation as natural as possible so that people will enjoy using it and will readily understand the meaning.

**Acceptability.** Traditionally, meaning-based translation acknowledged only the three aforementioned qualities of a good translation: accuracy, clarity, and naturalness. However, in the 1980s, a number of Bible translators began pointing out how important acceptability was in Bible translation (see Nida 1981, Barnwell 1986, Andersen 1998, Gutt 1998, Larsen 2001, Gross 2003).

**The idea of acceptability** is not to adjust the translation in such a way that it would be acceptable to a non-Christian audience, but unacceptable to a Christian audience.

An underlying assumption of acceptability as a quality in Bible translation is that it is other Christians who are the judge of acceptability. If the Church considers a translation unacceptable, it will not promote its use for evangelism or Christian growth. The idea of acceptability is not to adjust the translation in such a way that it would be acceptable to a non-Christian audience, but unacceptable to a Christian audience.

The translation, after all, is being undertaken by the Global Church. Thus, the Church will not support any translation which it deems unacceptable. An example of the Church judging a translation to be unacceptable was the severe criticism the *Today’s English Version* received in its first edition in 1966 (*Good News for Modern Man*) (Moser 1970; Orlinsky and Bratcher 1991).

Although there were several controversies surrounding this translation, one of the most heated was about the way the TEV translated ‘blood’ in verses like Colossians 1:20. The thematic value of blood was very important to these critics, who cited such passages as Leviticus 17:11 and Hebrews 9:22 to show the importance of the blood that Jesus shed when he died as a sacrifice for people’s sins.
Although Nida wrote a vigorous defense of the TEV's rendering of 'blood' with 'death' (Nida 1977), the American Bible Society changed the TEV in later editions to retain the word 'blood' with a footnote explaining its meaning as representing the sacrificial death of Jesus. This example is very telling, since it showed a large Bible translation organization adjusting its major language translation because many Christians found it unacceptable.

**Recent Controversy Regarding Divine Familial Terms**

There has been a great deal of controversy regarding how to translate 'Son of God' when referring to Jesus, and the term 'Father' when referring to God. I believe that the controversy can be understood better by examining how such renderings relate to the four qualities of a good translation.

First and foremost is the quality of **accuracy**. Experimental translations have been severely criticized for not using common father-son terms when referring to the relationship between God and Jesus. The common terms include a biological factor that implies sexual procreation, which obviously does not apply to Jesus. The translators of these experimental versions have used alternative terms that may not imply any biological/sexual component.

The problem with non-common father-son terms is that they may omit the crucial meaning that Jesus was of the same divine nature or essence as God (as can be seen in such verses as John 5:17-18, John 10:30-33, and Heb.1:3).

The following quotations reflect the common interpretation that 'Son of God' implies a shared nature or essence with God the Father:

- “In John, the nature of Jesus’ deity is profoundly and repeatedly tied to the exposition of his sonship ...” (Carson 1991, 663).
- “Jesus was not teaching that God is the Father of all. The Jews would have accepted that. His claim meant that God was his Father in a special sense. He was claiming that he partook of the same nature as his Father” (Morris 1971, 309).
- “As the Son, he is the very expression of the Father, because ‘he shares the essence and nature of that one living and true God’” (Bruce 1986, 159).
- “In John sonship ‘expresses the unity of nature, close fellowship, and unique intimacy between Jesus and the Father’” (Tenny 1981, 196).

Translations which omit the meaning that Jesus shared God the Father’s divine nature are inaccurate. The obvious meaning of such passages as Luke 1:35 (“The angel answered, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.’”) is that God is the Father of Jesus not through a sexual act, but through a divine miracle.

Translations which do not use the normal terms for ‘father’ and ‘son’ are
inaccurate if the substitute terms do not include the meaning that the Father and Son are of the same nature or essence. For example, some experimental translations have tried using terms which are back translated into English as ‘one and only’ or ‘only beloved’ because the translators say that these terms imply ‘son.’ One problem with such translations is that if they do actually mean ‘biological son,’ they will be rejected for the same reason as the common term ‘son’ is rejected by people who are offended by the idea and say that it implies a sexual act between God and Mary. On the other hand, if these alternative terms do not imply the same divine nature or essence, then they fail in terms of accuracy. They also fail in terms of the other qualities of a good translation, as will be pointed out below.

Furthermore, such translations violate the thematic principle of accuracy. The father-son relationship between God and Jesus is expressed over three hundred times in the Bible. One of the principles of meaning-based translation mentioned earlier in this article is that such ideas are thematic and thus, even if they were figurative, they need to be retained and not substituted.

**Translations which attempt** to avoid the normal, biological father-son terms may cause a reader to wonder what is being meant.

For example, the fullest meaning of the passage about Abraham almost sacrificing his son (Gen. 22) can only be understood if the same father-son terms are used to refer to God and Jesus as are used to refer to Abraham and Isaac. Likewise, the parable of the wicked tenants (Luke 20:9-19). Translations that eliminate or obscure the father-son relationship between God and Jesus obscure important thematic links of scripture. Substitutions such as ‘Messiah of God’ for ‘Son of God’ or ‘Lord’ or ‘Guardian’ for ‘God the Father’ fail to express the father-son relationship between God and Jesus. Since ‘Son of God’ and ‘God the Father’ are thematic in the New Testament, any such substitutes are inaccurate.

Non-common terms may also be **unclear**. Translations which attempt to avoid the normal, biological father-son terms may cause readers to wonder what is being meant. For example, even a rendering such as ‘Son from God,’ while including the correct word for ‘son,’ may be unclear because it obscures (intentionally) the father-son relationship. It may cause readers to wonder what the meaning is. Father-son terms are based on an association; they are not independent ideas like ‘house’ or ‘tree.’ What would be the reciprocal term for ‘Son from God’ that would be used to express ‘Father?’ Would it be ‘the one who sent the Son?’ Or would it be ‘the Father who sent Jesus?’
The problem with such renderings is that to the extent that they obscure the father-son relationship between God and Jesus, they also confuse the meaning, thus failing to be clear.

Non-common terms may also be *unnatural*. Every language in the world has a natural way of expressing the father-son relationship. If a translator invents a new way of expressing this, it may sound stilted and foreign. Readers may stumble when they read such a passage, and listeners may lose interest when they hear it because it is confusing.

Finally, such experimental translations have proven to be *unacceptable* to the Global Church. The outrage that Christians have expressed all over the world in recent years at such translations was predictable if translators considered the history of Bible translation. TEV’s rendering of ‘blood’ is a good example that would have predicted the firestorm of criticism for experimental translations of divine father-son terms. Translators must make the Church (both local and global) the arbiters of what makes for acceptable translation. To do otherwise would be to err and fail to serve the Church.

**Conclusion**

I have attempted to show that renderings for ‘Son of God’ and ‘God the Father’ in some languages have seriously departed from the basic principles of meaning-based translation rather than being guided by these principles. The effect of these errors is very serious, despite the well-intentioned effort of Christians sincerely trying to communicate the gospel to diverse audiences. Rather, when followed well, those principles of meaning-based translation would have led to translations which were accurate, clear, and natural, as well as acceptable to the Church.

**References**


Steve Doty has a BA in Architecture, an MA in Linguistics, and a PhD in Translation Studies. He has served with Wycliffe Bible Translators and SIL as a translator, trainer, consultant, and administrator in Asia, Africa, and the Pacific.

Questions for reflection

1. There are occasions when the four qualities of a good translation conflict with each other, and the translation team must decide which is most important and which can be compromised a bit. Which quality do you think is the most important and should not be compromised?

2. What do you believe is the meaning of ‘Son of God,’ and what do you base this on?

3. How important do you think it is that Christians acknowledge that Jesus Christ is the Son of God?
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God, the Bible, Technology, and Missions
by Eric M. Straw

The world is overrun with technology! ” When it comes to missions, is that good or bad, helpful or harmful, God-ordained or devil-inspired? My goal in this article is to help us answer three important questions: What is technology? What do God and the Bible say about technology? and In the case of missions, is technology culturally neutral—why or why not?

What Is Technology?
Imagine exploring the forest on a cold, crisp October morning. You pick up a long stick and begin to walk using your newfound object as a staff. Wait! Your use of the stick as a staff has repurposed the stick and created a tool of it. A tool extends a physical ability. In this case, the staff aids you in...
walking by engaging your arms to improve balance and, perhaps, increase momentum.

A tool, then, can be a natural thing (such as a stick) or an artificial thing, such as aluminum Nordic poles (see Figure 1 on page 142). As you walk further into the oak grove, you are surprised and delighted to see a young buck in the distance and think about venison steaks. You decide that you need a bow because your stick is inadequate for steak getting. So you imagine attaching a string to your stick to create a bow.

Your stick-and-string-as-bow would be another tool. It would extend your ability to throw. But the bow would be more than a tool: it would be technology. Technology is the result of assembling, reconfiguring, reforming, or modifying natural things. Technology is always artificial (see Figure 1 on page 142). A bow carved from wood with leather grip and sinew string has been constructed from all natural things. Yet, the bow as a bow is artificial.

Both tools and technology have extrinsic ends. That means the directedness toward an end (goal, outcome, or aim) is outside of the item. It is observer-relevant. There is nothing intrinsic (internal) to the stick that directs it toward the end of being a staff. That end was assigned by you. You could just as easily have assigned the end of being a club, javelin, or post.

You spot a small bird’s nest overhead. Is that bird nest technology? A tool? Neither? Perhaps a few more examples will help you decide. First, we need to consider the concept of art in order to build a formal definition of technology.

Art is not necessarily technology. Art is constructed for aesthetic value, for the beauty of it. The paint on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel is technology, yet the patterns are not. They are art. Technology is constructed for non-aesthetic (not-art) ends. Something can be both art and technology if it is constructed for aesthetic value and at least one non-aesthetic end.

Formally, technology is any artificial thing constructed with at least one non-aesthetic extrinsic end. Informally, technology is a stick with a string and anything else that fits that model.

Likewise, there is nothing intrinsic to a stick-with-a-string that directs it toward being a bow. You could have assigned the end of being an exercise device, straight edge, or musical instrument.

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Formally, technology is any artificial thing constructed with at least one non-aesthetic extrinsic end. Stated less technically, technology is anything
made to satisfy a not-art, observer-relevant end. Informally, technology is a stick with a string and anything else that fits that model.

**Does the Bible Talk about Technology?**

The Bible contains many examples of technology. For example, Genesis 4:17-22 references technology in the form of a city (v. 17), tents (v. 20), lyre and pipe (v. 22), as well as instruments of bronze and iron (v. 22):

Cain knew his wife, and she conceived and bore Enoch. When he built a city, he called the name of the city after the name of his son, Enoch… Adah bore Jabal; he was the father of those who dwell in tents and have livestock. His brother’s name was Jubal; he was the father of all those who play the lyre and pipe. Zillah also bore Tubal-cain; he was the forger of all instruments of bronze and iron.

Exodus 25-31 contains many examples of technology in the instructions for building the tabernacle and associated items. The list in Exodus 31:7-11 includes the ark and its cover, tables, utensils, lampstands, wash basins, garments, and more. All of these are technology. They are artificial things constructed with at least one non-aesthetic extrinsic end.

Jesus instructed others to use technology. Jesus told Peter to use a hook in Matthew 17:27: “Go to the sea and cast a hook and take the first fish that comes up.” Jesus used technology in John 13:4-5. He used a table, robe, towel, and basin: “So [Jesus] got up from the table, took off his robe, wrapped a towel around his waist, and poured water into a basin. Then he began to wash the disciples’ feet, drying them with the towel he had around him.”

You may find it hard to think of these things as technology because they are not new to you. However, newness is not part of the definition of technology. Our familiarity does not alter the category of an object.
Is Technology Culturally Neutral?

“None.” That was the answer to my question. I had just been told by someone that she and her husband had switched from the printed version to the digital version of *Our Daily Bread*, a popular daily devotional.

“What has the impact been?” I asked. “None,” she replied. None? No impact caused by switching from the printed version to the digital version? I find that hard to believe because technology always has an impact on individuals and cultures. Technology is never culturally neutral.

This *never culturally neutral claim* is not a moral claim. I am not addressing the moral value (good or bad) of technology. Rather, I am addressing the existence of cultural and individual impacts from technology. To illustrate this, consider adding a lemon wedge to tea. A lemon wedge is *never flavorfully neutral* in tea. It changes the flavor of the tea. This says nothing about the moral value of adding a lemon wedge to tea. Likewise, the claim I am making, and that many others have made, is that technology always has an impact on individuals and culture. Technology changes the flavor of cultures, so to speak.

Can Technology Change the DNA of a Culture?

Forty years ago in Zemio, Central African Republic, a very large slit-top drum called a *gurru* was used as the primary communication technology between villages. The drum’s design was ideal for the tonal Zande language and the sound of the *gurru* could be heard many kilometers away.

A friend of mine described hearing about the death of a woman named Dawa drummed out on the *gurru*. To achieve this communication there had to be a drum maker, a way to learn drum making, a drummer, a way to learn drumming, and protocols for using the drum. The *gurru* was a community-based technology centralized around the tribal elders.

Again, forty years ago Zemio was a drum-using culture. Today, there is a cellular phone tower in Zemio. If a woman named Dawa died today in Zemio, the message would be carried by cell phone towers, not *gurru* drums. The same message, but different technology.

One resident even said, “With the cell tower now up in Zemio this old way of life is probably going to be lost!” *Not probably*. Most definitely.

Today in Zemio, there are cell phone owners and not drummers; there are cell phone shops and not drum makers. The use of cell phones is centralized around young people. The cell phone is an individual-based technology. Today, Zemio has a cell phone culture. Everything has changed.

Is Technology Neutral When We Use the Bible Today?

If technology is never culturally neutral, then the impact of switching from the printed version to the digital version of *Our Daily Bread* cannot be “none.” If we think more deeply, we can identify the impacts.
There is another important question related to this switch from print to digital. What does God think about the switch? Does he prefer we use the printed version, or is the digital version acceptable? Just as good? Better?

Ashley is an ardent follower of Jesus. She enjoys reading and discussing the Bible. She also enjoys giving Bibles away to people at her favorite coffee shop, Café des Sagesse. Ashley has a bit of a reputation around Café des Sagesse as someone who cares deeply about others. She listens well and often shares from her own experiences of following Jesus. Ashley carries several copies of the New Living Translation (NLT) paperback New Testament because they are great for giving away. They are affordable, lightweight, and have a very low intimidation factor because of their small size. In addition, Ashley likes the readability of the NLT, especially for those who are new to following Jesus.

Today, Ashley is sitting in Café des Sagesse with an excellent cappuccino that began with exquisite micro-foam art. The aroma is heavenly. The flavor is supreme. After slowly breathing in the aroma and ever so lightly tasting her cappuccino, Ashley reaches into her satchel to pull out a Bible. Should Ashley pull out a printed Bible or a digital Bible? Does the media format matter?

What Does God Really Think about Technology?

The first clear mention of technology in the Bible is the story of sin entering the world in Genesis 3. We can learn something about God’s attitude toward technology both by what he did and by what he did not do with technology in this story.

Adam and Eve made technology to cover their nakedness: “They sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths” (Gen. 3:7). God then replaced technology with new theologically-significant technology:

“[The Lord God] made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them” (Gen. 3:21). What did God not do? He did not eliminate technology by simply getting rid of the plant-based clothes. Instead, he replaced the technology with new technology that served his purpose.

Thus, in the first clear example of technology in the Bible, we see God endorsing the use of technology because it served his purpose. As it turns out, this idea of God’s purpose is central to understanding what God thinks about technology.

The construction of the tabernacle in Exodus 25-31 is another example
of the interaction of technology and God’s purpose. God commanded the creation of very specific technology: “You must build this tabernacle and its furnishings exactly according to the pattern I will show you” (Exod. 25:9). God not only commanded the very specific technology, he also prepared the workers:

See, I have called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with ability and intelligence, with knowledge and all craftsmanship, to devise artistic designs, to work in gold, silver, and bronze, in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, to work in every craft. And behold, I have appointed with him Oholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan. And I have given to all able men ability, that they may make all that I have commanded you. (Exod. 31:2-6)

This is all very amazing. God commissioned technology and prepared the craftsman so that his purpose would be fulfilled. Wonderful! Yet not all technology in the Bible contributes to God’s purpose. Perhaps the best example of this is the tower of Babel in Genesis 11:1-9. At the tower of Babel, the purpose of humanity was opposed to the purpose of God. This is evident in the contrast of verses 4 and 9: “[The people said] let us build...lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth” vs. “The Lord dispersed them over the face of all the earth.”

