



It may well be that the largest number of genuine believers in Jesus Christ do not show up in what we usually call Christian churches!

Ralph D. Winter



Dear Reader,

This time you must learn a new phrase: *Insider Movements*.

This idea as a mission strategy was so shockingly new in Paul's day that almost no one (either then or now) gets the point. That's why we are devoting this entire issue to "Insider Movements." That's why the 2005 annual meeting of the International Society for Frontier Missiology is devoted to the same subject. (See www.ijfm.org/isfm)

First of all, be warned: many mission donors and prayer warriors, and even some missionaries, heartily disagree with the idea.

One outstanding missionary found that even his mission board director could not agree. He was finally asked to find another mission agency to work under. Why? His director was a fine former pastor who had never lived among a totally strange people. After a couple of years of increasingly serious correspondence between the director and the missionary family, the relationship had to come to an end.

Okay, so this is serious business. Why is *Insider Movements* such a troubling concept?

Well, everywhere Paul went "Judaizers" followed him and tried to destroy the Insider Movement he had established.

Some of those Judaizers were earnest followers of Christ who simply could not imagine how a Greek – still a Greek in dress, language and culture – could become a believer in Jesus Christ without casting off a huge amount of his Greek culture, get circumcised, follow the "kosher" dietary rules and the

"new moons and Sabbaths", etc.

The flagrant language of Paul's letter to the Galatians is one result. The very serious text of his letter to the Romans is another. Years ago the scales fell off my eyes when I read that "Israel, who pursued a law of righteousness, has not attained it ... Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works" (Rom 9:32 NIV).

Paul was not saying the Jewish religious culture was defective or that the Greek culture was superior. He was emphasizing that heart faith is the key element in any culture—that *forms* were not the key thing but the *faith*.

Greeks who yielded in heart faith to the Gospel did not need to become Jews culturally and follow Jewish forms.

Paul said, in effect, "I am very, very proud of a Gospel that is the power of God to save people who obey God in faith, no matter whether they follow Jewish or Greek customs" (Rom 1:16).

But the real trick is not simply for people of faith in every culture to stay and stagnate in their own cultural cul-de-sac, but both to retain their own culture and at the same time recognize the validity of versions of the faith within other cultures and the universality of the Body of Christ.

Different sources of European Christianity flowed over into the United States, producing some 200 different "flavors" of Christianity—some born here (Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses),

some quite Biblical, some not so Biblical, some very strange.

The same thing happens on the mission field: a lot of different movements emerge. The ideal is for the Gospel to become effectively expressed within the language and culture of a people and not just be a transplant from the missionary's culture.

H. Richard Niebhuur's famous book, *Social Sources of Denominationalism*, is known for pointing out that different denominations did not just have doctrinal differences (often very minor) but usually reflected, at least for a time, social differences that were the real difference. Note, however, the Christian faith was in many cases an "Insider Movement" and was expressed within different social streams, taking on characteristics of those different streams.

But, back to missions. The Jewish/Greek thing is far more and far "worse" than the differences between Methodists who pray that their trespasses be forgiven and Presbyterians who pray that their debts be forgiven!

No, in Paul's day circumcision was undoubtedly a major barrier to adult Greek men becoming culturally Jewish followers of Christ. Another sensitive point was the question of eating meat that had been offered to idols, and so on.

Later in history, the Jewish/Greek tension was paralleled by a Latin/German tension. This time, we see a profound difference in attitudes toward clerical marriage vs. celibacy and the use of Latin in church services.

For centuries Latin was *the language* of Europe, enabling ministers, attorneys, medical doctors, and public officials to read the books of their trade in a single language. That lasted a long time! For centuries a unifying reading language did a lot of good. But the Bible did not come into its own until it was translated into the heart languages of Europe.



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The deep rumbling that modernized Europe was the unleashed Bible.

It is an exciting and maybe disturbing thing—the idea that Biblical faith can be clothed in any language and culture. Witness the awesome reality in the so-called mission lands today. Whether Africa, India or China, it may well be that the largest number of genuine believers in Jesus Christ do not show up in what we usually call Christian churches!

Can you believe it? They may still consider themselves Muslims or Hindus (in a cultural sense).

Alas, today Christianity itself is identified with the cultural vehicle of the civilization of the West. People in mission lands who do not wish to be “westernized” feel they need to stay clear of the Christian Church, which in their own country is often a church highly Western in its culture, theology, interpretation of the Bible, etc.

For example, in Japan there are “churches” that are so Western that in the last forty years they have not

grown by a single member. Many astute observers have concluded that there is not yet “a Japanese form of Christianity.” When one emerges, it may not want to associate with the Western Christian tradition except in a fraternal way.

In India we now know that there are actually millions of Hindus who have chosen to follow Christ, reading the Bible daily and worshipping at the household level, but not often frequenting the West-related Christian churches of that land.

In some places thousands of people who consider themselves Muslims are nevertheless heart-and-soul followers of Jesus Christ who carry the New Testament with them into the mosques.

In Africa there are more than 50 million believers (of a sort) within a vast sphere called “the African Initiated Churches.” The people in the more formally “Christian church” may not regard these others as Christians at all. Indeed, some of them are a whole lot further from pure Biblical faith than

Mormons. But, if they revere and study the Bible, we need to let the Bible do its work. These groups range from the wildly heretical to the seriously Biblical within over ten thousand “denominations” which are not related to any overt Christian body.

Thus, not all “insider” movements are ideal. Our own Christianity is not very successfully “inside” our culture, since many “Christians” are Christian in name only. Even mission “church planting” activities may or may not be “insider” at all, and even if they are they may not be ideal.

Around the world some of these movements do not baptize. In other cases they do. I have been asked, “Are you promoting the idea of non-baptized believers?” No, in reporting the existence of these millions of people, we are reporting on the incredible power of the Bible. We are not promoting all the ideas they reflect or the practices they follow. The Bible is like an underground fire burning out of control! In one sense we can be very happy. ☉

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GLOBAL PRAYER- Younger Generation

Ryan Shaw

Over the last several years there have been subtle, but positive signs among Christian young adults concerning the possibility of a renewed, widespread, long-term movement to reach the nations. Small groups committed to global prayer have historically always been at the center of new thrusts of global mission vision among students. It seems timely, then, to unleash a present widespread call to devoted prayer among the college student population focused on the urgent realization of the global purpose of God.



