

# MISSION FRONTIERS

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## Unleashing the Gospel through Storytelling

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**06** WHY COMMUNICATE THE GOSPEL THROUGH STORY? / **18** CONTEXTUALIZING THE GOSPEL IN A VISUAL WORLD / **32** SORROW AND BLOOD

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/ TOM STEFFEN

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# WE HAVE THE GREATEST STORY EVER TOLD. LET'S USE IT.



RICK WOOD  
/ EDITOR, MISSION  
FRONTIERS

Steve was a house painter from England vacationing at a beach in the Philippines with his family. A Bible teacher named Christine happened to be staying at the same resort. One day during a conversation that began to turn toward spiritual things, Steve said to Christine, "I've talked with numerous religious leaders but they've never been able to answer my questions satisfactorily. So I've given up on religion. I am trying to live a good life."

"What were your questions?"

Christine asked.

"The main one is, why the world is so unfair? Why is there pain and suffering and why doesn't God, if there is a God, do something about it?"

"Could I have a go at sharing something I've learned about these things using a story from the Bible?" Christine asked.

"I don't believe the Bible," said Steve.

"That's no problem. I hope you will find the story helpful anyway."

Christine started with Genesis 1 and God's intentions for his world. She explained how God said, "Let us make people in our image," and how God made man and woman to rule over the earth and to multiply and fill the earth. Soon Steve's two children and his son's girlfriend casually drifted over to listen to the conversation. She filled them in on the story so far and continued by explaining the beginning of pain and trouble in the world from Genesis 3.

She continued on through the stories of Abraham, the exodus and on through the Old Testament. Each story set up the one that followed it so her audience would understand the nature of the human problem and how desperately we needed a Savior. Her listeners peppered her with questions and they discussed them one by one. Most often Christine asked them a question in return, and they found themselves answering their own questions based on what they had already learned.

Finally, after about an hour, they reached the end of the

Old Testament. "Come on," they begged. "Don't leave us in suspense. Tell us how Jesus saves!"

Outside our open-air dining room, the beach beckoned. It was a perfect day for snorkeling, and this family had come from winter-bound England to play in the sun. Their holiday was almost finished, but today the beach might as well not have existed.

They continued through Jesus' birth and ministry. Finally, they reached his death and resurrection. "Do you remember what the temple curtain in the Old Testament symbolized?" Christine asked.

"The separation between God and his people," said one.

"What was the only way people could be forgiven and continue to be friends with God?"

"A representative had to prepare himself carefully and then kill a perfect sacrifice and take its blood through the curtain," another responded.

"So what did it mean when the temple curtain split from top to bottom just when Jesus died?"

They started hesitantly, saying, "I guess it means... that because Jesus died... the barrier between us and God has been dealt with." Then they concluded in a rush, "So we can once again be friends with God."

"So Jesus was like that perfect sacrifice," one said.

"Yes, but he was also the representative," chimed in another.

At last Christine called an end to the storying before they'd exhausted themselves and lost the joy of discovery. Two days later as the family was departing, Steve said, "I am going home to find my Bible. If those religious experts had told me such relevant stories, I would have happily gone to their church and wouldn't have given up searching."<sup>1</sup>

## DO WE KNOW HOW TO TELL THE STORY OF GOD?

Everyone loves a great story. And we have the greatest story ever told. But I am afraid that few inside the church understand the whole story of God well enough, or are trained well enough, to tell this story to someone who needs Jesus as Christine did in the story above.

There is an untapped hunger for the story of God. In fact,

just this year *The Bible* mini-series featuring various stories from the Bible, garnered record setting ratings for the History Channel over several weeks with 100 million people tuning in.<sup>2</sup> This series, however, only presented various Bible stories but not the *story* of the Bible. Do you understand the difference? In the story above, Christine used a series of Bible stories to tell the redemption story of

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God in a way that made it clear what the plan and purposes of God are and how the spiritual world works. Her story tied the loose pieces together so the overall picture made sense.

Most people, even believers, see the Bible as a disjointed collection of books, verses and teachings but they do not understand the overall story of God that is presented from Genesis

to Revelation and how they fit into it. When reaching out to the lost, we cannot assume that anyone in our world today knows any Bible stories or understands how they fit together. We must be prepared to do that for them.

There is a central theme that runs through Scripture that ties all of history together. Every believer should be trained to tell that story of God from Creation to Christ so that every person can find their place in the unfolding story of God in history to bring access to the gospel to every person, tribe and tongue. Most believers think the gospel is just about God saving them when in reality it is also about what God wants to do in the world through them. As a result most Jesus followers never get plugged into the mission of God on earth.


### OUR CULTURE IS CHANGING AND SO MUST WE

How the world receives and interacts with information is changing at a dizzying pace. From YouTube to Facebook, we are relating to each other in ways that are unique in the history of the world. In previous generations since the time of Gutenberg and his press first arrived, the focus has been on using literate means to communicate the gospel. But now we find our world moving increasingly toward using oral means to communicate. It is not that most cannot read but that there is an increasing preference for non-literate means of communicating. Samuel Chiang refers to this in his article starting on page 10. As the world changes in the way it prefers to use and process information, we must also change the way we communicate the gospel. The priority must be to communicate in such a way that

people will listen and understand the gospel.

### WHY USE STORYTELLING?

Throughout history, storytelling has been the most powerful means of communication of truly important ideas and values from one generation to another. It was the primary means that Jesus used to communicate with the people during his time on earth. Our culture is increasingly oral in nature, motivated by great stories told by way of movies, television and the Internet. We literally spend billions of dollars every year to listen to and watch great stories created by professional storytellers. This is in addition to the thousands of peoples around the world who are primarily oral in nature and must be reached using oral strategies that resonate with their existing culture. See the article by Dr. Pam Arlund, starting on page 12, which features some enlightening case studies of how to develop Church Planting Movements within oral cultures.

Because storytelling is so powerful, many have used it to lead people astray and to manipulate them for their own purposes—religious, political, economic and otherwise. Satan has been very successful in using the power of storytelling to deceive people in our culture. If the church is wise we will take back the tool of storytelling from the devil and use it to build God's kingdom in every people. 

<sup>1</sup> Dillon, Christine, *Telling the Gospel Through Story*, adapted from the Introduction, Copyright 2012. Used by permission of InterVarsity Press, PO Box 1400, Downers Grove, IL 60515. [www.ivpress.com](http://www.ivpress.com)

<sup>2</sup> McKay, Hollie, “*The Bible*” *Creator Talks Series Success*, Published September 24, 2013, [FoxNews.com](http://FoxNews.com)

## WHY COMMUNICATE THE GOSPEL THROUGH

# Stories?

From *Reconnecting God's Story to Ministry: Cross-cultural Storytelling at Home and Abroad*, 2005. Used by permission of William Carey Library, Pasadena, CA



### TOM A. STEFFEN

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I thought that I had finally learned enough of the Ifugao language and culture (Philippines) to allow me to do some public evangelism. I developed Bible lessons that followed the topical outline we received in pre-field training: the Bible, God, Satan, humanity, sin, judgment and Jesus Christ. I began by introducing my Ifugao listeners to the authority-base (the Bible). Then I quickly moved on to the second part of the outline (God), and so forth, culminating with Jesus Christ. I presented the lessons in a topical, systematic format. My goal was not only to communicate the gospel, but to communicate it in such a way that the Ifugao could effectively articulate it to others.

But as I taught, I soon realized that the Ifugao found it difficult to follow the topical presentations and found it even harder to explain the content to others. I was perplexed. Something needed to change, so I added a number of stories from the Old Testament to illustrate the abstract (theoretical) concepts in the lessons through pictorial (concrete) characters and objects. I told stories about Creation, the Fall, Cain and Abel, the Flood, the escape from Egypt, the giving of the Ten Commandments, the Tabernacle, Elijah and Baal, all of which would provide foundation for Jesus' story. Their response was phenomenal. Not only did the evangelistic sessions come alive, the recipients became instant evangelists, telling the stories to friends enthusiastically and effectively. From then on I integrated stories in all my evangelistic efforts.

### BACK TO THE POWER OF STORY

After the Ifugao reintroduced me to the power of story, I began to research the topic.<sup>1</sup> I soon discovered that many disciplines, including management, mental and physical health, apologetics, theology and anthropology rely heavily on telling stories.

Sadly, though, storytelling has become a lost art for many Christian workers in relation to evangelism. Few present the gospel using Old Testament stories to lay a solid foundation for understanding the life of Christ, or connect these stories of hope to the target audience's story of hopelessness. Rather, many prefer to outline four or five spiritual laws and prove the validity of each through finely honed arguments.

A number of hollow myths bias this preference against storytelling in evangelism:

(1) stories are for children; (2) stories are for entertainment; (3) adults prefer sophisticated objective, propositional thinking; (4) character derives from dogmas, creeds and theology; (5) storytelling is a waste of time in that it fails to get to the more meaty issues. As a result of these and other related myths, many Christian workers have set aside storytelling. To help reconnect God's story to evangelism-discipleship, I will highlight seven reasons why storytelling should become a skill practiced by all who communicate the gospel.

### 1. Storytelling is a Universal Form of Communication

No matter where you travel in this world, you will find that people love to tell and listen to stories. Young children, teenagers and seniors all love to enter the life experiences of others through stories.

Whatever the topic discussed, stories become an integral part of the dialogue. Stories are used to argue a point, interject humor, illustrate a key insight, comfort a despondent friend, challenge the champion or simply pass the time of day. No matter what its use, a story has a unique way of finding its way into a conversation.

Stories can be heard anywhere. They are appropriate in churches and prison, in the court house and around a campfire.

Not only do all people tell stories, they have a need to do so. This leads us to the second reason for storytelling.

### 2. More than Half of the World's Population Prefer the Concrete Mode of Learning

Illiterate and semi-literate people in the world probably outnumber people who can read.<sup>2</sup>

People with such backgrounds tend to express themselves more through concrete forms (story and symbol) than abstract concepts (propositional thinking and philosophy).

A growing number of Americans prefer the concrete mode of communication. This is due, at least in part, to a major shift in communication preference. One of the reasons behind this shift (and the dropping literacy rate) is the television. With the average TV sound byte now around 13 seconds, and the average image length less than three seconds (often without linear logic), it is no wonder that those under its daily influence have little time or desire for reading. Consequently, newspaper businesses continue to dwindle while video production companies proliferate. If Christian workers rely too heavily on abstract, literary foundations for evangelism and teaching, two-thirds of the world may turn its attention elsewhere.<sup>3</sup>

### 3. Stories Connect with Our Imagination and Emotions

Effective communication touches not only the mind, but also reaches the seat of emotions—the heart. Unlike principles, precepts and propositions, stories take us on an open-ended journey that touches the whole person.

While stories provide dates, times, places, names and chronologies, they simultaneously provoke tears, cheers, fear, anger, confidence, conviction, sarcasm, despair and hope. Stories draw listeners into the lives of the characters. Listeners (participants) not only hear what happened to such characters; through the imagination they vicariously enter the experience. Herbert Schneidau eloquently captures this point when he states: “Stories have a way of tapping those feelings that we habitually anesthetize.”<sup>4</sup>

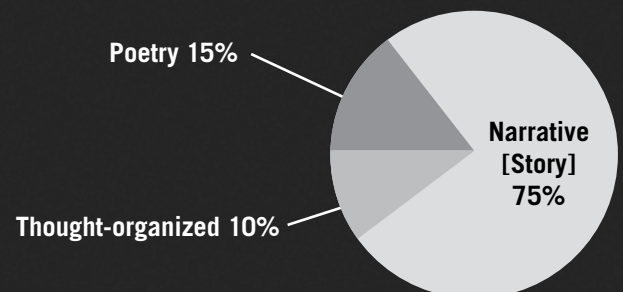
People appreciate stories because they mirror their own lives, weaving together fact and feeling. Stories unleash the imagination, making learning an exciting, life-changing experience.

### 4. Approximately 75% of the Bible is Story

Three basic styles of literature dominate the landscape of the Scriptures—story, poetry and thought-organized format—but story is predominant (see figure above).

Over the centuries, the writers of the Bible documented a host of characters: from kings to slaves, from those who followed God to those who lived for personal gain. Such stories serve as mirrors to reflect our own perspective of life, and more importantly, God's. Charles Koller astutely points out:

#### Major Literary Styles of the Bible



The Bible was not given to reveal the lives of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, but to reveal the hand of God in the lives of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; not as a revelation of Mary and Martha and Lazarus, but as a revelation of the Savior of Mary and Martha and Lazarus.<sup>5</sup>

Poetry covers approximately 15% of the Bible. Songs, lamentations and proverbs provide readers and listeners with a variety of avenues to express and experience deep

emotions. These portions of Scripture demonstrate the feeling side of people, and illuminate the feelings of God as well.

The remaining 10% of the Bible is composed in a thought-organized format. The apostle Paul's Greek-influenced writings fall under this category, where logical, linear thinking tends to dominate. Many Westerners schooled in the tradition of the Greeks, myself included, prefer to spend the majority of time in the Scripture's smallest literary style. Yet if God communicated the majority of his message to the world through story, what does this suggest to Christian workers?

### 5. Every major religion uses stories to socialize its young, convert potential followers and indoctrinate members.

Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity—all use stories to expand and limit membership, and assure ongoing generational adherence. They use stories to differentiate true members from false, acceptable behavior from unacceptable. Stories create committed communities.

Whether Paul was evangelizing Jews or Gentiles, the audience heard relevant stories. Unbelieving Jews heard



about cultural heroes, such as Abraham, Moses and David (Acts 13:13-43). Unbelieving Gentiles heard about the powerful God behind the creation story (Acts 14:8-18; 17:16-34). Maturing believers heard the same stories with a different emphasis.

Could one of the reasons for this be that stories provide an inoffensive, non-threatening way of challenging one's basic beliefs and behavior?

### 6. Stories Create Instant Evangelists

People find it easy to repeat a good story. Whether the story centers around juicy gossip or the gospel of Jesus Christ, something within each of us wants to hear and tell such stories. Suppressing a good story is like resisting a jar full of your favorite cookies. Sooner or later, the urge is too strong and the cookie gets eaten, the story gets told. Told stories get retold.

Because my Ifugao friends could relate well to the life-experiences of Bible characters, they not only applied the stories to their lives, they immediately retold them to family and friends, even before they switched faith allegiance to Jesus Christ. Stories create storytellers.

### 7. Jesus Taught Theology through Stories

Jesus never wrote a book on systematic theology, yet he taught theology wherever he went. As a holistic thinker, Jesus often used parabolic stories to tease audiences into reflecting on new ways of thinking about life.

As Jesus' listeners wrestled with new concepts introduced through parables, they were challenged to examine traditions, form new images of God, and transform their behavior. Stories pushed the people to encounter God and change. It wasn't comfortable to rise to the challenge of Jesus' stories—to step out of the boat, turn from family members, extend mercy to others, search for hidden objects and donate material goods and wealth to the poor—none of it was inviting. But the stories had thrown open possibilities that made it difficult to remain content with life as it had been. Whichever direction the listeners took, they found no middle ground. They had met God. Jesus' stories, packed with theology, caused reason, imagination and emotions to collide, demanding a change of allegiance.


