

EDITORIAL COMMENT



Does God Have a Purpose for Our Suffering?

RICK WOOD, EDITOR, *MISSION FRONTIERS*

Suffering: it's awful. We hate it. We run from it like a gazelle fleeing from a hungry lion. We will do almost anything to avoid it. But suffering is an inescapable part of living in this world. God does not spare even His most faithful servants from it.

Since the original sin of Adam, this world has lived under a curse, a curse of suffering and death that will remain until Jesus Christ is revealed as the King of Kings. Our bodies grow old and suffer numerous painful ailments. Exercising their God-given free will, sinful human

of His kingdom. God has ordained that it is through much pain and suffering that God's kingdom would be established and advanced among all the peoples of the earth.

The real question is whether we will accept the assignment or resist it in a futile effort to avoid suffering. What is most important to us—saving our own lives, or being faithful and obedient to God's call to spread His glory in all the earth? The future of world evangelization will depend on how each of us answers that question.

HE IS OUR PRINCE, THOUGH CHRISTIAN, AND HE DID NOT MIND THE PAIN. I MUST NOT, EITHER, BECAUSE I AM THE KING'S SERVANT, AND IT IS WRITTEN IN MY BOOK THAT THE KING'S SERVANTS ARE TO BE LIKE THE PRINCE.

—From *Little Pilgrim's Progress*, by Helen Taylor, p. 106

beings continue to inflict devastating pain on one another. And the blood of the martyrs has often been the seed of the church. In the midst of it all, many are tempted to shake their fist at God and say, "Why me?", as if something strange were happening to them or as if they expect to somehow be exempt from the painful trials of this world.

We should expect suffering in this life—Jesus promised it to us. We cannot expect God to spare us from all suffering when He did not spare His only Son from suffering. But does God have an ongoing purpose for our suffering?

As Bob Sjogren points out in his article (pages 14-15), Jesus came on a mission to suffer and die for the glory of God, and God has appointed us to go and do likewise in the advancement

What is the Highest Priority of Our Lives?

The life of Josef Tson, a Romanian pastor, illustrates the choices we all face when suffering or persecution comes to us. Beginning in October 1974, Pastor Tson was interrogated for six months, up to 10 hours a day, five days a week, simply because of his faithfulness in proclaiming the gospel. The goal of his interrogators was to "break" him, to make him their slave. They wanted him to abandon his faith and become their ally in destroying others who would dare to proclaim the gospel.

One interrogator said to him, "You're going to be shot, but first I want you tortured so you will curse all that you hold sacred and holy."¹ That is exactly what Satan would like each of us to do

when we encounter suffering. He wants us to give up on serving God and distrust God in the midst of our darkest hours. Job's wife urged him to "curse God and die." Satan is defeated when we humbly trust God with our lives and resolutely determine that we will proclaim His glory no matter what suffering or persecution He allows into our lives.

In return for his cooperation, Josef Tson was promised safety and freedom. He was faced with the choice to remain faithful to Christ or to do what his captors wanted and avoid suffering. What was his highest priority: saving his own life or glorifying God?

Pastor Tson responded to the promise of safety and freedom:

"What you offer me is spiritual suicide. I would much rather accept a physical death. To tell you the truth, I don't see any reason to save my own life. Go on, shoot me." Tson reports, "I cannot fully describe that man's fury at that moment. He suddenly realized that the whole plan to break me had failed."

"Why did I say I did not need to save my life? Here is why. During an earlier interrogation at Ploiesti I had told another officer who threatened to kill me, 'Sir, let me explain how I see this issue. *Your supreme weapon is killing. My supreme weapon is dying.* Here is how it works. You know that my sermons on tape have spread all over the country. If you kill me, those sermons will be sprinkled with my blood. Everyone will know I died for my preaching. And everyone who has a tape will pick it up and say, 'I'd better listen again to what this man preached, because he really meant it: he sealed it with his life. So, sir, my sermons will speak 10 times louder than before. I will actually rejoice in this supreme victory if you kill me.'"

In Josef Tson's life he had learned to value Christ and his glory above his

own life, safety and freedom. For him the advance of the gospel was the highest priority, not saving his own life. He knew that this life is not all there is and that a great reward is awaiting him for his faithfulness. The only way he could lose was by abandoning his trust in Christ.

If we are to bring the gospel to every tribe and tongue, we must value Christ and His kingdom above our own lives. Christ is worthy of all we have and all we are. We must choose to trust His sovereignty and His purposes when suffering does come. We must not shy away from proclaiming the gospel in order to protect ourselves, but rather boldly go to every unreached people.

It is hard, especially for Americans, to learn to die to self and the pleasures of this world. The Western, consumer-driven culture is designed around satisfying our every desire and avoiding suffering. This is probably why some in the West have developed a “health, wealth and prosperity” theology but not a theology of suffering. We are taught to live for

the things of this world, and this has infected our churches. But when we come to faith in Christ, we receive a new master who has called us to be on mission with Him, and faithfulness to that mission will involve suffering.

Jim Elliot so aptly said before earning a martyr’s crown, “He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.” Like Elliot and his four companions who died with him in their attempt to reach the Waorani people of Ecuador, we must be willing to embrace suffering and death, especially when these come by way of our faithfulness to the mission Christ has given to us. The only way to glorify God with our lives is to trust Him with our suffering, even when it makes no sense and seems to serve no purpose.

It’s All About the Glory of God

The purpose of all of life is to glorify God and to make His glory known to every tribe and tongue. This is all part of God’s grand design for history—to raise up worshippers to Himself from every tribe and tongue. As John Piper says, “Missions exists because worship does not,” at least not within all peoples

to the degree that is required for God to receive the glory He deserves.

No sane person seeks out suffering. But we embrace suffering when it comes, trusting in God’s sovereignty and provision, in order to advance God’s kingdom and His glory. We suffer hardship in order to meet the needs of hurting people around the world so they can see a glorious God who loves them and is worthy of their worship. We suffer willingly so that the whole world can see the all-surpassing value of Christ and His kingdom. Why should the peoples of the world believe anything we say if we are not willing to suffer for Christ? Why should we expect the peoples of the world to live for Christ if we are not willing to die for Him? Let us resolve to respond to suffering in our own lives and in the lives of others in such a way that God receives the glory and His kingdom is established in all the earth. **f**

¹The quotes from Josef Tson are excerpted from the article, *Thank You for the Beating* by Josef Tson, which appeared in the Fall 2009 publication of *To Every Tribe*, available at www.toeverytribe.com. Josef Tson has also written the book *Suffering, Martyrdom and Rewards in Heaven*.

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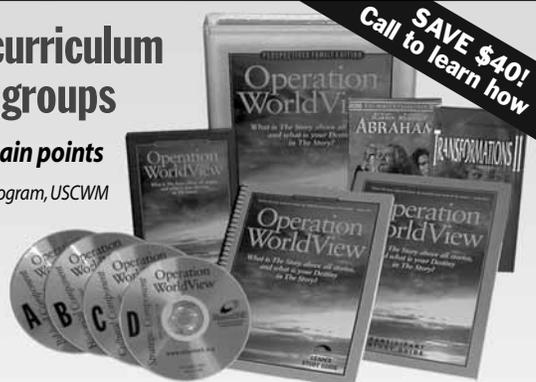
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— Glenn R. Felty, Pastor of Missions, Cedar Crest Bible Fellowship Church, Allentown, PA





Recapturing the Role of SUFFERING

NIK RIPKEN

The following is excerpted from chapter 24 of *From Seed to Fruit: Global Trends, Fruitful Practices, and Emerging Issues among Muslims* (William Carey Library, 2008). To order copies, see page 2 of this issue of *Mission Frontiers*.

“Unless a kernel of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains a single seed. But if it dies, it brings forth much fruit.” John 12:24

The testimony of believers living in the midst of persecution challenges the church in the West, and its emissaries, to recapture a biblical missiology—a missiology that is mature enough to embrace suffering, persecution, and even martyrdom. Believers in settings of persecution, through numerous interviews, suggest that the church in the West has lost its missiological edge and that it has grown soft in the face of overt persecution.

The story told by persecuted believers calls to mind God’s people of old. The priests of the Old Testament could rightly interpret the Ten Commandments and parse the grammatical nuances of the law code. But the work of the priests was much broader and richer than merely that. These ancient carriers of God’s Word could also place these commandments upon their shoulders and carry them into battle, through

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swollen rivers, across deserts and over mountains. These messengers of God were courageous carriers of the Word, calloused of feet and hand, seasoned mentally and spiritually. These priests knew the

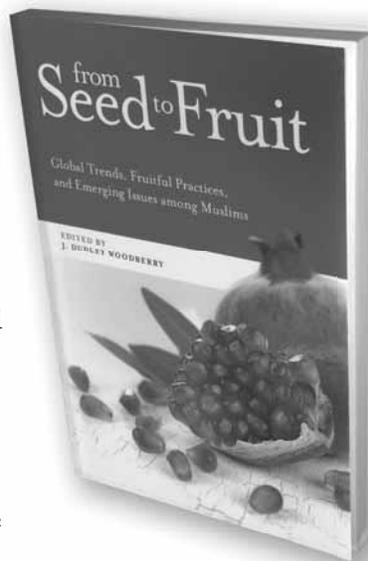
Word, and they lived the Word.

And they rightly understood that a life lived in the presence of God would be framed by suffering and persecution. In fact, for these ancient heroes of the faith, that is what it meant to share in the Kingdom of God.

Can the same be said of us? We are the modern carriers of this same Word. Do we understand the central place of suffering and persecution in the faith we claim? Or, in light of the freedom that has shaped us, have we written those troubling truths out of the story? Are suffering and persecution essential parts of the story—or are they relics from another time and place? Modern Western

believers may revolt at the thought—but unless we find our identity as God’s people in the midst of suffering and persecution, we will sadly discover that we have no identity.

