

Biblical Missiology

A University Course in Cross-cultural Mission

Robin Daniel

Course Outline

Academic

This module offers an introduction to missiology as an aspect of applied theology and as an academic subject in its own right, drawing from a wide range of disciplines including biblical studies, sociology, psychology, anthropology, geography and history.

It should enable the student to assess other theological disciplines from a practical missiological perspective, and to approach the OT and NT scriptures from the viewpoint of a pioneer cross-cultural missionary.

Practical

This course takes a fresh look at the Great Commission given by Jesus to his disciples. It will prepare you to serve as a cross-cultural missionary, or to support others engaged in this vital task. It should equip you to...

- Understand what the Old and New Testaments say about mission.
- Assess the mission strategies adopted by Jesus and by Paul.
- Evaluate diverse cultures from a biblical perspective.
- Address some important controversial issues in world mission.
- Understand the sociology and psychology of conversion.
- See how the history of gospel mission may help us today.
- Prepare to go into an unreached area and present the gospel to an unreached people.
- Develop strategies suited to the particular people you are approaching.
- Recognize and overcome many of the difficulties faced by pioneer missionaries.

The Biblical Missiology course book includes Teacher's Notes, Written Assignments and Class Notes.

The Biblical Missiology compact disc contains all these in PDF format along with the texts listed as required reading for the course. Also included on the CD are a number of other recommended books and documents.

If the Biblical Missiology book or CD are lost or missing, they may be obtained free of charge from Tamarisk Publications or Opal Trust.

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This course can be studied and indeed taught effectively by almost anyone with missionary experience. If you wish to invite the author or another qualified person to teach it, or if you wish to translate any of these resources into another language, please contact Tamarisk Publications or Opal Trust.

Please note that a variety of views are presented and discussed in this course and do not in every case represent views held by Tamarisk Publications or Opal Trust.

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Teaching Biblical Missiology

About This Course

There are certain things which make this course quite different from other mission resources produced in recent years. First of all, it offers a deliberately *biblical* missiology. It looks directly to the Bible for guidance rather than to the opinions of Western church leaders or the expectations of international organisations. It was developed in and for the Majority World and may find a home wherever missionaries and church leaders choose to take the Bible as their authority and guide.

It is intensely *practical*, forged not in the safety and comfort of a library or college campus but in the real world, where evangelists and Bible teachers are hot, hungry, despised, persecuted, sometimes joyful, sometimes sorrowful – as they labour to lead the ignorant and confused to faith and maturity in Christ.

At the same time it is rigorously *intellectual*, requiring careful and disciplined thought, raising difficult questions and insisting on honest answers. Drawing ideas from scripture, and from personal experience in many places, it freely questions the theological fashions (the so-called paradigm shifts) introduced in recent years by Western theorists. It offers an independent perspective on a number of current issues in the theology of mission.

Doctrinal Basis

“Biblical Missiology” is an evangelical teaching resource. Affirming the Bible as our highest authority in all matters of personal belief, it accepts the New Testament as our essential guide to Christian faith and practice. Teachers and students without this personal conviction are advised to look for an alternative course.

The sections containing practical advice for missionaries, especially towards the end of the course, are intended primarily for missionary training colleges. They could be omitted, if desired, from the official syllabus submitted for accreditation by secular universities.

Academic Level

“Biblical Missiology” is described as a university course because its content reaches the highest academic level. It can be used with students working for a Diploma, Bachelor’s or Master’s degree in a Theological Seminary, Bible College, Missionary Training School or Church. It may also suggest topics for doctoral and post-doctoral research.

The basic information in the Class Notes will be of value at each of these levels. Students at the higher levels will benefit from the additional information in the Teacher’s Notes and should be able to present a more sophisticated response in terms of essays, research papers and examinations.

Course Material

The **Teacher’s Notes** comprise twelve classroom sessions presented as interactive lectures or seminars with questions for oral discussion. Questions to be raised in class are indicated by a star * in the text. Teachers should expect to add further questions relevant to their own context wherever appropriate.

Analyses of specialised topics and controversial issues are provided for the teacher as short texts within shaded box frames. Some of these may also be helpful for more advanced students.

True stories are included from around the world to illustrate many of the issues introduced in class. You should give additional illustrations from your own experience. Encourage your students to respond and to discuss their response together.

The **Class Notes** provide an outline of the material to be studied, and are intended primarily for the use of your students – to be photocopied and distributed to them as handouts (or emailed to them as PDF files). The Class Notes may also be used as a basis for powerpoint presentations by the teacher if so desired.

It is recommended that you give the Class Notes to your students for each session *after you have completed that session*. In class you will want them to give you their full attention, responding to your questions, without looking for answers in the Class Notes or attempting to write their own notes.

Please be aware, however, that for Sessions 6 and 7 the Class Notes should be distributed at the *beginning* of the session because the students will be asked to read and comment on the notes in class. This will be made clear as we progress.

The Class Notes for session 5 occupy just one side of paper. On the back of this are notes continued from session 4.

Encourage your students to read and remember what is written in their Class Notes, and to enquire about anything that may be unclear. Remind them to complete the reading assignments that are indicated. By the time this course is finished, each student should have received a complete set of Class Notes for all twelve sessions. These may then be useful to them as a resource for teaching others.

Students should bring a Bible to every session. They will need to refer to it, read aloud from it, and discuss it.

A range of **written assignments** for students are based on the content of this course. They include brief book reports, comprehensive book reports, quiz questions, exam questions, essay questions and research papers. Select and adapt whichever of these you consider appropriate for the academic level and personal experience of your students.

Each **classroom session** may occupy two to four hours, depending on the amount of student interaction and the time available. On this basis the total classroom time for this course would be 36 hours on average, but might be as little as 24 or as much as 48 hours. Alternatively, the course may easily occupy an entire semester or even a year if the sessions are divided and extended with good use of student presentations, practical outreach assignments and visiting missionary speakers, along with further discussion and prayer.

Preparing to teach this course

1. Supply your students with **the texts designated as Required Reading**. They are included in PDF format on the Biblical Missiology CD. Some are also available as published books.¹ Make sure your students have all these texts, either on paper or as PDF files. Ask them to start reading, if possible, before commencing the classroom sessions.

2. Provide a **printout or photocopy of the Class Notes** for each student. The Class Notes for each session should be on a separate piece of paper for each session. Make sure they are not all collated or stapled into a single booklet. As an alternative to photocopying, you may prefer to email the Class Notes to your students in PDF format (available on the CD).

The Class Notes for most of the sessions should be given out at the end of the session, but remember to provide the notes for sessions 6 and 7 *before* the session starts so they can be used in class.

Required Reading	format	A4 pages
Brian Fargher (translator): <i>Sorsa Sumamo, an Ethiopian Evangelist</i> (Tamarisk, 2014)	PDF	42
Eileen Lageer: <i>New Life For All</i> (Lakeland Oliphants, 1969; Tamarisk, 2014)	PDF	51
Robin Daniel: <i>The Saviour of the World</i> (Tamarisk, 2014)	PDF	8
Robin Daniel: <i>Mission Strategies Then and Now: an introduction to biblical missiology</i> (Tamarisk, 2012)	PDF or book	87
Robin Daniel: <i>A Practical History of Gospel Mission</i> (Tamarisk, 2014)	PDF	14
Robin Daniel: <i>Rapid Mass Movements</i> (Tamarisk, 2014)	PDF	6

The texts listed as required reading are all included on the Biblical Missiology CD. Also available on the CD are the following books and documents offered as recommended texts.

Recommended Texts

Robin Daniel: <i>The Process of Conversion</i> (Tamarisk, 2014)	PDF	10
Robin Daniel: <i>Preparing for Mission</i> (Tamarisk, 2014)	PDF	22
Lois K Fuller: <i>Going to the Nations</i> (4 th edn, ACTS, 2011; Tamarisk, 2014) ²	PDF or book	42
Lois K. Fuller: <i>The Work of a Missionary</i> (3 rd edn, ACTS, 2012; Tamarisk, 2014)	PDF or book	48

Specialist Subjects

Robin Daniel: <i>How to Speak in Parables</i> (Tamarisk, 2014)	PDF	9
Robin Daniel: <i>What do you think of the One who will come?</i> (Tamarisk, 2014)	PDF	9
Robin Daniel: <i>This Holy Seed – faith, hope and love in the early churches of North Africa</i> (Tamarisk, 2010)	PDF or book	211
Lois K. Fuller: <i>A Missionary Handbook on African Traditional Religion</i> (ACTS, Bukuru, 2001; Tamarisk, 2014)	PDF or book	49
Charles Marsh: <i>Share Your Faith with a Muslim</i> (Moody, 1975; Tamarisk, 2014)	PDF	34
Charles Marsh: <i>Too Hard for God?</i> (Echoes, 1970; Tamarisk, 2014)	PDF	84
Douglas S Hubery: <i>The Teaching Methods of Jesus</i> (NCEC, 1970; Tamarisk, 2014)	PDF	26

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I am grateful to Eileen Lageer, Brian Fargher, Lois Fuller Dow, and to the copyright holders of Charles Marsh's books for permission to offer their work free of charge, and likewise to John Hubery for the use of his father's work. These people naturally bear no responsibility for the content of the course itself.

As always, my grateful thanks for helpful suggestions and careful proof-reading go to my dear wife Janet.

The author

Robin Daniel has thirty years' experience of pioneer gospel outreach, scripture translation and making disciples, all under pressure of persecution. He speaks four languages and has taught biblical missiology in various parts of Africa and more recently India. His university studies have focused especially on Geography, Sociology and Theology. His PhD in Theology was awarded by the University of Liverpool for research in the history of mission methods. This is not his real name.

¹ Books by Robin Daniel can be obtained from booksellers, or online from amazon.co.uk, or direct from Opal Trust (see page 1).

² Books by Lois K Fuller are distributed by Africa Christian Textbooks, TCNN, PMB 2020, Bukuru 930008, Plateau State, Nigeria; phone: +2348035895328 --- www.africachristiantextbooks.com --- email: acts.jos@gmail.com

1. Introduction to Missiology

Note: This first session contains much introductory material. You may present it quickly or slowly according to your circumstances. If your students are responsive, and the questions lead to useful discussion, you could divide this session into two and complete it in your next class.

At the end of this first session, you should provide your students with a copy of the Class Notes for this session. Encourage them to study the notes carefully in order to clarify and confirm the issues raised. They should ask you about anything that may be unclear.

Sharing our Experiences

Tell your students about YOUR experience of cross-cultural mission

At the very start of this course you might speak about your own experience of cross-cultural mission. Or alternatively, invite someone else whose experience will inspire your students. You must awaken their interest in worldwide gospel outreach and stimulate their desire to learn about it.

Ask your students about THEIR experience of cross-cultural mission

As a teacher your aim is not merely to give information so your students can pass their exams. You are training them to think carefully. You are also preparing them to take initiatives. You want them to raise questions, to imagine possibilities, and to offer their own ideas and suggestions. Here are some questions you could use to awaken their interest and get them thinking.

Mission experience

- * What is your personal experience of gospel outreach to people of a different culture?
- * Have you visited anyone engaged in cross-cultural mission? Tell us about them.
- * Has your church sent out any cross-cultural missionaries? Where are they and what are they doing?
- * Are you praying regularly for any missionaries that you know? Tell us about them.
- * What opportunities are there for cross-cultural mission where you live?
In other parts of your nation? Beyond its borders?
- * Are you preparing to go somewhere for mission yourself?

The relationship between churches and missionaries

- * Do your church leaders regularly talk about mission activity in other places?
Do they read out reports from missionaries or evangelists, encouraging the congregation to pray for them?
- * Do you think pastors are usually happy for their church to support missionaries?
- * Are church members happy to send missionaries and support them financially?
- * Who decides if someone can be a missionary? How are missionaries appointed?
- * What training do you think a missionary would need?

The choices and challenges that missionaries face

- * If a husband wants to be a missionary, how might his wife feel about it?
- * What do you think it's like for children to live in a rural area with a different language?
What about schooling?
- * What happens if missionaries suffer illness or accident in a place far from home?
- * What should missionaries do if their financial support does not cover their expenses?

Perhaps there are some personal questions

- * "I'd like to be a missionary but my church won't support me. What shall I do?"
- * "I'd like to be a missionary but I don't know where to go?"

Ask your students if they have any other questions about cross-cultural mission. Assure them that you will make time to discuss their questions either now or later.

What is Missiology?

Missiology is the study of Christian mission, especially cross-cultural mission.

It considers how missionaries introduce the gospel to a new place, make disciples, and start churches.

It draws on scholarship in the fields of biblical study, history, geography, sociology, psychology, linguistics, cultural anthropology, and in some contexts medicine and agriculture.

Missiology is an interactive discipline.

We interact with THEOLOGIANS (who know the Bible) and with MISSIONARIES (who know the people). A missiologist should challenge Bible scholars *to be practical in the real world*.

A missiologist should also challenge missionaries *to think biblically*.

To be a good missiologist, you will need an intelligent mind and a wide general knowledge.

You will also need EXPERIENCE of mission work.

If you have never been a MISSIONARY, you cannot be an effective MISSIOLOGIST.

That would be like a car mechanic who never gets his hands dirty, or a cook who never goes into the kitchen.

As students of biblical missiology, our responsibility is to consider:

1. How the gospel was defined and then proclaimed by Christ and his earliest apostles,
2. How the authentic gospel has been carried into all the world since then,
3. How we ourselves may be effective in proclaiming the gospel and discipling people from every ethnic group.

Missionaries and Missiologists

This course attempts to bridge the wide and growing gulf between missionaries and missiologists. With rare exceptions, it is painfully evident that missionaries and missiologists live in two different worlds. It has been said, perhaps unfairly, "Those who can, do; those who can't, teach."¹

But one thing is clear. A really effective cross-cultural missionary is usually too busy making disciples to attend conventions or to study for higher degrees. Reluctant to invest in air tickets when his neighbours are short of food, he remains unknown and is rarely invited to address international conferences or to pass on his knowledge and experience to students who will become the next generation of church leaders.

A common criticism thrown at theological colleges is that they produce graduates capable of quoting authors but incapable of making disciples. After years of isolation in academic institutions, it must be admitted that many missiology lecturers are failing to address the issues of concern to missionaries. Indeed they may be completely unaware of such issues.

One of the best known professors of mission studies in recent years is Andrew Walls. He has declared, "A new generation of mission scholars is arising with all the necessary skills and equipment but without the opportunity of overseas service."² That is a shocking statement. It illustrates the great divide that separates those who are teaching about mission from those who are engaged in it. A *lack of missionary experience* will be a crushing handicap to anyone desiring to teach about mission. Every missiologist should make it a priority to obtain such experience, and continue to seek it throughout life in as many different places as possible. A scholar "without the opportunity of overseas service" would be well advised to teach some other subject.

World Trends, Opportunities and Strategies

Note: At this stage you are just raising questions to awaken interest. You do not need to give complete answers.

If we want to be effective in mission, we must face the issues of the modern world.

We cannot simply do what our parents and grandparents did.

We need to understand our own generation and consider the best way to serve Christ now.

*** What changes are we seeing in the world today? How does this affect cross-cultural mission?**

*** What new difficulties are we facing and what new opportunities do we have?**

1. Increasing travel

Compared with previous generations, people are now travelling much more within their own country, and beyond its borders to other nations. They travel for education, business, tourism, medical care, and many are compelled by tragic circumstances to travel as refugees.

HOW MAY THIS AFFECT GOSPEL OUTREACH? People travelling or living far from home will expect new experiences, choices, challenges and opportunities. They are adjusting to change and looking for ways to adapt. They may be unsettled, traumatised, hopeful or ambitious. All are desiring to establish new social networks of friends and workmates. Separated from the constraints of their traditional community, they are

¹ George Bernard Shaw, *Man and Superman*

² Andrew F Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History* (Orbis, 2004), p.156

usually more willing to consider new ideas and adopt new lifestyles. For these reasons, people may become more open to hear and accept the gospel when travelling or living far from home.

2. Increasing importance of cities

Rural people are moving in large numbers to the cities. It is usually the most restless, intelligent and progressive who make this move, leaving the more passive and traditional people in the countryside. In some places it is the men who move in search of work, and in consequence the rural villages are populated almost entirely by women.

Mission outreach in the past was often focused on rural areas, so that cities have been relatively neglected. But there are now far more unreached people in urban areas than in the countryside. The cities also attract immigrants in large numbers from many different places.

HOW MAY THIS AFFECT GOSPEL OUTREACH? People moving to the cities are often hoping to improve their circumstances, ambitious for personal advancement in the global culture of the urban world. At the same time they may be lonely and unsettled, with poor living and working conditions. They may be suffering a measure of culture shock. No longer closely watched by relatives and religious leaders, they may feel less obligation to follow traditional culture and religion. For these reasons we may find urban people especially responsive to friendship and to the gospel.

In the great cities of the world, where immigrants from many places are gathered together, there is wonderful potential for cross-cultural mission.

3. Increasing globalization of culture

The past ten or fifteen years has seen the growth of a global culture brilliantly advertised and sold wherever electricity can take it. In every continent we watch the same television programmes, translated into many different languages. Satellite channels enable the whole world to watch the same films and see the same news. The internet allows identical products to be advertised and bought all over the world.

But global culture has grown beyond its Western roots to form a range of semi-global cultures using the same sophisticated technology yet speaking other languages and promoting slightly different worldviews. Middle-eastern Islamic culture, for example, is presented in Arabic using a similar style of TV channel – with news, films and musical entertainment but reinforcing an emphatic commitment to Islamic supremacy.

Global culture has impacted evangelical churches worldwide, through Christian conferences, television channels and video recordings. Throughout the world a particular style of church service has been adopted, with a stage, microphones, keyboards, worship group and dramatic preaching by a dominant pastor.

HOW MAY THIS AFFECT GOSPEL OUTREACH? Global culture has undermined traditional values and beliefs by emphasising personal assertion and enjoyment, demonstrating new freedoms and lifestyle choices, and by promoting all the luxuries that money can buy.

In the West, global culture rejects all religion. Elsewhere, however, many people think that global culture is Christian culture and may be willing to hear the gospel for that reason. But we may wonder: Have the churches, and the gospel itself, been corrupted by global culture?

4. Changing social relations

The traditional distinctions of tribe, caste and class are breaking down as social status becomes more determined by the individual's level of wealth and education. New social networks (friendship, marriage, housing, communal leisure activities etc.) are being formed on this basis, especially in the cities.

HOW MAY THIS AFFECT GOSPEL OUTREACH? With the rise of a new urban middle class, it is becoming easier for ambitious individuals and families to leave their old social network and join Christian fellowships compatible with their new social status.

5. Increasing fundamentalist extremism

Our generation is seeing a clash of civilisations along ethnic, cultural and religious lines leading to conflict between nations and also within nations. New technologies of communication have made it much easier for religious extremists to promote their views and co-ordinate their agendas.

In addition to political instability and a failure of law and order, this brings increasing persecution for evangelical believers. In about 60 nations, Christians are denied basic human rights on account of their faith.¹

Most of the world's non-Christian population is deliberately kept in ignorance of the gospel by government policy. At least 80% of the world's non-Christian population lives in nations that restrict open access for evangelical missionaries.

HOW MAY THIS AFFECT GOSPEL OUTREACH? Countries and regions that are "closed" to the gospel may require more creative strategies for entry, survival and outreach. But many ordinary people are becoming

¹ <http://www.evangelicalfellowship.ca/page.aspx?pid=598> (accessed 19 June 2014)

disillusioned with the fanaticism and terrorism of extremists, and may turn away from their traditional beliefs and communities for that reason.

6. Increasing physical suffering

In addition to the suffering caused by deliberate religious terrorism and persecution, many thousands of people are affected by large scale disasters: famines, earthquakes and floods, epidemics (such as HIV-Aids) and wars. These seem to be on the increase. Most of these disasters are caused directly, or made far worse, by human greed or political rivalry.

Many people have become homeless refugees, and thousands of children are at risk. The United Nations estimates that there are 45 million refugees in the world. Half of these are displaced within their own country.¹

Despite a global reduction in extreme poverty, the gap between rich and poor families continues to widen on account of over-population, corruption, climate change, exploitation of cheap labour etc. Many young men cannot find work and so cannot get married. Many families are unable to secure a balanced diet, a safe and hygienic home, or basic health care.² Despite these needs, evangelical relief and development agencies are increasingly prevented from helping, on account of religious discrimination.

The passionate desire for short-term economic growth has resulted in massive long-term environmental destruction in many parts of the world. Global warming and other severe effects may soon have serious social and economic consequences.