### CONCLUSION

The Bible begins with the story of creation and ends with a vision of God's recreation. Peppered generously between alpha and omega are a host of other stories. While stories dominate Scripture, they rarely enter the Christian worker's strategies. Leland Ryken cogently asks:

Why does the Bible contain so many stories? Is it possible that stories reveal some truths and experiences in a way

that no other literary form does—and if so, what are they? What is the difference in our picture of God when we read stories in which God acts, as compared with theological statements about the nature of God? What does the Bible communicate through our imagination that it does not communicate through our reason? If the Bible uses the imagination as one way of communicating truth, should we not show an identical confidence in the power of the imagination to convey religious truth? If so, would a good starting point be to respect the story quality of the Bible in our exposition of it?<sup>6</sup>

Is it not time for today's Christian workers to revitalize one of the world's oldest, most universal and powerful art forms—storytelling? I believe so. I also believe that Christian workers, with training and practice, can effectively communicate the finished story of Jesus Christ and connect it to the target audience's unfinished story. Presenting an overview of Old and New Testament stories that unveils the history of redemption will highlight for the listeners the Storyline (Jesus Christ) of the sacred

Storybook (Bible). Should this happen, the gospel will be much more easily understood, and more frequently communicated to family and friends. 

- <sup>1</sup> For more information on storytelling see Chapter 11 in my *Passing the Baton: Church Planting That Empowers* (1993), which looks at the Chronological Teaching model, and *Reconnecting God's Story for Ministry: Crosscultural Storytelling at Home and Abroad* (1996), both available through the William Carey Library.
- <sup>2</sup> Barrett, David B., "Annual Statistical Table on Global Mission: 1997," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, 1997, 21(1):24-25.
- <sup>3</sup> Klem, Herbert V., *Oral Communication of the Scripture: Insights From African Oral Art* (Pasadena CA: William Carey Library), 1982.
- <sup>4</sup> Schneidau, Herbert N., "Biblical Narrative and Modern Consciousness," Frank McConnel, ed., *In The Bible and the Narrative Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press), 1986, p. 136.
- <sup>5</sup> Koller, Charles W., *Expository Preaching Without Notes* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House), 1962, p. 32.
- <sup>6</sup> Ryken, Leland, "The Bible: God's Story-book," *Christianity Today*, 1979, 23(23): 38.

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## TRANSFORMING WORLDVIEWS THROUGH THE BIBLICAL STORY

D. BRUCE GRAHAM

The Bible reveals a story. Its earliest chapters trace the history of the people of Israel; it was written to help them understand their unique identity and purpose as a people. Their identity was rooted back in the first human family and the God of Creation who was fulfilling a purpose on earth through them. But Israel is not unique in this sense.

Every nation needs to understand its history and origins. People tell and re-tell their stories, which shape their worldview and identity as a people. But a people's story that is disconnected from God's story will remain hopeless and without enduring purpose. People need to find their place and purpose on earth in light of God's story among the nations.

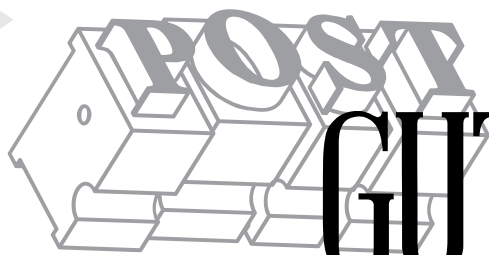
People filter new information through the grid of their worldview and evaluate it accordingly. In the beginning of the movie *The Gods Must Be Crazy*, a glass Coke bottle is dropped out of a small airplane flying over the Kalahari Desert. It lands among the Sho desert people and awakens intense curiosity. Wondering why the gods have sent this strange tool, they spend several days evaluating its usefulness. Finally the elders conclude that this new thing is not good for them, and they set out to dispose of it.

The biblical story is processed in a similar way by people who hear it for the first time. They ask themselves, "Is this good for us? Does it give us a better way of coping with our world, of making sense of it? Does this story match reality as we know it? Does it give hope to our people?" For the biblical story to be

received and believed by a people, it must find a place and connection within their worldview. If it is perceived as a story that has answers for their people, as a story that fulfills the longings and hopes of their people, it becomes good news to them. They can see themselves connected in a new way to an ancient and holy God who has great concern for them. He has revealed himself to them in his Son who fulfills ancient promises and hopes for every nation. Following him restores their identity and purpose on earth. They become part of God's story.

This kind of worldview transformation requires storytellers who grasp the whole biblical story and can meaningfully communicate it among a people. This is far from bringing a people a new "religion." It's far more than a way to "get people saved." It does not extract a people into a foreign community. A skilled biblical storyteller engages a people in a process of discovery that does not disregard their own story, but rather gives them new perspective and new purpose in connection with God's purpose.

Working in India as a teacher of missionary candidates, I observed students learning the Bible by memorizing its details—authors, dates, names of people and places, etc. They learned facts about the Bible and could teach biblical truths. While people sometimes responded without foundation in the biblical story, they easily turned to another teaching or another god if something more interesting came along that would meet their perceived need.



# GUTENBERG!



ORAL PREFERENCE LEARNERS WELCOME THE "DIGITORAL" ERA



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From creation to about the time of the Gutenberg press, communication was primarily oral in nature; writing systems took time to develop, and technology for mass printing had not yet arrived. In the fifteenth century the Gutenberg press allowed printing en masse; this, coupled with the Reformation, was where the church enthusiastically declared that everyone should be able to read and fueled the trend toward reading, literacy, and privacy.<sup>1</sup> Memory (community and social memory), which was at the core of society, got outsourced to the containers of paper and filing cabinets.

Oral cultures value face-to-face communication, in context, and living within the "story" of the community. The literate world communicates through textual means and often is not able to convey the whole context in a communiqué. The textual "story" is truncated or emptied of meaning. As we enter the digital culture, one that is defined by collaborating with multimodal content and tasks, strangely we are on a converging trajectory with the oral culture.

## A GUTENBERG PARENTHESIS

Academicians are now labeling the time span from the fifteenth to the twentieth century the Gutenberg Parenthesis as a period when the left side of the brain took over and gave birth to sciences, inventions, and philosophies, but in so doing relieved the right-side brain of its active engagement in creativity.<sup>2</sup> Today, more than a decade into the twenty-first century, captured images, reality entertainment, social media, and online video gaming actually closely resemble the pre-Gutenberg era, when the right side of the brain was much more in unison with the left side. Thus, the period that commenced with the Gutenberg press and closed with the development of digital platforms has been labeled the Gutenberg Parenthesis. The result is once again a more holistic approach to society and tasks, thereby recapturing creativity, collaboration, and community.

In oral cultures, the information is local and always rooted in context and history, so that there is meaning with coherence to the community. In digital culture, like that of Facebook postings, the emphasis is on morphing the private and individual into open, specific, contextual, and communal experiences, albeit at a distance.

This form of communal experience with a digital identity and digital narrative imbedded into social networking is reinforced by the F-Factor—fans, friends, and followers. So pervasive is this practice that we often discover products and services by relying on our social networks. We are conscious of how our postings will be rated. We are constantly seeking feedback both to improve and validate decisions. Our social networks (communities) are often buying together, and our digital communities are themselves becoming products and services. The F-Factor created a closing parenthesis to the Gutenberg Press, period!

## THE DIGITORAL ERA

Rushing to label the twenty-first century, Jonah Sachs<sup>3</sup> argues that a new period has begun; he characterizes it with the word “digitoral”—a combination of the words “digit” and “oral.” Sachs contends that in oral traditions, “ideas begin in the mind of a creator, but their path to their audience is far less prescriptive. Instead of being processed through an elite device that replicates and delivers them directly, orally transmitted ideas must replicate themselves, passing from the mind of one listener to the next.”<sup>4</sup>

Sachs captures the meaning of digitoral well in the context of social networks, where the messages sent through social media may be adjusted, tossed, twisted, rated, commented upon, shared, and perpetuated. Similar to the pre-Gutenberg era when societies and communities were primarily oral, “ideas today are never fixed; they’re owned and modified by everyone. They move through networks at the will of their members and without that activity, they die.”<sup>5</sup> Hence, the digitoral era is conceived.

## A JOURNEY INTO RENEWAL AND INNOVATION


Walter Ong provided an invaluable contribution to the study of orality in his seminal book: *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*.<sup>6</sup> He makes a distinction between “primary orality,” which exists where there is no written language or little appreciation for or contact with writing, and “secondary orality,” a technologized form of orality that is delivered by electronic media and which depends on writing and print for its existence. Secondary orality has been of special interest because of its impact on people who are well educated but prefer to use electronic media as a way of gaining access to such familiar oral art forms as music, song, and storytelling, whether in audio or video forms. Non-readers also are influenced by secondary orality. Thus, there exists a continuum of culture and learning preferences from exclusively oral to highly textual/digital; approximately 80% of the population within that continuum has a strong preference for oral methods of learning and communicating. We refer to this 80% of the world’s population as “oral preference learners.”<sup>8</sup>

The Church can be described as a large social network and in her book, *The Great Emergence*, Phyllis Tickle has suggested that it is experiencing what amounts to a large rummage sale, one that happens every five hundred

...ideas today are never fixed; they’re owned and modified by everyone. They move through networks at the will of their members and without that activity, they die.

years. In the midst of the convergence of oral, literate, and digital culture, coupled with online digital identity and narrative, and further combined with the phenomena of the Gutenberg Parenthesis, what does the Church have to say and how do we move forward in this very fluid state with oral preference learners in our midst?

With the hard close of the Gutenberg Parenthesis and the onset of the digitoral era, we continue with the long-term residual effects of the print-based culture, and we are rediscovering the ancient keys to the oral cultures that are infused with visual digital effects.

At the beginning of the third millennium, this is a defining moment for us to understand the oral preference learners of this century, and to explore the digitoral galaxy as we reach UUPGs (Unreached Unengaged People Groups), plant churches, make disciples, engage public squares, reshape missions, and learn together! 

<sup>1</sup> Samuel E. Chiang, “Editor’s Notes”, *Orality Journal 1*, no. 1 (2012): 7–10.

<sup>2</sup> Tom Pettitt, as presented in his paper “Folk Cultures and Digital Cultures”, talks about the Gutenberg Parenthesis; see also, “Before the Gutenberg Parenthesis: Elizabethan-American Compatibilities,” at MIT5 Conference, [http://web.mit.edu/comm-forum/mit5/papers/peittitt\\_plenary\\_gutenberg](http://web.mit.edu/comm-forum/mit5/papers/peittitt_plenary_gutenberg) (accessed 12th July 2013); and others, including Jean-Francois Vallee, “Paradoxes of Orality and Literacy: The Curious Case of the Renaissance Dialogue”, Media Ecology Association 10, 8 (2009) [www.media-ecology.org/publications/MEA\\_proceedings/v10/8\\_Paradoxes.pdf](http://www.media-ecology.org/publications/MEA_proceedings/v10/8_Paradoxes.pdf) (accessed 12th July 2013); see also Chris Lott, on the “Closing the Gutenberg Parenthesis,” Ustream video, <http://www.ustream.tv/recorded/2403446> (accessed 12th July 2013).

<sup>3</sup> Jonah Sachs, *Winning the Story Wars: Why Those Who Tell—and Live—the Best Stories Will Rule the Future*, (Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Publishing, 2012). See also Samuel E. Chiang, “Editor’s Notes”, *Orality Journal 2*, no. 1 (2013): 7–10

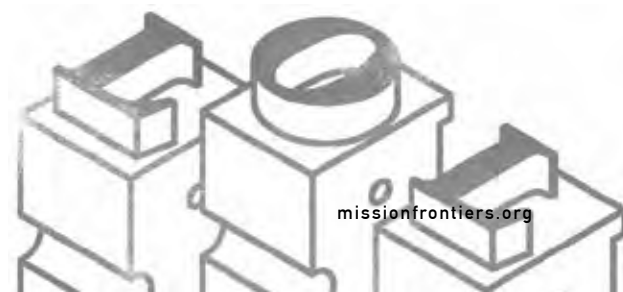
<sup>4</sup> Sachs, 17.

<sup>5</sup> Sachs, 19.

<sup>6</sup> Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London and New York: Routledge, 1982).

<sup>7</sup> See Lovejoy, “The Extent of Orality.” Globally, institutions tend to work with an illiteracy to literacy continuum that often is defined by the United Nations. We see a subset of that continuum that describes learners from those who are exclusively oral to highly textual/digital, who by necessity or by choice, prefer to learn in an oral manner.

<sup>8</sup> In a paper presented to the Asia Theological Association tri-annual General Assembly meeting in Jakarta, 08/2013, Grant Lovejoy and this writer further elucidates this continuum on pages 2–5.



# CHURCH PLANTING MOVEMENTS AMONG *Oral Learners*



## PAM ARLUND, PhD

Pam Arlund, PhD, served in Asia for a decade as a church planter and linguist. She is now Director of Training for All Nations Family, Inc., based in Kansas City, Missouri, USA. She trains and sends pioneer church planters all over the world through their flagship training program, Church Planting Experience (CPx). She earned a degree in International Affairs from the George Washington University, Washington D.C. She also earned an MA and PhD in Linguistics from the University of Texas at Arlington.

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Church-Planting Movements are one of the major ways God is moving today. In fact, these movements are the only method of church reproduction that seem to move faster than population growth in our twenty-first-century world where everything is “mega”—mega-cities, mega-populations, mega-economies. There appear to be perhaps as many as twenty-five Church-Planting Movements in the Arabic-speaking world today alone.

For such movements to take place, several vital elements seem necessary. Although it is true that these movements are ultimately the work of the Holy Spirit, there are several ways church planters can either help or hinder the work of the Holy Spirit in how we go about our work of co-missioning with the Father.

One of the ways Church-Planting Movements can be either helped or hindered is in how we approach oral learners. If church planters insist that those who are naturally oral learners become print learners to be good followers of Jesus, then Church-Planting Movements (and therefore the move of the Holy Spirit) will be inhibited. This article details how Church-Planting Movements and orality work hand in hand.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF ORAL LEARNERS

It has been estimated that two-thirds of the world are oral learners. This does not mean that two-thirds of the world cannot read. Although it is true that some oral learners cannot read, the main way oral learners are identified is through preference—not through ability. For example, many people in the West are capable of reading, but do not prefer to learn through reading. Instead, they prefer to learn through oral formats, primarily through video and movie in the industrialized West.

Ask any group of Europeans or North Americans if they would rather read the book or watch the movie and their preference becomes obvious almost instantly. The vast majority of westerners are oral learners, but they are capable of reading. Therefore, principles of orality are not just things that apply “over there,” but are extremely relevant to pastors and others promoting discipleship in developed contexts as well.

