

# MISSION FRONTIERS

ISSUE 35:5 | SEPT/OCT 2013

MISSIONFRONTIERS.ORG

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AN UNPRECEDENTED OPPORTUNITY  
/ **10** PENTECOST IN RAJASTHAN / **20** HOW TO BE  
A SAVVY INVESTOR IN WATER AND THE GOSPEL





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**MISSION  
FRONTIERS**

VOL.35, NO.5 / SEPT-OCT 2013  
ISSN 0889-9436

*Mission Frontiers is published six times a year.  
Call 330-626-3361 for address changes, donations.  
Editorial Office: E-mail: [rick.wood@uscwm.org](mailto:rick.wood@uscwm.org)  
Advertising: E-mail: [advertising@missionfrontiers.org](mailto:advertising@missionfrontiers.org)  
E-mail: [mission.frontiers@uscwm.org](mailto:mission.frontiers@uscwm.org)  
Website: [www.missionfrontiers.org](http://www.missionfrontiers.org)  
Address: 1605 E. Elizabeth St. • Pasadena, CA 91104*

*Rick Wood, Editor  
Katie Koch and Drew Shafer, Graphic Design  
Dan Eddy, Circulation  
Contents © 2013 by the U.S. Center for World Mission.  
The U.S. Center for World Mission is a member of Missio  
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# WHAT DOES GOD WANT THE CHURCH TO DO?



RICK WOOD  
/ EDITOR, MISSION  
FRONTIERS

A tall, rugged man stands at the bedside of his 11 year-old-son. The boy had been sick with a fever for days but now it is over. Lifting the bed-sheet and gazing down at his son's now lifeless body, he chokes as he speaks through sobs of grief, "My

poor boy, he was too good for this earth. God has called him home. I know he is much better off

in heaven, but then we loved him so. It is hard, hard to have him die!" He buries his head in his hands, his tall frame convulses with emotion.<sup>1</sup> His son was such a good boy who had endeared himself to everyone who knew him. Just recently he had told his Sunday School teacher he wanted to become a teacher or preacher of the gospel.<sup>2</sup> Now that dream was gone. This man's other son, just 8 years old, is now also very ill with the same dreadful fever. Would he die as well? How could he bear the grief of losing two children at the same time? He is physically strong from years of hard labor having grown up in great poverty, but his great strength is no match for this struggle. He had now risen to become an important man in his country but this disease is no respecter of person or position. Scriptures had been read and prayers offered but his son had died in spite of the best efforts of all the doctors and pastors.

There is nothing that can be done because this is February 20, 1862, and there is no cure for the typhoid fever that has just taken the life of "Willie" Lincoln, son of President Abraham Lincoln. The most powerful man in the United States and one of the greatest men in history could not keep his son from dying from a preventable disease because he did not understand that you cannot take your drinking water from the same river, the Potomac, that was also the city's sewer.

Tragically, this scene is repeated every minute of every day all around the world. Mothers and fathers likewise grieve over the loss of their children and all the dreams they had for them. Today, almost 2,000 children will die from dirty, disease-filled water.<sup>3</sup> In the time it takes you to read these two pages, five more children will die from preventable

waterborne diseases. Every year sixty million children are born into households that do not have clean water and sanitation.<sup>4</sup>

The question for us as the Church is whether Jesus wants us to stop such tragedies or is the God of heaven only concerned with getting the message of the gospel to every person, tribe and tongue?

## GOD HAS CALLED US TO DO BOTH

In past decades the "liberals" who have endorsed the "social gospel" of good works have also abandoned

the gospel of salvation by grace. There are also good Bible-believing Jesus followers who argue that we must focus on proclaiming the gospel. Starting on page 24, Ralph Winter makes a very cogent case that Jesus has asked us to do both—that *by caring for the needs of people and doing good works we actually empower the proclamation of the gospel and glorify God in the process*. In effect, without good works, our message of the love of God through Christ becomes empty and hollow, contradicting the very message we seek to proclaim. As the apostle John says in 1 John 3:17-18,

"If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth."

When Jesus sent out His disciples, did He tell them to just proclaim the gospel? In Luke 9:1-2, we see the answer.

"When Jesus had called the Twelve together, He gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases and He sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick."

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Jesus told His disciples to both heal the sick and proclaim the kingdom of God. In Matthew 5:14, Jesus says, “You are the light of the world.” Jesus goes on to tell us not to hide our light but to let the whole world see it. In Matthew 5:16 Jesus says,

“Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”

Clearly, Jesus is saying that our good deeds bring glory to God and encourage those around us to acknowledge God and glorify Him. Our life goal as believers should be to glorify God in all we do and to become more like Jesus. As we do, we should follow the model that Jesus gave us of caring for the needs of suffering people as well as proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom. Jesus did both. So should we. Demonstration and proclamation of the gospel go together.

## MISSIONARIES LEAD THE WAY

Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries missionaries intuitively followed the model of Jesus in caring for the needs of those they sought to bring to faith. In many parts of the world missionaries started the first hospitals, schools and universities. Was this a distraction from sharing the gospel or did it actually empower the spread of the gospel?

William Carey is a good example of one of these missionaries who did both demonstration and proclamation of the gospel. He translated Scripture into 40 different languages, protested social evils, stood against the murder and oppression of women, started schools and a college, campaigned for agricultural reform, introduced the idea of a savings bank and established the first newspaper

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## WHEN WE BRING THE DEMONSTRATION AND PROCLAMATION OF THE GOSPEL TOGETHER, IT IS THEN THAT PEOPLE WILL MOST CLEARLY SEE THE CHARACTER OF GOD AND PRAISE OUR FATHER IN HEAVEN.

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in an Oriental language. On and on it goes. His impact was so profound that many Indians, including Hindus, honor his work to this day. If an uneducated shoemaker from England can do all that, what can God do through us to change the world if we have the will to do so?


## LET'S DO AWAY WITH THE EXCUSES

The common argument is that we cannot meet all the needs out there so we must make proclaiming the gospel the highest priority. First, this is a pragmatic argument rather than a biblical one. It is a proposed remedy for the lack of giving and involvement of the Church in the mission of God. The great majority of funds collected in the Church stays within the church to bless the people of the church. Bigger buildings and programs to attract people to the church has been the priority rather than equipping believers to bring the demonstration and proclamation of the gospel to every people and every person.

Secondly, God has blessed the Evangelical community of believers world-wide with the resources to

tackle some of the toughest problems in the world, like providing clean water to the millions who desperately need it. But because the majority of believers are not living on mission with God, the needed resources are not being released to meet these needs and to disciple all peoples. So in reality the choice is not whether to care for people or proclaim the gospel. It is really a choice of whether the Church will decide to fully participate in the mission of God.

## THE RIGHT WAY TO DO IT

The task of providing clean water to those who need it is a doable task, but this is not about collecting a lot of money to send overseas to attack a problem. As we make clear in nearly every article, this mission of God is about coming alongside people in need as servants and advisors. It is not about doing things *for* people but rather helping them to provide this vital resource for themselves so that they consider it their water resource to develop and maintain. Done in this way, it will be there for them for many years to come. When we bring the demonstration and proclamation of the gospel together, it is then that people will most clearly see the character of God and praise our Father in heaven. 

<sup>1</sup> Keckley, Elizabeth. (1868) *Behind the Scenes*, London, England: Partridge and Oakey, Chapter 6, Willie Lincoln's Death-Bed.

<sup>2</sup> *The Death of Willie Lincoln*, <http://www.abrahamlincolnonline.org/lincoln/education/williedeath.htm>

<sup>3</sup> Child Health Epidemiology Reference Group (CHERG), 2012 and UNICEF Child Mortality Report, 2012

<sup>4</sup> UNICEF, 2006 [http://www.unicef.org/publications/files/Progress\\_for\\_Children\\_No.\\_5\\_-\\_English.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/publications/files/Progress_for_Children_No._5_-_English.pdf) page 3)





+ FEATURE

# Water + Gospel = transformation

AN UNPRECEDENTED OPPORTUNITY FOR THE GLOBAL CHURCH





Jonathan Wiles has been documenting the transformation that water and the gospel bring to communities for more than a decade. He currently serves as Vice President for Program Excellence at Living Water International, a Christian organization that implements WASH programs in partnership with local churches. Jonathan also chairs the steering committee of the Accord WASH Alliance, and is an instructor for Perspectives on the World Christian Movement. For more information, email [jonathan@water.cc](mailto:jonathan@water.cc) or visit [www.water.cc](http://www.water.cc).

## THE LAST UNREACHED PEOPLE GROUPS IN THE WORLD WILL ONLY BE REACHED BY THE LOVE OF GOD AS WE ADDRESS PHYSICAL NEEDS—THE FIRST OF THEM BEING WATER.”

— Dick Eastman, President, Every Home for Christ.



When we were children, we drank from mud holes, and many of our brothers and sisters died from it,” said Kunguru. “Our children will never know this kind of suffering, praise the Lord.” I was sitting with a group of Maasai women near a recently installed water system, under the acacia tree by a tin-roofed church in Kenya’s Rift Valley. I had come to listen to their stories and learn what it meant to lack access to safe water. That day, a decade ago, would be the first of many such conversations, and one that would always stay with me. That was the day I realized for myself that something as simple as clean water can be a sign of God’s kingdom.

### A CLEAR NEED

You have probably seen sobering statistics about the effects of poor water access. At any one time, half the hospital beds in the world are filled with people suffering from water-related diseases—diseases that are responsible for 2.2 million deaths each year. Children are particularly vulnerable; diarrhea caused by poor water and sanitation is the number one killer of children under the age of five in sub-Saharan Africa.

The health impact of poor water access may be the most obvious, but there is much more to it than that. Education suffers, as 443 million school days are lost each year to water-related disease. Livelihoods are dramatically affected when water sources are distant. Women most often bear responsibility for hauling water for use in the home; in sub-Saharan Africa, women lose 40 billion hours of labor hauling water each year—time they can’t spend with their families, tending gardens, or earning income. The real value of this lost time and health is difficult to measure, but in pure economic terms, every dollar invested in water and sanitation is estimated to yield *four* dollars in improved use of time and reduced health expenses.

How widespread is this problem? When it comes to water, the most consistent measure we have is “access to improved water sources,” a number that’s been tracked globally for more than 20 years. In 2000, 1.1 billion people were declared to be without access to improved water. The number fell to 884 million in 2008, and again to 783 million in 2012. While this demonstrates great progress, it doesn’t tell the whole story. The measurement of “improved water sources” doesn’t account for water safety or sustainability—recent estimates of people drinking *unsafe* water range from 1.8 to 1.9 billion globally, with perhaps 3.8 billion having difficulty getting *regular* access to safe water.

The numbers can be staggering, but to people like Kunguru and her fellow tribeswomen I visited all those years ago, it is a problem that is real and personal. For them, water has a fundamental impact on every other area of their wellbeing: health, education, economic development, and gender equality. Without water, individuals, households, and communities simply cannot live up to their God-given potential.

## UNDERSTANDING THE TASK

It's clear that something must be done. But as we address this critical problem, there are a couple of hard-won lessons we need to remember:

### 1. It's not just about the hardware

It's easy to think about water as a simple engineering challenge—one that can be solved with the right kind of well or the right kind of pump. In the 1950s and 60s, everyone thought about it that way. In the 70s and 80s came a realization that without good *sanitation*, a community just couldn't keep their water safe; after that, the two were generally addressed together and referred to as “Watsan.” In more recent years it has become clear that a community's behaviors are *at least* as important as its infrastructure—the simple act of hand washing, for instance,

**WE MAY HAVE THE BEST OF INTENTIONS, BUT IT IS EASY FOR US TO DO MORE HARM THAN GOOD. IF DEVELOPMENT IS TO BE TRANSFORMATIONAL, IT NEEDS TO BE LED BY THE LOCAL COMMUNITY.**



can reduce disease transmission by up to 53%. Today, these three aspects of development are usually integrated into “Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene,” or “WASH.”

### 2. Communities must lead their own development

Those of us from relatively rich countries often see development challenges that seem straightforward on the surface—like lack of safe water—and take it on ourselves to “fix” the problem. We bring our financial resources, knowledge of *how* things should be done, and how *quickly* they should be done. We may have the best of intentions, but it is easy for us to do more harm than good. If development is to be transformational, it needs to be led by the local community, driven by local demand, and use local resources whenever possible. Being agents of transformation within their own communities helps people gain dignity, recognize the image of God in themselves, and take on their

roles as stewards of God's good gifts.

“Using a pump is like carrying a chicken egg. You better be gentle.” Foday Massalay is full of useful advice on this subject—he is the caretaker of the hand pump that stands across the road from the church in the center of Kakata, Liberia. A year ago, the 16 nearby households organized themselves and elected a “water committee”—three women and two men, including Foday, who set the rules for the pump's use, and manage its operation and maintenance. They developed a fee system, in which a household purchases a small, pink ticket each month for the local equivalent of 50¢, and must show the ticket each time they collect water. So far,

it has used the funds to purchase spare parts for the pump, erect a fence to keep animals at bay, and saved enough to cover the cost of any conceivable maintenance expense. The committee chose to keep its accounts transparent by recording its rules, meeting notes, income, and expenses in a school notebook that anyone in the community can ask to see. “Sustainability” has become quite a buzzword in recent years. As outsiders, we can't *produce* sustainable projects. Every community is *already* sustainable, at least to some degree, or it wouldn't exist. It's our role to discover the ways God has empowered a community to sustain itself, and to *cultivate* those things. Almost always, ideas and methods that emerge from this kind of collaboration are better than anything we could have brought from the outside.

## THE ROLE OF LOCAL CHURCHES

The Church is God's primary agent of transformation in the world; a *local* church is both an agent and a sign of God's kingdom within its community—a body of living witnesses to God's work in that place—and is central to the transformation of that community. The development of water, sanitation, and hygiene services can be a natural arena for local churches to live out this transformative role, working toward a healthy and vital community, and loving their neighbors well.

WASH has developed beyond infrastructure alone, to include the growth of communities toward improved behaviors—this requires local champions, who are trusted and have a long-term presence. The growing importance of community leadership and local management necessitate thoughtful messaging, demonstration, and good facilitation. These are roles that can naturally fall to local churches, and can be an avenue for cultivating healthy relationships within communities.



“Water helps us to live the gospel here,” Pastor Matthew says with a smile. He sits on the stool across from me, in front of his home in Kadapuram Village,<sup>1</sup> in central India. The small church he pastors is made up of low-caste converts from Hinduism. They have always been outcasts in this community and denied access to even the most basic of services, including the hand-dug well at the center of the village. That all changed three years ago, when, in partnership with Living Water International, the church approached the village elders, offering to install a well on their small church tract for the benefit of the community. The well was drilled, a hand pump put in place, and the church, now with the best water in town, made it available to everyone. Today, the people of Kadapuram walk to their local church every day for water, and the village elders work with Pastor Matthew to manage and maintain the well. “When we hold something that has so much value, and share it readily, doors are opened.”

## ROLE OF THE NORTH AMERICAN CHURCH


In the 1920s, the Church in North America had a falling-out with itself. Some Christians advocated for a “social gospel” centered on serving the poor; others were determined to hold on to the “fundamentals” that focused on personal sin and salvation. This division was a defining factor in the North American Church for much of the 20th century, but the rift is being healed as new generations of Christians are recognizing how false that divide is. The 1974 Lausanne Covenant was one of the century’s most influential statements on the Church’s theology of mission; on the topic of Christian social responsibility, the Covenant confessed that the Church had wrongly considered evangelism and social responsibility to be mutually exclusive, and that both were necessary to be fully obedient to Jesus Christ.<sup>2</sup> The “integral mission” movement emerged from the Latin American church in the 1970s, and has helped us further recognize that the proclamation and demonstration of the gospel are inseparable. “It is not simply that evangelism and social involvement are to be done *alongside* each other. Rather, in integral mission our proclamation has social consequences as we call people to love and repentance in *all* areas of life. And our social involvement has evangelistic consequences as we bear witness to the transforming grace of Jesus Christ.”<sup>3</sup> Churches across North America are beginning to echo this message.