In the former Soviet Union, believers understood that their heritage was one of suffering and persecution. To this day, believers growing out of



that heritage claim that persecution is “normal,” that it is as normal as the “sun coming up in the east.” For decades, believers in the former U.S.S.R. and in neighboring China have lived victoriously in the midst of persecution. They have done this by incarnating a genealogy of faith that models from one generation to the next how a follower of Christ lives and how a follower of Christ dies. When these believers are asked, “Where did you learn to live like this? Where did you learn to die like this?” they answer, “I learned this from my mother and my father. I learned this from my grandfather and grandmother.” Though enduring and excelling in the midst of persecution is never easy, these modern-day giants of the faith teach us through their flesh and souls that following Jesus involves a cross as well as a crown.

This is a seminal issue for first-generation believers who are emerging into faith from within Islam. Who is able to teach these new [Muslim-background believers, or MBBs] how to live in Christ? Who will teach these new MBBs how to die in Christ? These are especially critical questions in light of the fact that it is often their biological parents and grandparents who lead in their persecution. It is often immediate family members who beat the new MBBs, place them under house arrest, disinherit them, and then arrange marriages for their believing daughters to Muslim men thirty years their senior. It is often immediate family members who turn the new believers over to the religious authorities. Who will teach these new believers how to live in Christ—and, perhaps, even to die in him?

This will never happen without a genealogy of faith. But a genealogy of faith will likely not be found in the immediate family. If it is to be found at all, *it will originate from the very people who have shared with these new believers the Gospel story.* This precious responsibility falls on the shoulders of witnesses from outside the culture. They will be the ones to model for MBBs a genealogy of faith.

This genealogy of faith will include at least two elements. First, the witnesses will model a genealogy of faith that is grounded in the story of God’s people through the ages. They will build for these new believers, in literate and oral forms, a biblical genealogy of faith that spans no less than the sixty-six books of the Bible, Genesis to Revelation. Second, they will incarnate a living

example of a genealogy of faith—one that both asks and answers this crucial question: “Do you want to know how to live and die in Christ? Then watch our lives as we live them out in your midst.” Such was the admonition of the apostle Paul to believers in the early church. And God’s people on mission, even today, will find the courage to say the very same thing.

Of course, making such a claim is both difficult and humbling. Entering into suffering is unspeakably painful. But even more terrifying is watching “our Joseph” begin to experience his or her own persecution. That’s where most of us want to draw the line. How exactly do we react today when “our Joseph” is thrown into Pharaoh’s prison unjustly? What do we do when our beloved “Joseph” begins to suffer for the faith? Emails fly as we demand the immediate release of “our Joseph” who has been wrongly accused and imprisoned. We petition governments to intercede, and we bring political and military might to bear on the situation. We threaten the persecutors. We call the church to pray that the persecution might end. Many Western-based and well-meaning organizations have developed a protocol for responding to events of persecution, often adopting a four-fold agenda that aims to:

1. Stop the persecution;
2. Punish the persecutors;
3. Promote Western forms of government and democracy; and
4. Raise funds that will aid in the rescuing of believers from persecution.

Much to our amazement, a truly biblical vision would likely respond in a different way. How might we develop a spiritual, emotional and physical toughness that, when Pharaoh throws “our Joseph” into prison unjustly, *we allow him or her to stay in jail?* Where does such strength and spiritual insight come? And, then, do we dare consider this thought: to rescue Joseph prematurely from prison, before he has the opportunity to interpret Pharaoh’s dream, would lead to the starvation and destruction of both Egypt and Israel, the destruction of both persecutor and persecuted.

How do we know when it is within God’s will for Joseph to remain in jail for a season? For most of us, the answer is easy. We can allow that *as long as it is someone else’s Joseph.* But when it is “our Joseph” undergoing persecution, there erupts an overwhelming desire to rescue this dear brother or

sister from the prisons and crosses that necessarily accompany faith in the Messiah.

... A biblical vision reminds us that believers should not fear the persecution that is inherent in following Christ, engaging in compulsive fleeing. But, at the same time, believers should not seek out persecution when God has determined that believers are allowed to live in a season of grace.

We can learn much from the response of MBBs to this telling question: "What do you learn from Western witnesses?" The initial answers are affirming and kind. MBBs express gratitude for the Gospel that witnesses have sacrificially carried to them. They marvel at the selflessness of witnesses as they meet human needs at great cost, both financially and personally. MBBs are typically in awe that Western missionary families have given up living in the rich West for the sake of the poor

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and lost among the nations. MBBs have many kind things to say about Western workers. But, eventually, other answers are offered. When confidences are won, and candidness appears, MBBs often share insights that are more difficult to hear

and accept. "What do we learn from missionaries?" They often repeat back to us, "*Missionaries teach us to be afraid.*"

What are Western missionaries afraid of? According to these gracious MBBs, they fear that their platform might be compromised, that they might be kicked out of a country, that they might lose their work permit or visa. They fear that their children might have to move with them to another country, that they might be uprooted from their schools and friends. They dread the thought of having to learn another language. Most of all, they fear that the fruit of their ministry will be targeted: that new believers might be persecuted, fired from their jobs, divorced from their families, and beaten. They fear most that "our Joseph" will go to jail or, worse, be martyred because of the faith that has been born because of their witness. Satan plays on this fear as they are accused by the secular media or even other mission partners of "getting this person harmed or killed." This fear tends to make them timid in their witness. When faith does break out, often they will extract "their believer" to another country of perceived

safety, preferably in the West. Therefore, church-planting is compromised. In fact, if this pattern is followed, the planting of a church will likely never happen....

Believers living in settings of persecution offer another insightful piece of counsel. Missionaries most often, they point out, face persecution as a result of discipling, baptizing, and gathering MBBs together within the missionaries' living environment. The regular meeting of MBBs in their homes, or singling out MBBs and worshipping with them in their location, frequently leads to persecution. And, tragically, this is persecution for reasons other than for who Jesus is. Persecution that results from a personal relationship with a Western missionary—or persecution that grows out of employment, education or worship—is different from persecution for who Jesus is. MBBs suggest, creatively, that missionaries were called by God to expend their lives among those who remain in lostness. MBBs suggest, conversely, that most missionaries get into trouble, not because they are leading lost people to Jesus, but because they are spending the bulk of their time among *those already added to the Kingdom of God....*

MBBs ask us to consider taking most of our risks among those who are still lost rather than taking most of our risks among those already saved.

Learning from the Persecutors

... Believers living in the midst of persecution suggest that, when they are rejected by their families, thrown into prison, beaten, and killed for their faith, then that is precisely the time for the global Church to rejoice and give God praise. Why would they make such an insane suggestion? It is these overt acts of persecution that reveal the persecutors' abject failure to silence witness, diminish faith, or slow Pentecost from arriving once more in the midst of a resistant culture. Overt persecution is a sign of the failure of the persecutors. Failure to keep believers quiet leads to overt persecution—so overt persecution is an indication that believers have refused to be quiet! Overt persecution authenticates the faith within resistant cultures. Overt persecution gives faith value in the eyes of those who watch believers and marvel at their willingness to suffer and die in Jesus' name.

What that means is that a radically different understanding of persecution, suffering, and martyrdom must be considered. In this light, countries such as Saudi Arabia and Somalia can be

listed at the very pinnacle of those who persecute the faith and the faithful because, at their core, they seek to deny people access to the eternal life that is found only in Jesus. The implication for the Western church and her cross-cultural witnesses is huge. Every day, every follower of Jesus decides whether to side with the persecutors or the persecuted. Believers side with the persecutors when they withhold their witness—and they side with the persecuted when they are open in sharing their faith.

If persecution is defined by beatings, imprisonments, and martyrs alone, then the Western church is correct to pray “for” the persecuted. Persecution is about “those poor people and the terrible things happening to them.” But if persecution is defined in terms of denying others access to Jesus, then perhaps praying “with” the persecuted will have a more intimate feel as we side with persecuted brothers and sisters by choosing to give our witness boldly.

What, Then, Are We to Do?

What might a truly biblical missiology look like? What might we choose to learn—and unlearn—in light of this worldwide witness? And how might we live in response?

We begin with this startling word: the number one cause of persecution is people giving their lives to Jesus. We can reduce persecution, most easily, by reducing the number of those who come to salvation! Most Christians in the West have been taught to pray for persecution to end, to pray that suffering would cease, and to pray that martyrs would be only an historical reference. The only possible way for those things to happen is to stop people from accepting Jesus. The major cause of persecution is people giving their lives to Christ and, then, refusing to deny others access to the very same Savior. Salvation and witness inevitably result in persecution for Christian believers.

Persecution, quite simply, is normal for Christians. Both the witness of Scripture and the testimony of history bear this out. How, then, are Western missionaries to react? Consider these simple words of counsel:

- Accept the hard truth that persecution is normal and prepare yourself and others for that reality.
- Become culturally astute. Strive to create a safe place and space of time for lost people to hear, understand, believe

and experience Pentecost before being visited by severe persecution.

- Lose your fear and claim your freedom to be a culturally wise and bold witness to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Losing fear and claiming freedom have little to do with political environment. Followers of Christ are as free to share their faith in Afghanistan as they are in the United States or Europe. The issue is not whether we are free to share; the issue is whether we are willing to suffer the consequences of expressing our faith. We are all free—but not all of us are willing to bear the consequences of a free and bold witness.
- Be tough—emotionally, spiritually and physically—for you will be the cause of an increasing amount of persecution as thousands of lost people hear and believe your witness. Persecution and response to the Gospel are the two sides of the same coin. Understand that bold witness will necessarily result in persecution—not because you are unwise in your practices, but simply because Satan detests faith and desires that no one become a child of God.
- Do not run from persecution—and do not seek it.
- Decide not to extract a believer. Decide not to rescue others from sharing in the sufferings of Christ.
- And never regret that others joyously received your witness, even if the cost of their faith carries the high cost of persecution. Remember that the resurrection came through crucifixion.
- Never lessen the price paid by believers in persecution. No matter how the persecution event is publicized, no matter what victory might be won, no matter the glorious finale—persecution is not fun, and it is not to be sought. It is blood, sweat, and tears. It is physical and psychological abuse. It is isolation and years of separation. It is growing up as a child with a father in prison. It is raising children without a mate, ostracized from the community. Never slight the price paid by believers in persecution and never become casual about the cost. Honor the suffering of brothers and sisters in Christ by telling the truth about the price they have paid.
- Determine to live out your genealogy of faith, modeling for first generation, emerging believers, how a follower of Christ lives and dies. Have the courage to say, “Watch my life as it is lived out in your midst.” And then live a life that is worthy of being copied.
- Through it all, become a risk-taker among lost people so that they—every tongue and every tribe—might have opportunity to hear, understand, believe and be gathered in the Body of Christ.