In fact, it could very well be that a realization of the needs and preferences of oral learners in Western contexts could be critical to a revival of the Western Church. The National Adult Literacy Survey conducted in the United States in 1992 determined that “90 million adults, almost all of whom can read, have difficulty using the written word to accomplish everyday tasks with consistency and accuracy.” Add to this those who are able

to accomplish everyday literacy tasks but do not prefer to read and write and the number of oral learners in the United States could soar as high as 80%.

This has profound implications for our traditional methods of discipleship in the West, which are based on reading. In fact, the first thing that usually happens when westerners become believers is that they are given one or more books to read.

On the other hand, in the Developing World, many oral learners are not able to read or may read at only very low levels. In the past, church planters coming primarily from the industrialized West and trained primarily through institutions of higher learning assumed that everyone in the world wanted to learn to read and write.

However, this assumption has not turned out to be true. Not everyone has the desire to read and write. Interestingly enough, this becomes almost irrelevant in the early stages of a Church-Planting Movement because stopping to create a literacy program would certainly take too long and be too slow to help spark a Church-Planting Movement. This is not to say that there is no place for churches to run literacy programs, but the early stages of a Church-Planting Movement is not the ideal time for reasons that will be outlined below.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF CHURCH-PLANTING MOVEMENTS

For churches to reproduce rapidly, certain key elements must be in place. This is not to say that planting churches is formulaic. Indeed, it may be possible to have all the right elements in place but not have the spark of the Holy Spirit and not see a Church-Planting Movement. On the other hand, it is possible to have that Holy Spirit spark but to put inhibitors in place, thereby limiting through poor principles the rapid move of the Holy Spirit, or at least initially slowing that move of the Holy Spirit.

Researchers have identified a list of ten common characteristics of Church-Planting Movements:

1. Extraordinary prayer by missionaries, prayer for new believers, and prayer by new believers
2. Abundant evangelism that includes over-sowing and a buzz in the air about Jesus
3. Intentional planting of reproducing churches
4. The authority of God's word, which demonstrates that the answer to almost every question is, "What does God's word say?"
5. Local leadership

6. Lay leadership
7. House churches
8. Churches planting churches
9. Rapid reproduction
10. Healthy churches that worship, love each other, love the lost, and love the word of God

Several of these factors have direct implications for oral learners, orality, and storying.

First, abundant evangelism can take place only if young believers feel empowered to share Jesus immediately after beginning to follow him. If young believers are made to feel that they are inadequate to share Jesus for any reason whatsoever, they will hold off and develop a fear of mistakenly sharing Jesus. Ultimately, even if they are told to wait for a short period of time to go through a small introductory Bible study before being allowed to share



Jesus, this inhibits abundant evangelism. To tell young believers that they must first learn to read and write before being allowed to share Jesus would slow down that process so much that abundant evangelism would simply not be possible.

Second, local leadership and lay leadership are critical to Church-Planting Movements. If leadership is only turned over to those with high literacy levels or to those who are good at reading and writing at high levels, then it is likely that the group outsider will remain in leadership for too long. The young churches will begin to believe that reading is necessary to leadership and the entire movement will slow down.

Since lay leadership is also critical to a Church-Planting Movement, many of these early leaders will work at other jobs. Very few pastors and elders will work full time for

the church. This means they will have very little time to devote to a literacy program. It also means that if a highly detailed discipleship and leadership training program is introduced, many of these young leaders will lose heart and give up. The requirements will be more than they can meet.

Third, none of this need for rapidity is in conflict with the absolute need for these Church-Planting Movements to understand the written word of God. However, it bears remembering that the written word of God was first the oral word of God. Even people who cannot read the word can listen to it and can receive the stories of the Bible through oral formats.



Many languages have oral Bibles in recorded formats that are available. Where these are not available, someone can teach the Bible in ways that oral learners can remember and then pass on to others. Even people who could potentially read the written word of God may not prefer to receive it in that way. For the word of God to advance rapidly, we must cooperate with people's natural learning styles. This might mean using drama, stories, video, artwork, and songs even when the written word is available, but not preferred.

Fourth, Church-Planting Movements are vulnerable in the early stages. One of the main reasons they are undermined is because the person sparking them uses a means or technology not available or easily accessible to the locals. For example, a westerner opens his or her laptop every time he or she studies the Bible. The locals quickly understand that if they do not have a laptop, then they cannot lead others to Jesus.

The same problem can come with literacy when print learners begin to spark Church-Planting Movements. Oral learners will see a model of sharing and following

Jesus that requires high levels of literacy. When they realize that they are not good readers, don't read much, or don't like to read, they recognize that they are not qualified to lead others to Jesus or to lead churches. When this signal is sent, two-thirds of the world becomes ineligible for leadership and Church-Planting Movements become impossible to spark.

Last, the early stages of a Church-Planting Movement are particularly vulnerable to anything slow. Even the simplest of literacy programs will take months or years to get off the ground. Likewise, complicated Bible classes or seminary classes will work contrary to this principle of rapid multiplication.

This does not mean that literacy programs, Bible colleges, or seminaries are off the table for Church-Planting Movements, but it does mean that they will be contrary to what is needed at the initial stages. They are also likely to kill a movement if introduced too early.

## TRANSMITTING THE WORD OF GOD ORALLY: CASE STUDIES

How can the word of God be transmitted quickly from oral learner to oral learner while still preserving the integrity of the word? How can pastors and other leaders become teachers without learning to read and write?

### Case Study #1: Central Asia

The first case study comes from a persecuted church area in Central Asia, so some of their details have been suppressed. The people are a minority in the country in which they live. They speak a Persian language with no writing system and come from a folk Muslim worldview. When they first became actively engaged with the gospel nearly twenty years ago, there were no known believers among them.

The church planters in the area knew that they had to adopt an oral approach to sharing Jesus stories because there was no writing system for the language and many people could not read or write in any language. However, it soon became clear that even those who could read and write did not prefer to do so. All seemed to prefer to hear Jesus stories in their own mother tongue (as opposed to the trade or national language), which meant that the oral means of transmission was the only possible method.

This particular people group had almost no Bible translation at that time, so a small number of Bible stories were prepared in an oral format and distributed in extremely limited quantities. The church planters adopted a stance of telling Jesus stories whenever they could and encouraging

the locals to do the same. Due to the location of this people group, access was difficult and only possible during certain times of the year due to extreme weather. Thus, transmission of the gospel had to be fast and accurate.

This particular people group had heard of Jesus in the context of Islam, so it was easy to have conversations about Jesus. Church planters simply said, “Tell me stories about Jesus or some of your other prophets.” The idea behind this was to learn as much as the locals knew about their prophets and therefore where their hearts were. Most locals knew very few stories about any of the prophets. In fact, the stories locals often knew about Jesus were not biblical; however, the church planters simply listened, nodded, and thanked them for the stories.

The church planters were also interested in and collected local folk stories and proverbs. This was simply part of the process of discovering the local culture and values. The church planters wrote down and recorded the stories and soon gained reputations as people who loved stories. The process of recording local stories revealed many important aspects of the culture that were helpful in sharing the gospel.

For example, the local culture already had a concept of “blood brothers” and how exchanging blood can seal a relationship. This concept was used as a bridge to the gospel. The stories revealed a real and deep belief in witches and witchcraft and opened conversation to spiritual forces in the area. The stories revealed that there was going to be an “end of time,” which meant that part of their worldview already coincided with the biblical worldview that time will end.

Proverbs were deeply held and highly regarded, so the church planters began to focus on translating the Book of Proverbs. This appealed to the culture and provided a way to talk about David, a prophet in whom the locals already believed. As the church planters collected stories, they eagerly began to share similar biblical stories. When stories were from the shared prophets, they stressed that these were real historical accounts, different from the other stories.

Sometimes, the church planters met a person only one time and knew that they were not likely to get another chance to meet the locals, so they immediately asked the locals to tell them stories about the prophets. They explained that the two cultures held these stories in common, since Muslims already hold the Gospels and prophets in high regard. Typically, the locals only took a minute or two to tell their stories.

The church planters would then ask, “I know a lot of stories about Jesus. Would you like to hear some?” The

locals always agreed. Sometimes the church planters used pictures to illustrate the stories. The church planters occasionally read the stories from notes, but sometimes told them from memory.

After sharing a few stories, usually including the creation account, locals were invited to follow Jesus based on what they knew of him. Most agreed Jesus was worthy to be followed and prayed a brief prayer. This was not considered a prayer of salvation, but rather a step toward Jesus. For many, it did end up being their prayer of salvation, but this was judged later based on the fruit of the Spirit in their lives.

After the prayer, the church planters asked, “Which of the stories I told you today did you like the best?” The local would identify one of the stories and the church planters would acknowledge what a great story it was and tell it again. Often, at this point, they would ask some of the children to help act out the story as they told it. This was fun for both the kids and the adults.

The church planters would then ask if any of the locals thought they could tell the story. If no one could, the group would practice until everyone was able to tell the story. Finally, the church planters would ask, “Who do you know needs to hear this story? Jesus people tell Jesus stories. That’s what Jesus people do.” They would help the locals to identify several people who needed to hear the story about Jesus. They would then pray and ask God for opportunities to share the story.

Sometimes, the church planters never saw the person again. However, in every case where follow up occurred, people told Jesus stories to the rest of their villages. In this way, the gospel spread among this people group through a simple method of telling and practicing stories. To the best of

our knowledge, there are now forty churches among this small people group, and the churches have reached multiple generations.

There are several key principles to be noticed in this case study:

1. The church planters were interested in stories of all types and explained from the beginning that they wanted to hear all stories. They felt this opened people’s hearts and established the right tone in the relationship from the beginning. It also helped them bond with the locals and learn their language.
2. Biblical stories were highlighted as being special and different from other stories.
3. Locals were invited to tell Jesus stories from the

beginning and were not corrected when they told non-biblical Jesus stories.

4. People practiced telling the stories, and pictures and drama were used in story-telling.
5. When possible, stories were memorized rather than read to emphasize that it wasn't about reading, but about the story itself.
6. Locals practiced telling stories and were told that this was a normal part of the Jesus life.
7. Locals were released to tell Jesus stories immediately after beginning to follow Jesus.

There are several other points worth mentioning.

First, the church planters made use of gospel portions in the trade language. Those who could read would usually read the stories and then translate them “on the fly” into their own mother tongue. Usually, the very formal version of the Gospels was considered intimidating, but most people readily embraced the “comic book” version of the Bible.

Second, the church planters would translate the stories into the mother tongue for those who couldn't read the trade language, so literacy was used at some level in the movement. However, most people who were following Jesus were listening to the stories as a bridge person translated them from the trade language. Since there was a minimum literacy level and the Bible was available, this was deemed most expedient to allowing a rapid spread of the gospel. Waiting for a complete preparation of the Bible into their mother tongue would have violated the principle of speed and slowed down the movement. Sometimes in Church-Planting Movements church planters cannot aim for “purity of philosophy,” but must simply do the most expedient and practical thing possible.

This “union” of literate and oral approaches worked well for this people. It allowed those who didn't read to be immediately empowered and it elevated the mother tongue. On the other hand, introducing the written Bible portions in the trade language meant people didn't have to rely on outsiders to gain access to new Bible stories. The group of outsiders who were the church planters knew that their access would be limited and that providing new stories would not be practical.

## Case Study #2: Southeast Asia

The second case study also comes from a persecuted church area. These people come from a Buddhist background and number around three million people. Their Church-Planting Movement was catalyzed by several cross-cultural

church planters who decided to train the locals to plant churches rather than to plant churches themselves. Orality was a major part of their strategy. In the past nine years, 365 new churches have been planted among them.

As a part of the church-planting training offered in this movement, local believers were taught Bible stories and asked to practice the stories until they were able to tell them well. They were given pictures to go with the stories since pictures are a normal part of the culture. The pictures were initially brought from another country and then adapted with the help of a local artist.

While testing the usefulness of the pictures, the church planters discovered that if Jesus had a beard, then the locals thought Jesus was a Muslim. This was because the only people in their context with beards were Muslims. So new pictures were drawn of a beardless Jesus and these have proven very popular. These pictures have been key to the Bible storying strategy.

When preparing the stories, the church planters were taught to use terms that were appropriate to the worldview of their Buddhist audience. This was accomplished as the foreign church-planting coaches encouraged the locals to indigenize local Buddhist worship forms to the worship of Jesus. This led to a change in how some terms had traditionally been used. For example, older versions of Bible stories in the area had used the local word for “sky” to refer to “heaven.” However, the local church planters felt that “sky” was not a place to which people wanted to go. Instead, they chose to use the term “Golden City of Nirvana,” because this was a place of no more sin and suffering in the Buddhist worldview.

Orality and storying training were not taught separately, but were always an integral part of the training. Church-planting training also included instruction in obedience-based discipleship, instruction on how to carry out the nine basic commands of Jesus, and an introduction into how to share the story of Buddhism first before sharing the story of Jesus. These trainings were normally held in Buddhist monasteries.

This integration of church planting and storying can be seen in the basic structure of how the first churches multiplied.

When asked to describe her training process, TT explained it this way:

At 11 a.m. on Sunday we strike the *gyizee* three times as the lawyer showed me and pray to Abbot Jesus. My 9-year-old daughter tells a Bible story using the pictures and then I ask the questions to help seekers and new believers find the truths from the stories. Then, I tell the house church members and seekers to repeat this same story and pattern of worship in their homes. So at 2 p.m.

that same day most of these members meet in their own homes. There are fourteen churches now.

The 9-year-old Bible storyteller is the best preacher out of fifty house churches in that area. The *gyizee* is a bell struck in the Buddhist cultural context to initiate worship. In the case of the followers of Jesus, they struck the bell three times for each of the members of the Trinity. Buddhists not following Jesus also strike the bell three times, but for different reasons.

During the process of indigenization, the local church planters felt this method of worship was most appropriate for their local context. In addition, rabbis are foreign to their context, but an abbot is well understood, so Jesus is referred to as an “abbot.” This is the local cultural equivalent of a rabbi, as abbots are religious teachers and leaders in the local context. The lawyer refers to the person who led her to Jesus and trained her in church planting.

In this context, the church planters felt it was important to not only tell the good news of Jesus, but to first tell the bad news of Buddhism. Young believers were taught to talk about how one achieves freedom according to Buddhism before telling stories about Jesus. This was because the locals were familiar with Buddhism, but didn’t really understand the full implications of the path of salvation in Buddhism. When the story was told and pointed out that Buddhism demanded perfection, most people realized that they would never be able to achieve perfection.

Realizing their need for a better way, the church planters then told the story of Jesus. As in the earlier case study, church planters here also started with stories that were not Jesus stories but instead were familiar to the locals.

There are several key principles to be noticed in this case study:

1. The process of adapting the language of the Jesus stories to the local culture was led by locals. They decided what words needed to be changed or adapted.
2. Orality was simply a part of a church-planting strategy, not a separate component.
3. Local stories were studied, understood, and adapted to new purposes.
4. Storytellers began with stories the locals already knew and then moved to new stories.
5. Pictures were an important part of telling stories, but they had to be adapted to the local context. Pictures were also tested for intelligibility and cultural appropriateness.
6. During the church meeting, all believers practiced telling Jesus stories and had an expectation that they


would share the stories with others. They immediately went and shared the stories that same afternoon.

