



# MISSION FRONTIERS

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Evangelizing Whole  
Families, p. 14

The Essential Role of  
the Family in World  
Evangelization, p. 22



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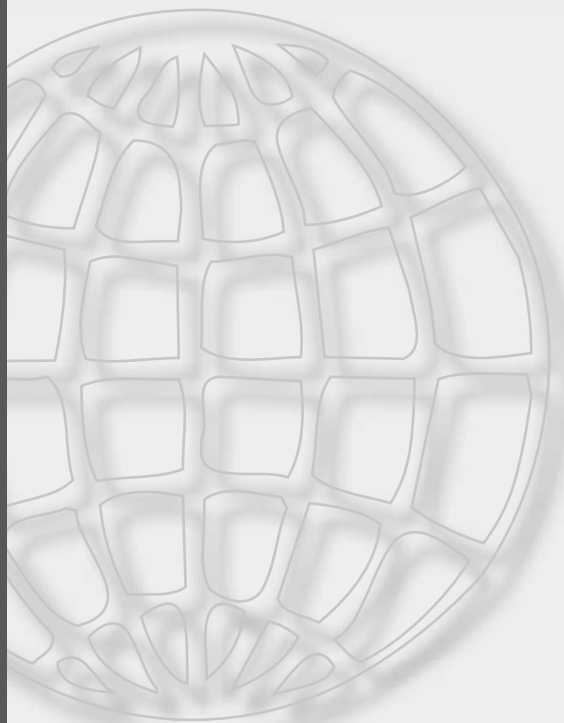
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**MISSIO NEXUS**

*Empowering the Great Commission Community of North America*



# Editorial Comment



## God's Plan Is to Reach Families

Rick Wood, Editor, *Mission Frontiers*

**A**s you read through this issue, prepare yourself for a paradigm shift in your thinking about what it means to do missions. Evangelicals from the West are so accustomed to thinking about reaching people with the gospel as distinct individuals—one at a time. Much of our theology and evangelistic practices are centered upon this individualistic approach apart from any connection people have with their family or community. Have we missed God's prime strategy for world evangelization with this exclusive focus on individuals?

Don't misunderstand me. Every individual must develop their relationship with Jesus Christ by faith in Him as his Savior and Lord. But that does not mean that he or she cannot be introduced to that relationship as part of a larger group such as a family.

Our hyper-individualistic, freedom-focused Western culture has dramatically impacted the methods that we have employed in reaching the unreached peoples. Most of our mission strategies over the last 200 years of the modern missionary movement have been focused on extracting individuals from their families and gathering these remnants of the surrounding society into churches. In the process these individuals lose much if not all access to presenting the gospel to their family and community. As the Church goes forth to enter the various unreached peoples for the first time, would not the gospel spread more easily and rapidly if the church came as a friend to families and the community as a whole rather than being seen as a destroyer of families—extracting its various members—taking them “captive” to a foreign community and system of beliefs?

As Alex Smith points out starting on page 14, this individualistic approach to world evangelization is not based in biblical or historical precedent. It is a more recent phenomenon for the church in the West—a by-product of our history with the Reformation. Smith provides numerous examples of how the standard practice before the Reformation was for whole families and peoples to turn to Christ *en masse*. He presents us with many practical suggestions for reaching families and not just individuals. He also debunks many of the myths and mistaken ideas regarding the effectiveness of reaching family groups versus a focus on just reaching individuals.

### Is Reaching Whole Families Really Possible?

The impact of one man's passion to reach his family can be seen on page 19. We present a story from Donald McGavran of one man named Ditt who persevered in reaching his whole family and created a people movement to Christ that impacted hundreds of thousands of people in India. In accord with common missionary practice, Ditt was urged not to go back to his family but to stay with the missionaries and they would give him a job. They were isolating him from his family and his community. How would his family ever hear the gospel this way? Instead, Ditt went against the mission methodology of his day and changed an entire people for Christ. Can that happen today?

With our focus on reaching just individuals we have overlooked one of the most effective ways to build God's kingdom by impacting whole families and peoples for Christ. Because of our own Western cultural background, the idea of whole families and peoples turning to Christ is

foreign to our thinking but not to God's. It was His plan all along.

T. and B. Lewis explain in their lead article starting on page 6 that the family is God's idea. He created it to accomplish His purposes for mankind—to spread His reign and rule to every family by using every family to fill the earth with His glory. God's design is for the family to do battle against Satan by bringing the knowledge of God to every family. Even the failure of the first family did not deter God from using other families to fill the earth with His glory. He used Noah and his family and he made a special promise to Abraham and his family that through Abraham and his seed all the families on earth would be blessed (Gen. 12:3). This promise to Abraham is ultimately fulfilled when every tribe, language, people and nation stands before God's throne in worship (Rev. 5:9, 7:9). This is no minor theme of Scripture, but the very heart of God's plan for humanity. It is also no surprise that Satan would be attacking the family so viciously—he knows that it is central to God's plan to defeat him.

The Lewises learned firsthand from their church-planting experiences that reaching family units was the most effective way to establish churches. They tried for years to gather the remnants of families into churches. They found repeatedly that these churches were inherently unstable and prone to break apart because there was mutual distrust among the members—they had no previous committed relationships. The Lewises discovered by “accident,” when someone invited them to share Christ with an entire family, that family units are the best means by which to build home fellowships. There is much greater trust and commitment within the family

than there is when you just gather some individual remnants of families together. The gospel also spreads more rapidly within the safety of the network of extended family relationships. You can read more about this in their article in the January-February 2009 issue of *MF* on page 16. Reaching whole families not only rests on a solid biblical foundation, but it is also the most effective strategy in many cultures.

## Rethinking Church Ministry to Families

How effective has the Church in the West been in equipping parents to disciple their kids and help them find God's calling on their lives? In his article starting on page 22, Rob Rienow points to recent statistics that show that we are increasingly losing each succeeding generation in the West to unbelief. Only 4% of the latest generation claims to be Bible-believing followers of Jesus.

Rienow identifies the root cause, "When it

comes to youth and children's ministry, we must acknowledge that the 'new experiment' has failed. The new experiment is age-segregated, church-building-based evangelism and discipleship of children. Parents drop them off. We split them up by age in different rooms in the building and 'disciple' them. In terms of Christian history, this is a brand-new idea. Slowly but surely, we abandoned the biblical model of family discipleship and delegated the spiritual training of our children to 'professionals' at church." One of the unintended consequences of this "new experiment" is, as Rienow describes, "parents were free to remain spiritually passive at home. After all, they were making sure that their son or daughter was involved in a 'great youth group.'"

The biblical focus should be on equipping parents to do the job of discipleship, not attempting to do the job for them. The church has taken over the proper role of the parents while abandoning the role of training parents and others to do the work

of the ministry. An unhealthy dependency has developed in the church. As the professionals have taken over more responsibility for discipling the young people, the parents have taken on less.

As Rienow points out, this is in stark contrast to the way it was in centuries past, when the parents were expected to disciple their children at home and there was strict accountability set up to make sure it got done. When was the last time your pastor or someone at church asked you how your family devotions were going? Has it ever happened? First, having family worship has not become a priority or an expectation from the church. Second, accountability has almost vanished from our churches. The renowned preacher Charles Spurgeon was so concerned about this trend, clear back in the 1800s that he said, "How can we hope to see the kingdom of our Lord advance when His own disciples do not teach His gospel to their own children?" (p. 23). Great question! How indeed? 🌐

# HISTORIC MERGER OF U.S. MISSION ASSOCIATIONS

CrossGlobal Link and The Mission Exchange are now one. With 159 years of combined history these two associations have joined forces to form Missio Nexus, one of the largest, most inclusive networks of Great Commission-oriented evangelicals in North America. With over 200 churches, mission organizations, training centers and educational institutions, the global impact of Missio Nexus extends to nearly every country in the world through the ministry of 35,000 missionaries serving with its affiliates.

Rebranding two associations with this much history requires a full-circle perspective that looks back and ahead all at the same time, blending timeless values with contemporary relevance. The board chose the name Missio Nexus because it captures a sense of appreciation for their rich history and a sense of anticipation for their preferred future.

*Missio*, the Latin word for mission, has been used in Great Commission literature over the years and affirms the importance of being on mission with God, standing on the shoulders of a great cloud of faithful witnesses proclaiming the unchanging message of the gospel of Jesus Christ. *Nexus* is a Latin word that has found a place in contemporary English and describes the coming together of two associations in this historic merger as well as a point of convergence where Great Commission influencers from North America can learn from each other and work together in servant partnership with the

global Church to make disciples of all nations.

The Missio Nexus board appointed Steve Moore, former President and CEO of The Mission Exchange, to serve as President of the new entity. Speaking about the merger, Moore said, "In coming together we embrace the unity promise of Psalm 133, 'For there the LORD bestows his blessing,' and the unity prayer of John 17, 'so that the world might believe.'"

In reflecting on the merger journey, Moore went on to say, "We never could have made it to this point without the commitment and partnership with Marvin Newell, Executive Director of CrossGlobal Link. I'm thrilled he has agreed to continue on with Missio Nexus as Senior Vice President."

In looking to the future Moore said, "The Great Commission is too big for any one organization to do it alone, and it's too important for us not to try to do it together. We invite you to join us on this journey as we explore the possibilities God is opening before us for shared learning, collaborative action and increased effectiveness through Missio Nexus."

**For more information, go to [www.MissioNexus.org](http://www.MissioNexus.org).**

The logo for Missio Nexus features a stylized graphic of two curved lines arching over the text "MISSIO NEXUS".

*Empowering the Great Commission Community of North America*



# AS FOR ME & MY HOUSE

## The **Family** in the Purposes of God

T. AND B. LEWIS

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**I**n Islamabad recently, a university lecturer spoke on the factors that make a country or culture prone to progress or poverty. He said “I am not here to tell you how to succeed, because it is not important that you succeed by yourself. What is important is that your families and communities... are healthy and strong and have all their needs met. What I am telling you today is not just for you but for your whole family.” The students began to clap, slowly at first, then rising steadily to a standing ovation. The head of the department later said, “I have never seen the students even clap for a speaker before, much less clap like that! What you said has touched our hearts.”

The family is the most widespread and enduring structure of human society. Everywhere people have families, some fairly healthy, some disastrous—the greatest source of joy for some and the greatest source of pain for others. Almost always they are a mixture of the two. The Chinese say “Five generations under one roof, heaven on earth.” But how many people think like that anymore? Some might even say it’s “hell on earth.”

*T. and B. Lewis, along with three of their children and all of their grandchildren, live and work in South Asia, seeking to bring to families the blessing promised to Abraham. You may contact the author at [tlws03@gmail.com](mailto:tlws03@gmail.com).*

The Bible is our greatest source of revelation, but we often look only at one piece, a passage here or there, missing the forest for the trees. We cannot do the will of the Father without understanding what that will is. To fulfill the covenant God made with His people, we must seek to understand better what the covenant is—a covenant made with families and for families. The Bible is a history of God choosing godly families to carry out His purposes on our planet.

### **How God’s Kingdom Was to Be Established on Earth**

In Genesis 1 we see that God created Adam and Eve so that, through relationship with Him and on His behalf, they and their descendants would become the godly caretakers of all life on earth. God’s kingdom, or reign, over the earth was to be exercised through Adam’s family.

Satan launched an immediate assault on God’s plan (Genesis 3), attacking man’s relationship with God, and then attacking Adam’s family. Life is war, and the family is the epicenter of that war! Satan continually wars against God and His purposes, seeking to curse and destroy all the families of the earth—including yours, mine, and those around us.

In Genesis 6 and 7, as the living things on earth became increasingly violent, God decided to destroy mankind and all air-breathing creatures from the earth. To accomplish this, God called and rescued one godly family to carry on His plan. In Genesis 8:18-19, not only Noah's family came safely out of the ark, but "every beast, every creeping thing, and every bird, everything that moves upon the face of the earth, went out *by families* from the ark."

Then God made Noah's family a promise that He would never again destroy mankind and the animals, repeating again the command He gave to Adam to be fruitful and multiply and spread his family over the earth to rule it as God's caretakers.

*Don't miss the fact that God had not changed His original plan to use a godly family to establish his dominion, or His kingdom, on the earth. In spite of his best efforts, Satan had not succeeded in deterring God from His original plan.*

As the story unfolds, we see God keeping track of all the families of the earth. Even after the tower of Babel, God keeps track by name of heads of households, and they are listed according to "their clans and languages, in their territories and nations" (Genesis 10:20, NIV). Does God still know the names of all the heads of households on our planet and the territories where they live? We suggest He does.

In Genesis 12, God made a special covenant with Abram and his whole family. After retracing the family of Noah to the birth of Abram, Genesis 12:3 records that God says to Abram, "I will bless those who bless you ... and in you *all the families* of the earth shall be blessed."

So, who did God choose to bring His blessing to the world? Not an agency, not an organization, but a *family*. And who did God say would receive this blessing? Not individuals, not countries or even languages but *families*—all the other families listed in Genesis 10 and 11—all the families of the earth.

So the family structure is the bearer of God's blessing, and also the receiver of God's blessing. God blesses families who are willing to be obedient to Him, and He expects us as families to fulfill the promise He made to Abraham by blessing the other families of the earth. God's covenant with families is also a commission—to extend that blessing to other families.

*The Family is the Basic Social Unit of God's Redemptive and Rulership Purposes in the World.*

*The Family is also the Receptor Unit of God's Redemption and Rule!*

But what does God mean by "families"? God was not referring to just Abraham, his wife and son. When Abram left "as God had told him," he took with him his entire household—all those for whom he was responsible, including his orphaned nephew. In Egypt, he added to his household many more people as servants. It was such a large group that when they returned from Egypt, Abram had to split from Lot to have enough pasture land for all their flocks. Later, when Abram rescued Lot, he brought more than 300 fighting men from his own household. There were almost certainly 1,000 people in Abram's household.