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We need round-the-clock, ongoing houses of prayer raised up in local churches and on college campuses that cry out to God, day and night, for peoples around the world whom the Church has forgotten. The spiritual power required to see the gospel planted around the world and for millions to be ushered into the Kingdom will be sustained only

Ryan Shaw is Director of Student Volunteer Movement 2 and is based in Dorchester, Ontario, Canada.



by these prayer furnaces. God knows that prayer and intercession must once again become our primary activity to move forward appropriately and powerfully.

There is a global mission movement arising among the younger generation. Student Volunteer Movement 2 (SVM2) is seeking

to serve this movement. One of its priorities is encouraging the formation of Global Prayer Teams on college campuses and in local churches around the world. These are small groups of committed young adults who gather on a weekly basis crying out to God for the fulfillment of His purposes among every culture on the earth in our lifetime, for local and global revival, and for an increase of practical involvement in global proclamation among the younger generation. Just imagine a global prayer movement among the younger generation where 50,000 Global Prayer Teams are meeting weekly on campuses throughout the world. Why not now?

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It seems timely to unleash a widespread call to devoted prayer.

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“WHEN Christian” DOES NOT Translate

Frank Decker

I grew up as a Muslim, and when I gave my life to Jesus I became a Christian. Then I felt the Lord saying, ‘Go back to your family and tell them what the Lord has done for you.’ Such was the beginning of the testimony of a sweet sister in Christ named Salima. As she stood before the microphone at a conference held recently in Asia, I thought about how her story would have been applauded by my Christian friends back home.

But then she said something that would have probably shocked most American Christians. She told us that in order to share Christ with her family, she now identifies herself as a Muslim rather than a Christian. “But,” she added, “I could never go back to Islam without Jesus whom I love as my Lord.”

Like this woman, countless people, primarily in Asia, who live in Muslim, Buddhist, and Hindu contexts are saying *yes* to Jesus, but *no* to Christianity. As Westerners, we assume that the word “Christian” *ipso facto* refers to someone who has given his or her life to Jesus, and a “non-Christian” is an unbeliever. However, in the words of one Asian attendee, “The word ‘Christian’ means something different here in the East.”

Consider the story of Chai, a Buddhist from Thailand. “Thailand has not become a Christian country, because in the eyes of the Thai, to become a Christian means you can no longer be Thai. That’s because in Thailand ‘Christian’ equals ‘foreigner.’” So when Chai gave his life to Jesus, he began referring to himself as a “Child of God” and a “new Buddhist.” He then related a subsequent incident in which he had a conversation with a Buddhist monk on a train. “After I listened to his story, I told him that he was missing one thing in life. He asked me what that was and I told him it was Jesus.”

Chai continued to tell us the story in which the monk not only gave his life to Christ, but also invited Chai to come to his Buddhist temple to share about Jesus. Then Chai said, “At the beginning of our conversation the monk asked me, ‘Are you a Christian?’

and I said *no*. I explained that Christianity and Jesus are two different things. Salvation is in Jesus, not in Christianity. If I had said I was a ‘Christian,’ the conversation would have ended at that point.” But it didn’t end. And the monk now walks with Jesus.

Indeed, an American missionary that has been working in Asia for about two decades said, “For the first five or seven years of our ministry in [a Muslim country] we were frustrated because we were trying to get people to change their religion.” He went on to say how in evangelical circles we talk a lot about how it is not our religion that saves us; it is *Jesus*. “If we really believe that, why do we insist that people change their religion?”

Asif is a brother in Christ with whom I have spent time in his village in a country that is 90 percent Muslim. Traditional Christian organizations in that country have only had a significant impact on the other ten percent that has never been Muslim. Make no mistake – Asif is sold out to Jesus, as are the other members of this Muslim Background Believers (MBB) movement. I will never forget seeing the tears stream down Asif’s face as he told me how he and his brother, also a believer in Jesus, were beaten in an attack that his brother did not survive. These are Muslims who walk with Jesus and openly share with their Muslim friends about the Lord, who in Arabic is referred to as “Isa al-Masih” (Jesus the Messiah).

These “insider movements” are not intended to *hide* a believer’s spiritual identity, but rather to enable those within the movement to *go deeper* into the cultural community – be it Islamic, Hindu, or Buddhist – and be witnesses for Jesus within the context of that culture. In some countries, such movements are just getting started. In other places, estimates of adherents are in the hundreds of thousands.

As the Body of Christ, we should be very careful that the things we uphold as sacred are not post-biblical accoutrements, but are indeed transcendent. If we are not open to “new wineskins,” we may unwittingly find ourselves attached to traditions, as were the Pharisees in the day of Jesus

**The names in this story have been changed. This article is excerpted by permission from the May/June 2005 issue of Good News Magazine, a renewal ministry within the United Methodist Church (www.goodnewsmag.org).*

A former missionary in Ghana, Frank Decker currently serves as Vice President for Field Operations for the Mission Society for United Methodists.

Pursuing Faith, Not ~~Religion~~

The Liberating Quest for Contextualization

Charles Kraft

The following is excerpted from chapters 5 and 6 of *Appropriate Christianity* (William Carey Library Publishers, 2005).

It is not widely understood either outside of or even inside of Christianity that our faith is intended to be different from the religions in its relationship to the culture of the people who practice it. Whereas religions such as Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism require a sizeable chunk of the culture in which they were developed, Christianity rightly understood does not. Jesus came to bring life (Jn. 10: 10), not a religion. It is people who have reduced our faith to a religion and exported it as if it is simply a competitor with the religions. And so, those receiving our message tend to interpret Christianity as if it was simply another religion—a culturally-encapsulated religion—rather than a faith that can be expressed in terms of any culture.

But Christianity correctly understood is commitment- and meaning-based, not form-based. A commitment to Jesus Christ and the meanings associated with that commitment can, therefore, be practiced in a wide variety of cultural forms. This is what contextualization is all about. And this is an important feature of Christianity that is often misunderstood by advocates as well as potential receptors.

Still another part of the reputation of Christianity worldwide is that it is more a matter of thinking than of practicality. For many, our faith has little to do with the issues of real life such as how to gain protection from evil spirits, how to gain and keep physical health and how to maintain good family relationships. Instead, Christianity is often seen as a breaker-up of families. And when the issue is a need for spiritual power and protection, even Christians need to keep on good terms with a shaman, priest or medicine man/woman since, in spite of biblical

promises, Christian pastors can only recommend secular approaches to healing and protection.

A Christianity that is appropriate both to the Bible and to the receiving culture will confront these misperceptions and, hopefully, get them changed.