Parkview Church, in the western suburbs of Chicago, got involved in water four years ago, in partnership with Living Water International. Their initial goal was to collectively give enough money to fund the capital cost of four water wells that Living Water would be installing in northern India, as part of a campaign called Advent Conspiracy. “I didn’t know if it was a good idea, frankly,” says Dave Davis, one of Parkview’s pastors. “The church was facing a financial deficit that year, and I didn’t

know what to expect.” As it happens, the church gave enough to fund 18 wells that Christmas, *and* meet their other financial obligations. “The generosity was shocking—and it didn’t stop. After that, people started helping one another with their car payments and electric bills,” says Dave. “We learned through that experience that our church—and THE Church—isn’t supposed to hold onto its blessings, but to pass them on to others in need.” Today, Parkview continues to give sacrificially, and takes four volunteer teams a year to India, Nicaragua, and El Salvador. Parkview’s experience has changed the way they think about global mission—“We got excited about being a part of something so much bigger than ourselves; we realized that together, if we step out in faith, we can make a difference.” Their radical obedience has attracted new people into the church, has opened new opportunities to reach people in their own neighborhood, and given them a reputation for being the hands and feet of Jesus—both near and far.

## A TIME LIKE NO OTHER

Today, churches around the world are recognizing their call to reach out with the whole gospel, both in their own neighborhoods and across the globe. Mission agencies that have traditionally focused on evangelism are seeing the need to address people’s physical and social needs. Relief and development agencies that have always focused on social transformation among the poor are recognizing their need to bear more consistent witness to the gospel of Jesus within their work. An incredible amount of time and investment in the past 20 years has helped us understand how to multiply the impact of water, sanitation, and hygiene in communities. The time has never been more ripe for the “whole Church to take the whole gospel to the whole world,” as the Lausanne Covenant charges us to do, and to start with water.

Just over a century ago London and New York were centers of infectious disease. Diarrhea, typhoid, and dysentery killed as many children as they do today in sub-Saharan Africa. Industrialization boosted income, but child mortality and life expectancy hardly changed—*until* safe water and sanitation broke the cycle of disease. We have safe water to thank for half the mortality reduction in the United States between 1900 and 1930. Can you imagine that kind of transformation happening in today’s Haiti, India, or South Sudan? Can you imagine local churches—with the support of the global Church—being at the center of it, to the glory of God? 

<sup>1</sup> Community name changed for security reasons

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.lausanne.org/en/documents/lausanne-covenant.html>

<sup>3</sup> Micah Network Statement on Integral Mission, 2001: [http://www.micahnetwork.org/sites/default/files/doc/page/mn\\_integral\\_mission\\_declaration\\_en.pdf](http://www.micahnetwork.org/sites/default/files/doc/page/mn_integral_mission_declaration_en.pdf)

# Pentecost in R

## WATER AND LIVING WATER IN INDIA

PAUL DARILEK



Paul Darilek as former water well driller, missionary and bean farmer, has experienced the need for clean water first hand. During his 10 years as a missionary in El Salvador, he was hospitalized more than once with kidney problems resulting from lack of access to safe drinking water. His ministry was transformed when Living Water International taught him to train a Salvadoran drilling crew to partner with local churches to “offer a cup of water in Jesus’ name.” Today Paul works as Living Water’s Senior Director of Communications. Learn more at: [www.water.cc](http://www.water.cc) Email: [paul@water.cc](mailto:paul@water.cc)

**T**odi is a tiny village in the dry hills of Rajasthan, India. Only 0.01% of Rajasthanis are Christian, so, the visitor wonders, how did Bethel Prayer House get here?

Hindi-inflected voices spilled from the cinder block church we visited. Worship songs flowing past resting cows, past statues of Hanuman—the monkey god — and past the India Mark II hand pump where the Christians’ Hindu neighbors collected water offered to them in Jesus’ name.

We asked how the church was started and the people regaled us with stories. It all began, they said, when an itinerant pastor named Promod<sup>1</sup> prayed in Jesus’ name for a woman named Nirmala. That prayer, they said, miraculously cured her. She had been sick for two years. Nirmala and her husband Kalu had spent 40,000 rupees (\$720), a fortune by their standards, on traditional and medical cures, but nothing worked. Her uterus came out of her body, and they had no idea what a prolapsed uterus was. They were frightened. She was sick in bed for months and they had no idea what was wrong. Then, they said, a prayer to Jesus cured her.

Kalu wanted to know more about this Jesus who had saved his wife’s life. He enrolled in the only Christian seminary he knew of. He started a church, Bethel Prayer House in Todi Village. News of Bethel’s healing prayer ministry, Nirmala’s story, and those of others spread.

The new Christians prayed for Waloo, who had been bed-ridden for two years. They said a huge cancerous tumor took over the greater portion of his neck, and they said it disappeared after persistent prayer to Jesus. Waloo pointed to a stretch mark on his throat where the tumor had been. It looked like a scar. Today he sells ice cream from a bicycle-mounted ice chest. He says he loves his job because it gives him a chance to tell children about Jesus.

Patrus, a 12-year-old from neighboring Mota Para Village had been born deaf and mute. He walked to church in Todi on Sundays because he liked how their worship made him feel. Then one day at church he shouted his first word: “*Alleluia!*” He could hear! His proud parents enrolled him in school. They couldn’t read and write themselves, but they bragged that Patrus could write his name. We handed him a pen and paper so he could show off and he wrote a Hindi word that meant “weak minded.” His cruel teacher had taught him to write that word as his name to mock him, but to the Christians in Todi and in Mota Para Patrus was a miracle.

At the edges of their seats, *everyone* at Bethel Church told stories like these. Frankly, it was so much it was hard to believe. They went on and on in the most matter-of-fact way: the lame walking, captives set free and the sick healed.



# Rajasthan

At the risk of seeming incredulous (and perhaps unfaithful), we asked to see all these people for ourselves. We spent the ensuing days going from village to village, visiting the lame who walked, the deaf who heard, captives set free. Everyone affirmed the stories. To them, this was the plain-and-simple reality in which they lived.

**AS WATER WELLS BECAME THE DEMONSTRATION OF CHRISTIAN FAITH, PEOPLE BEGAN TO LISTEN TO ITS PROCLAMATION. NOW THE CHRISTIANS' ACTIONS, PERSONAL STORIES, AND THEIR SCRIPTURE ALL DEMONSTRATED WHAT THAT FAITH LOOKED LIKE IN ACTION.**

Few cultures if any resemble the first century roots of our faith more than Promod's. These signs and wonders were a page right out of Acts of the Apostles, and their socio-political reality bears an uncanny resemblance to first-century Rome also.

Like Rome in Jesus' time, the "kingdom of this world" ruling Promod's land is one in which state power and polytheistic religious identities are intertwined. Christians are few, they're largely ignored, sometimes persecuted, and they're gaining ground among the poor, sick and marginalized. The Holy Spirit is bursting into the world through apparent nobodies—an itinerant evangelist, a healed woman, a cancer-stricken man, a deaf-mute boy, everyday disciples, their courage and conviction about a man named Jesus, the God of all things who came to live among us in flesh and blood, who healed, still heals, and gives his followers power to heal too.

But all was not well in Todi. One of the unfortunate first century resemblances was that followers of Jesus were sometimes persecuted. Many of Promod's neighbors didn't like the idea of a foreign religion gaining ground in their midst. This shouldn't come as a surprise to the American Christian. Though the United States was founded only two-and-a-quarter centuries ago with protections for our religious freedom, the FBI documents more than 1,400 religion-based hate-crimes in the United States each year.<sup>2</sup> Now imagine the shoe on the other foot in India, where religion has far deeper

roots as one uninterrupted, continuously unfolding religious identity since Neolithic times.

One day, walking home alone from a housewarming party, Promod was surrounded by a mob of 70 to 80 men. They told him they didn't want him to preach anymore. He recognized some of them as members of a local political party known for tapping into religious enthusiasms and hatreds for its own promotion. The situation got tense, Promod was attacked, beaten and left by the side of the road to reconsider his faith.

Aside from an actual experience of the living Christ, there aren't many reasons to be a Christian in Todi Village. There are no social rewards, and being beaten up by 70 men is quite a deterrent, but Promod got back up with more resolve than ever.

He got in touch with Living Water International, wanting to form a partnership that would help him bless his non-Christian neighbors in ways they would tangibly understand. Rajasthan is a dry place, and India



is a land of contradictions. People in these villages know that their country is a technology leader in the world. They know that India produces the drill rigs and water pumps used all over their continent and in Africa, but all of that is inaccessible to them because they are poor.

Then Promod and his fellow Christians began drilling water wells to offer clean drinking water in Jesus' name to entire villages at a time.

At first the reaction was not entirely positive. People saw Christians drilling wells, and they saw the people with access to those wells becoming more prosperous. They had more free time for enterprise, spent less time hauling water, got sick less, had healthier kids, and attended school more. The Christians themselves felt blessed. They said that their



crops were yielding more, and that wherever the gospel went, people prospered. Whether their new prosperity was a result of God's blessing, or a new outlook, or the benefits of safe drinking water—or the intermingling of all those factors—is anybody's guess, but at first some non-Christians didn't like it.

"As prosperity increased," said Promod, "so persecution increased." But then something changed. People noticed that these wells were not just for Christians. In fact, it was quite the opposite. It didn't matter to Promod or his Christian friends that the people they offered water to were Hindus, or low caste, or not from the same village. In Promod's eyes, they were just people created by and loved by God, by their neighbors, and by nameless Christian friends on the other side of the world.

The wells were symbols of love, demonstrations of the gospel, signs of this other kingdom where things are upside down, a kingdom to be inherited by the poor in spirit.

In the hills of Rajasthan there are temples everywhere, even in very poor villages. There are marble mines, and outside

them beautifully carved marble statues of Hindu gods, lined up for sale, waiting to find a temple home. Religious people make offerings, pool their time and money and spend them on these things—but *water wells*? That was something new. They were something the government might provide, but never an expression of faith in God.


As water wells became the *demonstration* of Christian faith, people began to listen to its *proclamation*. Now the Christians' actions, personal stories, and their scripture all demonstrated what that faith looked like in action. The Christians were the ones who reached out in love to heal others. They cured the sick. They offered a cup of water to the least of their brothers and believed that when they did, they were doing the same for Jesus Christ who asked to be seen and loved in the least of our brothers.

"The wells became like outposts where I could talk to people about Jesus," Promod said.

Before long he was welcome wherever he went.

Now when someone in that group of men who had attacked Promod spoke ill of him they were speaking ill of a man who cared for the children in the village and kept them healthy. Now Promod found himself being invited into people's homes. After demonstrating God's love by offering clean water, people were more willing to listen to him talk about the *living water* of the gospel. Most didn't respond by becoming Christians themselves, but some did.

More importantly, Promod and his Christian brothers and sisters now find themselves in a world where they can speak and act freely, and the Holy Spirit can do the rest.

"Water is melting away persecution," Promod said, "and it is opening doors for the gospel. Now I'm invited into people's homes. I am seen with respect." Today Promod is a respected member of the community. He's the guy who, along with his brothers and sisters in faith, drilled the clean water well at the school where children used to cross a dangerous road to climb into a dangerous pit to collect water. The teacher at the school is a Christian, part of the 0.01%, and life is safer for him too. Promod and his friends are the ones who offered water with no strings attached to their neighbors in villages where there are no Christians, yet. He's the guy whose friends tell miraculous stories, and all are welcome to join him and his friends at Bethel House of Prayer in Todi Village. 

<sup>1</sup> Pastor Promod asked that his last name and those of all featured in this story be withheld for security purposes.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/ucr/hate-crime/2011/narratives/victims>



# Watering and Planting

## THE INTERPLAY OF WATER AND CHURCH PLANTING IN WEST AFRICA

JOHN DALLMANN



John Dallmann has engaged in water development and church planting as a missionary engineer with Converge Worldwide (Ethiopia and Cameroon), and as water and sanitation advisor and country director with Samaritan's Purse. He is currently serving as CEO for Engineering Ministries International which endeavors to blend the design professions and mission to serve the poor and unreached around the world. You may contact him at [jdallmann@emiworld.org](mailto:jdallmann@emiworld.org)

**M**uch of my career has been focused on implementing WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene) programs in three African countries and consulting on others in Asia and Latin America. Many Christian implementers of WASH programming truly want to integrate their efforts with the gospel. But it is not always clear how that should look. Attempts at developing spiritual components to WASH programs often include things like regular staff devotions, Bible studies or adding evangelism and discipleship personnel to the team.

My journey has led me to explore spiritual intentionality beyond simply adding spiritual components to water programs. The catalyst for this is one phrase from Christ's Great Commission in Matthew 28 where Jesus says, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations... teaching them to obey everything I commanded you...." The phrase "teaching them to obey everything I commanded you" speaks to me of the ultimate goal of gospel ministry. To truly integrate gospel ministry with water development, can we stop short of making our objective the establishment of fully trained disciples and the planting of churches?

The following is a discussion of lessons learned while trying to join two outcomes: the implementation of excellent WASH programs and the multiplication of churches. There is much more to discuss and learn, but I prayerfully hope this encourages dialogue and leads to greater spiritual impact through water development.

### MAINTAINING TWO GOALS WITH EQUAL INTENTIONALITY

Christian relief and development organizations often don't adopt church planting as their mandate. Their expertise lies in developing sustainable, viable and transforming programs that impact the poor, vulnerable and needy. They employ experts in behavior change, monitoring, programming, water development, health, and agriculture. Most team members have little practical experience with spiritual ministry or in planting churches. They often see the need for addressing spiritual development, but have trouble knowing how to do it.

Christian mission agencies and churches, on the other hand, often focus on church planting, but struggle with all that goes into thoughtful community development. The many needs for clean water, good hygiene, and adequate sanitation push them to engage in WASH activities, but the complexities of doing it well are not easy for them to manage. Activities like catalyzing lasting behavior change in hygiene, initiating self-help methods of latrine construction, establishing viable water committees, creating local supply chains for spare parts, training local technicians to support themselves, avoiding dependency, and walking with the community until these important pieces are really established, seems beyond their reach. Is it even possible to do both water development and church planting with excellence?

Two years ago, I was a part of developing a strategy to open up a new field of outreach in a very poor West African nation. Our initial baseline surveys revealed that this particular



region had a population of 65,000 people and their primary needs were for water, food, and health. We also discovered that there were absolutely no churches or Christians in any of the villages, and that the locals were predominately nominal Muslims. The neighboring regions had a few Christians and churches that were excited about partnering together with us to reach this physically and spiritually needy region.

Working together, the church provided us with trained church planters, who we in turn intentionally integrated into our hygiene promotion, emergency feeding and livestock programs. These local evangelists seamlessly engaged in meeting both the physical and spiritual needs of the people. They also intentionally developed plans to share Christ in a culturally appropriate way with each household in the villages we served. The technical staff worked alongside these evangelists to coordinate integration and maintain focus on excellent programming. The regional team knew from the beginning that we had two equally important and vital goals: 1) Addressing the need for water, food and better health with excellent programming, and 2) Planting vibrant, evangelical churches. We knew the importance of both goals and we developed outcomes and indicators that provided a pathway to accomplishing both (Yes, you can develop spiritual outcomes and indicators!). Through the power of the Holy Spirit, God used these efforts to see many come to Christ and two fragile churches were birthed. Leaders are now being disciplined in their faith and are being connected to our partner churches. We were also able to see significant physical impact in the lives of those with whom we worked through increased access to clean water, improved health and hygiene practices and enhanced resilience to food insecurity.

