



further reflections

Learning from a Parable

Greg H. Parsons



The USCWM was founded in 1976, and the first issue of *Mission Frontiers* was published in 1979. I've been reviewing the early issues of *Mission Frontiers* and came across an interesting parable, the first part of which is reproduced below. This parable reflects one of the USCWM's main activities in those days: mobilization. But it also points out the essence of the problem of communicating the gospel: cultural difference.

What elements of ministry do you see in this parable?

I'll include the first half of the parable in this issue, and plan to finish it in the next issue. As you read, ask the Lord how you might apply the parable to your own life and ministry. What elements of mobilization, training, strategy, evangelical approaches to evangelism, short-term mission, etc. do you see in this? If you have some reflections, or your own parable to suggest, send it to me at greg.parsons@uscwm.org.

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In the pages of this volume of the first four years of *Mission Frontiers* the reader will find the fascinating story of those "crucial, cliff-hanging years" of the U.S. Center for World Mission, written down as they were happening. I can hardly wait to pore over once more the drama recorded in this illuminating record.

Jim Montgomery,
 Chairman, Founder, Dawn Ministries

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(Also consider whether you should get a copy of the first four years of *MF* coming out in a bound volume soon—there are additional articles of interest beyond this one. See the box below for more details.)

A Parable?

From *Mission Frontiers* Vol. 1:3 pages 3,7, March-April 1979. (Part 1 of 2).

The following story illustrates the need for a strategic approach to cross-cultural missions. My name is Osaku. I grew up in a rural Japanese town in the 1940s. My family embraced Shintoism as a religion and I felt at an early age the compulsion to share its truths with the rest of the world's peoples.

If I had been asked to choose a particular country in which to spread the news of my religion, I probably would have responded with...Korea, China, or even India. But just a few short years after my uncles and aunts were destroyed by an American B-29 bomber, I was divinely guided to consider the place I abhor the most on this Earth...the United States.

What a confusing place! My father visited there once. He told me that the people were very closed to outsiders with different religions. He said they would talk to you occasionally, but for the most part they claimed allegiance to Jesus Christ. This was a martyr who lived about 2000 years ago. My father told them that we accepted Jesus too, in our respect for great men. But for some reason they said it wasn't the same. It was hard to understand what they meant. Why couldn't they just revere Jesus and look into our religion too?

The funny thing was, most of them couldn't explain very well the details of what they believed. They just said, "This is what I believe and that's that!" This is somewhat the way the Muslims are...as well as many Hindus. They don't know exactly what they believe but they defend the religion from a standpoint of pride. This makes those Americans very hard to penetrate. You can't reason with them. They don't practice their religion in depth but mostly go through rituals which are almost impossible to break.

*(to be continued in the November-December *Mission Frontiers* – contact greg.parsons@uscwm.org for responses)*



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