In this example, we see God opposing technology so that his purpose would be fulfilled. Thus, we have the answer to our question, “What does God think about technology?” The answer is, “It depends on whether or not the technology supports God’s purpose.”

How Do We Choose the Best Technology in Missions?

As executive director of a mission organization, I don’t see this question as hypothetical. Instead, it’s imperative that we think through it carefully, wisely, and biblically. In Ashley’s case, with two forms of the Bible in her satchel, does technology further or hinder God’s purpose?

Consider the following scenarios and their implications in Ashley’s choice of reading the Bible in a print or digital format. The right choice could bear much fruit. The wrong choice could be tragic.

- Ashley has had an ongoing discussion with Kayla, who is curious about Jesus. And, Ashley knows that Kayla will be at the café this morning. The printed media might lead to a discussion opportunity.
- Ashley is in a position spiritually and emotionally where she needs time alone with God and his word. The digital media might provide more isolation.
- Ashley has a lesson to teach in the near future and needs to read multiple
Bible translations as well as dig into several commentaries. The digital media will provide access to more tools.

- Ashley lives in an Islamic community that prohibits the public reading of the Bible.
  - Further, Ashley is sensitive to the safety of those whom she works with and desires to protect them. The digital media might provide more privacy and protection.
  - Or, Ashley is in the right position spiritually, emotionally, and physically to make a bold proclamation for Jesus and freedom of faith. The print media will provide a clear public statement.

These examples are just a few of the possible scenarios. Ashley’s initial task is the same in each possible scenario: she needs to be sensitive to God’s Spirit, listen to God, and carefully discern God’s leading so that God’s purpose will be fulfilled.

I trust you have a better understanding of what God thinks about technology. If so, how can you use what you have learned to make wise decisions about your future use of technology in the cause of missions?

**Eric M. Straw**, PhD, serves as professor of business at the Hoff School of Business, Corban University. Eric also serves as founder and executive director of Mark 5 Ministries. He can be reached at estraw@corban.edu or eric@mark5ministries.org.

**Questions for reflection**

1. “The Bible contains many examples of technology.” What was your first thought after reading/hearing that statement?
2. The author claims, “Technology is never culturally neutral.” What happened in Zemio, Central African Republic? Are these changes good or bad?
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Editor's Note: EMQ wants to honor some of the ‘unsung heroes’ among us and we created our EMQ Unsung Hero Award to do just that. Nominations were sent in from many parts of the world. In this section, we want to honor seventeen of these individuals for their faithfulness in ministry. None would call themselves a ‘hero,’ but we are privileged to honor them and, through their stories, to inspire each of us to remain steadfast and committed to God’s call upon our lives. The bios below contain summarized facts and comments given from those who nominated each individual.

Redefining Friendship

Sarah Speer
25+ years of service in The Republic of Congo
Doctor

Sarah serves in the Pioneer Christian Hospital. The first time I met her was in 2013. One morning, she asked me if I want to go with her and visit her friends. Of course, I went with her. We ended up visiting two paralytics, lepers in an abandoned government hospital, pygmies who live in extreme poverty in the jungle, and I also watched Sarah help build mud houses for the poor. These are her friends! Every single penny she has, she would give to help these people. She would even take the pygmies into her house, which no other missionaries would do. She models Jesus’ kind of servanthood: meek and humble; at the same time, she shares the love of Jesus with each of her friends in a very concrete way.”
Ruba Shafik Al-Rehani  
21 years of service in the Middle East/North Africa Region  
Wife, radio broadcaster, founder of ministry to women

Ruba began serving as a pastor’s wife in northern Jordan. Five years later, she founded the ministry of Arab Woman Today, which effectively engages the community through social development and the church. Her first ministry to unreached women was through a radio program which sought to tackle women’s challenges, to be a voice for the voiceless, and to give hope to Arab women with wounded hearts and no knowledge of their value in the eyes of God. Working side-by-side with the radio program, the on-ground ministry focused on reaching Arab, Christian women who served on the field in frontline ministry. Ruba’s vision was ‘to see every Arab Woman reconciled with herself, with God, and with her respective society.’

As a result, together they started to build a program using seminars, workshops, conferences, and printed material aimed at empowering Arab women who are serving and leading various ministries and congregations in support of their husbands. God allowed this vision to extend via technology to Arab women residing in multiple countries throughout the region such as Syria, Iraq, Egypt, Tunisia, Lebanon, Morocco, Sweden, France, and Algeria. The entire endeavor was very successful because she built a network and provided a platform (online, radio, TV, and in groups) for women leaders to share and learn from each other. Ruba exhibited the highest level of Christian and Arab hospitality by always opening her home to those seeking love, rest, and encouragement, even when she was a mother, wife, and caregiver.”
Finding the Narrow Way

C.G. (pseudonym)
15+ years of service in China, Thailand, Indonesia, and Bali
Medicine, education, Muslim ministry

C.G., who knows Chinese, Uyghur, and Indonesian, is part of a team that creatively reaches Uyghur with media. She is praying that in the next few years it would become common knowledge among the Uyghurs that God’s Word is available in their language and that anyone who is interested in reading it would know where to find a copy. The team has identified about 350 villages that represent over eighty percent of the entire Uyghur population and they are working to creatively reach each village.”

Healed by the Power of Love

Tim & Ann Wester
40+ years of service in Cameroon and Central African Republic (C.A.R.)
Medicine, education, Muslim ministry

Tim and Ann are both MKs whose parents worked in Congo—Zaire—D.R. Congo. Tim contracted polio there and has walked with crutches since childhood. He became a medical doctor; Ann a teacher. They worked at a mission hospital and school for African girls in a remote area of northern Congo until one of its wars made the situation untenable. A mission in the C.A.R. gladly borrowed them and Tim worked in a hospital there and soon became director of the denomination’s medical work. Ann taught at a Central African high school. They developed an interest in the unreached Fulani Muslims and ministered to them through medicine, nutrition, and relationships. War came again and they fled to Cameroon.
Tim and Ann returned to the C.A.R. and have managed to continue outreach to the Fulani through more war and unrest. Ann teaches French and Bible to nursing school students; Tim is a doctor at the hospital. Countless Africans, and more than a few foreigners, have been healed and have heard of the power and love of God to save them. An untold number of young people have become better educated and at the same time learned the word of God.

Investing in Leaders

Jim Millard
37 years of service in Japan, Mongolia, China, Philippines, India, etc.
Church planting

We’ve seen people movements for Christ due to Jim’s influence in many places. His signature work with Asian Access is something deeply embedded into our core values and which all of our alumni point to as transformational in their journey: a lifelong commitment to ‘a love relationship with God.’ While many might look at this and say, ‘That should be the norm for a Christ follower!’ once you become part of the Asian Access family, you get a sense of how deeply important this element is for ministry.

Jim had led one of the most fruitful church-planting efforts in Japan during the 1980s and early 1990s, helping to train and take the successful Japanese Church Growth Institute to other Asian countries. In addition to his work in partnership with Asian Access in Mongolia, Nepal, and Myanmar, Jim leads works in China, the Philippines, India, and other countries. He helped redevelop the Asian Access core curriculum, which has been catalytic in the lives of leaders across nations, leading many to be stronger in their walk with Christ and successful as church planters. I would say the work God has led Jim to accomplish is the single most transformative factor in leaders’ lives and has greatly influenced many to follow God."
Unsung Heroes

Blessing the Underprivileged

Ann Hume
15+ years of service in Haiti
Medical work, orphanage oversight

Ann has brought various individuals to the USA for medical treatment. She has also made way for me to come study in the States and has been a supportive mother to me since 1999. She continues to run an orphanage in Haiti called God’s Children Haiti for those who are mostly underprivileged.”

Modeling through Wisdom and Kindness

Larry & Ann Vanderaa
30+ years of service in Liberia and Republic of Mali
Prayer, church planting, family ministry, small business

Born and raised in Africa, Larry and Ann met in an American college and returned to continue missionary work, starting in Liberia until war precluded their stay, and then for thirty more years in the Republic of Mali. Larry and Ann, along with other couples, each established small homes in a village and a larger home in the big city of Bamako. They raised their four kids, home schooled, and shared the gospel in life and word in this simple setting. Slowly, a handful accepted and listened to the gospel as Larry helped his Muslim friends to simply look at Jesus. He has not sought to have them join existing churches of other cultures, but enabled them to form one inside the Fulani culture. Once the team had a Fulfulde New Testament, the work was greatly enhanced.

Ann has had a great ministry of prayer with the women of the villages. She also became an outlet for their village to make goods
and operated a store from her house in the city to sell these. Larry has written much on this adventure and approach and taught in both small settings to Christian workers in Bible School among the Fulani. Their kindness, wisdom, patience, and intrepidness truly are amazing.”

An Agent of Change

Trinidad (Trino) Angeles Chaname
40+ years of service in Peru
Pastor

Trinidad is a man of God whose call started in an evangelistic campaign in the 1970s. Since then, God has been honing him, equipping him to take on more responsibility and becoming an agent of change in the Lord’s hands. Trino is from a small farm. He qualified himself as a carpenter, also selling alfalfa in the market. So, here in the marketplace is where my friend met Trino and invited him to help him in his house up in the mountains, doing the carpentry work needed in his house. Trino then lived with the family for many years, related to the Quechua people, and learned to speak Quechua.

After ten to eleven years, he went back to the coastal area and qualified himself for the ministry by studying to become a pastor. The La Playa community called him as their pastor and he still serves there. But it did not stay at that, because the Lord used his skills in many areas to become a very effective tool within the Quechua evangelical community, taking on a leadership role in bringing harmony and cooperation between different Quechua denominations and congregations. He was chosen to be the coordinator of the translation project of the Bible into Quechua. More recently, he has been elected to be president of the electoral committee, which is responsible for the democratic election of the committee that is to oversee the use of natural water sources to provide in the town’s need for drinking water. His respectful and effective service has been a strong example of a life full of love for our Lord.”
Unparalled Focus

Dee Wirz
40 years of service in Japan and China
Teaching, Bible study

Dee has ministered predominantly in Japan, but has served every summer teaching English for over a decade in China as well. In an era and location known as a ‘missionaries’ graveyard,’ Dee has stayed the course, faithfully leading evangelistic Bible studies and leading her neighbors and friends to Christ. Her steady presence has made a significant kingdom impact that no one can measure.

Dee developed some excellent English Bible study materials. As others came and went, she endured, laying a foundation for what continues today as a fruitful ministry. She still walks, rides her bike, and leads Bible studies seven times a week even though she is in her 70s. I have rarely seen someone so focused and faithful to her one unique calling as Dee. I would argue there are few missionaries who have seen so many Japanese people come to Christ over the last forty years.”

Uncompromised Compassion

Dr. Deborah Eisenhut
34+ years of service in Mexico, India, Haiti, Rwanda, Nigeria, Niger, Pakistan, Liberia, and Cameroon
Surgeon, medical training

Dr. Deborah (Debbie) Eisenhut has a deep faithfulness and courage in service to Christ. She is a trained, board-certified surgeon who is a leader in the medical team of Ebola fighters, yet is rarely mentioned. This recognition is fitting because of her outstanding and exemplary work as a surgeon and physician since August 2012 at ELWA Hospital in Liberia, especially during the Ebola outbreak.
of 2014. Dr. Debbie recognized the looming threat of an Ebola outbreak in early 2014. Her leadership in preparing the hospital staff by conducting intensive training in isolation protocols and in donning and doffing Personal Protective Equipment, identifying suspected cases of Ebola, and establishing a working, safe Isolation Unit in the hospital saved the lives of fellow doctors, nursing staff, and patients.

When the first patients confirmed with Ebola Virus Disease arrived at the ELWA Hospital in June 2014, Dr. Debbie spent uncounted hours in physically demanding conditions attending to them in the Isolation Unit, continuing her surgical schedule, and continuing to train hospital staff. Her courage and faithfulness in the face of appalling conditions was a visible reminder of Christ’s love and mercy to the people of Liberia. Dr. Debbie is currently serving in Cameroon, training surgeons for service in Africa and around the world. Her great desire is to demonstrate God’s love to the world in Christ, and to serve others in the name of Jesus.”

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**Multifaceted Ministry**

Ken Davis  
*20+ years of service in Brazil*  
*Pastor, leadership development, publishing ministry, teacher*

Ken runs a multi-million dollar business in Brazil, investing in the Brazilian leaders through a publishing house. This publishing house works through the Brazilian leaders to publish Bibles and theologically sound resources for the Portuguese-speaking world, both locally and in other parts of the world. This is a true Business as Mission venture that receives little attention outside of the Portuguese-speaking world as he makes a valuable contribution to missions and the growth of the Church.

With humble beginnings and a commitment to God and his Word, Ken models the humility and investment in people through his many years of service both as a pastor and through his years of service to those who needed him to serve. As a CEO, he continues to invest in the Church as wisely as possible. As a follower of Christ, he invests his teaching skills in a training school, and God has allowed him to continue as a pastor, investing in those God brings into his path.*
Unsung Heroes

Doing Life ‘With’

E. Wesley Seng
45 years of service in Brazil
Bible study, leadership training

Wes Seng came to Christ during a VBS when he was 9. His dad was very angry when he went to Bible school and, worse yet, to Brazil as a missionary. More than twenty years later Wes buried his dad in Brazil. His experience of being one of just a few children at the VBS bred in him a lasting commitment to reach ‘the least of these’ in the most remote places. Upon first arrival, Wes and his wife, Trudy, immediately started a Bible study and planted a church among the ranch hands. Wes was then asked to stand in for a missionary on furlough to do tribal work and he never left. Setting up training centers, he built circular classrooms: he placed the tribal

Quietly Leading

Jonathan & Dorothy Luethy
30+ years of service in Japan
Church planting, parents

Mr. & Mrs. Luethy are missionaries serving in an isolated province in western Japan. They have quietly done church planting in that rural area for over thirty years. Through perseverance and faithfulness to their call, they have labored hard to see just a trickling of Japanese come to faith in Christ. They have done a couple of church plants, but, as is typical for Japan, the churches are small (around thirty members) and in need of national leadership. They tirelessly work the villages, making contacts through tract distribution and social events. They raised three children there, all who are now married adults living in the States, but they continue to persist in Japan away from children and grandchildren.”
students in a circle and taught using orality combined with literacy. He began taking students from one tribe to minister in other tribes, thousands of kilometers away, and often faced grave danger.

Wes is passionate about doing life with his tribal friends and neighbors in godly and culturally appropriate ways. His focus is to train disciples of Christ to deeply love, understand, and obey God’s Word because the Word was ‘written so it would be a part of us, intrinsic to our lives.’ He modeled a humble spirit and a scholarly, intensely practical approach to the Bible as he brought God’s Word not just to training centers, but to everyday life in Brazil as he walked with tribal church leaders.

On an Adventure

Ruby Mikulencak
43 years of service in Ethiopia, Ghana, and Côte d’Ivoire
Nurse, church planting, country director

Ruby served the Lord in Africa for forty years. Little did she know when she dedicated her life to the Lord that it would be an adventure in missions. She first went to Ethiopia in 1972 to serve in hospital nursing. Like many Ethiopian workers she had to leave Ethiopia in 1979 because of the revolution. In 1980, she relocated to Ghana, working in primary health care, church planting, Bible teaching and women’s ministry. In Ghana, not only was she a nurse, she was also an important part of the church-planting team. She and her colleagues learned how to communicate in the local language, and along with a cultural understanding, was involved in planting several churches among the Kasena of Northern Ghana.