### DEVELOPING THE TEAM IN BOTH DISCIPLINES

Holding two goals with equal intentionality will never be realized if leadership isn't in full agreement of the importance

of each. But reality is that people tend to do the things for which they are trained in and neglect the areas for which they have no expertise. Jesus highlights this in Luke 6:40 when he says "The student is not above the teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like their teacher." The key is then to design a conduit that gives leaders knowledge of both water development and church planting.

More than twenty years ago I had the awesome privilege of working alongside a young man in Ethiopia named Fikre. Fikre had technical training as a water technician and also had the spiritual gift of evangelism. I was amazed

by the seamless integration of Christian witness into his day-to-day role as water team leader. Whether helping community volunteers digging trenches or constructing spring catchments with local laborers, he had a God-given ability to share Christ with those around him. As a result, dozens of people came to faith in Jesus and a growing church was established in that region. He was a wonderful example of integrating water and church planting until the Lord took him home at a relatively young age.

Since working with Fikre was my first experience in ministry overseas, I thought it was imperative that I find staff with this unique gift-mix of evangelism and water development. But in the years and decades to follow, God never brought anyone quite like him into my life. I was forced to figure out how to make it work with both technical types and ministry types working together toward common goals. I had to develop creative ways to train and disciple water staff to gain an appreciation and love for church planting. I also had to walk alongside ministry staff to train and develop in them an appreciation for excellence in water development. A few times, I had to go through the painful process of releasing those who through their actions demonstrated that they really had only one of the goals at heart and were thwarting progress. But when we persevered in this goal of developing in everyone a heart for both water development and church planting, God seemed to bless our efforts.

### WALKING WITH THE COMMUNITY UNTIL IT WORKS

As the world quickens its pace through improved technology and instant communications, expectations are increasing along with it. We want to do more, for less and in shorter periods of time. This is true of the relief and development world that is bounded by donor preferences,



budget years and planning timetables. NGOs are forced to monitor impact and produce measurable results after a certain period of time or potentially lose funding. Mission organizations are feeling the pressure too...to see spiritual results quickly or move resources to more responsive fields. This is not all bad. We should be held accountable for our work and not be allowed to continue plugging away on projects that are not bearing fruit. But the other side of the issue is that a better future takes time to build. Local communities and churches don't always develop at the same pace as budgets prescribe.

All of these pressures to predict, produce and publish results can fly in the face of seeing excellent development and church planting accomplished. Each community is unique and will need to follow its own path to sustained change – spiritually and physically. And we need to be patient since this process often takes years. Any short-cuts will only produce artificial results that satisfy headquarters and donors but don't bring about true change.


While doing water development and church planting among Muslims in northern Cameroon, our team worked hard to progress at the same pace as the community. This was not always easy and there were times when it took years for a community to be ready. In one instance, villagers told us that they were waiting for the chief to die before constructing their water well because he wasn't convinced that their contaminated source made them sick. In other places, the community was active and worked diligently to realize a water project within a few months. At times, we pulled the community along before they were ready in order to complete the project by deadline. But whenever we did that, it became clear months down the road that proper foundations of belief and trust had not been laid and the community was not maintaining their water source. On the church planting side, we sometimes struggled with moving too quickly before critical foundations were laid and the leadership established. And the results were often negative for the young church.

**BUT REALITY IS THAT PEOPLE  
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Patience and perseverance is needed to reach each goal.

One day after doing a refugee food distribution, an older Muslim woman came up to me and said something I'll never forget. She said, "I've watched you Christians over the years... helping us get clean water so our children don't die from diarrhea and helping us when we are sick through your hospitals and clinics, and even helping us with food when we have fled war and are hungry. We know that you love us... and we know that Jesus Christ loves us and he is true." She had been watching for years knowing that truth bears the test of time. The joining of water development and church planting takes time and we need to be ready to give it the time that is needed to see lasting change emerge.

### THE GOSPEL RUNNING ON ALL CYLINDERS

In my experience, the seamless integration of church planting and excellent water development can be a powerful and effective way to participate in God's kingdom. When churches, Christian NGOs and mission agencies combine their strengths to walk with communities until both goals are achieved the gospel comes alive and the world can "see [our] good deeds and praise [our] Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16). 



FRANK GREAVES



Frank Greaves is Tearfund's Advisor for Water and Sanitation. He trained in field engineering and worked for UK Water Authorities before spending 10 years overseas in Honduras, Tanzania, and Turkmenistan. Frank's current role, which began in 2006, is to support Tearfund's WASH programs to be as effective as possible, ensuring that good practice is shared and adopted in all major WASH programs. Of particular interest to Tearfund are the opportunities for the local church to engage in WASH.

water and poverty

## ONE ORGANIZATION'S APPROACH

A CONVERSATION WITH TEARFUND'S FRANK GREAVES

*Tearfund is an organization that was born in the 1960s out of The Evangelical Alliance in the UK. It is recognized for its professional expertise in development, disaster response, and advocacy, and follows the biblical mandate that helping communities in need is central to the purpose of local churches, wherever they are. Water and sanitation are major areas of focus for Tearfund as it works with local church partners and disaster response teams in more than 40 countries around the globe.*

**Mission Frontiers:** At Tearfund, you talk quite a bit about the interconnectedness of material and spiritual need. Tell us about that.

**Frank Greaves:** Tearfund is grounded in the principle of integral mission (from the Latino term “misión integral”). To us, this embodies the full gospel, representing both the voice and the hands of Jesus. We do not separate demonstration and proclamation, believing that we are here to serve, love, and have compassion—to walk with the poor, identify with them, and to know them by name.

Before I came on staff here in London, my wife and I were on the field for ten years, working with the skills and knowledge that we had; my wife Laura is a nurse, and I am a water engineer. On a daily basis we were able to talk and engage with those that we served—local staff and partners, community members and pastors—talking about the work we were doing, our faith, and what motivated us to be there. To me, the one-to-one relationships we were able to build during those years exemplify what I am talking about. It's about sharing—because, of course, we learn and are ourselves transformed as we take part in integral mission.

At Tearfund, I'd say that we ultimately view poverty as broken relationships—with God, with ourselves, one another, and with our environment.

**MF:** One of the areas where Tearfund focuses, and the area of your own expertise, is Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH). How does WASH fit into your work among the poor?

**FG:** WASH is so fundamental. It's the aspect of development that has the most direct causal influence on all the rest: health, education, economic poverty, food security, gender equality, environmental sustainability, the list goes on. On a personal level, every time I visit partner churches and communities to assess WASH projects, I am struck by the way water and sanitation affect peoples' dignity—particularly women, children, and the elderly.

**MF:** Has Tearfund had different models or approaches to water development or WASH in its history? What did they look like, what



**did you learn from them, and how has the journey shaped your current approaches?**

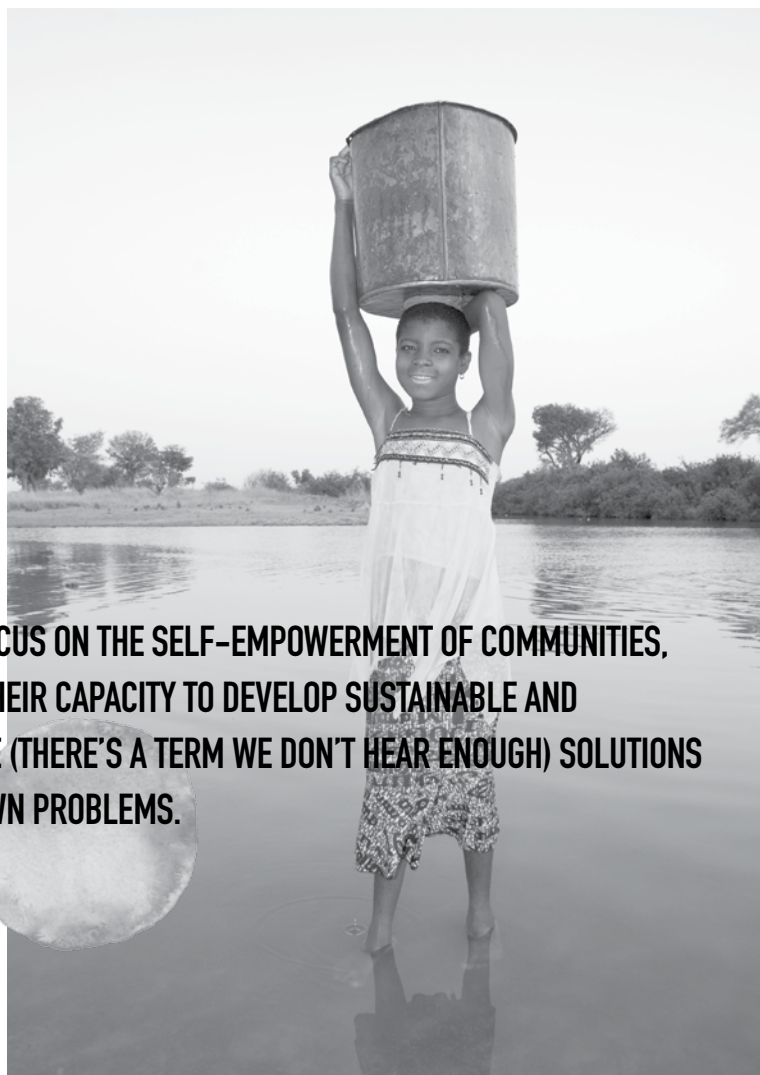
**FG:** Tearfund began working with water development very early on, as early as the late 60s. We allocated resources to digging wells, drilling boreholes and the like. In those days we had a bit of a top-down approach, where the emphasis was on what we were doing in the community. We now focus on the self-empowerment of communities, building their capacity to develop sustainable and replicable (there's a term we don't hear enough) solutions to their own problems. In the early years we thought in terms of "WatSan"—Water and Sanitation—with a focus on the technical side of things that mostly involved engineers building systems. Usually these were combined with health and hygiene projects, but these days we see that the full impact of water, sanitation, and hygiene can only be realized in an integrated approach. Hence... "WASH." Incidentally, the "A" in WASH is also important to us—we use it to refer to Advocacy, which is an important component of all this. Governments are the ultimate service providers, and we should work with governments at both the local and national levels to build their capacity.

In addition to the integration of the Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene components of WASH, another central focus is on a demand-led livelihoods approach to this and other areas of development, as opposed to a supply-driven approach. This means that the demand and stimulus of any particular project come from analysis and decision-making by future beneficiaries in communities themselves. It starts with enabling the community to perceive and prioritize its own needs, and to understand its roles and responsibilities in addressing their own needs. This approach can include use of tools like Community Led Total Sanitation (CLTS), Participatory Hygiene and Sanitation Transformation (PHAST), and Water Safety Plans—a particular favorite of mine.

Social marketing is another demand-led livelihoods approach. So, for example, instead of supplying latrine materials for, 500 households, we would prefer to work through an empowerment process to stimulate demand for household latrines, and to work in parallel with local artisans and vendors to build or sell latrine materials that local people can afford. A latrine that is basic, but regularly used and well maintained, does the job.

**MF: What does it take for a community or church to recognize that the development process is theirs, and not owned by a government or agency?**

**FG:** Well, there are the tools themselves... when the process is demand-led, people naturally come to see the causal link—expressing the notion that "we did this," "this is our journey." A key underlying issue with these tools is good facilitation by the implementing agency, with regular close follow-up. We've been focusing on church-community mobilization processes that enable the local church to play the key role of facilitator—helping its own community identify not only its collective needs and aspirations, but how the community itself can begin to address those needs.



**WE NOW FOCUS ON THE SELF-EMPOWERMENT OF COMMUNITIES, BUILDING THEIR CAPACITY TO DEVELOP SUSTAINABLE AND REPLICABLE (THERE'S A TERM WE DON'T HEAR ENOUGH) SOLUTIONS TO THEIR OWN PROBLEMS.**

**MF: How can agencies and churches in the global North participate in integral mission-based WASH programming without creating dependency?**

**FG:** Raising awareness of good development practices and methods is important. I get quite a number of inquiries each week from well-intentioned individuals and churches

who want to “provide water” for a particular community, orphanage, or school in less developed countries.. Their heart is in the right place, but their view is generally top-down. It’s quite rewarding to help them understand the real scope of what the community needs—what it takes to set up local water management, sustainable local supply chains, and integrate it with the broader issues of hygiene behaviors and sanitation services. It’s not just a matter of drilling the well or installing the right pump. How can we use the money we’re investing to bring sustainability, to stimulate people to really own and feel accountable to their project?

At some point in the future, the local church will be there, but we may not even have access to any particular country in the future. We can’t expect communities and churches to sit around waiting for external funding. The “aha” moment that I often hear over the phone as enquirers come to understand these issues reflects this core belief that we’ve had as a sector over the years.

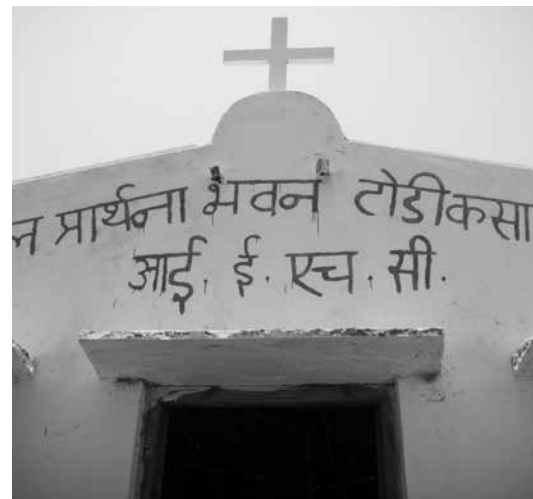
**MF: Talk to us about how local churches get involved with WASH in their own communities.**

**FG:** Well, in 2007, when we were at the midpoint of the fifteen-year Millennium Development Goal (MDG) period, a colleague and I began to do some research on this very issue. We wanted to understand the impact of

ended up happening. As we looked at data and stories of impact, a pattern emerged—a set of impactful roles that churches characteristically play in their communities: 1) messenger, 2) demonstrator, 3) implementer, 4) advocate, and 5) guardian of the benefits of WASH. We explored the pattern and elaborated on it because we wanted to see how these roles were adopted and developed by churches. We wrote about the pattern, with case studies illustrating it, in a document called “Keeping Communities Clean,” which you can read online.

This report, and our experience as a whole, counteracts the notion that WASH is technical, and that there is no real place for the Church in this sector. The Church has an amazing role—a foundational role in WASH.

It’s also important to note that we work beyond the bounds of traditional churches, bringing our Christian principles and witness into dialogue with communities of other faiths. We’ve had great success working with Islamic mullahs and their flocks in some otherwise hostile areas, as we seek transformation amongst the communities we support. We’re able to build bridges of trust as they see our integrity and ability to follow through, rather than just talk—they’ve heard quite enough empty words. It’s also interesting to note that discussing good hygiene and sanitation practices, something that both our Old Testament and the Qur’an speak about, is an easy way to



churches we had supported during the first half of the MDGs (2000-2007), to predict how our support of local churches would impact the second half of the MDG period (2008-2015).

We didn’t set out to develop a model for church engagement in hygiene and sanitation, but that’s what

open the conversation. Ultimately, the fact that we—and more importantly, our local partners—are people of faith reaching out to the poor in these communities—sharing meals together, talking about our experiences, and loving with no ulterior motive—all this speaks volumes.



**MF: Which of the roles outlined in “Keeping Communities Clean” have been the most effective, in your experience to date? Can you tell a couple stories of particular communities or churches to illustrate?**

**FG:** All of the roles can be transformative, but I think the first, most fundamental role of “messenger” can be so effective and straightforward—and is clearly biblical. This is a role that depends on good facilitation and natural leaders, which can sit very naturally with the Church.

The role of messenger is generally combined with that of “demonstrator,” obviously, because whether we’re talking about the gospel or just good hygiene and sanitation practices, these should go together. The combination of just these two can be very simple but extremely powerful.

