

Spreading Global Insight

by Greg Parsons

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When I interact with workers and mission leaders globally, I realize how privileged my learning experience has been here at Frontier Ventures. What an honor to learn global missiology from key mission leaders and thinkers over 35 years—including Ralph D. Winter! In this column, I will describe our learning process, how it has served the mission movement and how it can continue to do so into the future.

How does Frontier Ventures gain insight?

In 1976, when Ralph and Roberta Winter founded the U.S. Center for World Mission (now Frontier Ventures) they considered the role of missionary orders to be crucial to advance the Kingdom. Thus, we are a protestant missionary religious order. Members of religious orders do some things in different ways, which I will not outline here. One way is that when someone joins, they make a commitment to the core purposes and overall direction of the order. Here is how we describe that in our bylaws:

...the primary purpose of the Order shall be: to serve the mission enterprise by identifying barriers and pursuing solutions toward Kingdom breakthrough to see the gospel of Jesus Christ unleashed and unhindered among the least reached, so that “the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea” — Habakkuk 2:14.

In order to serve the mission enterprise well, we realized we needed to (1) listen to what global leaders were learning and experiencing. Then, we sought to (2) share with others what we were hearing; and (3) interpret what we were hearing and point out potential gaps in mission strategy and practice.

How did we accomplish this?

My first thought is what we called our weekly Frontier Fellowship meeting. Every Thursday night we would meet from 7:00 – 8:30 pm. Normally, there were two visiting speakers—usually from very different parts of the world in different kinds of ministry. These presenters (usually global workers) did not do their usual “pitch” of their ministry and often they found it to be a great time to share more in-depth to an audience that cared. While those of us on staff were often weary from a week of work—which never really ended—we were regularly encouraged to see what God was doing. While I often wished I didn’t have to go to the meeting, I rarely left it feeling it was a waste of time.

It was like a weekly missions conference, but it was much deeper than what most churches would want for such an event. We learned so much from these speakers — who might be just off the field from work among various people groups in Africa, Asia, Latin America or Europe.

After the two speakers shared, Ralph Winter would get up and “wrap up” the evening. He only shared 10-15 minutes, but I regularly thought what he shared was challenging and

profound—often inspiring.

What did we do with what we learned?

With all this great insight from people in a myriad of ministries from all over the world, we worked hard to communicate these insights we had gleaned through still other relationships with churches and mission agencies as well as through publishing in *Mission Frontiers*, the *IJFM* the *Global Prayer Digest* and William Carey Library. It fed into the Perspectives on the World Christian Movement course.

What’s next?

Since I worked in our media ministry back in those early days, I was running the sound system and recording the sessions on cassette tape. Over the last few years, we have digitized over 3,000 audio recordings (from other presentations too...not just the Frontier Fellowship meetings). We also have hundreds of files of writings from Ralph and Roberta Winter, Donald McGavran, and others.

We are working hard to make these available in various ways. Our intended audience is interested mission-oriented folks and field workers, mobilizers, trainers, etc. We hope this valuable content will give you something helpful to reflect on and apply to your life and ministry. 

I’d love to hear your thoughts and needs. You can reach me at: greg.parsons@frontierventures.org