Was this huge household included in God's covenant and blessing? When God marked His covenant with Abraham, all the males in his vast household were circumcised. Genesis 17:15-21 says that God's blessing would

BUT WHAT DOES GOD MEAN BY "FAMILIES"? GOD WAS NOT REFERRING TO JUST ABRAHAM, HIS WIFE AND SON. WHEN ABRAM LEFT "AS GOD HAD TOLD HIM," HE TOOK WITH HIM HIS ENTIRE HOUSEHOLD—ALL THOSE FOR WHOM HE WAS RESPONSIBLE, INCLUDING HIS ORPHANED NEPHEW

rest on Ishmael and his descendants, even though His everlasting covenant with Abraham would be through Isaac. Though the covenant promise (to bless all the families of the earth) was passed down through some, God's blessing was on the whole household.

We can use the biblical term *oikos* to mean this whole household, which is essentially a community with a family at its core. When committed spiritual, economic, and social relationships develop around an extended family, all these people together constitute the *oikos*. In the Bible we see that the family household or *oikos* is the basic building block of God's kingdom on earth.

God's calling on Abraham's family was not only wide, including all of his household in that generation, it was also long. The covenant was repeated to successive generations—to Abraham's son Isaac and his grandson Jacob. In Genesis 28:14, God says to Jacob "in you and your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed.... I am with you and will keep you wherever you go ... for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."

Does this "I am with you wherever you may go" promise sound familiar? It should, because Jesus reiterated it when He told his disciples to complete the commission that God had given to Abraham. Jesus extends to us the covenant God made with Abraham. "It is those of faith who

are the sons of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, 'In you shall all the nations be blessed.' So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham.... If you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise" (Galatians 3:7-9, 29).

So what has God promised us as Abraham's descendants? He has promised that all families on earth will be blessed through us. We can confidently spread the blessing of the gospel to all families because God has already promised He will do that through us.

### How the Apostles Spread Abraham's Blessing

For many years we have been studying the way the gospel is shared in the book of Acts. However, only recently did we notice that in Acts the apostles consistently preach the gospel as God's fulfillment of His promise to the whole family, community or people group. They never say, "Jesus came to save you" (singular); it is always about all of them.

For example, at Pentecost, when Peter preached to Jews from many countries, he pointed out that "the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off—everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself" (Acts 2:39). This is a family message, an "ends of the earth" message. This good news is a message of God's blessing coming to your whole family, or *oikos*, wherever they are on the planet.

In Acts, the Good News for the Jews was that Jesus came to fulfill the promises of God to bring salvation to all the descendants of Israel. Peter said to the Jews in the temple, "You are sons of the prophets and of the covenant God made with your *fathers*." He said to Abraham, "And in your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed" (Acts 3:25). Here Peter was making clear that this good news was not only for their whole family, but through their family for all the other families on earth as well. God's promise was both a covenant and a commission.

How do the apostles share this good news with Gentile families? The first time Peter preached to a Gentile

household, he exclaimed to Cornelius's relatives and friends: "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts from every nation [every ethnic group or family line] the one who fears him and does what is right" (Acts 10:34-36, NIV). But as Peter continued, he said, "God sent [this message] to the people of Israel." Before he had even finished this qualifier, the Holy Spirit fell on Cornelius's *oikos* (household), completely surprising Peter and the Jews with him. Perhaps they thought God would only accept this Gentile family when

they became Jews; Peter was still preaching the gospel as a message from God to the Jewish people group. They were just beginning to comprehend that a Gentile

family could also receive the blessing of Abraham and become his spiritual descendants through faith alone.

Soon the apostles began to understand that this message of the blessing of God, this restoration of our relationship with God through Christ, is a blessing for *all the families* of the earth, not just the Jews. When speaking to Gentiles, the apostles did not turn the message into one

of individual salvation. The apostles continued to preach salvation to the whole people group or whole family.

So when Paul preached in Athens (Acts 17), he emphasized several things: we all come from one man, God made every family line or people group and knows when and where they live, and we are all God's offspring (quoting one of their own poets).

Paul understood and made

clear that this message is for all families everywhere; God is calling all people groups everywhere to repent of their ignorance.

To our embarrassment, we cannot remember ever presenting the gospel in this way. We have shared the gospel with whole families before, but we have not said, "This is a message of blessing and hope and reconciliation for your whole extended family. God has done something amazing through Jesus Christ that will bring a blessing to your whole family and to your whole people group. All of you can be saved!"

How could we have overlooked this key aspect of the way the gospel message is presented in the New Testament?

THIS GOOD NEWS IS A MESSAGE OF GOD'S BLESSING COMING TO YOUR WHOLE FAMILY, OR "OIKOS," WHEREVER THEY ARE ON THE PLANET.



"Through you all the families on earth shall be blessed."



## We Have Failed to Bring the Gospel Blessing to Families

We must acknowledge that in recent centuries, Protestant missionaries have not always brought the gospel as a blessing to families of the earth. Rather, our well-intentioned zeal to tell individuals about Christ and call them to commitment has often resulted in tearing families apart. We need to re-think all our strategies and missiologies in terms of the covenant God made with Abraham and take a new “Hippocratic” oath: First, do no harm ... to families.

Perhaps once we learn how to implant the gospel in families and peoples in such a way that they receive it as truly good news for them all, we will see the news of the Kingdom spread from family to family and peoples to peoples. “And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations [families], and then the end will come” (Matthew 24:14).

Until we fully realize and appropriate what it means that our families become both recipients and bearers of God’s blessing, we cannot fully grasp what it looks like to carry this blessing to other whole families.

## What Does That Mean for My Family?

We want to emphasize these two points:

1. Through your commitment to Jesus, *God is blessing your whole family*—your parents, your siblings and cousins, even your friends, and your children and grandchildren through endless generations.
2. The gospel message includes God’s intention *to make this same blessing available to all families everywhere*—to extended households, clans and people groups.

You may be thinking, “You don’t know *my* family. It’s a disaster. God could not possibly use us!” But God consistently chooses to work with families with significant problems—like Abraham and Sarah (who doubted God and fathered Ishmael), or Isaac (who picked up his dad’s fear and sin and lied again to Abimelech).

Not only does God take seriously his commitment to bless and use our families, God also takes seriously the commitments of heads of households to Him. Abraham made a decision on behalf of his whole household and all

of his descendants. Just before Joshua died, he reviewed the whole history of the family of Abraham and the covenant that God had made with them. He challenged the families of the tribes of Israel to choose to follow God, making a declaration for his whole household, saying, “But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord” (Joshua 24:14-22).

Similarly, when God was pleased with David’s commitment to Him, He announced that the Messiah would come from David’s descendants. God’s promise to David remained secure, even when David’s descendants turned away from God, did what was evil, and lost the right to rule.

The declarations and commitments that heads of households make have spiritual consequences—a binding effect beyond their immediate sphere of influence, both horizontally (with their current extended family), and vertically (on future generations).

In the New Testament, we see similar power of heads of households to say “as for me and my house.” You, too, can make decisions that are powerful for your household.

What if only a wife or other household member who is not in authority over the family becomes a believer? Does the blessing in that case extend to the whole family or not? Paul indicates that it does: “If any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he consents to live with her, she should not divorce him. For the unbelieving husband is made holy

because of his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy because of her husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy” (1 Corinthians 7:13-15). Paul does not mean that all are saved by the faith of one believer in the family (see verse 16), but he does say that they are now holy, sanctified or set apart for God in a special way. *Because of the faith of the believing member of the family, a special blessing has come on them all.*

Households that come into a covenantal relationship with God through these types of decisions become partakers of God’s blessing to the families of the earth. They become part of the family of God through adoption by the Spirit, and part of Abraham’s descendants and his covenant. So what does this mean? It means that a believer’s family is actually part of Abraham’s family that



**When God chose to destroy the wickedness and violence on the earth, he chose a righteous man, Noah, and his family to start over. He also chose one animal “family” from every species.**

is bringing the fulfillment of God's promise to other families of the earth. It means that God is going with you, just as Jesus said: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations.... And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20).

What about single people? While they may not have married into a family, they still come from a family that God will bless because of their faith. And God is faithful to bless others through single people as well. Joseph, in spite of being treated very poorly by his own family, remained faithful to the calling and character of God. Surely no patriarch brought God's tangible blessing to more families, including his own, than Joseph.

Most of us have been taught that through Jesus, we are now adopted as individuals into a new family, the family of God. This is true (Galatians 4:4-5), and can be a special comfort for those from difficult families. However, it

is also true that through our commitment to Christ, the blessing of God comes upon our own families, even those non-believers, as it did on the whole family of Abraham.

Do not underestimate the willingness and power of God to bless your whole family because of the commitment you have made to Him through Christ. "For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off" (Acts 2:39). But remember, the point of that blessing is for your family to become a blessing to the families of the earth, just as Abraham took his whole household to a far-off place where God wanted to extend His blessing and His kingdom. 🌐

*All Scripture references are from the English Standard Version except where noted as being from the New International Version (NIV).*

## GLOBAL MAPPING INTERNATIONAL LOSES ITS LEADER

On January 11, GMI president and CEO Michael G. O'Rear suffered a sudden heart attack. After several days in intensive care, surrounded by family and friends, Mike died the morning of January 14th of complications. He was 57.

"Mike's death is a tragic loss for all of us who considered him a close friend as well as a loss for GMI, the mission community in Colorado Springs, the U.S. and the entire world," said GMI board chair Jane Overstreet.

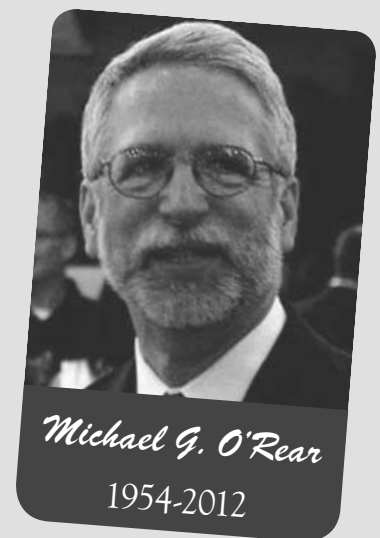
Mike was married to Laura, his partner in life and in ministry for 28 years. She served alongside him at GMI. They have four adult children, one grandson and a daughter-in-law expecting triplets later this year.

Mike was born in Andalusia, Alabama, in 1954. He attended Montana Institute of the Bible and Wheaton College, where he earned an MA in Communications in 1981. He joined the staff of the U.S. Center for World Mission in Pasadena, California, in 1983 and was introduced to the work of GMI on that campus. Mike led GMI since 1991, when he took the reins from GMI's founder, Bob Waymire.

Mike set the tone and direction for GMI's contributions to the evangelical mission community, including mapping, publishing, research services and information technology. He was largely responsible for defining and implementing GMI's key values of excellence in research and partnership with all evangelical mission leaders, especially those in the Global South.

"Mike gave selflessly to create an environment where we could do research, mapping, and publishing work without worrying about a vast array of funding and administrative details," said longtime friend Bill Dickson, Acting CEO of GMI. "He came to GMI as a researcher, hoping to do the work himself, but ultimately found he could have more effect for the Kingdom by enabling others all around the world to do the work he so deeply believed in."

*Memorial gifts will benefit the global ministry of GMI and can be sent to GMI, PO Box 63719, Colorado Springs, CO 80962.*





# Multigenerational **Family** Communities

DICK SCOGGINS

## **"Houston, we have a problem..."**

**T**hat phrase came to mind when I was teaching a European group of young adults in Amsterdam in 2002 on planting house churches. The problem was that the word "church" was just a total turn-off to this young generation. So I suggested that we look for other words to capture the essence of the Jesus communities in which nurture and transformation were normal as well as discovering and developing in one's calling. I threw out a phrase that I was experimenting with in my small communities in England and very much liked: "Jesus families."

A woman in her mid-20s shook her head and blurted out, "Too much pain." I noticed the nodding of many others in the room. I realized that the problem was much bigger than I thought: I had thought we merely needed to find a usable term for these types

of communities, but instead found out that the very foundation of the kingdom of God—the family—was so damaged that the concept was unusable. So how do we build the kingdom of God (Kingdom Communities) when the foundation is so damaged?

I grew up in a non-Christian home which fell apart in the late 1960s when I was in my first year at university and when such family failure placed a black mark by your name ("Don't marry someone from a divorced background—they will just get divorced!"). The next six years of my life were shaped by that brokenness and despair until I finally found Jesus, who began a journey of healing for me. This included getting reconciled to both my parents and working within the family I had, not an ideal family. God, by His grace, brought that healing through the woman who became my wife as well as through a mentor, an older Christian man who was my father's age. Thirty-seven years later I continue on that road of healing and wholeness, still married to the wonderful woman that God gave me, and linked by family to my spiritual father through my son, who married his granddaughter.

I realized from that wake-up call in Holland in 2002 that I had been on a special journey helped by others which led to my healing and having a legacy of a healthy family to pass on to my children. I really did not choose the journey, but God placed special people in my life, and I grabbed hold of them like a drowning man.

It was this experience in Amsterdam that opened my eyes to just how badly the Western world has been



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***Effective Church Planting Team and Transformational Ministry**. His books and Manuals are available on his website, [www.dickscoggins.com](http://www.dickscoggins.com) and have been translated into several languages. He moved to Los Angeles in 2010 and has started work with a new effort called "The Guild" which will focus on training up a new generation of apostles. You may contact him at: [dick@dickscoggins.com](mailto:dick@dickscoggins.com)*

fragmented. I had been living in England for eight years at that point after coming to faith in New England in the mid-1970s.