HOW MAY THIS AFFECT GOSPEL OUTREACH? Sociologists have observed that natural disasters and social upheavals often cause disillusionment with accepted systems of belief. In time of catastrophe, the traditional religion or worldview is seen to have failed in two ways. Firstly, it has failed to provide a satisfactory explanation of *why the disaster happened*. And secondly, it seems *powerless to help those affected*. At such times people become open to an alternative.³

In time of trouble there will be opportunities for compassionate help to people in need, which may open doors for Christian ministry, and may indeed open hearts to the gospel.

On the other hand, missionaries may find it increasingly difficult to raise support and pay their expenses if financial stress, debt, bankruptcy and unemployment are affecting the churches that send them.

7. Shift in spiritual leadership from the West to the Rest

The majority of evangelical believers are no longer found in the white English-speaking nations (USA, UK, Canada, Australia etc.). As believers in the West become increasingly despised, marginalized and discouraged, leadership is passing to Africans, Asians and South Americans. Every week about one thousand new churches are planted in Asia and Africa.

HOW MAY THIS AFFECT GOSPEL OUTREACH? The spiritual responsibility for world mission now lies with Nigerians, Brazilians, Indians, Chinese etc.

Conclusion: The world is changing.

We must consider how to meet its current and future needs (not its past needs).

We must assess the challenges and opportunities for this generation and the next.

We should be encouraged, especially by the statistics.

Global Statistics

Almost **one third** of the world's people identify themselves as Christian – more than any other religion.⁴

Christianity is the only religion that is **truly worldwide**. It is the main religion in every continent.

There are now probably more than **600 million born-again believers** in the world.⁵

Every day **69,000 people** are converted to Christ (more than to any other religion).⁶

Evangelicals are increasing at an annual rate of **2.6%**... much quicker than Islam (1.9%) and Hinduism (1.2%).⁷

Islam is restricted in its distribution and grows almost entirely through births, not conversions.

In Africa, for every 10 so-called Christians converted to Islam, 17 Muslims are converted to Christianity.⁸

¹ <http://www.unhcr.org/uk/about-us/key-facts-and-figures.html> (accessed 19 June 2014)

² The World Bank, press release 17 April 2013

³ Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity* (HarperCollins, 1997), pp.77-8

⁴ *Operation World* (7th edn., 2010), p.3

⁵ <http://www.worldevangelicals.org/resources/about/> (accessed 19 April 2014)

⁶ <http://www.islamreview.com/articles/mythaboutislam.shtml> (accessed 19 June 2014)

⁷ *Operation World* (7th edn., 2010), pp.2-3; http://joshuaproject.net/global_statistics (accessed 19 June 2014)

⁸ <http://www.islamreview.com/articles/mythaboutislam.shtml> (data from David A Barrett, *World Christian Encyclopedia*, 2001, p 4) (accessed 19 June 2014)

Between 1940 and 2010, "Bible-believing Christians" **increased from 3% of the world population to 12%**.¹

By 2010, according to *Operation World*, Evangelicals were 7.9% of the world population ...

but when Charismatics and Pentecostals are added to this, the percentage rises to **12%** or even 16%.²

Evangelicals are increasing worldwide **twice as fast as the population**, and some say three times as fast.³

"Despite the rapid increase in world population, the number of faithful Bible-believing Christians is increasing faster than any other large movement or religion. It is **doubling every ten and a half years**."⁴

This growth is especially spectacular in parts of Africa, Asia and South America.⁵

It is from these areas that missionaries must now go with the gospel to reach the rest of the world.

The Meaning of Mission

What does the Bible say about Mission?

* **Can you find the word "mission" in your English New Testament?**

* **Are there any "missionaries" in the Bible?**

The words "mission" and "missionary" come from the Latin *missio*, which means "sending".

Most English translations of the New Testament do not use these words.

But the idea of being **sent on a mission** is present in the New Testament.

It is expressed in a Greek word of great significance: *apostolē* (apostleship).

Associated with it are the related words *apostolos* (apostle) and *apostellō* (to send).

These all contain two elements: *apo* meaning "from", and *stello* meaning "send".

An apostle is a person sent from one place to another place. He is sent to do something there.

We must consider the meaning of **apostleship** in the New Testament.

The Eleven, sent to testify in all the world, wished to appoint a man in the place of Judas. They prayed,

"Show which one of these two you have chosen to take the place in this ministry and *apostleship* from which Judas turned aside" (Acts 1:24-25).

Paul later recalled how Peter was sent to the Jews and he to the Gentiles, and so he wrote,

"He [the Lord] who was operating in Peter for an *apostleship* to the circumcised was operating the same way in me for the Gentiles" (Gal 2:8).

Then Paul wrote to those who had responded to his message in distant Corinth (1 Cor 9:2)...

"If to others I am not an apostle, at least I am to you, for you are the seal of my *apostleship* in the Lord"

Words from the *apostellō* family are found **almost 200 times in New Testament**.

The idea of sending someone to do something was very important for Jesus and for the early churches.

Jesus chose twelve whom he sent as apostles to take the gospel to the ends of the earth. (Mk 3:14; Acts 1:2).

Others were also called apostles... Paul and Barnabas (Acts 14:14), Andronicus and Junia (Rom 16:7),

two unnamed men (2 Cor 8:23), Epaphroditus (Phil 2:25), Paul, Silas and Timothy (1 Thess 2:6).

There were also some false apostles (2 Cor 11:13).

In the New Testament an apostle is not a man who rises to high status and authority in a comfortable place.

An apostle is a pioneer sent to proclaim the gospel and make disciples among unreached people.

There are men and women doing this work today. We often call them missionaries.

Sometimes we are told that every Christian is called to be a missionary. This is not true.

In the New Testament, "apostleship" was **not entrusted to every believer** but to certain ones.

They were chosen and sent by God to proclaim the gospel to a race or a place that had never heard it.

While every believer should be a faithful witness in the workshop or school or home...

and every believer should make disciples... scripture says that **not all are apostles** (1 Cor 12:29).⁶

* **Do you think an apostle is the same as a missionary?**

* **Should missionaries today be called apostles?**

¹ "The Amazing Countdown" (US Center for World Mission, 2010)

² *Operation World* (7th edn., 2010), pp.3-4; see also <http://www.gordonconwell.edu/resources/Global-Context-of-Christianity.cfm>

³ *Operation World* (7th edn., 2010), pp.2-3. The annual world population increase is 1.2%.

⁴ Ralph Winter, US Center for World Mission; Todd Johnson and Kenneth Ross, *Atlas of Global Christianity* (Edinburgh U P, 2009)

⁵ <http://www.thetravelingteam.org/stateworld/statistics/growth-church> (accessed 19 April 2014)

⁶ We will discuss this further in due course (see the document *Preparing for Mission*).

*** What is the difference between an apostle and an evangelist?**

We have seen that “**apostle**” (Greek *apostolos*) has two elements: *apo* “from”, and *stello* “send”.

An *apostolos* travels to a distant place to accomplish something there. This can take long time.

Paul and Barnabas travelled by land and sea. They were many months away.

The Eleven were commissioned to make disciples in every nation. It takes time to make a disciple.

When there are some disciples, they must be gathered into churches. It takes time to form a church.

There are many tasks for an apostle – proclaiming, teaching, pastoral care.

Some will translate scriptures, make recordings, write tracts, produce videos.

Some will do medical work, teach people to read, help with agriculture or small crafts or businesses.

It is a pioneer work and often means learning a new language and adapting to a different culture.

The aim of all this is to form fellowships of disciples in places where Christ is not yet known.

*** How does an apostle support himself?** How does he pay for food and rent for a long period far from home?

He either finds work, or receives gifts, or both.

“**evangelist**” (Gk. *euangelistēs*) also has two elements: *eu* meaning “good”, and *angelos* “messenger”.

In the New Testament an evangelist is “a messenger of good”, that is a person who brings good news.

Acts 21:8: we entered the house of Philip the evangelist

Eph 4:11 “some evangelists” 2 Tim 4:5 “do the work of an evangelist”

A *euangelistēs* is someone who **announces good news**. He can do this quite quickly

An evangelist **sows seed** and moves on. He does not usually travel a very long distance.

He does not generally start churches. He does not care for a flock...

Philip went to speak to the Ethiopian on the desert road, but did not stay there to plant a church.

*** How does an evangelist support himself?**

He usually has a home and a job nearby. He earns his living, and proclaims the gospel in his spare time.¹

In the New Testament an evangelist is not just an assistant pastor, or a man training to be a pastor.

He is a man with the gift and calling *to proclaim the gospel*.

He goes out and meets lost people, and helps them to personal faith in Christ.

*** Do you know of any female evangelists?** (See Acts 18:26.)

Please note the difference between...

an **Evangelical**: a person who believes the gospel

an **evangelist**: a person who offers the gospel to others in hope of their conversion

And similarly the difference between...

an **evangelical church**: a church which believes the gospel

an **evangelistic church**: a church which offers the gospel to others in hope of their conversion

What is Mission?

If you take an old dictionary and look up the word “mission”, you will find it means something like “sending someone to a place for a purpose”. By this definition, mission involves travel from one place to another in order to accomplish a task in that place.

For two hundred years it was generally understood that an evangelical missionary is someone sent by a church or society to a foreign country in order to proclaim the gospel, make disciples and plant churches there.

The word “mission” was also used for schemes to send evangelists into particularly poor or needy places nearer home where the gospel was not known. A “city mission” or a “university mission” or a “beach mission” would be an intense campaign of preaching and visiting for the conversion of people in those specific places. These were “home missions” in contrast to “foreign missions”.

Outside of a Christian context we have become familiar with the idea of a “space mission” to other planets, or a “diplomatic mission” to the government of a foreign country. This still has the idea of sending to a distant place in order to accomplish something of importance there.

But many writers today, including some claiming to be missiologists, have started using the word “mission” in a different sense altogether. This reflects a general shift in the meaning of the word.

In commerce and industry, the term “mission” has gradually replaced the old and rather uninteresting word “aim” or “purpose”. A company or organization will define its “mission statement” indicating what it expects to do. This mission can be accomplished anywhere, in the office or factory or yard. It has no sense of being sent

¹ See also *MSTN*, ch.12, Apostles and evangelists (pp.132-3).

from one place to another. The influence of this business understanding of mission is now seen in many churches, theological colleges and Christian organisations.

In addition to this, some evangelical church leaders have adopted an expression used in non-evangelical circles. They have started to speak about *missio dei* "the mission of God". The Latin words clearly reveal the source of this idea in Roman Catholicism. The concept of *missio dei* embraces everything that the Creator wants to do in the world.

More recently the word "missional" has been introduced to describe anything that increases Christian influence in the world. So we hear about missional worship, missional spirituality, missional families, missional leadership and so on. For some people, missional simply means trying to make the world a better place to live, or making Christian countries more Christian. For some it represents good business practice or social justice or political involvement or caring for the environment, or just being a nice person in your community.

In such evangelical circles as these, the word "mission" is understood to mean everything a committed Christian should do. In the past we called this "ministry" or "service"; now it is called mission. So you will hear people saying, "Every Christian is called to mission" or "The central purpose of the church is mission." But mission does not mean what it used to mean.

One seminary used to have a course called "systematic theology". The course is still taught, and the content is unchanged, but the title of the course is now "missional theology". The college prospectus explains why: "Missional theology is not 'theology of foreign missions'; it's exploration of the character of God, who is a God on a mission."¹ But "God on a mission" does not mean that the Creator has been sent to a particular place to accomplish a task there as we might suppose. His mission is simply to do whatever he wants done. Used in this way the word really means nothing at all.

It is clear that the term "mission" has been adopted by people with a whole variety of influences and agendas. Linguists will tell you that when a word acquires many meanings, it becomes increasingly meaningless... because no one can be certain which meaning is intended. They call this *polysemia*, literally "many meanings". Now we might wonder: Is that the problem we are facing? Is the word "mission" suffering from the disease of polysemia to the point where it is no longer a useful word and should be abandoned altogether?

Perhaps so. Our concern, however, is not to protest at a misuse of words but rather to teach the truth. We need to do this clearly. Our students will not understand what we are talking about unless we can, at the outset, establish a biblical meaning for this word "mission", or else find another word. We may prefer to speak of "cross-cultural evangelism" or "apostolic outreach" or "pioneering unreached people-groups" or "worldwide gospel proclamation". The terms that we use are less important than the facts and ideas underlying them. But at the outset we may need to define our terms very carefully to avoid being misunderstood.

The word "missionary"

It is unfortunate that during the past hundred years the word "missionary" has acquired a meaning quite different to anything we see in the New Testament. In many places it now means a white person accountable to a foreign missionary society rather than to the local church. But there is no such distinction of race or accountability in the New Testament.

If the words "mission" and "missionary" have changed their meaning, we should take care that our understanding of New Testament apostleship is not distorted by this. For the sake of clarity we might decide to change the words we use:

<i>usual words</i>	alternative expressions			
<i>mission</i>	apostolic mission	cross-cultural gospel mission	pioneer gospel outreach	worldwide proclamation of the gospel
<i>missionaries</i>	apostolic missionaries	cross-cultural missionaries	pioneer gospel messengers	worldwide gospel emissaries / envoys
<i>missiology</i>	apostology or apostolics	studies in cross-cultural mission	studies in pioneer gospel outreach	global studies in gospel communication

¹ Dr. Todd Mangum, Why We Teach "Missional Theology" rather than "Systematic Theology" (blog 06 December 2011, Biblical Seminary, Hatfield, Pennsylvania)

The Origin of Mission

* How many books in the Bible make reference to mission?

Every book in the New Testament was **written by a missionary**.

Every **letter** in the New Testament was written **to a missionary** or **to a church just started by a missionary**.

Of the 12 disciples chosen by Jesus, all but one **became** missionaries.

The one who did not become a missionary... became a **traitor**.

* What about the Old Testament? Can you think of any missionaries in the Old Testament?

Jonah? No, he didn't want to go anywhere. He only went because he was forced to.

He had no good news for the people of Nineveh – only bad news of judgment to come.

There are **no missionaries in the Old Testament**.

Why? Because the Israelites had no gospel to proclaim to the nations.

There was no salvation for the Gentiles until Christ had atoned for the sin of the world.

Moses never planned a worldwide mission to tell the whole world about Yahweh.

He did not send out teachers of the Law with instruments of circumcision to every tribe, nation, tongue.

The Lord did not call him to do this. None of the prophets, priests or kings were instructed to do it.

The Israelites were rebuked for many failings... but never for failing to take the Law to the nations.

* But doesn't the Old Testament tell us God will bless every nation?

The Lord God said to Abraham "In you *all the families of the earth shall be blessed*" (Gen 12:3).

He said, "In your offspring *all the nations of the earth shall be blessed*" (Gen 26:4).

Despite this, the covenant that Yahweh made at Sinai was **only with the twelve tribes** of Israel.

They were told to keep **separate** from the peoples around them who had other cultures and beliefs.

Israel, throughout its long history, was in conflict with the nations of the world.

The Law anticipated that some foreigners might want to join Israel.

If these outsiders agreed to keep the Law and receive circumcision (in the case of the men)...

they would be allowed to live free from exploitation and oppression among the Israelites.

They could worship in the Court of the Gentiles and hear the word of the Lord.

But in order to benefit from the covenant with Israel they had to **live in the land of Israel**,

or travel constantly to Israel – **to the Temple, to the priests and prophets and teachers of the Law**.

In consequence, only a very small number of foreigners became worshippers of Yahweh.

There were so few that the **Court of the Gentiles became a common market** instead of a place for prayer.

So what about the promise to "all the families of the earth" and "all the nations of the earth"?

Abraham did not see the promise fulfilled in his day... nor did Moses or David or any of prophets.

But one man did... right at the end of the New Testament. John in Revelation 7:9-10:

"After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, **from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages**, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"

So how will the promise to Abraham be fulfilled? That is our subject for study in these days.¹

* Someone says, "The gospel was meant for the Jews. It was only offered to the Gentiles because it was rejected by the Jews." Would you agree?

No. From the very beginning God planned to bless all nations. He promised this long before he made a special covenant with Israel.

* Who first had the idea of mission to the world? The Lord God.

The origin of mission is the Lord God himself.

Required Reading: *Sorsa Sumamo* to page 40.

¹ This subject is developed in the document *The Saviour of the World*.

2. A Biblical Theology of Mission I

The Purpose of Mission

Two true stories

Is Jesus necessary?

One of my Masters' students, a theology graduate from a well-known evangelical church in Nigeria, raised a question in class. He said, "Abraham was justified by faith, Moses was a man of God, David was a man after God's own heart. If God accepted and blessed *them*, surely he will accept and bless *us* if we do as they did. The Old Testament saints had everything they could possibly need – the Ten Commandments, the Temple for worship, and sacrifices if they sinned. It seems they had no need of Jesus, so why did Jesus come?"

How would you reply? Was Jesus really necessary? Or was he just a little icing on the cake?

Are we Old Testament people?

When my children were small, I enjoyed teaching them stories from the Bible. One day I made a little wooden model of David and a bigger model of Goliath. David's arm was attached to a rubber band so he could shoot a peanut at Goliath and knock him down. We had fun with this toy but then I wondered: What am I teaching my children with this? Does God want them to throw stones at a big boy who bullies them? And will God help them to kill that boy? It was a moment when my understanding of the Bible changed.

What do you think I understood that day?

* **What do you think it means to be saved? What is salvation?**

* **Do you think people can be saved by following the example of Abraham or Moses or David?**

To understand the nature of Christian mission, we must know the condition of the world.

It is in a catastrophic condition. It is **a world of tragedy and disaster**.

We are so familiar with disaster, disease, decay and death...

that we cannot imagine a world without these terrible things.

But they were not there in the beginning (Gen 1:31). And they will not be there at the end (Rev 21:1-8).

Our earliest ancestors desired a **knowledge of both good and evil** in order to be wise.

They seized this knowledge against the will of God. Evil entered the world and corrupted all creation.

Their disobedience to the Lord was reckoned against them as sin, and **the wages of sin is death**.

The whole world now has this terrible knowledge of evil and this experience of death.

All of creation is longing desperately to be "liberated from its bondage to decay" (Rom 8:21-3).

After 6000 years of human history we still suffer the **terrible consequences** of evil entering the world – catastrophes, epidemics, earthquakes, hurricanes, floods and fires, war, hunger, guilt, hatred, oppression.

We all suffer the deadly consequences of sin – disease, disaster and decay, and all of us in the end will die.

Every generation **yearns hopelessly for a return to Eden**.

We try to recreate Eden with gardens, houses and hospitals.

But each of us will suffer our own share of disease, disaster and decay...

and each of us in the end will return to dust. Death has power to destroy us all.

But God has **not utterly condemned the world** or left it without hope.

He gave a promise that the seed of the woman would crush the serpent's head.

When Cain was born, his parents must have hoped he would crush the evil one and save the world.

But Cain rose up and killed his brother. Their hopes died with him.

After this the Old Testament shows us a long series of attempts to try and solve the problems of the world.

Perhaps if the murderer Cain can be **kept away** from others, then all will be well.

Perhaps if the sin of the world can be washed away in a **great flood**, all will be well.

Perhaps if Abraham can start a **godly family** separate from everyone else, then all will be well.

If his descendants can have an agreed **system of Law**, perhaps all will be well.

If they are settled in a **prosperous country**, then perhaps all will be well.

If a **king** is anointed to enforce the Law, perhaps all will be well.

Then if **prophets** are sent to warn them, they may turn back to the Lord.

Purified by **exile**, their children may do better than they did.

But **none of these efforts could save the people of Israel... or the nations of the world.**

They still suffered the terrible knowledge of evil... and the deadly consequences of sin.

The history of Israel is a history of **frustration and disappointment.**

“Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking” (Rom 11:7). Everything was tried and everything failed.

God taught his people the inadequacy of every possible strategy to solve the problems of the world.

The heroes of faith in Hebrews 11 did not receive what they hoped for (Heb 11:13).

The nations did not receive the blessing promised through Abraham.

They must wait to receive it, with us, through a new and better covenant in Christ (Heb 11:39-40).

The purpose of the Old Testament is to show **how much we need a Saviour.**

The Law is an elementary teacher (Gk. *paidagōgos*) **leading us to Christ** (Gal 3:24).

The promise to Abraham can only be fulfilled by Jesus Christ, the offspring of Abraham (Gal 3:16).

It was **Jesus alone** who could heal the sick, feed the hungry, still the storm, raise the dead.

He alone could bear in his body the sin of the world and forge a new covenant in his blood.

He alone can take away sin and the deadly consequences of sin for all who will put their trust in him.

He alone can fill us with his Holy Spirit, changing our character, transforming how we think and what we do.

He is **the only Saviour** and he has promised he will return **to complete his work of salvation.**

When he comes, the Kingdom of God will come. Then his will shall be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Then we shall inherit eternal life in a new and perfect world, and receive new bodies ideally suited to it.