Later, she moved to Accra, the capital of Ghana, and served as director until she retired. This, too, was an adventure in learning how to lead and to guide. Since returning from Ghana, her adventure on mission continues as she has taken up the role as mentor, trainer and mobilizer for Majority World missions. It is her prayer that this role will prepare and enable missionaries to thrive in their ministry. Ruby considers being on a mission adventure with God as the best part of her life!”
Walking in the Presence of God

Y.M.
18 years of service in Egypt and Jordan
Development, training, church planting, refugee support

Y.M. is a single Korean woman who served for twelve years in Egypt and Jordan. When she first deployed in 1997, she had to learn English and Arabic at the same time. In 2003, because her roommate distributed a Bible in a public place, they were both imprisoned for six days and then deported from Egypt. During her imprisonment ‘God brought me into His sweetest presence and said to me, “This is not the end of your journey and I will send you to the place where I want you to be…I will be with you.”’

Y.M. moved to Jordan in 2006 and reached out to Bedouins through development projects. She helped to open five kindergartens and reached one hundred families. Many were touched by God’s love and received Bibles. They were threatened by the government and sometimes weary. After receiving her M.A. on furlough, she returned to Jordan in order to work with relief training and provide a complete biblical response to suffering in addition to working with church-planting teams and leadership development.

Steadfast on the Word

Diane Chmielewski
27+ years of service in China
Discipleship, Bible training, medical clinics

I’ve known Diane for more than twenty years. I look up to her as an example of both Christian living and missionary service. She’s always cheerful and encouraging, even when faced with difficult circumstances. She’s godly, a woman of prayer, humble, and takes her work of sharing the good news with the lost in China very seriously. Her passion and focus are discipleship and teaching the Word,
primarily to the Sani minority group in southern China. Over the years, her NGO has provided teacher training, midwife training, medical clinics, and child sponsorship. She has trained up a Chinese woman to do evangelism and discipleship in rural areas. She meets with individuals or families for Bible study, and holds Bible studies for women who have been rescued from the ‘entertainment industry.’ Additionally, she teaches the Bible to Chinese Christian leaders. During these studies, she desires not merely to teach the Word, but to instruct the leaders in how to properly study the Word themselves. On the field, one is confronted with a great variety of needs, but Diane has fought to ‘keep the main thing the main thing,’ that of teaching the Word of God. She lives out 2 Timothy 2:2 by investing time in studying the Word with reliable people who will be qualified to teach others.”

More than a Mentor

Kelly Robinette
28 years of service in Thailand and Cambodia
Church Planting, discipleship, leadership training, mentor

Since 1992, the Robinette’s have faithfully served among the Khmer people of Cambodia. They were among the first to be able to enter the newly-opened Cambodia as missionaries. Throughout Kelly’s ministry in Cambodia, he and his wife, Cyndi, raised their two children and have been affectionately known as missionary ‘Uncle’ and ‘Aunt’ to dozens of missionary kids. Kelly has endeavored to see the Kingdom of God advance through church planting.

Whether serving as a Bible school director, school program coordinator, or local pastor, he has continually strived to enable pastors and parishioners to recognize the value of this ministry. He has a faithfulness in ministry and vigor in seeing new churches established, as well as a legacy to the missionaries who have followed in his footsteps to serve the Khmer people. His practical methodology has opened door after door for churches to be established, ministries to be birthed, and most importantly, people to be brought to Christ.”
As a teacher, privileged to work among indigenous people for almost forty years, I am uneasy with a recent trend in teaching curriculum for tribal people. I refer to the issue of orality, which welcomed in a fresh view for biblical training among traditional groups. Yet the issue today has caused disharmony rather than progress among Christian teachers. I wish to make some observations on orality and literacy and share insights learned, frequently after making mistakes. As I write this, I have in my mind students emerging from tribal contexts who come to a formal program of Bible education and ministry. It does not deal with initial biblical instruction in a tribe.

Because there were obvious flaws in going cold turkey by teaching people from an oral tradition using linear/literacy methods, the pendulum has now swung to excess on the opposite side. The cry is ‘back to orality.’ Literacy is now...
getting bad press as somehow irrelevant to tribal people; in some cases, the linear/literacy form of learning is being discarded altogether. Yet I have heard indigenous brothers lament being denied skills or disciplines which would aid them in continuing education in other fields. They feel ‘stereotyped’ and confined to roles suited only for orally-oriented lifestyles.

Orality, although obviously important, should in no way confine a learner to one method of growth. Orality is not a method of learning. It is a method of communication. We must not confuse these two concepts. After all, a method of communication is the way we transmit information from one person to another, but the hearer may not be learning. Literacy is also a method of communication: both methods can be classified as communication phenomena.

Learning depends on whether or not the listener has been programmed to learn by the communication mode being used. God used at least two very distinct methods of communication and these should never be pitted one against the other as opposing values or as incompatible. Neither is anyone’s exclusive birthright. As communication methods, orality and literacy greatly complement and enhance one another and should be used to advantage in our teaching institutions.

Orality, a communication phenomenon as old as Genesis and human community, produces a cyclical learning system. Since literacy is nonexistent in many tribal situations, principles and teaching are communicated by storytelling and listeners grasp content by the repetition of stories, growing in their knowledge as they mature through life stages. I must claim roots in
orality. On our family’s ranch in Montana, I learned ranching skills by my dad’s storehouse of repeated stories.

Worldwide attention has turned to orality today because a large part of the world communicates by this system. A new awareness has led some academicians to believe the original learning format should be maintained for learning to continue. I cannot agree. Rather, I believe that transition courses for new learners should be purposefully worked into a curriculum early on.

Let me clarify: *Literacy, a communication phenomenon, produces a linear learning system.* By literacy one can learn progressively and use excellent reference books to verify what was learned. By literacy one also can move on to the next level of understanding in the subject at hand. *Linear is the method of learning; literacy communicates the information.* Those who learn by reading do so because they were programmed to do so. Yet knowing how to read is not synonymous to learning.

**Those who learn by reading** do so because they were programmed to do so.

Although tribal people have some ‘catching up’ to do when they transition into a new system, they are capable of learning in a new system. This was demonstrated frequently during my teaching experience with indigenous people. Students would learn to read; however, on a written test over the material supposedly studied and learned, they would read the written questions over and over and finally summon the teacher and say, “I don’t understand this question.”

When I read the question, the student would brighten up and say, “Oh, is that what it says!” This happened repeatedly. They had learned to read and formulate the words, but they did not add meaning to them until they heard the words. When the teacher spoke the words, their meaning was understood. In time, they themselves learned to give meaning to the words they read.

However, the belief that cyclical learners should remain in that form of oral learning indefinitely should not be entertained. *A very important portion of God’s revelation to us can only be learned through the linear method of learning.* Sound principles of teaching oblige a curriculum to begin at the stage where the learners are. However, new learners should not be thought of as deficient or psychologically bound to one mode of learning; they are able to grow in their mental processes and adapt to the literary tradition of communication and most desperately desire to do so.
There should be no hesitation or lack of urgency on the part of teachers to aid cyclical learners to adapt to literacy and the linear method of learning as soon as possible. For learning to happen, one need not “go back to orality”; aid must be given to cyclical-oriented learners in their transition to linear learning so they can take advantage of both traditions for the glory of God.

If scripture exclusively limited itself to using story form, it would be obvious this was God’s favored (divine) way of communication. Certainly, scripture contains a large portion of valuable lessons in ancient history in story form. Orality as a method of communication was prominent and preeminent at that time. Moses received his information of ancient history in the oral tradition under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. However, once the accounts were registered in written form, they became available through literary communication. Orality joined hands with literacy.

Most of us from Haugan, Montana, would have opted for orality in our younger days. We had little use for stuffy libraries when there was all the beauty of Montana to explore. But a day arrived when life’s hard questions began to gnaw at my mind and I yearned for deeper truths that could offer direction in life.

And I cannot believe that tribal people are much different from this kid from Haugan. If they are made in the image of God, they are capable of sharing the same deep yearnings for knowing God that I had. Nor can I believe they do not wrestle with some of the same deep questions asked by the literary world community. I cannot believe God gave some instructions to be understood only by those born into literacy.

In our sincere love and desire to communicate the gospel to tribal people, we could slide into ‘dumbing down’ the whole precious and living word of God in order to be politically correct or follow a current trend. I believe that as both communication phenomena are used wisely, the Holy Spirit will do his part in translating truth to any mind. In fact, one of the first Suruí to encounter literacy expressed some amazing insights on Romans only a few years after coming to Ammi.

God probes our minds using linear thinking through didactic literary communication—line on line, precept on precept. Although the Old Testament was largely produced from oral tradition into a literary form, a very large portion of the instruction for the Church in the New Testament

I cannot believe God gave some instructions to be understood only by those born into literacy.
is presented for a linear style of learning. Unless there is a dedication to learning through a linear mode, many New Testament truths are lost to someone confined to the oral tradition.

One of the difficulties in oral tradition is that invariably human memory fails. Although an unwritten law in some oral tradition is that the story must be told identically every time, I would wager that most stories repeated around tribal fires differ in a smaller or greater degree from the accounts of the great, great grandfathers, and I have heard indigenous brothers admit this problem.

Despite the best intentions, I doubt a person's ability to have perfect recall of an original story every time. However, God’s written word is sure and does not depend on fallible human memory. The story is always the same, and it needs to be the same because God’s truths are not negotiable. They are eternal.

Scripture never assumes that some will not have the ability to deal with truth presented in a linear/literary tradition. God dared to challenge all his followers by giving us Romans, I Corinthians, Ephesians, James, and the other epistles. Just as people born into the literary tradition can transition over to learning in the orality form, people accustomed to cyclical learning can transition over and into the linear form of learning. Adhering religiously to a memorized oral system will hold back the progress of those hungry to learn.

Dr. Jim Slack gave excellent pointers to use when introducing the gospel to people from oral traditions in tribal settings. However, my concern lies in the school setting, where students come desiring literacy; the school curriculum must give students the opportunity to ‘gently’ move into the new learning style. Ample use of stories during the first year is appropriate; as students progress, a gradual moving to classes requiring linear type thinking is natural for biblical content.

A teacher is both a truth communicator and an enabler in the transitional expansion of learning methods. Linear truth can be introduced using a dual system that helps students attain a grasp of the truths available in linear, literary form not clearly expressed in the oral/cyclical traditions. A Bible school should provide the safe, yet challenging environment where this can happen.

In his research to explain the acquisition of human knowledge,
developmental psychologist Jean Piaget discovered that in any new situation (where it may appear no understanding is taking place), the mind is learning (absorbing information) all along but requires time to create the necessary ‘schemas’ in order to organize the new data into a useful store of knowledge upon which to draw. Once there is sufficient organization, the mind makes a leap forward in its organized understanding of the knowledge received. Although his research was done mainly on children, the principles are applicable across the board. We witnessed this learning process in students time and again. When everything came together, they made a sudden leap forward in comprehension and learning.

The study of scripture using both learning methods is one of the best preparations for people from oral traditions for further education. This privilege is not confined to those reared in libraries. Thankfully, God endowed kids from Haugan and the Suruí and Peter with the ability to grapple with Paul’s reasoning in order to come to full understanding (2 Pet. 3:16). Someone objecting to this view declared, “We are NOT preparing our students for university!”

While I agree a Bible school need not include disciplines such as math and physics, I would like to think that when a student completes the Bible curriculum, he or she would be at least as well prepared in his or her ability to think as I was when I finished high school.

God limited no part of his creation in such a way. The two main systems in discussion function well. Although many groups are still very oral in their learning style, in a rapidly-changing world, fewer will be in this situation tomorrow. We must help them make the transition in learning styles. A carefully planned ‘transitional’ Bible school curriculum has much to offer. The chasm between village life and the university is huge. A Bible institute can serve as a safety net for students crossing the bridge into a whole new tradition.

I make no claims to a comprehensive knowledge of tribal thinking. Yet I hear loud indigenous voices saying that future tribal dignity depends on education. Bible institutes must see the challenge as an opportunity to have a part in the intellectual and character formation of those who will influence their societies and may someday defend the gospel at a national level. Let’s go for it.

Wes Seng works with Mission Resources International in Brazil. He helped establish and taught in three biblical discipleship centers for tribal people.
Orality as Preparation for Reading?

by Jackson Wu

THE CORRECTNESS OF Wes Seng’s article is illustrated by the very fact we are able to have a conversation about the use of orality in a journal like EMQ. Had our parents kept us from getting an education beyond the third grade, readers would be ill-equipped to consider these key missiological issues (e.g., orality). Accordingly, I concur with Seng that we should not withhold from oral peoples the types of trainings that God has graciously given much of the Church.

By calling orality a “method of communication” rather than a “method of learning,” Seng implicitly warns missionaries not to patronize oral peoples. Functionally, non-literate tribal peoples are no different than elementary school children, who, of course, were not born literate. Therefore, it is a blatant contradiction for missionaries to teach their own children while treating oral peoples as though they are unable to learn linear thinking.

Many people object to oral approaches based on the impression that they minimize God’s self-revelation in the epistles.

Seng rightly argues against ‘dumbing down’ God’s word by using only an oral method of communication. Many people object to oral approaches based on the impression that they minimize God’s self-revelation in the epistles. This is certainly a danger if we are unwilling to help trainees develop their linear thinking.

How so? First, they will be less equipped to understand those more systematic, didactic passages, which God authoritatively inspired to be understood by his people.

Second and more subtly, those who advocate orality-only methods underestimate how God prepared writers like Paul to write their letters. Yes, even the book of Romans is rooted in various Old Testament stories; yet, his incisive presentation is only possible as a result of his prior literate-based
training. Even in old age, Paul saw the impact of his “books, and above all the parchments” on his ministry (2 Tim. 4:13). In our own day, might we miss out on training Paul-type workers simply because we discourage or prevent literate/linear approaches to learning?

Ultimately, we mustn’t forget that it is God who decided to change the world through the written word. Since Moses, God has not revealed himself merely through word of mouth. Rather than choosing either oral or literate methods, Seng urges us to embrace both. I further suggest that we even use our own literate learning to prepare stories and methods of storying that prepare oral people for the time when they might eventually read the Bible.

**Jackson Wu** (PhD) teaches theology and missiology in a seminary for Chinese church leaders. Previously, he also worked as a church planter. His second book, One Gospel for All Nations: A Practical Approach to Biblical Contextualization, was released last year by William Cary Library. In addition to his published works, he maintains a blog at jacksonwu.org.

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**Response #2**

**Oftentimes, Orality Really Is the Best Method**

**Jerry Wiles**

One of the interesting things about the orality movement is that there are numerous perspectives and opinions about it. I often hear or read various viewpoints and realize that our perspectives are usually based on our limited experiences and awareness. It is encouraging, however, to recognize that many times we can learn from others, even when we have different views and experiences.

One of the interesting observations about Wes Seng’s article is his comment that, “Orality is not a method of learning. It is a method of communication.” From my own experience and perspective, I would suggest that orality methods and strategies are very effective ways of communication and learning. I would also suggest that behavior change happens more effectively by orality ways and means than by text or print-based methods.

When we understand the depth, breadth, and multi-faceted aspects of the orality movement, we can appreciate the participatory and engaging parts of the oral arts. The oral arts are not just about a transfer of information, but are more relational, communal, and oral learner-friendly ways of communi-
cating the gospel and making disciples. In our orality training with Living Water International, we emphasize that Jesus is our best model, throughout all of history, as an effective communicator, trainer, and disciple maker. He used stories and parables, asked questions, and created community and relationships in ways that were reproduced for 1,500 years. After the invention of the printing press, the Church became more dependent upon text-based communication and instruction, and neglected, in many ways, the most effective methods that people have used to communicate and learn from the beginning of time.

We are also realizing that there are many oral preference learners in the West. In fact, we are finding great interest in orality training among U.S.-based churches and ministries. Initially, pastors and church/mission leaders become interested because they are sending people on short-term mission trips. However, once they experience the training, they recognize that it is universal in its application and will work in local churches and communities.

Those of us who are involved in the orality movement are on an amazing learning journey and are passionate to share it with others.

I appreciate many of the insights that Mr. Seng shares in his article, and I’m reasonably confident that given the opportunity to discuss, compare thoughts, and experiences, there would be some agreement that it’s not a matter of either print-based or orality-based methods, but the appropriate use according to the context of where one might be ministering.

A great resource we have available today is the collective knowledge and experience within groups such as the International Orality Network, the Global Orality Training Alliance, the Lausanne Movement, and others. Those of us who are involved in the orality movement are on an amazing learning journey and are passionate to share it with others. It is important for all of us to remain open to discovering different ways and means of advancing the Kingdom of God, as long as they are biblical, understandable, and reproducible.