The city in England where my wife and I lived had an excellent evangelical church, and my wife and I often went there. But I realized that it was a church which embraced the Good News for the 1970s and the people there reflected that. They were all my age! My wife and I very much liked the church, but it was pretty clear that they did not have good news relevant to the younger generation since few of that generation came. As I traveled more widely, I realized that in Europe and America most churches had “marketed” themselves to a specific audience. Those that attended did so because the church was meeting their needs. But this was usually to a pretty narrow audience (homogeneous unit principle!).

My mind went back to a book I had read some years before by Chuck Colson, *Against the Night*. In that book he refers to those he calls the “new barbarians.” In this book Colson foresees these new barbarians, who embrace a radical individualism governed by selfish interest, as a grievous danger to Western culture. When I read this book, I felt it was a bit of an exaggeration and yet too insightful to ignore. But my 16 years in Europe convinced me that this book was indeed prophetic, and Colson was not overstating the danger. It was in this flash of insight that I got in Amsterdam and the reflections after it that crystallized the next era of life for me that I embraced by moving to California from England in 2010.

Perhaps because of my broken family, God’s familial nature and plan spoke strongly to me as I began to follow Him in the 1970s. I was captivated by the Genesis story where God pursues mankind through families, from Adam and Eve, through Noah, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and my favorite, Joseph. I was impressed early by God’s declaration to Abraham that “in you all the families of the earth will be blessed” (Genesis 12:3, NASB). Through the rest of the Old Testament and into the New, God pursues mankind through families. In Ephesians 3:15 Paul speaks of God as the Father of Mankind, and “through Him every family in heaven and earth derives its name” (food for more thought on the heavenly families!). Family is not some construct that man designed. Earthly family reflects the very image of God’s heavenly family!

When we began starting house churches in Rhode Island in the late 1980s, it was for the purpose of learning how

to start underground churches in closed countries. After a few years of doing this, we felt we had learned what we needed, so we suggested to the house churches that they combine and become a large church. After all, America loves big! But at the meeting, several of the younger leaders, recent college graduates, said that in the house church they were able to watch parents interact with their kids and with other parents—it was church meeting like a family. They felt this was so valuable that, even with all its liabilities, they wanted to keep the church in the homes.

As we started house fellowships in England, myself and another older man, Ted, became the “grandfathers” to the group of 20-somethings. We found that “grandfathers” are able to bring healing and reconciliation to the

brokenness between fathers and their children, so that the next generation can rebuild the foundations and start healthy families. The kingdom of God does not have to be built on broken foundations.

...THE VERY FOUNDATION OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD—THE FAMILY—WAS SO DAMAGED THAT THE CONCEPT WAS UNUSABLE. SO HOW DO WE BUILD THE KINGDOM OF GOD (KINGDOM COMMUNITIES) WHEN THE FOUNDATION IS SO DAMAGED?

Ted continues this ministry to young men and women in England today.

After my experience in Amsterdam, I became convinced that if there is any hope for Western culture, it will only be as we heed the prophetic warnings of Chuck Colson, to turn away from self-centered, radical individualism, and focus intentionally on rebuilding the family unit in the West, where radical individualism is countered by multi-generational families which include grandfathers and grandmothers who are willing to lay down their lives for their kids and their legacy, and where the 55+-year olds stop focusing on themselves, but on their legacy of family which they will leave behind.

Jesus said “If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them” (John 13:17). So this past year my wife and I packed up our bags and moved from England to Southern California, where we have never lived, to join both our children in their families and their four children to learn how to build the Kingdom through multi-generational family. The early part of the journey has proved to be difficult, with one of the blessings being that my daughter and her husband have moved in with us with their first child (our fourth grandchild).

Building multi-generational family groups is not easy as you can’t escape your mistakes in your own parenting with your adult children and you can’t control how your kids interact with each other, or raise their children! Being a grandparent is not at all like being a parent. But



there are things you can do, like loving your grandchildren without needing to discipline them! The parents remain the parents. But the grandparents can give both the grandchildren and your adult kids a perspective that can only come with age—an ability to look back on previous generations and glean the good from them as well as look to the future and try to give perspective from a God with whom “one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day” (2 Peter 3:8).

The kingdom of God was never about individual salvation. The only time God said “it is *not* good” is when he created Adam without Eve. His evaluation? “It is not good for man to be alone” (Genesis 2:18). And so, God created Eve and they became a family. And even after they had fallen, God continued to pursue them: “Where are you?” He cries as He visits the garden after they had eaten of the fruit. God is not an individual, but a communal being, and he created man to be a communal being. God is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—a God of multi-generational families.

And the Old Testament is a story of God’s pursuit of man down through the generations of family. Even after the first siblings, Cain and Abel, have a breakdown of relationship so severe that Cain kills his brother, God never gives up on pursuing man through the unit He created them in—the family. We call Him “Father” and Jesus “Son” because family was not dreamed up by mankind, but was the pattern of God Himself, and we created in His image—the familial God.

In the West we need to acknowledge the brokenness that our selfishness and self-centeredness has brought, repent and turn to God asking Him to restore the years the locusts have eaten and restore our families to ones that

reflect our familial God! God will use many ways of doing this, so I am not suggesting that our pattern is to be copied by anyone else. But we cannot allow our culture to consume itself. We need to proclaim a Kingdom that is Good News and brings healing—one that reflects the invisible God.

So I have begun this new leg of the journey by shifting my life to the west coast of the USA, where I need to build into my children’s lives and their world. God has provided new young men here that I can “grandfather” just as I was doing in England. I trust that these will be perhaps the most fruitful years of my life as God allows me to pour my life into younger men. And I am not the

only one. I have been in dialogue with others who are embarking on a similar journey. One of my close grandfather-type friends, with whom I have talked at length on this topic over the last four years, has relocated to Asia and his extended family has joined him. Like

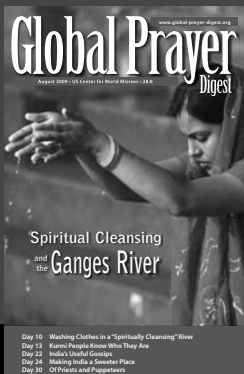
me, he has found it difficult and with many challenges. But the kingdom of God will always be countered by forces of darkness. God has called some of us to follow this path to see where it will lead.

Matthew 7:24-28: “Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock.

And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock.

Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell—and great was its fall.”

BUILDING MULTI-GENERATIONAL FAMILY GROUPS IS NOT EASY AS YOU CAN’T ESCAPE YOUR MISTAKES IN YOUR OWN PARENTING WITH YOUR ADULT CHILDREN AND YOU CAN’T CONTROL HOW YOUR KIDS INTERACT WITH EACH OTHER, OR RAISE THEIR CHILDREN!



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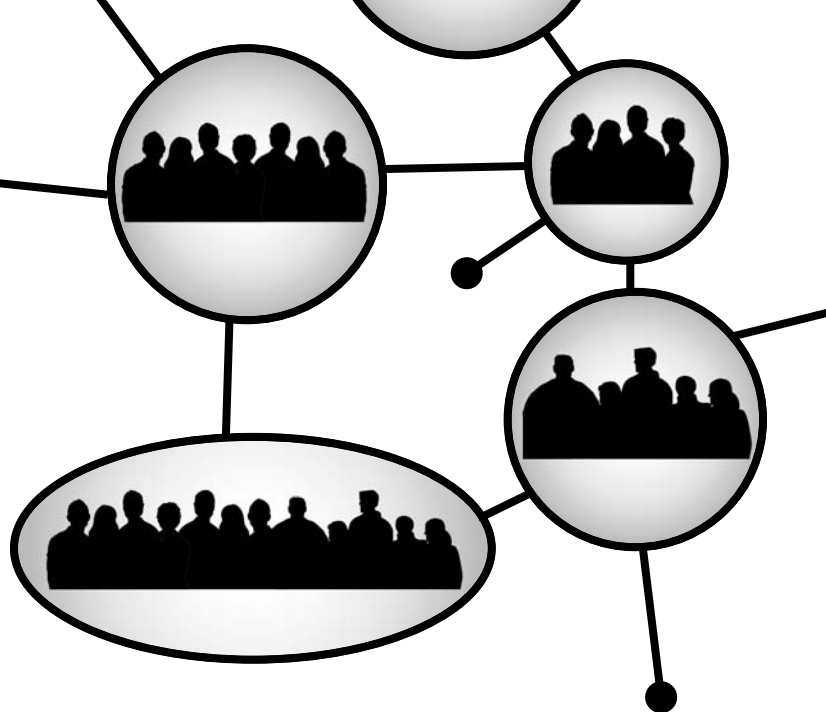
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# Evangelizing Whole Families: The Value of Families in the 21st Century



THIS ARTICLE IS EXCERPTED FROM THE FIRST CHAPTER OF THE BOOK, *FAITH AND FAMILY IN ASIA*, PUBLISHED BY WILLIAM CAREY LIBRARY AND USED BY PERMISSION.

ALEX SMITH

## Trends Renewing Emphasis on Family in the Twenty-First Century

Down through history until the Industrial Revolution of the 1800s, the major pattern of families was the extended family, more than the nuclear family. The clan, tribe and extended networks of family webs were generally self-sufficient, supporting the members through hunting, gathering, gardening and animal husbandry. Everything they needed for food, clothing and housing, they produced together. They married, raised their own children, cared for the aged generations and buried their own dead.

By the mid-1800s the Industrial Age had arisen. Manufacturing cities became the major population and work centers, drawing the masses from the rural and tribal areas. As families left their villages and kin, these nuclear units became free of the controls and restraints of the village and ancestors. They also became exposed to and often involved in social evils that they would never have considered participating in back in their traditional familial settings. As Communism dawned, Karl Marx saw the family as an antiquated structure and predicted

it, along with capitalism, would vanish. He was wrong. His experiment in encouraging casual dating and easy divorce, as well as the later “free love” movement went awry. In fact, after the Revolution of 1917 Joseph Stalin stopped those kinds of practices and declared the family to be “the basic cell in society.”

Everything, including economics, styles of living, and means of employment, changed in this new world of industrialization.

Farming families especially, were drastically affected. In 1900 ninety percent of Americans lived off the land by farming. They also lived on their own land. In 2000 less than ten percent in the USA were farmers. Over time this mobility during the Industrial Age caused a break up of many extended families, as nuclear families became the dominant economic earning units in the cities of industry. Up until the early twentieth century, grandparents lived in, with or next to the members of their extended families. In the latter half of the twentieth century that pattern increasingly changed to isolated, independent units of living, often hundreds of miles apart. By then most extended families did not live together or even nearby.

However, in recent decades that is now changing. The pendulum is swinging back slowly. In November 2008, Britt Hume reported on television’s Fox News that four thousand households in America now have three or more generations living together. In *Grandparents under the same roof*, Hume noted that the decade between 1990 and 2000 experienced thirty-eight percent increase of this



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phenomenon of three or more generations living together. This trend of multi-generational domicile indicates a new feeling and sense of people needing family.

Significantly in “The Family: At Home in a Heartless World,” Rowland Croucher affirms the extended family model. He writes that “no (nuclear) family can provide for all the needs of its members. I believe it’s time to re-tribalize. The extended rather than the nuclear family is the best model (and always has been). As we live in ‘community’ incarnational love is experienced again and again; we are loved in spite of our faults and failings and even our sinfulness” (1994:3).

### Historical Change of Approach Following the Reformation

Another kind of change seems to have become detrimental to the extension of the church and its pioneer outreach in virgin missions following the 1700s. Prior to the Reformation, much pioneer church growth occurred, mostly from in-gatherings of whole families, clans, tribes and peoples. Historians like Kenneth Latourette (1953:100) and Stephen Neill (1973:31-77), as well as missiologists such as Bishop Waskom Pickett (1933:37f) and Donald McGavran (1970:173f; 296f), affirmed that from the earliest centuries of the church, family, group and people movements were foundational to the extension of the church. Stephen Neill’s chapter, “Conquest of the Roman World, A.D. 100-500,” indicated that the key to the extension of the church was the movement of the gospel from people to people and country to country until the whole of the Roman Empire was reached. Writing about Asia Minor to Emperor Trajan about 112, Younger Pliny “was dismayed by the rapid spread of the Christian faith in the rather remote and mainly rural province of Bithynia in northwest Asia Minor.” Pliny made note of “many in every period of life, on every level of society, of both sexes... in towns and villages and scattered throughout the countryside.” The “evidence of Pliny is unimpeachable; we seem to encounter here one of the first mass movements in Christian history” (1964:31). Here was an obvious major family movement. Near the end of the fourth century in the time of John Chrysostom, the population of Antioch was not less than a half a million and “half the inhabitants at that time were Christian” (1964:32). Neill reported that “The church of North Africa was a church of bishops. Every town, almost every village, had its bishop,” in contrast to the rest of Christendom, where “bishops were located only in the cities,” and were few in number (1964:38).

Armenia became another Christian kingdom, reached through witness from Cappadocia. Tradition says that when Gregory the evangelist and wonder worker became Bishop of Cappadocia “there were only seventeen

Christians in the city, but when he died thirty years later there were only seventeen pagans” (Neill 1964:53-54). Armenia became the first known case in which the conversion of the king was the first step in the conversion of the whole country. King Tiridates accepted Christianity as the religion of his state. The families of aristocracy and common people followed en masse. A second factor was the association of the church with the language and thought of the people, for Gregory preached in Armenian. The third element came as the New Testament was translated into that language in 410 (1964:54).