Israelites who loved the Lord **longed for this full salvation** (Gen 49:18; Ps 119:166, 174; Is 12:2).

The Hebrew word for salvation is *yeshua*. This is the name of Jesus. He is the only Saviour.

That is why “we proclaim Christ”, and especially why “we proclaim Christ crucified” (Acts 8:5; 1 Cor 1:23).

The Old Testament shows us the best of all possible religions without Christ.

But **it does not teach us how to solve the problems of the world.** It does not tell us what to do.

We are not called to offer up our sons like Abraham, send plagues like Moses, attack cities like Joshua,

slaughter Philistines like David, make altars like Elijah, offer lambs in the Temple like the priests and Levites.

We should not teach our children how to live from the Old Testament.

As missionaries of the gospel, **we are proclaiming Jesus Christ...** not Moses or Joshua or David.

We are Christians, not Israelites. We are offering the new covenant, not the old.

Our task is to help people find salvation through faith in Christ.¹

*** What do you think are the differences between Israel and the Church?**

Note: The following paradigm or table is included in the Class Notes. You may wish to make a photocopy to use in class. If so, you will need two student volunteers. Ask one to represent the nation of Israel, and the other to represent the Church of Christ. The first will start by reading, “Israel... a political nation”. Then the other will read, “The Church... a spiritual movement”. As they continue reading alternately, the contrast between Israel and the Church will become clear.

Israel	the Church
a political nation	a spiritual movement
in a designated territory	in all the world
established by warfare	created by love
controlled by a government	not controlled by any government
sustained by the threat and the use of violence	never threatens or uses violence
desiring to benefit its own people	desiring to share its blessing with everyone
separate from the nations	present in every nation
focused on a luxurious building (tabernacle or temple)	not tied to any building
ministry by ordained priests	ministry by every believer
emphasis on religious ritual	emphasis on perfection of character
allowing foreigners to come and worship	taking its message to every nation
a covenant of Law	a covenant of grace
for several hundred years	for every generation and all eternity
did not obtain what it was seeking	obtains more than it could imagine
has no Saviour from heaven	has a wonderful Saviour from heaven

¹ This subject is developed in the document *The Saviour of the World*.

no salvation from sin or its consequences	complete salvation from sin and all its consequences
no promise of life after death	full assurance of life after death
no transformation of character through the Holy Spirit	complete transformation by the power of the Holy Spirit
no gospel for the nations	a wonderful gospel for the nations
no missionary call to go into all the world	a great commission to go into all the world

We face problems in mission because some evangelical churches do not understand this difference.

The missionaries that they send out do not know the gospel.

They try to teach the Old Testament and tell people to follow the Old Testament.

They do not understand that the old covenant has been replaced by a new covenant...

“Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since *it is enacted on better promises*. For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion to look for a second” (Heb 8:6-7).

To illustrate this... **Do a word-search for “mission” in the Old Testament...**

You will find it refers in almost every case to murder or genocide!!!

A cultural hindrance to understanding

In western Europe, where generations of Jewish men and women have been very badly treated, the majority of good people are anxious not to be thought “anti-Semitic”. Bible teachers may hesitate, for this reason, to say anything negative about the Jews or about Israel. The result is that many believers in Europe fail to appreciate what the Bible actually says about the failure of God’s chosen race.

Scholars in other parts of the world may be better able to evaluate the relationship between Yahweh and the historic Twelve Tribes, noting their joyful awareness of his love and also their painful rejection of his will and indeed of his incarnate Son.

*** What is the purpose of mission? salvation.**

The purpose of mission is to help people to be saved from sin – and the deadly consequences of sin – through personal faith in Jesus Christ.

The Message of Mission

I always ask my class this question: “**What is the gospel?**” One student answered, “The gospel is development.” When I asked him to explain, he replied, “The gospel meets people’s physical and spiritual needs through development.” He illustrated his point by adding, “For example, every human being has the right to a computer.”

*** Would you agree?**

*** What does the word “gospel” mean?**

Gk. *euangelion* means good news. It is the best news the world has ever heard.

*** What exactly is the good news? What is the news... and what is so good about it?**

*** How did Jesus define it?** Lk 24:46-47

*** How did Peter define it?** Acts 5:30-31; Acts 10:36-43

*** How did Paul define it?** 1 Cor 15:1-4; Acts 13:26-31 and 38-39

The gospel is a **glorious account of what Jesus has done**. It is a **message to be proclaimed**.

So Paul travelled constantly “to *preach* the gospel of Christ” (2 Cor 2:12).

Every time the apostles spoke to a crowd, they taught three important facts about Jesus:

- **his death** – suffering to atone for us and set us free
- **his resurrection** – proving he is alive to help us now
- **remission of sins** – removing sin and its deadly consequences for all who will put their trust in him

Paul liked to add two more points:

- **Jesus is coming back to raise the dead**
- **He will then establish his kingdom for ever**

Then the apostles would urge the people **to commit themselves to the Saviour** and so be saved.¹

They declared that Jesus is exalted “to give **repentance** to Israel and **remission of sins**” (Acts 5:31).

And that “**repentance** and **remission of sins** should be proclaimed in his name to all nations” (Lk 24:47).

* **What is repentance?**

Repentance (Gk. *metanoia*) means a change of mind, or second thoughts.

Jesus and the apostles wanted their hearers to abandon one set of beliefs and adopt another, inspired by new principles, ideals and convictions.

The time had come to understand something new, to change their belief system and their worldview.

* **What is remission of sins?**

Jesus said, “This is my blood of the covenant, poured out for many for the **remission** of sins” (Matt 26:28).

Some translations say for the **forgiveness** of sins but the Greek *aphesis* means more than just forgiveness.

It means to remove or to undo. To remit a debt or a sin means to release a person from it, to set them free.

Jesus brings **remission** from sin. He takes it away. He releases us from sin and sets us free.

The fact that all mankind gets sick and old and dies is proof that all mankind has sinned (Rom 5:21; 6:23).

When Jesus healed diseases and raised the dead... he showed his power **to remit sin**...

and all the consequences of sin (Matt 4:23; Acts 10:38; Lk 7:20-23).

The gospel began when he started to heal the sick, proclaim liberty to the oppressed and good news to the poor.

So Mark opens his account with the words: “The *beginning* of the gospel of Jesus Christ” (Mk 1:1).

The miracles that Jesus did were “signs” – small tokens of greater things he will do when he comes back.

They are a foretaste of full salvation to be completed and fulfilled in the new heaven and earth.

The fact that Jesus can remove sin and all its consequences is very good news – the **best news we ever had**.

It is not surprising that the early Christians were keen to proclaim it.

So Paul says, “I am eager to proclaim the gospel to you also who are in Rome” (Rom 1:15).

“It has always been my ambition to proclaim the gospel, where **Christ** is not yet known” (Rom 15:20).

* **What is the meaning of “Christ”?**

The word Christ or Messiah is much more than a personal name.

It literally means “the anointed one”... set apart from all others to be the leader of his people.

It is a unique title: “the Christ, the Messiah”. No one else has this title.

When Jesus was acclaimed as **the Christ**, people were immediately filled with great hope and expectation.

Here at last was the long-awaited Saviour come to rescue and restore his people.

In many languages the word Christ has lost this emotional intensity and power.

We may recapture it by speaking of “Jesus the wonderful Saviour” or “Jesus the great Rescuer”.

The gospel can be summed up very simply:

It is good news about Jesus the Saviour and his power to save.

It declares what he has done for us, what he is doing for us now...

and what he will do for us when he comes again.

It describes how he died, and rose, and secured remission of sins.

It demands that we put our trust in him and so be saved.

A true story

Thomas Heelis was an English sailor who became a missionary in south-eastern India. In 1859 he was proclaiming the gospel in the Telugu language at a remote village in the hills. A blind boy was brought to him in hope of restoring his sight. How did Thomas Heelis respond? He tells us what happened:

“I told him and those present that it was not in my power to give him sight, but that if he believed the news I was going to tell him, he would have sight after leaving this [world of sorrows]. The poor boy was anxious to know what I had to tell him; and on hearing the gospel was greatly delighted.”

The name of Jesus was difficult for the blind boy to pronounce but he was very anxious not to forget it. Thomas Heelis tried to help him: “I told him he must simply believe what God says concerning his dear Son – that through his precious blood we have remission of sins etc. But on mentioning the name of Jesus, he would

¹ See *MSTN*, ch.8, Paul's message (pp.80-3).

each time repeat the name aloud, as though afraid to lose it. Among his friends too, he would repeat that blessed name, and say that if he believed in Jesus he would receive his sight [in the age to come].”¹

*** Would you have done the same as Thomas Heelis?**

Some false gospels

From early times some people have distorted the gospel so it became “a different gospel”.

In fact it is no gospel at all (Gal 1:6-9; 2 Cor 11:3-4).

Today we may hear preachers proclaiming other gospels:

social development, justice for the poor, luxury and prosperity, health and healing, extending the church, the glory of God, building the Kingdom, prophetic words, dreams and visions etc.

These may be important matters, but they are not the gospel.

Some preachers are busy attacking other preachers, or promoting their own denomination...

or their particular doctrine, or style of worship, their spiritual experience, or even their own power or glory.

Those preachers may not have understood the gospel at all.

A common mistake is to start by **trying to persuade people they are sinners.**

We may go and say, “You are bad people. You are sinners. God is angry with you.”

This sounds more like bad news than good news. Jesus did not do that. The apostles did not do that.

To convict people of sin is not our task. It is the task of the Holy Spirit (Jn 16:8).

We cannot do his work for him. We must let him do it.

We come not to condemn but to save. Like the apostles, we should proclaim the good news about Jesus – what he has done, what he is doing, and what he is coming back to do.

The gospel has life of its own.

Be encouraged. God will draw people to faith through the true gospel message if you proclaim it faithfully.

Always remember that the gospel itself...

- has power to convince (1 Thess 1:5)
- has power to save (Rom 1:16)
- will bear fruit everywhere (Col 1:6)

Our responsibility is to proclaim it faithfully and joyfully.

We can trust God to convince our hearers of its truth.

*** What is the message of mission? Jesus Christ.**

Old Testament Scholars

It has become fashionable for churches and Bible colleges to study “the Old Testament basis for mission”. Why is this? Why do speakers and writers try so hard to find some evidence of cross-cultural mission in the Old Testament? Why not look for it in the New Testament where it is obvious? Why look for mission in the Old Testament at all?

It may be that some church leaders have a social and political agenda which cannot be justified from the New Testament and must therefore be justified, if at all possible, by the social and political history of Israel. If so, that might explain their desire to promote an Old Testament agenda for mission.

In the Law of Moses there are instructions for the governance of a nation. In the prophets there are references to justice, poverty, warfare, prosperity and the social issues that affect a political state. Elsewhere in the Old Testament there is allusion to dominion over the earth and ruling over the nations.

But if modern mission is inspired by the Old Testament rather than the New, there will be serious consequences. Funds and workers will be channelled away from gospel proclamation, evangelistic campaigns, scripture distribution, Bible teaching and church planting towards agricultural initiatives, medical facilities, development projects, environmental issues and public campaigns for justice. This is reflected in growing support for the ethos of “Holistic Mission”, for the idea of “Kingdom Now” and for “Missio Dei”. We are seeing a revival of what used to be called the social gospel, which is not the true gospel at all (Gal 1:6-10).

That was not the method of Jesus. When people asked him, “What must we do, to be doing the works of God?” he replied, “This is the work of God, that you *believe* in him whom he has sent” (Jn 6:28-29). His instructions to his disciples were, “Go into all the world and *proclaim* the good news...” (Mk 16:15).

If Old Testament scholars are invited to teach about mission we should not be surprised to hear a social gospel, because in the Old Testament there is nothing else. In the Old Testament there is no remission of sin, no promise of eternal life, no transformation of character through the power of the Holy Spirit and no call to proclaim good news to the ends of the earth.

¹ E B Bromley, *They Were Men Sent From God* (The Scripture Literature Press, Bangalore, 1937), p.157

The old covenant was for Israel alone, not for the nations of the world. It is an error to take laws and principles established for Israel and ask others to observe them. The Israelites themselves did not attempt this. They had nothing to offer the nations until Jesus Christ had died to atone for the sin of the world.

We should never forget that we are New Testament people proclaiming good news of peace with God through faith in Christ. We do not learn from the Old Testament how to deal with the nations of the world. For the message, the purpose and the methods of our mission we must look to the New Testament, not the Old.

National Church Leaders

It is understandable that theologians and church leaders will feel a measure of esteem and affection towards the denominational traditions and spiritual heritage which they have shared for many years with their closest friends. Authors and speakers will naturally and perhaps unconsciously base their proposals for mission on expectations and beliefs taken for granted in their own religious circle but which other believers might feel free to question.

In the United Kingdom and several other European countries the national Protestant church has, for more than five hundred years, served as part of the government. Its bishops are entitled by law to vote in parliament and to participate in legislation. It is understandable therefore that the national Church of England or the Lutheran Church of Denmark will be concerned to have a public voice on a range of social, economic and political issues of importance to governments.

Similarly in other countries such as the USA, well-known leaders of Baptist or Presbyterian churches are invited to make statements which may influence the policies of the nation and to advise politicians desiring to attract a significant number of evangelical voters.

But most of us who are engaged in pioneer mission to unreached people find ourselves in a very different position. We are not participating in government or influencing national policies. On the contrary, we often suffer oppression and persecution at the hands of governments and religious authorities. We work quietly or even secretly, and try not to draw attention to ourselves.

When leaders from national institutions such as the Church of England are invited to teach courses or write books on mission, we hear about political issues such as social justice, economics and the environment. These are matters of concern for national governments and national churches participating in government – with teaching, as we have seen, from the Old Testament. But Jesus and his apostles knew nothing of national churches or political Christianity. They did not plan policies and programmes for government. On the contrary, they were hindered and opposed, as we are, by secular authorities and religious leaders. Like us, they faced persecution and suffered hardship and made disciples who were willing to take up their cross each day.

As pioneer cross-cultural missionaries, it is to the example of Jesus and his apostles that we must look for guidance and inspiration rather than to the national churches of Europe or the political religion of America.

The Place of Mission

* Where is the place of mission?

Jesus said, “I am the light of **the world**” (Jn 8:12).

John the Baptist called him “the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of **the world!**” (Jn 1:29).

He said, “I did not come to judge the world but to save **the world**” (Jn 12:47).

The Samaritans understood that “this is indeed **the Saviour of the world**” (Jn 4:42).

There was no salvation in the world until Jesus died to secure a new covenant...

for all who would put their trust in him.

But after he had died and risen he told his disciples, “Go into **all the world**” (Mk 16:15).

He said, “This gospel of the Kingdom will be proclaimed **throughout the inhabited world**” (Matt 24:14).

The place of mission is “the world”.

* What is the world like? What are the people of the world like?

Eph 2:3-5	dead in trespasses and sins
Matt 9:36	harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd
Rom 5:10; Phil 3:18	at enmity with God
Acts 26:18; Col 1:13	in darkness and under the power of Satan
Eph 2:12	without hope and without God

And yet...

“God so loved the world that... whoever believes in him [Jesus] **should not perish**” (Jn 3:16).

Jesus said, “The Son of Man came to seek and to **save the lost**” (Lk 19:10).

*** What does it mean to be lost?**

Read these verses: Mk 16:16; Lk 13:22-30; Matt 10:28; Lk 16:19-31.

Then try to define the biblical meaning of "lost".

*** What does it mean to be saved?**

Read these verses: John 3:16-18; Eph 2:4-7; Rom 5:6-10.

Then try to define the biblical meaning of "saved".

For the Jews, Paul said, "my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is **that they may be saved**" (Rom 10:1).

For the Gentiles, his efforts were directed to this one purpose: "**that they might be saved**" (1 Thess 2:16).

The same longing is felt by every true gospel missionary.

What about those who have never heard?

We sometimes call them "the unevangelised".

They have never heard that Jesus died to save them. They have had no opportunity to put their trust in him.

Asking the question

*** How would you respond to the following statements:**

1. Surely God will not condemn those who never had a chance to hear the gospel. That would be unjust.
2. "God so loved the world," which means that he loves everyone in it and will not condemn anyone he loves.
3. Many good people follow other religions, and if they are sincere God will surely accept them as they are.
4. If we tell people about Jesus, some may reject what we say and so be condemned. It's better for us not to tell them.

*** Is this important?** Does it matter? Or is it just a theoretical question that we don't need to answer?

It is very important. It is a practical question.

If we think people are alright as they are, we will never go on mission.

Indeed this may become an excuse for us to stay at home.

Finding the answer

In Romans 2:14-15 we read that Gentiles may sometimes follow the principles of the Law without knowing it:

"their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them."

But keeping the Law and a clear conscience have never been enough for anyone to obtain salvation.

There are four important things to bear in mind. They are stated very clearly in the New Testament:

1. All mankind is in a state of death, and has been ever since the catastrophe of Adam and Eve.

In the history of Israel we have seen how no one could solve the problems of the world...

or meet mankind's deepest needs... except Jesus.

Before we hear the gospel, we are all in a state of sin, disease, decay and death.

This is true for everyone, even if their thoughts "excuse" them.

It is clearly described in the first six chapters of Romans and the first two chapters of Ephesians.

See especially Rom 2:12; 3:23 and 6:23; Eph 2:1-3.

2. It is Jesus alone who gives eternal life.

If people could have eternal life without him, there would have been no need for him to come.

He gave his life as a ransom because they could not be saved in any other way (Mk 10:45).

He urged them to put their trust in him because he alone could take away their sin (Jn 3:16).

"There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among humankind by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). See also John 14:6; Heb 2:14-15.

3. A person who has never heard is lost in sin until he puts his trust in Christ.

On the broad road leading to destruction, he will be lost forever if he does not hear and follow Christ.

"This is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.

He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life" (1 Jn 5:11-12).

See also Matt 7:13-14; Jn 3:3; Acts 26:17-18.

4. Jesus told his disciples to go into all the world and proclaim the Good News.

This was his final command and he insisted on it for a very important reason –

because everyone everywhere needs to hear. See Mk 16:15; Lk 24:47.

Applying the answer

Imagine you have a terrible disease such as HIV-Aids, inherited from your parents, as many children do. You are weak and ill, and you face a slow painful death in a matter of months or years. Then someone comes with a medicine guaranteed to remove the disease and restore your health: "Take this medicine," they say. "It's free and will cost you nothing."

Then someone else says, "Wait a minute. There's a possibility you might eventually recover without medicine." What would you do? Would you say, "Let's discuss this issue"? No. You'd say, "Give me that medicine!"

Scripture tells us "the blood of Christ cleanses us from all sin" and "by his wounds you are healed." If the people around us could only understand how ill they are, they would cry out urgently, "Give me that medicine!" And we would not discuss whether they might recover without it. We would rush to give it to them.

*** Where is the place of mission? the world.**

The Long Battle with Death (a sermon outline)

We have seen that mankind's greatest fear and sorrow is death. The gospel of the Kingdom declares that wherever Christ goes he overcomes and destroys death. We should make sure our disciples know what the Bible says about death. Here is a useful outline for teaching or discussion:

death chosen	by Adam	long ago	Gen 2:17 †
death suffered	by every generation	always	Rom 5:12; Heb 11:13
death defeated	by command of Jesus	2000 years ago	Jn 11:43-44
death abolished	by the death of Jesus	2000 years ago	2 Tim 1:10
death thrown into the lake of fire	on judgment day	sooner than we may think	Rev 20:14
death swallowed up in victory	by faith	even now	1 Cor 15:20-26 and 54-57

† A knowledge of good and evil is a knowledge of life and death.

Required reading: *Sorsa Sumamo* to the end, and *The Saviour of the World*.

3. A Biblical Theology of Mission II

The Method of Mission

In the book of Acts, the apostles' work is often described as "**speaking the word**":

"when they had **spoken the word** in Perga, they went down to Attalia" (Acts 14:25).

"forbidden by the Holy Spirit to **speak the word** in Asia" (Acts 16:6).

"they **spoke the word** of the Lord to him" (Acts 16:32). (See also Acts 4:29; 11:19; Phil 1:14; Heb 13:7 etc.)

Looking more closely, we find this "speaking" included several different ways of speaking.

Proclamation

The apostles **proclaimed**. They talked objectively, giving the facts of the gospel message.

They spoke about the death and resurrection of Jesus, remission of sins, his return and the coming kingdom.

We have already looked at the content of their proclamation (see above, The Message of Mission).

Testimony

The apostles **testified**. They talked subjectively, showing how the facts affected them personally.

"With great power the apostles were giving their **testimony** to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 4:33).

John "was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the **testimony** of Jesus" (Rev 1:9).

* What do we call a person who testifies?

A witness. They tell what they have seen or heard.