Jerry Wiles, president emeritus of Living Water International, became involved with orality in the 1980s. He has more than thirty-five years of experience in ministry and international mission work and currently serves on the International Orality Network Advisory Council and leads the Global Orality Training Alliance.
Response #3

Allowing for Patience as We Navigate Orality and Linear Learning Systems

Paul Trinh

I SYMPATHIZE WITH Wes Seng’s struggle for a tribal student to study in a formal or westernized Bible education program. It is an ongoing struggle between orality and linear learning systems. Although the majority of the Bible is narrative, I agree with Seng that “a very important portion of God’s revelation to us can only be learned through the linear method of learning.” Thus, as Seng indicates, “Orality and literacy greatly complement and enhance one another.”

Seng does mention that people need time to learn a concept. He believes that “when everything came together, they made a sudden leap forward in comprehension and learning.” Nevertheless, waiting for such “leap” requires patience. We must not get upset while someone objects to linear learning for oral people.

I am talking to myself, as well. Being an advocate of Bible storytelling, I have trained individual believers and churches in the States and on various mission fields to take advantage of this ancient learning. Typically, new believers love to embrace storytelling, while traditional churches show hesitation and even objection. Such an attitude reminds me of the story of Jesus’ disciples. In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus told them four times about his upcoming suffering, death, and resurrection (16:21; 17:22; 20:18-19; 26:2). But the disciples just didn’t understand. After the resurrection, some still doubted (Matt. 28:17). At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came and filled the disciples. Then, they boldly proclaimed the story of Jesus. They had made a sudden leap forward.

I am praying and waiting for more churches and believers to embrace Bible storytelling in their discipleship and witnessing. Similarly, one day church leaders will encourage tribal students to study in westernized Bible study programs.

Paul Trinh, a Bible storytelling coach and DMiss candidate, previously served as church planter, pastor, and missionary. He now pastors the Chinese Alliance Church of Pittsburgh.
Looking Instead at What Each Method Offers Learners

Billy Coppedge

WES SENG’S ARTICLE rests on a central motivation to see transitional curriculum established within the formal Bible training and theological education environment. He wants students coming from primarily oral traditions to have access to initial oral training, but also the necessary (transitional) courses so that they can acquire the tools to experience the fruits of learning via literate/linear methods (Seng’s terms). Certainly, Seng’s desire for his students to have the maximum options available so they do not miss any opportunities in their Christian learning deserves commendation.

Curiously, one senses in Seng that to endorse oral methods implies a loss of access to the rich treasures presumably only available via literate/linear communication methods. This substantial concern cannot be lightly dismissed as printed resources do indeed serve as storehouses of knowledge, experiences, commentary, and memory that can only be unlocked by learning the ‘local language’ (understood as learning to read) or with the aid of an ‘interpreter.’

While one can agree that literate resources offer certain advantages, a caution does need to be raised that in seeking to appreciate literate traditions one does not overlook the strengths that oral communication offers. So often, literary communication utilizes only one channel to disseminate information (the visual mode) while oral methods often lend themselves to multiple channels of engagement such the visual, audible, gestural, or spatial modes. This multimodal tendency of oral methodologies provides a greater likelihood of learners to experience truth in person.

Seng has already begun to point the way forward by reminding us that God himself uses both the spoken word and the written word to communicate. Instead of speaking of the transitional curriculum whereby the implication is the learners need to leave behind the oral/cyclical for the ‘deeper’ literate/linear methods, an alternative approach is needed. This begins by asking not what is lost through a certain method, but instead, what each method can offer and then how we can build an integrated
curriculum around leveraging the strengths of both oral/cyclical and literate/linear learning paradigms.

Integration in an educational environment requires a fierce commitment to honor learners from both methodological traditions and a willingness to cultivate a holistic learning paradigm. Such a holistic (understood as integrated) learning experience ensures the learners are equipped not only for their own learning, but to train the next generation.

Billy Coppedge spent seven years with his wife, Joanna, and family living in northern Uganda, where they served as oral pastoral training consultants. He is currently pursuing further study related to orality and theology at the University of Edinburgh.

Questions for reflection

1. If oral tradition people or groups wish to learn or use literature, why should they be discouraged? Would it not be best for them to develop the use of literary skills in a friendly environment where they could ask the hard questions?
2. In light of the mega-emphasis on Bible translation, should not the development of literacy and the linear method of learning be encouraged among tribal disciples?
3. Can anyone limited to orality communication and cyclical learning understand and apply the teaching of the New Testament letters? Why or why not?
4. Can a robust tribal theology (profound cultural application of scripture) develop without literary skills and linear thinking? Why or why not?
5. Does an oral tradition and cyclical learning/teaching practitioner ever lose the ability to use those skills? If not, why the concern?
IDEAS ABOUT AND METHODS FOR mobilizing missionaries abound, but Western culture is changing rapidly, and these ideas and methods need to be re-evaluated and modified periodically. Paula Harris, acting director for the Urbana Missions Conference in the early 2000s, wrote, “United States culture is changing fast, and we need new missionary recruitment methods” (2002, 44).

Whenever recruitment was discussed in our mission agency, people would point out that they joined the agency because they had met our missionaries or sending base personnel. Personal relationships were the key to stimulating others to consider becoming missionaries themselves. Although relationships were considered vital, it did not stop our agency from creating a plethora of recruitment materials, events, and experiences to try to get people to consider becoming long-term missionaries.

The work of mobilizing people into missions can be seen as nurturing the call of God on people’s lives (Stebbins 2010). Recent reflection on the missionary call has helpfully portrayed it as a person’s growing sense of conviction leading to a point of decision to serve God as a missionary (e.g., Austin 2000, 645-646; McConnell 2007, 213-215).

In order to work out what methods of mobilization might be most
effective in this generation, it is helpful to find out how God is bringing this sense of conviction so that we can work alongside him. We therefore set out to find out how God guided people who had recently been sent to the field for long-term missionary service. We focused on new missionaries sent out from Australia over the past ten years. Below, we report our findings and point out key implications.

Every person we interviewed spoke about the influence a missionary had on their decision to become missionaries.

Two members of Sydney Missionary and Bible College’s mission faculty conducted face-to-face interviews with forty-two missionaries between February and November 2013. Because we wanted to focus on missionaries who had recently been sent out, interviews were limited to missionaries who had first left (or who were about to leave) for their country of missionary service after 2002. Interviewees were between ages 24 and 49. There were twenty-three men and eighteen women, and three-quarters were married. Each was a member of one of ten interdenominational, evangelical mission agencies (Pioneers, WEC International, European Christian Mission, OMF...

Four-fifths of the interviewees were already serving in Asia, Europe, Africa, and the Middle East, and the other one-fifth had been accepted by their mission agency and were about to go to the field. The primary ministry roles of those who had already started their missionary work were evangelism and church planting, Bible college teaching, and mission team leadership.

We asked each missionary five questions:

1. Can you tell me your story of how you became interested in missions and eventually decided to become a missionary?
2. As you look back at your story, are there any particular people, events, or experiences that you felt God use or that helped you in making this decision or in becoming clearer about missions?
3. Before finally deciding to become a missionary, did you experience any times in which you doubted God was guiding you to become a missionary or felt discouraged from becoming a missionary? Can you describe these?
4. Was there anyone or anything that helped you get through that time of doubt or discouragement?
5. How did you come to choose the mission agency you finally signed up with?

The Importance of Meeting Missionaries

Every person we interviewed spoke about the influence a missionary had on their decision to become missionaries. They had met missionaries in their churches, at Bible college, or on the field during a short-term trip. Approximately half of the interviewees first became interested in missions because a missionary visited their church. Hearing missionaries talk inspired them to get involved and challenged them to consider missions. Seeing a missionary seemed to make the possibility of their becoming missionaries a concrete option. This was further reinforced when they had the opportunity to speak to the missionary and receive personal advice and encouragement.

It was the character of the missionary rather than an inspiring talk that seemed to speak most powerfully to our interviewees. When missionaries revealed their weaknesses, the interviewees began to understand that missionaries are ordinary people just like themselves. One interviewee explained it in this way,

This guy came and he spoke and he was very ordinary. He was the worst orator on the planet. He was an ordinary guy. He really encouraged me because I didn’t think I had to attain a standard that was beyond me. I could relate to this guy, I could identify. I thought, “If God can use that guy, he can use me.” I thought, “Perhaps God can use me in this.”
The Role of Missions-minded Leaders and Friends

Apart from missionaries, other people who influenced the interviewees were missions-minded parents and pastors, friends, and mission agency representatives. Interviewees’ stories reveal that it took them several years to work through what becoming a missionary involved. They appreciated having church leaders and mission agency representatives who would invest the time talking through the many questions they had and issues that arose along the path to becoming missionaries. All of our interviewees had been trained in a missions-oriented Bible college, and they particularly appreciated fellow students who encouraged and challenged them, and walked with them on the path to missionary service.

These Australian missionaries were most responsive to mission agency representatives who invested significant time talking with them. They appreciated regular follow up in which the representative would meet them face to face, work through their questions and issues, and challenge them when they seemed to be dragging their heels. It was important to them that the mission agency representative did not push their own agency’s agenda, but instead focused on the aspiring missionaries’ questions and what was best for them.

Just under half of the interviewees mentioned the importance of short-term mission trips in their journey into long-term missions.

Prospective missionaries were particularly appreciative of agency representatives who appeared committed to getting them to where they should be rather than simply recruiting them for the representative’s particular agency. The distinctive role of the mission agency representative seemed to be to help potential missionaries find a fit between their gifts, skills and circumstances, and a specific role on the mission field.

Exposure to the World’s Needs through Short-term Trips and Events

Just under half of the interviewees mentioned the importance of short-term mission trips in their journey into long-term missions. There were two distinctive types of trips. One occurred earlier in their journey and raised the prospective missionary’s awareness of the needs of the world and what missionary work entailed. It also gave them a sense that they could personally contribute to meeting some of those needs. For this trip, the place visited did not have to be related to where the interviewee was eventually interested in going long term.

Many interviewees also went on a second type of trip after they had
become more strongly committed to becoming missionaries. This kind of trip involved a visit to missionaries they had already met, or with whom a direct connection had been made by an agency representative. They went on this kind of trip to understand how they would fit into a particular part of the world, into a particular kind of ministry, or on a specific team.

To use their words, the purpose of these trips was “to get an idea of what life would be like for families,” to get a “clearer idea of what kind of thing we would be getting into,” and to “get our heads around practically what we would need to do.”

In order for them to feel they wanted to return as long-term missionaries, it was important that they felt welcomed by the missionaries on the field, and also that what they saw there was a role they believed they could fulfill. In a similar way as happened in encounters with missionaries in their home country, interviewees appreciated the opportunity to visualize the missionary role in a concrete way. One interviewee described the impact of their trip in the following way:

It had the effect of showing us what it was like for real flesh-and-blood missionaries to live there...and thinking, “We could put ourselves in their shoes. We can do this.” We could picture through them something of what it would be like to live there long term.

About a quarter of interviewees became aware of the world and its needs through a Perspectives course, missions conferences, missions literature, and missions prayer groups. The aspect of need that was most compelling for interviewees was the unequal access to the gospel and other resources that people had across the world.

How Interviewees Chose Mission Agencies

Interviewees deeply valued the emotional bond they developed with mission agency personnel and missionaries they spent time with on the field. Their connection or bond with agency personnel was as much a matter of the heart as it was of logic. One interviewee explained:

There was this connection of heart and mind that while we believed and were on board with everything that we’d spoken with [agency] … It really felt like a God connection because it was more than cognitive. There was something in the heart that was really driving it.

They appreciated mission agency personnel who spent time talking with them, visiting them in their homes, consistently following up with them, helping them work through things that were confusing, and challenging them if they seemed to be losing focus.

A second factor in choosing an agency was a sense of fit between the person’s own gifts and interests and a role on the field. Interviewees were
looking for agencies that offered opportunities for them to serve in ways that they, the interviewees, felt they were suited or qualified for. They wanted to feel as if they had a contribution to make and a skill or an ability to do something that would make a difference.

**Implications for Mobilization**

Below are four key points to remember as this relates to mobilization.

**#1. Missionaries need to visit churches and Bible colleges.** In order to become missionaries, people need to meet missionaries. Compared with the past, many missionaries today have shorter home assignments and strong relationships with just one or two home churches. As a result, there has been a decrease in missionary deputation to multiple churches. The findings of our study suggest that missionaries should be encouraged to visit a larger number of churches in order for more people to meet them.

There seems to be no substitute for the impact of meeting with missionaries. Speaking in churches and Bible colleges introduces the missionary’s role, but talking with people is particularly important. Meeting missionaries face-to-face helps to make the idea of becoming a missionary a concrete possibility.

**Meeting missionaries** face-to-face helps to make the idea of becoming a missionary a concrete possibility.

This is further reinforced by the opportunity to meet the missionary team on the field. This puts the onus on existing missionaries to recruit new missionaries by going to churches and meeting as many people as possible. Once people have expressed interest in their area of work, missionaries need to be willing to welcome them onto the field and help them to see in more detail what missionary work entails.

**#2. Mission agencies must invest in personal relationships.** When choosing which agency to join, the people we interviewed valued ongoing, personal contact with agency representatives who helped them to work out how they might fit into a specific role on the field. This requires agency representatives to spend lots of time getting to know prospective missionaries, answering their questions, and regularly following up with them. At the same time, our interviews suggest that prospective missionaries are looking to join a group that cares about them and their uniqueness. Agency representatives who focus on finding out about the person’s needs, aspirations, and gifts and are seen to be committed to the best interests of that person are likely to be most effective in mobilizing people into mission.

Because interviewees may not end up at a certain agency, mission agency
personnel need to have a kingdom perspective. There may be value in establishing combined recruiting/mobilization consultancies for missions, rather than each mission agency relying on its own representatives.

#3. **Provide opportunities for two different types of short-term trips.** Being exposed to the world and its needs is an important step in many people’s journeys to becoming long-term missionaries. One way of bringing this exposure is to provide short-term trips overseas. Early in their journey into missions, short-term trips increased interviewees’ awareness of the world and its needs and of what missionary life was like. It encouraged them that missionary service was a viable pathway for them.

Further along in their journey, a more focused kind of mission trip gave them the opportunity to see specific contexts and ministries and work out the practicalities of living and serving in a particular place. This confirms the conclusion of earlier research that short-term mission experiences “can be extremely beneficial for confirming the gifts/ability/desire to serve in a full-time career capacity” (McDonough and Peterson 1999, 19). Organizers of this type of trip need to ensure that participants are able to spend time

**Meeting missionaries** in their context of ministry enables participants to put themselves in the shoes of the missionaries.

with missionaries serving on the field. Meeting missionaries in their context of ministry enables participants to put themselves in the shoes of the missionaries, see what their ministry looks like day to day, and see the needs of the local people through their eyes.

#4. **Peer communities can be key in nurturing interest in missions.** Finally, the peer interactions in the Bible colleges attended by our interviewees provided a significant medium through which interest in missions was nurtured. Potential missionaries interacted with other students who were heading into missions, creating a sense of doing missions together. These fellow students created a spontaneous, interactive environment that was dynamic and enjoyable. This is easier to establish where students live and study together full time for several years, as occurs in residential Bible colleges. However, it may also be possible to develop in other contexts where young people naturally spend time together, such as in youth or university Christian groups.

**References**


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Questions for reflection

FOR MISSION AGENCY MOBILIZERS

1. How much time are you willing to invest in people even if they don’t end up going with your agency?
2. What more could you do to mobilize missionaries to speak in churches?
3. Do you have a specific strategy to increase the number of churches your missionaries visit?

FOR MISSIONARIES

1. How much are you willing to invest in the churches at home (apart from your home church) in order to mobilize new people and churches for mission?
2. Is it time to reconsider longer home leaves (after more time on the field) in order to allow time for more extensive deputation tours?
What Kind of Leaders Reproduce Churches?
John Wm. Mehn

Are there reproducing churches in Japan? You must be talking about churches in the U.S.” This and other comments revealed skepticism after reporting my field research that uncovered the existence of dozens of Japanese reproducing churches in Japan. A more concentrated study of six of these churches revealed the combined reproduction of at least sixty-two churches. Even one church of forty worship attendees, only three years old, had already established four churches!