Another case occurred through Patrick who returned to Ireland in 432 staying until his death in 461. At the time of his return “Ireland was almost wholly, if not entirely, a heathen country.” By “the time of his death, Ireland was largely a Christian country” (1964: 56). In 493 Clovis, King of the Franks married a Christian princess of Burgundy. She did her best to convert him. Later, in a crisis, “Clovis swore that, if victory was his, he would become the servant of the God of the Christians. He kept his vow; on Christmas day 496, he was baptized with three thousand of his warriors.” (1964:58). In 596 Pope Gregory the Great sent Augustine to Canterbury, England. King Ethelbert of Kent had married Bertha, a Christian princess from Gaul. Augustine’s preaching converted the king and by the end of the year Augustine baptized 10,000 Saxons (1964:67-68). Among the Franks and other Europeans, Boniface had a particular practice or habit, “When a group, often under the influence of a chieftain or ruler, had decided to become Christian, it was customary to baptize” them “without any long delay” (1964:77). Thus for more than a thousand years the church expanded across nations through massive family movements.

The Reformation of the 1500s faced a different situation than the early pioneer settings which were mostly among unevangelized people groups. Primarily, the reformers were dealing with largely nominal, already churchied communities. Throughout the Dark Ages moral corruption and unbiblical practices had saturated the church, resulting in spiritual weakness and large-scale nominalism. Under these conditions the primary focus of the Reformation was *within* the churchied communities across Europe. In these Christianized populations the call for renewal of personal faith and individual salvation was rightly warranted. In that context a change of emphasis to the individual was correct. The Reformation thereby brought renewal and revitalization to the existing church. Faced with the consequent Roman Catholic Counter Reformation, much energy of the Reformers, at least until 1648, was spent in “fighting for their lives” (Neill 1964:220).

As Ralph Winter pointed out, the Reformers did not organize new mission structures comparable to the

former missionary training monasteries. In fact, they discarded the monastic system (1999:226f). It was likely that Christian meditation, frequently nurtured in the monasteries, also ceased to be practiced around that period. This was one weakness of the new movement. Thus the Reformation did not spawn major missions across cultures to new unevangelized populations for more than another two hundred years (Pierson 1999:263). There was little thought of missions (Neill 1964:220-226). During the seventeenth century a few exceptions arose in Europe, notably the Moravian mission movement, which started in 1732. Consequently when William Carey and others launched the Protestant modern mission era in the late 1700s, the Reformers' pattern of converting "individual by individual" was carried over as a dominant evangelistic and mission strategy. Unfortunately this renewed pioneer outreach to frontier unreached peoples did not generally return to the earlier biblical model and historical pattern of evangelizing whole families, tribes and ethnē. At the restarting of the major mission enterprise, a definite change in methodology seems to have occurred.

In his 1970 article R. Pierce Beaver succinctly noted this changed emphasis of mission strategy following the Reformation. The aim of seventeenth-century Protestant missions of the Dutch, British and Americans was that peoples like the East Indians and Native Americans "would be converted, *individually* receive salvation, and be gathered into churches." In reaching the Native Americans at Martha's Vineyard, Thomas Mayhew followed "a slow, individual, personal approach." Beaver summarized nineteenth-century missionary strategy of the Protestants as being "aimed at individual conversions, church planting, and social transformation" through actions of "evangelism, education and medicine" (1999:244, 249).

When did the family approach change to an individual one? At the point when Reformation mission to unevangelized nations was restarted almost three hundred years later. The Reformers' theology and practice in reaching out to new unreached peoples did not return to the earlier biblical family approach. Instead a theological shift to individual evangelism, individual salvation, and calling to individual personal holiness were emphasized. The move from biblical theology to systematic theology helped advocate this ignoring of family evangelistic approaches too. Calvin's *Institutes*, as well as synthesized or summarized creeds, or shortened theological tenets, like the *Westminster Catechism*, tended to focus on the individual growth and not on evangelizing and discipling whole families and their entire extended families.

Nevertheless, God's Spirit often overruled in His harvest and spontaneously gathered some whole family networks, tribes and people groups into the church, especially in the non-Western world. One wonders how

much greater the ingathering might have been and how much speedier evangelization accomplished had family and group evangelistic approaches been the intentional method of modern missions, particularly among Hindus, Buddhists and Muslims.

Modern illustrations of family and people movements include the Mizo, Naga, Karens, Toba Bataks, Karo Bataks and many others who transferred their allegiance to Christ as family after family came into the church fold, until a large majority had become Christians.

## **Myths and Objections on the Family Group Approach**

Myths and ignorance concerning individual evangelism or conversion abound. Some sound quite plausible, but deeper scrutiny often explodes the myths. The *first* objection is "salvation is only an individual thing, not a family thing." Individuals can and do convert but, among resistant populations, usually will lack the solidarity of the group's backing, often essential for survival and added growth. Individual converts can soon become social misfits, or fringe people in society. Where a movement of families or multi-individual, mutually interdependent decisions of small or large unified groups occur, stability is more likely than that of several scattered individuals. Strong individuals sometimes can be innovators and catalysts to reach their own family networks, if motivated to do so.

A *second* retort says "Students are so receptive we should go for them now and not worry about their families." Asian youth in universities have some freedom to choose. But what about after they graduate? Who chooses their wives, work and jobs? Mostly the parents and elders come back into force after graduation. Even student churches do not remain student oriented forever.

*Thirdly*, "Youth work and children's ministry are superior because they build for the future generation. The old generation is 'dyed in the wool,' of the old way, and can't change." Again in Asia the family structure and its control indicate that most children have no power of decision or control of action until adulthood. So while we should not neglect the youth we are wiser to reach them along with their families.

*Fourth*, some advocate "Children and youth are more important because they are easier to reach and mold. Save a child and you save a life. Save a broken adult or family and you have no end of troubles to solve." Generally, conversion and growth in family groups provide the best stability, normality and strength for youth. They should be cherished and reached, but this is best done in the context of the whole family. Taking deliberate steps to reach out to the families of interested scholars and



children is a vital strategy. The worst sin of evangelism is to reach a child, but neglect his or her family, which is their nurturing ground and controlling entity.

*Fifth*, some say “It is better to have a few individuals who are genuine Christians than whole families that need so much work that you never are sure that they will become strong.” There is no guarantee that “our” isolated individual believers are holier, stronger or more stable than those in family groups.

*Sixth*, “Separating individual believers from their unsaved families is biblical, better and builds them stronger in face of opposition.” They are to “come out from among them and be separate.” This misinterprets the Word. History proves these views are wrong, on all counts. Co-dependent “rice” Christians usually turn out not to be the strongest disciples.

A *seventh* objection is, “Only individuals can have a relationship with Christ, not so for the diverse family.” This is true for “personal” salvation generally, but here we are talking about the best strategy for producing long-term stability against often-fierce opposition, particularly among resistant peoples. The family comprised of a majority of new believers becomes its own nurturing force, closing ranks on the outside powers of opposition. Families throughout Scripture have been kept by the grace covering of God.

*Eighth*, “Group and family movements are shallow, weak and unstable.” This can be true if post-decision nurture and teaching are absent. Family movements require suitable post-conversion evaluation with sustained teaching, training, discipleship and consolidation. But in the end the strength and solidarity of the Christian family stands tall. The strong Christian family can be a powerful model and tool for extending the gospel throughout the extended family and local community. History proves this.

*Ninth*, is a sad commentary, “Winning one by one individually is always the way we did it back home in our churches, so let’s do it in missions too.” The thinking advocate of indigenous methods will question this as a theologically good mission strategy. It has the seeds of proud ethnocentrism and ignorance of social and family structure across cultures.

*Tenth*, “Massive numbers of families coming into the church dilute it and produce nominalism.” Not necessarily so, depending on the prompt nurture and training given. Individual converts can be weak, nominal and just as easily dilute the church. Often they may not have the strength to stand alone against the opposition of the family or village.

An *eleventh* view suggests that “Doing God’s work with a few individuals is better than distributing our ener-

gies among the multitudes or multiple families.” This mentality can produce the small insular ghetto church and favors a fortress mentality, instead of the vision for reaching out to the whole community or people group in self-sacrificing service.

*Twelfth*, some feel “If we do not accept the individual when opportunity to believe arises, they usually miss the salvation boat.” While not advocating the rejecting of individuals, the group approach is one of faith in God and hope for the family by exercising love to the whole interrelated group. Often the “one by one against the tide approach” only shuts the family off from the gospel.

*Lastly*, “Individual salvation through “one on one” is the proven, successful method of some major evangelistic agencies. This form of evangelism is taught in churches, seminaries and Bible colleges.” Unfortunately, it is also passed on to new and old native converts of foreign missions as “the best or only way to do real evangelism.” Maybe changing this approach to “one on a whole family” might be an even better method with stronger and more extensive effect. It would be more culturally appropriate too.

## Concluding Practical Applications and Suggestions

Modern societies face growing dilemmas of enormous moral declension and ethical challenges. These complexities demand that the church return to stress the family in its involvement with local communities, rather than remaining apart in insular isolation. The more the church is involved locally with the families of its surrounding society, the more effective and valued it will become. This conclusion primarily offers advice to Christians; it suggests some vital principles to apply to reaching families; and finally it recommends a key simple model to win families.

First of all, the church must accept responsibility in regards to family groups. Christians might well repent for failures to serve families in their immediate communities. Often the church’s ambassadors have unwittingly contributed to family breakdowns and domestic divisiveness, not only through neglect, but also by their policies and practices in service and evangelism. Their tactics have frequently isolated individual converts from their families, instead of integrating loving ministry to their whole families through the church.

Church workers and missionaries should study and understand the sociological and cultural dynamics of families, the familial structures and their decision-making patterns. Making decisions in Asian families is often not an individual thing, but a family affair. So the church needs to take the whole family into account when anticipating increased and lasting conversion.

Notice that Christ's Great Commission commands us "to make disciples" (plural) not disciple (singular). Neither did Jesus instruct us to do that individually, "one by one." The emphasis is more likely "ethne by ethne," or family group by family group, tribe by tribe and people by people (Matt. 28:18-20). The Apostles obviously understood Jesus' command as from the beginning they won and incorporated whole families into the church. Few isolated individual converts are highlighted in the New Testament. The Apostles then extended the family movements out to reach Romans, Greeks, Gentiles, Goths and so forth. "Family by family" was the primary approach and mostly the usual mode of response for more than a millennium and a half.

Second, here are some vital principles and practical tactics for reaching whole families:

- Change the way we pray, from patterns of just individuals to lifting up whole families, their extended families and their family webs and networks before God.
- Focus outreach ministry and service objectives on specific families as the clear goal or reason for evangelism. This intentional strategy may produce quite surprising results.
- Experiment with creative ways to reach whole families. Test models, methods and strategies to do this. Research the effects of the process and its results. Recycle the best lessons learned.
- Foster building friendly relationships with whole families over time. Effort taken to invest in gaining connections with families does take energy, but is well spent.
- Develop family friendly tools and approaches to families rather than just to individuals. Mass media has tended to major on resources focused on individuals, little on families.
- Teach and encourage new interested seekers to begin sharing the good news with their families and their relatives, even before they themselves become committed believers.
- Allow time for the dissemination of the good news to penetrate and permeate whole family networks, before calling families to commit prematurely. Diffusion helps here.
- Practice patience, persistence, and perseverance in order to see whole families reached, penetrated, won and discipled. Pushing for speedy decisions, pressure to show results back home, and commando approaches are to be resisted rigorously. As Rome was not built in a day, nor are genuine converts or family conversions produced instantly.
- Immediately incorporate family accessions into house churches from the start. Most of the cutting edge extension of the church and its multiplication in Asia are found in tiny fellowships—usually less than fifteen or twenty members, sometimes only five to eight.
- Evaluate results in terms of families won, not just individual converts. Statistics should reflect both categories. The most vital one is the number of new families brought into the Kingdom.

Not only can heads of households start family movements, but sometimes they are started just from one relative's Christian witness to the family also. From there the movement is purposely spread throughout the extended family networks, across natural bridges of relatives and friends. It takes discipline to keep the group in mind.

Normally, time for diffusion of the gospel and its permeation to all members of the family network is required. Clear understanding and acceptance of the gospel may take even up to two and sometime more years. By not withdrawing from normal relationships, interaction and customary events of the family and the local community, Christians' witness can portray genuine faith and commendable ethical living to the society at large.

As family movements occur, it is essential to nurture the movements so that each member of the family affirms personal faith and relationship with Christ. Nurture adds spiritual depth to the members of believing families. Usually family house church fellowships are easily initiated. Unpaid local family leaders can be trained to function in them and to mobilize relatives for more extension into other family networks.🌐

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# One Man With a Passion to Reach His **Family**

## Transforms a People

THE FOLLOWING STORY IS EXCERPTED FROM THE BOOK, *THE FOUNDERS OF THE INDIAN CHURCH* BY DR. DONALD MCGAVRAN PUBLISHED IN 1937, THE TRUE STORY PRESENTED HERE ILLUSTRATES THE POWER OF STAYING WITHIN THE COMMUNITY OF YOUR BIRTH TO REACH YOUR FAMILY. RICK WOOD

**DONALD MCGAVRAN**

### The Story of Ditt

**T**here once was a man named Ditt who lived in the land of the Punjab in India. The Hindus called him an Untouchable. He was short, dark, and lame. He was a laborer in the village and also bought and sold hides. He was in good standing in the Chuhra caste there.

One day Ditt heard about Jesus Christ, the Savior. He heard of how Jesus Christ, the Sinless Incarnation of God, had gone about doing good, had given men wonderful teaching, and had died on the Cross that men might obtain salvation. Ditt said, "I want that kind of Lord, One who loves sinners and saves them from sin and ignorance and teaches them the truth about God. I want a religion in which there is no caste, where we Chuhra will learn that we are men every bit as good as Brahmins and Thakurs."

Ditt set to work at once, before seeing any padre or preacher, to learn about the Christian religion. He visited a nearby Christian, and from him learned the Ten Commands, the Apostles Creed and the Lord's Prayer. He committed them to memory. Then he walked 25 miles to the Mission House in Sialkot and said to the padre there, "I wish to be baptized."