"One of these men must become with us a **witness** to his resurrection" (Acts 1:22).

"You will be a **witness** for him to everyone of what you have seen and heard" (Acts 22:15).

Here are two important Greek words: *kērugma* and *marturion*, with their associated verbs *kērussō* and *martureō*.

The difference between them can be set out in a simple paradigm:

objective proclamation	subjective testimony
<i>kērugma</i>	<i>marturion</i>
We say, "This is true. These are well-known facts. Christ died to save sinners."	We say, "This has changed my life. I've experienced it. Christ has saved me."

Proclaiming and Testifying

On many occasions these two words go together.

So, for example, Jesus told his disciples: "This gospel of the Kingdom will be **proclaimed** throughout the inhabited world as a **testimony** to all ethnic groups" (Matt 24:14).

They said, "He commanded us to **proclaim** to the people and to **testify** that he is the one" (Acts 10:42).

Proclamation may come first, followed by testimony... or testimony may come first. Both are usually necessary.

It was the apostles' **testimony** about the resurrection of Jesus that made their **proclamation** so convincing.

They had seen evidence that it was true (the empty tomb and the risen Lord). And it had changed their lives.

"The Testimony of Jesus"

For two thousand years believers have been passing on "the testimony of Jesus" (Rev 12:17).

It is "the testimony about Christ" (1 Cor 1:6; 1 Jn 5:11)....

"the testimony given at the proper time" (1 Tim 2:6)... "the testimony about our Lord" (2 Tim 1:8).

Remember his final words to his apostles:

"You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

Those eleven men could not personally travel to every nation or speak in every language to every people.

But their testimony would be heard and passed on by the next generation...

and by every generation until Christ returns.

They left their testimony *for us to carry to the ends of the earth*.

Whenever we read the NT scriptures to people we meet, we pass on the apostles' testimony.

As gospel missionaries we can testify in these two ways:

1. We pass on "the Testimony of Jesus" entrusted to us by his first disciples;
2. We add our own personal testimony.

Paul, like us, was not present during Jesus's earthly ministry... but like us, he could testify in these two ways:

1. He liked to take Mark or Luke with him because they had a written record of *the disciples' testimony*.
2. He added *his own testimony*... about his conversion, missionary call and ministry in the power of the Spirit.

Wherever he went Paul was pleased to testify with great boldness (Acts 18:5; 20:24).

He found some of his best opportunities to testify when he was persecuted (Phil 1:12-14).

Other ways of speaking

Here are some additional words used in the New Testament describing how the apostles spoke.

They explained the gospel in every possible way so that men and women would understand and believe.

They **announced good news**, they evangelised (Gk. *euangelizō*, to bring good news; *euangelion*, good news).

As it was good news they declared their message gladly and cheerfully, expecting a positive response (Acts 8:25; 16:10 etc.).

They **taught** (Gk. *didaskō*, to teach; *didachē*, teaching).

As teachers they would be concerned to make sure their facts were correct...

and their information easily understandable (Acts 5:21; 28:31 etc.)...

and that their disciples would know everything they needed to know (Acts 20:20).

In addition, there are a whole range of words describing **interactive communication**:

Acts 9:22	baffle and prove	Acts 18:4	discuss and persuade
Acts 9:27	speak boldly	Acts 20:31	advise
Acts 9:29	talk and debate	Acts 28:23	explain and try to convince
Acts 13:43	speak and persuade	2 Cor 5:20	appeal and plead
Acts 17:17	discuss (dialogue)		

Paul and the other apostles expected a response, a discussion, a debate.

They wanted people to think, to ask questions, to raise objections and eventually to become convinced.

* In conclusion then, how should missionaries of the gospel communicate with people today?

We should *speak the word*: testify, proclaim, announce good news, teach, discuss and persuade.

Conclusion: In a cross-cultural context, people are totally ignorant of the basic facts about Christ (and often about God). They will need definite information. When we tell them the facts we are **proclaiming** the gospel.

But before they will listen to the facts, we may need to awaken their interest by giving some evidence that those facts are helpful and useful. In this we see the importance of testimony. When we tell them about our personal experience of the gospel we are **testifying** to its value and its benefits.

We should never forget that our message is **wonderful news**. We can share it with great joy – it has transformed our lives and our expectations, and we hope it will do the same for our hearers.

Then we should not neglect to **teach** everything that may be helpful for people wanting to know and follow Christ. We teach the truth without exaggeration or distortion.

Finally, we should give free opportunity for **discussion**, so that questions can be answered and problems resolved. We want people to be fully convinced of the truth concerning the gospel so they will be committed whole-heartedly to it.

* What is the method of mission? speaking the word

Miraculous healing

Healing campaigns

In certain parts of the world, gospel preachers commonly offer physical healing as a benefit – and perhaps the most important benefit – of the Christian faith. Preachers who fail to offer physical healing may be scorned as powerless and unspiritual. This can put great pressure on us to speak of healing, and even to claim an ability to heal.

In recent years the most famous of the so-called healing ministries have been carefully investigated. Qualified doctors have looked carefully and impartially at the medical evidence, and interviewed the people concerned. After a healing event, many sufferers have affirmed that they felt more comfortable or more positive for the experience, but only a small number will claim that a serious disability, deformity or a terminal condition has actually been healed. Evidence suggests that the few who do recover full health were not as seriously ill as they had supposed.

One recent study quotes from several independent medical doctors who investigated so-called miraculous healings and in every case found that these healings were either mis-diagnosed or mis-reported. They observed

that symptoms might be relieved for a short time, that natural recovery could be dramatically accelerated, and that psychosomatic illnesses might be permanently cured, but they could find no medically verified accounts of dead, damaged or missing organs being restored to full and lasting health. These are the conclusions of experienced medical doctors. Their reports are available for anyone interested.¹

The problem is that many Christians passionately want to believe reports of miraculous healing from around the world. It encourages them and strengthens their faith. Hearing that people are being healed, they do not like to enquire too closely for details; they just want to be encouraged. And to question what is said might seem like discourtesy and unbelief.

But are the reports we hear about miracles actually true? And what is our position before God if we pass on things we hear that are not true?

Two things can be said with certainty. Firstly, we know that nothing is impossible with God (Lk 1:37). He is perfectly capable of doing anything he wishes at any time. Surely there can be no theological or biblical objection to miracles happening at any time if God so wishes it.

Secondly, we know from scripture and experience that God answers prayer for people who are ill, and indeed restores their health (Ja 5:14-15). Many of us have prayed for people with minor illnesses – pain, swelling, inflammation or infection – and seen them recover quickly. We would certainly thank God for this, yet hesitate to describe it as a “miracle”. The healing is not in the same category as the astonishing instant reconstruction of damaged organs evident in the ministry of Jesus.

So we believe that God is capable of doing miracles and indeed that he answers prayer: biblical theology can take us that far. Beyond this point, however, it is not a question of what *could happen* but what *is happening*. It is not a matter of theory but of fact. Our investigation must now consider medical evidence.

If there are healing campaigns in which genuine miracles are occurring, careful investigation should find proof of it. Physical examination and medical records should show that something beyond a natural recovery has taken place.

Unfortunately most of the miracles we hear about happened far away. In general, the eye-witnesses cannot be identified or located. This is the issue that concerns us – the presence or absence of evidence.

If large numbers of people are indeed being miraculously healed through the well-publicised campaigns of faith healers, there should now be thousands of happy men, women and children testifying to full and permanent restoration from crippling disabilities and terminal conditions. Where are they? What is their condition a month later or a year later?

When closely investigated, the reality is that most reports of miraculous healing prove to be greatly exaggerated or simply untrue. The prayer letters and testimonies, having told us about the “healing”, usually fail to inform us about the death shortly afterwards of the person who was “healed”.

What really happened?

A friend of mine, a pastor, was excited about news from Myanmar. He told me that a boy with a brain tumour was miraculously healed in answer to prayer. Seeking more information, I studied the x-rays relating to this case. They showed that the boy had a cyst (a collection of fluid) just under the skin on the side of his head. It was not a tumour, nor was it on his brain. When the fluid dispersed, he quickly recovered, as is normal in such cases. We can thank God for this recovery... but no one should claim it was a brain tumour or that it was a miracle.

On one occasion some dynamic preachers came from Egypt, speaking about signs and wonders, healings and miracles that God was doing in their churches. We felt ashamed and humiliated that the Lord was not blessing our own church in this way. Then we asked our visitors what percentage of those they prayed for were actually healed. They frankly replied that everyone felt some relief, and one or two percent were healed. During the weeks our visitors spent with us, no one in our city was miraculously healed. In fact one of their children fell ill. She made a gradual and natural recovery with the medicine prescribed for her.

A missionary told me about a Muslim man in the Middle East with lung cancer, very close to death. Visiting him and his family with a friend, they prayed for him. The next day, there was exciting news. His blood tests and x-rays showed no sign of cancer. They believed he was miraculously healed. He bought himself new glasses so he could read the Bible. Shortly afterwards his lung condition became much worse and he died. His widow is now bitter against the gospel.

The people who told us about these “healings” were sincere believers desiring to glorify God and to encourage us. Many people would receive what they said in good faith and tell others. The word of a pastor or preacher or missionary would be accepted without question. But when those reports are investigated, they are found to be exaggerated or untrue.

¹ Jim Thompson, *Healing Miracles Today* (EP Books, 2013). For research on Benny Hinn and Reinhard Bonnke see <http://topdocumentaryfilms.com/question-of-miracles-faith-healing/> and <http://fakefaithhealers.000space.com/en/isreinhardbonnkealsoaliar.htm> and <http://www.arcapologetics.org/articles/article10.htm> and http://www.alexanderseibel.de/the_miracles_of_reinhard_bonnke.htm

This is a problem in many evangelical churches. People are taught to have faith. They are expected to believe incredible things. The more incredible it is, the more it seems to glorify God and the more they want to believe it.

But as evangelists, pastors and missionaries we are required to be sober-minded (1 Tim 3:2). We are responsible to teach the truth. We must be sure it is the truth we are teaching (2 Cor 4:2). This must be emphasized. We cannot glorify God with exaggerations and lies. If we are found to be lying and exaggerating, our credibility will crumble and people will no longer trust anything we say.

Raising the dead

In addition to miraculous healings we sometimes hear of people being raised from the dead. This is almost always somewhere far away. On investigation, no eyewitnesses can be found.

The word "dead" can be understood in various ways. In English we say someone is "dead to the world", meaning they are unaware of what is happening or too busy to be disturbed. Elsewhere, to be "dead" can mean to be deeply asleep or unconscious (in a coma). In Morocco a tax official told me his colleague was dead, meaning he was no longer working in that office. Someone else said his mule was dead, meaning the animal had a sore leg and could not work for a week or two. In some cultures a person or animal is declared "dead" so that evil spirits may be fooled into leaving them alone.

In all these cases, the "dead" might easily come back to life. It is important to understand the meaning of "dead" before we announce a miraculous resurrection.

Uncertainties

Many Christians, proclaiming the gospel and sharing their faith with others, are uncertain what to say about healing. It seems that sometimes God heals illnesses and sometimes he does not. We know of friends who have recovered and others who have died. On this subject it may seem that all we can offer is uncertainty. Healing cannot be denied; nor can it be promised.

At the same time we offer forgiveness of sin and eternal life as absolutely certain. This leaves us with a puzzling inconsistency. How can we guarantee the spiritual when we cannot guarantee the physical? If we are seen to be weak and vague in earthly matters, how can we be trusted in heavenly matters? It is vital for every evangelist to have something clear and positive to say about healing.

Some put themselves in a strong position by claiming that miracles of healing were actually "signs of the Apostles" (Acts 5:12; 2 Cor 12:12) and therefore ceased when the first apostles passed away. On this basis, they do not bother to investigate anything but simply say that every modern claim to miraculous healing must be false.

Others see no reason to limit God in this way, convinced that he could do miracles as easily now as in the days of the first apostles. On this question, scripture is not clear enough to bring serious Bible scholars to agreement, and so the theological debate remains unresolved.

It is time for a fresh approach. As this is a medical issue, we must consult doctors in addition to theologians. What medical evidence is there to show what God is doing now? And what medical facts are evident in the New Testament itself?

A strong positive message

When we see or hear of healing today in response to prayer, it is usually a healing of diseases and malfunctions in organs that are essentially sound but infected, stressed or wounded in some way. It is the kind of healing that occurs naturally (though much more slowly) through the body's immune system or through medicine or various therapies.

In the Gospel accounts, the miracles of Jesus were on a different level. They involved the re-creation and restoration of dead, missing, or extremely damaged organs. There was a man born without sight, a woman crippled for eighteen years, a youth completely paralysed, a shrivelled hand, a severed ear, a constant haemorrhage, blind eyes, deaf ears, and three people who had died. Jesus reconstructed organs that were damaged beyond repair and unable to function at all.

At this point it is important to discern the difference between *functional* healing and *structural* healing. Functional healing takes place in organs that are essentially sound and alive whilst suffering from infection or contamination or stress. The problem may be bacteria or parasites, strains or tensions, minor wounds or injuries to muscle, nerve or bone. *Functional* healing may often occur naturally. In response to prayer it may happen very rapidly.

The miracles that Jesus did were quite different. They were *structural* healings. To the people who saw them, they were utterly astonishing. Nothing like it had been seen before. They were signs that the Kingdom of heaven had come on earth. *Structural healing*, such as Jesus did, will repair or replace organs *that could never heal naturally*. He remade physical structures in the human body. He repaired or replaced organs that were fatally damaged and no longer working. Some were missing altogether.

The healing that we pray for today is usually *functional* rather than structural. Through prayer we see an increased effectiveness in the body's natural defences against infection, fatigue and psychological and physical disorder. This is God's gracious gift to us, and it may sometimes be described (inaccurately) as a miracle. But such healing today should not be confused with the true miracles, the *structural* miracles recorded in the New Testament.¹

That is one significant difference between the healings we experience today and those in the Gospel accounts of Jesus's ministry. There is a second significant difference. The Gospel writers repeatedly emphasize that Jesus "healed *all who were sick*" (Matt 8:16). No one ever went away disappointed. "Power was coming from him and *healing them all*" (Lk 6:19). This makes Jesus unique. During the earliest days of the apostles in Jerusalem it is again said that "all were healed" (Acts 5:16), but no other faith-healer on earth has ever had that testimony. The famous names of today will only claim to heal *some*, usually only a very small number, sometimes none at all. But Jesus healed *everyone*: "Many followed him, and *he healed them all*" (Matt 12:15). His healing in every case was prompt, perfect and permanent!

This provides a wonderful positive message for every evangelist, pastor and missionary. The power of Jesus to heal *everyone* is a certainty we can proclaim without hesitation. He has shown that he can do it. When he returns he *will* do it. This is a gift we can offer with absolute confidence to all who will put their trust in him.

We know that we will be healed for ever when Jesus comes into his Kingdom: "For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality" (1 Cor 15:52-3).

The Energy of Mission

In our mission to the world...

we are severely hindered by our human limitations – by our physical and spiritual weakness.

Jesus said, "Apart from me you can do nothing" (Jn 15:5).

We cannot **convict** people of sin, righteousness and judgment to come.

We cannot **awaken** their interest in us or our gospel.

We cannot **change** their mind or their character or their eternal destiny.

We must ask our Lord to do the things we cannot do.

Jesus said, "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you" (Acts 1:8).

We depend completely on that power.

Paul admitted to his own converts, "I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom."

But then he recalled how the gospel came to them... "in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God" (1 Cor 2:3-5).

The Holy Spirit works with us in gospel mission:

The Holy Spirit empowers

The Holy Spirit gives power to **testify** (Acts 1:8); to **love** (Rom 5:5); to **serve** (2 Cor 3:6)

See how he empowered...	Peter	to announce good news to the crowd in Jerusalem	Acts 2:4
	Peter	to answer the Jewish Council	Acts 4:8
	the apostles	to declare their testimony in public places	Acts 4:33
	all the believers	to speak the word of God with boldness	Acts 4:31
	Stephen	to proclaim Christ in the face of opposition	Acts 6:10
	Paul	to teach the gospel in all the synagogues	1 Cor 2:4

We will need this power if we wish to do as they did.

The Holy Spirit guides

Study these references: Acts 8:29; 10:19-20; 13:1-4; 16:6-9.

* **How did he guide in each case?**

The Holy Spirit convicts...

He convicts of **truth** (Jn 15:26; 16:13); of **guilt** (Jn 16:8); and he begins to **sanctify** (2 Thess 2:13).

Our job is to proclaim and testify. The Spirit's job is to convict and change people (Acts 10:44; 1 Thess 1:5).

We should not try to do his job for him!

* **What is the energy of mission? the Holy Spirit.**

¹ This point is made by Professor Dr. Verna Wright, "A Medical View of Miraculous Healing", in Peter Masters, *The Healing Epidemic* (The Wakeman Trust, London, 1988).

The Agents of Mission

* **Surely God could send his Holy Spirit or an angel or a vision to do the work better than we can. So why are missionaries necessary? Why don't we stay at home and pray for God to do it without us?**

* **Couldn't God just send his HOLY SPIRIT to convict people without us going anywhere?**

The Holy Spirit calls humans to go: "The Holy Spirit said,

'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them'" (Acts 13:2).

Peter tells us, "the Spirit told me to go with them" (Acts 11:12).

People need to hear the gospel from a human tongue, and to discuss and pray with a human being... so the Holy Spirit sends for a human like us.

* **Couldn't God just send an ANGEL?**

The angels call for humans to go: "An angel of the Lord said to Philip, 'Rise and go'" (Acts 8:26).

"Cornelius... was directed by a holy angel to send for you" (Acts 10:22).

A human is needed to explain things to a human, so **angels send for humans.**

Remember that angels have no experience of death, resurrection or remission of sins.

In fact "angels desire to look into these things revealed to us" (1 Pet 1:12)

* **Couldn't God just send a VISION or a DREAM?**

Visions and dreams usually direct ignorant people to humans.

Saul's vision on the Damascus road directed him to a man called Ananias who would tell him what to do.

When the Macedonians needed the gospel, God did not send a vision to Macedonia...

but he sent a vision to Paul saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us" (Acts 16:9).

It takes a human to reach humans, so **a dream or vision will point to a human.**

There are things a human being can do that an angel, a vision and even the Holy Spirit cannot do.

If you are a missionary called by God, you are more important and more useful than angels and visions.

The Lord's way for the gospel to go into all world is to send men and women.

It is our privilege and responsibility to go. We believe and so speak about our beliefs (2 Cor 4:13).

We have the ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor 5:18-20).

We speak because we are compelled to speak (1 Cor 9:16).

As we speak, **the Lord will work with us...** through the Holy Spirit...

and perhaps through angels and visions too.

The humanity of Christianity

One of the reasons the earliest churches grew so rapidly is that they established a caring community. When they turned to Christ, the money which pagans had lavished on priestly rituals and sacrificial feasts was used differently. They thought instead about the needs of their widows and orphans and people in distress.

Tertullian in AD 180 described the radical compassion of the Christians: "Though we have our collecting box, it does not contain fees as in a religion of things that can be bought. Once a month, if he likes, each of us puts in a small gift, but only if he really wants to, and only if he is able – for there is no compulsion; all is voluntary. These gifts are, as it were, a store of kindness to others. For we do not take money from this fund to spend on feasts or drinking parties or vulgar revelry, but to pay for the nourishment and burial of the poor, to support boys and girls who are orphaned and destitute, and old people who are confined to the house, and those who have been shipwrecked, and any who are in the mines or banished to islands or in prison [on account of their faith]." It was this compassion, Tertullian tells us, that caused the pagan populace to marvel, "See how they love one another."¹

The Roman emperor Julian, though bitterly opposed to the Christians, advised a pagan high priest to follow their example. In AD 361 he observed that "the kindness of Christians to strangers, their care for the burial of their dead, and the soberness of their lifestyle has done the most to advance their cause."² Julian saw how the pagan temples offered worship services but no love. With this weakness they were doomed and would shortly die.

It is the character of believers and their community that attracts outsiders to our faith.

* **Who are the agents of mission? men and women.**

¹ Tertullian, *Apology* 39

² Julian, *Letter XLIX, to Arsacius*

The Result of Mission

* What is the result of mission? What will it accomplish?

Some might say: Planting churches... or opening a new field for a missionary society...
or extending a church denomination into new areas.

Others might say: Doing whatever God wants done, or meeting holistic needs, or stimulating development. But Jesus said "Go and disciple all the *ethnē*, baptising them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Matt 28:19-20).

The Greek word *ethnē* is the plural of *ethnos*... an ethnic group with a common language and culture.

Jesus sends us out to disciple every ethnic group. That is our goal. That is what we will accomplish.

* What does it mean to disciple an ethnic group?