There’s also the role of “advocate”—speaking out on behalf of the poor, which is clearly a biblical idea as well. A great example of this is the work of Tearfund’s


is their work as a “guardian” in maintaining WASH services for the long term. The last time I visited Kigezi Diocese, was about three years ago. I went to see some of the area’s spring protection areas and gravity water systems, and the way that they were kept up and utilized, and the functionality and transparency that characterize them. One would easily be mistaken to think that they were constructed two months ago, but they were in fact completed 16 years ago. The household subscription service that was originally started to gather funds for maintaining systems has often been loaned to beneficiaries of the spring project, for example, to purchase seeds. And so the program is gaining benefits not only attributable to greater access of safe water, but also to the livelihoods of individual families. The need to follow up their programs is well understood by Kigezi Diocese. Much of the follow-up is done by volunteer women from within those churches who visit villages every month to be sure

services are working and continue to have an impact in each community.

**THE FACT THAT WE—AND MORE IMPORTANTLY, OUR LOCAL PARTNERS—  
ARE PEOPLE OF FAITH REACHING OUT TO THE POOR IN THESE COMMUNITIES  
—SHARING MEALS TOGETHER, TALKING ABOUT OUR EXPERIENCES, AND  
LOVING WITH NO ULTERIOR MOTIVE—ALL THIS SPEAKS VOLUMES.**

**MF: What do you think is possible in the next 10 years in terms of the global Church and WASH? What would need to happen for that vision to take place?**

**FG:** Well, Tearfund’s official 10-year vision is to see 50 million people released from material and spiritual poverty through a network of 100,000 local churches. My own personal vision as I think about it today—not speaking for Tearfund here—is that governments and agencies would increasingly look to the Church as a natural partner in serving the poor through access to water, sanitation, and hygiene. And I mean a true partner, not just a convenient grassroots organization or a conduit for their own projects. This would have all sorts of implications for finance, management, governance, and all of the background support WASH services need.

We once had a visitor at a staff conference at Tearfund who stood on the podium and said, “I believe that the days of the conventional ‘northern’ development agency are numbered,” and I think he may be right. With communications and direct support being what they are today, I think it is really becoming possible to move the power, decision-making, and resources into traditionally poor churches and communities, and local organizations, for them to truly lead the process themselves. 



local partner in Brazil, FALE. In 2006, FALE began a campaign that mobilized local churches to prayer, and advocate with Brazil’s national government to establish policies that would bring safe sanitation to even the poorest Brazilians. In 2008, the Government of Brazil adopted a pro-poor

national sanitation policy—largely due to FALE’s efforts to mobilize the Brazilian Church.

Kigezi Diocese in southwest Uganda is a fantastic example of Church leadership in WASH. This network of churches plays several of the other roles as well, such as “implementer,” but the one that stands out to me

# HOW TO BE A SAVVY INVESTOR IN *Water + Gospel*



JONATHAN MITCHELL

Jonathan Mitchell is the president of Concentric Development, a non-profit dedicated to helping Christian organizations become more effective in their efforts to transform the lives of the poor. Jonathan grew up as a missionary kid in Pakistan and has more than 25 years of international development experience. Over the course of his career he has worked for a broad spectrum of faith-based and secular organizations that include Christian relief and development agencies.

**W**hen it comes to powerful impact, it's hard to beat investing in water—it can dramatically improve quality of life, strengthen the local church, and help people experience the gospel. But not all giving opportunities in clean water are created equal, and where you give matters. More importantly, as a donor you can have influence beyond your dollar. Effective work in clean water involves more than engineering, and by asking a few key questions you can not only ensure that your investment has the impact you want it to have but may also help the organizations you support grow in healthy ways. What are some of the characteristics you should look for, why does the cost of water projects vary so much, and how does water development done by Christian organizations differ from secular ones?

## HOW TO BE A SAVVY INVESTOR IN WATER AND THE GOSPEL

We are thirteen years into the 21st century and 780 million people still lack access to improved water sources. It is important to ensure that communities plan and manage their own solutions to this problem, but strategic efforts by thoughtful development agencies can play a critical role of support and empowerment. I recently identified more than 55 clean water organizations with an explicit Christian identity, and there are doubtless many more. For the conscientious Christ-centered donor, clean water represents an outstanding opportunity to make a real difference in the lives of the poor, both physically and spiritually. Consider the following:

- Approximately 2,000 children die each day from diarrhea alone. **Clean water can bring substantial improvements in health** by reducing water related diseases such as diarrhea, schistosomiasis, Guinea worm, trachoma and river blindness. The health impact is greatly enhanced when water is combined with improved hygiene and sanitation.
- Women and children spend 200 million hours per day fetching water, often risking physical attack along the way. Each year 443 million school days are lost by children who miss school to fetch water or from water related illness. **Clean water can significantly improve quality of life and productivity** for millions of women and children.
- **Water can also serve as a tool to empower the poor** by giving them the skills and confidence to identify problems and feasible solutions, identify and raise necessary resources, hold elected representatives accountable and lead and take ownership of the process of navigating their way out of poverty.
- Most importantly, **the gift of clean water is an opportunity to communicate the love of Jesus** and open the door for long term outreach by the local church.



A dollar invested in clean water can yield three to five dollars in benefits, and more than \$20 in some places. That's a 300% to 500% return on your investment.

## DOING IT WELL

Not all clean water organizations are created equal. It can be daunting for donors to look past the marketing messages of all the organizations competing for their hearts and dollars. Donors want to give with confidence but due diligence is difficult when the organization is working in remote locations around the world. The sad truth is that one third or more of clean water projects fail prematurely, some in the first few months, and many are never repaired. Even when clean water is provided to the community, it is only a partial solution. How people transport and store their water, where they defecate, and whether they wash their hands determines whether they capture the health benefits of clean water. Failure to influence these behaviors can lead to very little improvement in health. Even worse, wells given in a welfare or hand-out mode can lead to a sense of entitlement. Broken and abandoned wells can be a constant reminder of people's helplessness and dependency on outsiders. Do we want the gospel to be associated with this? Of course not!



**THE CHALLENGE OF CLEAN WATER IS NOT PRIMARILY AN ENGINEERING PROBLEM. RATHER, IT IS A RELATIONSHIP PROBLEM... THESE RELATIONSHIPS ARE WORTH THE INVESTMENT BECAUSE THEY WILL DETERMINE THE LONG-TERM SUCCESS OF THE CLEAN WATER PROJECT.**

The challenge of clean water is not primarily an engineering problem. Rather, it is a relationship problem. Most water organizations have mastered the task of installing a well or piped water system, but even the best systems will require maintenance and repair. It takes someone's time and energy to operate and maintain water pumps, pipes and taps, and it costs money to repair them. It is naive to think a community will automatically be able to undertake these functions if it hasn't done so in the past. The community must decide who is responsible for these functions, who will pay for water and how much, who will collect the money, who will use it responsibly, and what will happen if the designated individuals don't live up to expectations. These critical decisions require motivation

and relationships of trust and respect within the community that can't be created and developed in a jiffy. These relationships are worth the investment because they will determine the long-term success of the clean water project. These are the same relationships necessary for a community to work together for a school, clinic, a bridge, a road or whatever else they believe will improve their lives. Indeed, these relationships are the building blocks for the steps out of poverty, and the best clean water organizations take the time to invest in them.

So how can a non-expert identify an effective clean water organization? There are several practices that stand out among the best organizations. These include:

- Giving a balanced perspective on their web site, acknowledging the challenges as well as the opportunities associated with helping the poor gain access to clean water.
- Inviting scrutiny by identifying their local partners and listing coordinates of their wells on their web site.
- Requiring significant investment by the local community, often including cash, as part of a long-term relationship. They are prepared to walk away where commitment is low.
- Investing heavily to ensure long-term operations, maintenance, and repair.
  - Combining clean water with hygiene and sanitation to maximize health impact.
  - Using water as a means of building broader community capacity to solve problems and tap local and external resources.
- Coordinating with and sometimes leveraging resources from local government as part of a regional strategy.
- Evaluating the long-term impact of their work in order to improve.

"Cost per well" is not a meaningful way to compare the work of organizations. Hardware and drilling costs vary enormously from region to region and larger systems that serve more people cost more than smaller ones. An organization can also lower their average cost per well by choosing easy locations or skimping on important elements of sustainability and impact. Generally, organizations that follow the practices listed above are good value for money even if they cost a bit more. If

you are concerned about costs, ask the organization for a breakdown of what a donation for clean water pays for.

## CHRISTIAN IDENTITY

Clean water is not only an opportunity to improve people's health and productivity, it can also be a very effective means of showing the love of Christ, strengthening the local church, and sharing the gospel message. By partnering with a local church, a clean water intervention can offer a tangible means by which a local church can bless the

community, raising the status of the body of Christ and strengthening its ministry. Where there is no church, clean water can open doors in communities that are otherwise closed to the gospel. The long term engagement that effective clean water work requires can lead to the relationships of trust

and respect out of which opportunities to share the gospel emerge very naturally. Water and gospel can fit together very effectively.

I have found that what is Christian about Christian clean water organizations varies tremendously and usually falls into several categories:

- Biblically motivated – these organizations are motivated by passages such as Isaiah 41:17-18 “When the poor and needy seek water, I will open rivers on the bare heights, and fountains in the midst of the valleys; I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water” or Matthew 25:35 “I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink.” But they do not call attention to their Christian identity among the people they serve.
- Christian identity only – these organizations are content to be known as Christian among the communities they serve, often stating that their service is motivated by their Christian faith and trusting that their love will be a witness, but they generally refrain from overt proclamation.
- Water with a bit of the gospel – the main function of these organizations is the provision of clean water, but they may invite a pastor to pray at a dedication or show the Jesus film as part of the process.
- Water primarily as a means to present the gospel – these organizations use water to gain access to a



community primarily as a means of sharing the gospel. The long-term operation and health benefit is less of a priority for them.


- Water and the gospel intertwined with equal emphasis – these organizations give similar levels of importance to meeting both physical and spiritual needs of the communities they serve, viewing the two as inseparable.

If these things are important to you, you need to ask what their Christian identity looks like in the field.

## INFLUENCE BEYOND YOUR DOLLAR

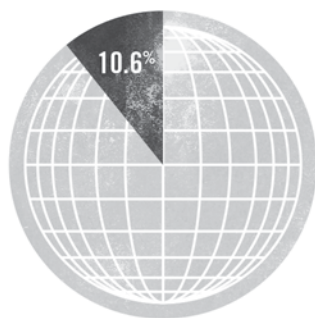
God has blessed you with the privilege of participating in his work with your gifts, and taking this privilege seriously is part of being a good steward of the resources God has entrusted to you. Your giving should be treated like your investments, a serious activity that is thoughtful and intentional. Moreover, as a donor your influence extends beyond your dollar. Non-profits pay a lot of attention to donors and you can discover a lot about them by asking a few key questions. Here are three questions I suggest:

- How do you partner with communities and what do they have to contribute to the project? Look for higher levels of contribution, including putting cash into a repair fund.
- What percentage of your wells is still functioning after two years, and what steps are you taking to measure this? This is not an easy question to answer, but good water organizations are curious about effectiveness of their work and work hard to assess it.
- How does your Christian identity manifest itself in your work? There is no “right” answer, but if an organization is serious about their Christian identity they will have given this question considerable thought. Is Christian merely an adjective they use or is the gospel integrated in the project cycle?

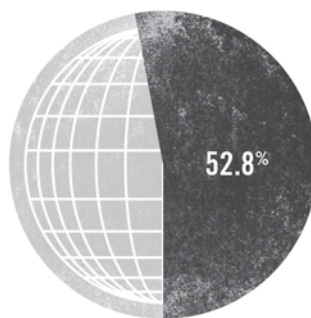
Even if an organization is not able to answer these questions, asking these questions communicates that these issues are important to you and that you are well-informed. These questions empower you as a donor to influence the industry. If even a few givers raise these issues, these questions will be given priority, which will in the long run have more influence than the dollars you give. 



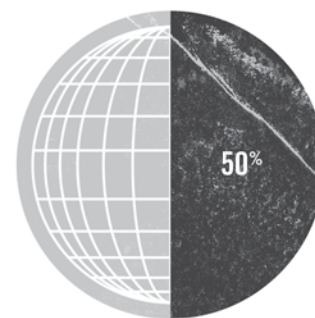
# A GLIMPSE: WATER AND SANITATION FOR LIFE



768 million people in the world do not have access to improved sources of water, such as piped water, protected wells, or protected springs.<sup>1</sup>



However, the number in the figure to the left does not account for water quality or sustainability. Recent estimates of people drinking unsafe water range from 1.8 to 1.9 billion, and perhaps 3.8 billion have difficulty getting regular access to safe water.<sup>2</sup>

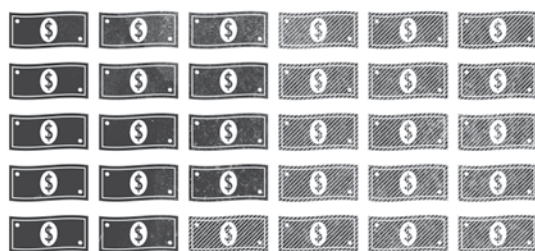


At any given time, nearly half the people in the developing world are suffering from one or more of the main diseases associated with dirty water and inadequate sanitation such as diarrhea, guinea worm, trachoma and schistosomiasis.<sup>4</sup>

\*World Population: 7,200,000,000 (as of 8/2/2013)

Providing safe drinking water and sanitation to those lacking them requires massive investment—estimated at \$14–30 billion in addition to the \$30 billion that is already being spent annually.<sup>6</sup>

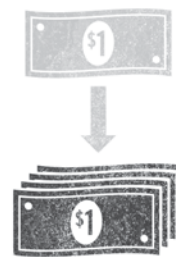
(NEEDED)



(CURRENTLY SPENT)



= \$1 BILLION USD



For every \$1 invested in water and sanitation, an average of \$4 is returned in increased productivity.<sup>7</sup>



Around 700,000 children die every year from diarrhea caused by unsafe water and poor sanitation—that's almost 2,000 children a day.<sup>3</sup>



Diarrhea, caused by contaminated water and poor sanitation, is the second biggest killer of children under five years old worldwide.<sup>8</sup>



Hygiene promotion is the most cost effective health intervention according to the World Bank.<sup>10</sup>



Every year, around 60 million children are born into homes without access to sanitation.<sup>5</sup>



Providing soap and hygiene promotion can reduce cases of diarrhea by 53%.<sup>9</sup>



Lack of water, sanitation and hygiene in Sub-Saharan African countries costs more in lost GDP than the entire continent gets in development aid.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>1</sup> WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme Report, 2013 update.

<sup>2</sup> Onda, et al., 2012: [www.mdpi.com/1660-4601/9/3/880/pdf](http://www.mdpi.com/1660-4601/9/3/880/pdf), Aquafed Report, Payen, 2011: [www.aquafed.org/pdf/Payen\\_DrinkingWaterNeedsUnderEstimate\\_EN\\_2011-11-09.pdf](http://www.aquafed.org/pdf/Payen_DrinkingWaterNeedsUnderEstimate_EN_2011-11-09.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Child Health Epidemiology Reference Group (CHERG), 2012 and Unicef Child Mortality Report, 2012

<sup>4</sup> UNDP: Human Development Report, 2006 <http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/HDR06-complete.pdf> page 45

<sup>5</sup> UNICEF, 2006 [http://www.unicef.org/publications/files/Progress\\_for\\_Children\\_No.\\_5\\_-\\_English.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/publications/files/Progress_for_Children_No._5_-_English.pdf) page 3

<sup>6</sup> [www.un.org/waterforlifedecade/pdf/supplyingwater.pdf](http://www.un.org/waterforlifedecade/pdf/supplyingwater.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Hutton, Global costs and benefits of drinking-water supply and sanitation interventions to reach the MDG target and universal coverage, WHO, Geneva, 2012: page 4

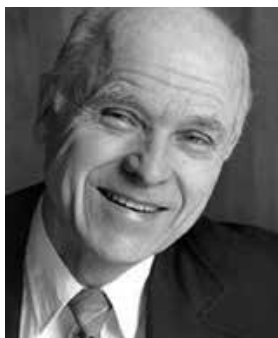
<sup>8</sup> Child Health Epidemiology Reference Group (CHERG) 2012

<sup>9</sup> Luby, et al. 2005

<sup>10</sup> Saving lives, WaterAid, 2012

<sup>11</sup> Using percentage estimate from UNDP: Human Development Report, 2006

# GOOD WORKS EMPOWER THE GOSPEL



**RALPH D. WINTER**

(1924-2009) was the founder of the Frontier Mission Fellowship and the U.S. Center for World Mission. He was also the first editor of *Mission Frontiers*. You may go online to [www.missionfrontiers.org](http://www.missionfrontiers.org) to post your comments on this article.