Donald McGavran

The padre said to him, "Stay here in Sialkot for a few months. Attend church. Learn further. Then I will baptize you." But Ditt said, "Sir, I already know all that you require for baptism, I cannot stay. I have my work to do. My family is expecting me to return. Please baptize me now."

The padre examined him again, and finding that Ditt really did know the Commands and the Creed and the Prayer, baptized him. He then said to him, "You are a new Christian. If you go back to your village, people will laugh at you, and persecute you, and put you out of caste. You had better stay here with us. We shall give you a job and you can earn your living here. Bring your wife here and she too will become a Christian."

But Ditt said immediately, "No, Padre Sahib, I must go back to my village. I have not abandoned my people. I still love them. I am not a coward to run away and become a Christian. I did not become a Christian for a job. I have my work. I shall go back and bring all my people to Christ, that they too may be saved."

So the Padre had prayer with him, and asked God to bless Ditt and strengthen him and make him a good Christian, and help him to bring all his people into salvation.

Ditt had five brothers living in Shahbdike with him. They and their families numbered sixty persons. All these people were angry with Ditt when he returned as a Christian. They shouted at him, saying, "You are ruined. You have disgraced us. You are a fool. You cannot eat or

drink with us. You cannot sit in our *panchayat*. You cannot smoke with us.” They abused him and ridiculed him. His wife refused to cook for him or to eat with him. The village landlord refused to give him any work. The money lender said, “Since you are a Christian I will not loan you any more money.”

But Ditt remained firm in his new faith. To his brothers he replied, “I am not ruined. Instead, I have found a Savior who will benefit me and you as well, when you too obey Him.” To his wife he was kindly, and did not abuse her for refusing to cook his food. This surprised his wife very much.” To the landlord he was respectful, more respectful than before, and said, “Sir, I will do your work faithfully and well. What difference does it make to you that I have begun to worship Jesus Christ?” After about a month the landlord gave Ditt a bit of work to do. Ditt did it so well that after that the landlord gave him work regularly. At the end of the year, when the money lender refused to give the Christian any money, the landlord gave him a loan. Thus Ditt remained with his people and refused to consider himself an enemy or an outcast. He said, “What I have will benefit all my people.”

A few days after his baptism, when his wife was scolding him for becoming a Christian, he said, “Listen to these words of God. Are they not wonderful? Why don’t you learn them too?” His wife answered, “I? I cannot learn. I am a woman.” Ditt replied, “Christ gives women power to learn. Repeat these words over together with me and you will learn them.” They repeated the words of the Lord’s Prayer over forty times and Ditt’s wife to her surprise found that she too could say the Lord’s Prayer. Then she listened with great attention to the stories of the great and wonderful works of the Lord Jesus, and of His death on the Cross for sinners. She decided to give her heart to Jesus Christ. Ditt’s daughter too decided to become a Christian and the man and wife living in the next house learned the Lord’s Prayer, the Ten Commands and the Creed with the wife and daughter. They too were soon ready to become Christians. Three months from the date of Ditt’s baptism these four people walked 25 miles to Sialkot and were baptized and then walked back to their village.

Now the whole village was aroused. Five people had become Christians. People asked Ditt, “What did you get for becoming a Christian? Money, legal help, a loan?” Ditt answered them clearly, saying, “Whoever changes his religion for money is a rascal. I work as I did before. I live in my old home. I have received nothing from the Christians but the true religion, a religion in which there is no idol worship, no worship of the Brahmans, and no castes. I now have a Bible which tells us that there are

no high caste and no low caste, but all are equal in the sight of God, and all are brothers here on earth. This is the true religion. I have found the true religion, therefore I have become a Christian.” This testimony greatly impressed his relatives. Four men started to come and learn Christian truth from Ditt and his family. Six months from the date of Ditt’s baptism he took four men to Sialkot for baptism. There were now nine Christians in Shahabdike Village. The padre visited the village now. While the padre was there Ditt was able to convince many others of the truth of the Christian religion. All these Christians continued to live in their village and to do the work they formerly were doing.

Part of Ditt’s work was buying and selling hides. He had to travel around to many villages. Wherever he went he said to the Chuhra, “My friends, we Chuhra must find a way out of our sin and ignorance. Our present religion tells us that we are untouchables. It keeps us ignorant. We have no Savior. The Lord Jesus Christ came to save just such people as we are, save them from sin and from ignorance, and to make it possible for them to live a good life and go to heaven. All Chuhra ought to accept the Lord Jesus Christ.” Chuhra would object, saying, “If we become Christians, we shall lose our relatives.” Ditt would say to them, “Not at all. Look at me. I became a Christian, and while it is true that for a few weeks people were angry with me, first my wife and then my neighbors and relatives have become Christian. Within a few years all of my relatives will be Christians. Because this is the true religion, everyone will become Christian. You become a Christian and others will follow.” Hearing this many Chuhra in many villages started to become Christians. Eleven years after the conversion of Ditt, 500 Chuhra were received in the church. By 1900 over half of the Chuhra in Sialkot District had become Christian and by 1915 all except a few hundred of the Chuhra had become Christians.

Thus Ditt’s example caused 100,000 people to become Christians. He led them out of darkness into light, out of slavery into freedom.

Hearing of the people who were becoming Christian in Sialkot District, other Chuhra in the Punjab became Christians, so that in the 1930s in the Punjab there were 450,000 Christians and the number is growing rapidly year by year. Recently, all the Chuhra of the Sialkot District have started to raise money to build a great church to the memory of Ditt, the man who was used by God to bring salvation to all the Chuhra. His memory is held sacred. 🌐





# Planting Indigenous Churches

## Missionary Money Muzzles Movement

Gene Daniels

**I**magine the following recruiting bulletin for a new mission field:

Today we are seeing a rapidly growing number of new believers among certain unreached people groups. More and more Muslims are coming to Christ, and churches are springing up almost on their own. We are even seeing miracles, signs, and wonders. Come join the fun!

For most of us our first response would be, "Sign me up!"

And that is how the situation was, in formerly-Soviet Central Asia during the 1990s. By the middle of the decade there were movements to Christ among several Muslim unreached people groups. Notice that I used the word "was." Today there are still Muslim-background believers, and a few churches are still growing, but for the most part the promising movements across the region have ground to a standstill. Why?

Some might point to more the new government restrictions which have hit the church in the past ten years. Others would remind us that there is often a low retention rate among Muslim converts to Christ. But since all the young churches in that region have faced the same government pressures and problems, why is it that a handful continue to grow while the majority have plateaued and many even declined?

I'm sure there are many reasons, but the simplest one might be something we don't want to hear. But hear it we should, and perhaps the best way to do that is through the words of a local MBB evangelist who lived through those heady days.

"In 1992, 1993, and even into 1995, there was so much happening here. Everyone was so on fire for Jesus. We would sometimes just get on a bus and ride to whatever village it stopped in. Then we would go to the mosque and start preaching. No one was ever afraid. People were getting saved every week.

But then lots of foreign missionaries started coming and soon they started paying people to do evangelism. Now the people in our churches say, 'Oh I would go and preach at my uncle's village, but I need a sponsor....' Today, no one wants to do anything without a sponsor."

As one who was there, I can say these words ring sadly true. My family and I were some of those who came in response to a revival that was happening among a Muslim unreached people group in the region. I would even go so far as to say that the only reason we did not make the same mistake and start spreading cash around is that we were too poor to do so!

Maybe a lack of money is sometimes a good thing, and there are more important things for missionaries to do than raise money. Perhaps another Central Asian story is in order.

A local MBB pastor went to the appropriate government office to try to register his little house church. To his surprise the woman at the desk was an old friend from back in the Soviet days. After a short catching-up, they started on the paperwork for church registration. Their conversation went something like this:

**Officer:** So Hakim, what is the address of your church building?

**Hakim:** It meets in my house.

**Officer:** OK, but since you are the pastor, where is your office?

**Hakim:** I don't have one.

**Officer:** OK... But how much is your salary and who pays it?

**Hakim:** I don't have a salary.

**Officer:** What?! No salary? How do you live?

**Hakim:** You know my wife and I are school teachers. That is enough for us.

**Officer:** OK. But what about a car, or a travel account, or something that you get for being the pastor of this group?

**Hakim:** I don't get any of those things.

**Officer:** You mean to tell me that you lead this church without any kind of pay? Without any material benefits? That doesn't make sense. Why would you waste your time being the pastor?

**Hakim:** I do it because I believe in Jesus.

**Officer:** You must, because there doesn't seem to be any other reason.

Now that is a powerful witness. We should think long and hard before we rush in and sweep away something like that away with our foreign money. **f**

*Gene Daniels is a church planter with many years of experience in Central Asia and Muslim outreach in general. His name has been changed for security purposes.*

# The **Essential Role** of the **Family**



## in World Evangelization

ROB RIENOW

**T**hese are exciting times for followers of Jesus Christ! The Holy Spirit is moving all over the world bringing people to repentance and faith in our risen and reigning Savior. The Spirit is working in places of abundance and in places of persecution. We rejoice when we hear the news of revivals around the world, and we pray for them to spread. But large numbers of conversions and church plants are only the beginning of the spread of the gospel in a nation. For faith to remain in a land it must be driven not only by Bible-driven churches but also through the multi-generational ministry of the Christian family.

### Europe has Fallen

Five hundred years ago, transformational revivals spread across Europe. Entire nations were reshaped by passionate believers who had returned to the truths of only Scripture, only grace, only faith, only Christ, and all for the glory of God. Churches were planted. Missionaries were sent out. The world has never been the same.



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But consider the spiritual state of Europe today. It is estimated that only 1-2% of the population are born again.<sup>1</sup> During my family's mission trip to France in 2008 we talked with missionaries about the spiritual condition there. They expressed great concern about the rise of Islam in the country and how radical Islamists were filling France simply by having many children and raising them to follow Allah. I asked, "Are the Christian pastors encouraging young believers to pursue godly marriage and raise their children to impact the nation for Christ?" I'll never forget what they said. "There are very few young believers here to encourage."

How could this have happened? How can an entire continent go from spiritual vitality to spiritual desolation? While many factors were involved, the final answer is simple. The believers in Europe lost the souls of their children, generation after generation. If we do not "make disciples" of our own children and grandchildren spiritual decline is inevitable.

### North America is Falling

The church in North America is following the same tragic path. Since 1900, the percentage of Bible believing Christians has been in decline.

Researcher Thom Rainer affirms this heartbreaking reality. He led a study to determine what percentage of Americans claimed to be Christians based upon having put their faith in Christ. In other words, what percentage of Americans identify themselves as Christians and

understand that being a Christian means putting one's faith in Christ alone for salvation? Here's what he found. Among Americans born before 1946, 65 percent identified themselves as Christians and were able to articulate the basics of the gospel. For those born between 1946 and 1964, the number dropped to 35 percent. For those born between 1965 and 1976, it fell to a scant 15 percent. Finally, among Americans born between 1974 and 1994, only 4 percent of the population identified themselves as Christians and had trusted Christ alone for salvation.<sup>2</sup>

Evangelism and discipleship are in dire crisis, and it is a generational crisis. We're losing more of our own children to the world than we are winning adult converts to faith in Christ. As a result, the percentage of Bible-believing Christians in the United States is in steady decline.

How could this be happening? This is the age of mega-churches, mega-programming, mega-budgets, mega-conferences, and mega-leadership training. We have Christian books, DVDs, and curriculum for every age group on every subject. Our outreach events, service days, retreats, and short-term mission trips are never ending. We are doing more than ever before, but are we making disciples more than ever before? I am convinced the answer is no.

When it comes to youth and children's ministry, we must acknowledge that the "new experiment" has failed. The new experiment is age-segregated, church-building based, evangelism and discipleship of children. Parents drop them off. We split them up by age in different rooms in the building and "disciple" them. In terms of Christian history, this is a brand-new idea.

Slowly but surely, we abandoned the biblical model of family discipleship and delegated the spiritual training of our children to "professionals" at church. I led this model at a large church for over a decade. One of the unintended consequences of my ministry approach which systematically separated children from their parents was that parents were free to remain spiritually passive at home. After all, they were making sure that their son or daughter was involved in a "great youth group."

Our new model is a dramatic departure from the approach of the early church and the reformation. It was common practice for church leaders in the 1600s to regularly visit the home of each family in the church to assess whether or not the parents were discipling their children through the regular practice of family worship. In 1647, believers in Scotland published the Directory for Family Worship in which they wrote:

The assembly requires and appoints ministers to make diligent search and inquiry, whether there be among

them a family or families which neglect the duty of family worship. If such a family is found, the head of the family is to be admonished privately to amend his fault; and in case of his continuing therein, he is to be gravely and sadly reproofed by the session; after which reproof, if he is found still to neglect family worship, let him be, for his obstinacy in such an offense, suspended and debarred from the Lord's supper, until he amend.<sup>3</sup>

Family worship was a major issue of church discipline. Why did these churches take it so seriously? Why did they invest so much time going from home to home to encourage and ensure that family worship was taking place? Family worship was a top priority because they were passionate about the Great Commission. They knew God had spoken clearly in the Bible that parents and grandparents were to take the lead in the spiritual training of their children and grandchildren. For them, a church could not be serious about the Great Commission if it was not serious about family worship.

Charles Spurgeon was deeply concerned about the changes which were occurring in Christian culture during the late 19th Century. In his article, "The Kind of Revival We Need," he wrote:

We deeply want a revival of family religion. The Christian family was the bulwark of godliness in the days of the puritans, but in these evil times hundreds of families of so-called Christians have no family worship, no restraint upon growing sons, and no wholesome instruction or discipline. How can we hope to see the kingdom of our Lord advance when His own disciples do not teach His gospel to their own children? Oh, Christian men and women, be thorough in what you do and know and teach! Let your families be trained in the fear of God and be yourselves 'holiness unto the Lord,' so shall you stand like a rock amid the surging waves of error and ungodliness which rage around us.<sup>4</sup>

Spurgeon's message is desperately needed today! Godly men and women in growing churches receive the constant call to get involved in "ministry." Often "ministry" is synonymous with "volunteering at a church program." Spurgeon understood that "to see the kingdom of our Lord advance" ministry needed to begin at home.