The verb *mathēteuō* "to disciple" is less common in the New Testament than the noun *mathētēs* (disciple).

In Derbe the apostles "evangelised that city and *discipled many*, and then returned to Lystra" (Acts 14:21). The new converts in Derbe were *disciples* of Paul and Barnabas for as long as the two men remained there.

They wanted to learn all they could about the faith they had accepted.

But it is clear that not everyone in that province or that city became a disciple.

* What is a disciple?

A disciple (Gk. *mathētēs*) is someone who is committed to a teacher or a teaching and wants to learn more.

"A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher" (Lk 6:40; see also Lk 14:26-33).

When someone is truly converted to Christ, that person immediately becomes a disciple.

He or she wants to know more.

They will learn more from the person who first told them the gospel or from another person.

They may think of themselves as a disciple of that person.

Paul's converts were known as his disciples (Acts 9:25).

At the same time, everyone committed to Jesus is a disciple of Jesus (Acts 11:26).

* When a person believes and wants to be a disciple, what should we do for that person?

We should baptise them and teach them (as we have seen in Matt 28:19-20).

They will learn best by watching what we do, discussing it with us, and then doing it themselves.

* We talk about a flock of sheep or a swarm of bees. What shall we call a group of disciples?

A group of disciples is an *ekklēsia* (pl. *ekklēsiae*), often translated "church",
but more accurately a gathering or assembly or congregation or fellowship.

* What are "fellowships" like in the New Testament?

An *ekklēsia* is not a building with a signboard, auditorium, office, music group and Sunday services.

It is not an organization with a programme, pastor, treasurer and financial budget.

An *ekklēsia* is simply a group of disciples.

Together they are learning what they need to know, and learning also to care for one another.

Disciples will enjoy meeting together in groups and fellowships.

They will have many interests and experiences in common.

They will benefit from mutual support, encouragement, teaching and prayer.

* What is the aim of gospel mission?

The aim of gospel mission is **not to plant churches**.

Jesus did not say, "Go into all the world and erect buildings."

He did not even say, "Go and establish congregations." He said, "Go and make disciples."

Our aim is **not to open new fields** for mission societies or to extend denominations into new areas.

Jesus did not say, "Support this denomination or that society." He said, "Go and make disciples."

Our aim is **not to develop nations** and increase prosperity.

Jesus did not say, "Go into all the world and serve the community."

Our aim is **not to run enjoyable meetings or to establish wonderful congregations**.

Our calling is to proclaim the gospel to all the *ethnē* in the world, and then to disciple those who respond.

When men and women respond to the gospel... and want to learn all they can from us...

they should be baptised... and start to learn from our example how to do what we do.

* What is the result of mission? disciples in every ethnic group.

Discipling the Nations

What exactly did Jesus mean when he said, “*mathēteusate panta ta ethnē*” (disciple all the nations) (Matt 28:19)?

Certain church and mission leaders have interpreted this expression “disciple all the nations” in a collective or political sense. They teach that a nation with its government can be disciplined as it starts to learn a Christian way of doing things. For them, discipling a nation means introducing a Christian worldview in politics, education, economics etc. which may eventually draw some, or many, to personal faith in Christ.

Others consider discipling to be a form of evangelism that enables people who do not know about Jesus to learn about him. Some writers speak quite openly about discipling sceptics and seekers.

But it is important for us to consider what the Eleven would understand by Jesus’s command for them to disciple all the *ethnē*.

Firstly, of course, the Eleven were not dealing with nations as we know them today. Indeed we might wonder whether it is actually possible to disciple a nation. Jesus was speaking about *ethnē* (ethnic groups), not nations.

Secondly, they knew what it was to be a disciple. Discipleship required total commitment. Jesus would only accept as disciples those who were completely dedicated to him (Lk 9:57-62; 14:25-33).

Now, to understand how the early apostles understood this great commission, we must see what they set out to do. Their strategy was to proclaim the gospel of Christ in public places, and then disciple those who accepted what they said. These new disciples were disciples of the missionaries (Acts 9:25). But they would also consider themselves disciples of Jesus, as the missionaries passed on to them the wonderful teachings of Jesus (Acts 6:7).

Looking carefully at our text (Matt 28:19-20), we see that Jesus instructed his apostles to baptise and teach not the ethnic groups (*ethnē*, feminine) but the individuals within them (*autous*, masculine). To be baptised and taught is a privilege for individuals. The apostles disciplined ethnic groups by teaching responsive men and women from those ethnic groups. These in turn would then disciple others among their people who wished to learn from them.

Discipling is a form of education. A disciple, like a student, is an individual committed to a teacher and keen to learn. We may speak of educating a village or a city but in reality we can only educate the individuals who will attend classes and accept what the teacher says. For this reason it is clear that *commitment* comes at the start of discipleship. A disciple is someone committed to a teacher.

It is impossible for an unbeliever to be a disciple. A disciple of Christ must first *hear about* him, and *believe in* him, before they can possibly be committed to learning from him. Jesus himself said, “Come to me... take my yoke upon you, and learn from me” (Matt 11:28-29). The coming and the taking of the yoke are essential; after that there is the opportunity to learn from him.

How then should we understand this command to disciple all the *ethnē*? We should understand it as the earliest apostles did. It requires us to identify individuals who have put their trust in Christ and earnestly desire to learn from him and his disciples. Then we must show them and teach them all we know.

Making Disciples

Missionaries and church leaders often teach on the subject of discipleship. They encourage and exhort believers to become disciples. They teach that a disciple is a better kind of Christian, a really committed Christian. Jesus never did this. His idea of discipleship was quite different. In the New Testament we see four important things about discipleship:

1. We are called not to BE disciples but to MAKE disciples.

Jesus never said: Go into all the world and *be disciples*. He said: “Go into all the world and *make disciples*.” Many Christians go to church because their leaders tell them a disciple must go to church – it is a duty they owe to God and it will do them good. Many become tired of church services because they expect to benefit and do not receive much benefit. Such people are attending church in order to *be* disciples without intending to *make* disciples.

Our thoughts should not be on what might benefit us, but on what will benefit others. It is by serving others that we grow to spiritual maturity. It is by teaching others that we learn ourselves. When you make disciples it does them good, and it also does you good. Jesus did not say: Follow me and be my disciples. He said: “Follow me and I will make you fishers of people.” He has called us... not to BE disciples but to MAKE disciples.

2. Discipleship is a short period of training.

A disciple is a learner, a student, a person in training. This training should eventually be complete. Although there is always more to learn, there should come a point when you are able to teach others what you know.

After two years of discipleship the Twelve and the Seventy-two were ready to be sent out to make disciples. If, after two years, we are unable to teach others, there is something wrong with us: “Although by this time you

ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles” (Heb 5:12). Discipleship is a short period of training.

3. Discipleship is never easy.

Jesus never exhorted and encouraged people to be disciples. On the contrary, people came to him begging to be his disciples. And he did not welcome them but rather discouraged them, saying, “Before you build a tower, count the cost... Any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple” (Lk 14:25-33). One man said: “I will follow you wherever you go.” Jesus replied, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.” Another said: I will follow you when my father dies” Jesus told him, “Go now and proclaim the Kingdom of God.” Another said: I will follow you after I have been to see my family.” Jesus said: “No-one who puts hand to plough and looks back is worthy of the Kingdom of God (Luke 9:57-62). Discipleship is never easy.

4. A true disciple is a most attractive character.

Although it is not easy to be a disciple, people came to Jesus begging to become his disciples. Why? Because they saw in Jesus something they wanted. They wanted to be like him.

How then can we make disciples? The same way that he did. When people see in us something they want, they will come to us saying, “Please let me be your disciple!”

What will people see in us? What have we got that they want? What are the marks of a disciple? As disciples of Jesus there are three things we have learned well from him:

WE LOVE DOING WHAT HE SAYS.

“Jesus told those who believed in him, ‘If you **abide in my word**, you are truly *my disciples*’” (John 8:31). We love the words of Jesus; we believe them, follow them, teach them, live by them. We love Jesus and want to please him.

WE LOVE ONE ANOTHER.

“By this all people will know that you are *my disciples*, if you have **love for one another**.” (John 13:35). If a brother upsets me, I forgive him. If he is in need, I help him. We love and care for one another.

WE LOVE EVERYONE.

“By this my Father is glorified, that you **bear much fruit** and so prove to be *my disciples*” (John 15:8). We bear sweet fruit – our words, our honesty, our kindness in helping people, never causing trouble or stress or unhappiness. A sweet character will attract friends. People watch us and are drawn to us. They want to know us better and become like us. They see how we love and care for everyone.

These are the three marks of Jesus’s disciples. It is not a question of knowledge but of character. A true disciple is a most loving and a most attractive character.

When people see these things in us, they will come and say, “Please let me be your disciple. I want to become like you. Please teach my children. I want them to become like you.”

Then we must warn them, as Jesus warned them, that this life is not so easy as they may think. They are called not to *be disciples* but to *make disciples* – not to remain forever learning, but to go out and teach others.

The twelve disciples did not stuff themselves with the loaves and fishes intended for five thousand. They shared it round. If our aim is to feed ourselves we will soon become very fat and very sleepy.

As we teach about discipleship, we must shift the focus from helping ourselves to **helping others**.

This concludes our study on the biblical theology of mission. Let’s have a quiz.

- * Who is the origin of Mission? The Lord God.
- * What is the purpose of mission? salvation.
- * What is the message of mission? Jesus Christ.
- * Where is the place of mission? the world.
- * What is the method of mission? speaking the word
- * What is the energy of mission? the Holy Spirit.
- * Who are the agents of mission? men and women.
- * What is the result of mission? disciples in every ethnic group.

Required Reading: first five chapters of *New Life for All*.

4. A Biblical View of Culture

The Meaning of Culture

*** What is culture? How would you define it?**

“The ideas, beliefs, values, and knowledge which shape all social activity for a given group of people.”

*** What does culture include?**

language, worldview, ways people interact, common knowledge and belief,
things considered important and unimportant, habits, indicators of status and honour,
things enjoyed and despised, food, clothing, hair style, house type and furnishing, art, music, sports etc.

Culture generally has three elements:

Technological... tools and techniques for managing the material world
Sociological... ways of dealing with people
Ideological... a shared worldview

*** How can you tell if someone you meet is a foreigner?**

*** Among people of your own nationality, how can you identify those who have a different culture?**

*** Have you had experience of living in a foreign culture, or dealing with people from a foreign culture?
Tell us about it.**

Sensitivity to culture

As pioneer missionaries we will be dealing constantly with people whose culture is different from our own.

Their culture can **hinder them** from hearing and accepting the gospel.

It can also **help us** in our approach to them, if we find ways to use their culture well.

People are usually suspicious of foreigners. If we show **respect** for their culture and for them...
we will be more quickly accepted as intelligent and reasonable people.

Our desire is to help them put their trust in Jesus.

Because this idea is new to them, they may not listen to us. If they do listen, they may not understand.

Our task is *to make it as easy as possible for them* to hear and understand the gospel.

Whatever their culture may be, they will have certain beliefs, needs, fears and expectations.

In order to communicate effectively with people from another culture...

we must imagine *how faith in Jesus might help* a person who has grown up in that culture.

You may go to work among farming people in a rural district, or business people in a city.

You may be approaching Muslims or Hindus or secular atheists...

or families with traditional tribal customs and beliefs.

*** How will you find out about their culture?**

Some things you will **see** (their appearance, how they dress, what they are doing).

Some things you will **hear** (the language they use, how they speak).

Some things you may discover **quickly** (their work, their religion, where they have come from).

Some things are **more difficult to find out** (what worries them, their hopes and fears, their personal beliefs).

The Culture Triangle

Our aims in this session are:

1. to understand how cultures affect us;
2. to discover how to make use of culture rather than being controlled by it.

*** As a pioneer missionary to an unreached people-group, how many cultures will you have to deal with?**

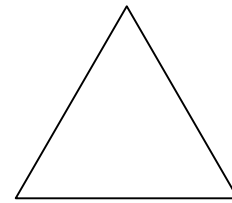
1. home culture

There are three cultures pulling you in three different directions...

This affects many things:

- the content of the gospel you proclaim,
- the nature of your relationships with the people around you,
- the type of church you will try to create with your first converts.

Let's look at these three cultures more closely.



2. local culture

3. gospel culture

Home culture

Without needing to think about it, you would probably say:

The Lord has blessed us. Our church or denomination or mission is wonderful.

We want to start churches like our home church and teach people to do as we do.

We are all naturally drawn to the corner of the triangle representing our home culture.

But if we go too far into this corner *we will get stuck*:

1. Although your home culture may be very attractive to you, your converts may not like it at all. They may resent your attempts to impose foreign ways.
2. The kind of church that is probably familiar to you – with a building, platform, keyboard, microphone, sound system, and a pastor with a salary – is very expensive to start and to maintain. Most pioneer missionaries are working among poor people, who could never afford these things. In order to start a church like this, your converts must leave their culture and join yours... and you must pay for it.
3. If you think, “Our way of doing things is best,” you may easily become proud, critical and divisive.

Most students and teachers using this course will be well-educated, and familiar with the modern world (with its advanced technology, its entertainment industries, and its current events reported in the world news).

This means that our home culture is closely related to the **global culture** of the twenty-first century.

Local culture

Having read some books or received some training, you understand the importance of cultural sensitivity.

So you say: We want to live according to the culture of the people we are trying to reach...

just as Paul was a Jew to the Jews, and a Greek to the Greeks.

You are willing to give up comforts and habits familiar to you in order to live as the local people live.

But if we go too far into this corner *we will get stuck*:

1. Your body is not accustomed to the climate or resistant to the diseases common in other countries. Living exactly as the local people live, you may get seriously ill and die.
2. Following the beliefs and customs of the local people, you may find yourself doing some strange things... practising witchcraft, bowing to images, marrying several wives, praising a false prophet... getting drunk with your friends and neighbours.
3. Living like a poor uneducated person will make no sense if you look like a rich educated person. People will think you are either stupid or planning to cheat them in some way.

Gospel culture

You have learned a new way of living from Jesus and his apostles.

You are impressed with the missionary career of Paul and the effectiveness of the early church.

So you say: We want to do as Jesus and the early Christians did, following their example as closely as possible.

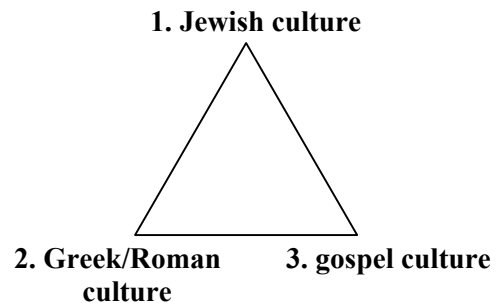
But again, if we go too far into this corner *we will get stuck*:

1. Times have changed. If you proclaim Jesus Christ in a synagogue, you will not get the response Paul got. If you appeal to Caesar (or the king or president), you may simply be deported from the country you are in.
2. Technology has changed. If you write only on animal skins, ride only on donkeys, wear only wool, speak only Greek or Aramaic, refusing to use any modern technology, people will think you are very stupid.
3. It is easy to confuse the Jewish or Roman cultures of the 1st century with the gospel culture Jesus taught. There is no reason for us to adopt Jewish, Greek or Roman cultures that have long gone... but every reason for us to love and live by the gospel culture that is the sweet fruit of our faith.

- * **What do you understand by “gospel culture”?**
- * **Read Heb 13:1-8. What elements of gospel culture do you see in this passage?**
- * **Read 1 Peter 3:1-17; Rom 12:9-21 and Ja 1:26-2:4. What elements of gospel culture do you see here?**
- * **What did gospel culture do for Onesimus – a runaway slave and a thief?**
- * **In what ways do you think gospel culture was different from Jewish, Greek and Roman cultures?**

Like us, the early Christians felt the tension of a culture triangle.

Born into Jewish, Greek and Roman cultures, they were starting to develop a new gospel culture of their own.



It is sometimes difficult for us to identify these cultural influences in the New Testament. So we wonder...

Were the earliest Christian churches and missions following Jewish customs... or Greek or Roman customs?

Or were they creating something radically new, as a manifestation of gospel culture?

Missiologists may have differing opinions about this. Some will say:

The NT churches and missions were so Jewish, Greek or Roman, that we cannot possibly do as they did.

Others will say:

The NT churches and missions demonstrate a new gospel culture, and we should do exactly as they did.

We will consider this question again in session 7.

Gospel culture in Ghana

“One thing that intrigued me was the way that everyone on the northern side of the river accepted Gbaba as leader of the churches. For 500 years the Konkombas had enslaved people from smaller or weaker tribes. Although no longer slaves..., they are treated as second-class citizens and not normally accepted as leaders. Gababa’s family fell into this category, which made it surprising that he should be accepted as a leader by the entire church in Molan and Jimoni. Their acceptance of him was a vivid demonstration of ‘gospel culture’... The whole tribe soon realised that the fellowship between believers was something special.”¹

Gospel culture in India

Bakht Singh was a great Indian evangelist and church planter. His biographer tells us, “He did not compromise the Word of God with Indian culture, customs or the traditions of men. He vehemently taught against any culture or custom that was contrary to, or in conflict with, the Word of God. ‘What we needed in the Body of Christ was not Western or Eastern culture but biblical culture,’ he emphasized.”²

Bakht Singh wanted authentic Christianity as it was meant to be, and as it was in New Testament times.

* **You may have heard about Third Culture Kids... What is the third culture of these kids?**

They are usually the children of missionaries. They are not entirely comfortable in their parents’ home culture, nor in the culture of the place where their parents work. *Their third culture is gospel culture.*

That is the culture they are most comfortable with, and it makes them different from other kids.³

Competing cultures

We have looked at the culture triangle with its three corners: home culture, local culture and gospel culture.

These are three strong cultures competing for our attention, pulling us in three different directions.

If missionaries disagree about strategy, it is usually because each is attracted to a different corner of the triangle.

For example, we may have different attitudes towards:

¹ Ronaldo Lidorio, *Unafraid of the Sacred Forest* (WEC/ Christian Focus, 2007), pp.57-58

² Koshy, T E, *Brother Bakht Singh of India* (Secunderabad, OM Books, 2003), p.456; see also p.537.

³ The term Third Culture Kids is also used outside missionary circles. TCKs without a Christian commitment may suffer severe cultural confusion.

DEBT

Home culture says, "If you borrow you must pay back."

Local culture says, "If you borrow you don't need to pay back" or "If you borrow you must pay back with interest."

Gospel culture says: "Owe no one anything" (Rom 13:8) and "Lend, expecting nothing back" (Lk 6:35).

ALCOHOL

Home culture says, "If you're drinking alcohol you have a good excuse for behaving badly."

Local culture says, "If you're drinking alcohol you are a slave of Satan, not God."

Gospel culture says, "Do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit" (Eph 5:18) and "Abstain from every form of evil" (1 Thess 5:22).

MARRIAGE

Home culture says, "A man and woman may live together" or "You can marry someone of the same sex."

Local culture says, "A man may take several wives to serve his mother, and divorce any who displease him (or her)."

Gospel culture says, "A man shall leave his father and his mother and commit himself to his wife, and the two shall become one body" (Matt 19:5).

TIME

Home culture says, "There's not enough time."

Local culture says, "There's plenty of time."

Gospel culture says, "making the best use of the time" (Eph 5:16).

* **Which culture do you usually live by? Which corner of the triangle pulls you most strongly?**

* **Look back over the past year, and think where you have been standing in the culture triangle. Would you now want to stand in a different place?**

* **Has our discussion changed your approach to culture in any way?**

The Third Race

The early Christians were commonly labelled "the third race".¹ They were recognized as neither Jews nor as Gentiles but as a community with a different culture altogether.

In fact anyone who thought there were only two cultures in the world might seriously misjudge the ethos of the Christian community. A Gentile might think them excessively Jewish; a Jew might think them excessively Gentile; both might miss the point that they were following an entirely new way of life learned from Jesus.

It is common to assume that missionaries today are dealing with only two cultures. The contrast is sometimes emphasized, for example, between Western culture and African culture, especially in matters relating to time or money. Western believers may think they are becoming more African, and African believers may think they themselves are becoming more Western; but in fact both are becoming more Christian.

Instead of seeing everything as a competition between two cultures, we should be aware that there is a third player in this game – gospel culture.

* **How might a "gospel person" view time?** See for example, Lk 19:5; Jn 9:4; 2 Thess 3:6-8.

* **How would this compare with Western and African perceptions of time?**

* **How might a "gospel person" regard money?** See for example, Matt 6:31-33; Acts 20:33-35; 1 Tim 6:6-10.