Never forget that Jesus is worth it. **f**



Jesus is WORTHY:

A Case Study from Mongolia

BRIAN HOGAN

The following is excerpted, with permission, from *There's a Sheep in My Bathtub: Birth of a Mongolian Church Planting Movement*, by Brian Hogan (Asteroidea Books, 2008). Learn more at www.AsteroideaBooks.com

The Letter

The sun defied all my expectations and came up that Christmas morning.

Just 24 hours earlier we had awakened to a horror that Christmas Eve and Christmas Day never broke. I got out of bed and went straight to the desk, knowing somehow I had to communicate what was happening to friends and family back home.

Christmas Day, 1994

Erdenet, Mongolia

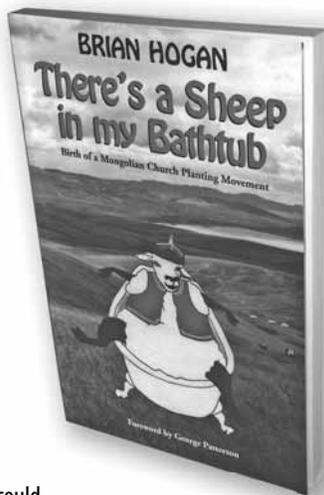
Dear Family,

Today is Christmas Day. Yesterday our son died. This letter will be tough to write. I usually enjoy writing to you and the words flow easily. There are no words for this. Yesterday morning Louise woke to find a perfect baby boy lying dead in his bed. Jedidiah was 52 days old.

I wish you could have known my son. I wish you could have held him and seen how beautiful his hands, eyelashes, lips, everything was. He learned to smile in his last week. He had a smile more gorgeous than a sunrise. Jed used to stare so intently at our faces-- just as if he was memorizing every detail.

I don't understand this "Sudden Infant Death Syndrome." I know whoever named it never lost a baby to it. The name should reflect that something in the parent suddenly dies. I have heard a few

facts which provide a sort of cold comfort. Our living in Mongolia had nothing to do with this. The highest prevalence of S.I.D.S. is in New Zealand, a Western country. It usually strikes healthy boys, under six months, during the winter. Jed had a full checkup by an American doctor just a week before he died. He was perfectly healthy.



Yesterday was the longest day of our lives. Louise woke and noticed it was six a.m. and Jed hadn't awakened her all night. She knew. Her scream woke me to a nightmare I have yet to awaken from. I ran to where he was sleeping and picked up my only son. Jed was not there. I prayed for God to raise him from the dead. He didn't. Louise and I wept in shock and disbelief. The girls woke when Louise had screamed, but had obeyed my command to stay in bed. They were calling to find out what was wrong. I had to go in and hold them and tell them their little brother was dead. I won't even try to describe this.

Louise went to get Magnus and Maria. They got up and came immediately. Praise God for our team. There is no way we could have walked through this without them. Magnus and I labored over Jed's body again in anguished prayer. I knew (and know) God could return life to Jed, but I began to realize the answer this time was this body was no longer a vessel for Jedidiah's life. . . .

We deeply love you and appreciate you,

Brian, Louise, Melody, Molly, and Alice Hogan

Brian Hogan serves with Church Planting Coaches, a global ministry of Youth With A Mission. He also serves YWAM on the Frontier Mission Leadership Team.

GOD HAD REDEEMED EVEN OUR DEEPEST SORROW AND TURNED IT INTO GLORY AND WORSHIPERS.
AS TEARS RAN DOWN MY CHEEKS, ALL I COULD THINK WAS "JESUS IS WORTHY."

Grieving with Hope

On Thanksgiving Day, 1997, Baika and I were staring out over the endless Pacific Ocean when he calmly declared, "Your grief over the death of your son was the most miraculous thing I have ever experienced."

Baika Puntsag, today pastor of Denver's Amazing Grace Church, America's first Mongolian Christian church, had come to spend the Thanksgiving holiday with us [in California] in a very strange way...

"I think you must be wondering why I wanted to be with you." The twinkle in his eye might have been the afternoon sun glancing off the breakers.

"I didn't want to ask, but yeah, I'm curious. Why us?"

"Even though we never actually met in Mongolia, I know your family.... I was saved in the early days of the coming of Christ to Mongolia.... My friend shared about the horrible shock of the news of Jed's death that came during the Christmas party. She also told us about the gathering at your home after the burial and the memorial service. As she told us what you had shared and how you and Louise had responded to this tragedy, we began to weep. My own hard heart melted as I cried."

"That means a lot to me. We all cried a lot that Christmas," I assured Baika.

"That is not why we were crying though. We were crying at our understanding through your grief."

I was completely confused, "What...?"

"Your grief over the death of your son was the most miraculous thing I have ever experienced," Baika explained.

As he said this, the memory of several of the believers in Erdenet saying something very similar, when we were saying our goodbyes a year and a half earlier, came rushing back to me. I had quickly forgotten their statements about our grief being a miracle because it made no sense to me. I had felt that my grief, which I couldn't hide, was a bad advertisement for the Kingdom. I had begged God to allow us to grieve in private in the States with family, and had been completely puzzled when He had made it clear to both of us that we were to stay in Erdenet during the worst months of mourning. I began to get a strange buzzing sensation as if I were about to open a door into a room filled with mystery.

"Could you please explain that for me, Baika?"

"Brian, you can't really understand what it is like for Mongolians. In your country everyone seems to believe in life after death. But in Mongolia no one has any hope for this at all. When loved ones die, they are gone forever! You will never meet or see them again. Mothers in my country sometimes lose their minds when they lose a child. But you were different. You were the first people we had ever seen, or even heard about, who grieved with hope. It came across in what you said about going to where your son is, even if he wasn't returning to you here, in the song you taught during the funeral meal at your flat, and the statement of faith you made at Jed's memorial service. You were being watched, then and over the months that followed. Seeing you and your family grieve with hope filled the gaping hole that has always been in every Mongolian heart. When I heard about your grief, I knew it was all real. The Bible, Jesus, heaven, all of it. That's why we were weeping that New Year's Eve; we had just had our faith confirmed...."

"I have continued to follow Jesus, and I have come to America to get an education in journalism so that I can start a Christian newspaper and radio station in Mongolia."

I was filled with extreme joy and overwhelmed with love as I realized how far out of His way God had gone to make sure we understood. It was all worth it. God had redeemed even our deepest sorrow and turned it into glory and worshipers. As tears ran down my cheeks, all I could think was "Jesus is worthy."

This thought was carved onto Jed's headstone the next time I visited Erdenet.

Since that day other Mongolians have shared variations on Baika's story, both old friends and strangers, in Mongolia and in the USA. I will never understand like they do, but it is clear that something happened in the hearts of the Mongolian believers as they watched and heard about our grief. At the very point where we felt weakest and doubted God's plan the most, the Father was doing His biggest miracle through us! **f**



Filling Up the AFFLICTIONS of Christ

JOHN PIPER

The following is excerpted, by permission, from the Introduction to *Filling Up the Afflictions of Christ: The Cost of Bringing the Gospel to the Nations in the Lives of William Tyndale, Adoniram Judson, and John Paton* (Crossway Books: Wheaton, Illinois, 2009). A PDF of the entire book may be downloaded at http://www.desiringgod.org/ResourceLibrary/onlineBooks/ByTitle/4111_Filling_Up_the_Afflictions_of_Christ/

God's Painful Path to Reach All Peoples

More and more I am persuaded from Scripture and from the history of missions that God's design for the evangelization of the world and the consummation of his purposes includes the suffering of his ministers and missionaries. To put it more plainly and specifically, God designs that the suffering of his ambassadors is one essential means in the triumphant spread of the Good News among all the peoples of the world.

I am saying more than the obvious fact that suffering is a *result* of faithful obedience in spreading the gospel. That is true. Jesus said suffering will result from this faithfulness. "You will be hated by all for my name's sake" (Luke 21:17). "If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you" (John 15:20). I am saying that this suffering is part of God's strategy for making known to the world who Christ is, how he loves, and how much he is worth.

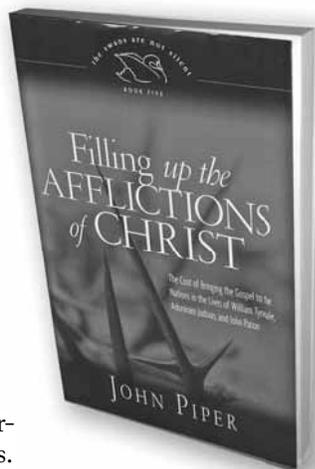
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This is both frightening and encouraging. It frightens us because we know that we may very likely be called to suffer in some way in order to get the breakthrough we long to see in a hard frontline missions situation. But it also encourages us because we can know that our suffering is not in vain and that the very pain that tends to dishearten us is the path to triumph, even when we can't see it. Many have gone before us on the Calvary Road of suffering and proved by their perseverance that fruit follows the death of humble seeds.

Jesus came into the world to suffer and die for the salvation of a countless number of believers from all the peoples of the world. "The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45).

"By your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation" (Revelation 5:9).

Suffering and death in the place of sinners was the way that Christ accomplished salvation. "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us" (Galatians 3:13). "He was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities" (Isaiah 53:5). We preach that. It is the heart of the gospel.



