

How the World Inquiry Began!

Luis Bush

Between July 2001 and March 2003 thousands of Christian leaders from more than six hundred cities heard stories from their colleagues of “God-at-work” in their cities and countries, then pondered in small groups the challenges, opportunities towards what they sensed God was calling them to in the twenty-first century.

One hundred twenty Christian leaders and scholars will gather in Seoul, Korea, May 7 to 9, 2003 as the World Inquiry International Coalition, to carry out a mid-course assessment of the preliminary findings and ongoing process of the World Inquiry.

How did the World Inquiry begin?

The World Inquiry, short for Evangelizing our World Inquiry, started out as an exercise to probe the minds and hearts of evangelical leaders in the major cities of the world. The Inquiry began and has continued not as a rigorous, methodologically driven research project, but rather a “listening venture” that seeks to tune-in to God’s voice through his people, especially those voices and leaders who are now emerging onto their local, regional and national scenes in the Two-Thirds World.

In the last months of the AD2000 Movement (AD2000) an abiding question was: Where do we go from here in world evangelization? The encouragement of my fifteen-year accountability group led me to reflect on this question through a doctoral study at Fuller School of World Mission. While looking through the lenses of the Scriptures, theology, missiologists, church history, global mission conferences, Christian leadership, etc.—it soon became clear that the focus of the dissertation

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“Catalysts of World Evangelization” would more appropriately be on informing The Question, rather than seeking to provide answers.

In the process I observed that certain catalytic impulses of world evangelization are constant, including a God-given purpose, renewal as a means, conferences leading to structures and human leaders as agents. The study

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of catalytic antecedents of today’s mission, plus review of AD2000 as an institutional and contextual framework of mission gave preparation for the final

section, which anticipates future mission directions by means of an inquiry process.

The Evangelizing Our World Inquiry compresses the reflective process into a practical instrument. It seeks to become a tool for listening to voices that can help construct a missiology capable of empowering the global church for participation in God’s mission

for the twenty-first century. As we listen to one another and seek God through his Word to hear “what the Spirit is saying to the church,” we can expect a fresh missiology to emerge that both deepens and extends our witness through the gospel.

From early on, the faculty of the School of World Mission and Fuller President’s Cabinet have greatly served this World Inquiry, providing advice at various stages of the research, design and conduct of the inquiry process. It is being conducted in collaboration with the Lausanne Committee on World Evangelization, with a view to a presentation of the Inquiry findings at the World Evangelization Issues Forum, sponsored by Lausanne in Thailand in 2004.

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