Now these statistics may not be exemplary in other global contexts. However, Japan is legendary for generating very slow church growth and multiplication. Japan
as a mission field is an enigma with a government wide-open missionary visa policy, unrestricted religious freedom, and economic and technical development, yet the Japanese remain the second largest unreached people group with only 0.43% believers in Christ (Joshua Project 2015). More churches are urgently needed as today there are still 25 cities and 1,800 rural areas without churches. This country of over 127 million people has less than 8,000 churches and missiologists report that a minimum of 50,000 are needed.

Many practitioners and scholars have delineated possible reasons for meager church growth in Japan. Some assert the difficulty of contextualizing the gospel message for the Japanese culture; others stress the real challenges of spiritual resistance and warfare. Still others blame the health and relevance of the existing Christian Church.

**My research revealed** six characteristics of leaders reproducing churches. These characteristics are closely interrelated and together all work in concert.

My chief concentration lies with developing and coaching leadership for church-planting multiplication. Unfortunately, little has been written about leadership and church planting, and any predominant research relates to church planter assessment or developing leaders of growing churches. A wide variety of factors could be studied for church-planting reproduction, but I believed leadership would be a crucial factor.

This research was to assist my ministry of developing leadership for church multiplication, to investigate this phenomenon in Japan, and to
benefit practitioners planting churches worldwide. From a broad sample of reproducing churches, a representative cross-section of six churches was selected across all geographical regions, church ages, sizes, ministry contexts and models, and denominational affiliation. Both primary leaders and one or more secondary leaders were interviewed in depth (Mehn 2010).

I uncovered six characteristics of leaders reproducing churches closely interacting in concert with each other, thus creating a unique symphony of church reproducing leadership.

1. **Envision the Church as a Dynamic Sending Community**

How these reproducing leaders envisioned the church was one of the most unexpected aspects of this research. The average church in Japan has only thirty-five attendees and each church’s mission field statistically is at least sixteen thousand people. Many churches in Japan feel outnumbered and impotent, so consequently they hesitate reaching beyond their church walls and activities. In contrast, these church reproducing leaders had a biblical concept of the Church as the people of God missionally sending others out in transformational ministry. Church reproduction arises not in the conclusion of a church’s mission but simply as a part of a healthy, growing, sending, and dynamic organism (Ott & Wilson 2011, 15).

**Japanese culture** is not spontaneous. It is predictable and prefers order, formal structure, and the static ministry of stability and security.

These church reproducing leaders envision the church as a relational community. Japanese tend to be more formal in social relationships. To these leaders, the church is not merely a social organization, but rather the family of God in community.

Japanese culture is not spontaneous. It is predictable and prefers order, formal structure, and the static ministry of stability and security. However, these reproducing leaders see their churches more as dynamic living organisms than ecclesiastical organizations (Schwarz 2006, 30-31). To them, the church is seen more as a living organism of God’s people where structure is secondary to function. One leader talked about “going with the flow” and compared his church vision with the image from Ezekiel 47, where water emanated from the temple.

Their church concept embraces reproduction as one declared, “Reproducing churches are nothing special .... It is normal, it is standard and average.” In their view, churches multiplied as a natural result of this dynamic organism, expanding and reproducing. Healthy churches reproduce (Murray
2001, 62-63) and a reproducing church stands beyond simply a big church. Their view of the church as a sending mission runs counter to the normal tendency in Japan to protect and defend the church from the influences of the world and culture. Rather than attracting and gathering, these outward-oriented churches are scattering and sending. They become ministry development centers equipping people and sending them beyond their walls.

To these leaders, reproducing churches are not mere theological concepts but they are applied theology. Their churches function as a dynamic community of God’s people sending others into ministry. The leader begins with receiving vision from God.

2. Receive Ministry Vision from God

Research examining effective leadership in various countries, including Japan, conclude that one essential characteristic of a ‘transformational leader’ entails acquiring a future vision and imparting that vision to followers (House et al 2004, 61). Vision has been shown to be a vital component of any effective church leadership, and particularly for church planting and reproduction (Barna 1997; Ott and Wilson 2011, 168-170). The significance of vision is also a vital characteristic for Japanese church leaders (Satake 1994).

For most Japanese church leaders, the main concept of vision is an overall future plan for their church. Although broad planning is desirable, it falls very short of a compelling God-shaped vision received from God. On their own, spiritual leaders do not intuit or imagine ministry vision. Vision is not received from others in spite of the influence of elders in a Confucian-based society like Japan. These leaders had no substitute for receiving vision from God.

**Although broad planning** is desirable, it falls very short of a compelling God-shaped vision received from God. On their own, spiritual leaders do not intuit or imagine ministry vision.

These church reproducing leaders received vision from God through various means. Following their personal ministry calling, they listened to God through prayer and their devotional life. For many, the practice of listening to God was quite new as they were caught up in ministry busyness. Some prayed daily, weekly, or at special times to hear God’s vision for their church.

They reflected on scripture. As quoted by Haddon Robinson, “Since our vision must be God’s vision, we must gain it from the Scriptures” (1999, 9). A big surprise for me as a researcher was that they would quote directly from scripture instead of quoting a textbook, denominational statement, or other
pastor. One leader said, “Vision is based on biblical principles,” and church reproduction was part of that vision.

They sought to obey God’s will even if it meant letting go of some of their own plans. One pastor summarized it well: “Listen to God through worship, prayer, and fasting; he will lead you with guidance. Then, obey him without question and overcome anything in the way of obedience.”

Vision leads us to the next characteristic: faith. As a leader affirmed, “Faith moves us toward the realization of a possessed vision.”

3. Exercise Risk-taking Faith

Reproducing leaders exercise faith, leading in risky directions to confront potential failure, overcome obstacles, and even overcome their own weaknesses. Japanese are very reluctant to assume risk due to a group culture emphasizing conformity and harmony. Risk implies uncertainty, and the culture of Japan greatly avoids that uncertainty (Hofstede 1984, 123). Japanese “feel threatened by uncertain or unknown situations” (Hofstede 1997, 113). Church planting is characteristically full of ambiguity and laden with risk. But, as one reproducing leader professed, “If it is God’s will; we will assume risk.”

Church reproduction is a minefield of potential failures, and Japanese avoid failure at all costs. In a shame-based culture like Japan, any failure can cause the loss of face and honor.

Their faith overcomes obstacles. Recognizing the hazards of church reproduction, leaders do not focus their energies on preventing possible obstacles, but merely overcome hindrances when confronted. They trust God to provide solutions through wisdom, creativity, flexibility, and exploring options. Their faith resists personal discouragement. Anyone involved in church planting regularly faces discouragements and these are overcome by their personal spiritual walk with God.

Their faith challenges even failure. Church reproduction is a minefield of potential failure, and Japanese avoid failure at all costs. In a shame-based culture like Japan, any failure can cause the loss of face and honor. One leader explained the need to risk failure in order to reproduce this way: “Just do it [church reproduction]. You may succeed or you may not…. But if you do not do it, you do not even fail. If you do it and fail, it is a great resource…. There is no guarantee that church planting will succeed…. We make a lot of mistakes while we plant churches.”

These leaders risked much by giving up key leaders, money, and gifted
people to reproduce churches. They expect obstacles in reproduction but also expect to overcome them. They challenge potential failure by a confidence in obeying God.

4. Develop Lay People for Ministry

These reproducing pastors understand ‘laity’ with the original scriptural meaning “the people of God” (1 Pet. 2:9–10) called to ministry (Gibbs 2005, 132-133). They also see developing lay people as solving the practical problem of insufficient pastors and missionaries to plant the minimum of fifty thousand churches needed to saturate Japan. For them, church reproduction means leadership multiplication.

The lack of lay mobilization and the predominately style of pastoral leadership are repeated as the frequent reason for the slow pace of church growth in Japan (Braun 1971; OC International Japan 1993; Sherrill 2002). Some believe the deep historical connection to the Roman Catholic Church and Japan’s top-down patron-client culture fosters a role for religious elites, leaving a large clergy-lay gap (Ohashi 2007, 142-143).

Reproducing churches develop lay leadership as seen historically from the Methodist movement to church-planting movements in places like China and Cambodia (Garrison 2004). In Japan, rapidly growing new religions display this dynamic. These church leaders are in practice answering the core issue of developing and releasing leaders for reproduction.

**Reproducing leaders** develop lay people for ministry by sharing their ownership of the reproduction vision. The leader not only catches vision, but casts God's vision to others in many ways.

Reproducing leaders develop lay people for ministry by sharing their ownership of the reproduction vision. The leader not only catches vision, but casts God’s vision to others in many ways. One example is a church which regularly has a “vision night” where they seek God’s vision together.

Large quantities of their time prepares people for practical ministry (Eph. 4:11) by coaching and hands-on training. They entrust ministry responsibility to others by releasing them. One person even said, “If a person wants to multiply churches, [he or she needs] to develop people who can be responsible for church planting. I think this is the key for everything.” These lay leaders are affirmed, encouraged, and respected as part of the ministry team as equals under the sovereign control of the Chief Shepherd, Christ himself.

The characteristics of developing lay people for ministry is coupled with the leaders’ view of the church and their role as leaders.
5. Lead Relationally through Encouragement

Leaders of reproducing churches choose a relational leadership style focused on encouraging others in ministry. Church planting and reproduction is a team sport and cannot be done without the encouragement of all team members. Their encouraging leadership role is much like the role of a coach and mentor. As one leader confessed, “They don’t need our lectures; they need inspiration and encouragement.” They focus not on pastoral care, but on equipping others for ministry achieved practically with regular visits to church planters and retreats for leaders.

These leaders exercise authority relationally, not positionally. They are more like spiritual fathers than bosses or supervisors. One leader responded that leadership is “acquired by love...through respecting and trusting others we will also receive trust and respect.” In Japan, the lone autocratic leadership style still remains the norm, often characterized by a lack of delegation, hindering the growth and reproduction of churches (Mullins 1998, 180). Growing churches in Japan are piloted by leadership with relational and spiritual authority (OC International 1993, 14).

In a very formal and structured society like Japan, these reproducing church leaders build trust relationships utilizing less formal structures. In the Japanese hierarchical culture, these leaders flatten and broaden the leadership pyramid, allowing for the growth of more leaders. These leaders release others with little control, as one pastor declared, “If you control, it will die, the fire of church planting will be lost and the multiplication will be stopped.”

They exercise patience in their chosen relational leadership role of equipping. Like a team captain or a spiritual father, they foster encouragement in the Japanese network of complex relationships and expectations.

6. Implement Aggressively through Practical Ministry

These leaders are concerned for real-world results in obedience to scripture, and they implement ministry aggressively. A study of Japanese leadership has found goal-oriented leadership a very positive trait, especially when coupled with caring for the team (Misumi 1985, 12).

These leaders impressed me by not getting bogged down in routine planning details, but instead keeping their hands on the throttle, decisively moving the ministry ahead. They will not delegate the role of reproducing their own church to another agency.

They achieve ministry objectives both practically and realistically for overcoming cultural tightness by utilizing creativity and flexibility. One reproducing leader expressed this spirit this way: “Just do it and find out. I do not believe that if you do this that this will happen. We do not know until you do it. I am a realist.”

They lead in new directions and do not maintain stability. Instability is
the nature of new church development and they do not defend or protect what exists. They are people of action who know reality and confront the status quo. They are courageous risk-taking change agents.

**Conclusion**

My research revealed six characteristics of leaders reproducing churches. These characteristics are closely interrelated and together all work in concert. After the research was completed, the leaders of this study confirmed each of these six characteristics were indeed true for them personally. Comparing similar research in other contexts to these conclusions would be extremely beneficial.

There are reproducing churches in Japan that are greatly encouraging many. I estimate up to five percent of Japanese churches may be reproducing, extending hope for us all, no matter how hard our context. The application of these biblical principles of leadership and church reproduction indeed causes what Roland Allen called the “spontaneous expansion of the church” (Mehn 2013, 172).

For many of us involved in planting or facilitating reproducing churches, there are numerous implications. Those developing and multiplying leaders need to consider how to assess, select, and develop leaders with a rich applied theology of the church, a personal spiritual walk with God, a growing faith capacity, skills in equipping and releasing people, and focused priorities. For all of us, considering these leaders’ priorities, faith, and connection with God challenges us as to how we are growing as leaders.

**References**


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Questions for reflection

1. As a growing leader how is your theological and practical understanding of the local church affecting your ministry practice?
2. Which of these six characteristics is a personal strength? Personal weakness? How could you develop more of these characteristics in your life and ministry?
3. How can you assess and develop these six leadership characteristics in others?
“WHAT WILL IT TAKE TO BRING THE GOSPEL TO THE LEAST REACHED?”
COMPARTMENTALIZING, categorization, and silo making. You may not realize it, but if you are a North American or a church in North America, you are good at these. We have our local community projects and funds here, our international projects and funds there. Our city activists are here, our global people are out there (somewhere). Our ‘missional’ philosophy and efforts are here in our neighborhoods, our global ‘missions’ are far away from here.

The language and understanding of what’s called ‘missional living’ has been with us for over a decade. This is a mandate that calls each of us, as well as our churches, to reckon with the idea that as Christ-followers we all...
have the opportunity and responsibility to partner with God in his *missio Dei*. Being on mission with God is an acknowledgement of who we have been called to be in this world, and none of us are exempt!

Wherever God has us (our homes, communities, or places of worship), Jesus calls us to see ourselves as his missionaries. So the Church has considered ‘missional living’ for a significant amount of time now. We have looked at ourselves differently and we have looked at our homes, communities, and churches differently. And it has been a good thing. But a further question is this: *In what way does missional living and partnering with God in the missio Dei affect our global missions efforts?*

For quite some time the answer to this question for many churches (and many other North American ministries) has been the idea of personal involvement in short-term missions (which has also been a good thing). Many followers of Jesus, along with their churches, have seen short-term mission as a healthy move away from just supporting missions in the traditional sense to being involved personally in God’s global work in the world. It has even been seen as a closer way to partner with God in the *missio Dei*.

But is this good enough? Does short-term missions, in the sense that many have experienced it, provide the best answer to the question that missional living is asking of us? Is short-term missions a logical step of continuity for ourselves and our churches in how missional living affects our global missions efforts?
Although short-term missions has been with us for at least thirty years with millions of people going each year, one of its biggest shortcomings is contained in its name: SHORT-term missions. One of the main characteristics of a missional lifestyle, where one considers themselves (and/or their church) to be on mission or partnering with God (*missio Dei*) is found in the re-education (for many of us as North Americans) on the importance of relationships. If you look at your home, neighborhood, community, etc., living out a missional life means living out a life of long-term, integral relationships, and most often, this is the aspect of short-term mission that fails to reflect one of the most important characteristics of the missional lifestyle.

So how do we address this disparity? Is there a way that we as churches can be true to our emerging missional lifestyle emphasis on vital relationships when it comes to what we do globally through short-term missions? The answer is to go about our global efforts with the same long-term, relationship-driven missional emphasis that we apply to our efforts closer to home. This is where a push toward relationship-driven Sister Church Partnerships (SCPs) looks to develop a missional philosophy where short-term mission efforts are done in the context of long-term mutual relationships.

**Our context for a global missional lifestyle** is to be found not in independent, single church efforts, but in partnering in each others’ communities and networks globally for the long haul.

SCPs provide a context for churches to consistently apply all that they’re seeking to do in partnering with God through missional living on the global scale as well as at home. A number of critical issues are addressed in these partnerships: long-term relationships; short-term mission projects; support raising efforts; and connection, communication, coordination, and collaboration between the two partnering churches.

When looking at Jesus’ words in Acts 1:8 (“you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth...”) and seeing the fleshing out of his words throughout the rest of the book, we follow this progression that churches were founded, developed, and continued in relationship to each other, even as “the ends of the earth” approached. Long-term relationships between the churches of the first century became the key to an emerging network of congregations across the known world, and we seek to continue that networking/expansion on the basis of those same types of long-term relationships.

Our context for a global missional lifestyle is to be found not in indepen-
dent, single church efforts (short term and otherwise), but in partnering, even Sister Church Partnering, in each others’ communities and networks globally for the long haul.