Traditions Die Hard

Any discussion of this topic needs to take into account the fact that the situations most cross-cultural workers are working in nowadays are seldom pioneer situations. Thus, we who teach contextualization are dealing primarily with those whose major concern will have to be on how to bring about change in already existing situations rather than on how to plant culturally appropriate churches.

Typically, then, those who learn what contextualization is all about find themselves working with churches that are quite committed to their Western approach to Christianity. This has become their tradition and they are not open to changing it.

The leaders of many such churches may never have seen culturally appropriate Christianity and probably lack the ability to imagine it. And if they can imagine such an approach, they are unlikely to want to risk what they are familiar with in hopes of gaining greater cultural appropriateness. For many, the risk of losing their position may be very real since their colleagues, committed to preserving the “sacred” tradition, may turn against them and oust them from their parishes.

We need to learn, then, not only the principles of cultural appropriateness, but the principles of effective communication. And this needs to be coupled

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with patience and prayer plus a readiness to make the right kind of suggestions if asked to.

Fear of Syncretism

A major hindrance to many, especially those who have received theological instruction, is the fear that they might open the door to an aberrant form of Christianity. They see Latin American “christo-paganism” and shy away from what is called Christian but is not really. Fearing that if they deviate from the Western Christianity that they have received they are in danger of people carrying things too far, they fall back on the familiar and do nothing to change it, no matter how much misunderstanding there might be in the community of unbelievers concerning the real meanings of Christianity.

There are, however, at least two roads to syncretism: an approach that is too nativistic and an approach that is too dominated by foreignness. With respect to the latter, it is easy to miss the fact that Western Christianity is quite syncretistic when it is very intellectualized, organized according to foreign patterns, weak on the Holy Spirit and spiritual power, strong on Western forms of communication (e.g., preaching) and Western worship patterns and imposed on non-Western peoples as if it were scriptural. It is often easier to conclude that a form of Christian expression is syncretistic when it looks too much like the receiving culture than when it looks “normal,” that is, Western.

As long as we fear something that is inevitable, we are in bondage.

But Western patterns are often farther from the Bible than non-Western patterns. And the amount of miscommunication of what the gospel really is can be great when people get the impression that ours is a religion rather than a faith and that, therefore, foreign forms are a requirement. To give that impression is surely syncretistic and heretical. I call this “communicational heresy.”

But, what about the concept of syncretism? Is this something that can be avoided or is it a factor of human limitations and sinfulness? I vote for the latter and suggest that there is no way to avoid it. Wherever there are imperfect understandings made by imperfect people, there will be syncretism. That

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syncretism exists in all churches is not the problem. Helping people to move from where they are to more ideal expressions of Christian faith is what we need to address.

As long as we fear something that is inevitable, however, we are in bondage. I remember the words of one field missionary who was studying with us, “Until I stopped worrying about syncretism, I could not properly think about contextualization.” Our advice to national leaders (and to missionaries), then, is to stop fearing syncretism. Deal with it in its various forms as a starting point, whether it has come from the receiving society or from the source society and help people to move toward more ideal expressions of their faith

Domestication and “Cultural Christianity”

[Down] through the centuries, those who have come to Christ have tended to “domesticate” their Christianity. Just as the early Jewish Christians who disagreed with Paul required Gentiles to accept Christ in a Jewish cultural package, so Romans and Germans and Americans have pressured those who convert to Christ to also convert to the culture of those who bring the message.

Thus, our faith has come to be known as primarily a cultural thing, a religion wrapped in the cultural forms

of the group in power. And from about the fourth century on it has been seen largely as a European cultural thing—captured by our European ancestors and domesticated in cultures very different from that in which the faith was originally planted. Converts to Christianity, then, are seen as those who have abandoned their own cultural religion and chosen to adopt the religion and, usually, many of the forms of European culture. Often such converts are regarded as traitors to their own people and their ways.

If ours is simply a “form religion,” ... it can be *adapted but not contextualized*, it can be in *competition with other forms of religion* but not flow through those forms because by definition it seeks to replace those forms. But biblical Christianity is not simply a set of cultural forms. Cultural Christianity, however, is. And we get tangled up in our discussions because it is often not clear whether we are speaking of essential, biblical Christianity or of the traditional religion of Western societies that is also called Christianity. In one of my books (1979a) I have attempted to make this distinction by spelling biblical Christianity with a capital C and cultural christianity with a small c....

I would ... call religion a form thing, the expression through cultural forms of deep-level (worldview) assumptions and meanings. Religious forms are culture-specific and, if the religion has been borrowed

from another cultural context, it requires certain of the forms of that other culture to be borrowed. Islam, for example, requires certain forms of prayer, a specific pilgrimage, an untranslatable Arabic book, even clothing styles. Likewise Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism and cultural christianity. These are religions.

Essential biblical Christianity, however, requires none of the original cultural forms. That's how it can be “captured” by the West and be considered Western even though its origin is not Western. *Essential Christianity is an allegiance, a relationship, from which flow a series of meanings that are intended to be expressed through the cultural forms of any culture.* These forms are intended, then, to be chosen for their appropriateness to convey proper biblical meanings in the receptors' contexts.

I believe Christianity is intended to be “a faith,” not a set of cultural forms and therefore different in essence from the religions. Religions, because they are cultural things, can be *adapted* to new cultures. Adaptation is an external thing resulting in smaller or larger changes in the forms of the religion. Christianity, however, can be *contextualized*, a process in which appropriate meanings may be carried by quite different forms in various cultures. Unfortunately, due to the interference of cultural christianity, we have not seen all the variety that is possible 🌐

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Appropriate Christianity

Charles H. Kraft, Ed.