Charles Spurgeon



## The Global Challenge

Many countries today are seeing an explosion of new converts and church plants. China is a great example of this. Praise God! But Satan isn't giving up. When he loses one generation to Jesus, he makes it his top priority to keep the next for himself.

The first task of discipleship with a new believer is not to encourage them to share Christ with a friend. Their first "Great Commission" is to share Christ with their spouse, parents, siblings, children, and grandchildren. For those who are parents, the souls of their children are to be their top spiritual priority. Imagine if we win all of our friends to Christ, but lose our children to the world. What happens to the church? When we die, it dies.

One of my great concerns is that in our zeal to train pastors in these new church plants we will give them the broken, age-segregated, church-building-based model of the West. The mission of making disciples has not been given to professional church leaders, but to every believer.

Satan would love to see nations like China follow the spiritual pattern of Europe and North America. If we want to see the gospel thriving in China 100 years from now, the church must follow the pattern of the early church which kept families together and equipped parents to disciple their children at home.

## Toward a Theology of Family

Here is the fundamental question:

*What is the biblical relationship between the Great Commission and the institution of the family?*

Ten years ago I would have had no idea how to answer this. When it came to the Great Commission, I thought only of the institution of the local church, and, as a result, I had an anemic view of God's redemptive strategy. God has created two essential institutions to advance His Kingdom—the local church *and* the Christian family. In the Bible, God gives each institution unique roles, responsibilities, and jurisdictions.

Throughout the Scriptures God links His plan for the world with His creation of the family. Here are just a few examples.<sup>5</sup>

## The First Commandment

God made Adam and Eve and He gave them an instruction in Genesis 1:28: "Be fruitful and increase in number, fill the Earth and subdue it." When was the last time you heard a sermon on this text?

Right from the beginning God tells us what He wants. He desires to fill the Earth, and ultimately the New Earth, with people who will love Him, worship Him, and bring Him glory. His plan will take thousands of years to accomplish. It will be a multi-generational mission and will be powered by the blessing of marriage, having children, and generational family discipleship.



**Satan would love to see nations like China follow the spiritual pattern of Europe and North America. We must equip parents to disciple their children at home.**

## God's Mission for Abraham

In Genesis 18, we find a clear articulation of God's purposes for Abraham. Genesis 18:18, "Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and all the nations on earth will be blessed through him." This echoes God's desire in Genesis 12 and 15 where we discover God's plan to bless Abraham so that he would be a blessing to the nations. But what did God want Abraham to do in response to this global vision? What was Abraham's

specific calling? Genesis 18 continues with verse 19, "For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just, so that the LORD will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him."

God comes to Abraham with the message (I paraphrase), "I am going to fill the earth with worship, and your job is to make your family a discipleship center. Your job is to impress the hearts of your children and your household with a love for me. Blessing the world begins with leading your family."

## The Great Commandment

In Matthew 22:35-36 Jesus is confronted with a powerful question. A religious leader asks him, "What is the most important commandment in the law?" He answered by quoting from Deuteronomy 6:5; "Love the Lord your



God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.” According to Jesus, nothing is more important than knowing God and loving Him. But what we are supposed to *do* with this command? Where do we start? How will you obey the Great Commandment today? In the next few verses God gives a specific mission for all those who would seek to love Him.

“These commands that I give to you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children.” – Deuteronomy 6:6-7a

Here we find the first task for the faith community in response to the Great Commandment. Those who love God are called first and foremost to do all in their power to lead their children to love Him even more. At the heart of the Great Commandment is family discipleship and parents being the primary spiritual trainers of their children.

But how does this happen? How can I, as a sinful man, pass faith and a love for God to my children? There are no magic formulas, but God gives us a simple starting point in the next verse.

“Talk about these things when you sit at home” (Deuteronomy 6:7b).

Where can parents start? By talking! Specifically, God calls parents to bring the family together in the home for what Christians down through history have called “family worship.” Family worship is time where the family gathers for prayer, Scripture reading, and spiritual encouragement.

There is a lot of talk in the Western church today about the importance of discipleship small groups. You have heard the buzz lines.

“We need to do life together.”

“Discipleship happens in the context of relationships.”

“We need to return to authentic community.”

God loves discipleship small groups too. He just has another name for them. He calls them families. He wants every person to be born into the ultimate discipleship small group – a Christian family. God created the family to shape our hearts and the hearts of our children with a deep and abiding love for Christ and for His word.

### A Vision for Generational Ministry

In Psalm 78:1-7 we are given a picture of the powerful impact families have in the advance of the Kingdom of God.

“O my people, hear my teaching; listen to the words of my mouth. I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter hidden things, things from old; what we have heard and known, what our fathers have told

GOD LOVES DISCIPLESHIP SMALL GROUPS TOO. HE JUST HAS ANOTHER NAME FOR THEM. HE CALLS THEM FAMILIES. HE WANTS EVERY PERSON TO BE BORN INTO THE ULTIMATE DISCIPLESHIP SMALL GROUP – A CHRISTIAN FAMILY.

us. We will not hide them from their children; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, his power, and the wonders He has done. He decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel, which he commanded our forefathers to teach their children, so that the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children. Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds but would keep his commands.”

What a marvelous vision! I want to be a father like this. I want to tell my children all about praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, so that they would tell their children who are not even born yet. At the heart of the advance of the gospel is the call to parents to impress the hearts of their children with a love for God and for His Word.

### The Church Launched with a Multi-Generational Vision

The disciples understood that the first action step of the gospel was to impress the hearts of children with a love for God. In Acts 2, God launches His church, and Peter preaches a magnificent evangelistic sermon. He ends it this way in Acts 2:38-39, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.”

You, your kids, and the world! This is the three-fold move of the gospel which we find cover-to-cover in the Scriptures. We have functionally cut out the top priority of the Christian life, which is to serve, minister to, and make disciples of our own children and family members. As a result, we have many well-intentioned Christian men and women who give their heart and soul to helping lead the programs at church and in the community, and never sit down to read the Scriptures at home with their own children.

I know this sort of Christian very well. It used to be me. I gave my heart and soul to my pastoral ministry at church, and my wife and children got the scraps. I was living an unbiblical, hollow Christian life, while at the same time receiving accolades for my public ministry. I have spoken with many pastors and missionaries over the years who had “discipled” hundreds of people, but they lost the

souls of their own children. Some were even told, “Trust your children to the Lord! You need to focus on your ministry.” Nowhere in Scripture does God command parents to abdicate the spiritual training to others so that they can “focus on ministry.” Instead, God calls His people to begin their Kingdom ministry at home.

### The Call to Fathers

God gives His call to fathers in Ephesians 6:4, “Fathers do not exasperate your children, instead bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.” God says that fathers are not to arouse deep anger in their hearts of their children, and He gives them a remedy so that it will not happen. Bring your children up in the training and instruction of the Lord. Training refers to spiritual exercise—the spiritual practices of the Christian faith. Fathers are to pray *with*, serve *with*, and worship *with* their kids. Instruction refers to the words that dads speak to their children. The words that fathers and husbands speak in the home about spiritual things have tremendous power!

Are you eager to see men rise up to lead your church with humility, godliness, and sound doctrine? Are you eager to see men rise up to impact their community and world for Christ? Then call them, train them, equip them, and hold them accountable to private prayer and Scripture study and to the leadership of family worship in their homes. If we want to maximize a man’s impact on the world, we must first maximize his impact at home.

### Family Discipleship, Pastors, and Elders

A prerequisite for spiritual leadership within the local church is effective spiritual leadership in the home. In the early church, if a man was a father and desired to be a pastor/elder, he needed to demonstrate that he was shepherding his children, before he was allowed to shepherd the greater body.

“He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. (If anyone does not know how to lead his own family, how can he take care of God’s church?)”  
— Timothy 3:4-5

When this text refers to “lead[ing] his own family,” it is not referring to paying the bills and mowing the lawn. The context here is one of spiritual leadership. In other words, if a man has not already taken the lead to encourage faith in the hearts of his wife and children, he is not

qualified for the office of pastor/elder in the church.

God reiterates this principle even more strongly in Titus 1:6 where we find additional qualifications for men who would seek the office of pastor/elder.

“An elder must be blameless, the husband of but one wife, a man whose children believe, and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient.”

In my experience I have heard little teaching on this phrase, “a man whose children believe.” Some interpret this to refer only to children at home, so that if a man has adult children who are not following the Lord that would not disqualify him. Regardless of one’s interpretation, this is powerful text that we must take seriously. Why would God say that a man can’t serve as pastor/elder if his children are not believers? I believe it is because if a man has a son or daughter who is not converted, he has all he can do to dedicate himself to prayer and ministry to that son or daughter! His Great Commission calling as a man begins with the souls of the children entrusted to his care.

### Conclusion

Is it any wonder that the enemy targets the relationships within the family with such ferocity? It should come as no surprise, since the Scriptures teach that the spiritual life of the family is directly tied to the Great Commission and filling the earth with worshippers of Christ. 🌐

1. If we are passionate about seeing the advance of the Gospel of the Kingdom of Christ, let us begin by turning our hearts toward home. Let us ask God to help us begin our ministry in this world by “making disciples” of our family members. Let us passionately and biblically defend God’s plan, structure, and purposes for the institution of the family, as well as the institution of the local church. For those of us in church leadership, let us follow the example of the early church which kept families together for worship and accelerated evangelism and discipleship in and through families. May God be glorified in our churches and in our homes, so that He might be worshipped around the world in every tribe and tongue for generations to come! Greater Europe Mission research - <http://www.gemission.org/Why/statistics.asp>
2. Polly House, “Survey Notes Heightened Challenge of Reaching Children for Christ,” Baptist Press, October 20, 2000, <http://www.bpnews.net/bpnews.asp?>
3. [http://www.reformed.org/documents/wcf\\_standards/index.html?mainframe=/documents/wcf\\_standards/p417-direct\\_fam\\_worship.html](http://www.reformed.org/documents/wcf_standards/index.html?mainframe=/documents/wcf_standards/p417-direct_fam_worship.html)
4. <http://www.spurgeon.org/revival.htm>
5. For a more detailed exploration of the biblical connection between the Great Commission and the family visit the church leaders page at [www.VisionaryFam.com](http://www.VisionaryFam.com)



# From My Perspective

## The Heavenly Father's Heart

This article is excerpted from the book, *T4T: A Discipleship Re-Revolution* by Steve Smith with Ying Kai and used by permission of WIGTake Resources

Ying Kai

**A** young student in Taiwan worked hard to pass an important exam that would enable him to get into a good middle school. He really wanted a new bicycle to ride thirty minutes to the new school, but doubted he would get it since his family was so poor. One day, however, as he passed his parents' bedroom, he heard his father comment to his mother that he would buy a new bicycle for the young student. The son was overjoyed. That night before bed, he asked his father for a new bicycle. But his father said, "No!" The son was perplexed but did not give up because he knew his father's heart! As he persisted, his father finally said, "Yes." The next day he had a new bicycle.

GOD LOVES YOU, CHOOSES YOU, AND WORKS THROUGH YOU TO SAVE YOUR WHOLE FAMILY. THIS IS YOUR HEAVENLY FATHER'S HEART. IF YOU KNOW HIS HEART, THEN YOU WILL NOT GIVE UP ASKING HIM FOR WHAT IS IN HIS HEART.

The son said: "Because I knew my father's heart, I never gave up. If I didn't know his heart, I probably would have given up. So if we know our heavenly Father's heart, we will have more confidence to do what He wants us to do."

Throughout the Bible, God chooses a person to save along with his whole household. Here are some examples.

- **Noah** (Genesis 6-9) – Because of Noah's righteous life, even though the whole world was corrupt, God saved Noah and used him to save his whole family on the ark. God saved Noah and all who belonged to him.
- **Lot** (Genesis 19) – Noah lived in a wicked city. Yet Lot lived righteously and God saved him and his whole household before the city was destroyed. God saved Lot and all who belonged to him.
- **Rahab** (Joshua 6) – Rahab was a prostitute who put her hope in God. God saved her and her whole household even though her city was destroyed.
- **The Gerasene Demoniac** (Mark 5:1-20) – God cast many evil spirits out of a violent man and then immediately sent him to tell his family and friends in their cities. Before he had even finished one training session, Jesus sent him to bring salvation to his *oikos* (household). God saved the demoniac and all who belonged to him.
- **Cornelius** (Acts 10-11) – Cornelius was an important army officer who was seeking God. God brought him the good news and saved him. Cornelius gathered everyone who belonged to him and they were all saved; God saved Cornelius and all who belonged to him.
- **Lydia** (Acts 11) – Lydia was a worshiper of God who heard the gospel. God saved her and her entire household – all who belonged to her.
- **The Philippian Jailer** (Acts 16) – The jailer was far from God, not

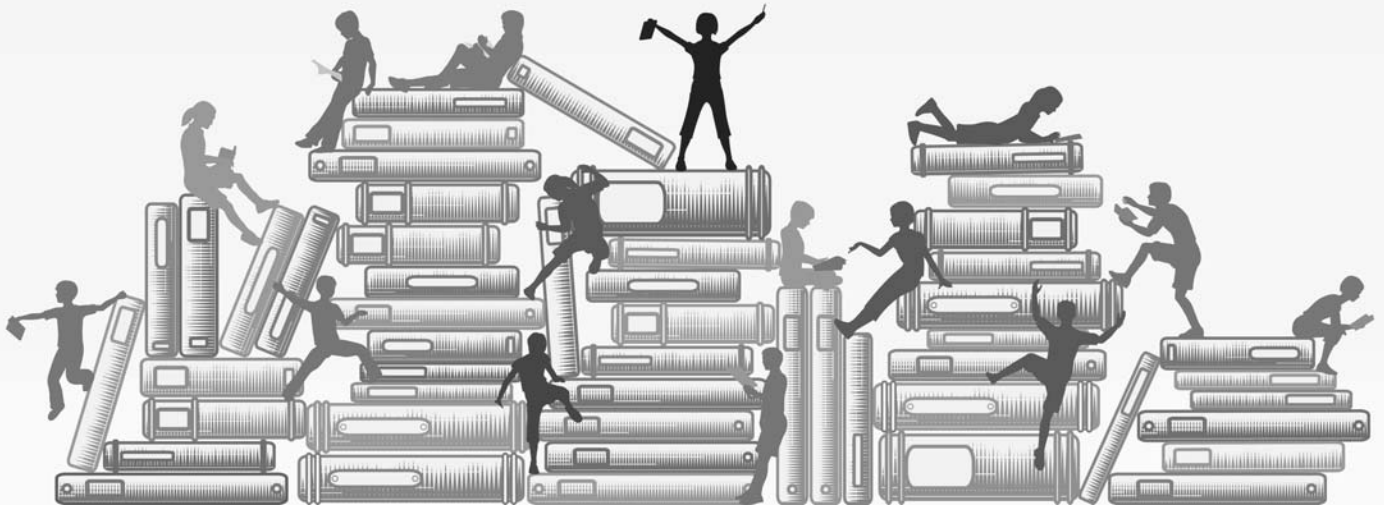
seeking God, yet God had mercy on him. That very night God saved him. With urgency, he woke up his family to hear the good news and become baptized.