*This article is excerpted from the article, "The Future of Evangelicals in Mission" published in the Sept.-Oct. 2007 edition of Mission Frontiers.*

It was understood back in the 19th Century and within the major missions that there was no rift whatsoever between learning and gospel, or good works and gospel, or schools, hospitals, vocational schools, and the planting of churches. Nevertheless, today, as far as donors are concerned, the enormous impact of social transformation arising (intuitively) in the work of standard church planting mission agencies is widely under estimated or even opposed. Indeed, the scope of this societal influence is virtually unknown in certain spheres, in part due to an intentional downplaying of this effort in reports to donors who want to hear only of spiritual conversions. This is incorrectly rationalized as a tension between the so-called liberal and conservative perspectives, when in fact it is largely due to the inherently different influence of some and the new era of social impotence among most Evangelicals in the 20th century. Rising exceptions like Charles Colson, an influential civil leader, have no trouble envisioning sweeping changes in the whole world's prison systems, nor any hesitance in helping to resurrect the powerful social/political example of William Wilberforce.

## EMPOWERED EVANGELISM

Obviously there is a theological problem here. We, of course, need to take seriously the fact that Jesus was concerned with handicapped people, sick people, children, women, Greeks, etc. and that His ministry embraced and encompassed those things. When He responded to John the Baptist, who wondered if He was the one to come, He sent back descriptions, not the text of His message, but simply a report of the good works He was doing. This He did, not only as an authentication of His divinity, but as a demonstration of God's character. His ministry was congruent with His own statement, "Let your light shine among men in this way—that they will glorify God when they see your good works (Matt 5:16)." In the Synagogue in Nazareth Jesus quoted Isa. 61:1,2:

The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners.

Does that apply to 27 million men, women and children held as slaves in the world today? This is more than twice the number who were bartered during four centuries before slavery was (supposedly) "abolished" by Wilberforce. Does that apply to the lifting of the burden of 45 million man-years of labor annually destroyed in Africa alone due to the malarial parasite?

It has been said that because the gospel is a message of hope, the poorest must see some concrete reason for hope before they can understand the gospel. Words themselves have no power if they do not refer to reality. Jesus' words were constantly accompanied and informed by the actions to which His words referred. Thus, just as faith without works is



dead, so evangelism without works is dead. Unless words refer to works, to reality, they are worth nothing. Just as it is a Reformation myth that faith can be separated from works, so it is meaningless if words are separated from the reality to which they were meant to refer.

It would seem, then, that just as we believe that works ought to follow faith in the sequence of salvation in the

life of believing individuals, it is equally true that in our outreach to unbelievers those very works displaying God's glory better precede. We see this clearly when we recognize that the usual way in which individuals come to faith is primarily by viewing the good works of those who already have faith—that is, by seeing good works that reflect the power and character of God. Immediately after speaking of His followers being salt and light in the world Jesus spoke this very key verse we have already quoted, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” (Matt. 5:16).” That is how people can see God's glory and be drawn to Him. Those who may be drawn by mere desires to be blessed personally will have trouble with Jesus' plain statement that “For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for Me and for the gospel will save it.” (Mark 8:35) Evangelicals today often ignore this.

Thus, in order for people to hear and respond to an offer of personal salvation or a ticket to heaven, it is paramount for them to witness the glory of God in believers' lives—seeing the love and goodness in their lives and deeds, and their changed motives and new intentions. That is the reality which gives them reason to turn away from all evil and against all evil as they seek to be closer to that kind of God and His will in this world.

It is of course perfectly true that personal salvation alone can still be a glorious transformation of people who may

never arise from a sickbed or from poverty, knowing that God loves them and wants them to love Him. At the same time, many believers are not poor, and have time and energy to do things other than simply talk to people about the next world. For them, a concept that is very hard to avoid (because it is happening throughout the whole Bible) is the concept that works are necessary to authenticate and

demonstrate the true character of God.

That is the true basis for empowering evangelism. This potent continuity of word and deed is, furthermore, the mainstream of mission history. It may not have been so large a factor among up-and-out people in, say, Japan, but in much of the world, the stunning achievements of medicine and healing have demonstrated to potential converts not only the love of God for them, but also the power of God that is on their side against the forces of darkness.

Paul the apostle spoke of delivering people from the dominion of Satan (Acts 26:18). Peter summed up Jesus' ministry by speaking of “how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil because God was with him.” (Acts 10:38) This kind of demonstration of the person and the power of God certainly should not be considered antagonistic to evangelism. In most cases it is, again, the very basis of an empowerment of evangelism.

## THE FUTURE OF EVANGELICAL MISSIONS

“Teaching them to OBEY everything that I commanded you...”

So what is the future of the Evangelical mission movement? I believe that the mission movement—more so than the church movement and considerably

more so than the secular world—holds the key to a great new burst of credibility which could win new millions. An unexpected trend of current philanthropy clearly indicates the potential assistance of people in high places who grow up in a highly Christianized society, even if they haven't regularly gone to church. But what

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is crucially true is that they need to understand that their efforts will ultimately be dismayingly ineffective without a certain minimum of transformed individuals whose character is essential to their major efforts. They need to realize that missions have a virtual monopoly on transformed individuals who can be trusted.


I yearn to see Evangelical missions be able to give more direct, credible credit to Jesus Christ for the impetus behind the social transformation that they have been doing, are doing and should be doing. Practically none of the major religions, by comparison, has any similar contribution to good works, small or large. Islam has the giving of alms as one of its five pillars, but there is absolutely nothing in the entire mammoth global Islamic movement that compares even remotely to the hundreds of major Christian mission agencies, or the thousands of ways in which the Christian movement has reached out with love and tenderness to those who are suffering. Islam also has a near vacuum of “non-government agencies,” although both in Pakistan and Bangladesh are some outstanding exceptions. But in general the West has thousands of NGOs which are not explicitly Christian. Islam has only a few. The work of Christ in the gospels, Christ’s references to the coming of the kingdom of heaven, and the present outworking in this world of the “Thy will be done” phrase of the Lord’s Prayer are actually echoed by the Great Commission itself. Looking closely at Matt. 28:20, it isn’t just the teachings that Jesus commissions His disciples to pass on. It is the actual enforcing, so to speak, of obedience to those teachings, “teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.” This implies the conquest of evil when the Lord’s Prayer is read in this light: “Thy will be done on earth.”

We hear later in the New Testament about people who do not “obey” the gospel. Obviously the gospel is not just mere information in the way of good advice. We see both authority and commands from God in the real biblical gospel. This is the clear meaning of the Great Commission of Matthew 28. There, Jesus sends his disciples out to bring about “obedience to the things I have taught you.”

As I have suggested, the older missions with roots in the 19th Century have in actual fact been doing exactly what Jesus did, both demonstrating the love of God and inviting into eternal life all who yield to that love and that authority. The trouble is that the fact of this breadth of mission has not been as clearly theologized to the point where we would plan to tackle some of the bigger problems such as the wiping out of Guinea worm or malaria, problems

which have existed under the very nose of missionaries for over a century. Nevertheless such extra breadth must not be seen to be a divergence from the preaching of eternal life, but rather an empowerment of the message of a gospel of a kingdom, which is both here and hereafter. This is the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is the gospel of the kingdom. It is the announcement of a “rule and reign of God” which must be extended to the whole world and all of creation. We must stand up and be counted as active Christian foes of the world’s worst evils. This is the biblical way, the way more than any other, in which missions have in the past and now even more so in the future can more powerfully and extensively than ever demonstrate who God is and what His purposes are. This is what the superb Transform World movement is leaning into.

This more extensive influence will come if agencies will simply take the practical conclusions of their missionaries’ magnificent local intuition up into national levels and into international campaigns to drive out those things that not only cut their own lives short but also cause hundreds of millions of people to go to bed at night with severe suffering and pain. Otherwise all such unaddressed evil is blamed on God and His “mysterious purposes.” This new, expanded influence may thus measurably help us re-win the West to “a faith that works,” and to a God Who is not doing bad things for mysterious reasons but a God Who opposes the Evil One and all his works—and asks us to assist Him in that campaign.

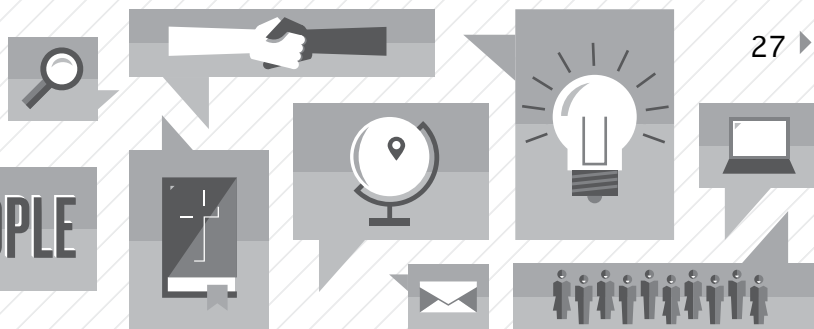
Evangelicals are increasingly again in the position of social influence, yet, are still mainly in the business of giving people a personal faith, a faith that does not include much of a mission beyond the idea of converts converting still others. However, a return to a full-spectrum gospel could mean an enormous change. Doors will open. Attitudes about missionaries will change. It will no longer be the case of missionaries thinking that they have to use adroit language to cover up the “real purpose” of their work. Their real purpose will be to identify and destroy all forms of evil, both human and microbiological and will thus be explainable in plain English without religious jargon. This will provide very solid common ground in almost any country. In that event there is no doubt in my mind that the future of the Evangelical mission movement will be very bright indeed. As Adoniram Judson said, “The future is as bright as the promises of God.” We must not forget that God is the one who asked us to pray, “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” 



## + KINGDOM KERNELS

A regular column featuring lessons from Church-Planting Movements around the world

# FINDING GOD-PREPARED PEOPLE



27 ▸

/ Steve Smith oversees the work of the International Mission Board (SBC) for Southeast Asia, and coaches churches and organizations on moving toward biblical Church-Planting Movements. He is the author of the book *T4T: A Discipleship Re-Revolution* with Ying Kai (WigTake Resources 2011). You can follow Steve's musings from his devotional thoughts and kingdom ministry on Twitter @kingreigncome and Kingdom Kernels on Facebook.

After sharing with a group of missionaries about God's vision of a Church-Planting Movement (CPM) in their contexts, I paused to ask them how their work was going. I was blind-sided by their responses:

- "In our culture, it normally takes four years for the average Buddhist to believe after first hearing the gospel."
- "In our country, it normally takes 15-20 hearings of the good news before someone will make a firm commitment to Christ."
- "Normally in our context people won't believe if we don't have the perfect worldview bridge."
- "Normally in our city it takes two years just to get into a spiritual conversation with a person."
- (My favorite came a few months later in Europe) "Normally the gospel is no longer good news for Europeans."

With each statement I grew more discouraged. That evening I prayed for discernment, searching the Word for answers.

### THE ABNORMAL WOMAN AT THE WELL

The Lord took me to John 4. What struck me was that nothing was normal about the Samaritan woman

at the well. Everything about Jesus' encounter with that woman was abnormal:

- **Culture:** A Jew talking with a Samaritan
- **Norms:** A man talking with a strange woman
- **Time to Transition into a Spiritual Conversation:** Jesus second statement was the beginning of a spiritual conversation (4:10)
- **Worldview:** Jesus went straight to the heart despite religious worldview differences (4:20ff)
- **Social Mores:** Jesus skipped small talk and discussed deep, personal issues immediately—call your "husband" (4:16)
- **Time to Believe:** Within the course of one conversation, with a person from a "hard" people group, the woman believed (4:28-29)
- **How Far and Quickly the Gospel Spread:** Within two days an entire town (Sychar) was reached with the gospel (4:39-42)

This woman was prepared by God to defy the norms for Samaritans. She believed in one hearing and was the key to a whole town's response.

### FINDING ABNORMAL PEOPLE

The next day I told my colleagues, "Everything you shared yesterday is true. You serve in tough places. Normally it is just like you described it. But we're not looking for NORMAL people. We're looking for ABNORMAL people!"

Abnormal is defined as: "deviating from the normal, average or expected; extremely or excessively large."<sup>1</sup> That's what the responses of the Samaritan woman and those in Sychar were like.

This was the beginning of a paradigm shift for many of our missionaries. We were honest to acknowledge that some fields are tougher than others, but none are unharvestable. Perhaps the normal response we find is lack of interest or faith. But we are looking for abnormal responses – the people prepared ahead of time by the Spirit of God. Now, rather than just spending all our time trying to convince the normal ones, we spend a lot more time looking for the abnormal ones.

The search for norm-breakers was a biblical pattern in the Gospels and Acts. I believe that the Gospels and Acts are like a sports highlights recap. When you watch the highlights, what do you see? The dribbles? The huddles? No! You see the abnormal ten percent of the game – the goals, the touchdowns, the remarkable catches and the slam-dunks. In the Bible we most often see the abnormal people, not the 80-90% that may not have responded. Jesus was constantly looking for such people. It's a biblical pattern for today in which...

- Often normal people take years but God-prepared people take only days or weeks to believe.
- Often normal people need to hear the good news 15-20 times, but God-prepared people only need to hear it once or twice.

We are surprised to find norm-breakers because the normal response to our evangelism or discipleship is the opposite. And that normalcy tempts us to label our community, country or people group as difficult and we stop expecting miraculous responses. We get dulled by the normal into no longer expecting the abnormal.

### THE KEYS TO A SOCIETY: GOD-PREPARED PEOPLE

Until you find the abnormal people, CPMs will not start. In the last issue of *Mission Frontiers* I explained the essentials for a CPM on a napkin. Finding God-prepared people is one of the first steps (field one). Many people declare their communities hard or unreachable with a CPM when the reality is they have not found the key person(s) for unlocking their community. Jesus called them persons of peace and they were the entry points He instructed His seventy disciples to find (Luke 10:2-12). When we as strangers witness to a “normal” person, he may not respond. But winning the person of peace may result in this “normal” person’s salvation because he trusts the person of peace.

Jesus declared the nation of Israel in His day as a “plentiful harvest” (Luke 10:2) while Paul described them as a “hardened” nation (Rom. 11:25). Both characteristics were true. Hard nations contain harvestable individuals. And harvestable individuals are the key to harvesting nations. There is no context in which God cannot begin a movement because His Spirit prepares

people in each of them. In some places one out of ten persons might be the God-prepared person. In other places one out of a hundred or a thousand. You just have to work harder to find them.

No CPM method will bear fruit until you find the right people. Conversely sometimes it seems you stumble through your gospel presentation and yet the God-prepared person gets radically saved. The Spirit’s just working in them in abnormal ways.

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Jesus fished for abnormal people not normal ones. In one conversation He went to the heart of the issue with the Samaritan woman and she responded in faith. He looked for people willing to break the norms and called them to respond abnormally.

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At the same time, we may miss the full potential of a harvest if we don’t follow up effectively with the abnormal person. Expecting the normal, we follow-up in our normal ways and miss the plentiful harvest. Again, we get dulled by the normal into no longer expecting the abnormal.