* **How would this compare with Western and African perceptions of money?**

* **Do you think an African following gospel culture might be thought too Western?**

* **Do you think a Westerner following gospel culture might be thought too African?**

¹ Tertullian (2nd century AD): "We are indeed said to be the 'third race' of men" (after pagans and Jews) (*Ad Nationes* 1:8; also *Scorpiace* 10). Elsewhere Christians are described as the fourth race (after Barbarians, Greeks and Jews) (*Apology of Aristides*, 2) (2nd century AD).

The Culture of the World

The word “culture” does not appear in English versions of the Bible...
but the idea of culture is evident in the biblical concept of “the world”.

*** Do you love your own culture, the culture of your hometown and your own people?
If so, does that mean you love the world?**

*** If you are a missionary, do you love the culture of the people you are called to?
If so, does that mean you love the world?**

The apostle **John** wrote: “*Do not love the world*, or the things in the world...
the things people desire and look for and are proud of” (1 Jn 2:15-16).

James taught us “to keep oneself *unstained from the world*.”

He said, “Whoever wishes to be a *friend of the world* makes himself an enemy of God” (Ja 1:27; 4:4).

Paul said, “When we were children, we were enslaved to the *basic principles of the world*” (Gal 4:3).

Jesus said, “Woe to the world for *temptations to sin!*” (Matt 18:7).

We might question whether we belong to this world at all,

for **Peter** calls us “God’s special people, *strangers in the world*” (1 Pet 1:1).

All this can leave us confused. Are we strangers, aliens, separate and opposed to the world...
or are we adapting to the world, becoming Jews to the Jews and Greeks to the Greeks?

Are we comfortable with the culture around us... or in conflict with it?

Are we trying fit into the world? Or change it? Or escape from it?

Culture in the Bible

*** What cultures are described in the Old Testament?**

In the days of Noah? At the Tower of Babel? At Sodom in the days of Lot? In Egypt at the time of Moses?

In Canaan when the Israelites came up from the wilderness?

*** What did God do to those cultures? Why?**

We know that “Moses was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians” (Acts 7:22).

*** Why do you think there is no trace of Egyptian culture in anything Moses wrote or said or did?**

Jesus and culture

*** How did Jesus respond to the Jewish culture of his day?**

1. Jesus sometimes accepted culture.

He dressed and spoke like a Galilean Jew. He obeyed the Law and attended the synagogue.

He met with his friends in an olive grove, rode a donkey, crossed the lake in a fishing boat.

He accepted invitations to meals and helped at a wedding.

*** Why did Jesus conform to the culture?**

a) to avoid offence.

He sent Peter to catch a fish with a coin for the Temple tax, “so that we may not offend them” (Matt 17:27).

b) to win acceptance.

He quoted from the Law and prophets and drew parables from both rural and urban life.

He used local culture to convey his message in a way that would be easily understood and accepted.

2. Jesus sometimes quietly ignored culture. To ignore a culture is surprising.

He did not fast when everyone else was fasting. He did not participate in ritual hand-washing before a meal.

He let a sinful woman publicly anoint his feet. He let his disciples pick grains of wheat on the Sabbath.

He touched a leper, took the hand of a dead girl, spoke to a Samaritan woman.

He healed on the Sabbath, perhaps more often on the Sabbath than on other days.

He did not become a Pharisee or a Sadducee but preferred to eat with outcasts, tax collectors and sinners.

*** Why did Jesus ignore the culture?**

Because he had something better than the culture and was happy for everyone to see it.

3. Jesus sometimes actively defied culture. To defy a culture is offensive.

He drove the animals and traders out of the temple. He refused to condemn an adulteress.

He called the Pharisees hypocrites, and spoke of judgment on Chorazin, Bethsaida and Jerusalem.

He expected his teaching to divide families. He opposed the normal practices of divorce and legal accusation.

He refused to admire the great stones in Herod's temple but said they would all be thrown down.

* Why did Jesus defy the culture?

Because the culture had enslaved the people and he wanted to set them free.

So we see that Jesus sometimes accepted the local culture, sometimes ignored it, and sometimes defied it.

* But the really important thing for Jesus was none of these... What was it?

4. Jesus introduced a new culture.

It was "gospel culture". He taught his disciples a new way of thinking and living.

* Read Matt 5:38-48; Matt 6:1-8; Matt 20:25-28; Mk 16:15-16.

What do these passages teach us about gospel culture?

Because Jesus created a new culture, you can go to any country in the world and find people like you.

And the better they know him, the more they will be like you.

The world contains much darkness but Jesus said: "You are the light of the world... Let your light shine."

He said, "You must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." The only perfect culture is gospel culture.

The gospel culture entrusted to us by Jesus has standards and principles that cannot be compromised.

We are not of the world but sent into the world so the world may hear and believe the truth (Jn 17:14-21).

Many times we must "obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).

5. Culture conflict

Jesus was wonderfully kind and compassionate.

He healed everyone who came to him, resolved their problems, and filled them with joy.

He was a good man, the best man this world has ever seen.

* Do you think people will always like you if you are a good person?

Jesus was not only good... He was also faithful and true.

With his first sermon in Nazareth "they took *offence* at him" and tried to throw him off a cliff (Luke 4:28-29).

Later his friends told him, "Don't you know the Pharisees were *offended* by this parable?" (Matt 15:12).

Within three years Judas betrayed him, his disciples forsook him, the crowds were shouting, "Crucify!"

Jesus has created a new culture for us, a new way of thinking and living.

We are different from the world, and for this reason some people will not like us (Lk 6:22).¹

Paul and culture

* Read 1 Cor 9:19-23... Working among people of various cultures, what was Paul's aim?

If Paul acts like a Jew to the Jews, or like a Gentile to the Gentiles, in order to please people, we might think he is simply an actor with no character or principles of his own.

If he is always changing, how can he be true to himself? How can we know which is the real Paul?

Verses 22-23 show us his aim: "*that by all means I might save some.*"

He never lost sight of this aim. This aim represents the real Paul. It is *gospel culture* which drives him.

1. Paul sometimes accepted culture.

With the Jews he says, "I am a Pharisee." With the Gentiles he says, "I am a Roman citizen."

He had Timothy circumcised for work among Jews. He left Titus uncircumcised for work among Gentiles.

He said, "Give no offence to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God" (1 Cor 10:32)

For the sake of Jews he became a rabbi teaching in synagogues; he made a vow and shaved his head (Acts 21).

For the sake of Gentiles he took a Latin name (Paul); he rented a schoolroom and presented lectures.

In Athens he quoted from philosophers and poets. For Cretans he quoted a proverb from Crete.

In Jewish synagogues he quoted from prophets. With pagans in Lystra he spoke of the one true God.

* Why did Paul conform to these cultures?

a) to avoid offence... b) to win acceptance, and so to communicate his message.

¹ See *Mission Strategies Then and Now*, chapter 3.

2. Paul sometimes quietly ignored culture. To ignore a culture is surprising.

In prison he sang Christian hymns at midnight. He went as a Jew into the home of the Gentile jailer.

He said a condemned criminal is the Messiah. He said "Jesus is Lord" when others said "Caesar is Lord."

He did not follow the food restrictions of the Jews. He walked about publicly in the company of Gentiles.

*** Why did Paul ignore culture?**

Because he had something better than the culture and was happy for everyone to see it.

3. Paul sometimes actively defied culture. To defy a culture is offensive.

He insisted on Jewish and Gentile Christians eating together. He drove out a demon that told fortunes.

He dismissed sacrificial animals and flowers. He watched the Ephesians burn their books of magic.

He told the Corinthians to come out of their temples and leave their prostitutes.

He accused the high-priest of violating the Law.

*** Why did Paul defy the culture?**

Because the culture had enslaved the people and he wanted to set them free.

So we see that Paul sometimes accepted the local culture, sometimes ignored it, and sometimes defied it.

*** But the really important thing for Paul was none these... What was it?**

4. Paul introduced a new culture.

For Paul some things never changed. There is a core gospel culture that he was committed to.

It is not negotiable. It overrides every home culture and every local culture.

Paul grew up with a strong home culture (Jewish) and worked in a dominant local culture (Greek),

but it was **gospel culture** that now motivated and inspired all he did.

He said, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, so that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect" (Rom 12:2).

Paul identified two missionary principles in this gospel culture:

He was committed to **proclaiming Christ**. "The Jews demand signs and the Greeks seek wisdom, but *we preach Christ crucified*, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles" (1 Cor 1:22-23).

He was committed to **pleasing Christ**. "Whether we are at home or away, *we make it our aim to please him*" (2 Cor 5:9).

Paul would always proclaim Christ and please Christ. That is gospel culture.

It had become Paul's own culture. For him it had authority over every other culture.

5. Culture conflict

Paul's aim was not merely to be the same as everyone else.

He had a message to proclaim and a Christian life to live...

and he would not let any culture prevent him from doing so.

It is offensive in any culture to tell people they are lost and need a Saviour.

It is offensive to insist that Jesus is the only way, and that "there is salvation in no one else" (Acts 4:12).

Like Jesus, Paul faced violent mobs crying, "Away with him!" (Jn 19:15)

"Away with such a fellow from the earth! For he should not be allowed to live" (Acts 22:22).

John advised, "Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you" (1 Jn 3:13; also 4:1-5).

When we ignore or defy other cultures, we may find ourselves in trouble.

The early Christians were accused of turning the world upside-down.

If our mission is as successful as theirs, we are likely to face the same accusation.¹

Culture conflict in the workplace

As this course is focused on gospel mission to unreached people, it does not directly address the issues faced by believers in other spheres of service – a godly employee, for example in a corrupt business, or a godly teacher in a corrupt education system, or a godly politician in a corrupt administration. The concerns of such people would be discussed in a course on Biblical Ethics, but the concept of the culture triangle may certainly be applicable to their circumstances.

A school-teacher or businessman or politician who follows Christ will take his own *gospel culture* wherever he goes, and live by it in all he says and does. At the same time, he or his colleagues may be attracted by new methods or ideas inspired by *global culture*. Whilst conforming in many ways to the *local culture*, he may sometimes ignore it and occasionally defy it. Because of his willingness to think for himself, he may be highly respected as a man of integrity. But he may also be considered naïve or difficult, and may sometimes suffer tension on account of his personal principles.

¹ See also *Mission Strategies Then and Now*, chapter 10.

An awareness of the culture triangle may help us understand what is happening in any social context and enable us to deal wisely with the circumstances we are in.

Culture and contextualization

Contextualization: “An attempt to adapt Christian beliefs and practices to the local culture, so that people can follow Christ faithfully within their own cultural context.”

Syncretism: “An attempt to combine diverse beliefs or practices by asserting an underlying unity or tolerance.”

Syncretism is usually considered bad, but there are different opinions about contextualization.

* **Would you say that contextualization and syncretism are the same thing?**

People who support contextualization say that the gospel can (and should) become **incarnate** in any culture.

It can be born into that culture and should then grow naturally within it.

They say: The gospel can be poured into any culture...

just as a liquid is poured into a cup and so takes on the same shape as the cup.

For example, Christians may choose to look and behave like Muslims whilst inwardly believing in Jesus.

We take Islamic **form** and fill it with Christian **content**. We practise Christianity in a Muslim way.

We dress like Muslims, pray in the mosque, fast in Ramadan, keep the sheep feast etc. and also believe in Jesus.

This is a way of becoming a Muslim to the Muslims in order to win Muslims.

In practice it should reduce prejudice and persecution, and make it easier for others to join us.

The same approach is being tried elsewhere in Hindu and Buddhist contexts.

The aim is to make ourselves and our gospel acceptable to people while they remain in their own culture.

This raises a question:

* **Is that what we see in the New Testament?**

* **Did Jesus practise his gospel principles in a Jewish way? Did he pour his teachings into a Jewish cup?**

He did... but we have also seen that he sometimes ignored or defied the cultural expectations of the Jews... and in the end was rejected by them and crucified.

* **Did Paul take Jewish form and fill it with gospel content?**

He did, whenever he taught in the synagogues...

but at times he ignored or defied it, and was thrown out of the synagogues.

* **Did Paul take pagan form and fill it with gospel content?**

He did not... because pagan religion (unlike Jewish religion) was not inspired by God.

“What pagans sacrifice, they offer to demons, not to God. I do not want you to be partners with demons”

(1 Cor 10:20). So he insisted, “Flee from idolatry” (1 Cor 10:14).

The aim of Jesus (and his apostles) was to establish a new community on new principles.

Jesus specifically said that new wine cannot be poured into old skins or a new patch sewn on an old garment.

New principles cannot be poured into an old cup designed for a very different set of beliefs and behaviours.

This is the reason why Paul's converts established house-fellowships (churches).

They did not continue to attend pagan temples or Jewish synagogues whilst inwardly believing in Jesus.

In fact they were very quickly driven out of the synagogues and persecuted by the temple worshippers.

* **Is it possible to keep the form of another religion and fill it with Christian content?**

In all religions, apart from Christianity, *the form is what really matters*.

The form (the religious ritual) is far more important than the content (the personal belief).

What you do outwardly is your religion.

This makes it difficult (or impossible) to add Christian content to a false religion.

If we do, our Christianity will become false. It will not be understood for what it is.

People will see what we do without asking what we believe. They will see the form and ignore the content.

They see us acting as pagans and so think we are pagans.

In the New Testament we see that *both the content and the form must change*.

The new content is expressed in a new form – the godly family and the house fellowship.

For Jesus and his apostles the gospel was a new culture. They offered it freely and openly.

They would make use of the old cultures in order to introduce it.

But they never allowed the old cultures to control their character or behaviour.

Peter affirmed: "You were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers" (1 Pet 1:18).

Our personal culture, the culture that determines how we think and behave –
the culture that for us has authority over all others –
is the gospel culture we have learned from Jesus and his apostles. That never changes.

Some practical questions

Studying local culture

* **How much do you think we should study culture?** Not too much and not too little...

1. As much as we need in order to avoid offence.

We have no wish to alienate people unnecessarily by behaviour they would consider offensive.

Common sense will usually enable a missionary to avoid offending people. It is not something to worry about.

Some missionaries have become quite neurotic for *fear of causing offence*. There is no need of this.

Whatever we do, some people will be prejudiced against us anyway. Some will find the gospel itself offensive.

But most people will be patient with a foreigner who is friendly and respectful.

They will not quickly take offence.

Some missionaries study the *academic principles* of cross-cultural communication.

But there is something much better than this. It is a matter of personality rather than knowledge or technique.

Learn to be sensitive, humble, teachable, ready to apologise, and able to laugh at your own mistakes.

Learn to listen more than you speak. And remember that "love covers a multitude of sins" (1 Pet 4:8).

Be a loving and lovable person and you will rarely cause lasting offence.

2. As much as we need in order to win acceptance and communicate our message.

In every culture there will be things we can adopt (and adapt) in making known the gospel.

For example, people will accept what we say more easily if we communicate in ways familiar to them...

using the kind of parables, proverbs, songs, drama, teaching or discussion that they appreciate and enjoy.

Study how people **communicate** (language, gestures, facial expression etc.).

See how they **acquire information** (newspapers, radio, TV, books etc.).

See how they **win friends and influence people** (hospitality, use of humour, stories, proverbs etc.).

See how they express **creative ideas** (songs, poetry etc.).

You can make use of all these to communicate your message.

Study the **daily activities** of the people (farming, shopping, travelling, family life etc.).

You can draw illustrations and parables from the events of everyday life.¹

See what causes them to be **anxious and dissatisfied** (stress, conflict, death, fear of failure, fear of God etc.).

Knowing this, you can show how certainty and satisfaction are found in Christ.

Study the history and worldview of the people to see if there is anything **preparing them for the gospel**.

Some may have ancestral prophecies of a coming saviour, a holy book, a new and better world etc.²

In this way you will *make good use of the culture* in order to communicate the gospel.

They may even admire your creative contribution to the development of their culture, and thank you for it.

Accepting, ignoring or defying a local culture

In any cross-cultural situation, local people may do something you would not normally do.

You may wonder whether to join in with it, or ignore it, or deliberately go against it.

For example, there may be a public religious ceremony, a day of fasting, a political rally, a sporting event, a community celebration, a student protest, a teachers' strike etc. Should you take part or not?

* **Is there any way of deciding whether to join in a cultural event, or to ignore it, or oppose it?**

In every culture there will be certain things you **accept**, some things you **ignore**, and other things you **oppose**.

For example, a neighbour may offer you holy water or strong beer, a traffic policeman may wait for a bribe,

a friend may ask to borrow your car, a child may throw a stone at you, goats may eat your vegetable garden,

your students may give you a Holy Cross or a Hand of Fatima, your neighbours may chant loudly all night

* **How can we decide which aspects of a local culture to ignore or defy, and which to accept and use?**

In such circumstances, there are two questions to bear in mind. We learn them from Paul:

¹ For many examples, see R Crawford Allison, *Leaves from the African Jungle* (John Ritchie, 1999).

² On this important subject, see Don Richardson, *Eternity in their Hearts* (Regal, 2006).

“So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, **do all to the glory of God**. Give no offence to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God, just as I try to please everyone in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, **that they may be saved**” (1 Cor 10:31-33).

These two great desires motivated Paul as he proclaimed the gospel to people of varied cultures and races:

Do all to the glory of God... that they may be saved.

So I always ask myself:

1. If I follow their culture, **will it glorify God?**

In other words: Will it show them his glory? Or will it confuse and weaken their understanding of him?

2. If I follow their culture, **will it help them to be saved?**

Will it help the people to see that they are lost and need a saviour? Or will it hinder their salvation?

Dealing wisely with culture

1. As a missionary you will be pulled in three directions... home culture... local culture... gospel culture

2. In general the Bible is not impressed with cultures.

They are the creation of man without reference to God and are described simply as “the world”.

3. In general we should respect and adapt to local culture for two reasons:

to avoid causing unnecessary offence, and to win acceptance for our ourselves and our message.

4. There may be things in local culture that help us to communicate the gospel.

We must identify them carefully and work hard to make good use of them.

5. Don't be intimidated by local or global cultures. You have something better to offer.

It is a new culture. You have learned it from Jesus. It is good news for the people around us.

It takes priority over every other culture.

We saw that culture generally has three elements:

1. Technological...tools and techniques for managing the material world

2. Sociological... ways of dealing with people

3. Ideological... a shared worldview

* **“Cross-cultural missionaries will usually accept 1... adapt 2... and replace 3.” Would you agree?**

The culture of a Christian home

Finally, if you have a home of your own, even a small rented room, remember this.

Although you can't change the culture of the world, **you can choose the culture of your home.**

Within your four walls...

Jesus is Lord; the Kingdom of heaven is near; you are a Christian family, living by gospel culture.

People will tell you, “In the world there is no peace.”

“That is true,” you reply, “but in our home there is always peace, thank God.”

The world outside may have better food, smarter clothes and all the latest luxuries,

but you have something whose value is beyond price. “For the Kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of the goodness that pleases God, and peace and joy through the Holy Spirit” (Rom 14:17).

Three True Stories from Morocco

A warm hat

It was winter and my head was cold. At that time Arabs everywhere hated Israel because of war in the Middle East. In the market was a man selling hats made of thick cloth and I bought one.

I was glad to wear my new hat as I was selling books in the market. Before long a stranger came and asked me to arrange a visa so he could go to Israel. Why did he ask me? Because he thought I was Jewish. Why were many Arab people avoiding me? Because they all thought I was Jewish. Then I realised I had bought my hat from a Jewish man. It was a Jewish hat, worn only by Jews. Everyone else knew that, except me.

A long robe

There was a servant of Christ who wanted to be accepted by the Muslims so he dressed like a Muslim in a long robe with a little cap on his head (*tagiya*). He changed his name to a Muslim name. In Ramadan he told them he was fasting and praying. They were very pleased and said to one another, “Look, he is becoming a Muslim. See how much the foreigners like Islam! We must teach him more from the Qur'an. Soon Islam will take over the world.”

A significant drink

Another servant of Christ was invited into a Muslim home during Ramadan. The man of the house offered him a glass of water, knowing the Christian was not fasting as they were. Showing respect for them and their culture, the servant of Christ did not drink. Then a young boy came in. Children are not usually required to keep

the fast, but this boy was fasting. His father commended him, "My son, today you are fasting like the men!" Hearing this, the servant of Christ thanked his host for the glass of water and drank it, giving praise to Allah. Why do you think he did that?

*** What is the difference between a shame culture and a conscience culture?**

The difference between a shame culture and a conscience culture can be illustrated by what happens at the traffic lights. In a **shame culture**, you will stop your car at a red light *if a policeman is there*. In a **conscience culture**, you will always stop at a red light, even if no policeman is there. It is the same with speed limits. In a shame culture, you will keep to the speed limit *if you see a radar camera*. In a conscience culture, you will keep to the speed limit even if there is no radar camera. Now let us dig a little deeper.

