

# 3 Ways We Stifle S.W.A.P.

BY JEAN JOHNSON

website: [fivestonesglobal.org](http://fivestonesglobal.org)

**Jean Johnson** serves as a missionary and coach as well as Director of Five Stones Global (formerly known as World Mission Associates). She has over 32 years of vocational cross-cultural ministry experience. This includes church-planting among Cambodians in St. Paul/Minneapolis and 16 years of service in Cambodia. One of the key starting points of her missional journey was moving in with a first-generation Cambodian refugee family of eight in the inner city of Minneapolis. She presently promotes and teaches about creating a culture of dignity, sustainability and multiplication in Great Commission efforts.

Steve Smith's book, *Spirit Walk*, moves many of his readers, including me. In his book, Steve presents a pathway to walk in the Spirit via the acronym S.W.A.P. As a quick reminder, S.W.A.P. stands for:

- Surrender to His will and His every word
- Wait on God in prayer
- Avoid sin, and let God root out all unrighteousness
- Pursue the promptings of the Spirit.

As I read about the absolute necessity of surrender and waiting on God in prayer to aid us in walking in the Spirit, this question came to mind: *How often in serving cross-culturally do we unintentionally stifle people's ability to surrender completely, wait on God, and obey His promptings?*

How could we possibly stifle our host cultural group's S.W.A.P.? I desire to touch on three critical ways we stifle S.W.A.P. among the nations we serve.

**We stifle people's felt need to practice S.W.A.P. by creating an environment in which it becomes their top priority to seek out foreign sponsors and then accommodate those sponsors.** In some cases, what their sponsors want and what keeps the flow of money coming becomes their pathway to make decisions. In other words, they surrender to the outsiders' agendas and accommodate to their prepackaged foreign forms, rather than seeking and waiting on God's agenda and creativity for His will and word for them.

**We exercise our control by using our Western business models.** In the name of partnership, as soon as we begin to fund local initiatives and fund salaries, we are perceived as the person who has the power and we naturally exercise control in the relationship to varying degrees. Money flowing one direction changes the power balance in the relationship. We have to track return on investment and require reports for our home base. We must withdraw funding when we see missteps or lack of best accounting practices according to our Western systems. These types of influences give us a level of authority and control that disturbs a healthy practice of S.W.A.P.

**We artificially move the movement.** Steve Smith, a dedicated practitioner of Disciple Making Movements, reveals to us the most critical way to experience fruit, growth, multiplication and movement — through walking in the Spirit via the process of S.W.A.P. The apostle Paul surely was someone who practiced S.W.A.P. faithfully; yet he faced persecution, opposition, and was ejected from many places. His growth came with the rhythms of the Spirit and realities of the environments he served. No one came along and said, "You would be way more successful if you let us inform you of better ways and even pave the way with money and resources." The movement was the Spirit's movement. It was at His pace and His way. But wealthy foreign Christians like to speed things up with their financial and expert intervention. Before you know it, we artificially infuse the local movement instead of allowing the Holy Spirit to drive it. If the Holy Spirit is generating the movement through the local believer's S.W.A.P., do we need to artificially speed things along as we see fit?

Raising local resources includes raising local disciples' vision and ability to walk in the Spirit via S.W.A.P. In this case, they lack nothing. The Spirit will provide, lead, and move based on their practice of:

- Surrendering to His will and His every word
- Waiting on God in prayer
- Avoiding sin and letting God root out all unrighteousness
- Pursuing the promptings of the Spirit.

Do you want to partner with existing and emerging churches around the world? Do you want to engage with unreached people groups? Focus on how to foster S.W.A.P.—and how to avoid stifling it.

Cheering people on, praying alongside them in the background, asking good open-ended questions (not hiding our solutions in the questions), leaving our Western systems and traditions at home and allowing necessity to be the mother of Holy Spirit-led invention are just a few ways to encourage local, indigenous S.W.A.P. 