7. Lay people, women, and children were included in the process and even empowered to become some of the best preachers in the area.

## CONCLUSION

In each case study, orality was not a separate strategy; it was simply a part of an overall church-planting strategy which involved learning local stories, indigenizing the gospel, training locals to lead churches, and storying. Spreading the gospel orally was not a particular philosophy, but a pragmatic answer to a pragmatic question: How can the most number of people hear about Jesus in the shortest amount of time?

Church-Planting Movements are the fastest-growing expression of Jesus on the planet today. They seem to give more people a greater chance to hear the gospel, respond to it, and get plugged into a fellowship than any other current vehicle. For these movements to continue to expand rapidly, they must be led by lay leaders who can create a general buzz in the air about Jesus.

They must also have a love for God’s word. If the only way to know and love God’s word is to learn to read and write well, then much of the world will not be able to effectively follow Jesus. Orality is simply a way for new disciples to effectively engage with Jesus and his stories and then to effectively engage others with Jesus and his stories. 

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# CONTEXTUALIZING THE GOSPEL IN A VISUAL WORLD



## CLYDE TABER

Clyde Taber leads the Visual Story Network, a coalition launched to expand a global movement of visual story for the Kingdom of God. From 2000-2006 he led the development of innovative media initiatives for the JESUS Film Project, including “Magdalena: Released from Shame,” the Damah Film Festival, and “JESUS: Fact or Fiction?” Prior to this, he directed the campus ministry in Paris and coordinated the campus work of Campus Crusade for Christ throughout North Africa, the Middle East, and Central Asia. Clyde’s wife, Shirin, is a writer (*Muslims Next Door, Wanting All the Right Things*), speaker, and mother.

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The dust settled and most of the crowd now dispersed. The weathered man leaned in asking the pastor with sadness in his voice, “Does your God love widows?”

“Yes, he loves widows,” replied the pastor.

“Does your God love orphans?” he asked.

“Yes, he loves orphans as well.”

The man shifted his weight to his cane, keeping his eyes fixed on the pastor.

“Among our many gods, we do not have one like this; I must know this God of yours.”

This man in India had just watched the “Widow and the Oil,” a ten-minute dramatic recreation of Elisha and the widow from the book of 2 Kings. Although this visual story, produced and used by Crown Financial Ministries, was intended to teach Christians about God’s provision, it opened this man’s heart to the God of the Bible. In an effort to more effectively teach biblical stewardship to oral-speaking peoples in developing countries, Crown created a six-part series of biblical short films called “God Provides.” Crown stepped boldly into the new wave of communication—the wave of visual story.

## AN HISTORIC OPPORTUNITY FOR THE CHURCH

We live in a transitional time in the history of the Church when a great opportunity exists to preach, print, and portray. For 1,500 years, preaching was the primary means by which the Church communicated its message. For the last five hundred years, print media has accelerated the spread of the gospel. We are now able to visually portray Christ and his kingdom. This is the third wave of communicating with the world around us.

As the world grows more media-saturated and sophisticated, young people and adults are becoming more visually oriented. The heart language of a growing number of people worldwide is visual story. Every day, four out of five people on this planet are molded by visual story. The orality movement is addressing the need to contextualize the gospel among those who are illiterate or functionally illiterate. A new movement to contextualize the gospel among the world’s population that is “visually literate” (able to interpret meaning from an image) is expanding.

One of the greatest gaps in the global outreach of the Church is the lack of culturally-relevant visual media. Through film, television, computers, and mobile devices, stories are being told on large and small screens. This deluge of stories is captivating the hearts of men, women, youth, and children, and raises the question, who will shape the stories that shape the hearts of people around the world? The destiny of a generation depends on the answer.

It is critical that God’s people connect and communicate with the lost through kingdom visual stories. A kingdom visual story combines narrative and visual media to

communicate the message of Jesus and his kingdom. They may be as direct as the JESUS film, or stories that stimulate thought and reflection. The truth of creation, fall, and redemption revealed in scripture and expressed in everyday life is the missing message in the stories shaping the lives of billions of people.

The Church is beginning to awaken to the possibilities of communicating in visual story. The JESUS film has been viewed by billions of people.

Churches in America and Africa are developing films that speak to real-life issues from a biblical perspective. Christian television networks are beginning to broadcast content beyond preaching alone. Much more, however, remains to be done. The Global Church must address urgently the following concerns.

1. Local churches must learn to create visual stories. Culturally-specific, locally-produced visual media should be available in every language of the world as technology and distribution become more affordable. It should become common for leaders in churches and parachurch organizations to consider a visual component to sermons, outreach programs, and discipleship material. Increasingly, this media must be story-driven, and not limited to “talking heads.”
2. New models of evangelism and discipleship using visual media must be developed. As more visual story content becomes available, the Church must find ways to use the content to effectively reach and teach.
3. The gap between creative and missional Christians must be bridged. Historically, the Protestant Church has not embraced the artist in its midst. The Body of Christ must identify, encourage, and equip emerging visual storytellers. As a result, faith-based storytelling will be innovative rather than merely copying the example of the host culture.
4. We must understand that the big screen is the small screen. In October 2011, the world’s population surpassed seven billion people. By late 2012, mobile phone subscriptions worldwide were projected to reach seven billion.<sup>1</sup> Video accounted for more than half (52%) of all mobile web traffic in 2011 and will increase to 70% in the next five years.<sup>2</sup> “Feature phones” account for most of the world’s subscription base, but “smart phone” subscriptions have surpassed one billion and are gaining market share in developed nations. We live in the age when media and technology saturation is globally approaching 100% through mobile devices. The opportunities


to use the mobile platform are expanding and must be leveraged for the Great Commission. The Mobile Ministry Forum is a new coalition of mission practitioners helping the mission community learn to appropriately integrate mobile device technology into their outreach and church-planting strategies.

IT WILL BE IMPOSSIBLE TO FULFILL THE GREAT COMMISSION IF WE DO NOT LEARN TO SPEAK THE LANGUAGE OF VISUAL STORY

## CONCLUSION

It will be impossible to fulfill the Great Commission if we do not learn to speak the language of visual story. When my wife and I arrived in France as young missionaries, we understood the success of our ministry would depend greatly upon our ability to learn French. In many countries, church services are televised, but this is essentially a model of “preaching to the choir.”

We must learn the art of story and new forms of visual communication that speak to the teenager surfing the web, as well as the Bedouin tribesman whose most prized possession is his cell phone.

If God’s people invest time, energy, and resources into contextualizing the gospel in a visual world, the Church’s ability to communicate visually should be equal to or better than that of the local culture. Messages of the kingdom will not be limited to a subculture, but permeate and leaven the host culture. Believers will be prepared to give a visual answer to everyone who asks about the reason for their hope. Within a generation, it will be possible for every person on earth to have the opportunity to encounter the truth of Jesus and his kingdom every day. 

<sup>1</sup> See [www.cellular-news.com/story/51223.php](http://www.cellular-news.com/story/51223.php). Accessed January 18, 2013.

<sup>2</sup> See [techcrunch.com/2012/02/14/the-number-of-mobile-devices-will-exceed-worlds-population-by-2012-other-shocking-figures/](http://techcrunch.com/2012/02/14/the-number-of-mobile-devices-will-exceed-worlds-population-by-2012-other-shocking-figures/). Accessed January 18, 2013.



# THE TWO JOURNEYS OF Shanti & Jasmine

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## TRICIA S.

Tricia's passion is for all believers to be equipped to effectively share their faith, disciple others, and plant churches using Bible storying. She and her family have lived and ministered in France, Benin, and South Asia for the past 13 years.

Shanti and Jasmine come from very different backgrounds, but both belong to the Information Technology (IT) community in the country where we work. Shanti was a “born Christian” who grew up going to church and whose entire extended family had been going to church for generations. When she was a teenager, Shanti understood what it meant to choose to follow Jesus instead of being “born into” the faith, and she made a conscious decision to follow him wholeheartedly.

Jasmine, on the other hand, was born a Hindu and grew up going to Hindu temples with her extended family. This had been the family practice for generations. As a teenager, several people helped Jasmine come to believe that there was only one God, and that his name was Jesus. Jasmine now follows only Jesus, but the rest of her family has not yet made that decision.

Both Jasmine and Shanti are highly educated IT professionals and fluent in English.

When I met Jasmine and Shanti, they were friends who loved Jesus and wanted to serve him. They knew Jesus had commanded them to tell people about him, but they weren't sure how to do it. So they hit the streets of our city, passing out tracts and talking to people in parks and major shopping areas. What wonderful intentions and beautiful hearts! Unfortunately, it didn't work for them.

## A NEW WAY OF SHARING THE GOSPEL

They decided they needed help so I facilitated a one-day training in how to tell their stories and how to use the story of the demon-possessed man (see Mark 5:1-20) as an initial hook to sharing the gospel.

They soon realized that sharing stories could be an effective evangelism strategy and began coming regularly to our house for a weekly “satsang,” or “meeting of truth,” where we worship in a culturally-appropriate way and, of course, tell stories.

## JASMINE'S JOURNEY

Jasmine began to see that we were systematically telling a set of stories with a theme and purpose for evangelism and discipleship and decided she should begin telling her non-believing family the stories. She deeply appreciated the last question we asked each week: “To whom will you tell this story this week?”

The story set began in a non-threatening way with the story of David: his beautiful relationship with God, how he broke it, and how it was restored after he repented. As Jasmine told a story each week to her mother, father, and brother at home, she began to

see that they were interested; they listened to her in a way they hadn't before. It was as if Jasmine had found a new freedom—she had something valuable to say to her non-believing community.

The story set continued to the stories of Daniel's life. One night, Jasmine shared, "My parents are starting to understand that they should worship only the creator God, and no other. I didn't even have to tell them—they are just getting it from the stories!"

Then another breakthrough came. I told the story from Daniel 7 about the One coming in the clouds who looked like a "son of man," and the Ancient of Days giving him all authority, and all nations bowing before him. Jasmine exclaimed, "I finally got it! The Trinity! I now know how to explain it!" She explained that this proved to her that Jesus was fully God and fully man, because he looked like a man (that's how Daniel recognized him), and he was given authority and the right to be worshiped—a right only given to God himself.

Indeed, the story is a clear picture of two of the three Persons of the Trinity in one place at one time. There are other stories that can be used to explain the Trinity, but this is the one with which Jasmine identified.

I would never have chosen this story to teach this concept, but thankfully I wasn't trying to control her learning experience. If I had been, I might have paraded past her many stories that meant nothing to her, frustrating both of us. Instead, she had experienced the power of a special story which opened up a new world of understanding for her.

She soon found new freedom to share not only with her parents, but also with her colleagues and friends. She began to systematically tell the stories to a friend, and in the cab on the way to her office in the mornings. One day, she traveled three hours one way to a temple with her friend just so she could tell her the stories!

Jasmine occasionally still calls me late at night to practice a story before she tells it to her two aunts—her newest storying group—who own salons. One morning each week, Jasmine gathers the families together and tells them a story.

## SHANTI'S JOURNEY

Shanti hasn't been so easy to convince; in fact, I'm not sure that she will use stories for the rest of her life. However, even Shanti would say that stories have opened her eyes to new concepts and have helped her to study her Bible better. Stories have even challenged some of her long-held misconceptions.

Shanti first came to the Sunday night storying group thinking that she already knew too much about the Bible to actually glean anything from a simple story. She was convinced she would be bored. However, she continued attending and took part in the training on how to tell her own story and pair it with the story of the demon-possessed man.

Shanti thought it was a good idea to use simple, non-churchy words in the stories. For example, when she heard that she could say "having a right/good relationship with God" in place of "righteous," she came to a deeper understanding of the meanings of these words that she had heard all her life. She also began to understand that some words like "baptism," were actually understood differently in her culture

than the way they were meant to be understood in the Bible. For the first time she began using other terms to accurately portray what really happens when someone is baptized.

But Shanti still hesitated to tell other people stories. Then her turn came to teach children's Sunday school at church. She was presenting on the Holy Spirit and decided to tell the story of Pentecost.

She practiced her story with me and the seven simple questions that came after. When she told the story, the children loved it so much that many shared it with their parents. Because the children seemed to really grasp the concept of the Holy Spirit, Shanti felt she perhaps could tell stories! She began bringing friends to the storying group who she thought would benefit from the non-traditional church setting.

Then the crisis came. I told her the story in John 9 of the man born blind. I asked the normal questions, but at the second question—"What bothered you about this story?"—she began to giggle nervously. She answered, "This story has always bothered me. It doesn't fit my theology."

As we talked, it became clear that she believed that all

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physical ailments and bad things that happened to a person are the direct result of sin and unbelief. This story, however, was clear that this man's blindness was not the result of sin, but so that "the power of God could be seen in him." The story, questions, and resulting discussion forced her to face a problem in her theology that she had never before been forced to confront.

Her thinking didn't change that night; however, she did go home considering what we had discussed. In the following weeks she heard other stories that also confronted her belief (e.g., David and Bathsheba's baby dying even after they were forgiven; Daniel's persecution). These weren't new stories to her, but she was experiencing them in a new way as she learned to tell and discuss them. Each time, however, she avoided discussing her questionable theology.

She was soon, however, forced to live out the story. Even though she felt like she had been obeying God, something "bad" happened to her. How had this happened, she wondered. I reminded her of John 9.

A few weeks later, we told the story again in the larger storying group. During the discussion, Shanti said, "This story used to bother me, because I didn't agree with it. But now, after what happened to me, I'm changing my beliefs about why bad things happen to people." It took a year and a half of story after story for Shanti to come to this conclusion. Some people say that's too long. The fact is, Shanti's entire worldview is changing, and it will take time as she experiences life alongside the stories taking root in her heart. Today, every time she's tempted to go back to her old way of thinking, a story will pop into her head that will remind her of Truth.

Shanti and I continue to meet every week. Recently, studying the Bible had become a little difficult for her, and she found herself falling asleep while reading. I suggested she craft a story for each section she reads as part of her quiet time, and then tell that story to herself throughout the week. At first, this seemed silly to her. Now, she is coming every week with a new story that she has crafted. Shanti has finally incorporated storying into her life.

## EXPERIENCING THE BIBLE

I remember someone snickering three years ago when we said we were moving to the IT part of town to story with IT professionals. People would comment, "Why them? They're literate. They want answers, studies, an in-depth study on the original languages, and tables and charts." This was true about some people. Some did want a study that gave them all the answers. Some wanted to go back to the original Hebrew and Greek text. Some wanted fill-in-the-blank

worksheets and textbooks.

But some wanted freedom to experience and live out the story themselves without getting all the answers in one sitting. They wanted to live it out until the answers came through the experiences themselves. Those who were willing to try storying received something they never could have received through a workbook.