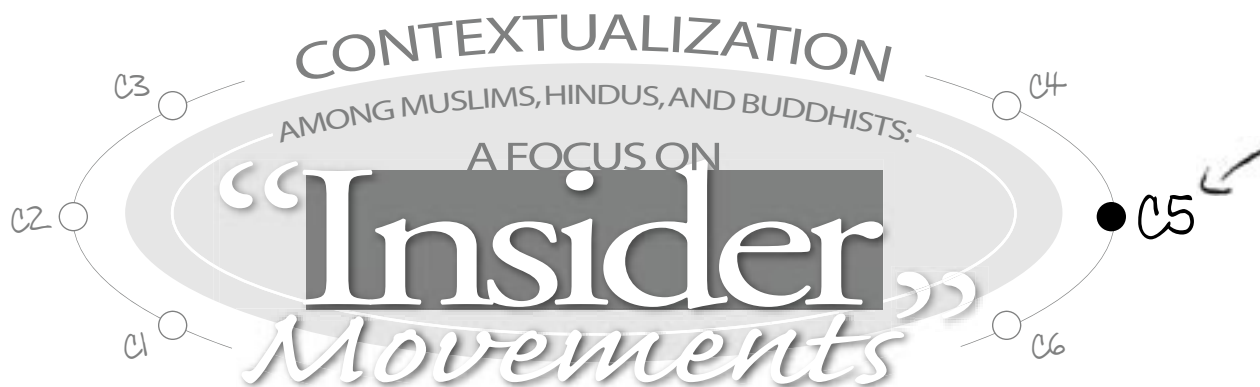
Appropriate Christianity consists of 28 chapters by 18 authors approaching contextualization in three dimensions: truth, allegiance and spiritual power. Over the years, there have been quite a number of helpful discussions of the contextualization of theological truth. Though we have been helped greatly by them, it is high time we began to deal also with allegiance and spiritual power, two additional dimensions that Jesus considered of great importance. Any adequate and appropriate treatment of the contextualization of biblical Christianity needs to deal with all three of these “crucial dimensions.” For allegiance to Christ is the basis for all we do that makes us Christian, and Jesus was very much into spiritual power. If we are to be truly biblical, we must deal also with these areas.

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John and Anna Travis

The following is excerpted by permission of the authors. A larger version of this article is found in chapter 23 of *Appropriate Christianity* (William Carey Library Publishers, 2005).

Much has been written over the past 25 years on the application of contextualization in ministry among Muslims. In 1998 I (John) wrote an article for the *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* in which I presented a model for comparing six different types of *ekklesia* or congregations (which I refer to as “Christ-centered communities”) found in the Muslim world today (Travis 1998). These six types of Christ-centered communities are differentiated in terms of three

There is no question in our minds that these C5 Muslims are born-again members of the Kingdom of God.

factors: language, cultural forms, and religious identity. This model, referred to as the C1-C6 spectrum (or continuum), has generated much discussion, especially around the issue of

fellowships of “Muslim followers of Jesus” (the C5 position on the scale).

Parshall (1998), an advocate of contextualization, feels that C5 crosses the line and falls into dangerous syncretism. In subsequent writings many of Parshall’s concerns have been addressed (see Massey 2000, Gilliland 1998, Winter 1999, Travis 1998 and 2000). *Yet in spite of concerns that some may have on this issue, the fact remains that in a number of countries today, there are groups of Muslims who have genuinely come to faith in Jesus Christ, yet have remained legally and socio-religiously within the local Muslim community....*

We will not be contending that C5 is the best or only thing God is doing in the Muslim world today; indeed God is bringing Muslims to Himself in a great diversity of ways, some of which we may only understand in eternity. What we will argue, however, is that one way God is moving at this point in salvation history, is by sovereignly drawing Muslims to Himself, revolutionizing them spiritually, yet calling them to remain as salt and light in the religious community of their birth

In recent years we have had the privilege of meeting a number of C5 Muslims, and although our religious backgrounds and forms of worship are quite different, we have experienced sweet fellowship in Isa the Messiah. There is no question in our minds that these C5 Muslims are born-again members of the Kingdom of God, called to live out the Gospel inside the religious borders of their birth. As we have continued to see the limits of C4 in our context, and as our burden for lost Muslims only grows heavier, we have become convinced that a C5 expression of faith could actually be viable for our precious Muslim neighbors and probably large blocs of the Muslim world. We ourselves, being “Christian-background-believers,” maintain a C4 lifestyle, but we believe God has called us to help “birth a C5 movement” in our context

We have attended many Muslim funerals. We grieve every time we see another Muslim friend buried, having passed into eternity without salvation in Christ. As we have seen the resistance toward

John and Anna Travis, along with their two children, have lived in a tight-knit Asian Muslim neighborhood for nearly 20 years. They are involved in contextualized sharing of the good news, Bible translation and the ministry of prayer for inner healing. They have also helped train field workers in a number of Asian, Middle Eastern and North African countries. Both are pursuing graduate degrees, with John a Ph.D. candidate.

changing religions and the huge gap between the Muslim and Christian communities, we feel that fighting the religion-changing battle is the wrong battle. We have little hope in our lifetime to believe for a major enough cultural, political and religious change to occur in our context such that Muslims would become open to entering Christianity on a wide scale.

But we do have great hope, as great as the promises of God, to believe that an “insider movement” could get off the ground – that vast numbers could discover that salvation in Isa the Messiah is waiting for every Muslim who will believe. We sense the desire of Jesus Himself to take the “yeast” of His Gospel to the inner chambers of Muslim communities, calling men, women and children to walk with Him as Lord and Savior, remaining vital members of their families and Muslim communities.

Theoretical and Theological Issues Regarding C5 Movements

... Our intent is not to prove if C5 *can* happen, as case studies already indicate that it *is* happening. Rather, we hope to help build a framework from which to understand this phenomenon and to answer some of the questions which have arisen such as: From a Biblical perspective, can a person be truly saved and continue to be a Muslim? Doesn't a follower of Christ need to identify himself as a Christian and officially join the Christian faith? Can a Muslim follower of Christ retain all Muslim practices, in particular praying in the mosque toward Mecca and continuing to repeat the Muslim creed? This section will be framed around ten premises [elaborated in the full version of this article].

- *Premise 1:* For Muslims, culture, politics and religion are nearly inseparable, making changing religions a total break with society.
- *Premise 2:* Salvation is by grace alone through relationship / allegiance to Jesus Christ. Changing religions is not a prerequisite for nor a guarantee of salvation.
- *Premise 3:* Jesus' primary concern was the estab-

lishment of the Kingdom of God, not the founding of a new religion.

- *Premise 4:* The very term “Christian” is often misleading – not all called Christian are in Christ and not all in Christ are called Christian.
- *Premise 5:* Often gaps exist between what people actually believe and what their religion or group officially teaches.
- *Premise 6:* Some Islamic beliefs and practices are in keeping with the Word of God; some are not.
- *Premise 7:* Salvation involves a process. Often the exact point of transfer from the Kingdom of darkness to the Kingdom of light is not known.
- *Premise 8:* A follower of Christ needs to be set free by Jesus from spiritual bondages in order to thrive in his/her life with Him.
- *Premise 9:* Due to the lack of Church structure and organization, C5 movements must have an exceptionally high reliance on the Spirit and the Word as their primary source of instruction.
- *Premise 10:* A contextual theology can only properly be developed through a dynamic interaction of actual ministry experience, the specific leading of the Spirit and the study of the Word of God.