But this voluntary suffering and death to save others is not only the *content* but it is also the *method* of our mission. We proclaim the Good News of what he accomplished, and we join him in the Calvary method. We embrace his sufferings *for us*, and we spread the gospel by our suffering *with* him. As Joseph Tson puts it in his own case: “I am an extension of Jesus Christ. When I was beaten in Romania, He suffered in my body. It is not my suffering: I only had the honor to share His sufferings.”¹ Pastor Tson goes on to say that Christ’s suffering is for *propitiation*; our suffering is for *propagation*. In other words, when we suffer with him in the cause of missions, we display the way Christ loved the world and in our own sufferings extend his to the world. This is what it means to fill up the afflictions of Christ (Colossians 1:24)...

Filling Up the Afflictions of Christ²

We would be warranted at this point to be concerned that this way of talking might connect our suffering and Christ’s suffering too closely—as though we were fellow redeemers. There is only one Redeemer. Only one death atones for sin—Christ’s death. Only one act of voluntary suffering takes away sin. Jesus did this “once for all when he offered up himself” (Hebrews 7:27). “He has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself” (Hebrews 9:26). “By a single offering [Christ] *has perfected for all time* those who are being sanctified” (Hebrews 10:14). When he shed his blood, he did it “*once for all*,” having obtained “*eternal redemption*” (Hebrews 9:12). “There is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 2:5). So there is no doubt that our sufferings add nothing to the atoning worth and sufficiency of Christ’s sufferings.

However, there is one verse in the Bible that sounds to many people as if our sufferings are part of Christ’s redeeming sufferings. As it turns out, that is not what it means. On the contrary, it is one of the most important verses explaining the thesis of this book—that missionary sufferings are a strategic part of God’s plan to reach the nations. The text is Colossians 1:24 where Paul says,

Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church.

In his sufferings Paul is “filling up what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for . . . the church.” What does that mean? It means that Paul’s sufferings fill up Christ’s afflictions *not* by adding anything to their worth, but by extending them to the people they were meant to save.

What is lacking in the afflictions of Christ is not that they are deficient in worth, as though they could not sufficiently cover the sins of all who believe. What is lacking is that the infinite value of Christ’s afflictions is not known and trusted in the world. These afflictions and what they mean are still hidden to most peoples. And God’s intention is that the mystery be revealed to all the nations. So the afflictions of Christ are “lacking” in the sense that they are not seen and known and loved among the nations. They must be carried by missionaries. And those missionaries “complete” what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ by extending them to others....

May the Lord of the Nations

Give Us His Passion

When Paul shares in Christ’s sufferings with joy and love, he delivers, as it were, those very sufferings to the ones for whom Christ died. Paul’s missionary suffering is God’s design to complete the sufferings of Christ, by making them more visible and personal and precious to those for whom he died.

So I say this very sobering word: God’s plan is that his saving purpose for the nations will triumph through the suffering of his people, especially his frontline forces who break through the darkness of Satan’s blinding hold on an unreached people. That is what the lives of William Tyndale, John Paton, and Adoniram Judson illustrate so dramatically. My prayer is that their stories here will awaken in you a passion for Christ’s fame among the nations and sympathy for those who will perish for their sin without having heard the Good News of Christ. **f**

End notes

- ¹ Joseph Tson, “*A Theology of Martyrdom*” (an undated booklet of The Romanian Missionary Society, Wheaton, IL), p. 4.
- ² The following exposition of Colossians 1:24 depends heavily on the thought and words of my book *Desiring God: Meditations of a Christian Hedonist* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2003), pp. 267–270.



The Other Side of the **CROSS**

Suffering and the Glory of God

BOB SJOGREN

A contemporary worship song includes these lines for the believer to voice to Christ: “Like a rose, trampled on the ground, you took the fall and thought of me, above all.”

Excuse me? Did Christ think of me “above all” while he was on the cross? The Scriptures don’t point us in that direction. Did he think of us on the cross? Yes. Above all? No. Let’s get this straight!

Just as there are two sides to a coin, so are there two sides to the cross. For generations, many in the Church have only known one side of the cross. It’s a side that can point to ease, safety and comfort. But it’s now time for the Church to grow up and look at the other side of the cross—the one that points us to suffering.

The first side we are all familiar with: Christ died for us. But there is a second side to the cross: Christ died to magnify and vindicate the glory of his Father. This is the side with which we are unfamiliar. This is the side where we are weak and need to grow deep roots.

Why would Christ’s death be primarily for his Father’s glory? You begin to find the answer by first looking at Hebrews 10:1-4.¹ The author here is simply saying that the sacrificial system of the Old Testament never took away people’s sins. It was a system that was to foreshadow a perfect sacrifice found in the cross centuries later. Hence, the sins of all of those in the Old Testament were never really dealt with; they were just “hanging out there” left unpunished. People were thinking: “What kind of a God are you to allow sin to go unpunished? Are you no longer righteous? Are you no longer just? Do you not care about your glory any more?”

In John 12:27-28, we get a clear picture of how Christ *primarily* viewed his death on the cross. In

this context, he is talking with his disciples about not wanting to go to the cross. After opening his heart to them, he then addresses his heavenly Father directly. Knowing the slow, suffocating death he was about to experience, certainly he would be talking to his Father about *the primary reason* as to why he was going to the cross.

Now note what he does not say: “*Save these kind, wonderful, worthy people from hell, for they don’t deserve it.*” In fact, he doesn’t even mention us. Kind of humbling, isn’t it? And it definitely contradicts “Like a Rose.” So what does he say? “Father, glorify thy name.” Christ’s primary focus was on his Father’s glory.

Why was he concerned about his Father’s glory? Because of all the sin that had not been punished and that had tarnished the reputation of God. Christ was first and foremost concerned for his Father’s glory. “Father, I’m going to the cross to show them how holy, righteous and just you really are.” This was primary. We were secondary.

Two Different Conclusions

This is where the other side of the cross is pointing. Christ’s death was focused on his Father’s glory; he wanted to satisfy his Father’s righteousness and free us so that we could glorify God as well. Now depending upon which side of the cross we focus on, we will have two different conclusions about how the cross should govern how we live our lives.

If we are only focused on the familiar side of the cross, we look at the cross and say, “Christ suffered and died for me.” We then look at Revelation 21:4 and see that in heaven, there will be no death, no more mourning, or crying, or pain. So we conclude, “If that’s what God wants for me

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in heaven, it must be what he wants for me here on earth now! Wow, it makes sense! Since Christ suffered for me, he must not want me to suffer. He did all the suffering for me.”

From this we can conclude that God wants us to have a safe, soft, comfortable, happy life—no pain, no crying, no mourning. Instead of living for God, *we believe God lives for us*. So we think, “If Jesus lives for me, I’m going to be like Jesus. I’ll live for me too. I’ll just do it in a Christian context!” Suffering? Why would God want us to suffer?

How does the other side of the cross view suffering? It’s simple.

Since it is first and foremost about the Father’s glory, we then look at the cross and say, “Christ suffered and died for me *so that* I might gain favor with the Father and therefore be able to glorify him. So since Christ suffered primarily for the Father’s glory, then he has given me an example. I should be willing to suffer for the Father’s glory as well.”

Herein lies the key logic. Christ suffered to reveal the Father’s glory. And if Christ suffered to reveal the Father’s glory, then we should follow his example and be willing to suffer and reveal the Father’s glory, too.

Does the Bible call us to suffer? Unequivocally yes.

Jesus first foretells us that it is going to happen. He spoke of sending us out like sheep in the midst of wolves, about being hated, persecuted, whipped² and even killed.³ He told us that we are not greater than our teacher. Since he was persecuted,⁴ we will be persecuted. (Where did we get such a safe gospel?)

As the disciples saw suffering take place in their own lives, they wrote about it to each other. The Lord made those letters become a part of the Holy Scriptures, which is the training manual for our lives today.

In this manual, Paul says suffering for Christ’s sake is a special privilege given to us.⁵ Paul even wants to suffer⁶ and challenges us to join him in suffering!⁷ Peter clearly tells us that Christ left us an example to suffer; therefore we should follow in his steps.⁸ He then later tells us to expect it in our lives...and even calls us to rejoice in suffering.⁹

Why Aren’t We Suffering?

Yes, the Bible clearly calls us to suffer. So then, why aren’t we suffering?

Answering that question falls into two categories. The first is found in the fact that we—the Body

of Christ—are suffering. Just ask our brothers and sisters in China, Iran, Iraq, Sudan, India, Indonesia and a multitude of other countries. Our brothers and sisters in Christ are being beaten, tortured, raped, persecuted and killed. Just go to The Voice of the Martyrs website and read up on what our brothers and sisters are going through this very day.

Do we Americans get a “pass” on suffering? Don’t jump to that conclusion too quickly. Most Christians are “passing” on suffering, not because it’s not God’s will for their lives, but because they’ve only viewed one side of the cross. They are living a safe, soft, comfortable life because they think Jesus lives primarily for them. If they were to view the other side of the cross, they would find that Jesus lives primarily for the glory of the Father and suffering is to be a part of their lives, but not necessarily the kind of suffering that would make it on The Voice of the Martyrs’ website.

This is the second category that helps answer the question of why we’re not suffering. Paul spoke of different levels of suffering when he spoke about all of the things that were happening in his life. In his list of suffering he spoke of dishonor, bad reports, hunger, sleepless nights, emotional distress, imprisonment, beatings, despairing of life, and even death. I categorize those as “emotional suffering, light physical suffering” and “great physical suffering.” Though few Americans are involved in the great physical suffering, many are experiencing other suffering on a regular basis.

Have you counseled other believers for hours on end, still not seen victory, and are torn up over it? You have experienced emotional suffering. Have people at work lied about you, tearing down your reputation because you are a believer? You have something in common with Jesus and Paul. You have suffered, too.

But God wants suffering as a part of our lives for a multitude of reasons, one of the primary ones being that suffering reduces sin in our lives. Less sin means we reflect the glory of God better—and that is what life is all about.

Discover the other side of the cross. Make the glory of your heavenly Father your highest priority, and live out the reality of Romans 11:36: “For from him, and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever. Amen.” f

¹ For the sake of brevity, look up the texts yourself!