I'm reminded of the story of the blind man in the Gospel of John. The man was asked to explain how it came to be that he was healed of the blindness he had from birth. He didn't know; all he had was his experience: "All I know is that once I was blind, but now I see." Rejected from his place of worship, Jesus found him and asked, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?"

The Son of Man was a story the blind man had heard all his life, and now he wanted to experience it. "Show him to me," he said. Jesus replied, "I AM he," and the man fell down and worshiped him.

Once the blind man met the Son of Man, an entirely new depth of worship was revealed to him. As Jasmine and Shanti met with Jesus through these stories, they've begun to experience him in new ways as well. Slowly but steadily, their worldviews have been expanding and deepening as they apply each story to their own lives.

I am amazed at how far they have come and the things they are now willing to do.


I'm amazed at the ease in which they retell stories after hearing them only once.

I'm amazed at the deep truths and personal doubts that they're willing to explore during the discussion times.

I'm amazed at how sometimes they both speak up at the same time when asked who will tell the story the following week.

I'm amazed at the friends they've known for so long, with whom they've only shared superficially until they began telling stories.

The theology they have learned along the way is what the Holy Spirit has deemed necessary for them to learn at this time in their lives. They are now capable of learning a story and asking the Holy Spirit to teach them through the story. So even better than them learning a set of theological principles, they've learned how to extract good theology from the word of God, and to live it out.

My relationship with these two women is changing. Soon, I will move to another country. But I'm confident that they have the tools to continue on this journey to a deeper relationship with Jesus. 

## ONE THOUSAND ORPHANS TELL

# GOD'S STORY



### MARLENE LEFEVER

is Vice President of Educational Development for David C. Cook Global Mission. She developed the orality unit mentioned in this article.

For a free copy and to receive updates on this orphan initiative, email her at [marlene.lefever@davidccook.org](mailto:marlene.lefever@davidccook.org).

“By the end of the month, you’ll be able to do something most pastors can’t do!” The auntie smiled at her club of forty orphans meeting outside a home in the foothills of the Himalayas. They were meeting three times a week for what the children called their “Jesus Fun Club.”

“You’ll be able to tell the whole big, exciting, amazing story of the Bible!”

This woman—and dozens of Christian workers like her—spent the month of December 2011 in India, showing children that the Bible is not a book of unrelated stories. Instead, it’s one beautiful story of a Heavenly Father’s love. During that Christmas month, over one thousand orphans in dozens of India’s eighteen thousand Christian orphanages learned that their Heavenly Father moved heaven and earth to prove his love for them.

The twelve lessons, given three a week for four weeks, followed a familiar pattern to people involved in the orality movement.

First, the auntie (a respectful title for the club leader) would tell or read the story. The big redemption story is part of David C. Cook’s Global Mission club project for orphans and other children at risk. The story began with the Creation, followed by the Fall, life outside the Garden, the great flood, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and David, and the parts they played in the redemption story. Then Jesus, our Redeemer, came. He lived, died, and rose again for us. Finally, the children learned the great, glorious end of the story: they would have a real home with their Father God forever.

After each day’s portion of the story, the children divided into pairs and told the story to each other. “You forgot the part about God’s promise to Noah,” Afreen grinned as she corrected her partner. “I think the rainbow is the prettiest part!”

At this point, the children had heard or told the story portion three times. Next, they discussed it. They were encouraged to think more deeply than simply giving fill-in-the-blank answers. In the segment about Noah, they answered these questions:

- People died in this story. How do you know that God wanted to save the other people, too?
- The Bible tells us that God shut the door. Why is that important to the story?
- What did you learn about God from this story?

Each child had a personal story that brought him or her to the orphanage. Those stories were filled with pain and danger.

One child’s father hung his mother.

One girl’s mother had leprosy, and although the girl was healthy, she will always be

GOD'S PEOPLE EFFECTIVELY MOBILIZED IN MISSION



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**by all means** x  
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viewed in her society as untouchable. She will only marry if she marries another healthy child of a leper.

Another child was HIV-positive, although he didn't know it yet. His father was dead, and his mother dying.

A young teen was left by her mother with the promise that in a week she would return to the orphanage to bring her home. That was seven years ago.

Their own stories made God's special story of love precious to them. They learned the Bible's promise that no matter how hard things are, these children will always have a Father God. They are not alone. "I used to want to kill my father because he killed my mother," Preetham admitted. "Now, the big Bible story showed me that God forgave me. I won't kill my father when I grow up. Instead I'll find him, and tell him that God forgives him, and I do, too."

After the children heard the story and discussed it, they read the story in their Action Bibles, a comic-book-style Bible that covers most of the stories in scripture. Using The Action Bible breaks with a strict orality pattern. Because most of these children will have a better future if they can master English, The Action Bible was used to help them learn the language. Their eyes moved back and forth from the words to the pictures, confirming what they heard and read, and enlarging their vocabulary.

The auntie was almost finished with the day's part of the big Bible story. "I want you to tell today's story to one other person before we meet again. It can be someone who is in this club, or it can be someone who isn't here. Tell it over and over so you'll never forget what your real Father has done for all his children."

Ayesha came up to the auntie after the club ended. "I can tell the whole story perfectly," she announced. "All the parts we've learned so far! Want to hear me?" Auntie knew she would miss her bus and have to wait an hour to catch the next one. She smiled and sat down. "I'd love to, Ayesha." As Ayesha started to tell the most wonderful story ever told, the other children settled down close to the auntie and listened one more time. MF

# IMPORTANT POINTS TO REMEMBER WHEN Storytelling



J.O. TERRY

Appointed to the Philippines as media missionary in 1968 Terry initially served as radio program producer, and later as media consultant for the Asia-Pacific Region Baptist missions. In late 1987 he was introduced to Chronological Bible Teaching and the following year began studying the developing Chronological Bible Storying while learning to tell and teach the Bible stories to mostly nonliterate village peoples in South and Southeast Asia. Until leaving for retirement in 2003 Terry taught hundreds of Bible Storying sessions and taught Bible Storying methodology in Asian, African and Latin American countries. Currently Terry publishes a Bible Storying Newsletter and has written several books on the methodology.

**A**s a Bible storying trainer, I approach the subject of mistakes carefully. For missionaries, mistakes can lead to broken relationships, misunderstanding, and error in teaching. At the Asian Rural Life Foundation training center in the Philippines, the motto is: “We want to be the first to fail in order to learn, so you will not need to fail.” Failure for Bible storyers often results from falling into various traps that the missionary and non-missionary worker will want to avoid if at all possible. Below are some of the lessons I and others have learned over the years.

- 1. Your interpretation of a story or expositional teaching from the Bible story is not as important or powerful as the story itself.** This does not mean that neither interpretation nor exposition should be used. With pastors whom I have trained, I have provided scripture-based interpretations (letting scripture interpret scripture) and exposition as they were able to handle. But for the average listener, I have learned to trust the stories and to let the discovery activities be sufficient.
- 2. Knowledge of local cultural and spiritual worldviews is vital. Fortunately, none of my gaffes were serious enough to break relationships.** But I soon found that certain stories which were sensitive to worldviews really caught the attention of the listeners. This was how the story sets for women began to succeed. During my early days of storying, I learned that stories that worked well in the animistic cultural Christian worldview of the Philippines did not work as well with those of other Asian religions. Again, when local worldviews were taken into consideration, the stories began having greater impact. When I taught many stories, I noted that trainees selected certain stories for their use as these related intuitively to their people’s worldview.
- 3. Test stories or items in stories that may hinder a receptive hearing.** Some stories need to be contextualized or adapted in order to prevent initial rejection of the stories because of social or cultural taboos. This is because the listeners either did not understand first century culture or who Jesus was. Over the years, I have learned to carefully listen to what the oral learners did to stories when they retold them. This allowed me to see what they kept or changed in telling the story.
- 4. Adequately prepare listeners for stories.** For example, with the story of the prodigal son, the storyteller may get a response he or she did not expect: the father is the culprit in the story because he gave everything to his two sons. The older son is now head of the household; therefore, the father should have consulted the older son before welcoming the younger son back into the family. Another example is the story of Esau and Jacob. In a listener’s culture, the second twin born is evil and should not live. Yet God blesses the “evil” twin over the firstborn.

5. **Simplify stories.** Since I had to work mostly through interpreters, I learned to simplify stories and be very careful about using names instead of pronouns in stories, especially those found in the four Gospels, which contain a good amount of dialogue. This way, my interpreters could correctly follow who said what to whom.
6. **Be patient.** I learned to not assume anything, and to be very patient as even my interpreters sorted out story details. On one occasion, I was a bit exasperated because my interpreter kept asking for scripture references in order to see what his Bible said. When I challenged him to mark his Bible with passages we frequently used, he informed me that his people did not mark in holy books! I taught from a well-annotated chain reference Bible, but realized that, at times, I needed to have a clean copy in case someone wanted to see my Bible. I also had to learn patience if an interpreter wanted

As the number of stories continues, there usually comes a tipping point, during which the stories begin to make sense and the larger picture begins to emerge. Never force discussion of the stories before the listeners are ready to talk.

to back up and correct an earlier mistake they made. This usually happened the first several times I worked with a new interpreter

7. **Oral learners are people just like us.** In the early days of Bible storying, I believed what had been shared with me about oral learners: that they had a marvelous capacity to hear something once and remember it forever. I soon learned that was not true and had to learn the patience of retelling and repeating as often as needed, first to get the original understanding, then to correct or refresh stories that had drifted culturally, or were simply fading from lack of being exercised by telling often.

**8. Oral learners have a very practical memory system.** They learn best what they consider to be practical information that either explains gaps

in their knowledge or that is directly related to their everyday lives. While oral-learner pastors may ask theological questions, the average listener will be more concerned about matters relevant to his or her daily life. In most cases, then, the post-story discussion needs to be simple and not too heavily laden with facts since oral learners have to remember the facts as lists—a difficult task. Oral learners can tire easily if discussions are overly detailed and long.

9. **It takes time before understanding is reached.** Among some listeners, discussion is initially difficult because listeners have not yet heard enough stories to begin to see the connection and direction of the stories. As the number of stories continues, there usually comes a tipping point, during which the stories begin to make sense and the larger picture begins to emerge. Never force discussion of the stories before the listeners are ready to talk.
10. **Tell Bible stories to the larger group if possible.** If an individual is led to make a decision alone without the consent of his or her community, there is often hostility. Gather the larger community if possible to hear the stories as a group—this way they can be led as a group to the same invitation. That said, it is not uncommon for individuals to be present at Bible storying sessions and respond to the stories and then take the stories back to their people, or be the gateway to invite the Bible storyer to come and share the stories.



**11. Never go it alone in planning, selecting, and preparing stories for telling without bathing each step in prayer for wisdom, guidance, and patience.**

Here are two more points to consider:

- In many places, true stories may only be told at a certain time and in a certain place. Several apocryphal stories have circulated about how missionaries have attempted to tell their stories without regard to knowing where sacred or true stories were to be told.
- Some younger Bible storyers whom I have trained have had difficulty getting their elders to listen. They were viewed as too young to teach their elders. We often got around this by giving the young storyers a set of teaching pictures that gave them credibility and a status that set them up as worthy to



One day, after being away for some time, I discovered that he had taught his wife and children to tell the Bible stories; the family then told their neighbors and planted a church.

tell and teach their elders. On the other hand I also learned that giving pictures to all those being trained was expensive and limited the scope of the training due to the need to import large numbers of picture sets. My using pictures conveyed the message that the trainees needed to use pictures as well. On more than one occasion a former trainee reported that he had not told any stories since training because he did not have any pictures.

I'll end with a personal account. For several years, a Tamil driver took me to the places where we were teaching the Bible stories. The driver was literate but had no formal theological training. One day, after being away for some time, I discovered that he had taught his wife and children to tell the Bible stories; the family then told their neighbors and planted a church.

After an absence of ten years I met him again. He was now pastoring a church that met in his home and still telling the Bible stories in his preaching and outreach. If I had it to do over, I would spend even more time training pastors and others who were willing to learn the stories, who lived among the people, and who caught the vision to tell the stories of Jesus until he returns. MF

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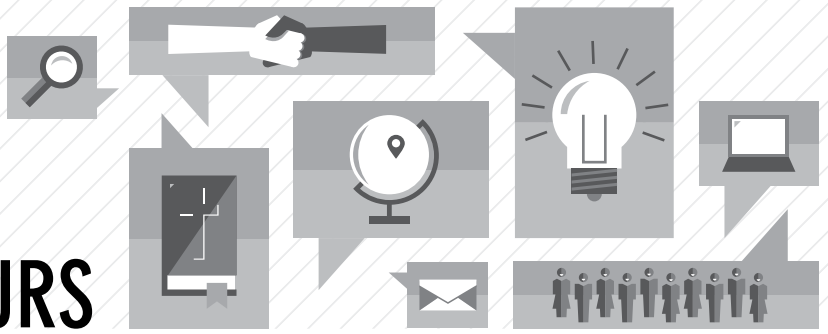
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# MINUTES AND HOURS

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

In the previous issue, I discussed the concept of finding God-prepared people. Because they are so out of the norm from what we normally encounter, I sometimes call them abnormal people: they are prepared by God to respond abnormally quickly and fervently as well as to have abnormal impact in their communities. Much of Church-Planting Movement (CPM) focused ministry is spent in bearing witness to many people in order to find these force-multipliers. They might be one out of ten or one out of a hundred in your culture. Because their responses are so out of the norm from the majority of our witnessing encounters, we often miss them. The differences I see in ministries that experience multiplication often and those that do not is how the evangelist disciples the abnormal person in the first few minutes or hours. Those that adapt their follow-up discipleship to expect abnormal results in the first few hours rather than waiting days or weeks often experience kernels of kingdom explosion.

- The person of peace wins a whole family or web of relationships to Christ within hours or days.
- These disciples repent of sinful

lifestyles, often with miraculous deliverance from strongholds.

- They walk through the waters of baptism with radical abandonment to Jesus.
- They bear witness to their community, stand firm under trial and become a beautiful example of an Acts 2-like church – all within days and weeks.

## THE FIRST FEW MINUTES AND HOURS DETERMINE THE DIFFERENCE.

This process is not without backward steps and failures. The enemy is at work to quench the flame of the Spirit unleashed in them. Some of these new disciples fall back into old patterns before emerging into long-term victory. Some fall away completely. Uncomfortable situations co-exist for a while (e.g. the man and woman that live together come to faith and begin planning their Christian wedding). Yet with all the warts, this norm-defying group of people in love with Jesus and each other, through zealous obedience to the Word, grow by leaps and bounds, transforming their community. Their faith reminds us of our first love.

My colleague, Jeff Sundell, calls the initial group of people who come to

faith a “house of peace” much like the New Testament calls the abnormal person a “person of peace” (Luke 10:6). This is a community of people peaceful toward the kingdom who respond in abnormal ways. How does a whole group of people come to faith together so radically?