Would you wake up your whole family at midnight and share the gospel with them? In Acts 16, the Philippian jailer could not wait. Perhaps his family thought, "It's midnight, why are you waking us up?" Perhaps he said, "If it had not been for these men, I might be dead right now. These two gentlemen saved us." He could not wait. He asked Paul and Silas to come to his house. At midnight, the jailer and his whole family came to Christ.

God loves you, chooses you, and works through you to save your whole family. This is your heavenly Father's heart. If you know His heart, then you will not give up asking Him for what is in His heart. The responsibility is yours to witness to your own. As you pray and witness to your *oikos* (household), don't give up on them. Keep loving them and sharing with them. Be persistent. 🌐

Twelve years ago Ying Kai and his wife, Grace, started what has become the largest and fastest growing Church Planting Movement in the world with over 150,000 churches planted and over 1.7 million people baptized. Ying Kai co-authored the book *T4T: A Discipleship Re-Revolution* c2011 with Steve Smith. The book is published by WIGTake Resources, PO Box 1884, Monument CO 80132, (719) 646-3190. Go to [www.ChurchPlantingMovements.com/bookstore](http://www.ChurchPlantingMovements.com/bookstore) to purchase and for more information.

# Resourcing the **Missional Family**



NANCY TICHY

**T**he North American family is faced with many challenges. Children move away from parents, not only geographically, but morally and spiritually as well. The typical church deals with this by further fragmenting family life. In many cases, it manages families within its membership by offering help along age and gender lines, rather than along avenues provided by God for *generational faithfulness*. Biblical wisdom is compartmentalized and increasingly, followers of Jesus find it difficult to take Jesus' teaching seriously. How many, of any age, actually attempt to follow the pattern set down in the Sermon on the Mount? How often do parents develop intentional strategies and best practices to deliver a godly lifestyle to their children in ways that the pattern continues on with succeeding generations?

How can Christian parents, today, create an environment where their children learn to know God intimately and serve Him passionately? Clearly, the best design is the one where parents model the truth they espouse. Actions do seem to speak louder than words. Actions and words in sync with biblical wisdom are powerful indeed. What are practical "next steps" once parents determine to love God with their whole beings and their children as

themselves? Are there resources readily available to guide them in maintaining a godly household that honors the Creator God of the Universe and sends their children out to do the same?

The answer to these questions is a resounding, "Yes!" A fragmented lifestyle can be replaced by one that is *integrated*. Apathy can give way to inspiration and passion. Ignorance can be challenged by information. Information, inspiration and integration can be the watchwords for building godly family structures that will contribute to the life of the church and positively impact the life of the community.

Inspiration and integration are dealt with in greater detail in other articles in this issue. I will attempt to provide suggestions primarily under the heading of information. Following are a few of my favorite things. This list of resources must be incomplete. Parents desiring to arm themselves for battle against the evil forces at work today seeking to destroy godly family life will find even more to equip them for success.

**The Bible remains the most important guidebook on family life.** We are blessed when we make time to trace the golden strand of *generational faithfulness* that binds its stories into a grand panorama of what God desires for His children. One idea: take a "Through the Bible in One Year" publication and highlight everything you read that deals with families, fathers, mothers, children. What are the examples to follow and to avoid? Whom does God put forth, besides Himself, as parents worth emulating? What makes them "good?" What were their flaws to avoid? What actual commands and suggestions are embedded in



Working with KidZ At Heart International, Nancy Tichy shares from her experience in West Africa and North America. She seeks to provide a global focus on children and families that enables Christians everywhere to tell the next generation of God's mighty acts. (Psalm 145:4) Contact her at [ftichy@aol.com](mailto:ftichy@aol.com)

Scripture that need to be “written” on the hearts of family members? Make this a family adventure and invite your children into the discovery-making process.

**Church Ministries** that are large enough have pastors of family ministry. Praise God, their numbers are increasing and networking forms alliances for holding conferences and publishing materials. Dr. Rob Rienow of *Visionary Parenting* ([www.visionaryparenting.org](http://www.visionaryparenting.org)) and Dr. Scott Turansky and Joanne Miller of the *National Center for Biblical Parenting* ([www.biblicalparenting.org](http://www.biblicalparenting.org)) stand out as resources here. Even small churches can develop a mindset and ministries that draw attention to their families and make sure they are prayed for and ministered to in holistic ways.

**Books, Periodicals, DVD's** – there seems to be no end! To fit in with the theme of this issue of *Mission Frontiers*, I will suggest some resources that primarily speak to the missional family.

*Operation World* and *Window On The World* – these two volumes are invaluable for providing *information, inspiration, and even integration*. *OW* is considered an adult book, but because the contents are attainable by calendar date and by alphabet it is a very flexible tool and useful with children. I call it a prayer encyclopedia. *WOW* is designed for kids, to focus on 47 countries and 47 people groups within countries. All 94 are unevangelized or represent places where thriving, reproducing faith is at risk. This children's version abounds with photographs and gives stories and points for prayer.

Here's an idea for *integration*: When children are mature enough, invite them to watch the news with you. For any age, one good way to combat crisis fatigue is to take the place in focus in a news broadcast or publication and look it up in *Operation World*. See if it's included in *Window on the World*. Google it. Take information and create your own prayer guide for family use.

**Global Prayer Digest** – ([www.globalprayerdigest.org](http://www.globalprayerdigest.org)) A magazine with two months' worth of information in a daily format with a focus on the least-reached peoples

of the world. *GPD* is like a regular supply of kindling to fuel your family's desire for God and for the nations.

**DiscipleLand Curriculum** – ([www.DiscipleLand.com](http://www.DiscipleLand.com)) Unique feature: Every lesson, grades one through six, incorporates some truth from the *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement* course. Provides a great website for parents, presenting the family as a discipleship center. Recent publication: *My Awesome God Bible Storybook* for preschoolers/early readers that concludes each reading with a focus on God, the Heavenly Father ([www.AwesomeGodBible.com](http://www.AwesomeGodBible.com)).

## Books for Children to Read

Again, the list must be incomplete! Half a century ago, books published for children to read, apart from texts in the classroom, were slim pickings, mostly biographies that were pretty boring along with *Nancy Drew*, *Bosby Twins*, *BoxCar Kids* and a very few others including comic books. Today the options, just under Christian literature alone, are abundant, whether it be children's Bibles, Bible story books, biographies or adventure stories.

- **Hero Tales, Volumes II, III, IV: A Family Treasury of True Stories From the Lives of Christian Heroes** by Dave & Neta Jackson, 1997, on; by Bethany House Publishers [www.bethanyhouse.com](http://www.bethanyhouse.com)  
Each volume contains 15 biographies of missionaries, evangelists and other Christian heroes who worked courageously to share the gospel with others. Perfect for bedtime story hour/homeschooling.
- **Trailblazer Books** by Dave & Neta Jackson Series of books for children to read combining biography and fiction. by Bethany House Publishers.  
More than 36 books in the series. Well written even for adults.
- **Christians Heroes: Then & Now- Inspiring True Stories of Men and Women Who Answered God's Call** by Janet & Geoff Benge by YWAM Publishing; [www.ywampublishing.com](http://www.ywampublishing.com)



- *Heroes For Young Readers*; more than 19 in a series of biographies, written in rhyme, for early readers by Renee Taft Meloche by YWAM Publishing.

### Books for Parents/Grandparents to Read

**Top seven for every household:** Even though you can find many more than these, I chose the following books for their direct bearing on the topic of the missional family. They not only deal with foundational issues for creating family life according to God's design, but provide practical strategies and best practices for weaving compassion, outreach, prayer and worship into the family's fabric.

- *Too Small To Ignore: Why the Least of These Matters Most* by Dr. Wess Stafford 2007 by Compassion International, Inc.  
A valuable read to understand the global assault on children and families along with keen insights into parenting strategies, partly flowing out of the author's own childhood challenges in Africa documented in his book. My top pick of these top seven!
- *Teaching Kids Authentic Worship: How to Keep Them Close to God for LIFE* by Kathleen Chapman 2003 by Baker Books  
The finest book I've read on what true worship is, with practical ways to incorporate it into the lives of children and adults. Includes "52 Ideas for Worship Moments."
- *Growing Compassionate Kids: Helping Kids See Beyond Their Backyard* by Jan Johnson 2001 by Upper Room Books  
Twenty-two chapters full of wisdom and practical strategies to combat "affluenza." The author is a widely known, highly respected writer/speaker on matters of spiritual formation.
- *Becoming a World Changing Family: Fun & Innovative Ways to Spread the Good News* by Donna S. Thomas 2008 by YWAM Publishing  
This book gives answers to "the sheer volume of activities competing for your family's time and energy that makes it hard to focus on one of the most important tasks of all—fulfilling the Great Commission. Creative, practical, impactful."
- *When Families Pray: Forty Devotions to Build, Strengthen, and Bond* by Cheri Fuller 1999 by Multnomah Publishers, Inc.  
Each chapter starts with a Scripture verse and illustrative anecdote, followed by discussion questions, other related Scripture passages, a prayer and parting thought/quotation. Cheri Fuller is a

highly regarded, prolific author on matters of family, spiritual formation.

- *Raising Kids For True Greatness: Redefine Success for You and Your Child* by Dr. Tim Kimmel 2006 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.  
Eleven chapters defining godly success with practical strategies for helping children achieve it. Discusses ways to prepare kids to reach the potential and fulfill the purposes God has designed for them. A thoughtfully wise and practical book.
- *Transforming Children Into Spiritual Champions: Why Children Should Be Your Church's #1 Priority* by George Barna 2003 by Regal Books  
A vitally important book, still, to be shared by pastors and parents alike. Challenges the church "to come alongside parents and equip them to provide their children—at the earliest age possible—with biblical precepts that will protect them from a worldview hostile to the biblical worldview." A vital read for all adults.

### Eight More Books that Make Valuable Additionsn to Parents' Libraries

- *Missions Moments: 52 Foundational Messages and Activities for Children* by Mitzi Eaker 2005 by Women's Missionary Union
- *My Children, My Mission Field: A Family's Place in God's Plan to Change the World* by Susan E. Field 2002 by New Hope Publishers
- *Kids Making a Difference: Incredible Stories Of What Kids Today Are Doing Around the World* by Pete Hohmann; 8061 Shady Grove Road; Mechanicsville, VA 23111
- *Faith Begins at Home: The Family Makeover with Christ at the Center* by Mark Holmen 2005 by Regal Books
- *The Danger of Raising Nice Kids: Preparing Our Children to Change Their World* 2006 by InterVarsity Press
- *Real Kids—Real Faith: Practices for Nurturing Children's Spiritual Lives* by Karen Marie Yust 2004 by Jossey-Bass, A Wiley Imprint
- *The Missional Mom: Living with Purpose at Home & in the World* by Helen Lee 2011 by Moody Publishers
- *501 Practical Ways to Love Your Grandkids and Their Parents* by Roger Sonnenberg 1997 by Concordia Publishing House



## A Final Word for This Segment:

Each of the following authors is responsible for multiple titles, but anything by Randy Alcorn, John Piper, and Steve Saint is valuable for inspiration/motivation. Especially powerful for teenagers and young adults: *Don't Waste Your Life* by Piper ([www.desiringgod.org/store](http://www.desiringgod.org/store)), *Treasure Principle* by Alcorn ([www.hotbooksale.com/store](http://www.hotbooksale.com/store)), and the book, *End of the Spear* by Saint ([www.itecusa.org/store](http://www.itecusa.org/store)).

## DVDs

- **The Torchlighters** – Heroes of the Faith Ongoing series of animated programs with strong values and educational content for ages 8-12. Each episode presents the story of true-life hero from Christian history. 30 minutes; includes interviews, leader's guide and student handouts. By Christian History Institute with *The Voice of the Martyrs*, [www.torchlighters.org](http://www.torchlighters.org).
- **Redcard! Standing Against Oppression Providing Hope** – Equip Yourself to Take a Stand. Eight interactive lessons engage the entire family in exploring God's heart for children at risk. Designed for children, grade four and up, by Caleb Resources; [www.RedCardKids.org](http://www.RedCardKids.org); [www.cartpioneers.org](http://www.cartpioneers.org)

**DVD Documentaries** – A selected few full length features suitable for family viewing. Some contain segments not appropriate for young children. (Most of these found at: [www.visionvideo.com](http://www.visionvideo.com))

Listed below by focus – title.