### FINDING ABNORMAL PEOPLE—3 F’S

In all likelihood, as the disciples took the road into Sychar this woman passed them on the way to the well. Twelve missed her but One found

her. Why? Perhaps they were so accustomed to the normal rejection of Samaritans that they expected nothing out of the ordinary.

But Jesus’ lifestyle was one of constantly sifting through society to find where the Father was preparing people (John 5:17, 19). Though tired He found the abnormal response that day. Why did He find her but the twelve missed her?

### FULL OF THE SPIRIT

One major difference between Jesus and the Twelve was that He was full of the Spirit (Luke 4:1) and they had not yet been filled with the Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2). As the incarnate Son of God, Jesus limited His divine abilities so that He lived in faith by the Spirit just as we must. Through the Spirit He had the discernment to see opportunities before Him and to expect results that broke the norm.

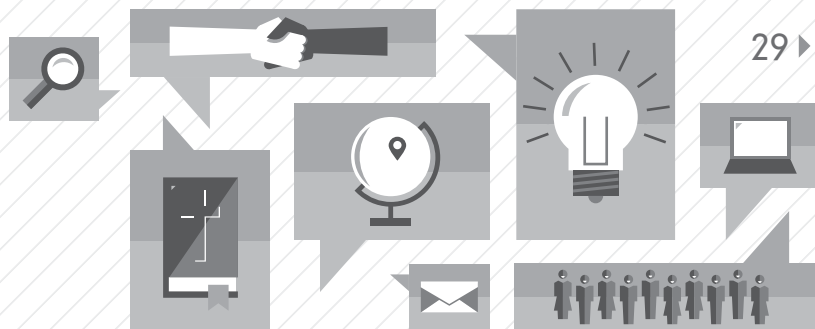
The day was coming for the apostles, however. They may have missed the abnormal person in Sychar but Peter and John didn’t miss the one at the beautiful gate. Full of the Spirit after Pentecost they finally “saw” a man they had probably passed many times – the lame man. This time they called for an abnormal response: “Rise up and walk!” (Acts 3:6) What resulted was the beginning of a fresh movement in Jerusalem.

**Application:** Unless you cultivate being filled with and walking in the Spirit continually, you will likely miss the people who will break the norms. Will you daily surrender yourself to the Spirit of Jesus so that you have the eyes of faith He had?

### FISH FOR ABNORMAL PEOPLE—GOING FOR BROKE

After sharing this with some national church planters in the Philippines, our missionary leader pulled me





aside. “Steve, that’s our problem! We are fishing for normal people not for abnormal ones.”

Jesus fished for abnormal people not normal ones. In one conversation He went to the heart of the issue with the Samaritan woman and she responded in faith. He looked for people willing to break the norms and called them to respond abnormally. He told the rich young ruler to sell everything, most likely disappointed that he didn’t (Mark 10:21ff). An abnormal invitation but a normal response. But two other rich men, Levi and Zacchaeus, responded abnormally, giving up their possessions. Jesus fished for norm-breakers.

Jesus could have fished for normal people not daring to challenge them to radical commitment to the King. But to do that, He would have missed the abnormal people that God uses to launch movements. Instead, He went for broke so much of the time: sell everything, come follow Me, don’t say goodbye to your parents, don’t sin anymore, go tell your family the great things God has done for you.

Do we expect people to be normal or abnormal when we share Jesus with them? Too often we expect them to be normal and therefore stop short of abnormally inviting them to wholeheartedly follow Jesus and boldly fish for men. We use methods that require them to wait weeks, months or years before we call them to respond, and then we call them to such shallow responses. Such an approach means we’ll miss the norm-breakers in all likelihood. We have a saying in our

region: “People are responsive until they prove themselves otherwise.” This transforms our expectations.

**Application:** If you tend to fish for normal people, try fishing for abnormal people also. This does not mean you have to give up the many normal relationships you have, some

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Is your discipleship approach for new believers one in which you expect them to get up and run with wholehearted surrender and bold witness to family and friends?

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of which will require years for the salvation of a friend. But in addition, begin finding ways to share the gospel lovingly, relationally and frequently, calling people to wholehearted faith and witness. Why miss the abnormal by only fishing for the normal? There will be times you are disappointed that persons only respond normally (rejection). But in due time you’ll have the joy of finding the abnormal response. If only one in a hundred in your community is the God-prepared person, how many people do you need to share the gospel with to find that one?

## FOLLOW-UP FOR ABNORMAL PEOPLE—EXPECTING AN EXTRAORDINARY LIFESTYLE

It wasn’t just that Jesus fished for abnormal people. He also followed-up (discipled) expecting them to respond with an abnormal lifestyle.

He wasn’t satisfied with an initial amazing response. Many of us would have been thrilled just to have a man with a legion of demons delivered and whole-heartedly trusting Jesus. But not the Savior! He continued to follow up with the Gerasene demoniac, instructing him to return home to the Ten Cities and proclaim the great things God had done for him. As he did so, people throughout the Ten Cities marveled (Mark 5:1-20). When you find an abnormal person, if you follow-up abnormally, a movement may result. This was a biblical pattern.

Would we have done such a thing? Or would we have told him, “Listen, you have a lot of emotional, relational and spiritual baggage. Stay here and let me disciple you for a while. When you’re ready we’ll let you take baby steps in responsibility.” Would you have trusted him to start on a ten city tour the next day proclaiming his testimony?

Once again we get dulled by the normal into no longer expecting the abnormal. We’ve seen so many normal discipleship responses that we no longer expect people to make radical commitments to Christ, to follow through with baptism immediately and to bear witness to their whole circle of influence within days. Instead, we must give God-prepared people a vision for how the Spirit will

use them to reach a whole community. Rather than say “sit and stay,” like Jesus we must say “get up and run”! We will be disappointed at times, but the alternative of never trying is unacceptable.

**Application:** Is your discipleship approach for new believers one in which you expect them to get up and run with wholehearted surrender and bold witness to family and friends?

All CPMs began in an intensive and ongoing search for God-prepared people. As in the parable of the four soils there are no labels on their foreheads identifying them as “good soil.” They look the same as everyone else. The only way we find the good soil is through dozens and hundreds of relational gospel conversations with a challenge to biblical commitment. In the process of finding many normal responses, not too different from the first three soils (hard, rocky, thorny), we will find abnormal responses that bear fruit thirty, sixty and

a hundred times. We must sift through large numbers of people in our locales to find the norm-breakers through which God will start Church-Planting Movements.

A few years ago, a missionary colleague of mine adapted his approach and began fishing widely for abnormal people.

One day, while hiking with a group of volunteers, he met a man who inquired where they were going. When my friend said, “Up to that village over there,” the man responded, “No you’re not! You’ve come to see me!” My friend recognized this as an abnormal response and set aside his agenda in order to go to the stranger’s house.


In that house he immediately went for broke and shared a simple Creation to Christ gospel presentation. That day the man believed. Immediately the man called his family and friends to his house and shared the same gospel presentation with them. As my friend discipled

him in abnormal ways, this man led his family to believe. A month later, after surviving a death threat from a witchdoctor, eighty people in his village believed.

Shortly after that, the next village invited him to share the gospel. Sixty people there believed.

The kingdom of God has continued to spread from valley to valley because a missionary found an abnormally-prepared man and discipled him in abnormal ways.

Will you and your team or church fish repeatedly to find the people God has prepared and then follow-up expecting abnormal responses? Full of the Spirit you can be an abnormal fisher of men.

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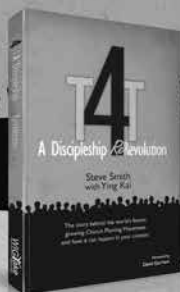
<sup>1</sup> Dictionary.com <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/abnormal?s=t>

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# THE MEANING OF

# ETHNĒ

IN MATTHEW 28:19



## LUIS BUSH

Luis Bush is a servant catalyst on God's mission of transformation. He serves as servant of Transform World 2020 and servant catalyst of the 4/14 Movement. Bush was born in Argentina and raised in Brazil. He and his wife, Doris, have four children and sixteen grandchildren. You may contact him at: [luis.bush@gmail.com](mailto:luis.bush@gmail.com)

## INTRODUCTION:

At the Finish the Task (FTT) annual conference held in California, December 2012, the following question was raised by Paul Eshleman and subsequently commissioned which resulted in this white paper:<sup>1</sup> "Why should castes be included in the ethnē?" There are good tactical reasons why these groups should be approached separately. However, as he well noted, "the question is, what is the biblical basis for including them, if any? The biblical meaning needs to be accurate and then properly applied to our strategies for reaching the nations of the world."

FTT and the related Issachar initiative, led by Paul Eshleman, partner with Transform World 2020: Christ's Missional Challenge which is facilitated by the U.S. Center for World Mission (USCWM) and chaired by Dick Eastman of Every Home for Christ.

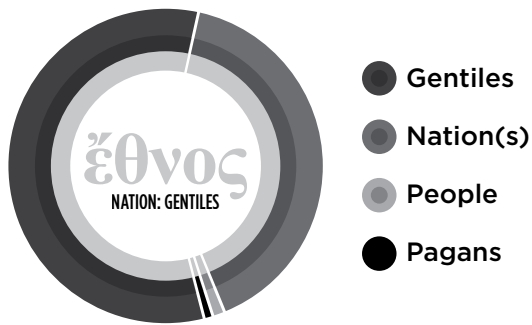
The task of this word study is to pursue the answer to the question "what was the intended meaning of the New Testament author Matthew as he was carried along by the Holy Spirit, (2 Pet. 1:21) to write in Matthew 28:19 "make disciples of all ethnē?" In order to understand the biblical basis of the meaning of the term ethnē the white paper is organized by means of a review of the meaning of ethnē in Greek literature beginning in the classical period, from New Testament literature, with specific concern for New Testament usages, particularly in the book of Matthew with special concern for the meaning in the Great Commission Mandate verse of Matthew 28:19.

## OVERVIEW

According to the analysis by the Content Innovation Team (CIT) at Logos Bible Software, ([www.logos.com](http://www.logos.com)) based on a review of lexical and exegetical resources, the Greek word *ethnos* is translated into the English Bible by the term *Gentiles*, 84 of 161 times that it is used in the New Testament; the term *nation* 63 of 161 times, the term *people* 6 of 161 times, the term *pagan* 6 of 161 times and the term *country* and *heathen*, one time. Of the fourteen times Matthew uses the word *ethnos* seven times refer to nations and five times to *Gentiles*. What about in Matthew 28:19? That is the question we need to answer in this report.

Following review of the meaning in respected lexical and exegetical sources that bring shades of light to the understanding of the term ethnē used in Matthew 28:19 the final decision made by the CIT will be considered. The Content Innovation Team (CIT) at Logos has used technology to bring a new degree of accuracy due to the ability to search, analyze and process hundreds of resources to produce the Bible Sense Lexicon. A list of these resources appears in an email sent to the author of this white paper.<sup>2</sup> The Sense definition is a specific, contextual definition within any particular verse for a Greek word in the New Testament. For example, for the Greek word *kosmos* they concluded as follows: "This word may have 12 different meanings, but the Content





Innovation Team (CIT) at Logos believes that in John 3:16, it means world populace!”

The word sense analysis undertaken in Logos Version 5 Bible Software highlights four primary meanings for the word *ethnos* in the figure above, which are Gentiles, nation, people and pagans. The definition of the CIT for people group, gentiles and people of Israel appears in the following figure.

With this overview we can now analyze several resources commonly used to understand the contextual meaning of a Greek word in the New Testament beginning with the classical period.

## CLASSICAL (UP TO 300 BC)

Old Testament Greek translation was done between 300 and 200 BC. The Septuagint which is sometimes abbreviated LXX is the name given to the Greek translation

● People Group (Social) noun
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ A large group of people based on various cultural, physical, or geographical ties</li> <li>○ <b>λαός</b> (laos) <b>ἔθνος</b> (ethnos) <b>φυλή</b> (phyle)</li> <li>○ Type of abstraction ι →Group →People group (social)</li> </ul>
● Gentiles noun
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Every ethnic group or nation not allied with &amp; trusting in the God of Israel (Jesus as the Messiah)</li> <li>○ <b>ἔθνη</b> (ethne)</li> <li>○ Group ι → People group (social) → Gentiles</li> </ul>
● People of Israel noun
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The people group (normally) geographically situated in Palestine of those descended from Abraham who claimed alliance &amp; trust in the God of Israel</li> <li>○ <b>λαός</b> (laos) <b>ἔθνος</b> (ethnos)</li> <li>○ Group → People group (social) → People of Israel</li> </ul>

of the Jewish Scriptures. The Abrahamic promise in Genesis uses the phrase “all the nations” (kol goiey) which the Septuagint translates with *panta ta ethnē*, which is found in Mat. 28:19 (Gen. 18:18; 22:18; 26:4). For example, in Genesis 18:18 we read “Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and all nations” (*panta ta ethnē*) “on earth will be blessed through him.”

The primary authority in the classical period was H.G. Liddell, dean of Oxford for 36 years. He was the compiler of the *Greek Lexicon*, along with Robert Scott. Together they produced *A Lexicon: Abridged from Liddell and Scott's Greek-English Lexicon* in which the entry for ἔθνος (ethnos) includes a reference to caste pertinent to the discussion in this white paper.

ἔθνος τό: (ethnos to)— a number of people accustomed to living together, a company, body of men, etc.; ἔθνος λαῶν (ethnos laon) a host of men; also of animals, swarms, flocks, Ib., Soph.

- after Hom., a nation, people, Hdt., etc.:—in N.T.
- τὰ ἔθνη (ta ethne) the nations, Gentiles, i.e. all but Jews and Christians.
- a special class of men, a caste, tribe, Plat., Xen.

In conclusion, the classical usage--up to the year 300 BC--of the word *ethnos*, according to the standard Greek-English Lexicon by Liddell and Scott, does include the meaning of a special class of men, a caste, or tribe used both in the writings of Plato and Xenophanes.

## NEW TESTAMENT (1ST CENTURY AD)

Tools: BDAG<sup>3</sup>, *A Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament* and other early Christian literature. A lexicon is defined as being “an alphabetically arranged book setting forth the meaning and etymology of the words of a language; a dictionary; specifically applied to dictionaries of Latin, Greek, or Hebrew.” Walter Bauer (1877-1960) of Gottingen in Germany, undertook a systematic search in Greek literature down to Byzantine times which was translated into English by Arndt and Gingrich. Their comment in the foreword of the Lexicon was that Bauer’s analysis and arrangement of the small words so frequently used is a great improvement over anything of its kind previously done.”

ἔθνος, οὗς, τό (ethnos)

1. A body of persons united by kinship, culture, and common traditions, nation, people

- Singular: τὸ ἔθνος τῆς Σαμαρείας (ethnos Samareias) the Samaritan people Ac 8:9 (cp. Jos., Ant. 18, 85).



- The people in contrast to heads of state Ac 9:15. ἔθνος ἐπὶ ἔθνος (ethnos epi ethnos) one nation against another Mt 24:7; Mk 13:8; Lk 21:10 (cp. 2 Ch 15:6);
- Plural: πάντα τὰ ἔθνη (panta ta ethnē) Mt 24:14; 28:19
- πάντα τὰ ἔθνη τοῦ κόσμου (ethnē tou kosmou) Lk 12:30;
- πᾶν ἔθνος ἀνθρώπων (pan ethnos anthrōpōn) every nation of humankind Ac 17:26.
- In Mt 21:43 ἔθνη (ethnē) (not gentiles) in contrast to the leaders described vv. 23; 45.
- 2. (τὰ) ἔθνη (ta ethne) people groups foreign to a specific people group
  - a. those who do not belong to groups professing faith in the God of Israel, the nations, gentiles, unbelievers (in effect=‘polytheists’) with ἡγεμόνες καὶ βασιλεῖς (hēgemonas kai basileis) Mt 10:18.
  - b. non-Israelite Christians, gentiles of Christian

## THE MEANING OF ETHNOS IN MATTHEW IN 28:19 / JIM HANEY

We have been challenged to understand the meaning of ethnos in Matthew 28:19. In order to see how this understanding affects our lists, we should review some perspectives that guide our models of understanding.