Defined in this way, with their intended focus on long-term relationships first and foremost, Sister Church Partnerships present churches with a consistent way to apply missional living on a global scale. If you are a pastor or church leader who is passionate about giving your church opportunities to live *missionally* in your own community, think about how a relationship-based approach may be a consistent answer to what *missional living* looks like in our global efforts.

As these relationship-based partnerships are formed again and again across the Global Church, imagine the presence that such a relational network could be in this world. *Can we conceive a kingdom community that reflects and exemplifies the very heart of our Trinitarian God, who himself exists in the vital relationship of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?* Can we imagine multiple examples of relationship-based Sister Church Partnerships networking together across the globe, all with the intention of partnering with that same Trinitarian God in the *missio Dei*? Now THAT would be a good thing.

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**Questions for reflection**

1. *Have you observed the ‘missional conversation’ to be primarily a domestic affair for churches? In what ways?*
2. *How have you experienced global missions to be different when its focus has been on ‘relationships first’ rather than ‘projects first,’ ‘outreach first,’ etc.?*
3. *Does short-term mission make more sense within the context of connecting congregations of believers with each other? What are the downsides of emphasizing (admitting?) that this is the best focus for mission trips?*
EARS AGO, I MET A MISSIONARY who had just moved to town. “What brought you here?” I asked, trying to make conversation. “God brought me here,” he said without hesitation or further comment. Sure, I realize that God leads and directs his people, but I wanted to say something like, “Did he just beam you here like a character on Star Trek, or did he use more ordinary means and circumstances?”

I love how God uses ordinary things to accomplish his purposes. Did Jesus really need for a boy to hand over his bread and fish before feeding five thousand? I don’t think so. When someone gives a testimony, it’s not unusual to hear how God used a praying friend, a faithful family member, a book, a film, the scriptures in his or her native language, and a thousand other things. Somehow, God gets glory and we get to participate. For God to work through common, visible things is no less marvelous than a Damascus Road experience. I suppose God doesn’t have to use the ordinary, but he does.

Missionaries pour out their lives for the gospel because they understand God uses ordinary means to accomplish his work. I’ve never heard a missionary say, “I’m just going to give a half-hearted effort and trust God.” Or, “I don’t need to prepare or study; God will just lead me.” Missionaries trust God and work hard. It seems like a paradox but it’s a truth we need to be
comfortable with. I think of friends who spent years studying in university and seminary, who learned another language and who prepared for living in another culture, all in an effort to be fruitful and effective for Christ. God does the extraordinary with the ordinary.

It’s true too that God uses ordinary means to provide for our needs. God provided my breakfast this morning. But food didn’t just materialize on the kitchen table. God used farmers and trucks and distribution centers and grocery store cashiers to make it possible for me to have a good breakfast. That in no way diminishes the fact that these things were a provision from God. I still pray. I still ask him to provide. I still give him thanks.

In the same way, God provides for your needs as missionaries through people who go to work, get paid, and then write checks to your ministry. You’re able to do your work because donors do ordinary things like send money. How well are you managing these donor relationships that are so important to your ministry?

My wife and I have been donors for more than thirty-five years. We’ve contributed to a number of agencies and to missionaries who serve in a variety of positions in the U.S. and in other countries. It would be safe to say that all the missionaries are and have been universally appreciative of our support. But, almost universally, they don’t communicate very well with us—and I’m not sure they even know it. Over the years, we’ve seen all types of communication—from clear to unclear, scrutable to inscrutable, regular
to irregular to almost no communication. While donors have shortcomings, there’s room for missionaries to do a better job engaging us.

Regardless of what your ‘job’ is, donor communication is part of it. And that part should be executed with proficiency and purpose just like the other work God called you to do. The extent to which you engage well with donors will likely have impact on not only financial support but prayer support and other ministry opportunities.

I was reading Psalm 34 the other day and was struck by David’s communication with God: “I sought the Lord, and he answered me and delivered me from all my fears.” Communication always has two parts: giving and receiving. You don’t just pick up the phone, punch in a number, and start talking. You wait until there’s someone on the other end...even if it’s voicemail. Unless both giving and receiving take place, there is no effective communication. In this one sentence of Psalm 34, David presents a picture of effective communication. He ‘gave’ his communication (“I sought the Lord”) and God ‘received’ the communication (“...he answered me”).

You don't just pick up the phone, punch in a number, and start talking. You wait until there's someone on the other end...even if it's voicemail.

But wait, there’s more! In this verse, giving and receiving are confirmed because God “delivered me from all my fears.” Not only did David ‘give’ and God ‘receive,’ God chose to act upon David’s plea. Think about your own prayers—salvation of the lost, healing of the sick, guidance, protection, and so forth. I hope you pray with expectation. You ask for the Lord’s will yet you pray for specific outcomes. Effective communication through giving and receiving anticipates action.

Giving

It is obvious that communication must be given, but some people struggle with even this first step. I think of one missionary we faithfully supported for a couple of years. We rarely heard from him. We knew he was getting the contributions because we got a receipt each month. I finally wrote to say we were going to stop contributing. And guess what? We never heard from him.

A similar thing happened with a family in Europe we supported for several years. I don’t deny that these folks love and serve the Lord, but their support suffered because they didn’t keep in touch.

A friend told me about a local missionary he supports. It’s an impactful ministry and the donor would be willing to increase his giving. He said, “If the guy would only call me up sometime and say, ‘Let’s get together
for coffee’ or something, I’d be inclined to contribute more money.” This person is ministering in the same town as the donor, but is not doing a good job keeping in touch. As a result, he’s missing the opportunity to not only strengthen his financial support, but to get an eager supporter more involved in his ministry. The first step toward effective communication includes regular contact.

It also includes specific contact. My Uncle Marty had a good and long life. He lived far away and we only saw each other about once a year, but I was fond of him. When he was hospitalized at age 95, I needed to send a card. “Get well soon!” or “I hope you’re feeling better” would not do. He was dying.

So I got a blank card and began to recall some memories—like the time he sent me a model rocket after I had asked him about his work in the aerospace industry. Or when I was a teenager and he gave me $15 to help with a car repair.

So on that blank card I was able to be specific and recount good memories. I was able to thank him and give God the glory for Marty’s influence in my life. It would have been a whole lot easier to get something from Hallmark, add a scripture verse, and just sign my name. I would have done my duty with a clear conscience and I could check that off my list.

However, Uncle Marty was worth more effort than that. Your supporters might be worth more effort than you are giving them. It’s not enough to drop a batch of prayer letters in the mailbox and think, Whew, I’m glad that’s over with.

**Remember,** meaningful effective communication must be received. And receiving means more than your letter arriving in a supporter’s mailbox.

I talked with one missionary who sends out two hundred letters in order to get the bulk mail discount even though he has less than half that many contributors. “I don’t even know if some of them are still alive,” he told me. As a supporter, I wasn’t sure whether to laugh or be insulted. I faithfully contribute each month and regularly pray for this missionary. And he engages me with the same level of communication as somebody who may be dead! Effective communication is given with specificity, not with a one-size-fits-all approach.

**Receiving**

Remember, meaningful effective communication must be received. And receiving means more than your letter arriving in a supporter’s mailbox. True receiving is when a supporter reads, understands, and digests your letter. Perhaps he or she is encouraged in his or her faith or moved to pray.
Perhaps your communication stimulates his or her interest to get involved in a significant way with your particular ministry or global missions. That’s when meaningful communication has taken place.

My wife really appreciates when I give her a bouquet of flowers. They can be from the grocery store, a street vendor, or the backyard—where they come from isn’t really important. A box of chocolates or a bottle of perfume are nice gifts, but for her those kinds of things don’t communicate in the same way. Flowers communicate that I understand and know her. It took me a while to grasp the concept of giving her what she wants not what I think she wants. You see, I don’t always intuitively know what communicates love to her, but it’s still my responsibility to understand her and nurture our relationship. I have to work at it.

In the same way, effective communication takes work. You shouldn’t just send out a letter and hope somebody reads it. You may have nice pictures or touching stories, but are you really connecting with your supporters? Effective communication means working to understand what they want, not what you think they want.

Here are six things we (donors) look for as you (missionaries) communicate with us:

1. **Passion.** While your zeal will wax and wane to some degree, we want to see that you are passionate about what you’re doing. *What gets you up in the morning? What keeps you going even though the journey is difficult?* Frankly, if you’ve lost your passion, you might consider doing something else.

2. **Simplicity.** Most of us are more inclined to read something we can easily digest. For supporters who want more than the headlines, refer them to your website or blog. Send an occasional personal letter. I don’t remember the last time I got a personal letter from a missionary. Generally, letters should be one page with good margin space and include maybe a photo or two. It might come across as more spiritual if you cram a lot of information, but remember that you’re trying to get supporters to receive what you’re giving.

3. **Clarity.** Be clear and forthright in your comments. One of the best bumper stickers I ever saw said, “Eschew Obfuscation.” Stay away from mumbo jumbo, which the dictionary defines as “pretentious language, usually designed to obscure an issue.” That might describe some letters I’ve received when missionaries don’t have anything new to report or when
things aren’t going well. We generally understand that you have a difficult job, you face spiritual warfare, and that you’re in it for the long term. You can be honest about these things. Furthermore, don’t assume we remember what you wrote to us last time. Don’t assume we know acronyms and abbreviations or people and places from previous letters.

4. Connection. We want to see that our contribution is having an impact for the kingdom. We support you because at some point God stirred our hearts and impressed us to be a part of your ministry. We don’t necessarily expect to hear of great spiritual victories with each communication, but we do want to know that you’re using your time wisely and engaging in the ministry God has called you to. We are less moved by third-party stories—we want to know what YOU are doing for the kingdom. We are serving vicariously through you.

5. Accuracy. Have someone else review anything you send. A couple of years ago, I did one of those Shutterfly custom photo books to commemorate a special family occasion. I spent two months gathering and scanning photos and writing text. I proofed and reviewed and proofed again. When the FedEx driver showed up with the final copy, I couldn’t wait to open the box. The book looked great. The next morning I proudly presented a copy to my daughter. Within thirty seconds, she said, “Did you mean to spell this like this?” As careful as I had been, two typos still slipped by. It’s sometimes difficult for us to see our own mistakes. That’s why it’s helpful to have another set of eyes review your material.

Get your grammar straight. Understand things like where to use “me” rather than ‘I’ and ‘you’re’ as opposed to ‘your.’ These things won’t necessarily impact reaching the world for Christ, but there are correct ways of expressing yourself in the English language. This includes proper punctuation and capitalization. There are also generational considerations. It may not communicate well when a millennial writes “I appreciate you guys” to an audience that includes women. Don’t assume it’s okay to call someone who’s your father’s age by his first name. These may seem silly, but we supporters appreciate being respected.

At the risk of stating the obvious, if a husband and wife are supporting you, make sure they’re both getting your email. It has taken us several years to get all the missionaries we support to send their letter to both my wife and me. I’d say to her, “We haven’t heard from so and so for a long time” and she

It may not communicate well when a millennial writes “I appreciate you guys” to an audience that includes women.
would say, “Didn’t you get their email last week?” Well no, because my email wasn’t on their list. That’s basic stuff. You’re not keeping in touch if someone is not on your list.

6. Regularity. Do you have a supporter communication plan? Make a plan for the year. Give yourself deadlines. If your plan is to send out six letters, then put six dates on the calendar. Make sure you allow time for writing and proofing (and printing and mailing, if applicable.) With a plan, these dates should not take you by surprise. If you are struggling with what to say, perhaps you could have a theme for each letter. Here are some theme suggestions:

Letter 1 theme—My ministry – an overview of what I do and why I’m here
Letter 2 theme—My organization
Letter 3 theme—My family, how we’re doing personally
Letter 4 theme—Testimony from someone who’s a beneficiary of my ministry
Letter 5 theme—What I’m currently doing and/or working on
Letter 6 theme—Christmas

Will you be visiting any supporters personally during the year? Planning the date, time, and logistics are vital, but you should also plan the visit itself. You should have some expectations. Think about what a successful visit will look like. Not too long ago a missionary couple stayed at our house. After we exchanged pleasantries, looked at photos, and asked them a few questions, there was a great lull. I prayed for them and we all went to bed early. They came without a plan.

Passion. Simplicity. Clarity. Connection. Accuracy. Regularity. With thoughtful application of these points, you can help your supporters be better receivers.

Action

Whether we supporters can articulate it or not, we want to ‘act,’ we want to be involved, we want to make meaningful contributions. And we’re more likely to act if you engage us well and skillfully present us with compelling opportunities.

A couple of times a year, my wife and I volunteer at a free dental clinic. I’m not a dental professional like my wife, but I can help in other ways. I do things like take out the trash, direct traffic, and escort patients. At one clinic, there were so many volunteers that we were tripping over each other. After a few hours I determined that my help was not needed and went home. The organizers had not done a good job deploying their volunteers. I wanted to make a difference, but I wasn’t needed.

Maybe we supporters have a longing like that. We want to do something.
Most of us still get up and go to work every day. We’re concerned about saving for retirement and what’s going to happen with healthcare costs just like you. Most of us are giving to you above and beyond what we’re giving to our church. We’re giving voluntarily, not bound by scripture to contribute specifically to you. So it’s a pretty big deal that out of all the worthy ministries we could contribute to, we have chosen to contribute to yours.

Don’t act like God just beams support into your account (or not) and there’s not much you can do about it. Give God the glory for the ordinary and visible means he has put in place to provide for your needs. Isn’t it interesting that the Bible, from beginning to end, instructs God’s people to trust in him, yet it places a high value on skills? The Old Testament speaks of skilled weavers, skilled metalworkers, skilled musicians, skilled carpenters and so forth. These people used their skills to glorify God. The New Testament talks about studying, working, and learning. It’s okay to develop your skills to be a better communicator.

God is working through the ordinary means of a missionary reaching out to a supporter to help us more fully participate in the kingdom. We might spread your story to other supporters. We might give more faithfully and generously. We might even sense God calling us to go somewhere in missionary service. As God uses you in our lives, we just might be changed.

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Questions for reflection

1. In your ministry, do you think there is a relationship between preparation and effectiveness? How does that view affect your understanding of the relationship between your support and your ability to communicate with supporters?
2. Supporters are not the focus of your ministry but they are an important part. What are some things you are doing or can do to engage supporters more fully?
3. How would you make a communication plan for the coming year?
WITH PROPHETIC IMAGINATION, Andrew Walls (2002, 202) claimed that the great new fact of our time is that mission is now in reverse: from the non-Western (or Majority World) to the Western world (see Catto 2012, 91-105). For Walls, the Church now has many centers of mission. Similarly, Lesslie Newbigin pointed out in the 1990s that “we must recover the sense that mission is the enterprise of the whole Church of God in every land, directed towards the whole world” (1994, 11). This implies that we need to acknowledge the fact that the home base of missions is now worldwide.

Many Christian leaders, especially from the Majority World, perceive Europe as a dark continent in need of revitalized mission and evangelization. This view includes the current state of Christianity in Great Britain. What I propose here are suggestions for the U.K. Church regarding how to welcome Majority World missionaries. This proposal comes from my fifteen years of experience in working in reciprocal collaboration for a church in London, and having promoted mission in Europe for more than twenty years.
Reasons for a Dark Continent

Four external factors will help clarify why Christian mission has often become so difficult in Europe. This will help lay the foundation for why this affects Majority World missionaries coming to the continent as well.

1. **An increasing secularization within society.** The division between sacred and secular has become a pivotal reason for diverting people away from seeking God. One example is that more people than ever go out shopping and for pleasure on Sunday.

2. **An increase in postmodern thinking.** This factor highlights a more individualistic approach to life rather than a corporate one. For example, many people invest in sustaining their private lives and personal achievements due to the individualistic tendency to protect themselves from times of uncertainty. Churches with a passion for mission in Europe struggle with uncontrollable access to information and mass telecommunications, environmental interest, civil rights and equal opportunities, struggles against oppression defined by sex or ethnicity, etc. Since churches have less access to the people than social media, people have more interest in what the power of media and telecommunications offer than in what churches have to offer.

3. **An increasing atomization of the nuclear family.** More than ever,
families are made up of single or cohabiting parents rather than married parents. In addition, new laws in the European Union have led to increased levels of divorce.