² Matthew 10:16-25

⁶ Philippians 3:10

³ Luke 21:16

⁷ 2 Timothy 1:8

⁴ John 15:20

⁸ 1 Peter 2:18-21

⁵ Philippians 1:29

⁹ 1 Peter 4:1, 12, 13



MARGINALIA

Suffering by Degree

DAVE DATEMA, GENERAL DIRECTOR, FRONTIER MISSION FELLOWSHIP

What I'm about to talk about does not normally "count" as suffering, but I'm going to include it anyway. While this issue of *MF* provides clarity to the realities and dimensions of physical suffering, I want to draw attention to another type of suffering usually not considered worthy enough to warrant serious consideration. Yet I feel it is the type of suffering much more common to the experience of the average *MF* reader. I refer to the suffering inflicted on believers not by an intolerant environment but by a merely disbelieving one. Really.

Suffering can be measured by degree, and I would argue that any kind of suffering, even the unworthy lesser types, are attempts by Satan to thwart God's Kingdom purposes, and have proven to be very effective. If suffering has to do with enduring pain, distress, loss, injury, etc., then there is a wide spectrum within which it can be experienced.

Obviously, the loss of life or limb has a tendency to curb evangelistic fervor! Yet consider a lesser form. Young believers (in any country) face a tidal wave of peer pressure to adopt and practice un-biblical cultural norms. Anyone who puts up a serious fight is sure to encounter a certain amount of distress. (For some college students, not drinking in excess is committing social suicide.) At the very least, there is often a loss of social status and self-esteem. Because this "suffering" is so very real, the majority of young believers simply opt for a cloaked expression of faith and a muted witness, or they lose their faith altogether. Can you imagine how many people Satan has sidelined from effective witness through this one lesser form of suffering?!

I'm suggesting that being physically and mentally tortured is in some ways similar to being pressured into ungodly behavior. In both scenarios, Satan capitalizes on our fear of suffering to limit our witness. The only difference is one of degree. Make no mistake, that is one BIG difference, yet when looked at from a utilitarian perspective, they both have the same result: stopping Kingdom advance. Suffering in this sense is a universal phenomenon, and there is no place it is not felt. Intimidation isn't limited to the torture chamber. Its subtler forms abound in every society and culture.

So how do we prepare people to be willing to suffer? The two types of suffering contrasted here suggest an answer: ability to endure low-level suffering will inform and prepare one for the high-level kinds. In his 1966 classic, *Dedication and Leadership*, Douglas Hyde details the ways and means the Communist Party utilized to prepare workers willing to endure hardship and suffering. He says,

Quite deliberately, and with good reason, the Party sends its new members, whenever possible, into some form of public activity before instruction begins. More specifically, it is designed to commit the recruit publicly to Communism. Quite often this will take the form of being sent out to stand at the side of the street or in some public place selling Communist papers, periodicals or pamphlets. This may appear to be a very simple, somewhat low-grade form of activity. It is in fact of profound psychological significance.... Humble as the task may appear, to engage in it requires for many people a certain degree of moral courage. . . . It requires another act of moral courage to remain in a fight for which, he by now realizes, he is not fully equipped. And moral courage is not a bad starting-point for future action.

If we faithfully endure the small sufferings well, we are better prepared for the larger ones. The moral courage necessary to stand up under peer pressure as a teenager, if nurtured and grown, can one day provide the faith and hope needed to endure higher forms of suffering.

Yet, in a sense, we cannot really prepare for suffering. We can only prepare for the next day of walking with the Lord, which is accomplished by taking full advantage of this one. A life that is formed by the Word and the Spirit, shaped by obedience and accountability in community, and molded by faithfulness and endurance, will not be ashamed when the day of suffering comes.

Jesus suffered. So will we. Let us suffer well. **f**



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THE INCREDIBLE PROGRESS OF THE FRONTIER MISSION MOVEMENT:

From Edinburgh 1980 to Tokyo 2010

DAVID TAYLOR

Although it is difficult to pinpoint exact moments or fixed dates when historical movements begin, it is probably roughly accurate to say that the modern “frontier mission movement” began to gather significant momentum around 40 years ago, in the early 1970s. It is around this time that the first lists of unreached peoples began to be compiled, building on the research conducted by Wycliffe Bible Translators in their pursuit of identifying the world’s “Bibleless” peoples. David Barrett’s comprehensive study of church growth among all the peoples in Africa (introduced at the world’s first frontier mission consultation held in 1972) became a model for research around the world. He later expanded his research to include a global list of 13,000 “ethno-linguistic” peoples, which became the foundation for many people group databases over the next two decades.

The first estimates of the number of unreached peoples were prepared for the 1974 Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization by Ralph Winter and his colleagues at the Fuller Seminary School of World Mission. Leading up to this conference, the first global survey of unreached peoples was also conducted, involving 2,200 questionnaires sent out around the world to mission organizations and field offices. Six years later, the Edinburgh conference in 1980, following up on the first Edinburgh gathering of 1910, gave a significant boost to the frontier mission movement. Out of Edinburgh 1980 came the Adopt-A-People Campaign (the first inter-mission cooperative effort to reach all peoples) and the AD2000 Movement (the first global network focused on frontier mission). These initiatives resulted in more attention given to unreached peoples around the world, both among

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mission agencies as well as local churches, than any other mission mobilization effort in history. Here at this second Edinburgh consultation, the frontier mission movement finally leaped beyond the realm of missiologists and researchers and into the realm of mission sending agencies that had the capacity to act on the facts unearthed by strategists such as Barrett and Winter.

The result of all this research and mobilization has been nothing short of stellar. The last 40 years have seen more Muslims, Buddhists and Hindus come to know Christ than in all previous centuries combined. Dozens of church-planting movements have been initiated among the world’s major unreached mega-peoples (those over one million in population), where just two decades before the ground had remained untilled for literally centuries.

The first major breakthrough in the Muslim bloc came in South Asia, where at least half a million Muslim-background believers have come to faith. This breakthrough proved the effectiveness of an “insider approach” for winning high-identity Muslims and became a model for many church-planting movements around the world. Next door to South Asia, in Iran, a strong underground church movement continues to emerge with thousands of house fellowships multiplying throughout the country. Surveys in the country indicate that Christian satellite broadcasting in Farsi, which began in the year 2000, is being viewed by well over half the population. Equally impressive are the results of radio and satellite broadcasting throughout the Arab world. One ministry, SAT7, has a regular audience of 8.5 million people. In North Africa, the Berbers are responding to the gospel in massive numbers, with one movement among the Kabyle encompassing several hundred thousand believers.

In the Buddhist world, two significant breakthroughs occurred among the Khmer and the

Mongolians. In Cambodia the church exploded from just a handful of believers 20 years ago to over 400,000 today. In Mongolia, the church grew from a few isolated believers to over 50,000 in 200 established fellowships in the same period.

Among Hindus, we now have extensive data on the status of Christianity in almost every caste group in South Asia, giving us a clearer picture on the unfinished task in this complex region than we have ever possessed. Surveys show increasing progress being made in the middle- and upper-caste groups. Geographically, the latest research reveals a significant Christian presence in over 200,000 villages in India. Additionally, mission researcher David Barrett estimates there are probably 10 million Hindu devotees to Jesus (believers that are exclusively devoted to Jesus but who choose to remain within the Hindu cultural tradition to increase the impact of their witness). Missiologist Ralph Winter predicted that such believers will one day outnumber traditional Christians in South Asia.

In the last decade, missionary deployment among unreached peoples has increased at a rapid pace, effectively doubling the number of missionaries among the least-reached. In 1980, the ratio of missionaries to Muslims was one per million. It is now only one per hundred-thousand. Most of these missionaries are non-Western, many of which are from nearby or related peoples. Although much work remains to be done, the significance of an increasing number of believers among the world's non-Christian peoples cannot be underestimated. What this means is that the cultural distances dividing unreached peoples from the gospel are shrinking. Momentum is gaining. For the first time in history, the very real possibility of reaching all peoples with the gospel in one generation is well within sight.

Vision 2020: What Might We Do Together in the Next Ten Years?

The success of the frontier mission movement demonstrates how pleased God is when we work together in the joint mission he has given us all. He blesses and honors cooperative efforts, and causes them to produce lasting fruit. At Tokyo 2010, mission leaders will gather to assess where we are in the midst of this incredible momentum, and how to build on this progress.

Although we can't predict the future, if world conditions remain stable, it is certainly probable that the next ten years could see disciple-making movements launched in every people group on earth. This would mark an incredible milestone in the history of the Great Commission.

With this possibility in mind, what might a global gathering of mission leaders seek to accomplish in terms of joint planning and cooperation in this coming global decade of harvest? Here are a few areas and issues of interest to mission leaders around the world:

1. The need for field-based infrastructure: How can major international missions work more closely together on the field—regionally, nationally and among related peoples—to ensure the full engagement of all peoples in the next ten years? Will Ralph Winter's proposal for a "Global CoMission" become a reality (a forum for bringing together international missions to take on the remaining unfinished task as a joint project with definitive results)?
2. The need for greater knowledge stewardship: How can we learn from what God is doing and better disseminate the results of research to mission leadership at every level where decisions have to be made—from the people group level to the global level? (For example, over 100 active church-planting movements among frontier people groups are now known in the 10/40 Window region. But due to the speed with which these have taken place, no comprehensive survey and study of these movements has yet taken place. A global forum for frontier mission research and strategy is needed to facilitate this.)
3. The need for better resource sharing: Here is an area which has seen remarkable progress in the last decade. Mission organizations are developing a Kingdom mindset with the resources and tools God has given them, making them available to the entire Body of Christ. But much more can be done to enhance this in multiple areas, from international development, to new technologies, to evangelism and discipleship materials and programs, to personnel sharing, etc.