Persecution/Music/China – *Canaan Hymns*

Redemptive Analogies – *Peace Child*

2 Timothy 2:2 Principle – *EE-TAOW, The Next Chapter*

Pioneer Bible Translation – *Return to Hauna*

Godly Ambition/Children/Africa – *Mama Heidi*

Humility/War/Congo/Medicine – *Mama Luka*

Spiritual Warfare/Uganda – *An Unconventional War*

Fraser/Lisu/Prevailing Prayer – *Breakthrough*

Amy Carmichael/India – *Mother to the Motherless*

## Web Site and Publishing House/Distributors

[www.globalpresskc.com](http://www.globalpresskc.com) – USCWM – Free downloads of missions magazine for kids w/teaching tips

[www.kidsofcourage.com](http://www.kidsofcourage.com) – Persecuted Church, emagazine for kids

[www.questforcompassion.org](http://www.questforcompassion.org) – Compassion Intl., emagazine for kids

[www.simkids.org](http://www.simkids.org) *Serving in Mission* – general missions, Africa/Asia/S.America

[www.ntm.org/kidstuff](http://www.ntm.org/kidstuff) – New Tribes Mission, tribal outreach

[www.wycliffe.org/Kids/FreeCurriculum/PrayerLessons.aspx](http://www.wycliffe.org/Kids/FreeCurriculum/PrayerLessons.aspx)

[www.onehen.org](http://www.onehen.org) – Christian Community Development

[www.viva.org/PrayToday](http://www.viva.org/PrayToday) – Contains a very fine video presentation: *The Great Omission*, a daily prayer diary, among other things.

## Some Other Significant Mission Agencies that Have Focus on/for Children:

(An incomplete list!)

Inspirational Films (Story of *Jesus* for Children in multiple languages) Great tool for neighborhood evangelism

Pioneers (Caleb Project) [www.cartpioneers.org](http://www.cartpioneers.org) Very valuable online store of missions resources for kids

Transform World/New Generation – [www.4to14Window.com](http://www.4to14Window.com)

World Vision (Child Sponsorship)

Samaritan's Purse (Shoe Boxes, and more)

Heifer International – [www.Heifer.org](http://www.Heifer.org) (Christian Community Development)

## A Final Word – A Resource That May Yet Need to be Created

If setting the course of a young child is a better strategy than course correction for a young adult, then shouldn't intentional guidance (and resourcing) for families of the very young be better than drastic interventions later on? If resources for this don't already exist, they must be written and produced.

Even beyond that, I'd like to suggest parenting classes for teenagers (a significant number of whom are parents before high school graduation) and a firm grip on premarital counseling that includes basic principles of godly child rearing and early childhood development. This may be the single most important resource to prepare emerging Christian parents to not only keep their kids safe, but to prepare them for their God given privilege of carrying His *Good News* to their neighbors nearby and far away. May it be so. 🌍

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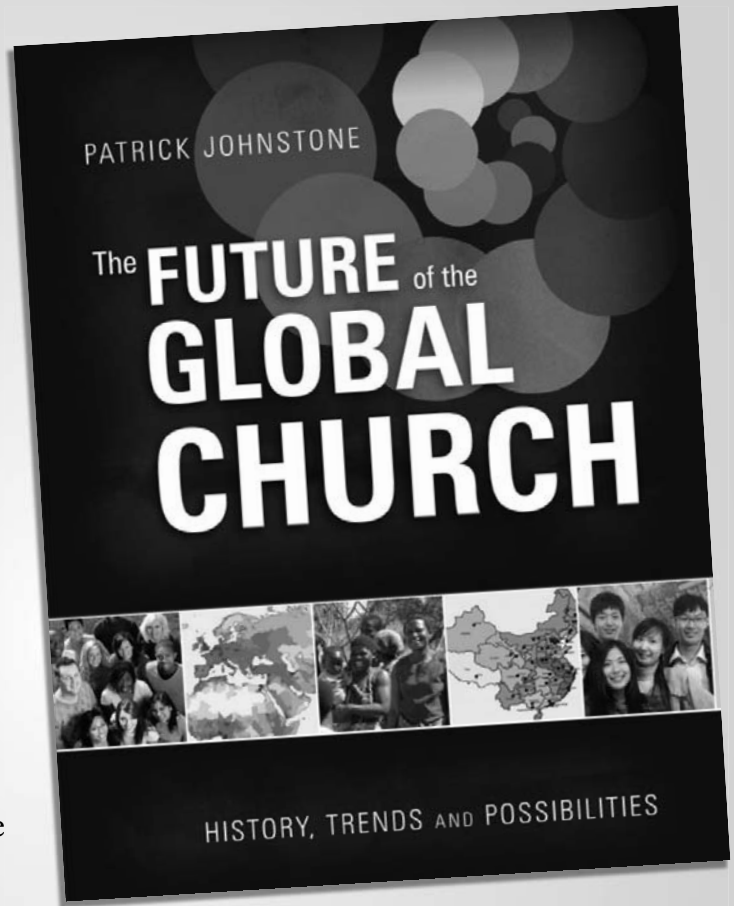
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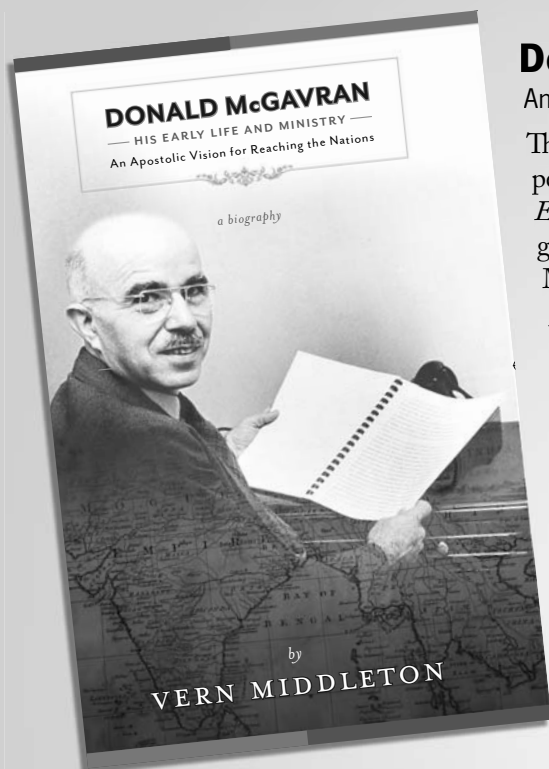
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Vern Middleton has been a lifelong church planter and missions professor. He served in India from 1965 to 1976. During his time in India he was mentored by Donald McGavran and they formed a close friendship in ministry and church planting experiences. It was out of this context that interest grew to write McGavran's biography. During the last decade of McGavran's life Middleton had opportunity to interact with him on virtually every page of the biography.

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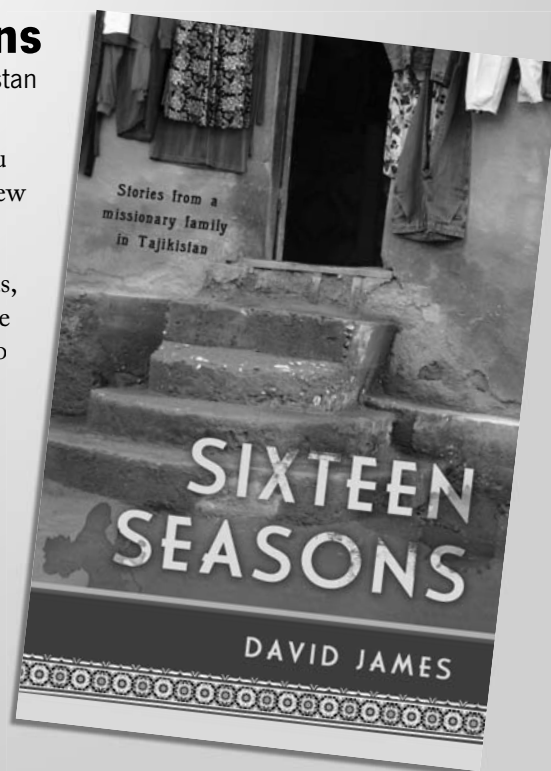
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# Further Reflections



## Joy and Grief

Greg H. Parsons, Global Director, U.S. Center for World Mission

**M**y wife and I have been here at the USCWM for almost 30 years. An amazing part of being on staff is meeting people from all over the world. Many of them are involved in God's purposes to extend his fame to the least-reached peoples.

Earlier this month I was in Asia again, and was reminded that sometimes our mobilization efforts actually work. I talked with a young missionary who has been on the field just three years. Prior to that, he was in the Navy. While stationed in Asia, he just "happened" to meet a staff member of ours who was there for a year. That staffer felt led of the Lord to give him a copy of the *Perspective on the World Christian Movement* reader. He read it and some other materials including people group profiles. He caught a vision for reaching a specific group in Thailand, where he and his wife and kids now serve.

That encounter came in the midst of discouragement. Sometimes it just doesn't seem like we are getting that far, and unfortunately, it is often differences between Christians that causes a great deal of the trouble and delay.

As I was reflecting and praying this morning—both over the encouraging stories and the great needs around the world—I felt a sense of grief that:

- There is little progress in many Muslim, Hindu and Buddhist people groups. Yes, there are amazing breakthroughs and workers on the ground in so many more locations than 30 years ago, but we can do better. Yes, the harvest is in

God's timing, and He chooses to move when He will, but I don't want that to be an excuse for inaction or ineffectiveness.

- So many Christians are distracted by so many things. Here in the U.S. people get absorbed with material things. In some other nations, they see the same things now and want them, not realizing how much it will "cost" them by distracting them from God's best for them. It can be *good* things that absorb our lives also. Pastor Tim Keller says that while Christians may not have physical idols, our spouses or children, jobs or ministry—anything—can be an idol if that thing is ultimate in our lives...if "we'd die" without it. Only God is ultimate.
- Differences of opinion related to field strategies are becoming more and more confrontational. Many of these are far more focused on specific field strategies than on doctrine. We seem to have forgotten that Jesus never seemed concerned with defending a certain position—except who He was and even then, He isn't as clear when asked directly by certain people (like Pilate). He does get frustrated over unbelief and he gets angry when religious leaders lead people away from God. I'm sure he was "careful" with what he said, but not overly so, or there wouldn't be different ways to interpret his meaning in a number of passages.
- Rumors and misinformation are being shared, in various forums, so that excellent evangelical workers are

forced to spend time defending their positions. There are enough problems on the frontlines to last global field workers years. They don't need harsh criticism, false accusations or rumors to distract them just because they are trying something we might not do back home.

I just received a prayer letter from a very effective global servant I've known for 30 years. He described this exact situation quoted from a recently published book that had what he calls "a complete fabrication" of information related to the people group he serves. What was written, which was related to a translation issue in the Bible, was "easily verifiable." The book's authors did not care to check and now have created yet another distraction for this brother and many others. I know for a fact that my friend is working to stand for the core truths evangelicals hold, yet with the sensitivity the cultural situation requires.

We may disagree with a particular brother or sister in practice while we agree in areas of clear biblical teaching. Perhaps we should allow others the freedom to apply different field strategies as they and those in their mission determine and not second-guess them at every turn. Jim Petersen, author of *Church Without Walls* and other books, said it this way:

*"We do not need to convince the rest of the body, to get everyone to agree that we are right and they are wrong. All we need is the space to pursue our calling to the lost. In the end the proof will be in the fruit" (Acts 15:7-9).* 🌐

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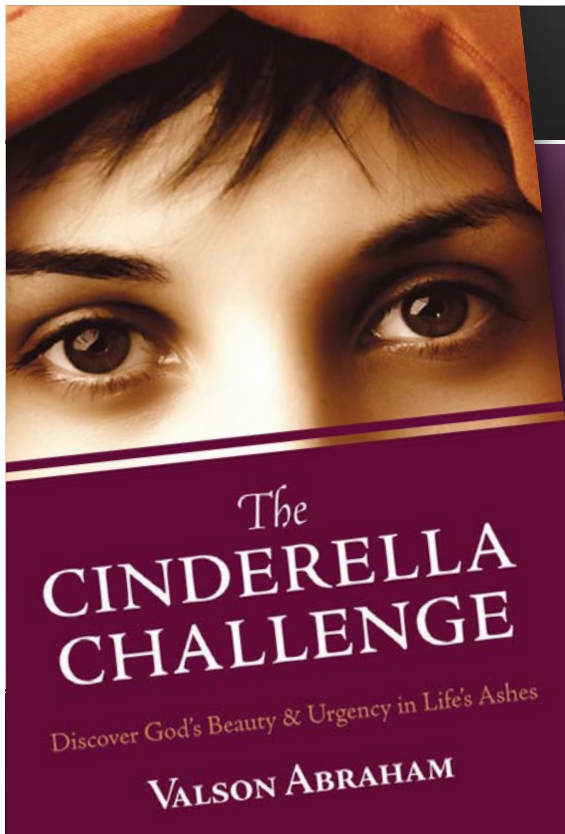
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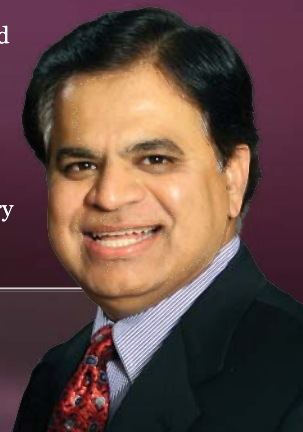
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