## HOUSES OF PEACE

When Jesus sent out the Twelve on their first mission (Matthew 10, Luke 9) and sent out the Seventy on their mission (Luke 10), what did he expect them to find—an individual alone or a community that would respond to the kingdom of God?

Whatever house [or household] you enter, first say, ‘Peace be to this house!’ And if a son [man] of peace is there, your peace will rest upon him. But if not, it will return to you. And remain in the same house, eating and drinking what they provide, for the laborer deserves his wages. Do not go from house to house. (Luke 10:5-7 ESV)

Understanding the person of peace concept is a critical first step in following the leading of the Spirit to enter new communities for the kingdom. They are the pathways the Spirit has set up for the kingdom to flow through. However, the person of peace (abnormal person) is just the gateway into a web of relationships. It is easy to miss the web of relationships out of sheer excitement of seeing the initial person respond.

In the passage above Jesus made it clear that the goal was to escort a whole household (not just one

person) into the kingdom of God. In the gospels and Acts, numerous examples emerge of whole networks of relationships coming to faith. Often our value of individualism blinds us to this kingdom potential. We fail to move from discipling an individual to winning and discipling a group. For kingdom movements, we must re-introduce biblical patterns into the first few minutes and hours after the salvation of a person of peace.

How did Jesus and the early disciples transition the kingdom from a person of peace to a house of peace? Read these examples and ponder how the whole group came to faith:

1. Levi and his friends: Luke 5:27-32, Mark 2:14-17
2. The Samaritan woman and the town of Sychar: John 4:7-42
3. Zaccheus and his friends: Luke 19:1-10
4. The Gadarene (Gerasene) demoniac and the Ten Cities (Decapolis): Mark 5:1-20; 7:31; (Matt. 15:29-31 explains what happened when Jesus returned to the Decapolis in Mark 7:31)
5. Lazarus, his household and community: John 11:1-46, 12:9-11
6. Cornelius and his household: Acts 10:1-11:18
7. Lydia and her household: Acts 16:14-15, 40
8. The Philippian jailer and his household: Acts 16:23-34
9. The first believers and leaders in Corinth: Acts 18:4-11; 1 Cor. 1:14-17, 16:15-18

Who initiated the salvation of the household, town or group of friends?

- At times the evangelist witnessed to the whole group at once (rather than one individual) and led them to faith (e.g. Cornelius).

- At times the evangelist trained the newly-saved person of peace to go home to win his household to faith (e.g. the Gadarene demoniac).
- Sometimes the evangelist accompanied the person of peace to win the household together (e.g. the Philippian jailer).

Consistent in the thoughts of the evangelist was the winning of a whole network of family and friends through

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...Jesus made it clear that the goal was to escort a whole household (not just one person) into the kingdom of God. In the gospels and Acts, numerous examples emerge of whole networks of relationships coming to faith.

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the initial responder. The salvation of this group of people occurred concurrently with or within minutes, hours or days of the salvation of the person of peace.

### WHEN WERE THEY BAPTIZED?

Remarkably quickly, often together! The evangelists sought to secure their initial devotion and commitment to Christ with immediate baptism (e.g. Peter commanding Cornelius' group to be baptized immediately – Acts 10:47-48). In the case of the Philippian jailer and his family, this appears to have been in the wee

hours of the morning (Acts 16:33 “at once”), so urgent was this step. In fact, other than Saul of Tarsus fasting and waiting three days after his conversion for his baptism (Acts 9:9ff), we are hard-pressed to find any examples in Acts where new converts were not baptized the day of their salvation. That was because baptism was a sign that these disciples were sure, not that they were mature in following the King.

So effective were these patterns set that these houses of peace often became the leaders of the churches and ministries established through them (e.g. Stephanas' household 1 Cor. 16:15).

### COACHING ABNORMAL PEOPLE TOWARD A MOVEMENT

Within minutes or hours, when critical patterns and expectations are set, the evangelists began to set the DNA for a movement. In various ways they accepted, encouraged or coached the person of peace to reach his web of relationships.

Beyond encouraging their firm commitment to Christ, what were the frequent elements of this coaching?

- Help them look outward and be responsible for their household: In many of the examples, the evangelist implicitly or explicitly encouraged the abnormal person to gain a vision for reaching his family, friends and community. Rather than the evangelist taking responsibility for their salvation, he put the onus on the new disciple to be the fisher of men. Even the angel who came to Cornelius prior to his salvation gave him a vision to gather his whole household for the message they would receive (Acts 11:14).
- Coach them on what to do: The evangelists did not assume the

new believer would know how to bear witness but rather coached them on what to do and say. Sometimes they accompanied the new believer and shared the gospel themselves. Sometimes they sent the new believer back to bear witness. Sometimes both. A clear example is the account of the Gadarene demoniac:

“And [Jesus]...said to him, “Go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you.” 20 And he went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him, and everyone marveled.” (Mark 5:19-20)

Jesus gave him a clear target and a clear way to begin to bear witness – one that was simple enough for this hours-old disciple.

## LESSONS OF MINUTES AND HOURS: FOLLOW AND FISH

If we will emulate the expectations of the New Testament movements, we must look at our watches rather than our calendars when a person shows interest in the gospel or gives his life to Christ. Within minutes or hours, we should disciple in the twin expectations that Jesus gave his first disciples – follow and fish (Mark 1:17). CPMs around the world are injecting this discipleship DNA in various ways but follow a similar pattern:

- **FOLLOW:** Baptize and prepare them for persecution (counting the cost). Like the evangelists above, we must begin with encouraging their white-hot devotion to Christ. This comes through helping them count the cost rather than avoiding the hard discussions. New disciples of Jesus can grasp the persecution that may come but

out of love for him will joyfully accept it. We must help them see that the King is worth it. The New Testament avenue of helping them become a fervent follower is to do this through immediate baptism. How long do new believers in your context wait before they can demonstrate this sign that they are sure about following Jesus?

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Within minutes or hours, we should disciple in the twin expectations that Jesus gave his first disciples--follow and fish. (Mark 1:17)

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- **FISH:** Encourage the new believer to bear witness or the interested person to gather his family and friends to hear the gospel. Coaching to witness should incorporate three simple elements:

**WHY** - Give them vision to look outward (“you and household”)

**WHOM** – Help them identify family and friends who need to hear this message.

**HOW** – Give them a simple way to start in the first few minutes – their story of what God just did for them (testimony). Like the Gadarene demoniac, encourage them just to tell the story and as the days go by you can help them develop a more comprehensive gospel presentation.

Below is a case study in which the missionary has implemented these principles with explosive results.

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## “G” PEOPLE CASE STUDY

/NATHAN SHANK

For the last twelve years, my growing team and I have been targeting the 25 to 30 million “G” people groups who are spread out across 2000 kilometers. In my family, I am a first generation Christian. Though I work cross-culturally, I am fluent in the trade language of the people groups. I’ve worked hard to research the local culture and religions and have led out in contextualization, but with much criticism for my approaches. This won’t stop me because I long for the Lord’s return and want to equip every new believer to join us as ministers of reconciliation.

Our multi-cultural polytheistic people groups have never heard of Jesus and our team is the first to engage most of these fields. A strong economy has led to broad trade, exposure to various philosophies and secular motives in densely-populated urban areas. Financial incentives mean that religious traditions are fiercely guarded.

Persecution has followed kingdom breakthroughs as new disciples abandon temples. We’ve also been persecuted by members of our home religious culture as we have departed from Christian traditions we deemed unbiblical.

Most of our ministry partners have been new believers inside the culture who have become fruitful laborers. Other than a few core teammates, we have not spent time mobilizing outside resources. Explosive sustained growth has come through on-the-job training for new local leaders raised up from the harvest.

## Strategy

We've employed a very simple strategy based on Jesus' instructions:

1. Find and win believers through Holy Spirit direction.
2. Disciple converts to immediately reach their family and friends.
3. Immediately baptize them as a foundation of obedience.
4. Gather churches in homes.
5. Instruct and hold leaders accountable before persecution forces us to move on.
6. Entrust the believers to the Holy Spirit and the Word. Return when possible, correspond often, and watch for obedience.

Amazingly, miracles are frequent. Encounters with pagan deities have led to breakthroughs in which several religious and political leaders have come to Christ. Normally households are our target. This aids church formation as families believe and are baptized. New leaders often emerge naturally within family structures. Because persecution limits how long we can stay in one locale, we have developed a common discipleship pattern implemented in all churches. This has streamlined reproduction by new believers who can pass on this discipleship anywhere.

## Results

Six provincial movements of reproducing churches have resulted in a broad evangelization of local populations. Personal ministry responsibility among the thousands of new believers and our refusal to hold authority over churches has been a key for rapid maturity. The strong leadership base of trainers in each region means that engagement in these fields is sustainable.

## Difficulties

1. False teaching has infiltrated some networks of churches. We have chosen to confront these traditions directly with truth from Scripture, often expelling false teachers.
2. Frankly some churches have major problems. False gospels, unscriptural eschatology and abuse of spiritual gifts have affected multiple churches. We've also discovered legalism, abuse

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Amazingly, miracles are frequent.

Encounters with pagan deities have led to breakthroughs in which several religious and political leaders have come to Christ. Normally households are our target.

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of the Lord's Supper, immorality and factions among leadership.

3. The New Testament is not yet available resulting in dependence on oral methods for teaching about Christ. Literacy is estimated below 25%.
4. Long-term discipleship by our team is difficult due to distances. Though we revisit some churches, most of the second and third generation churches do not fit into our calendar. Therefore we write churches frequently

on various topics: our basic discipleship package, God's power, biblical theology, holy lifestyle and love for God's word. We also instruct believers concerning non-negotiables: salvation by faith, deity of Jesus, etc.

## Conclusion


Despite these shortcomings, the six kingdom movements move forward in an exponential manner. Everything needed for sustained growth and health is present. After twelve years of service in these fields I feel the Lord saying there is no room left for my pioneering work and that it is time for me to move on.

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## YOUR FIRST MINUTES AND HOURS

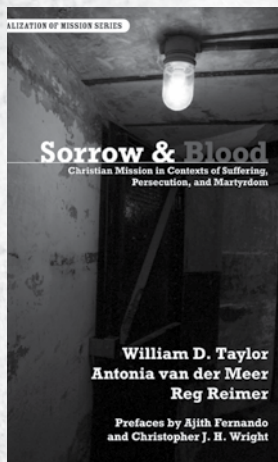
As you read this case study, what were your initial responses both positive and negative? Did the missionary seem reckless or on the right path? Could this missionary have been Paul the Apostle working among the "G"entile people groups? Read it again.

A fresh read of New Testament patterns may shake us into a new awareness of kingdom ways.

If the lifestyle of new believers were set on course by the DNA you help them establish in the first few minutes or hours, what would their lives look like? Could a movement result? In your initial discipleship, is a new believer empowered to act in minutes and hours or encouraged to wait weeks, months or years to follow radically and gather his community to do the same? Are you willing to take the risk, along with its messiness, of unleashing the Spirit of God in the life of this abnormally-prepared person and community? 

# Sorrow & Blood

Interview with Bill Taylor



MF STAFF

## BILL, WHAT IS THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS BOOK?

First, nowhere else will you find a “resource anthology” that is truly global, with 68 voices from 22 nations, women and men who represent the essence of what we call in the WEA MC, the “reflective practitioners” of our world. Each writer speaks from deep experience and passion, bringing a unique depth and breadth to this international feast for the mind and heart.

Secondly, it’s the way the book is structured, a formidable yet enticing buffet to challenge, nourish and grow the soul. The bracing appetizer builds the foundation with a global survey, tackling the issue of definitions (especially persecution and martyrdom), working through the demographics of martyrdom. Then the first main dish displays a panoply of biblical and theological themes, surveying Scripture, addressing the seductive prosperity gospel heresy. The third set of main plates addresses issues related to preparation before, support during and healing-reconciliation after the hard times of persecution. This section releases voices (again North and South) from the local church, the mission agency, the strategists, the stories of families and missionary kids whose parents were martyred, the guidelines for crisis management and prevention, the ministry of the shepherds and member care providers. The last course gives two shorter sections: final themes (primarily prayer) and bibliographic-Internet resources.

## WHAT’S THE BACKGROUND OF THIS LONG-TERM PROJECT?

This book was conceived at the Iguassu missiological consultation convened by the WEA Mission Commission in late 1999. At that event the participants challenged the MC leadership to research and write a serious work on suffering, persecution and martyrdom. From gestation to birth, took 13 years.



*Pieta*. Emmanuel Garibay.

Filipino artist Emmanuel Garibay writes, “*Pieta* is an image of a woman with a picture of a loved one (son or husband) who is missing and presumed killed. When people disappear due to political or religious repression, it leaves their loved ones with deep pain and anguish, uncertain of the fate of the victim, clinging on to faint hopes that they are still alive. I used the title *Pieta* to associate it with the famous sculpture by Michelangelo, to suggest a contextual and contemporary version of the death of Jesus and the suffering it brought to his mother.” Used with permission.

## HOW DID YOU SELECT YOUR EDITORIAL TEAM AND YOUR WRITERS?

The challenge was to discover and select the writers. We poured over a global list of women and men who had something to say and were competent writers. We needed voices from around the world; we needed the theologians and the church historians; we needed the very personal stories of those who had suffered; we needed stories and more stories (thank you, Miriam Adeney!) that would salt down the book and make it more readable. We needed writers who would represent the spectrum of voices: from the local church to the mission agency, from the seminaries and missionary training schools to the member care providers, from the researchers and theologians to the grass-roots servants.

We needed writers with passion and clear heads, people who wrote from tested reality with something to say. It's at least a lower-level miracle that not a single writer whom we invited turned us down. For many of them English was a second (perhaps a third) language, and that meant careful editorial work. I am deeply grateful for our copy editor, Koe Pahlka, who has helped us with other MC publications.

## WHY DID YOU DEDICATE THE BOOK TO THE "UNKNOWN ONES"?

I just love this question! The book is dedicated "To the 'unknown ones' who because of their witness for Christ have suffered, been persecuted and even martyred. Unknown to the broader world, they are known to their families and friends; and their names are written in God's book. They are fully known and cherished by the loving Father, the suffering servant Jesus, and the comforting Holy Spirit." This came to me in Cape Town, 2010, as we listened to a young North Korean school-girl's story of suffering, and that of an American widow, whose husband had that year been martyred in Afghanistan. They represented the "known" ones, and the Spirit embedded in me the idea of the "unknown ones."

## HOW DID YOU DEFINE SOME OF THE KEY TERMS?

We left some of the tensions and differences in place, because even amongst Christian writers there is not unanimity. Here are two key ones:

- Persecution: "Any unjust action with different levels of hostility committed primarily based on religious convictions, directed at Christians, limiting their freedom to practice and propagate their faith."
- Martyrdom: "The death of a Christian believer who loses his or her life prematurely in contexts of witness because of human hostility."

In what ways is persecution becoming an issue in the Global North, particularly Europe and North America?