Of course, this is only the tip of the iceberg of the many areas which can be enhanced through global mission interaction and cooperation. Only the Lord knows fully what will proceed from the various strategic world-level gatherings planned for next year. But one thing is for sure: all of this activity reveals something very significant. The Holy Spirit is moving, and He is uniting His Church around a common vision in a way that we have never seen before in history. As disciples of the One who gave his life to see this day, these are truly the most exciting times to be alive and engaged in this incredible story. **f**

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FANNING THE FLAME

A Report from Ethne 2009

DAVID TAYLOR

What happens when you bring 350 global mission strategists from around the world to collaborate on matters relating to reaching the world's least-reached people groups? The Holy Spirit begins to move! With such a group, you hardly need an agenda. Just get them in a room together and watch the sovereign hand of God at work, as He supernaturally networks the Body of Christ together for action.

In November 2009 such a gathering was organized by the Ethne to Ethne network in Bogota, Colombia. Ethne to Ethne is a global forum of unreached people-focused strategy groups and mission networks, which meet together every three years in different parts of the world. The last meeting was held in Indonesia in 2006, and the next meeting in 2012 will be held in India, giving each gathering a unique flavor and allowing for greater local participation from the host region.



STAN, KEITH, AND KENT PARKS

Although sponsored by an eclectic group, representing various organizations from almost every continent, two of the key leaders behind the network and tri-annual gathering are Kent and Stan Parks. The

David Taylor is a member of the planning committee of the Tokyo 2010 Global Mission Consultation. He is the senior editor of the Global Mission Database.

Parks brothers are an amazing team. Sons of the legendary director of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board during the 1980s and 1990s, they have taken up the baton for unreached peoples and are running with it all over the world. Their father Keith is one of the unsung heroes of the frontier mission movement. Among many significant accomplishments, it was Keith who arranged for David Barrett's people group database to find a home at the Board's headquarters in Richmond—a move which would eventually guide Southern Baptist mission strategy for the next three decades. As a result, today Southern Baptists have taken a leading role in fulfilling the Great Commission among the vast majority of the world's least-reached mega-peoples.

Kent and Stan Parks are now following in their father's footsteps. In 1989 they watched as their father helped organize the first Global Consultation on World Evangelization held in Singapore, which led to the formal launching of the AD2000 Movement.



When the movement was disbanded as scheduled in the year 2000, many felt the need to sustain the momentum that had developed from ten years of global mobilization to see a "church for every people." From out of this shared desire and concern came the Ethne to Ethne network, which Kent and Stan Parks have served and championed from its conception to the present.

Getting Organized

What many deemed most valuable about the AD2000 Movement were the various global task forces that brought together leaders around common interests and vision. Ethne to Ethne (E2E) has replaced these with strategy groups, which have continued to develop, strengthen and multiply over the last few years in such areas as research, prayer,

BECAUSE SO MANY BREAKTHROUGHS ARE NOW TAKING PLACE AMONG MAJOR UNREACHED PEOPLES, ONE DILEMMA IS HOW TO DOCUMENT THE BREAKTHROUGHS SO THAT OTHERS CAN LEARN FROM WHAT IS HAPPENING.

training, missionary care, and crisis response. Thus E2E has become a significant international forum for nurturing such groups into formation, and then enhancing their capacity to collaborate on a global level. Even more significantly, E2E has the ability to create synergy between various strategy groups that are in need of one another in some related area (e.g., those involved in pre-field training may need the input of researchers doing studies on missionary attrition, etc.).

The Frontier Mission Crisis Response group is perhaps the most unique and concrete development to come out of the E2E network. Due to the practical hands-on nature of crisis response, cooperating agencies have been able to work together to more effectively respond to various natural disasters in the last year and a half. Unquestionably, this is one of the most important developments in global mission strategy to emerge in the last decade.

A recent study among Muslim people groups by the Fruitful Practices research group revealed that 40% of church-planting breakthroughs among Muslim people groups followed some kind of natural disaster. Breakthroughs following the Sumatra tsunami of 2002 continue to bear fruit even today from Sri Lanka to Southeast Asia. The same can be said for Northern India following the Kashmir earthquake. In both of these cases, missionaries labored for years without seeing results until these disasters hit.

In another study of major crises, including earthquakes, wars and famines, it was discovered that 80% of such occurrences in the last 20 years have taken place in the 10/40 Window region, where the vast majority of the world's unreached peoples reside. Mission strategists are beginning to realize that this is no accident! God is sovereign over these

events, and they are door-openers for His kingdom. Thus, having the ability to respond quickly with aid, in partnership with church-planting agencies which make a long-term commitment to affected areas, is proving to be an effective strategy for demonstrating the love of Christ in both word and deed amidst some of the most difficult regions in the world for missionary work.

In one way or another, every strategy group in Ethne is seeking to contribute to the goal of seeing movements to Christ among all the world's least-reached peoples. At the synergistic core of this global collaboration is the Church Planting Movement (CPM) Strategy Group. Represented in this group are leaders involved in, or connected in some way to, dozens of movements among

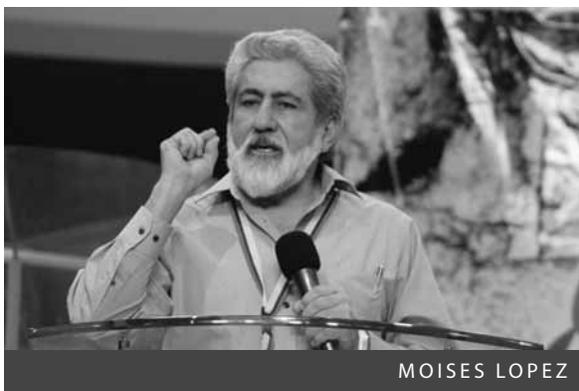
unreached peoples that are bringing millions to faith in Christ, and seeing hundreds of thousands of churches planted in a relatively short period of time. Because so many breakthroughs are taking place now among major unreached peoples, one of the dilemmas faced by this group is how to document the breakthroughs so that others can learn from

40%
OF CHURCH-PLANTING
BREAKTHROUGHS AMONG
MUSLIM PEOPLE GROUPS FOLLOWED SOME KIND
OF NATURAL DISASTER.

80%
OF MAJOR CRISES
(INCLUDING EARTHQUAKES,
WARS AND FAMINES) IN THE LAST 20 YEARS HAVE
TAKEN PLACE IN THE 10/40 WINDOW REGION.

what is happening. As a result, a special research group has been proposed to identify, validate and describe in-depth every known church-planting movement.

Interestingly, the Latin Americans at the Ethne 2009 gathering had a difficult time grasping the concept of church-planting movements as they are developing in frontier mission areas today. That's probably because church planting in Latin America has generally followed a traditional model that was based on buildings and professional clergy. But most church-planting movements today are house-church based and lay-led, which is why they are able to grow so fast. It is as if the Holy Spirit has taken the Chinese model and blown it all over the 10/40 Window region! For this reason, COMIBAM,



which is the major mission movement in Latin America (and a co-sponsor of the Ethne meeting in Bogota), is seeking to invite CPM trainers to teach Latin agencies, leaders, professors and pre-field candidates about what God is doing through these movements. Also, at the upcoming Global Mission Consultation in Tokyo (May 11-14, 2010, see pages 22-23 of this issue of *Mission Frontiers*), the CPM Strategy Group will lead a special track to dialogue with mission leaders from around the world concerning CPM principles and methodology.

Special emphasis will be given to show how God uses CPMs to fulfill the Great Commission mandate of making disciples of all peoples. Indeed, what CPM strategies reveal is that you don't have to sacrifice quality for quantity. Quite the opposite, when lay people are engaged in evangelism and church-planting, they become disciplined much more effectively, and leadership is multiplied exponentially.

The role of prayer in these movements is something that continues to be highlighted through E2E. A researcher commented in Bogota that one such movement in Northern India began only after a team of intercessors came to a strategic city and prayed intensively against the ancient spiritual strongholds of that area. This is not an isolated incident. Many of the breakthroughs witnessed throughout the 10/40 Window followed prayer initiatives organized with

the express purpose of bringing down strongholds of darkness, and seeing the "strong man" bound (Mark 3:27). Another report from South Asia revealed that a church-planting movement in a particular region of a Muslim group only began when indigenous leaders gathered together to pray against the powers and principalities over those areas. For this reason the Prayer Strategy Group is seeking to raise up prayer initiatives for all of the 6,000+ least-reached peoples documented by the U.S. Center for World Mission's Joshua Project research team. Additionally, the U.S. Center's *Global Prayer Digest* has become an important "fuel source" and outlet for this prayer initiative (the *GPD* is translated into multiple languages, including Spanish, Korean and Chinese). Along with the *GPD*, the Prayer Strategy Group networks with intercessory groups around the world that bring unreached people prayer updates to over two million intercessors.

Welcome to the Family

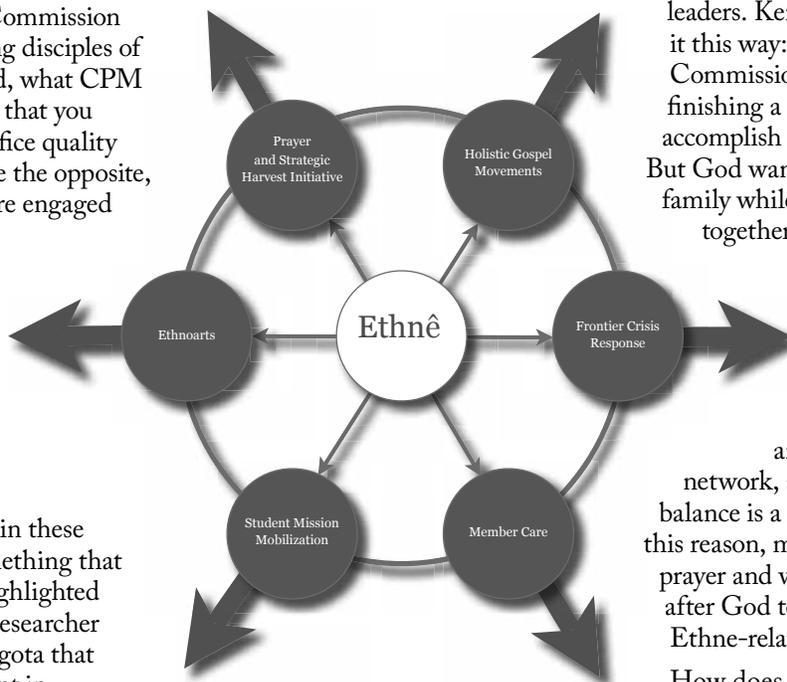
As important as all this is, there is something perhaps more important about Ethne, which may not be evident on a surface evaluation. As a global

network, Ethne seeks to build relationships of trust between leaders. Kent Parks describes it this way: "If the Great Commission was just about finishing a task, we could accomplish it readily enough. But God wants us to become a family while finishing that task together." This statement

really drives to the heart of what Ethne is all about—it's both a relational

and task-oriented network, and keeping that balance is a high priority. For this reason, much time is spent in prayer and worship, and seeking after God together at every Ethne-related gathering.