The etic perspective uses a system of categorization from the outside to describe something. For example, because language is important to the way we understand people groups, many of the people groups that are on our lists are distinct because they speak distinct languages. We also apply a strategic test to defining people groups when we go to them and present the gospel—we say that a people group is the largest grouping of people whereby the gospel can spread without encountering significant barriers of understanding or acceptance. We examine religion and other characteristics of people groups, and these help us to determine if a distinct people group needs to be added to our list.

The emic perspective recognizes that people groups around the world are not dependent on our etic perspective. By the time missionaries go to them, they have a name for themselves; they know who they are and who they are not. They are as they identify themselves. They perceive themselves to have a common affinity for one another because of their shared language, religion, ethnicity, residence, occupation, class or caste, situation, etc., or combinations of these.

The Jews in the days of Jesus had an etic perspective about the Gentiles and an emic view of themselves. As a result, they knew their ancestry, and they knew which town to return to in the census of Caesar Augustus. However, everyone else was lumped into one primary category—the Gentiles, which included everyone who was not a Jew.

Why are we talking about the meaning of ethnos in Matthew 28:19? --because those who heard the words of Jesus that day had a very limited understanding of the Gentiles. Acts shows us how they came to know the nations as distinct entities and how they came to respect them. At Pentecost, Luke observed God’s promise to Abraham in action, and at

the house of Cornelius the Holy Spirit fell on the Gentiles, and Peter’s eyes were opened. Paul discovered the nations through his missionary journeys, and the Bible culminates with every language, people, tribe and nation around the throne.

Luis Bush has addressed the meaning of ethnos in Matthew 28:19. He has shown that πάντα τὰ ἔθνη, panta ta ethne as found in Mathew 28:19, must be generally interpreted to include castes in the scope of the Great Commission and that castes are ethno-cultural peoples. If Jesus had wanted to restrict the Great Commission to entities more specifically defined than ethno-cultural peoples, he could have said all tongues, all national entities, all tribes or those of common descent.

Ethne is broad and we must be careful not to limit it to our categories of understanding. As we go, we find what is described in Acts 17:26, where Luke writes: “And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place.” “Every nation of mankind” allows for a wide diversity in who lives on our planet—it allows us to go and learn who they are, and since they have moved beyond their boundaries and original dwelling places through time, how much more have nations changed in how they identify themselves and how we must understand who they are and what barriers the gospel must undertake.

So, what can we say about castes? Are they part of the ethne? Should they be on our lists of people groups?

By what right would we exclude them? Certainly, we cannot exclude them with the biblical understanding of ethnicity provided by Luis Bush. Further, we cannot exclude any entity from our list if the barriers to their hearing the gospel are such that they will not hear if they are not included on the lists we have. How terrible it would be to engage and reach every people group on our list only to find in heaven that many ethne were not listed because they did not conform to our categories of understanding.

congregations composed of more than one nationality and not limited to people of Israel πᾶσαι αἱ ἐκκλησίαι τῶν ἐθνῶν (pasai hai ekklesiiai ton ethnōn) Ro 16:4.

In conclusion, in the authoritative *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* the primary definition of the word *ethnos* is a body of persons united by kinship, culture, and common traditions. The culture and common traditions of India are rooted in a caste system.

## SCHOLARSHIP FROM 1ST CENTURY TO 1948

*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* editor Gerhard Kittel, a German biblical scholar who died in 1948, was professor of the New Testament at Tübingen University in East Germany.

This word, which is common in Greek from the very first, probably comes from ἔθος (ethnos), and means “mass” or “host” or “multitude” bound by the same manners, customs or other distinctive features. Applied to men, it gives us the sense of people; but it can also be used of animals in the sense of “herd” or of insects in the sense of “swarm” [though cf. also ἔθνος μελισσῶν (ethnos melissōn) for the race of bees]. The original sense may still be seen in the πᾶν ἔθνος ἀνθρώπων (pan ethnos anthrōpōn) of Acts 17:26.

The synonyms of ἔθνος (ethnos) provide insight into the nuances of the meaning of the terms related to peoples. The synonyms express delicate shadings of connotation that provides an important distinction that bears directly upon the question of the biblical basis for castes in the term ἔθνος (ethnos) in Matthew 28:19. In most cases ἔθνος (ethnos) is used of men in the sense of a “people.”

Synonyms of ἔθνος (ethnos) are φυλή (phylē) (people as a national unity of common descent), λαός (laos) (people as a political unity with a common history and constitution) and γλῶσσα (glossa) (people as a linguistic unity). ἔθνος (ethnos) is the most general and therefore the weakest of these terms, having simply an ethnographical sense and denoting the natural cohesion of a people in general.<sup>4</sup>

The book of “Revelation often places ἔθνος (ethnos) in a series with λαός (laos), φυλή (phylē), and γλῶσσα (glossa), especially in hymnic sayings (5:9; 7:9; and 14:6); thus it is said that all peoples are affected without distinction by the judgment and grace of the one God.”<sup>5</sup>

In Appendix A, prepared by Dan Scribner, the various words used in the NT for peoples, languages, nations etc. in Revelation 5:9 are compared. Some combination of these terms appears seven times in Revelation 5:9; 7:9; 10:11;

## ● ἐθνη, βαπτίζοντες, *ethné, baptizantes*

- ἐθνη (*ethné*)
- ἔθνος (*ethnos* nation; gentiles) *noun*  
accusative, plural, neuter± | direct object  
Sense: people group (social) - A large group of people based on various cultural, physical, or geographical ties

11:9; 13:7; 14:6; 17:15. The emphasis of these combinations is on completeness, totality, fullness. By the author using *ethné* rather than *laos* in Matthew 28:19 seems to suggest that distinctives other than race and language can define a people such as caste, community, culture and religion.

Again γλῶσσα (glossa) in the Revelation passages emphasizes people as a linguistic unity and is the Greek term that best expresses ethno linguistic peoples. In conclusion, as we consider the four synonyms used in the Bible related to peoples, the term ἔθνος (ethnos) relates to ethno cultural peoples as distinct from *ethno* linguistic peoples, γλῶσσα (glossa) or ethno political peoples, λαός (laos) or φυλή (phylē) which refers to people as a national unity of common descent. In South Asia ethno cultural peoples are usually identified by caste community.

1. Etymologically, the term ethnos used in the New Testament probably comes from ἔθος (ethos), and means “mass” or “host” or “multitude” bound by the same manners, customs or other distinctive features. Applied to men, it gives us the sense of people. There are synonyms found in the New Testament including φυλή (phylē) (people as a national unity of common descent), λαός (laos) (people as a political unity with a common history and constitution) and γλῶσσα (glossa) (people as a linguistic unity). It is worthy of note that γλῶσσα (glossa) would be the likely Greek word used to describe ethno-linguistically distinct peoples.
2. ἔθνος (ethnos) is the most general and therefore the weakest of these terms, having simply an ethnographical sense and denoting the natural cohesion of a people in general.
3. The word ethnos (*ethnos*) appears in the New Testament 162 times
  - Only 32 are singular
  - The use of the 32 times in the singular is as follows: 13 times general, 18 times with reference to a specific people, once in reference to Christianity.
  - Of the 130 plural uses 35 are anarthrous ἔθνη (ethné) (i.e. they do not have a definitive article),



but even of these anarthrous uses most plural uses have the meaning Gentiles which presupposes a qualifying distinction between (ὁ) λαός (laos) and (τὰ) ἔθνη (ta ethnē). *Bible Sense Lexicon*, Content Innovation Team (CIT) of Logos Bible Software.

## SCHOLARSHIP IN THE PRESENT DAY

In an attempt to identify the contextual meanings of Hebrew and Greek words, Logos developed the *Bible Sense Lexicon in Logos Version 5*. A Content Innovation Team (CIT) at Logos Bible Software which now has compiled more than 20,000 resources defines the meaning of a Greek or Hebrew word within a specific verse of the Bible which they call the Sense definition.

The new Sense line of information goes a long way in helping us disambiguate the meanings of biblical words within different verses in the Bible. For instance, the Greek word *ethnē* may have different meanings in the New Testament, but the Content Innovation Team (CIT) at Logos believes that in Matthew 28:19 it means a large group of people based on various cultural, physical, or geographical ties!

The figure above shows the word *ethnē* and the text of Mathew 28:19 followed by the more typical English translations in the New Testament of the word *ethnos*, parses the word and then comes the word sense and a colon which is followed by the CIT definition of *ethnē* as used in Matthew 28:19.

## INDIAN BIBLE TRANSLATORS

Indian Bible translators use the word *jati* which means community/caste<sup>6</sup> when they see the Greek word *ethnē*. This would suggest that community / caste is a valid part of *ethnē* particularly coming from India translators; not westerners.

## BIBLICALLY COMMITTED MISSION LEADERS GATHERING IN 1982

In March 1982 a group of mission leaders came together in Chicago for a meeting sponsored by the Lausanne Strategy Working Group. It was designed to help bring clarity and definition to the remaining or unfinished missionary task. At no time before or since this meeting has as large or as representative a group gathered for two days to focus specifically upon the necessary definitions for a strategy to reach the unreached peoples.


While the results of this gathering describes a strategic definition which added tactical value to the notion of the

unfinished task, the group was made of people totally committed to the biblical basis of primary texts related to the unfinished task such as Matthew 28:19 and the meaning of ἔθνος (ethnos) in πάντα τὰ ἔθνη (panta ta ethnē). It would be very unlikely they would incorporate a meaning for ἔθνος (ethnos) inconsistent with their understanding of the use of the term in Matthew 28:19. Two basic definitions were made at this gathering that have remained as the standard in relation to completing the unfinished task.

1. A People Group is “a significantly large grouping of individuals who perceive themselves to have a common affinity for one another because of their shared language, religion, ethnicity, residence, occupation, class or caste, situation, etc., or combinations of these.” For evangelistic purposes it is “the largest group within which the Gospel can spread as a church-planting-movement without encountering barriers of understanding or acceptance.”
2. An Unreached People Group is “a people group within which there is no indigenous community of believing Christians able to evangelize this people group.”

In the course *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement* which has been taken by an estimated 200,000 people around the world one of the main articles in *The Perspectives Reader* by Ralph D. Winter and Bruce A. Koch is titled: “Finishing the Task: The Unreached Peoples Challenge,” Dr. Winter references these two definitions as the standard for defining the unreached peoples challenge.

## CONCLUSION

Although the most frequent translation of the word *ethnos* in the New Testament is *Gentile* followed by *nation* there are a few exceptions of which the use in Matthew 28:19 is considered to be one of them. That is the conclusion of one of the most respected lexicons available known as BDAG. (In this Lexicon *ethnē* and its plural form: πάντα τὰ ἔθνη (panta ta ethnē). Matthew 24:14; 28:19 is defined as “a body of persons united by kinship, culture, and common traditions, nation, people.” This definition justifies the inclusion of *caste* in the word *ethnē* used in Matthew 28:19. Furthermore, the classical usage--up to the year 300 BC--of the word *ethnos*, according to the *Standard Greek-English Lexicon* by Liddell and Scott, does include the meaning of a special class of men, a caste, or tribe. 

*The full text of this article including footnotes and Appendix A can be viewed on the web...[www.missionfrontiers.org](http://www.missionfrontiers.org)*

# TRANSFORMATION IN THE ZAMBEZI VALLEY



## ROBERT REESE

Robert Reese was born and raised in Zimbabwe, where he was also a missionary from 1981-2002. He teaches missions at Mid-Atlantic Christian University in Elizabeth City, NC and he published *Roots and Remedies of the Dependency Syndrome in World Missions* in 2010. You can contact him at [robert.reese@macuniversity.edu](mailto:robert.reese@macuniversity.edu).

**M**y first memory of visiting the home of Isaac Ndlovu was of our arrival at night, and hearing a strange bubbling sound amid the cacophony of greetings in the Tonga language. As it was pitch black that night, I could not tell where the sound came from until the next morning when it became clear it was made by women smoking pipes that drew smoke through water-filled gourds. That was in 1987 in the area near Binga, Zimbabwe where Ndlovu was just beginning ministry to his own people after he became a Christian miles away to the south. He had no visible support as an evangelist, but only a burning desire to share the liberating gospel with his Tonga relatives and neighbors. By Zimbabwean standards the Zambezi River Valley was backward and remote, long neglected by central government. Small children had to walk five miles one way to get to the nearest school, malaria was rampant, taking the life of Ndlovu's oldest daughter, and jobs were hard to come by. The Tonga existed by fishing in Lake Kariba or subsistence farming, doing battle with wild elephants for the privilege of eating the crops.

What a contrast when compared to what I saw in July 2010 after more than two decades of determined Christian activity directed by Ndlovu! By this time he had a network of five churches he had planted along with a couple of dozen younger church leaders


he was training. In addition he had strong links with several other churches because of his growing influence in the area. Visible changes had taken place in agriculture and education. Now I saw large gardens producing vegetables and fruit, a program for distributing seedlings of fruit trees to anyone who wanted them, and a growing network of elementary schools led by indigenous Christians. What I did not see at all during a week in the area was women smoking pipes!

Such a transformation needs some explanation. The simple truth is that it was a result of local initiative. From the beginning, Ndlovu never asked for assistance or waited for others to direct him. He simply announced that he was leaving a paying job as a farm worker and moving his family back to his ancestral home. That is how his ministry began, for no other reason than the fact that his people needed to hear the gospel. By the time the first missionaries, including me, arrived in 1987 in his home area, he had already built a church building out of local materials in the local style. Yet Ndlovu had never completed the first grade in school!

Ndlovu's story supplies some abiding principles that apply to church planting among spiritualists:

- Of primary importance is a thorough conversion to Christ. A thorough change from a spiritualist worldview to a biblical

one is essential for long-term transformation. The spiritualist mind is especially subject to fear and jealousy. The Christian mindset, however, delights in sharing resources and knowledge for the common good.

- With conversion comes a call to minister the gospel, and in Ndlovu's case he had a specific burden to reach his home community no matter what it might cost him, physically or spiritually. Commitment to a community is necessary for transformation: beyond simple determination is the necessity of living above the fear of witchcraft. Only the truly converted learn to live in God's protective hands safe from evil spirits. Knowledge of spiritual warfare is essential for transformation on any level: personal or communal. Ndlovu could not have succeeded without regular fasting and prayer.
- Local initiative is vital to genuine transformation. Outside intervention needs to be done very carefully in order not to quash local leaders. In Ndlovu's case, he was far removed from the centers of power and money, so he had to make his own decisions daily. He demonstrates that power and money are not even needed for community transformation. The seed of the gospel is said to be a force that grows "all by itself" (Mark 4:28). God delights in initiatives that use the "least of these" to shame the more influential of the world. His power is most evident in community transformation that relies on local initiative. 





## A KEY COMPONENT IN COMPLETING THE GREAT COMMISSION



### RICK LEATHERWOOD

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In 2006, the late Avery Willis, former vice president of the Southern Baptist's International Mission Board and founder of the International Orality Network, stood before 40 missionaries in northern Iraq and began his talk by saying, "For forty years I did it wrong." I was amazed. I had no idea what orality was and didn't really care. I had simply come to the seminar to hear Avery Willis. He was one of the biggest names in missions and yet here was Avery beginning his presentation saying he had done it wrong for 40 years! Without exception Avery had our attention as he turned and drew a circle on the white board and asked, "What is that?" and we all said, "Circle." He then drew a square and asked, "What is that?" and we all said, "Square." Then he drew a triangle and we all said, "Triangle." Avery turned around and looked at us and said, "You say that because you are literate. If you were a non-literate person you might see a ball, a block, and a pyramid, because non-literate people do not think in abstract terms like literate people do. When we learn to read, something happens in our brain and we begin to think in more abstract terms." Two years later I was conducting my first orality workshop in Liberia, West Africa, which is 80% non-literate, and I drew a big circle on the chalkboard and asked what is that? Everyone said, "Ball." Hum. Then I drew a square and asked, "What is that?" and everyone said, "Block," just like Avery had said. The point is if we come to people preaching the gospel using circles and squares (abstract concepts) and they are thinking in terms of balls and blocks (concreteness), we don't communicate in a form the people understand, and this was the 'wrong' that Avery was talking about.