We feel that fighting the religion-changing battle is the wrong battle.

A Look Beyond the Islamic Milieu

... An amazing book has just been republished by William Carey Library – *Churchless Christianity* (Hoefer 2001). The author, while formerly teaching at a seminary in India, began hearing stories of Hindus who in fact were worshipping and following Jesus in the privacy of their own homes. Knowing that there are many Hindus who have high regard for Jesus as a teacher, he set out to determine if indeed they had accepted Him as Lord and Savior or only as an enlightened guru. His quest became the basis of a doctoral dissertation in which he interviewed 80 such Hindu and Muslim families in the area of Madras, India.

“The Church Emerges from the Inside”

A missionary couple working in Asia report, “In 1990 we were sent out into the field as church planters. But over the last year we have observed that when the gospel is sown on fertile soil within already established social groupings – like a circle of close neighbor friends, or the multi-generations of

an extended household – the church emerges from the inside. It is not so much that we are planting a church but that we are planting the gospel, and as the gospel seed grows, the church or churches form to the shape of existing networks.” 🌐

Hoefer found that that a large number of these families, which have never been baptized or joined churches, indeed have a true relationship with Christ and pray and study His Word fervently. Hoefer says

The process may be theologically messy, but we see no alternative.

that most want baptism, but have never seen a baptism which is not one in the same with becoming an official member of a particular

church. His conclusion after a very extensive process of interviews and statistical analysis is that in Madras there are 200,000 Hindus and Muslims who worship Jesus – an amount equal to the total number of Christians in that city!

It is instructive to note that 200 years ago, William Carey referred to Hindu followers of Jesus as “Christian Hindoos.” Apparently this was due to the strong linkage in the minds of the Indians (and presumably William Carey) between being Hindu and being Indian (etymologically the word India comes from Hindia, the land of the Hindus). Rather than Hinduism being close to monotheistic faiths, it is just the opposite: adherents can worship any number of gods and goddesses. It appears that this openness allows room to exclusively worship the God of the Bible as the one true God (note the words of Joshua in Joshua 24:14-15).

In the early 1900s, Indian evangelist Sadhu Sundar Singh ran into hidden groups of Jesus followers among Hindus. As he preached the Gospel in Benares, his listeners told him of a Hindu holy man who had been preaching the same message. Singh spent the night at the man's home and heard his claim that his Hindu order had been founded long ago by the apostle Thomas, and now had up to 40,000 members. Singh later observed their services (including worship, prayer, baptism and communion) which were held in places which looked exactly like Hindu shrines and temples, minus the idols. “When Sundar tried to persuade them that they should openly declare themselves as Christians, they assured him that they were doing a more effective work as secret disciples, accepted as ordinary sadhus, but drawing men's minds toward the true faith in readiness for the day when open discipleship became possible” (Davey 1950:80).

Recently, we met a man doing outreach among Buddhists, among whom there is an extremely high fusion of culture and religion. To my surprise he had taken the C1-C6 continuum and adapted it to a Buddhist context. Though it appears impossible for the Gospel to thrive inside Buddhism, might there not be millions of Buddhists who are nominal believers and who are only Buddhist due to birth and nationality? As Kraft has stated (1996:212-213),

once this principle of true spiritual allegiance versus formal religion is grasped, “we begin to discover exciting possibilities for working within, say, Jewish or Islamic or Hindu or Buddhist or animistic cultures to reach people who will be culturally Jewish or Muslim or Hindu or animist to the end of their days but Christian in their faith allegiance”. (Note: in his book Kraft defines *Christian* with a capital “C” as follower of Christ verses *christian* with a small “c” referring to the religious institution).

What is all of this leading to? Is there not blatant idolatry in traditional Hinduism? Yes, but not among those Hindu followers of Christ described by Hoefer and Davey. Is there not a denial by most Muslims that Jesus died on the cross? Yes, but not by those Muslims we have known who have put their faith in Christ. Is it not true that Jews teach the Messiah is yet to come? Yes, but thousands of Jews go to Messianic



Chuck Davis
Professor of
Intercultural Studies

Who I am becoming matters as much as what I am doing...

I left for Mali, West Africa as a missionary with great intercultural communication theory. But theory was like an unsharpened machete: I found I needed the experience of interacting with people from cultures and social structures different than my own. Mali became my laboratory, and I began to imagine a preparation process that encompassed both theory *and* practice.

Intercultural Studies at AGSM provides excellent academic preparation while living in the intercultural capital of the world—New York City! Students move beyond *talking* about poor people. Students begin *engaging* people whose lives are daily on the edge, or by eating naan and lentils with the local Mosque's Sufi Imam, or by ministering among recently arrived immigrant populations.

Through coaching by experienced professors and peer mentoring, we ask the challenging developmental questions that will prepare the student as person before servant. The bottom line of study at AGSM: *who I am becoming matters as much as what I am doing* in the task of mission.

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synagogues and believe, as did thousands of Jews in the first century, that Yeshua is indeed the long-awaited Son of David.

We are tentatively coming to the conviction that God is doing a new thing to reach these remaining nations (*ta ethne*) dominated by mega-faiths. If Bosch had it right that faith in Christ wasn't meant to be a religion, could it be that we are witnessing some of the first fruits of vast movements where Jesus is causing the Gospel to break out of "Christianity"? Where those who know Jesus remain as a sweet fragrance inside the religion of their birth, and eventually the number of born-again adherents grows so large that a reform movement from inside that religion is birthed?

The process may be theologically messy, but we see no alternative. If we view both culture and religion as a person's own skin, we can look beyond it to the millions of human hearts longing for God yet longing to remain in community with their own people. This is in no way universalism (the belief that in the end all will be saved). Rather, this is a call to take much more seriously Christ's final words to go into all the world – Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim, Christian – and make disciples of all nations. 🌐

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Seeking to Nurture "Gospel Movements"

The ethos of one new mission agency includes an emphasis on "insider movements" or "Gospel movements" (instead of "church-planting movements") among unreached Muslim peoples. The founders here explain why.