4. An increasing decline in church attendance. Fewer and fewer people frequent churches on a regular basis. It seems that life for pleasure, such as traveling abroad on weekends and atheistic, rationalistic, and postmodern thinking make people anti-church in the U.K. These factors produce less interest in church activities.

These four factors have made a marked and dark impact on European Christian leadership, which has resulted in the feeling that there is little room for interest and openness to receive Majority World missionaries. The above factors have had a large impact on churches in Europe looking to do mission, including:

1. They have less money available for mission.
2. There is less interest in supporting the mission activity of the local church.
3. Centripetal mission (concentrating only on local efforts) makes people less aware of key issues of a global mission.

Three Negative Missiological Views

It seems that there are at least three negative missiological views regarding Majority World missionaries who come to Europe.

1. Rejection (refusal, denial, renunciation, refutation). This includes expressions such as, “You have to weigh the implications of missionary work in the U.K.” or “You know that Europe is not Peru or South Africa” or “I do not want to discourage you, but it is necessary for me to highlight this.” There is a tendency to make sure Majority World missionaries are well-trained in cross-cultural mission or in intercultural studies. Of course, this is not necessarily a direct refusal, but most of the time it can be polite rejection.

2. Reaction (response, reply, answer, feedback). A second type of thinking goes like this: “I will see if I can do something for you, but I can’t promise anything; let’s be in touch.” Some leaders begin to question those who intend to come to Europe. Reaction implies a kind of surprise and perhaps interest in knowing more in order to make a decision. Reaction can be positive, negative, or indifferent. Of course, this missiological view is not always direct; most of the time it is a polite response with no clear alternative.

3. Retaliation (rejection, revenge, reprisal, punishment). The terminology ‘reverse mission’ (see Ross n.d.) and ‘revenge mission’ are easily misunderstood. The second is an anti-theological mission, not acceptable in any mission activity; the first means that mission is now returning to the West. An anti-mission revenge is sometimes expressed when spiritual and material support to Majority World missionaries in need is delayed. Of course, this approach does not always take the form of direct retaliation; it could occasionally come in the form of a lack of reciprocal collaboration.
For these three views (rejection, reaction, and retaliation), perhaps we need some theological and missiological clarifications to help understand better that the Holy Spirit blows whenever he wants and wherever he pleases (John 3:8), and all Christians belong to Christ’s body (Eph. 4:4-6).

**Three Positive Missiological Views**

But it doesn’t end there. Let me also share three examples of how U.K. Christian leadership respond positively to Majority World missionaries.

1. **Welcome** (greeting, reception, receiving, salutation). From time to time I hear, “You are most welcome, we need you!” It is time to give a clear *missio salutatio (missio acceptus)* to Majority World missionaries. Western leadership needs to have a clear attitude of welcoming missionaries whom God is mobilizing within the new global mission scenario. A welcome is taken as, “We know you are here.”

2. **Approval** (support, agreement, authorization, appreciation). From time to time I hear, “Thanks for coming to help us.” Approval implies a clear voice of recognition that Majority World missionaries are also part of Christ’s body and want to work hand in hand with the British Church. For the most part it is individual members of a church who are more open to Majority World missionaries. It is time Western Christian leadership gives a clear *ordo acceptum* (order of acceptance) by making more agreements to support Majority World missionaries. Approval is taken as, “We know you want to serve here.”

3. **Collaboration** (partnership, teamwork, group effort, association). I also occasionally hear, “I suppose your ministry fits with our plan, therefore we could work together. Would you help us in evangelism or in pastoral counseling?” It is time to also ask, “What can we do for you?” This attitude comes in recognition that Majority World missionaries have been called by God to make a contribution for God’s kingdom in the U.K. Collaboration is taken as, “We know we can work together.” One possibility of collaboration is that Majority World missionaries can benefit from European training.

For these three views (welcome, approval, and collaboration), perhaps we need some theological and missiological remarks to help understand better that as Christ’s body we are working for the Kingdom of God—the rule of everything and all creatures by our eternal sovereign God (Mark 1:15; John 3:5-7), and for the mission of God, the owner of the mission (Col. 1:16-18).

**Case Study**

I arrived in London in 1997 with my family, having been sent by my local church in Peru. We set up a mission collaboration with St. James’ Church in Muswell Hill, London. They provided us with free use of the church building and gave a small financial contribution to our ministry in the U.K. In 2000, I became a staff member of the church (again with a small financial contribution) which produced a mission model, allowing me to serve within a British congregation.
and to develop the vision God had given me to plant a Latin church and establish mission bridges between churches of the Global North and South.

Currently, I am a mission partner of the St. James’ World Mission Group, and the concept of reciprocal collaboration is becoming better understood within the Anglican Church. We know that isolation is not a biblical view and I strongly believe in what I call reciprocal contextual collaboration—a new definition of the traditional word ‘partnership’ for mission.

**Defining Reciprocal Contextual Collaboration**

Reciprocal contextual collaboration is the reciprocal relationship of harmonious freedom in creative tension which exists between two or more of Christ’s disciples as they seek to accomplish the *missio Dei* through the Christological double mandate, which includes commitment to the cosmos and people for the glory and benefits of God’s kingdom. The Christological mandate implies an historical, theological, political, economic, social, and cultural dimension of the redemptive mission (see Cueva 2011).

- **Reciprocal** implies that we are the Body of Christ with diverse and multiple ministries, with gifts and resources (not just financial) to help one another reciprocally.

- **Contextual** implies the incarnational attitude of Christian mission that includes conscious acknowledgement of the reality of the social, political, religious, cultural, and economical context.

- **Collaboration** implies that we acknowledge that the *missio Dei* belongs to God and we are just collaborators in God’s kingdom with freedom of prophetic imagination (the innovative ways to develop the mission task for the fulfilment of the *missio Dei*).

For this definition, let me clarify a few points:

1. Reciprocal collaboration is not primarily quantitative, but qualitative. Reciprocity is strongly related to the pneumatological work of the Spirit who empowers the work of each partner in mission within a relational mission theology.

2. Reciprocity relates more to relationships between people rather than to structural or managerial missiology, which emphasizes the organization. Reciprocity is rooted in the spiritual, moral, and supra-cultural biblical values of unity, truth, trust, humility, patience, harmony, and thankfulness. Relational commitment, flexibility (flexible policy), co-responsibility, accountability, local decision-making, respect for personal identity, and interdependence are also key factors of mission in biblical reciprocity.

3. Reciprocal collaboration implies the rejection of any sense of superiority or inferiority. We have been created in the image of a relational God, who challenges us to prioritize partnership in mission according to the pattern of biblical relationships, which is linked to the intentional action of partnering with others.
Conclusion

It is possible to improve mission relations between Majority World missionaries and the churches in Europe. Predominately since the 1950s, mission has been concentrated on the missio Dei, while recently the missio Spiritus has become a new tendency for global mission. However, my proposal goes in line with those tendencies by adding the need of a third element which is a missio salutation—a deep welcome—to Majority World missionaries. This implies a clear and formal welcome of their new initiatives without denying the need of reciprocal collaboration with the presence and experience of Western mission systems.

I want to encourage a strong biblical and theological basis for reciprocal contextual collaboration of every force in mission. This will imply a big effort on the part of both Majority World missionaries and the Church both in the U.K. and throughout Europe. Mission to a dark continent can be changed by bringing new mission light.

References


Questions for reflection

1. Are there reciprocal relationships being formed where you are, or is missionary work still being undertaken independently by one or the other mission force?
2. Are feelings of superiority or inferiority present where you work or minister today?
3. How would it be possible to make more reciprocal collaboration in mission?
A storytelling event is happening. The news of it has been shared from person to person and interest has multiplied. Now a crowd has gathered outside the shelter where the stories will be told. So great is the interest that after waiting in the cold, many are turned away, going back to their homes to seek conversation or entertainment in another way. Is this a village in remote Africa or Southeast Asia? No! It is in Richmond, Virginia, where new interest in live storytelling is igniting a movement.

For years, storytelling and other forms of oral communication have been the predominant forms of information sharing and learning among the vast majority of our world. These were the primary means of communicating biblical content until the printing press revolution.

So what if you were part of the ‘oral majority’ of the world—the eighty percent who do not read or prefer to learn by oral means? Or, what if there was no print in your language?

Awareness of the need for orality-based methods of discipleship has increased in the Church. It has moved to the forefront of mission discussion and practice, and has begun to influence thought leaders and institutions. Since its inception in 2005, the International Orality Network (ION) has served as a catalyst and facilitator in the growth of the orality movement. God’s faithfulness has been abundantly evident as ION has grown and flourished under the excellent leadership first of Avery Willis and then Samuel Chiang.

Now the question is: What is the Lord’s vision for the orality movement in the next ten years? And how do we best position ourselves as individuals, churches, organizations, and the ION network, for maximum effectiveness and fruitfulness in making disciples of oral learners?

There are tremendous demographic shifts taking place in the Church globally. At current growth rates it will not be long before there will be more
Chinese Christians than North American. By 2050, one in three Christians will be African. The fastest-growing mission-sending nations are in Asia and Latin America. There is a massive, and as yet untapped, missionary workforce in the Global Southeast to be mobilized and equipped to reach oral learners.

Within the orality movement, and ION specifically, a broader international base should be built with much greater participation and influence from the Church in the Majority World. Making disciples of all oral learners will require a synergy between the West and the Global Southeast that maximizes the strengths of each. Three examples of how this vision is catching on in different parts of the world stand out:

- Dr. Romerlito Macalinao, executive director of Wycliffe Philippines, speaking at the November 2015 launch of ION Philippines, articulated an exciting concept. He shared that since Filipinos are essentially an oral-preference people and that Filipino communities are present in 212 nations of the world, they are one of the most strategically placed potential mission forces for orality globally.

- At a pan-African ION consultation on theological education for oral learners held in Nairobi (October 2015), leaders from the educational, church, and non-profit sectors were challenged to take their rightful place in leadership within the global orality movement. The mobile phone industry has set an example of what could happen in the field of orality.

  In only six years the use of cell phones in Kenya has gone from one percent of the population to thirty percent. This is almost unprecedented.

  - The Church in India has long been employing orality practices dating back to the days of William Carey. Today, innovative indigenous leaders and agencies are using orality techniques across the nation. Exemplifying this early adopter mentality is Serampore College (founded in 1818 by William Carey and two associates), which is launching a two-year program to train both undergraduate and graduate students in orality and scripture translation.

Building a Younger Demographic

As we look to the future, the potential of the orality movement lies within
the next generation. Today’s young people contain a plethora of creativity which can be channeled into great effectiveness in all the disciplines of orality, thereby strengthening our collective influence and impact in every sphere of society.

By focusing on enabling engagement from a younger demographic, the orality workforce of the future will be fueled anew by those between 20 to 40 years old, supplemented by the contributions of those both older and younger. This is nowhere better modeled than in Kenya and India, where young leaders such as Bramuel Musya and Daniel Ponraj head up very significant orality initiatives. These younger leaders recognize the value of networking with both younger and older generations, as well as of employing technological tools to reach oral learners.

Bramuel Musya, ION East Africa regional director, has been involved with a program that is training community leaders who are oral-preference learners to know the word of God, establish life patterns accordingly, and teach others to do likewise. Two classes have now graduated from this unique two-year program in which the participants learn, memorize, and can accurately share 296 Bible stories. This amounts to nearly fifteen percent of the entire Bible.

As recounted by Mr. Musya, these stories have challenged long-standing values and traditional cultural practices of these leaders and their families. After learning one particular story set, the all-male class felt convicted that they were not properly treating their wives, who were not able to participate in the learning due to their role in preparing food for the class. The men decided that they should take turns in food preparation so that the women could learn the Bible stories as full participants.

**Building Media Connections**

Kingdom movements are fostered by prayer and the flow of information. Those involved in the orality movement need to actively cultivate improved connection with all forms of media outlets so that the stories from around the world and wealth of knowledge bubbling up globally can be more rapidly and broadly disseminated. If given room and encouragement, the younger generation will be instrumental in bringing this about. The recent relaunch of the ION website and social media is a case in point. Technologically-savvy young adults spearheaded the development of an international culturally-sensitive, multi-linguistic website with full audio capacity, which is one of the first of its kind. Using the rollover function, the written text can be heard, making it possible for oral-preference learners to listen to the content of the website.

**Building Up Others in the Word of God**

Evangelicals agree that obedience to the word of God is the essence of
discipleship and the key to life transformation. As followers of Christ and as stewards, we are entrusted with a responsibility to maintain the centrality of the word of God in all we do as we focus on making disciples of oral learners. Whether in our discipleship training, theological education, leadership development, social action, business, or any of the other domains of life in which the disciplines of orality are exercised, the word of God is to be the foundation and core of our orality practices.

For the word of God to take root and bring transformation to a community or culture, it is necessary to have more than a few story sets, although that is a wonderful place to begin. Accuracy in transmission, replication, scalability, and sustainability require more than just storytelling. For oral learners, this ultimately necessitates audio scripture engagement.

One ministry has come up with a unique scripture engagement method that intentionally integrates storytelling with audio scripture engagement. It is called Interactive Bible Discovery (www.davarpartners.com). The approach begins with storytelling but uses audio scripture recordings as the authoritative point of reference and plumb line. The training and practice is now being used in dozens of nations on several continents.

Building on Bible Translation

But what about communities that do not have the whole Bible in their own language? How does the local Body of Christ disciple its children without the Old Testament stories of Joseph, David, Esther, and Daniel? How does the community learn God’s standards of righteousness, justice, or governance without the OT? Knowledge of the OT is essential for understanding the message of the gospel. As one Philippine leader has said, “The New Testament without the Old Testament is like a machete without a handle.” Furthermore, many oral communities identify closely with the OT and the culture and practices of the historic children of Israel.

The future of the orality movement rests to a great extent upon the translation of the full Bible into the languages of these people groups. Of the approximately 7,000 languages of the world, the Old Testament has been translated into only 552. Efforts are being made by translation agencies to accelerate this process, but there are a number of bottlenecks which impede the progress, particularly in translation of the Old Testament. One of these is the relatively few translators skilled in biblical Hebrew.

At the very time when translation agencies globally are making a concerted push to begin translation in all languages of the world, many Western theological institutions are moving away from requiring biblical Hebrew in their degree programs. This trend has grave implications not only to the Church in the West, but more particularly to the emerging Church within newly-reached people groups consisting of oral majorities.

To mitigate the dearth of biblical Hebrew translators, for the past twenty
years the Home for Bible Translators (HBT) has been training mother tongue translators and others in biblical Hebrew. With an average participation of eight persons per year, the HBT has trained translators from over seventy nations who have been involved in hundreds of Old Testament translations in past and ongoing projects. A more recent development is being directed by Dr. Randall Buth, a seasoned translator and biblical languages expert. This initiative, under the auspices of the 4.2.20 Foundation (www.4220foundation.com), works in conjunction with translation agencies, Bible societies, and educational institutions to catalyze as many streams of biblical Hebrew training as possible, with the end goal of training sufficient biblical Hebrew translators to have begun Old Testament translation in all languages by 2033.

Their three-fold strategy involves providing (1) biblical Hebrew fluency and pedagogy training in theological institutions around the world, (2) training native Hebrew speakers to become translation consultants and checkers, and (3) an eight-month intensive biblical Hebrew translation immersive program in Israel.

Conclusion

Building upon the foundations laid in past decades, the orality movement continues to grow and multiply globally. In order to further catalyze and facilitate that growth, ION has made some intentional changes. Recently, its advisory board has grown to include African, East Asian, and Indian leaders in its membership. Similarly, a global executive team and international council have been formed with leaders representing six regions of the world. ION is evolving into a matrix structure with geographic regions as well as focus areas. This is in order to create as many ways for individuals to be involved regardless of location, age, or language.

We have heard how the Holy Spirit fell upon an international crowd gathered in Jerusalem and everyone heard the word of God proclaimed in their own language and thus the gospel was spread beyond Jerusalem. As we enter the season leading up to Pentecost and commemorate the time when God’s word was first proclaimed in the heart language of all who heard, pray for the orality movement and that ION and all its members may serve the Global Church with increasing effectiveness, so that together we may disciple all oral learners.