Jesus was literate. But He knew the vast majority of the people listening to him were not literate. So He did not speak to the people in high abstract terms. He taught them through storytelling. He taught them through the concrete stories of fishing and farming, vineyard owners and laborers, merchants, pearls, hidden treasure, wheat, tares, nets, tax collectors and Pharisees. Jesus was the master storyteller whether it was about a moneylender and his debtors, a rich man and a beggar, two sons, an unjust steward, and on and on. Even when Jesus talked to a religious expert, someone who was obviously literate and could quote the Scriptures, Jesus told the expert of the law the story about the Good Samaritan. Nothing too abstract here- a Levite, a priest, a Samaritan, robbers, an inn keeper, two coins. Where did this story come from? It came from the mind of Jesus, as He graciously gave the expert in the law the direction he needed to leave his racial prejudice and religious hypocrisy behind and "go and do" as the Samaritan had done.

Storytelling is the fastest growing method of evangelism and discipleship in the world today. It is effective and people like it. Jesus said, "You are truly my disciples if you continue in my word." Jn. 8:31. You and I have become disciples by reading the word

of God and following its teaching. But what if someone cannot read? Jesus did not say, "Go and make disciples of everyone who can read." He said, "Go and make disciples of all nations," whether they can read or whether they cannot read. Sixty five percent of the world's population is not literate. Most of those living within the unreached peoples in the world today are oral learners. If we are going to reach oral learners with the gospel we must use oral strategies. Missionaries all over the world who are serious about making disciples of oral learners are now engaging in storytelling.

But more than just storytelling is needed. A few stories here, a few stories there, people get excited . . . and then time passes. Where is the continuity and sustainability needed to make disciples? These are two very important components to spiritual growth. Where is the breadth of vision that is needed for people to come to really know God and His purposes so that they can participate with Him and find true meaning in life? Storytelling as it is being practiced on many mission fields today creates 'story sets' which deal with topics such as leadership, evangelism, marriage, women's issues, poverty, sickness, demons, men's issues, etc. But where is the big picture that provides the needed continuity and sustainability? It is in making an oral Bible.

So just what is an oral Bible? An oral Bible is the recording of a core set of stories of the whole Bible from Genesis to Revelation that gives the chronological panorama of God's word as it unfolds in the most central, essential, and fundamental stories of the Bible. It is not a summary nor is it a children's Bible. An oral Bible is the word of God. Great pains are taken to maintain the integrity of the Scriptures. Nothing is added or expositied. It is not embellished or expanded upon in any way. It is a selected portion of stories from God's word which non-literate people can understand better than they can understand the abstract portions of Scripture such as Paul's epistles.

An oral Bible is more than a story set of 6 to 10 stories dealing with a particular issue. It is a story set of 70 stories that gives the whole overview of the purpose of God

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from beginning to end. Not too many. Not too few. The International Mission Board is one of the leaders in the storytelling movement and has prepared more than 180 stories. But 180 stories is a lot for a native who doesn't wear clothes living down on the border of Ethiopia and Kenya to try to get his mind around. By keeping the story set short in an oral Bible (60-70 stories), the end can be clearly seen from the beginning and even non-literate people can see and understand the plan of God. After that more stories can be added.

In speaking of oral Bibles a moment is needed to note the difference between an oral Bible and an audio Bible such as Faith Comes by Hearing (FCBH) is producing in many parts of the world. The audio Bible produced by FCBH is a dramatized recording of the New Testament onto a cassette tape or an audio player. But the text for audio

Bibles such as FCBH produces comes from a written New Testament which has been translated and approved by Wycliffe or a Bible Society. The problem here is that Bible translation is a long, time-consuming process. Wycliffe says it will take at least another 25 years to even start a written translation in the languages of all the peoples that need one. It can then take another 20 years or more after work begins to complete each of these translations. But an oral Bible beginning from Genesis and not just the New Testament, can be quickly produced from the written translation of the local trade language, which has already been completed by Wycliffe or a Bible Society. In Liberia we made oral

Bibles in 16 languages in just 18 months. So the oral Bible is not dependent on 45 years of future new translations. It takes what is there in the previously completed translation of the trade language, and building on the years of hard work to produce that translation, records a selection of stories orally into the mother tongue of the unreached tribe. This would be similar to someone translating a message of a visiting preacher. However the added advantage of the oral Bible is the oral Bible is done by a team in a group setting, rather than the translation coming through just one person as in the case of a message being translated from a guest speaker.

Another difference between an oral Bible and an audio Bible is that the stories recorded in an oral Bible have been crafted for reproducibility. Instead of recording the whole text (as is done in an audio Bible) the stories in



an oral bible have been shortened. The story of David and Goliath is a good example. The written text includes the details of Goliath's clothing, his armor, the weight of his spear, etc. Are these details important to the main point of the story? Is knowing these details essential for becoming a mature Christian? Including all the written details makes a story hard to reproduce in an oral form. If the story is not orally reproducible, the good news that a man has risen from the dead does not spread among unreached, non-literate people. Therefore in order to make the stories reproducible, an oral Bible keeps the heart of a story but omits unessential details like Goliath's clothing, enabling the stories to be remembered and retold. As Bruce Wilkinson of Walk Through The Bible said, "We try to get our stories down to the irreducible minimum." Exactly. To get an idea of a complete 70 story set and the text used to create an oral Bible, go to [www.oralbibles.org](http://www.oralbibles.org).

So a team of 5-6 native speakers of a given language, who also know how to read their trade language, take on the task of providing the Scriptures orally for their tribesmen who can't read. These 5-6 native speakers learn two or more Bible stories a day, taken from the written text of the Bible in the trade language. With such a team, usually an oral Bible of 60-70 stories from creation to Revelation can be recorded in a week. First the group sits together in the morning discussing the key terminology of the stories they will be telling in their mother tongue that day. Their goal is to find the best way to say this word or that one in their language. They collaborate as a group discussing the word's meaning in the context of the passage until they all come to agreement. Then each one studies their story using the group's consensus of the correct terminology or as is more often the case, the best phraseology, and then with one of their team members listening to check for accuracy, they tell their story in their mother tongue as it is being recorded. The oral Bible then goes through another important check as it is edited. With a native speaker listening to the recordings while following the written text, the editor makes any changes necessary, making sure the oral story agrees with the written word in the Scriptures. Together the editor and the recorder then arrange the stories in chronological order. The recording is then put onto one of the solar


powered audio players that are now on the market or onto an SD card to be used in cell phones."

And so we come to the question of distribution. Who gets the players? From what I've observed, at present, the practice is to get a player into a village so that all can use it. But let me ask you a question. When you are ready to read the word of God, do you want to begin by taking an hour out to go down the block searching from house to house to find which one of your neighbors has the Bible? No. Your spirit is calling for the word of God to come into your soul right at that moment, so you take your readily accessible printed Bible and begin to read. Historian Paul Johnson records that in the 1630s and the years following, every home in Boston had a Bible, and that Bible was being read on a daily basis giving guidance and direction and consensus to the settlers living there as they tried to live by God's word. This is discipleship. The same will be true for people who do not read. Oral

Bibles need to be available to every household that wants one.

The church in the 20th Century did a wonderful job of getting the cost of printed Bibles into hundreds of languages down to around \$3 per Bible, providing access to the word of God for millions of people all over the world. As we move closer to completing the Great Commission in the 21st Century, the church must come to grips with the fact that the word of God needs to go into every

home that wants it. The cost of solar players must come down from the present \$15-\$60 price range to \$5. If the secular world can put a calculator on the market for \$3, surely it is possible for the church to get solar powered players containing an oral Bible into every non-literate person's home for \$5.

Our commission is to "go and make disciples," but it is pretty difficult to make disciples without the word of God. It is surely time for the whole translation component of the church to take a major step toward reaching every tribe and tongue with the word of God by creating oral Bibles. It is good to see Wycliffe moving more and more into the creation of oral Bibles as well through a project called "One Story." Without doubt oral Bibles are the best way forward to make disciples of the non-literate unreached peoples of the world by bringing them the word of God in a form they can understand. 

## OUR COMMISSION IS TO "GO AND MAKE DISCIPLES," BUT IT IS PRETTY DIFFICULT TO MAKE DISCIPLES WITHOUT THE WORD OF GOD.



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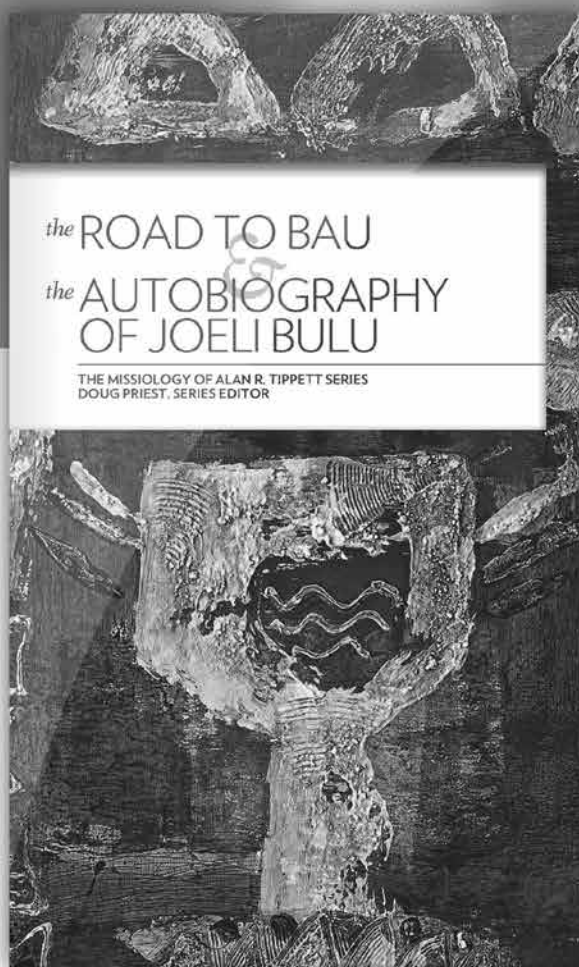
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Tomasi Kanailagi was born in the Fiji Islands, and an ordained minister of the Methodist Church in Fiji. He served with the Bible Society in the South Pacific, holding a Diploma of Theology from the Melbourne College of Divinity, and a Bachelor's degree in Divinity from the Pacific Theological College.

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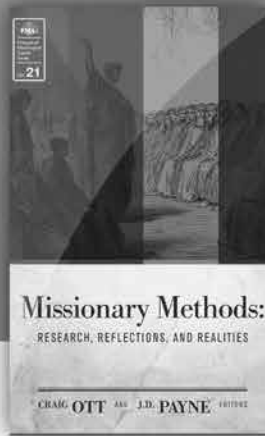
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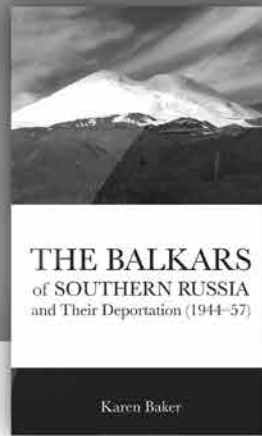
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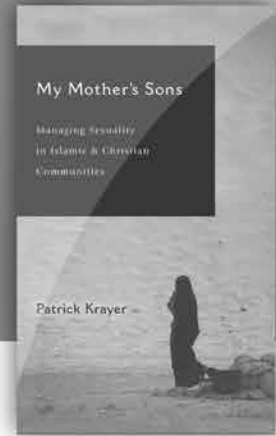


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## STEWARDING A LEGACY



GREG PARSONS

/ GLOBAL DIRECTOR,  
U.S. CENTER FOR  
WORLD MISSION

In October 1976, I first heard Ralph D. Winter speak at a student conference. It was one month before the USCWM was legally founded. I had never heard of Winter before that day, but what he shared that evening changed my life focus. I had

a strong missions vision instilled by my home church, but what I heard that night from Winter blew away my understanding of the world and introduced me to the idea of Unreached Peoples.

When my wife and I joined staff at the USCWM in 1982, we thought we'd be here a few years. We figured we'd help out during those founding days and then we would have a better idea where we could serve overseas. But we never made it! Over the years, we felt led to stay—serving, at times in difficulty, witnessing amazing breakthroughs and watching people be mobilized and thrust out.

As Director of the USCWM from 1990-2010, I didn't always agree with Dr. Winter in terms of how to run things. But there were very few areas of missiology with which I differed. Sure, he overstated to make a point, at times ignoring valid points on the other side of the discussion. But it was rare that his insights in missiology—and a range of other issues—didn't make you think harder about the

point, which was the point.

So, for 27 years up until his death in 2009, I was stimulated by the way he “simply flipped that idea on its head” as *Christianity Today* Senior writer Tim Stafford put it in a cover article about Winter.<sup>1</sup> I found his approach was a great way to address a range of issues confronting us.

Winter seemed forgetful or focused elsewhere, but he was diligent to keep almost everything that came across his desk. As a result, when he died, there were some 900 boxes or file cabinets of materials. Many of them were archival materials of the USCWM or the WCIU—which Ralph and Roberta Winter also founded. Over the past few years, we have culled that material down, and are officially announcing the establishment of the **Ralph D. Winter Research Center**. This is a joint ministry of the USCWM and WCIU. It will house Winter's books and archives, material from Donald McGavran archives and his library as well as several other collections.

But it will not be mainly or only focused on the past. The foundation of the Research Center is based on the insights and innovation of people like Winter and McGavran, but the goal is to build on that, in order to discover and address today's global issues. It will be biblically grounded, strategically focused, and globally engaged. It will seek to: 1) learn and disseminate lessons from the past, 2) connect with current efforts, and, 3) project into the future, all with the goal of advancing strategic collaboration and effective networking of mission leaders,


thinkers, scholars and activists.

This will be accomplished through both the physical space on our campus, but also through online availability of papers, letters, and presentations—written, audio, and video. Add to that the element of face-to-face collaboration at the facilities of the USCWM and WCIU—and elsewhere globally.

In fact, this week, we are hosting a small event focused on the Stewarding the Legacy of Donald McGavran. In this case, we are bringing together ten scholars who knew or did doctoral work on McGavran to discuss his legacy and how it should be stewarded well. Other upcoming events include topics like Vulnerable Missions and Genetics and Faith among others.

To pull this off, we will need a lot of help. We have one full-time staff member working on the archives, and another working on cataloging, but we would love to greatly speed that up!

We also need some funds to increase staffing, provide seminar scholarships to key mission leaders globally, redo space for the archives, research and forums focused on the key global issues of the future.

We should have a basic web site soon, so keep your eyes open for major changes and updates at: [www.ralphdwinter.org](http://www.ralphdwinter.org) including more detailed information about the Ralph D. Winter Research Center. 

<sup>1</sup> Stafford, Tim 1984 “Ralph Winter: Looking for the Hidden Peoples”. *Christianity Today*, 28:12, September 7, 1984, 14-18.

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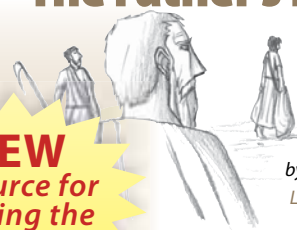
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