How does Ethne to Ethne coordinate with various frontier mission-related events and networks such as Tokyo 2010 and the Global Network of Mission Structures (GNMS)? E2E seeks to be a servant to all such collaborative efforts, and they are strategically positioned to do so in a major way. The GNMS and Tokyo



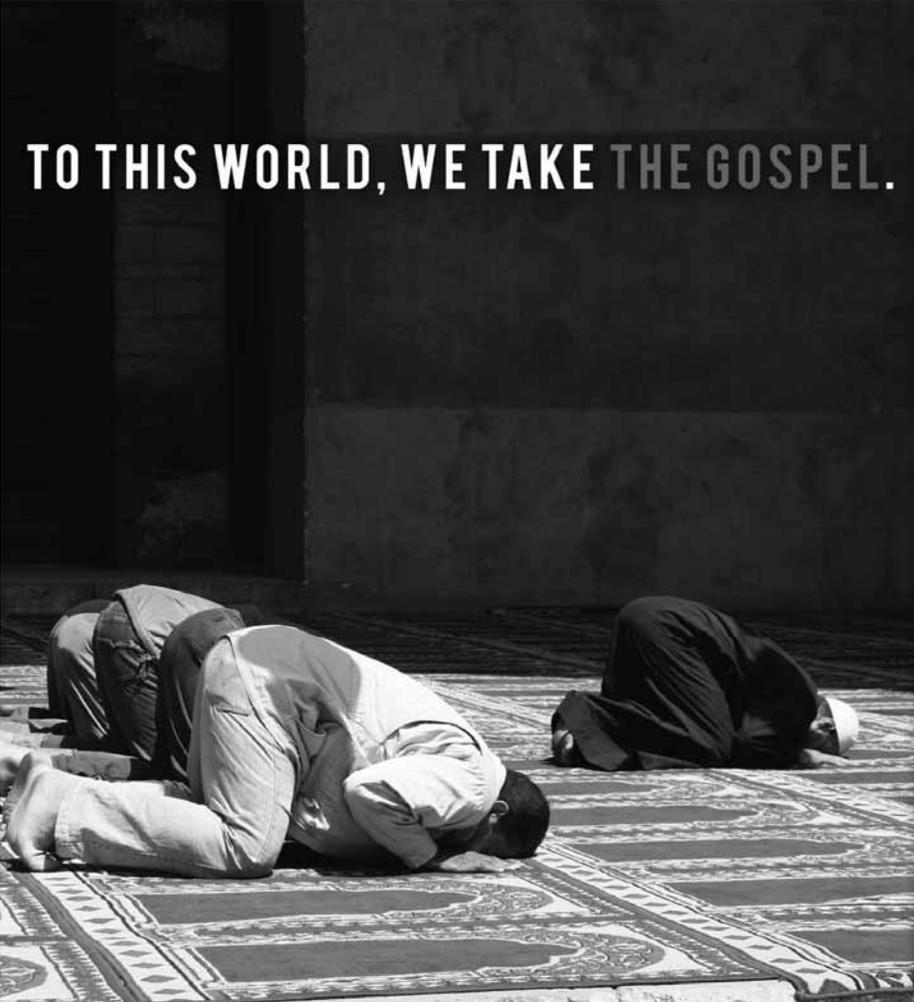
THE CPM GROUP MADE A COMMITMENT TO FOCUS ON FIVE OF THE LARGEST LEAST-REACHED PEOPLES THAT LACK A CPM AND WORK TOGETHER TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT THIS GAP.

2010 represent international mission agencies and mission agency associations from around the world that can benefit from the strategy groups sponsored by the E2E network. Thus at Tokyo 2010, E2E will play an important role in seeking to serve these agencies and mission associations with the various areas of expertise represented by the network.

How can E2E be enhanced? "More and better collaboration to get things done" is Kent Parks' answer. Reaching the least-reached, hand in hand, by all and every means is the driving force behind Ethne. Kent would like to see E2E participants take on small projects together, and as they see success, he believes momentum will build. The CPM group, for example, made a commitment to focus on five of the largest least-reached peoples that lack a CPM and work together to do something about this gap.

For Kent's part, as director of a mission agency called Mission to Unreached Peoples (an organization which came out of the Edinburgh 1980 meeting), he has set a goal of engaging several hundred least-reached people groups and population segments in the next ten years with CPM strategies.

Clearly, the torch has been passed, and its fire is lighting torches around the world for the glory of God! E2E is a story of how a few people can make a big difference when they work together, not caring who gets the credit. Beyond what they have accomplished as a network, they have also become a model for what global mission collaboration should look like in the twenty-first century: hearts united by the love of Christ, centered on His mission, and ignited by His passion for all the peoples of the earth. **f**



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WHO ARE THESE PEOPLE?

Discoveries in the *Atlas of Global Christianity*

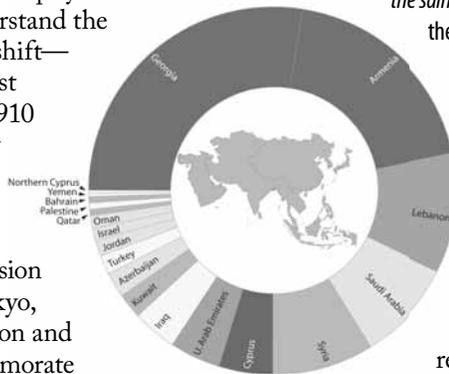
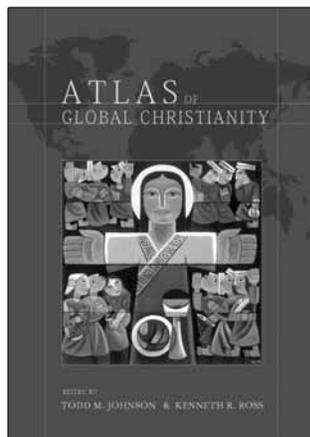
DARRELL DORR

From May 2008 to June 2009 I had the privilege of working with the international team that produced the *Atlas of Global Christianity*. Editors Todd Johnson and Kenneth Ross assembled this team and did a remarkable job of shepherding the Atlas to completion by the autumn of 2009. As this issue of *Mission Frontiers* goes to press, the Atlas is in the hands of a printer in Edinburgh and should be available to the public by January 2010. But why should you—and your church or mission agency—sit up and take notice of this 400-page collection of maps, tables and essays?

Though it is widely known that Christianity's center of gravity has shifted to the non-Western world, the *Atlas of Global Christianity* helps you and your colleagues to better understand the contours and textures of that shift—region by region—over the past 100 years, since the seminal 1910 Edinburgh World Missionary Conference. And the *Atlas of Global Christianity* appears on the scene just in time to inform the array of global mission consultations in 2010—in Tokyo, Edinburgh, Cape Town, Boston and other cities—that will commemorate Edinburgh 1910 and launch new forms of cooperation in world mission into the twenty-first century.



Darrell Dorr is a Contributing Editor of *Mission Frontiers* and an Associate Editor of the *Atlas of Global Christianity*.



Odd Curiosities or Treasured Family?

As I rolled up my sleeves and began my work as an Associate Editor, I expected that I would gain new insights in the process of editing. But what I did *not* expect was how the Atlas would affect my *heart* as well as my *head*. This personal impact was due, in part, to the convergence of my work on the Atlas with a sermon series at my home church, a sermon series on the first three chapters of Ephesians, where the apostle Paul elaborates the “grand plan of God” in which (emphases mine) . . .

His intent was that now, *through the church*, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms . . . And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, *together with all the saints*, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be *filled to the measure of all the fullness of God* . . . until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and *become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ* (Ephesians 3:10, 3:17-19, 4:13, *New International Version*).

These truths from Ephesians were rattling around in my mind and heart while I edited essays from scholars representing Orthodox, Catholic, Pentecostal, Anglican, West African, Southeast Asian, Central American, East European and many other streams of Christianity. As I read and re-read about streams of Christian vitality that are very different from my familiar stream of American evangelical Protestant Christianity, I asked myself, “Who *are* these people? Am I—and are most of the readers of this Atlas—likely to look on these people as *odd curiosities*, almost like animals in some kind of theological and sociological zoo? Or—as these

great texts of Ephesians affirm—are we prepared to view these very different people as *treasured family* through whom we can apprehend the manifold wisdom of God, with whom

we can grasp the love of God, and with whom we can enter into the “fullness of Christ” for which we were created? Do I really believe these truths from Ephesians, and do my perspectives on the global Church—and my behaviors—reflect what I say I believe?”

Great Maps and Tables, But Don't Miss the Essays!