- The term "Church Planting" implies inventing a new structure. No matter how contextualized the "church" may be, it is still a new structure that is foreign to the people group. Church-planting work of various levels of contextualization is necessary in some contexts. However, our primary desire is for the spontaneous spread of culturally relevant Gospel movements through *pre-existing networks*. We believe that the extended family unit is the primary and foremost biblical model of *ecclesia*.
- Our aim is to be *catalytic agents* in the spawning of new movements. We do not have a prescribed methodology. We focus on facilitating the induc-

tive learning of the scriptures that will enable indigenous believers to define their own convictions in their daily living. Using the scriptures as the primary and foremost authority, we trust in the self-correcting power of God's Word that is lived out through obedience and the work of the Holy Spirit to lead the indigenous believers.

- Catalyzing a Gospel movement should not end after one iteration. Within any growing indigenous movement, there should be apostles ready to break out into new territories and peoples. These apostles will primarily be responsible in taking the gospel to other unreached Muslims. We, as "incoming catalytic agents", should constantly look to spot these apostles and encourage them to develop their own missiology and its corresponding structures to carry out their responsibilities most effectively. In this sense, true gospel movement does not separate "church planting" effort from "mission planting" work. 🌐



A People Reborn



Foundational Insights on People Movements

Donald McGavran

Editor's note: What follows are excerpts from the late Donald McGavran's foreword to the English edition of Christian Keysser's classic book, *A People Reborn* (William Carey Library, 1980). McGavran's pen portraits and autobiographical notes reveal the extent to which, consciously or not, today's proponents of either insider movements or church-planting movements are building on foundations laid by pioneers such as Keysser, McGavran, and others in the first half of the 20th century. Note, in the final paragraph, McGavran's prescient observations about mission in the 21st century.

[Christian Keysser] was born in Bavaria in 1877, went to Kaiser Wilhelm Land (East New Guinea) in 1899, and remained in or near Sattelberg as a missionary till 1921, when he returned to Germany.... A literal translation of [Keysser's book] is *A New Guinean Congregation*. A truer, better title is: *A People Reborn: Caring Communities, Their Birth and Development*....

People Movements to Christ

... Around 1900 Keysser found himself evangelizing the Kate (pronounced Kawtai or kotte) tribe in the mountains near the sea.... Keysser's genius recognized that Christianization ought to preserve this people consciousness, and transform it into

Tribal Christianity or Folk Christianity....

Group decisions have enabled men and women to move to Christian faith without social dislocation.

In 1935, largely through [Waskom] Pickett's writings and lectures, I woke to a discipling of ethnic units. I accompanied him while he studied missions in

Mid-India and contributed several chapters to his *Christian Missions in Mid-India*, 1938. I, too, saw that the goal was not one-by-one conversion out of the castes and tribes, but rather the conversion of social units which remained part of the caste or tribe, and continued living in their ancestral homes. For the next two decades I worked at encouraging a Satnami people movement to develop – and

failed. In 1955, my *Bridges of God* called castewise or tribal movements to Christian Faith “people movements”.... What Keysser, Pickett and [Bruno] Gutmann had described in New Guinea, India and Tanganyika – *Bridges of God* – indebted only to Pickett, described in universal terms.

The discovery of all of us was that group decisions, which preserved the corporate life of the society and enabled men and women to become Christians without social dislocation, was the route by which most humans have moved to Christian Faith from non-Christian Faith, and was a good route. For all four of us, the discovery was difficult because missionaries came out of the most dedicated parts of the Western Church. They had learned that real Christians are those who individually and at great cost believe in Jesus Christ, love Him, obey His word, and venture out alone across the seven seas to do His bidding. They believed that “one-by-one-against-the-tide” was the right, the best, and often the only way for men and women to become Christians....

Keysser's discovery in 1903 should be seen against his common erroneous conviction. He broke through



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that mindset to see that for a people to come to Christ “with social structure intact” was the best possible way. He, of course, went on immediately to describe the way in which such a people movement should be nurtured, guarded against formalism, fed on the Word, and made strong through constant exercise of its Christian options. This is his great contribution. His book is essential reading for any who wish to understand a) that discipling ethnic units is a splendid way for multitudes to become Christian, and b) how discipling and perfecting can be done so they result in genuine Christians in a truly Christian Congregation – a true Homogeneous Unit Church.

The Objective Thinker

... The people movement really began to roll. The outlying clans and villages clamored to become Christian, precisely because they saw that the Christians had become *greatly changed for the better*. This is the fundamental reason why people movements occur. Human beings are highly intelligent. After all, man is homo sapiens. When he sees that the new order, the Church, is actually different from and *superior* to the old order, then homo sapiens in corporate decisions moves to Christian Faith. A chain reaction runs through the tribal fabric. Congregations multiply. In general, it may be said that the higher the standard of Christianity achieved by the first groups to become Christian, the more influential is their example. Keysser, the objective thinker, saw this....

Forming a True Congregation

[Another reason] why missiologists will profit from this book is Keysser's determined emphasis on the privilege and duty of the missionary *to form a Christian congregation out of various villages and clans*. By this he does not mean taking individuals, as separate pebbles, and forming them into a new organization called the church. Rather, he means taking the social

organism, which the clan or village had been from time immemorial, and by exposing it to God's will and God's Word, and by leading it to act in a Christian fashion *transforming it into a Christian tribe*.

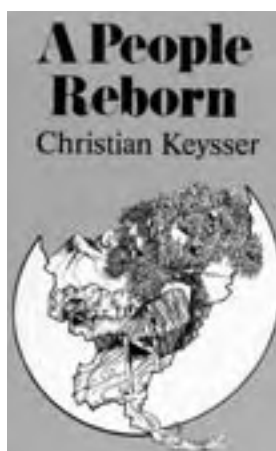
This is not done simply by baptizing it. Hearing the Gospel, seeing the Gospel, receiving ample instruction, some of it in dramatic form, being baptized with clanal

approval, and then for years led by the missionary and the Word, thinking through what in specific circumstances Christ requires the village, clan or tribe (the Christian Congregation) to do – all these steps are required to transform non-Christian social units into a Christian congregation....

Dr. Keysser's adverse judgments concerning the churches in Germany must be seen as part of his convictions concerning the True Church. Throughout this volume he criticizes congregations in Germany for not being true communities, i.e. true *congregations*.... When in 1922 Keysser went back to Germany, he experienced culture shock in reverse. He found “churches” which as churches exercised little if any pastoral care of their members.... The congregations were not real communities

Today, when the establishment of caring communities in western churches has become one of the main purposes of contemporary Christianity, Keysser's comments about the German Church are particularly pertinent. They can be affirmed about the Church in most developed nations. When society becomes fragmented, individualism rages out of control and loneliness afflicts millions. The Church must provide loving, caring, powerful *communities*. Life is richest when lived in such. In the ancient world New Testament churches were such communities. Churches can again become such in New Guinea and New York, in Tokyo and Berlin, and in short, in every land. *True Churches are functioning communities*.