Dr. David Swarr serves as executive director of the International Orality Network and is president/CEO of 4.2.20 Foundation. David grew up in the Middle East and has lived and worked on five continents. He has a rich background in cross-cultural leadership, including senior positions in multinational companies, NGOs, and a university, and holds a PhD in intercultural organizational leadership. David and his wife, Sharon, split their time between Israel and the USA. They have two daughters.
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book reviews

Called to Unity for the Sake of Mission

—Reviewed by Cameron D. Armstrong, church planter, International Mission Board in Bucharest, Romania; PhD Intercultural Studies student, Biola University.

Any attempt to document the history and development of ecumenical Christian missions promises to be fraught with challenges. Consensus concerning which groups to highlight as helpful or unhelpful in fostering partnership is difficult to garner. In Called to Unity for the Sake of Mission, John Gibaut and Knud Jorgensen bring together authors from numerous academic, cultural, and ecclesiastic backgrounds to display how commitment to Christian unity plays an intrinsic part in offering the world a credible Christian witness.

Beginning with lessons learned since the Edinburgh 1910 missionary conference, the first section of the volume details the historical and missiological development of ecumenical groups through the follow-up Edinburgh 2010. The authors in this first segment of the book note how only a few evangelical representatives from the Majority World attended the 1910 conference, although their presence and furtherance of unified mission kindled discussions that led to the development of bodies such as the World Council of Churches, the World Evangelical Alliance, and the Lausanne Movement. The desire for Christian unity, for which Christ himself prayed, also led to refocusing on the topic of ecclesiology.

The book’s second section offers a smorgasbord of practitioners involved in global and church-based initiatives, new movements that preview a bright future, and other worldwide perspectives on the path toward Christian ecumenism. Noteworthy here is the genuine spirit of encouragement that each author takes in interacting with those from other theological traditions that have spurred much-needed conversation for their particular denomination or society. For example, Roman Catholic theologian Stephan Bevans relates how ecumenical conferences have assisted Roman Catholic leaders in thinking further about the *missio Dei*. Further, the century in between the two Edinburgh conferences added many more voices from the Majority World.

One weakness in this thoughtful work is the observation that the Edinburgh 1910 conference, and therefore its subsequent gatherings, focused on how evangelism, not theology, unites Christians. Can the two be truly separated? What one believes about the gospel and salvation will always affect what type of message is shared. Although the authors interact
a bit with this theme, especially in the chapters dealing with missiology, a more visible discussion to this end would be beneficial.

*Called to Unity for the Sake of Mission* offers an illuminating look into how the *missio Dei* unites Christians. Each writer carefully shows how the Church is truly missional by nature. As the ecumenical movement in modern missions now passes its 100-year mark, the humble desire to learn from and assist one another for the glory of God permeates each page of this work.

**Church Planting in Europe: Connecting to Society, Learning from Experience**

_Evert Van de Poll and Joanne Appleton, eds. Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2015._

—Reviewed by David R. Dunaetz, Azusa Pacific University, Claremont Graduate University, and former church planter in France.

Since the 1980s, evangelical denominations and missions in Europe have heavily emphasized church planting as the most effective way to evangelize the post-Christian continent. These efforts have not always proved successful, often because they were based on methods more appropriate to a North American context. In response, Evert Van de Pol and Joanne Appleton have put together an outstanding collection of articles with the goal of equipping church planters for ministry in Europe. The writers chosen for this project demonstrate how church planting can be carried out in multicultural and postmodern Europe.

The focus of the book is on missionary church planting, specifically, church planting led by a team that has been sent to start a church with the goal of evangelizing the local community, leading to conversions and changed lives which influence the surrounding culture. All of the authors, in a unified voice, argue that this must be done through new churches that are culturally relevant.

The first section of the book addresses the foundations of church planting, emphasizing the central role that the Bible should play. Boris Paschke presents an interesting and novel study of New Testament prayers related to church planting. Dietrick Schindler uses Jesus’ training of his disciples to discuss the importance of the leadership training in the European context.

The central section of the book addresses cultural aspects of church planting in Europe, including chapters on the importance of cultural relevancy, descriptions of tendencies, and common barriers as well as common bridges for communicating the gospel. Johannes Reimer argues for a geographic focus (i.e. towns and neighborhoods) rather than an ethnic focus in church planting. He bases his argument on the belief that ethnus in Matthew 28:19-20 refers to geography rather than ethnicity. A stronger argument might be that cultural expectations for assimilation (rather than multiculturalism)
call for a geographic focus to church planting which excludes no one.

In contrast, Ishak Ghatas argues for the need of starting Arabic and Turkish-speaking churches for first-generation immigrants. André Pownall describes the inevitable necessity of multiethnic churches in spite of the challenges this brings.

Original research presented by Jim Memories indicates most church planters do little to evaluate their effectiveness. Memories argues that, rather than measuring success by the number of people touched by the gospel, success should be evaluated by the church’s cruciformity based on the Nicene Creed. Although his argument seems like a call for churches to be hotels for the holy rather than hospitals for the hurting, it is a fascinating discussion of issues that need to be openly addressed.

The book concludes with Johann Lukasse’s summary of best practices used by successful church planters in Europe and several interesting and diverse case studies. All in all, this is probably the most important book on church planting in Europe to come out in the last decade. All church planters in Europe should read it. Church-planting teams would especially benefit from discussing it and prayerfully incorporating relevant ideas into their strategies.
Effective Discipling in Muslim Communities: Scripture, History and Seasoned Practices


—Reviewed by Roy Oksnevad, director of Muslim Ministries, Billy Graham Center for Evangelism.

The body of Christian literature on Islam is growing and developing. Much of this is focused around evangelism, church-planting strategies, contextualization, and conversion theory. There is a dearth of literature that deals with post-conversion issues and in particular discipleship of believers from a Muslim background, reflecting the reality of so few conversions of Muslims to Christ. However, two specific events are fueling a change: a worldwide prayer movement for Muslims and the global reality of radical Islam’s carnage, particularly among Muslims. These two events have resulted in large movements to Christ, chronicled in David Garrison’s book, A Wind in the House of Islam. Don Little’s book could not come at a more propitious time.

Little, a practitioner/scholar, brings his unique blend of experience and
research to this topic. The book is divided into two sections: foundational issues and practical matters. He lays down a solid foundation in the first five chapters, giving a comprehensive analysis of spiritual growth through the lens of scripture, contemporary approaches, and the Early Church. In chapter six, he does not shy away from the murky waters of contextualization giving an assessment of insider approaches. This, in my opinion, brings clarity to this contentious dispute and adds value to the book’s topic of discipleship. He defines discipleship with the breadth of a scholar and adds his own nuanced description of discipleship in chapter eight, which he calls “The Living Pyramid of Relational Communal Discipling.”

In part two of this book, Little brings the collective wisdom of seasoned disciplers to some of the most vexing challenges facing believers from a Muslim background. They include negotiating identity, persecution, finances, families, and dealing with expatriate disciplers. It was a delight to see a chapter dealing with demonic oppression and attacks, something most workers among Muslims have experienced. The tables and grafts taken from his initial research in this area gives the reader solid evidence of the reality of his arguments.

I get the impression that in Little’s effort to be comprehensive, he relies
heavily upon works by other authors for much of the content in some of the chapters in the second part of the book. To be fair, he does clue the reader in by saying he will draw upon published writing and interviews (p. 167). Yet, at times, I felt like I was reading Little’s review of literature he has read on the subject, with a summation of what he quotes. He ends the section with his insights in a closing paragraph rather than gleaning the wisdom and integrating it with what he brings to the topic.

This book breaks new ground in the area of discipleship, providing practical advice through the lens of a scholar/practitioner. I highly recommend this book to everyone working with Muslims.

**Check these titles:**


The first thing I did after reading John Bailey’s book was to order a dozen copies to give to churches that partner with our work in Africa. It is unfortunate that his book on local church engagement in mission is unlikely to be widely read in evangelical missions circles. It is unfortunate, because coming from the perspective of a local church missions mobilizer, Bailey seeks to respond constructively to many of the criticisms leveled at local church involvement in missions to outline a ‘better’ approach to such engagements.

Bailey challenges readers to reconsider how they do missions by carefully considering the models they adopt, the true motivation behind their engagement, and their relationship with others in pursuing the mission. Rejecting many of the models common in evangelical missions, Bailey urges a model that proceeds from a position of weakness to build capacity in those to whom we go to serve—a model that closely resembles “Asset Based Community Development.”

As we check our motives, Bailey urges that “we need to recognize that the mission is not ours, it is God’s”; and in so doing “issues of territory, credit, and ownership fall away.” Bailey concludes with a strong appeal for high levels of partnership and unity in mission efforts. His strong warning against churches engaging in mission on their own without the accountability provided by partnerships with local believers and long-term missionaries and agencies is especially refreshing and timely. Missions pastors, local church missions committees, and members of short-term missions teams will find much fodder for thought in this book that goes a step further than simply a recognition of the harm that has often been done in the name of local church missions.

However, the book does seem to fall short in several significant ways. For example, in adopting a developmental model for missions, Bailey fails to distinguish between economic development activities and evangelistic activities and to explore whether the model he proposes is equally valid in both situations. Also, the final chapter discusses three levels of church engagement (review and disperse, projects, partnership) as if each stage is superior and should replace the previous stage, rather than being cumulative, building on each other—a much healthier and holistic engagement model.

This book will probably be perceived as intended primarily for those within the Wesleyan tradition and the subtitle might suggest a theological/ecclesiastical arrogance in assuming that “Wesleyans do missions better.”
That is not the author’s intent, but rather he simply wants to be explicit about how his thinking is derived from his Wesleyan tradition.

One might question whether he has been successful in that attempt or whether he has simply shown that his proposals are consistent with Wesleyanism. Either way, the unfortunate result is that the scope of impact of the book is likely to be much more limited than the content deserves.

Check these titles:


Married in Mission: A Handbook for Couples in Cross-Cultural Service


—Reviewed by Ken Wiggers, retired from HR Administration and Management Training, Wycliffe Bible Translators.

Some of the best ‘help’ literature grows out of encountering challenges. This is the case of Alexis Kenny’s handbook, *Married in Mission*. Upon returning to the U.S. from a very ‘intense’ 13-month, cross-cultural orphanage ministry, Ali and her husband were disappointed because they could not find readily available resources to assist them in processing their mission experience as a couple. Where this ‘dead end’ stopped, Ali’s research started.

Ali created, disseminated, and analyzed two multi-organizational surveys: one for married missioners and the second for ministry staff. She also conducted correspondence interviews with still other individuals. Her findings and perspective are assembled into this very useful, broad-based handbook. It is focused on the wide range of issues many couples undergo at various stages within their ministry involvement.

Kenny has identified seven different phases within an extended, international mission commitment: the pre-departure periods of (1) discernment and (2) preparation; the (3) beginning, (4) middle, and (5) end of the abroad experience itself; and finally, the post-assignment stages of (6) reentry and (7) integration. Each chapter is dedicated to one of these seven phases, and includes three interactive exercises “concerning marriage and service…(as) a means for individuals to purposefully engage with their vocational roles as both spouses and missioners.”

This is not a book you read through and file on your bookshelf. It is truly a
workbook to keep at one’s side throughout ministry. While the handbook concentrates on spousal dynamics, concepts presented and exercises offered can be effective for any two or more people serving in close proximity. Gleanings from this material could be utilized in a variety of contexts: team building, marriage seminars, and even personal self-discovery.

While she writes from a Catholic experience and perspective, Ali makes this resource one that is accessible across ministerial theological boundaries. This handbook is about growth in relationships, minimizing the more unpleasant surprises that can occur in ministry, and holistic development (spiritually, emotionally, and intellectually).

Both Ali and her husband, Patrick, are enrolled in James Madison University’s Doctoral Program of Psychology. Their shared drive to serve with and for others will challenge you when you avail yourself of this valuable resource.

Check these titles:

One Gospel for All Nations: A Practical Approach to Biblical Contextualization


—Reviewed by Nathan Hart, pastor, Stanwich Church in Greenwich, Connecticut; MDiv, Princeton Theological Seminary.

I grew up in the American Midwest, in a small town where most people spoke English with the same accent. I didn’t think we spoke with an accent. I thought Southerners and Long Islanders and British people did. Later, I learned that all English speakers have an accent of one kind or another. Language contextualizes wherever it is spoken in community.

The gospel, too, contextualizes wherever it is taught and believed. Jackson Wu, with his book One Gospel for All Nations, has endeavored to “simplify something so inherently complex as contextualization” (Introduction, xxi). Wu states that the Bible transcends all human cultures and is also relevant for each one. The goal of any missionary is to take this transcendent truth and speak it in the unique accents of local contexts.

After showing, in section one, that contextualization must begin with biblical interpretation, Wu develops a mission model in section two which he suggests is suitable for fluctuating cultures. Fluctuating cultures are all
living cultures, which are always changing. In this section, Wu describes three themes in which the Bible presents the gospel, namely Kingdom, Covenant, and Creation. Each of these can be communicated contextually in various human cultures.

Throughout the book, Wu offers practical approaches for teaching, preaching, and applying the gospel in various cultural settings, most frequently those in China and the United States. In section four, Wu clearly proposes several practical steps necessary for any missionary who seeks to contextualize the Bible. He reminds the reader that missionaries need more training in biblical theology, not just systematic theology, and that they need to better understand biblical interpretation. This section crystalizes Wu’s main themes, which center the idea of contextualization on the Bible itself instead of on the varieties of human culture. In this sense, Wu accomplishes his goal of simplifying the idea of contextualization.

However, in chapter six (“Process: How Do We Move From Biblical Text To Cultural Context?”), Wu complicates, rather than simplifies, his main idea. With many charts, graphs, and metaphors, Wu leaves the reader overburdened with too many words and concepts. It would have been more helpful, and simplifying, if he had stuck with a single metaphor and extrapolated it in various ways.

Overall, Wu’s book is a helpful contribution to the field of missions and gospel communication worldwide. It should help missionaries learn to speak truth with any accent.

**Check these titles:**


**The Spirit Moves West: Korean Missionaries in America**

*Rebecca Kim, Oxford University Press, 2015.*

—Reviewed by Pam Arlund, director of training, All Nations Family, Kansas City, MO.

Missions “from everywhere to everywhere” is a common catch phrase in missions today, yet little is empirically known about missions from the Global South to the rest of the world. Rebecca Kim does an excellent job of filling this gap with this book. Although Kim only analyzes one mission
group sending missionaries from South Korea to the United States, this book should be a welcome and interesting read to anyone interested in cross-cultural missions in general. Indeed, the problems that the Korean missionaries encounter have some uniqueness to them, but many are the same problems that missionaries of all kinds encounter. As such, this book should be of interest to anyone training, sending, or becoming missionaries from anywhere to anywhere.

Kim’s research into the University Bible Fellowship (UBF’s) launching of missionaries from South Korea to the campuses of North America may at first blush seem small and not of universal interest. Indeed, Kim’s own interest began through family connections. As such, she takes great care in the introduction to ground the book in the broader discussions of the changing face of Christianity (see Philip Jenkins and Michael Pocock). The introduction is the most academic part of the book and might initially make one feel that the book is difficult to read. However, subsequent chapters are easy and interesting to read, although a bit repetitive.

Chapters one and two give background and general information about the group being examined (the UBF). While chapters three to five analyze specific themes such as: soldier spirit, sacrifice, and privileging whites. Next, chapters six and seven demonstrate how the UBF responded to these challenges. Finally, the conclusion once again places this rather narrow study into a global picture.

By far, the most interesting chapters were three to five. In each case, I felt the tug of the Korean’s desire to adapt to U.S. culture while at the same time I felt that they were bringing values like soldier spirit and sacrifice that the U.S. Church needs. These chapters raised some fundamental missiological questions about adaptation to local culture while maintaining non-negotiable values. For example, how much adaptation is too much adaptation? This is a question far bigger than just the UBF. Likewise, the issues raised about how people from lower socio-economic backgrounds can find a voice and serve in wealthier countries will become more and more relevant. These issues were immensely interesting, stimulating, and applicable in a broad context.

The final paradox of the book sums up where the book leads us to: “Paradoxically, greater Americanization has made it harder, not easier to evangelize Americans.” This statement alone challenges much of our thinking about missions in general and provides rich food for thought. Indeed, I suspect that this book will become classroom reading for many and will become the basis of much edifying discussion for many others.