In a **shame culture**, the principle is: Do whatever you can for your own advantage, so long as you can get away with it. You want people to respect and admire you. You make sure they know the good and successful side of you. You try to hide anything that might make you look small.

In a shame culture there are many hidden sins – cheating, fraud, corruption, treachery, pornography, prostitution, secret drink and drug habits, viewing illicit videos and websites. People will do these things secretly and hope that no one finds out. There is much hypocrisy in a shame culture. Aware that they are taking risks, people often live in fear of being found out. Assuming that everyone has something to hide, they will condemn those who are caught but become aggressive and defensive if caught themselves. A youth will say, "My father would beat me if he found out!" But he knows his father is also cheating on weights, measures, prices or taxes, and having secret adulterous affairs.

A shame culture may sometimes degenerate into a shameless culture, when things previously considered shameful are blatantly admitted or even promoted.

A **conscience culture** is quite different. Here the principle is: Do whatever is right and you will be alright. In a conscience culture, you have your own personal standards of right and wrong. You respect the rights of others, take no more than your share, do what is honest and honourable even if no one is watching. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries some nations such as Britain and the USA largely adopted a conscience culture. From about 1960 onwards it declined and is now almost completely gone.

In truth there is only one real conscience culture in world – it is gospel culture. New Testament Christianity is the only worldview or belief-system that cares more about the inside than the outside of the cup (Matt 23:25-26). We value our conscience above our popularity and reputation. We care far more what God thinks of us than what other people think (Eph 6:6). In what we say and do, we will be led by the Holy Spirit rather than the expectations of our friends, family, teachers or employers. Throughout much of their history, the Jews also had a good understanding of conscience culture. A righteous man was one who did what was right in the sight of God, without unduly seeking to impress people (Gen 6:9; Prov 20:7; Micah 6:8).

So we see the essential difference between a shame culture and a conscience culture. In a shame culture we are accountable to people. In a conscience culture we are accountable to God.

*** Is there a difference between gospel culture and evangelical culture?**

Evangelical churches throughout the world are becoming more and more the same. They buy keyboards and drums; they spend much time singing Western worship songs to Western tunes. The pastor jumps around and gets excited but rarely teaches much of the Bible.

In the past, young believers in many nations would serve the Lord by open-air preaching, Bible teaching, visiting homes and gospel outreach. Now it seems they are playing in the band. In past times, believers met for Bible study and prayer; now they meet to practice their musical arrangements.

The New Testament does not identify "singer" or "keyboardist" or "worship leader" as a spiritual gift. The early churches did not meet for "worship" but for teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread and prayer (Acts 2:42). Something has changed, creating a worldwide evangelical culture.

*** As a missiologist, how would you evaluate this change?**

Does it mean that evangelical churches are contextualising in order to reach modern youth?

Would you say that global culture is destroying the churches?

Are evangelical churches growing... in the number of people... in spiritual maturity?

Are the churches now more attractive to people of other religions and beliefs... or less attractive?

Are they meeting the needs of people from various cultures and languages?

Are they preparing young believers for cross-cultural mission?

Required Reading: chapters 6 to 10 of *New Life for All*.

5. New Testament Mission Methods

Note: Display a map of Paul's journeys, if possible, to show where he went.

The Mission of Jesus

*** Was Jesus a missionary?**

He left his home and Father. He left riches and glory to live among poor people... to bring good news, to help with problems. He was an apostle (Heb 3:1) and an evangelist (Lk 4:43). Jesus was a perfect missionary... an example for his disciples and for us.

*** But was Jesus a cross-cultural missionary?**

He said, "I was sent *only* to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt 15:24). He did not stay among the Samaritans or Gadarenes; he just passed through their territories. He learnt no new language and adopted no new culture. He told his disciples, "Go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans" (Matt 10:5). He told a Canaanite woman, "It's not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs" (Matt 15:26).

*** When a group of Greeks came seeking Jesus, what happened (John 12:20-27)?**

He was troubled and thought about his death. Why? He had nothing to offer them until he had died for their sin and secured a new covenant for them in his blood. Jesus had *no gospel to offer the Gentiles* until he had died to atone for the sin of the world. Jesus was not a cross-cultural missionary.

*** But he always had cross-cultural mission in mind. How do we know this?**

- He said, "I am the light of *the world*... I did not come to judge the world but to save *the world*" (Jn 8:12; 12:47).
- He was happy to think of the day when many Gentiles would enter the Kingdom (Lk 13:29).
- He was glad for individual Gentiles to take the news back to their own people (Lk 8:38-39; Jn 4:28-29, 39).
- He prepared his disciples for cross-cultural mission and later sent them into all the world (Acts 1:8).¹

The Mission of the Twelve Apostles

After Jesus had died and risen, he commissioned his apostles to go into all the world. The good news must reach people of many different languages, cultures, customs and beliefs.

*** Were the first apostles cross-cultural missionaries? What cross-cultural mission do we find in Acts?**

1. Perhaps on the Day of Pentecost

Visitors from many nations came to Jerusalem – "both Jews and proselytes" (Acts 2:11). They spoke various languages, and no doubt had various local customs. But they were *already committed to Jewish religion and culture*. This was not cross-cultural mission

2. Perhaps the Ethiopian eunuch

No. He was already committed to Philip's Jewish religious culture before meeting him. Philip did not have to learn a new language, or study a new worldview, in order to communicate with him.

3. Perhaps Cornelius and his Roman friends

No. These Gentiles already believed in the God and the scriptures of the Jews before hearing the gospel. Peter did not have to learn a new language or enter a new culture as he explained the good news to them.

4. Perhaps the Greeks in Syrian Antioch (Acts 11:20)

"Men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who on coming to Antioch spoke to the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus" But these Greeks were already committed to the religion and culture of the Jewish synagogue. The evangelists from Cyprus and Cyrene did not need to cross culture in order to reach them.

*** Do you think these events were cross-cultural mission?**

So far we have not seen any cross-cultural mission in the New Testament.²

¹ *MSTN*, ch.3, Was Jesus a cross-cultural missionary? (pp.33-36)

² *MSTN*, ch.4 (pp.37-41 and 45-7).

The Mission of Paul

* Was Paul a cross-cultural missionary?

On his **first journey**, with Barnabas, they went to Cyprus, which was **Barnabas's homeland**.

Then to Cilicia and neighbouring provinces (Pisidia and Lycaonia), which was **Paul's homeland**.

On this missionary journey Barnabas and Paul were never more than 200 miles from home.

On this journey they were welcome to speak in synagogues everywhere (Acts 13:15).

Paul could use Greek, Aramaic and Hebrew, familiar to him from childhood (Acts 21:37, 40).

He did not have to learn a new language or enter a new culture.

You might say Paul (a Jew) was an apostle to the Gentiles, which makes him a cross-cultural missionary.

* If Paul was an apostle to the Gentiles, why did he always go to the Jewish synagogues?

The synagogue was the best place to meet Gentiles... that is Gentiles who would listen to him with respect.

The Gentiles in the synagogue had already crossed from their own culture into the Jewish culture.

In addition to their many local languages, they could speak Greek, the language of the synagogue.

Paul was comfortable with these synagogue Gentiles. In their company he could be himself.

The hard work of learning a new culture and language had been done by Paul's hearers before he met them.

So we could say that **Paul was not yet a cross-cultural missionary**.

He did not enter a foreign culture or learn a foreign language or study foreign customs or beliefs.

On Paul's **second journey**, he and Barnabas started in his native Cilicia, continuing west through Turkey.

Again they went to the synagogues... and many people in the synagogues believed.

But when Paul was in a truly cross-cultural context, he had great difficulty (Acts 14:11-13).

The further Paul went away from his homeland, the more sensitive he became to cultural differences.

Moving into Gentile territory, he wanted to take Timothy (Acts 16:1-3).

Timothy was half Gentile and would be more *comfortable in a Gentile context*.

Paul was uncertain about crossing the sea to Macedonia and entering a new cultural context in Europe.

He needed the reassurance of a vision before he would *enter a new culture* (Acts 16:6-10).

Then he had another a difficult cross-cultural experience in Philippi (Acts 16:16-24)

He was not yet a cross-cultural missionary.

On his **third Journey**, Paul wanted to deal with problems among Gentile converts in Macedonia.

He sent his Gentile co-workers **Timothy** and **Erastus** ahead of him, to prepare the way (Acts 19:21-22).

He knew the best person to work in any cultural context is a person from that culture.

Paul was not a cross-cultural missionary.

On his **fourth journey**, he spoke in Greek to soldiers, officials and judges and rulers.

But when problems arose in the Gentile cultures of Corinth and Crete...

he sent **Titus** (a Gentile) to deal with them (2 Cor 12:18; Tit 1:5).

Paul was still not a cross-cultural missionary.¹

He never had to attract the interest and attention of foreigners speaking a foreign language.

Conclusion: There is much less cross-cultural mission in the New Testament than we might imagine.

How the Gospel Crossed Cultures

* Is there no cross-cultural mission at all in the New Testament?

Yes, there is cross-cultural mission in the New Testament. The gospel certainly did enter new cultures.

* How did the gospel enter new cultures in New Testament times?

We can answer this by asking another question...

* Who are the key people mentioned as converts in the book of Acts?

the visitors in Jerusalem at Pentecost, the Ethiopian, Cornelius, Saul of Tarsus, Barnabas, Priscilla and Aquila, Apollos, Lydia...

* Which of these were in their home town when they were converted? Which were far from home?

They were all far from home when they heard and accepted the gospel.

¹ MSTN, ch.6: Was Paul a cross-cultural missionary? and ch.10: Minimizing cross-cultural resistance (pp.71-2 and 117-120).

*** What can we learn from this?**

The *first believers* in any culture- or language-group will probably hear the gospel far from home. They can then take it back to their own people.

*** After Peter's preaching on the Day of Pentecost, how do you think the gospel was heard in Parthia, Mesopotamia, Asia, Libya, Rome, Crete, Arabia and the other places mentioned?**

Visitors from those places would take it back to their own people in their own language.

*** After Philip met the Ethiopian, how would the gospel enter new cultures in Ethiopia?**

Having heard it in Greek, the Ethiopian would talk about it with his own people in his own language.

*** After Peter's visit to Cornelius, how would the gospel enter new cultures in the Roman Empire?**

Cornelius's friends and family would take it back to all the places they had come from... and discuss it with their own people in their own languages.

*** Can you summarize how the gospel entered new cultures through the ministry of Paul?**

1. He went to the synagogues, *where he was in his own culture* and people would listen to him with respect.
2. In the synagogues he found Gentile immigrants who had *already entered his culture* before they heard the gospel.
3. He taught them in Greek and expected them *to tell their own people* in their own languages.
4. When Paul wanted the gospel to reach a foreign land, he either sent a believer belonging to that culture... or went himself with a believer belonging to that culture.

Why this strategy? **Paul wanted to reduce the cross-cultural strangeness of the Gospel.**

He knew that people will listen best to people like themselves... who look the same and speak the same.

A key to the success of NT mission is *the conversion of immigrants and travellers far from home.*

They had already crossed culture before hearing the gospel.

They were free from the social and religious constraints of their own homeland.

Hearing the gospel in a foreign language, they could express it in their own language for their own culture.

The gospel was taken into new cultures not by the missionaries but by their converts.

*** What are the advantages of this strategy?**

1. People will regard the gospel message as something one of their own people has discovered... not something a foreigner is trying to introduce.
2. They will not be distracted by racial prejudice... or by thoughts of foreign money or foreign travel.
3. The gospel can be explained in the local dialect so everyone understands it.
4. If it is good news, it will seem natural for them to pass on good news to their own people.
5. They will also tell friendly foreigners living among them or mixing with them in business or commerce.

*** On this basis, what is likely to be an effective strategy in cross-cultural mission?**

The conversion of immigrants. If you want to introduce the gospel to an unreached place or people-group...

look for someone who has come from there. Then lead that person to faith in Christ.

Then help them to share their discovery with their own people in their own language.

Immigration and cross-cultural mission

People come to our cities from far away. Many are from countries that forbid Christian mission. We can share the gospel with these visitors without leaving home. Tell your students some true stories from your own experience of immigrants who accept Christ.

Two students in Lagos, Nigeria

David was a Nigerian believer at college in Lagos who rented a room next to a student from a neighbouring Muslim country. Missionaries were not allowed to preach the gospel in that country. When David explained his faith to his neighbour, the young Muslim accepted Christ. They read the Bible together every day in English, and soon David was invited to visit his friend's homeland. There they received a warm welcome from his friend's family and village and told them about the gospel. His friend could explain it all in his own language to his own people. Some of them have accepted Christ.

David had discovered a very effective method for cross-cultural mission. It requires no language study, imposes no culture shock, and costs almost nothing. Now he is completely committed to this work.

Warfare in Sudan

In Sudan before partition, “the prolonged conflict and war caused Christians to scatter throughout the country and beyond. This resulted in churches being planted in places and among peoples who were previously unreached. Now many of those won to Christ while displaced are returning to their home areas with the goal of starting new fellowships”.¹

The Church in China

“The urban professional Church has truly changed the face of Chinese Christianity in the last ten years. Many younger professionals, students and professors encountered Jesus while studying abroad, through campus Bible study groups or other forms of outreach, and returned to China eager to engage urban society with their new-found faith. These well-educated and energetic believers are strategically placed to impact the future of China, which will belong to those of influence within government, business, media, academia, the legal profession and the emerging civil sector.”²

Rachel Saint and the Waorani tribe

In the early 1950s a group of young evangelical missionaries were located in Ecuador on the west coast of South America. They were concerned to take the gospel to a primitive tribe living in the jungle, known as the Waorani or Auca. There were no believers in this people-group, and they had a reputation for violence and hatred of foreigners.

A girl called Dayuma had run away from the Waorani. Her father had been speared to death and her own life was in danger. A young missionary lady, Rachel Saint, who had come to do Bible translation, heard about this girl and arranged to meet her. Rachel and several others, including Jim Elliott and Rachel's brother Nate, started to learn a little of the Waorani language from Dayuma, and she learned about the gospel from them.

Nate was a pilot and in 1955 he went with four other men in a small aeroplane to begin gospel outreach in the Waorani area. For several weeks they dropped gifts from the aeroplane and eventually decided to land. Almost immediately the five missionaries were attacked with spears and killed.

Two years after the death of the five men, some members of Dayuma's family came out of the jungle and made contact with Dayuma. They asked her to return to the tribe as the man who threatened to kill her was now dead and her mother was longing for her to come home.

Dayuma went back with them and told the tribe that the foreigners who died were good men who wanted to share good things with them. She told them about the true God and about the wives and families of the men they had killed. They asked her to bring the white women so they could learn more from them.

Then Elizabeth Elliot, whose husband had died, and Rachel Saint, whose brother had died, went and lived with the Waorani for a while. They were the first outsiders to be accepted by the tribe.

It was Dayuma, with the help of Rachel in particular, who explained the gospel to her people, led some to faith in Christ and taught them from the newly translated scriptures. That was the beginning of a genuine fellowship of believers among the Waorani people.

The death of the five men might be seen as brave and heroic, or as tragic and futile. It may certainly have contributed something to the conversion of the tribe. But the fact is that the Waorani people were led to faith in Christ not by the pioneering presence of foreign missionaries but in a much less spectacular and more culturally sensitive way. They accepted the gospel from one of their own people, who heard it far from home.³

A Natural Way for News to Spread

*** How do you know what is going on in the world?**

*** For example, if there is a presidential election in America, how do you know who has won?**

A news reporter from your country, living in America, obtains the information in English.

He then prepares it for his own people in his own language.

That is the way news usually travels from one culture to another.

People far from home hear about it in a foreign language and then tell their own people in their own language.

News has always travelled this way. That is probably how Jesus and his apostles expected it to travel.

That is the best way for it to travel today. If we want the Good News to reach every nation...

we should look for foreigners who have entered our culture and speak our language.

When they accept Christ, they will then be able to tell their own people in their own language.

They will naturally find ways that are appropriate to their culture, customs and traditional beliefs.

¹ *Operation World* (7th edn., 2010), p.785

² *Operation World* (7th edn., 2010), p.220

³ Ethel Emily Wallis, *Dayuma: Life Under Waorani Spears*, YWAM, 1996; http://www.worldmag.com/2006/01/five_man_legacy. For sources see also http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Auca. The word Auca means “savage” and is pronounced: *aw* (as in cow) - *ka*.

*** In your homeland, how is news communicated from one person to another?**

In many places the market is a good place to hear news.

People have come from many different places, and bring many items of news.

After they have done their business they usually have time to listen.

Some have come with no intention to buy or sell, but simply to hear the news.

In small villages and country places, travelling salesmen are also very welcome.

They sell items not normally available in those places, but they also bring news.

Many missionaries travel from place to place preaching the gospel to crowds in public places.

There is nothing wrong with this, but it is not natural.

News is not normally spread by someone travelling from place to place announcing it.

News is usually brought by someone travelling for other reasons.

The main reason that people travel is for trade. A trader would be a natural person to bring news.

Selling items door-to-door or in the market, he can tell his customers about Jesus and give them a leaflet.

That is a very natural form of cross-cultural mission. It is culturally sensitive.

Traders and cross-cultural mission

In nineteenth-century India

In the 1840s there was an Indian Hindu, a seller of sugar and salt fish. In the market he was friendly with some Christian sellers who met every morning and evening to pray for God's blessing on their work. Hoping for the same blessing, he started to read the Bible and eventually put his faith in Christ. Taking the name Aquillah, he learned from an evangelist how to ask and answer questions about the way of salvation. After that, wherever he went selling his sugar and salt fish, he talked about Jesus with his customers: "When he entered a village he used to read the Gospel and preach on the subject and distribute tracts, and sell his sugar and salt fish for a livelihood."¹

In thirteenth-century Austria

In the year 1266 a report was compiled by a priest of the Catholic Inquisition, listing evidence to be used in the condemnation and execution of Evangelicals (Waldensians). "A curious passage described the Waldensian approaching wealthier potential converts in the guise of the travelling salesman selling pretty things, rings, scarves and the like, and then, when the customer asked if he had other items for sale, replying that he had much more valuable gems, but would need to be assured that he would not be betrayed to the clergy. There would follow a recitation of some gripping scene from Scripture – the Annunciation, John's account of the Last Supper, or Paul's exhortation in the twelfth chapter of Romans, 'Be not conformed to the world.' Such devices were designed to take the [new person] into a reading circle."² The book they read together was the New Testament in the local language, forbidden by the Roman Catholic Church but attractive to many customers in many places.

Required Reading: chapters 11 and 12 of *NLFA*; introduction and first two chapters of *Mission Strategies Then and Now*.

Recommended Reading: Douglas S Hubery: *The Teaching Methods of Jesus*

¹ G H Lang, *The History and Diaries of an Indian Christian (J C Aroolappen)* (Thynne & Co, London, 1939), pp.107-108

² Malcolm Lambert, *Medieval Heresy* (Blackwell, 3rd edn, 2002), p.168

6. Some Current Issues in Mission

Class Notes 6 : Give out the Class Notes BEFORE STARTING THIS SESSION. They contain items for discussion. If you have time, and your students are responsive, you could extend this class and the next over three or even four sessions.

Every pioneer missionary would like to see quicker conversions, more enquirers, more people coming to faith.

We wonder if we can find better ways of working. We look for a key to success that no one has found before.

Every now and then someone says, "Those old missionaries were so stupid. I have a better idea. Follow me!"

But looking for a key to instant success, we will probably be disappointed.

There is no quick and easy method in cross-cultural mission.

There is no secret key to instant success. It is hard work and slow, and it always has been.

It was *hard work* for Jesus. He walked long distances, talked with many people and was sometimes very tired.

He was misunderstood, insulted, hated and eventually killed.

It was *hard work* for Paul. He studied the scriptures, taught with care and answered difficult objections.

He was mocked, slandered, shipwrecked, stoned, arrested, imprisoned, beaten and finally put to death.

But sometimes we do actually get a new idea. At some times, and in some places, it does help.

So we must be open to new thinking, especially as circumstances change from year to year.

Missiologists are only Human.

Differences of Opinion

In any subject of academic study, including missiology, there will be diverse opinions. A teacher's task is to present both sides of every argument. A student's concern is to develop his or her own opinion on these issues, and also to understand and respect other points of view. Remember that we are united in Christ, not by agreement on every detail of doctrine and strategy, but by agreement on the essential truths of the gospel and by love for Jesus and one another.

There are reasons why missiologists will have different opinions. We are all influenced by our church background, our past experience, our personal character and our home culture. This equips us to offer a variety of insights and practical applications. It enables us to compare our own approach with that of others and to widen and refine our understanding. Let us consider these four influences.