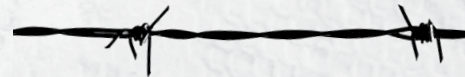
This is a challenging question, because

of the misguided thinking that persecution takes place only where it is obvious, i.e. countries where the political, economic, legal, educational, media, religious, cultural, spiritual and familial forces (the nine forces) mitigate against the gospel.



'We learn to forgive,  
because we must. But  
we never forget, for if  
we forget, then this will  
happen again.

We forgive, but we  
never forget.



*Beloved.* Genocide site, Ntarama, Rwanda. Adella Thompson. All Rights Reserved © Adella Thompson (adella@mac.com)

Photographer Adella Thompson writes, "Many genocide sites in Rwanda are left intact, with skeletal remains unburied in testimony to the horrors of the 1994 genocide. In this Catholic Church where over 5,000 were killed, someone—I presumed a loved one—took the time to wrap his or her beloved's head with a head scarf. When asked how he was able to cope with the death of more than twenty family members, one person told me: 'We learn to forgive, because we must. But we never forget, for if we forget, then this will happen again. We forgive, but we never forget.'"



Chinese Christian just after arrest. *Connections* vol. 7, no. 1 & 2 (July 2008), cover.

However, we in the West have clearly witnessed in the last 20 years a change in the opposition climate to orthodox Christianity. Europe leads here. In some ways the continent is about ten years “ahead” of the USA, and Canada perhaps five. That is, the political, religious, legal, popular culture, educational system and media forces are increasingly lining up against true Christianity.

### WHAT OTHER RESOURCES DO YOU USE THAT REPORT ON THE PERSECUTION OF CHRISTIANS?

Today I Googled “persecution of Christians” and got 18,200,000 hits; “religious liberty” and got 29,400,000 hits. These are “in-topics” and realities on the ground and around the world. Even as I write this line, we pray intensely for our sisters and brothers in Egypt, Syria, Nigeria and Iran. “How long, oh Lord?”

In 2011 the Pew Forum released a massive report on religious liberty around the world, [www.pewforum.org/2011/08/09/rising-restrictions-on-religion2/](http://www.pewforum.org/2011/08/09/rising-restrictions-on-religion2/). But the reality is that 75% of the restrictions are directed against Christians. This is primarily the case in countries where Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism exercise inordinate power.

Sorrow and Blood presents an excellent listing of Internet resources. Here are some of the prime sites I use to study and speak and write on these themes:

- [www.worldevangelicals.org/commissions/rlc/](http://www.worldevangelicals.org/commissions/rlc/)
- [www.worldwatchlist.us/?utm\\_source=opendoorsusa.org&utm\\_medium=referral&utm\\_campaign=\(none\)](http://www.worldwatchlist.us/?utm_source=opendoorsusa.org&utm_medium=referral&utm_campaign=(none))
- [www.uscirf.gov/images/2013%20USCIRF%20](http://www.uscirf.gov/images/2013%20USCIRF%20)

Annual%20Report(1).pdf

- [www.globalreligiousfutures.org](http://www.globalreligiousfutures.org)
- [www.persecution.net](http://www.persecution.net)

### IN WHAT WAYS DOES THIS BOOK APPLY TO THE LOCAL CHURCH, TO THE BIBLE COLLEGES AND SEMINARIES, AND TO THE MISSION AGENCIES?

The book is a natural text for contemporary mission courses in Christian colleges, seminaries and missionary training schools. One chapter reports on the survey of missionary training centers to determine where persecution themes were included (or not) in the curriculum. We were distressed to find how absent they were in the North, even more surprised to see their absence in some South countries, but grateful to see them particularly in/for Islamic, Hindu, Buddhist contexts.

As I speak on this topic around the world, I ask believers how many sermons they have heard on persecution from their pastor. The responses are predictable, at times, and surprising in others. It is largely absent from pulpits of the North. Why is it not part of our core training curricula? How are mission agencies equipping their constituency and their future missionaries to face suffering and persecution?

### HOW DOES A PERSON READ SUCH AN EXTENSIVE RESOURCE ANTHOLOGY?

Well, don't be turned off by the size, because the book is truly very readable. It does not have to be read from front to back, but rather selectively. Ask the Spirit to guide you as you survey the table of contents. Read the Foreword (to be read), and the introductions to each of the major sections. Mediate on the art in the center of the book. It is not a novel, so read slowly, even devotionally. Select the chapters that catch your attention. Go to others that will stretch you. Engage with the many stories that breath flesh and blood.

### WE HEAR YOU HAVE AN IDEA FOR YOUR OWN BOOK ON THESE THEMES. WHAT CAN YOU TELL US AT THIS POINT?

This question has a singular background for me personally. The fact is that more writers than I expected sent in their chapters (thanks to extended deadlines). The book was getting too long, and something had to be sacrificed. The sacrificial lamb was my major article, and it pained me to spike it. It had been my summary of what I teach in a 25-hour seminary class, and I was eager to include it. But it had to go. Then a friend suggested that I turn that chapter

into a more accessible (popular but not lite) treatment of the themes of suffering, persecution and martyrdom. And that gradually morphed into a project tentatively called Persecution: Global Reality Coming to your Neighborhood



A secret Uzbek Christ worshipping community. *Connections* vol. 7, no. 1 & 2 (July 2008), 37.

Soon. In late 2012 my wife, Yvonne, and I were on sabbatical in Israel. There the Spirit guided my thoughts to “track with Jesus” and his teaching on persecution.

During our season in the Galilee a major download came after multiple readings of Matthew’s Gospel. I was moved to read how Jesus almost front-loads (you can never accuse him of a “bait and switch” tactic) his teaching on what it means to follow him fully. I was stunned anew as I read the Beatitudes, Matthew 10 and 24, and so many other passages from this perspective. One afternoon, seated on the Mount of the Beatitudes I sensed my mind and heart surging with words and sentences. I could almost see them running down my arm as I rapidly wrote what would become the introduction of the book, and later the epilogue. The book structure came in a second similar experience while sitting in the garden of Christ Church in the Old City of Jerusalem.

So that’s the dream in my heart, to produce something that will be accessible and that will challenge serious believers in Jesus. It will be addressed first to the Global North, and then we will see how to adapt it to other regions.

### IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE YOU MIGHT WANT TO LEAVE MF READERS WITH?

It has been a privilege to serve our Lord over nearly 50 years of mission ministry. I thought I would live and die in Latin America as a life-long missionary in my beloved Spanish language and continent. I did “die” when God invited me to move to the US. I taught two years at Trinity


Evangelical Divinity, TEDS, and then God opened the door to the WEA Mission Commission. Never in my wildest imagination did I conceive that I would have the honor to witness the full globalization of mission, to journey alongside my colleagues in Asia, Africa, Latin America, the Middle East, the Caribbean, the South Pacific, Europe and North America, as the moving Spirit of God led the Church of Christ in mission from everywhere to everywhere. Sure, a gargantuan task awaits us, but my honor has been to witness this remarkable advance of the kingdom of God in Christ.

We are convinced that present and future cross-cultural servants will profit deeply from this resource anthology. We are encouraged that the Portuguese version is in final stages of production, the Korean one has started, and that the book is now available in an electronic “Kindle” format. To order: <https://www.missionbooks.org/products/detail/sorrow-blood>

A final personal word. In *Foxes Book of Martyrs* I read of Rowland Taylor. Just three years ago I discovered that he is my direct ancestor; martyrs blood runs through my family. All of a sudden, the topic hit home personally. I am a direct descendent of Rev. Dr. Rowland Taylor, Anglican rector of a country church, born in 1510, died 1555. A graduate of Cambridge University, he had served as chaplain to Thomas Cranmer. He was married to Margaret, William Tyndale’s niece (yes, the Bible translator). Imprisoned several times for his Reformed faith, he was burned at the stake in Hadleigh, Suffolk, England, thanks to Queen Mary, whose hands were stained with so much innocent blood.

“He found the prisons to be quite a fruitful ground for the gospel. Queen Mary put so many believers in Christ in prison that ‘... almost all the prisons in England were become the right Christian Schools and churches, prisons turned into churches and churches into dens of thieves.’” John Foxe writing about Rowland Taylor’s experiences in prison in Suffolk, England”. (Accessed on August 20, 2013). [rowlandtaylor.wordpress.com/2006/11/19/the-legacy-of-rowland-taylor/](http://rowlandtaylor.wordpress.com/2006/11/19/the-legacy-of-rowland-taylor/)

In other words, I stand in the historical stream of his spiritual legacy, as do my children, and my grandchildren.

Suffering because of Christ is a global growth industry, and will only intensify as we sense the birth pangs of an “ending season” of world history, and as we enter another historical paroxysm against the Christian faith and its devoted followers. May we be found prepared, rooted and faithful. “In this world you will have tribulation. But be of good cheer, for I have overcome the world!” 

# RECRUITS OR DEPENDENTS?



GLENN SCHWARTZ

/ Glenn Schwartz is Executive Director Emeritus of World Mission Associates. He continues to have an international ministry encouraging the discovery and mobilization of local resources for the Kingdom of God. His book *When Charity Destroys Dignity: Overcoming Unhealthy Dependency in the Christian Movement* can be ordered on the website of World Mission Associates at [www.wmausa.org](http://www.wmausa.org)

Over the years I have written and spoken quite a lot about discovering and using local resources for the furtherance of God's kingdom. My heart's desire is to see the church around the world become deeply rooted in the society of which it is a part and then draw resources from that society for both its own existence and for outreach. Why is this so important?

When I began thinking about this, two different pictures of the Church and how it spreads came to mind. One picture is the church which sends out emissaries or evangelists who tell the world who Jesus is and what a commitment to Him will mean for them and others. In reality, those emissaries and evangelists are seeking to recruit others who will help to get this message to the whole world. When the gospel is properly presented, it is for the purpose of seeking recruits for God's army that is spreading out across the world in search of more recruits. When done appropriately the new recruits help to take the message further – giving themselves and their resources to help promote the gospel.

Consider the second picture of what sometimes happens. Let's say that this army going out to spread the message does not

gather recruits, but rather people who become dependent on those carrying the message. This means that some of the resources the emissaries need for furtherance of the gospel are shared with the people they are trying to recruit. As they try to move on, their progress is hindered, rather than being helped. Instead of getting new resources to help in the cause, the people in this army are being drained of resources, slowing their progress toward world evangelization. Sometimes those in the army decide to settle down and live there for the rest of their lives or their ministry. They make a commitment to help needy communities engage in what is sometimes called the syndrome of church development rather than the dynamic of spiritual outreach.

So, there you have the two pictures of missionary activity. One gathers recruits to help further the cause, and the other gathers dependents who consume precious resources originally designated for world outreach.

There are other things that keep the Church from being the Church, but my purpose here is to show that the gospel could be preached in many more places if the simple shift were made from gathering dependents to raising recruits.

Obviously along the way the carriers of the gospel will meet people in need. A serious reading of the New Testament reveals that the Church is to assist those who are in need. The challenge is to discern whether people are facing absolute poverty, which demands immediate assistance, or relative poverty; which means that they most likely have something they could give. Time and again we see places where people—who appear to us to be in need—actually have something to contribute to the church, however small, such as a handful of rice from each meal, joyfully given to further God's kingdom.

I often use the example set before us in II Corinthians chapter 8 where the Apostle Paul tells about the believers in Macedonia pleading for the privilege of giving to those in need in Jerusalem. This was a generous act on the part of the Macedonians - who were living in severe trial and extreme poverty (verse 2), yet wanting to help the brothers and sisters in Jerusalem (verse 4). It is interesting to note that in the New Testament there is no record of "mother churches" sending funds to the "mission churches." In other words, the pattern in the New Testament is giving which goes from the mission churches to the mother church.


In a few places, the mother church sent support to missionaries like Barnabas and the Apostle Paul, even though Paul himself did not prefer that kind of support (I Cor 9:15). He chose to get his support from the new recruits or the labor of his own hands. Why was he so adamant about that? He was countering those who were preaching the gospel for personal gain, and he did not want the gospel to be tainted in this way.

In practical terms, what can be done in places where the church has become characterized by “dependents” rather than

“recruits?” First, it is necessary to find out whether the gospel is truly transforming the hearts of those who hear it. If there is only marginal commitment to Jesus Christ, we should not be surprised when adherents act like dependents rather than recruits. We should not expect people who do not have a personal relationship with the Lord to become enthusiastic supporters of his kingdom. So the whole gospel must first be preached, along with a call to serious commitment to God’s cause.

Second, if this transition to recruits is going to be successful, then

the challenge must be to join the world-wide spread of the gospel. The Church will need to stop hiding behind their inadequacy and discover that apart from the filling of the Holy Spirit, they will never become adequate. This means moving from the syndrome of church development to the dynamic of missionary outreach. When this is done appropriately, people will become “World” Christians, not just Christians in name only.

So, let us press on to disciple recruits not just gather dependents. 

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## TRANSFORMING WORLDVIEWS THROUGH THE BIBLICAL STORY


D. BRUCE GRAHAM

*...continued from page 9.*

But something new began to develop among my students when we started going through the whole biblical story. We approached it inductively, seeking to discover God’s message within each story. How were the stories connected? What was at the heart of the whole story? Their worldview and perspective began to change. They felt part of what we called the “Seed-Man Mission” (the term we used to describe the heart of the story from Gen 3:15). They were energized and felt part of something significant.

But knowing the story did not necessarily make them good storytellers. They had to practice telling the story. And they had to understand the people they wanted to reach in order to effectively communicate the biblical story. Rather than reading books about the people (usually written by outsiders), we encouraged the students to study the people inductively. They spent time in teashops and homes, discovering the concerns and interests of the local people. They took part in their celebrations and traditions, always asking God for insight and wisdom that would help them tell the biblical story most effectively.

This led to creative ways of communicating the story—song, drama, pictures or simply storytelling, are all common forms of expression among Indians. One student drew pictures of successive stories through the Bible, one page per story, and hung them on his living room wall. Another invited friends to his home for discussion weekly and eventually had religious leaders going through the whole biblical story. One woman spent months, even years, listening to the stories and concerns of the Muslim women among whom she worked. Eventually they began to open up to her, and she had biblical stories to share with them that captured their interest. They wanted to hear more.

So, let’s multiply storytellers who understand the whole story. Let’s help them internalize it for themselves inductively so this story becomes their story. Let’s encourage them to take the time to know the local people and their stories so they meaningfully connect that peoples’ story with God’s story. This will transform a people’s worldview. 

# FROM 16,800 TO 1

## JOSHUA PROJECT'S UNREACHED PEOPLE OF THE DAY

Research often stays on dusty bookshelves, rarely entering the minds and hearts of the masses. Joshua Project was started in 1995 to help the mission's community know which ethnic people groups have few if any Christians. Then, the Internet was in its infancy and mobile apps only existed in science-fiction movies. Joshua Project was initiated as part of the AD2000 and Beyond Movement, to provide insight to mission organizations, but God has used it to bring awareness of unreached peoples to the Christian community.


