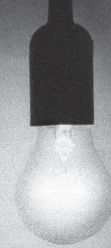


MOBILISTICALLY SPEAKING



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The story is told of two shoe salesmen who went to a rural, undeveloped part of the world. One came back and said it was hopeless, “No one wears shoes...we can’t sell anything here.” The other said, “Wow! No one wears shoes; no one is selling shoes; we have a

totally open market here!”

While the story is often used to describe the difference between the pessimist and the optimist, it applies to our mobilization speech. Like others, I love to hear a good speaker that tells amazing stories from around the world. But I often learn more about what is and is not happening through a thoughtful, reflective person.

We’ve all heard the phrase, “evangelistically” speaking—by which we mean someone is stretching the truth a bit. We have the same thing in mobilization. We talk about getting the job finished. I was at one event, where “Get ‘er done” was shouted from the platform—to the applause of the crowd—as if more money thrown at the problems would mean we were done.

I understand the enthusiasm. I want to see the unreached reached... That’s what I’ve given my life to for more than 32 years. We must communicate hope. But the longer I am involved, the more serious

I seem to get. That grows from relationships with spirit-filled field servants who, with the best of tools and strategies, are still waiting for breakthrough. Of course, some do see breakthroughs.

My “data” for suggesting we change the way we communicate is related to the reality on the ground in places like North India. In my last *MF* page, I mentioned just one part of India with a lot of people (Bihar, population 100,000,000). If you go from Bihar any direction you continue to see the complexity and massive size of the need.

Throwing more “warm bodies” at the problem—from the West or the East—will not be the solution. Part of the reason is that our way of presenting the gospel typically follows a Western apologetic with a legal/guilt approach rather than that of honor/shame (as we have outlined in this issue of *MF*). It does not work among the unreached cultures that generally do not “revere” Western morals, individualism and materialism.

For example: if you go east from India to China your approach needs to change. The Chinese, in the mainland, do not believe in God, so you have a different starting place. The gospel has made an amazing impact in China. They are now the main messengers to their own people and they have been for years. And as they go to minorities within China (or outside) they—just like us—must learn that effective sharing of the gospel must be done differently.


Back in India, that is not the case. If you start with convincing them to believe in God, they think you are either crazy or foolish. But if, as you continue a discussion with a religious person there, you are willing to say you do not really, fully understand concepts such as the Trinity—the finite understanding the infinite—they might respect you and dialog a bit longer.

A first step to adjust our mobilization speech is to consider a few key questions:

- How do we “temper” our mobilization language to wisely communicate without hype?
- How do we motivate people toward more serious involvement, if we can’t always talk about fast results?
- How do we communicate what we are doing and encourage prayer when we aren’t sure yet that our approach(es) will work?
- How do we share the difficulties and the potential of failure?
- How do we talk in realistic time frames?

I invite you to share your answers to and reflections on these questions in the comments below this article on the website (www.missionfrontiers.org/issue/article/mobilistically-speaking).

We know God can always work faster, but he doesn’t always do so.

I pray that this issue of *MF* will help the gospel to breakthrough in new and deep ways as we share its truth from a position of love, servanthood and humility. 

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