... Professor Keysser has given the world of mission many insights which will be of great use in the coming century. In his day, animistic tribes were turning to Christ by people movements and forming genuine communities (congregations) in the Christian fold. In the twenty-first century, we shall see great segments of developing and *developed* nations turn to Christian Faith without social dislocation. They will remain real communities in becoming real congregations. Modern missiology is indebted to Christian Keysser. 🌐





Learning From a New Wave of Social Entrepreneurs



Molly Wall

What can the mission movement learn from today's social entrepreneurs? How did Indian street children gain a voice in their community? Or African families confidently solve their own problems? And how must we be changed through reflection on the experiences and insights of "entrepreneurs in action," thinking harder and more broadly about the future and Kingdom advance, especially among unreached peoples?

Case Study #1: A Voice for Children in India

Supper has ended, the sun gone down. Village children light kerosene lamps and set out for school. School? For most, the day held long hours of difficult labor, yet these classmates – child laborers and street kids in over 80 locations across rural Karnataka – are eager to assemble for study at their local village "Extension School."

Night schooling for child laborers is unexpected enough, but add the fact these students meet only two hours a day, manage themselves, select a teacher (an older student), participate in village politics, and still manage to sit for state-required exams, and you have the sort of work that can only be traced to the most innovative of social entrepreneurs.

**Long-term solutions
will require wider
and more innovative
initiatives.**

In this case, his name is Damodaran Acharya (Damu), son of a Hindu priest whose own poverty-forced migration experience left him convinced that child laborers must somehow be allowed an education, even though family poverty has driven them to work during school hours. (At that time, 40% of Karnataka's unregulated workforce was comprised of children.) Damu founded a society, The Concerned for Working Children, training

trainers to multiply the effort across the state and all of India.

The New Idea: Organize and empower young people to meet their own needs, and to address those of the community. Employ innovative educational methods and structures relevant and useful to students and families.

The Strategy: A trainer helps village children organize, listens to concerns and needs, and arranges discussion with village leadership. Once community problems are identified (considering the voice of the children), solutions (such as creating an "extension school") are implemented by the community.

The Result: Many of the state's child laborers are staying in or returning to school!

The alternative educational methods employed have been so successful that many government schools have adopted them. Some villages have seen a decrease in long-standing problems (such as alcoholism among adults) through student work efforts, and an increase in awareness of the power to address their own needs. Communities across the state have welcomed these marked improvements.

Case Study #2: Power From the Ground Up in Zimbabwe

Alexander Chisango founded the Pan-African Family Empowerment Foundation in a daring attempt to address current social, physical, and spiritual problems of his native Zimbabwe. Chisango recognized that most development policies and programs are often based on Western social patterns (functioning as clusters of individuals) rather than African social patterns (functioning as clusters of families). So he enlisted individual families in the battle, using the community to support the effort.

His goal? If each family learns to solve its problems by working together (and is thereby strengthened),

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then perhaps the great challenges facing the country today will relent as healthy families emerge, participating in community and national affairs. Inspired by lessons from his own mother – who worked hard to address her family’s needs even as a peasant farmer widowed with eight children – this entrepreneur is seeking widespread change through a grassroots movement among families.

The New Idea: Empower and equip families to solve their own problems. Mobilize various sectors of the community (churches, non-governmental organizations, families, individuals) to network and contribute to this initiative in an effort to both change government policy and break a culture of dependence within communities.

The Strategy: The Foundation’s strategy is four-fold: 1) Train volunteers for family counseling – survey families to help them recognize existing resources and strengths (employment, skills, education, history, etc.), then provide counsel, 2) Help families start income-generating projects to keep funds benefiting families directly, 3) Conduct research – learn from those who have been through trials and hardship what kind of counsel and help is most relevant and useful, and 4) Lobby government for better policies that will benefit families first and foremost.

The Result: Given Zimbabwe’s large Christian population, Chisango has chosen to work primarily through churches to advance this initiative. More than 15 churches in Zimbabwe (and others in South Africa) now have family empowerment divisions, and more than 4000 families have been directly helped by the Foundation’s effort. Changes have surfaced within communities where families once hesitant have begun to care for their own relatives infected with HIV-AIDS. Demonstration of love between family members has notably increased.

What Can We Learn From These Examples?

Five principles emerge with direct application for the rapid spread of God’s Kingdom.

1) *Without openness to new paradigms, change would not have occurred.* Are we willing to relinquish what we know “must” be true in order to see what God might desire to do instead? Are we willing to examine a situation and dream of new systems never attempted, or will we cling to existing forms and institutions, forcing present-day realities into potentially outdated structures?

2) *Without the participation of the civil sector, change would not have occurred.* We will do well to recognize this emerging force of civil societies worldwide, learning to encourage, partner, and contribute through the powerful vehicle of quality NGOs.

3) *Communities were mobilized to identify and address their own root needs.* Are we willing to find and work through existing leaders or social sectors? Even those less educated, “qualified,” or seemingly able to contribute? Are we willing for projects to be led by those not yet following Jesus? Are we equipped to facilitate communities taking action and defeating their own root problems rather than setting up and running civil societies run by “us” to help “them”? (Note that both organizations founded by these entrepreneurs serve not to directly address their targeted need; rather, they motivate, connect, and mobilize other government, private, or civil sectors to help address needs.)

4) *Solutions sought to keep existing familial and community networks intact, utilizing these networks to bring reform.* In neither case do we find these entrepreneurs removing those who are hurting and in need from their own network or transferring them into foreign structures or solution paradigms. Rather, both sought solutions to unique problems by recognizing that natural networks must remain as conduits for the flow of innovation. So how can we redirect our efforts such that the preservation of the family and extended networks holds sway over the structures we are inclined to introduce? The existing network is by far the most natural channel along which the gospel can rapidly spread!

5) *Effective entrepreneurs work for systemic change, not just situational change.* Address root problems – not just symptoms. Entrepreneurs realize some problems could be addressed for years and bring temporary relief, yet never provide long-term betterment to those in need. If solutions merely scratch the surface of a problem, root problems remain unaddressed. In both these examples, specific problems were identified as related to system-wide problems and addressed accordingly. Are we willing to step back and recognize that long-term solutions will require wider and more innovative initiatives?