How do you help people comprehend the estimated 7,200 unreached people groups, let alone the world's approximately 16,800 total groups? Before people can comprehend what the research means, they must be exposed to it first. Joshua Project has succeeded in broadening exposure to unreached peoples, though this has been more from God's providence than from strategic planning.

In 2001, when Joshua Project first published the complete unreached people group list on a website, mission leaders and organizations were the audience. A website provided an inexpensive and quick way to make research available. Joshua Project was unsure who would be impacted, but God used it to influence a wide variety of Christians. The Internet and other later technologies enabled anyone who had access the ability to be exposed to the research. However, exposure does not equal inspiration.

Numbers and lists do not usually awaken hearts and minds and motivate people to act in deep ways. Thus, Joshua Project has never been content to simply fill minds with statistics and facts, but instead to expose

Christians to the realities of people groups who live without access to the gospel. Unreached People of the Day was started in 2008 with this goal in mind. The idea was that if Christians were confronted with just one unreached people group, their interest in learning more, praying and eventually acting could be sparked.

The Unreached People of the Day focuses on one people group each day and encourages concerted prayer. Initially, 366 unreached people groups, one for each day of the year, were randomly selected and simple profiles with a photo and map were created. Recently, a second set was developed to present a unique group for each day every two years. (Profiles for all people groups are available at [joshuaproject.net](http://joshuaproject.net))

The Unreached People of the Day widget, which now appears on thousands of websites, was the first tool used to deliver each day's group beyond the Joshua Project website. Today, the widget can also be displayed on a website in seven different languages. Also now more than 17,000 subscribe by e-mail in English, Spanish, Portuguese and Korean. Thousands of others use it through the iPhone and Android apps and social media. Unreached People of the Day has not only helped people go from 16,800 to one; it has united thousands world-wide daily in prayer for the unreached. 

## WAYS TO GET THE UNREACHED PEOPLE OF THE DAY



**Website:** [unreachedoftheday.org](http://unreachedoftheday.org)

**Web Widget:**  
[unreachedoftheday.org/widget](http://unreachedoftheday.org/widget)

*(Available in English, Spanish, Portuguese, French, German, Korean and Mandarin)*

**Email:**  
[unreachedoftheday.org/email](mailto:unreachedoftheday.org/email)  
*(Available in English, Spanish, Portuguese and Korean)*

**Mobile App:**  
Apple iOS—<http://goo.gl/5894ux>  
Android—<http://goo.gl/P4cUwf>  
(Google Play)  
<http://goo.gl/QOws5i> (Amazon)

**Calendar:**  
[unreachedoftheday.org/month](http://unreachedoftheday.org/month)

**RSS Feed:**  
[unreachedoftheday.org/rss](http://unreachedoftheday.org/rss)

**Bulletin Insert:**  
[unreachedoftheday.org/bulletin](http://unreachedoftheday.org/bulletin)

**Social Media:**  
[unreachedoftheday.org/social](http://unreachedoftheday.org/social)



## USE YOUR MOBILE DEVICE TO PRAY FOR THE UNREACHED OF THE DAY

Introducing the updated Unreached People of the Day mobile apps. Make a difference among unreached people groups by joining thousands praying for a given people group on the same day.

- Free iOS and Android mobile apps to help you pray for a different unreached people each day.
- Each people profile includes a photo, map, description and basic statistics.
- View the 366 people profiles by date, country or people name.
- Set a reminder to encourage you to pray.
- Share the app with friends via email, Facebook, Google+ or Twitter.
- Also available by email or a display on your website.  
See: [www.unreachedoftheday.org](http://www.unreachedoftheday.org)



## GET THE “UNREACHED OF THE DAY” APP AT:



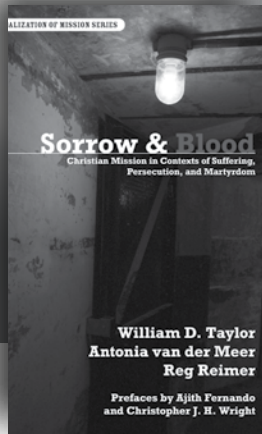
*“I love this app! It makes daily praying for unreached peoples extremely easy. This app is an awesome resource! – Julia K.*

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# William Carey Library *Classics*



## **Sorrow and Blood** **Christian Mission in Contexts of Suffering, Persecution, and Martyrdom**

*William Taylor, Antonia van der Meer, Reg Reimer*

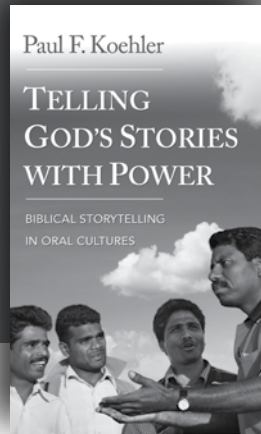
The editorial team of William Taylor (USA), Tonica van der Meer (Brazil), and Reg Reimer (Canada) worked over four years to compile this unique resource anthology.

This book is the product of the Mission Commission's global missiology task force and a worldwide team of committed colleagues and writers. Some 62 writers from 23 nations have collaborated to generate this unique global resource and anthology. Ajith Fernando of Sri Lanka and Christopher Wright of the UK each wrote prefaces to the book.

This latest WEA volume has the potential of profoundly shaping our approach to mission in today's challenging and increasingly dangerous world.

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ISBN 978-0-87808-472-2 William Taylor,  
Antonia van der Meer, Reg Reimer  
WCL | Pages 568 | Paperback 2012



## **Telling God's Stories with Power** **Biblical Storytelling in Oral Cultures**

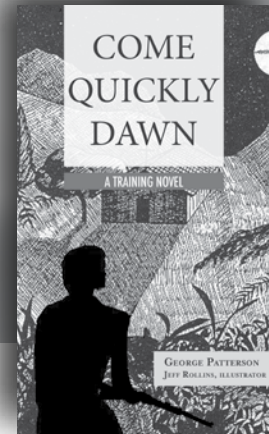
*Paul Koehler*

This is a complete and practical introduction to storying, especially for people who want to learn about using biblical storytelling in cross-cultural contexts and who want to train others to become storytellers. It includes many fascinating accounts of the responses of tribal people to the first proclamation of the gospel through storytelling.

The result of years of research and field testing, *Telling God's Stories with Power* is a product of the author's own journey as he confronted the challenges of teaching the Bible in parts of the world where people are unaccustomed to a Western style of learning. Full of innovative and groundbreaking insights, this study is packed with ideas, explanations, and constructive suggestions stated in clear and simple language.

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ISBN 978-0-87808-465-4 Alan R. Tippett  
WCL | Pages 334 | Paperback 2010



## **Come Quickly Dawn** **A Training Novel**

*George Patterson*

Come Quickly Dawn offers a unique reading experience. This fully integrated hybrid is both a fast-paced novel and an incisive training tool. It equips one to evangelize in a way that spreads like measles, to make disciples who actively obey Jesus, and to multiply churches or cells. The best way by far to prepare an effective shepherd or church multiplier is to do it as Jesus and Paul did it: take apprentices with them to where the action is happening. Its simulated trip conveys one out of a familiar comfort zone to a setting similar to that of many peoples among whom God is working powerfully, as in the book of Acts.

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# NEW RELEASES



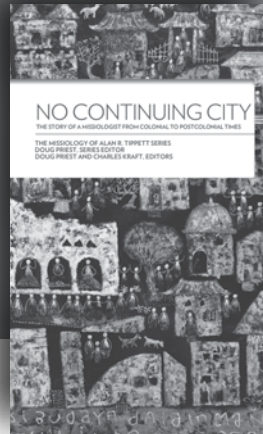
## Expect Great Things Mission Quotes that Inform and Inspire

*Marvin Newell*

Expect Great Things is the most comprehensive collection of mission quotes, contemporary and classical, ever compiled in one book. Here you will find over 700 of the best mission quotes ever uttered by Great Commission Christians—250 different authors from Adoniram Judson to John Piper, from J. Hudson Taylor to David Platt. Read them for personal encouragement! Paste them on your website, blog, or other social media. Tweet them to a friend. Include them in sermons, speeches, newsletters, and lesson plans. Pass them on to others to encourage them along their way to Great Commission familiarity and commitment.

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ISBN 978-0-87808-626-9 **Marvin Newell**  
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## No Continuing City The Story of a Missiologist from Colonial to Postcolonial Times

*Alan Tippett*

Alan Tippett's publications played a significant role in the development of missiology. The volumes in this series augment his distinguished reputation by bringing to light his many unpublished materials and hard-to-locate printed articles. These books—encompassing theology, anthropology, history, area studies, religion, and ethnohistory—broaden the contours of the discipline.

As a gift to Edna and the children on the occasion of their golden wedding anniversary, Tippett completed his autobiography, ironically just months prior to his death. Containing personal reflections on his childhood and later mission experiences in the South Pacific, relationship with Donald McGavran and the founding of the School of World Mission, and retirement years in Australia, *No Continuing City* is the inside story. These are Tippett's Personal reflections that can be found in no other publication.

List Price ~~\$39.99~~ • **Our Price \$31.99**

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## Environmental Missions Planting Churches and Trees

*Patrick Krayer*

*Environmental Missions* defines an emerging category in missions, one that takes seriously both the mandate to evangelize the world and the responsibility of caring for God's good earth.

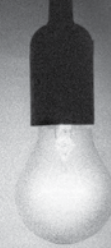
Lowell Bliss was a traditional church planting missionary in India when his best Hindu friend there died of malaria. This was just one of the events that led him to reexamine the politically charged term "environment," understanding it now as simply "that which surrounds those we love, those for whom Jesus died." In other words, the church is called to reach not only vulnerable people but the space in which they live and breathe.

Pointing to the narrative of Scripture and the history of missions, Bliss shows us that the gospel of Jesus Christ is good news for the whole creation, that we must unite two traditionally separate endeavors to fulfill the entirety of God's commission.

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ISBN 978-0-87808-538-5 **Lowell Bliss**  
WCL | Pages 346 | Paperback 2013

# THE WORDS WE USE



GREG PARSONS

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

**B**etter understanding ourselves is a crucial step in understanding, explaining and living out the gospel to those from other cultures. We learn more about ourselves and God by living and working with people from different

backgrounds. One of the things we learn, is that different ethnic groups, countries and generations tend to emphasize distinct issues or problems.

Some view missions, as it developed in the UK and US in the 1800s to 1900s, as growing out of British or American “exceptionalism.” Our nations/societies had “advanced” and improved in certain ways ahead of other nations, so we believed they needed our help—both practically (as nations) and spiritually (as believers). Our feeling blessed by God as a nation fed into the desire of many Christians to go and share the Gospel. We saw the gospel as a part of what helped us to advance—which is partially true.

The amazing ability and obedience of those early pioneering missionaries and their willingness to sacrifice brought the gospel to many places. Ralph Winter identified these as the 1st and 2nd Eras of Missions. At times however, they subtly communicated that they had everything the “pagans” needed.

Certainly mission efforts brought improvements and in many places helped establish a strong church. Yet that well—meaning pioneering spirit can also come across with a “superiority” mentality. Any society that has developed beyond the receiving culture—including many in Asia—must fight against the view that we are better. “White power” or Korean superiority, or... influences relationships and can derail the best of intentions. Everything is a delicate negotiation when you have more of certain resources than those around you.

That is especially true in the eyes of major remaining blocs of peoples—such as Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist. In their view, we are not seen as superior religiously (or morally, or...) and they really do not “want” much of what the Western world has to offer. While many are looking for help or improvement in some areas, they are not sure we have it to offer.

H.L. Richard—with 30 years in India—said it this way:


...when we think we are superior and are recognized as superior then we are working from a common worldview and things can proceed smoothly, but when our assumed superiority is not recognized, there is a worldview clash and little hope of success, particularly since God is not going to bless our sense of superiority where it contradicts fundamentals of the gospel.

We need to remember that we are not promoting one cultural approach to religion over another. We are not promoting religion at all. We are trying to lead people to our Savior—

by grace through faith—to see them become partakers in the divine nature like us. Of course, many missionaries of the past realized and acted with this in mind.

At the end of the book of Acts, Luke refers to Paul’s ongoing ministry as: “proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with complete boldness and without restriction.” (Acts 28:31 NET)

A friend of mine suggested another way we can talk about how we spread Gospel truth in other global religious contexts. Rather than emphasizing “evangelism and the Great Commission,” or even church planting, we put that commission and method in the context of our wider mandate to honor God and manage his creation. Ultimately, it is not about (rapid) church growth or even the number of multiplying disciple-making movements, but it is about that wider mandate being taken seriously and followed, as the kingdom of God on earth. God’s glory restored where Satan has distorted it.

How that will be lived out in a given context will likely be different than what we have experienced before. I believe that not knowing how it will work or what it will look like is actually normal for pioneering work—and sometimes life in general. As one of my life long mentors put it, “nothing works” short of being very close to the Lord and his word. 



## Writing Exceptional Missionary Letters (REVISED) Essentials for Writing, Producing, and Sending Newsletters that Motivate Readers

*Sandy Weyeneth*

*Writing Exceptional Missionary Newsletters* shows anyone who writes personal ministry newsletters how to captivate readers. This revised edition offers more ideas for better online communication like e-mail and Facebook. It shows how to increase your letter's impact and provides tips for how often to send your newsletters, e-newsletters, and posts. It is for seasoned and new missionaries, church leaders, mission organizations, mission boards, and any person encouraging missionaries to communicate well.

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ISBN 978-0-87808-488-3 *Sandy Weyeneth*  
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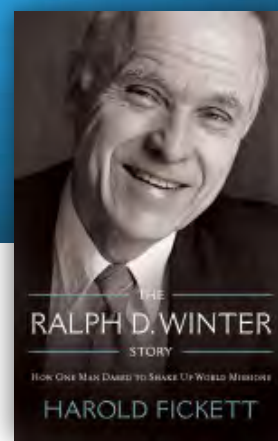
## Longing for Community Church, Ummah, or Somewhere in Between?

*David Greenlee, Editor*

Understanding the strength and unity of the ummah—the worldwide Muslim community—and its role in an individual's identity is essential in comprehending the struggles that Muslims undergo as they turn to faith in Jesus Christ. It has been a place of security, acceptance, protection, and identity; turning away from it entails great sacrifice. Where, then, will Muslims who choose to follow Jesus find their longing for community fulfilled: ummah, church, or somewhere in between?

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## The Ralph D. Winter Story How One Man Dared to Shake Up World Missions

*Harold Fickett*

Legendary missionary strategist Ralph D. Winter always provoked strong reactions, one way or another. This long overdue book captures both the genius and the controversy of a self-described "social engineer," named by Time magazine as one of the 25 Most Influential Evangelicals in America.

Harold Fickett is a critically acclaimed author of novels, biographies, and works of spirituality, including *The Holy Fool*, *The Living Christ*, and *Dancing with the Divine*. He currently serves as managing editor of *Aleteia*, an international website for truth-seekers published in six languages.

List Price ~~\$15.99~~ • **Our Price \$12.79**  
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