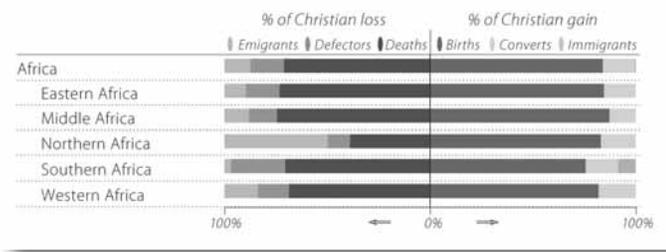
It's to be expected that maps, tables and other graphics will attract lots of attention in the Atlas. But don't miss the sterling collection of two-page essays interspersed amidst the series of two-page and four-page map spreads, for the essays bring additional depth and nuance. My favorite essays include:

- Moonjang Lee on the future of global Christianity
- Andrew Walls on Christianity across 20 centuries (a masterful overview)
- J.N.K. Mugambi on Christianity in Africa (look out—this critique has bite!)
- Ogbu Kalu on Western Africa (full of color and verve)
- Mark Noll on Christianity in Northern America (a terrific synthesis)
- Lamin Sanneh on the multi-cultural tapestry of world Christianity
- Dana Robert on the 100-year patterns in missionary sending
- Jonathan Bonk on Christian finance (vignettes of sacrifice and stewardship)

Repercussions for Frontier Mission

As you might expect, I'm especially grateful for those parts of the Atlas that shed light on the challenges of frontier mission in particular. Most of this material can be found in Part IV (Peoples, languages and cities) and Part V (Christian mission).

For example, there is much benefit in such tables as “Global peoples with the most Muslims” and “Global languages with the most Buddhists.” Delineation of the religious demographics of major cities in each world region is fascinating and useful; soak for awhile in the tallies of cities to allow your mind and heart to be moved. I like the missionary scatterplot diagrams that reveal, region by region,



where missionaries *are* and *aren't*, and the representations of missionaries received by people group, revealing the great need for pioneers among peoples such as the

Northern Luri of Iran, the Lampungese of Indonesia, the Bagri of India, the Daza of Chad, and the Zaghawa of Sudan.

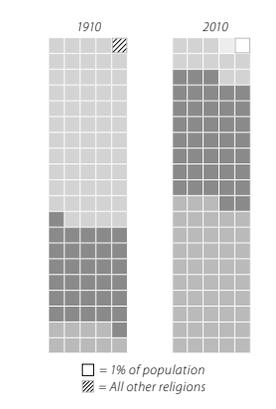
Note, too, the portrayals of the extent of personal contact between Christians and non-Christians, including the assertion, “Buddhists, Hindus and Muslims have relatively little contact with Christians. In each case, over 86% of these religionists globally do not personally know a Christian.” Contrast these pages with those explaining a “Responsiveness Index” for different countries and regions, with the index revealing that the world's least-evangelized sectors have shown the highest average responsiveness to Biblical witness. Go figure!

An Embarrassment of Riches in 2010

The *Atlas of Global Christianity* is part of an embarrassment of riches in 2010, the first installment in a series of great reference tools that will also soon include Patrick Johnstone's *The Future of the World-wide Church* and Jason Mandryk's new edition of the much-loved *Operation World* handbook. Inevitably the Atlas will be compared and contrasted with these other two books, even though the Atlas is a larger and more expensive tool, includes an electronic “presentation assistant”, and is written for a wider audience than the evangelical mission community. Indeed, I expect that some evangelicals will approach the Atlas with ambivalence: admiration for its scope and breadth and yet unease at its insistence at pressing beyond the social bounds of evangelicalism. Yet I am honored to be part of an editorial team that married evangelical conviction to ecumenical perspective. Enjoy the feast of 400 pages! f

- To catch glimpses of the *Atlas of Global Christianity*, go to <http://bit.ly/UlkMo>
- If you live in the USA, you can order copies of the Atlas from Columbia University Press at <http://bit.ly/8LPdh>
- Readers outside the USA may order copies of the Atlas at <http://bit.ly/71Hhm4>

Proportions of religions, 1910 & 2010



RAISING LOCAL RESOURCES



We Can Do It!

GLENN SCHWARTZ, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, WORLD MISSION ASSOCIATES

About a year ago I was asked to speak in a small church in Kampala, Uganda. I had been there for other meetings and was asked to preach on a Sunday morning. Normally I decline such invitations, believing that it is the privilege of a pastor to preach to his own people. But this pastor prevailed upon me, so I prepared a simple message challenging the congregation to be all they can be for God. I reminded them that there is a big world out there waiting for their witness. This was a congregation of forty people meeting in a very modest building big enough for perhaps thirty.

Little did I know how God would use what I said on that occasion. It was not long before I heard that this congregation caught the vision of using local resources to do God's work. First, they began to pay their pastor a decent salary so that he could afford a better house. Second, they began a children's ministry in which they provided a home for twenty street children. Third, the congregation has encouraged their pastor to take the self-reliance message "on the road" to other countries. He and some other pastor colleagues have already gone to Kenya, Burundi and various places inside Uganda—and they have invitations pending for Tanzania, Zambia, Congo and Sierra Leone. This is all being done with local support within Uganda!

After this pastor spoke in western Kenya, people there decided to buy a car for their bishop. Following his visit to war-torn northern Uganda, he reported, "The people received the Good News of self-reliance with happiness." One church from there is sending their pastor to a self-reliance conference being planned for Nairobi in early

November. Another group in Kampala decided to buy a car for their pastor "after learning that they can do it."

Notice the sense of freedom and release in that last statement "after learning that they can do it." It reminds one of the Macedonian church in II Corinthians 8:2 about whom the Apostle Paul said, "Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity." Paul goes on to say in verse four that "they begged for the privilege of giving."

What if they had never learned that they were not only free to give something back to God but able to do so!

It is sad that believers in Africa have often been given the impression that they cannot support their own churches, outreach ministries, or para-church organizations. Think about how much joy has been robbed from them in the process!

My current ministry includes a significant exchange of e-mails with church and mission leaders regarding the benefits of mobilizing local resources. This has resulted in a gathering of church leaders in Nairobi in November 2009 for those who have been teaching and writing about issues of sustainability. Those registered to attend come from Zambia, Kenya, Uganda and as far away as Nepal. These are leaders who have discovered the joy of giving to God and have passed the excitement along to their people. They eagerly anticipate attending this conference so they can share what God is doing in their midst. Some wanted to send in their accommodation fees for the conference several months ahead of time, such was their anticipation of wanting

to meet others who are like-minded. This conference is being organized and paid for by people in East Africa, and they could not be more excited or proud to have the privilege. As one of them told me recently, "Africa has seen the light."

My prayer is that the day will come when people all over Africa and in many other places in the world will come to the realization that with God's help, "We can do it." Let's encourage that to happen and, most importantly, let's not do anything to prevent it from happening. The challenge for westerners (like me) is to move out of the way so others can do what God is calling them to do with the resources He has put within their own arm's reach. **f**

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FURTHER REFLECTIONS



Communicating the Gospel from Within

GREG H. PARSONS, GENERAL DIRECTOR, U.S. CENTER FOR WORLD MISSION

A basic premise in effective communication is that the intended message makes sense to the hearer. When it comes to areas of theology, we tend to focus on what we *say* more than what will be *heard*. One of the biggest problems is when a messenger does not realize how major cultural differences are creating distance between him and those who hear.

That is why people like Donald McGavran talked about this issue in the book *The Bridges of God* more than 50 years ago: *people like to become Christians without crossing racial, linguistic or class barriers*, or, to put another way, *people like to come to Christ with others that are like them*.

Of course, others said it in different ways before McGavran, but the basic approach when reaching a group that is unreached is:

1. A believer needs to cross cultural barriers between where the church has taken root and where it hasn't.
2. As the gospel takes root and begins to grow, the new believers study the Word to figure out how best to spread truth within their culture/people.

The less we assume about how gospel truth must be communicated, the more new believers are free to think of their own ways of communicating truth. In its simplest form, some have described this as a two-step process: 1) Focus on the Word; and 2) Let *it* speak and not our cultural "Christianity" or our theological formulations (the way we state Biblical truth).

I'm not suggesting that we change our theology, and I realize that in many situations, the quality of Bible translation and the background of the

hearers can make this two-step process difficult. I *am* suggesting that new believers should have the freedom to formulate their own Biblical theology. We don't hand them a ready-made church or theology in a box.

It is interesting that as McGavran grew older, he was less and less interested in "Church Growth." He saw many of his followers spread their version of his theories, applying them to existing churches. Toward the end of his life, he told Vern Middleton (his student and later biographer) that he no longer wanted to use the phrase *Church Growth*. Rather he wanted to talk about *Evangelism*.

That was, in his mind, a way to talk about *both* the process of sharing the gospel *and* discipling or mentoring someone. In his thinking, church growth never means "merely" having people make decisions. During in his field experience in the 1930s and 1940s in India, when he was studying "mass movements to Christ" with J. Waskom Pickett, McGavran changed the terminology. He noted in *The Bridges of God*, "We do not use the term 'mass movements.' This unfortunate term implies unthinking acceptance of Christ by great masses."¹ That is *not* what the "people movements" he and Pickett researched were all about.

One of the underlying concepts became known as the Homogeneous Unit Principle. He argued that people are *homogeneous* in their language or culture. Some have reacted to the principle over the years, believing it to be less than ideal for the Church to be "race-based." But that was not what McGavran was suggesting, as much of the Church Growth literature

demonstrates. He was talking about how people come to Christ in the first place, *not* what the church might look like after that process starts in any given people group. In *Understanding Church Growth*, he talked about the need to apply common sense, because "the creation of narrow Churches, selfishly centered on the salvation of their own kith and kin only, is never the goal."²

As we consider how to apply McGavran's thinking today, a natural extension is that we encourage new believers to decide how they will live out their faith in obedience to the Scriptures. If a people group is unreached, then (naturally) the first person from that culture will likely hear Biblical truth in a manner different from the way he or she may prefer to communicate Biblical truth. Often new believers inherit some "Christian" baggage from the culture of the cross-cultural messenger. Sometimes they can get over that, and sometimes others they lead to Christ pioneer a new way of sharing that fits the host culture.

Giving new believers latitude in Biblical obedience seems to fit the parable of the yeast, which we can summarize as 1) Get a small amount of yeast in the dough and 2) It will permeate *inside* the dough.

We should not try to force the yeast to do its work. We need not over-analyze what should happen next. We trust in the Holy Spirit and focus on the message of the Word. It will flow from there in God's timing. **f**

¹ *The Bridges of God*, 1955, World Dominion Press, p. 14.

² *Understanding Church Growth*, 1970, Eerdmans, pp. 242-243.