Solutions sought to keep existing familial and community networks intact, utilizing these networks to bring reform.

Social Entrepreneurs and the Kingdom of God

At the root of systemic problems is the need for worldview transformation, without which even systemic change will ultimately fall short of bringing life, peace, and truth. But what might we learn from those experiencing notable success with social movements that give life to those in need? Let’s ask God for new paradigms of involvement worthy of His Kingdom. It seems clear that if the Kingdom is to spread rapidly, it must do so along existing and natural lines of relationship. How can we tap into and

strengthen these networks through development work that defeats evil, restores communities and spreads the good news of Jesus Christ?

To learn more about these two case studies, or to read about other social entrepreneurs worldwide, see www.changemakers.net. Both men featured in this article are Ashoka fellows (see www.ashoka.org). 

insider movement

Missions in the 21st Century: Working With Social Entrepreneurs?

Rebecca Lewis

The challenge is this: how to catalyze an “insider movement” to Christ in a society closed to traditional mission work? For this to happen, the gospel needs to spread through pre-existing social networks, which become the “church.” People should not be drawn out of their families or communities into new social structures in order to become believers. God seems to be opening a new avenue of opportunity into closed societies through working with community agents of change – entrepreneurs working for social reform.

Historically, the most successful model for achieving lasting social change has been neither government nor business but the voluntary society (also known as the “citizen sector” or “civil society”). The idea of citizens banding together to reform society took a great step forward during the Evangelical Awakening, initiated by John Wesley in the 18th century. Out of this revival, and the Second Great Awakening in the early 19th century, came hundreds of voluntary, cross-denominational associations or “societies.” Founded by visionary social entrepreneurs, each society attacked a certain issue, everything from abolishing slavery to creating special “Sunday schools” to teach reading to children who worked all week. Why not harness this successful model as a vehicle for advancing God’s purposes among today’s least-reached people groups?

Today the door is wide open in most countries to people who would catalyze grass-roots initiatives to address social problems. During the 1990s the number of international non-profit organizations jumped from 6000 to 26,000, a growth rate of over 400%. Likewise, hundreds of thousands of national NGOs (non-government organizations) have been formed in non-Western countries. Why the sudden growth? First, since the fall of the Soviet Union, many governments have been releasing control of the economy and nurturing the private sector. Second, social entrepreneurs and the civil society sector are now widely recognized

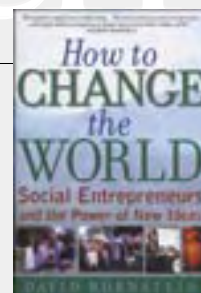
for their success in solving formerly intractable problems.

Third, governments are increasingly embarrassed if they try to block non-profit initiatives, because a global value for “empathy” has been established by the rapidly-spreading evangelical movement and the incorporation of Christian values in secular education worldwide. Fourth, there is a new openness to change in general. As people in remote places have become exposed to the rest of the world through mass media, they are reconsidering their behavior patterns and traditional beliefs. People everywhere are putting their hope in education and valuing progress as never before. As a result, local communities, as well as national governments, are getting behind citizen organizations seeking to implement solutions to systemic problems.

If the goal is to produce insider movements to Christ, why work with social entrepreneurs? Christian workers can build extensive relationships with leaders and families within a community by assisting social entrepreneurs (whether they are believers or not) with their vision to attack a problem. These types of broad relational networks – proactively bringing change to the community – form an excellent basis for the spread of the gospel in a way that leads to insider movements. Through helping the civil sector, workers have a role that is understandable and beneficial both in the eyes of the local people and the government. Also, like Jesus, they can announce the Kingdom in the context of bringing healing to the community.

To those who would like to learn more about finding and assisting social entrepreneurs, I recommend David Bornstein’s fascinating book, *How to Change the World: Social Entrepreneurs and the Power of New Ideas* (Oxford University Press, 2003). 

Rebecca Lewis spent eight years in Morocco on a church-planting team and currently creates curricula to help young people see how they can live their lives for God’s purposes.





Living Out “Christ In You” Every Day

Greg H. Parsons



I was recently asked to serve the leadership of the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization (LCWE) as a global strategist. My first assignment was to glean major themes and action steps in the papers from the 31 Issue Groups that met last year at a LCWE conference in Thailand. Almost every group identified one major need: to raise up committed believers who take their

faith seriously. Many groups suggested *that* would solve many other global problems inside and outside the Church.

This need came to mind as I thought about the life of Elsie Purnell, a friend and co-worker who died June 25, 2005. We need more people like Elsie.



Elsie Purnell, 1934-2005

I am deeply challenged by the stories told by those Elsie loved and served. Some stories come from new missionaries Elsie counseled. Others come from those advised by Elsie when they were adjusting to different cultures. Some come from parents or missionary kids (MKs) or adult MKs who needed help in adjusting to their home cultures. Others come from families shattered by the murder of a son or daughter.

Elsie and her husband Herb served with the Overseas Missionary Fellowship in north Thailand for more than 15 years, and in 1982 they came to Pasadena to serve here in a variety of effective ways. Those who knew Elsie employ these kinds of words and phrases to portray her life.

- She loved: her roots in New Jersey; her children; other mothers; the richness of culture; art; opportunity.
- She was: a faithful encourager; a low-key leader;

an organizer of women; a connector of all kinds of people; able to maintain friends over many years and places; a counselor to missionaries, parents, kids, and others in deep need; able to listen to those in pain and help them verbalize it; fearless with the truth.

- She was: a fighter through the murder of her oldest daughter, through a fire that destroyed her home, and through cancer; a minister alert to opportunity and need; consistently present for community meetings.
- She saw needs and met them, like giving renewed energy to the local chapter of Parents of Murdered Children, or ministering to Third Culture Kids and adult MKs.
- She always had more time than you did, and never seemed in a hurry when it came to people.

Elsie was one who acknowledged her own inadequacy, not just in the big things, but in everything. She could say with the apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 3:5-6, “Not that we are adequate to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God, who has made us adequate as servants of the New Covenant.”

Elsie sought to impart life in the midst of difficulty and pain. Yes, we need more believers like Elsie Purnell. While key ministries like the LCWE identify broad themes in world evangelization, the LCWE and others remind us that there’s no substitute for salt-and-light sisters and brothers who reveal the life of Jesus amidst gritty, daily challenges. Thank God for friends like Elsie who point the way. 🌐



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