1. Our *church background*, in particular, will affect how we attempt to start and lead churches. A missiologist from an underground fellowship in a Muslim nation is unlikely to have the same view of "church" as a bishop with responsibility for historic cathedrals and government policies in Europe. A missiologist from a megachurch with a great auditorium in Seoul is unlikely to see things the same way as one who meets for fellowship in a small apartment in Bangalore. When preaching, an African may be accustomed to say more about God than Christ, whilst for an Indian the opposite may be true.

2. Every missiologist will also be influenced by his or her own *experience of mission*. A missiologist in Europe, for example, contending with the overbearing cynicism of secular atheism, may have insights quite different from his brother confronting the intense anarchic spirituality of Africa or the dogmatic rigidity of the Middle East. It is evident that a medical doctor or an agriculturalist, an evangelist or a Bible teacher, may each bring different perspectives and priorities to their understanding of pioneer mission. We must learn all we can from one another.

3. And of course we have varying temperaments and personalities. A missiologist with an extraverted and outgoing character may see little value in subtle definitions of "gospel" or "church" and be willing to accept almost anyone or anything so long as they are friendly and will follow Jesus in some way. A missiologist with a character more sensitive and intense may feel such a high regard for truth that he or she is inclined to reject almost everyone and everything as false and unacceptable. We must take into account *our own personality*, and not assume that our views are entirely unrelated to the kind of people we are.

4. Like all human beings, missiologists carry *cultural baggage*. We each have habits and assumptions that influence our response to new information or experience. We filter and interpret what we see and hear.

Our personal background may affect our theological values and priorities more than we realise. In the agnostic and atheistic context of Europe, for example, we are compelled to emphasize the existence, glory and worship of *God* – and we tend to think of the Bible as a single book, focusing on *continuity* in the plan of God through Old and New Testaments. But in the more devoutly religious context of the Middle East and North Africa we may take the existence and worship of God for granted and be much more concerned to proclaiming the uniqueness of *Christ* as Saviour – we emphasize the profound *contrast* between the Old Testament and the New.

Yet missiologists cannot easily be classified according to race or birth. Things are not always what they seem. A Korean pastor may consider himself a Lutheran or a Calvinist; he is an Asian with a distinctive European theology. A Brazilian missionary has worked for many years among Bantu tribes in Angola or Mozambique; he is a South American with an acutely African understanding of spiritual realities. An English evangelist has

debated theological issues with Arabs and Berbers all his life; he is a European with a profoundly Semitic view of scripture and indeed of faith.

For these reasons it is clear that any one of us may offer unique insights not evident to other missiologists. It also means that our own missiological ideas can be unbalanced or flawed or simply wrong.

New Ideas Promoted and Marketed

We should always bear in mind that ideas (and the books and videos presenting them) are advertised and marketed. Bad ideas may be widely accepted because they have been skilfully presented and publicised. Good ideas may go almost unnoticed because no money was available to promote them. The best thinkers and writers may be obscure and unknown if they do not have the financial resources or the egotism to advertise themselves and their work.

Some speakers and writers have become world-famous by identifying errors in the churches familiar to them and teaching the opposite. Here are some examples.

John Piper insists that every Christian should have “a passion for happiness”. He says, “We should pursue happiness with all our might. The desire to be happy is a proper motive for every good deed, and if you abandon pursuit of your own joy you cannot please God.”¹

In this way Piper promotes “Christian Hedonism”. It is a reaction against a harsh and restrictive Christian legalism in some American churches. But if we teach “Christian Hedonism” in other parts of the world, our disciples may become resistant to essential Christian principles such as “Let him deny himself” and “Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.” We may also leave them ill-prepared for hardship and persecution.

Kevin DeYoung suggests that God has *no* plan for your life and will *not* guide you in your decisions. In his book *Just Do Something* (first edition, 2009), he teaches that you should simply decide for yourself what to do.

DeYoung is reacting powerfully against an idea in some American churches that we must wait for a special vision or dream or prophecy before we can do anything for God. But in other parts of the world, if we say “Just do something!” we will not be teaching our disciples how to “discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.” Nor will they learn how to identify and undertake the “good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them”.²

As a third example we may take the so-called “**grace churches**”. These, in recent years, have reacted against the tendency of some American denominations to speak constantly about sin and the danger of falling into sin. Emphasizing the truth that grace overlooks offences and refuses to condemn, the “grace churches” have too often gone to the opposite extreme, ignoring bad behaviour and denying the importance of repentance and practical holiness.

It is clear that many new ideas about church and mission come out of America. They are skilfully promoted with lavish publicity. They are a reaction against some extreme in America. But they quickly go to the opposite extreme. These books and teachings may be helpful in America, but in other countries they can be misleading or even dangerous.

Our conclusion is quite simple. In the world today, missiologists teach a wide variety of missiologies. As with any other academic discipline, we must know what is being taught... and then decide what we will teach.

Start with Adam, or with Jesus?

When we go to people who are not Christians, it is important to discover what they already believe... and especially what they know about God.

Do they have any concept of God at all? If so, how do they attempt to approach or relate to him?

*** What do Muslims know about God (Allah)?**

They have a strong concept of God (Allah). Some are afraid of him. Many sincerely desire to please him.

Their greatest need is not for proof that Allah exists, or that Allah is powerful, or even that Allah is merciful.

But they urgently need to know that Allah loves them personally...

They need to know he sent Christ to establish a new covenant of peace, forgiveness and blessing.

It is a covenant with promises that remove all fear and doubt.

As we speak to them we focus on the uniqueness of Christ, and what it means to put all our trust in him.

*** What do European atheists and agnostics know about God?**

They think that God does not exist. Or if he does exist he is weak and therefore irrelevant.

They need basic information about God.

¹ John Piper, “We Want You to Be a Christian Hedonist!” (August 31, 2006)

² In a later book, *What is the Mission of the Church?*, DeYoung offers a helpful response to some other recent trends.

We offer them evidence for design in the natural world, and explain why there is good and evil.
We show how the character of God is most clearly revealed in Jesus, the kindest man who ever lived.
We show how belief in him has led many people to open schools and hospitals for the benefit of mankind.
We suggest that living with God makes more sense than living without him or against him.
We explain from our own experience how committing ourselves to Jesus has brought us very close to God.

*** What do animistic people in Africa and India know about God?**

They usually believe in a creator God who is inaccessible and uninvolved.
But they devote much time and money to manipulating the spirits and powers around them.
These more closely affect their health, their relationships and their prosperity.
They need to understand much more about the most high God.
The need to know about the Saviour sent by God to drive out evil spirits and set us free from witchcraft.

Conclusion: In each case we must **identify and diagnose the spiritual illness** of the people.
Then, from our spiritual medicine box, we can prescribe **the most appropriate remedy**.

In **South America** some missionaries with New Tribes Mission were living among primitive people.
The people seemed to know nothing about God or Jesus.
They did not feel a need for God. Stories about Jesus did not interest them.
One or two may have understood and believed but it was hard for one or two believers to continue alone.
Then the missionaries tried a new method.
Knowing that the villagers sat outside their huts every evening, there was plenty of time to sit with them.
There were no distractions from television or other modern technologies.
The missionaries decided **to tell God's story from beginning to end**.
With one lesson every day, they would teach the whole Bible over a period of several weeks or months.
They started with the days of creation, then Adam and Eve, the Fall, Noah and the Flood, Abraham, Joseph.
Then Moses, Joshua, David, the prophets, the exile and return.
It was a long story with a fresh episode every day.
Eventually they came to the birth of Jesus, then his miracles and his teaching about the Kingdom of God.
By this time the whole tribe was interested and wanted to know what would happen next.
They could see that Jesus was able to do what no one else could do.
The next lesson told how some people opposed Jesus, became his enemies, and then put him to death.
That night the whole tribe was upset.
Next day, they heard about his resurrection. After that, his ascension and promised return.
At this point **they were ready to make a communal decision** to put their faith in Jesus.
They became a Christian tribe.¹

Missionaries all over the world became very excited about this new method.
They called it **Chronological Storying** and urged everyone to use it.
Since then it has been tried in other places but has not met with the same success.
There is no evidence that it works, for example, in a Muslim context.
Educated Muslims already have a strong concept of God.
They have a strong prejudice against Israel and against Christianity.
They have their own stories about Old Testament characters with details that differ from the Bible accounts.
So they will often argue about the Old Testament before they get as far as the New Testament.
Chronological Storying is not the right medicine for their spiritual illness.
This illustrates the difficulty of taking a method that works in one place and expecting it to work everywhere.

*** Have you had experience of Chronological Storying? Did you find it a good method, or not?**

Homogeneous Units, or All One in Christ?

Donald McGavran was an American missionary in central India from 1936 to 1954.
He became convinced that the great hindrance to the spread of the gospel in India was the caste system.
Caste determined where individuals lived, what work they did, who they married, who their friends would be.
The few who had become Christians were rejected by their families because they stepped out of this system.
They mixed with people of other castes.

¹ "Ee-Taow" and "Now we see clearly" (DVDs available from New Tribes Mission)

McGavran argued that believers should take care to remain within their own caste.

They should maintain their normal activities and relationships.

In fact they should **create a separate church for each caste** so that people would not lose caste by joining it.¹

His views became quite influential.

In 1965 he established the School of World Mission at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California.

Then in 1970 he published his most influential book *Understanding Church Growth*.

Here McGavran suggested that cross-cultural mission has been relatively unsuccessful – not just in India but all over the world – for one simple reason.

It is because we aim for conversion of individuals and then try to combine diverse individuals into churches.

Of course they will feel uncomfortable when compelled to mix with people different from themselves.

McGavran said men and women like to mix with people from their own social, economic and educational level.

They will prefer to attend a church whose members have a similar background and lifestyle to their own.

They will share the gospel most easily with people like themselves.

He argued that church growth will happen far more rapidly if we respect cultural diversity...

and allow people to remain within their cultural comfort zone.

He emphasized the concept of **people-groups**, and the creation of an appropriate church for each people-group.

In recent years McGavran's followers have taken his idea to its logical conclusion.

They want separate churches for rich and for poor, educated and uneducated, black and white, old and young.

They want specialist churches for motorcycle riders, for drug addicts, prostitutes, lepers, Aids victims etc.

This is called the **Homogeneous Unit Principle**.

McGavran argued that our outreach must **target the whole people-group**, not individuals within it.

We must plan for the conversion of the whole community by using a method such as Chronological Storying.

We should then encourage the community leaders to make a community decision.

The intention is to start **mass movements** in which thousands will turn – all at same time – to Christ.

This idea has been taken to an extreme by some of McGavran's followers.

They **do not want individual converts**...

because an individual convert will be alienated from the people-group:

“Extracting individual converts is one thing we must not do if we want to see a whole people come to Christ.”²

“Each convert extracted from his own cultural situation reinforces in the minds of Hindus and Muslims the misunderstanding that Christians are opposed to their cultural traditions. In this sense, one could defend the thesis that each convert won from these faiths at present actually represents a setback to winning large numbers from these communities.”³

* Do you think the Homogeneous Unit Principle is a good idea or not?

A number of mission leaders were very excited by the Homogeneous Unit Principle and promoted it widely.

They hoped it would lead to many more conversions. But others were not convinced, for four reasons:

1. People do not want to be separated.

Although division along cultural lines may be acceptable in India with its rigid caste system...

it might not be helpful, or even possible, in other places.

In many countries social and cultural differences are not nearly so obvious or so rigid.

Throughout the world, many villages and towns have a very mixed population, and cities far more so.

We cannot separate people easily by race, culture, language, or any other identifying feature.

Some of them will resent it if you try.

Do poor people, for example, want to have a church separate from rich people?

Do old people want to have a church separate from young people?

At its worst, if you insist on separate churches for black and white,

you will end up with a system of apartheid such as there was in South Africa.

We might say that segregating people is always a bad idea, and in particular segregating Christians.

Jesus said, “There will be one flock, and one shepherd” (Jn 10:16).

¹ Donald McGavran, *The Satnami Story* (William Carey Library, Pasadena, 1990); *Bridges of God* (1955; Wipf and Stock, 2005)

² Ralph Winter, “Mission Frontiers Bulletin”, Jan-Feb 1998

³ H L Richard, “Mission Frontiers Bulletin”, Sep-Oct 1996

2. Separating people-groups stops the gospel entering new people-groups.

If believers only have contact with members of their own people-group...

it will be almost impossible for the gospel to reach other people-groups.

Applied consistently, the Homogeneous Unit Principle will make cross-cultural mission extremely difficult... or perhaps impossible.

3. Individual converts need help.

Desiring the conversion of the people-group, can we *refuse to accept* the conversion of individuals?

Can we deny a man or woman the teaching and fellowship they need in order to grow in their faith?

Bear in mind that many people-groups have never made a communal decision about anything.

Twenty years may pass before some leaders express an opinion...

and their choice may indeed be against accepting Christ.

Meanwhile those who did want to follow him receive no help or comfort...

they may easily get discouraged and drift away.

4. Separating believers is unscriptural.

Christians in NT times shared their faith with anyone who would listen, not just their own people-group.

Philip (a Jew) went to the Samaritans and to an Ethiopian.

Peter (a Jew) went to the house of Cornelius (a Roman).

Jewish Christians from Cyprus and Cyrene spoke to Greeks in Antioch (Acts 11:20).

Paul was constantly mixing with Gentiles.

The body of Christ includes all who belonged to him: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are *all one in Christ Jesus*" (Gal 3:28).

The dividing wall has been broken down... we have no right to build new walls (Eph 2:14).

If some feel offended by social differences, they should learn that love covers many offences (1 Pet 4:8).

We might call this the **All One in Christ Principle**.

Note: You may be able to give examples of churches where people of very different social and cultural backgrounds enjoy happy fellowship together.

* Does this mean we should completely reject the Homogeneous Unit Principle?

Probably not. It reflects a reality of life. People do indeed prefer to mix with people like themselves.

They will accept the gospel most easily if they hear it from someone like them.

An emphasis on people-groups should not be entirely rejected. It can help us in evangelism and in church life.

In **evangelism**, it will encourage us to be sensitive to different cultures:

- to offer scriptures to people in their own heart language
- to identify unreached groups (perhaps living in particular areas)
- to introduce seekers to believers from their own background
- to offer friendship in a form appropriate for their culture
- to explain the gospel in ways that make sense to them so it is quickly seen to be good news

In **church life**, it will encourage us to respect the varied cultures and races that make up our fellowship,

- to use hymns in various languages
- to make sure the teaching is translated if necessary
- to include people in leadership from diverse backgrounds
- to ensure that children from different families understand and respect one another

In practice, much evangelism naturally follows the Homogeneous Unit Principle.

This is simply because, wherever we may be, most people in one place have one culture and language.

Our aim, however, is to introduce them to Jesus Christ so he will unite them with all who follow him.

Believing in him, their horizons will be widened as they become part of the worldwide church of Christ.

It is then our task and privilege to do what governments and schools are quite unable to do.

We will teach them to love people from every culture, race and tribe...

and to respect people from every social, economic and educational level.

Note: In this session and the next we will introduce a number of paradigms or tables summarizing two contrasting views of some controversial issues. Make sure that your students all have a copy of the Class Notes.

Now you will need two student volunteers, A and B. Ask A to represent the Homogeneous Unit Principle, and B to represent the All One in Christ Principle. So A will start by reading, "People prefer to be with their own type of people."

Then B will read, "We must learn to love all types of people." Continue through the paradigm so that both points of view are heard and understood.

Some of the statements in the paradigms are extreme, some less so. It may sometimes be possible to accept statements from both sides and so establish a compromise position. Your students should be encouraged to make up their own minds about each statement. You might even take a class vote. If your students have had experience of pioneer mission, ask them which of these approaches they used. Ask which they would consider best in their context or in other contexts. Ask them to summarize the possible advantages and disadvantages of each.

Homogeneous Unit Principle	All One in Christ Principle
People prefer to be with their own type of people.	We must learn to love all types of people.
We will always be different from one another.	We are all one in Christ Jesus (Gal 3:28)
Avoid any possible risk of social or cultural offence.	Learn that love covers many offences (1 Pet 4:8).
Start separate local churches for each people-group.	Start united local churches for everyone.
Welcome only individuals from the one people-group.	Welcome all types of people.
Use only one language and style of meeting.	Use several languages and styles of meeting.
Aim for mass conversion of entire people-groups.	Aim for personal conversion of individuals.
Delay conversion until the whole group will accept Christ.	Urge each individual without delay to accept Christ.

Culture and Church

In Yangon (Rangoon) there are churches for many tribal peoples who have come from other regions of Myanmar. But the majority people – the Burmese – do not have a single church. "There is no indigenous Burmese Christian congregation in Yangon or even in the whole country. The main reason is that the vast majority of Christian leaders still favour the traditional approach of integrating Burmese converts in the existing non-Burmese congregations. Without the establishment of Burmese congregations, communication of the gospel to Burmese people will very likely never be successful. The goal should be to establish small Burmese house fellowships, which will help Burmese converts stay within their Burmese community and culture, and which will be more effective in attracting Burmese Buddhists to the gospel."¹

Proclamation Mission, or Holistic Mission?

*** What is holistic mission?**

In theory it is outreach that cares for the whole person, physically and spiritually, body and soul.

In practice it usually starts with physical care, aid, education or development...
dealing with the physical first and then the spiritual, the body before the soul.

Launching a mission to a new area or people-group, there are two possible ways we might start:

1. **Proclaim the gospel message** and urge people to believe in Jesus.
We could call this **Proclamation Mission**.
2. **Meet some practical needs** – providing clean water, food, education, medical care etc. – and showing them the love of God. We could call this **Holistic Mission**.

*** Which of these have you experienced? Which would you recommend?**

There are likely to be two points of view:

Some say we should start with holistic aid or development... for the following reasons:

1. Jesus was concerned with both the physical and spiritual needs of people, and so were the first apostles.
2. A sick, frightened, hungry person is too concerned with his family's need to listen to what you say.
If you meet his need he will see your love and may then listen to your words.
3. Many places closed to gospel proclamation are open for humanitarian work, allowing us to share our faith discreetly, to win friends in authority and exert a positive Christian influence.
4. Caring ministry will quickly awaken the interest and enthusiasm of the whole community, and so may start a mass movement to Christ.
5. Caring ministry may open doors to neighbouring people-groups.
When other communities see what is happening, they may wish to have the same benefits.

Some say we should start with proclamation... for the following reasons:

1. Jesus and Paul both made proclamation and teaching their priority.

¹ Peter Thein Nyunt, *Missions amidst Pagodas* (Langham Partnership, 2014), p.124

The miracles they did were simply signs showing that what they said was true.

They did not launch an ongoing ministry of healing the sick or feeding the hungry in every nation.

2. Proclamation quickly shows what is most important to us.

People understand that peace with God and eternal life are more important to us than anything in this world.

They will see that we are people of faith... not just people with money.

3. Proclamation attracts people seeking spiritual and religious change.

This means that we can give our attention to individuals who want to accept Christ...

rather than crowds seeking material benefits. We are much less likely to make "rice Christians".

4. Proclamation is much less expensive.

It can be continued by our converts after we are gone, without requiring further foreign money or supplies.

5. Proclamation ministry can more easily adapt to social, political and economic changes.

Holistic institutions such as hospitals and schools may be taken-over if there is a change of government.

This can happen suddenly, without appeal or compensation. The investment is lost and the ministry ended.

A paradigm shift¹

In recent years some well-known church and mission leaders have changed their emphasis from gospel proclamation towards holistic mission. The **Lausanne Forum** in 1974 was an international conference of evangelical leaders attempting to inspire and influence a new generation of evangelical missions. There have been several further conferences since then under the Lausanne banner, promoting what has been identified as a "paradigm shift" towards holistic mission, with a concern for both the physical and spiritual needs of people.

Other church and mission leaders consider that the Lausanne movement may have gone too far in promoting a social gospel and neglecting the earlier evangelical emphasis on proclaiming the way of salvation. They would dismiss the "paradigm shift" proposed by liberal church leaders as a subtle attempt to introduce "another gospel" (Gal 1:6). (See section below on The Lausanne Covenant).

In proposing this "paradigm shift" it is commonly assumed that earlier generations of evangelical missionaries neglected holistic ministry – that they only preached, and failed to help with practical problems. This is simply untrue. Anyone who has read the letters and journals of missionaries in the 19th and 20th centuries will know that they did both.

True stories from India

An evangelist becomes a nurse

William Bowden was an English stonemason who went with his wife as a missionary to India in 1836. He considered his main work to be preaching in public places and distributing tracts, but he also opened an elementary school and a dispensary for medicines. In a letter to friends at home, he wrote, "It will perhaps be inexplicable to you why their sicknesses should so entirely occupy my time; but we have here no medical aid. And from the Christians being a defiled caste, no responsible native doctor will touch them to ascertain the nature and extent of their disease. Then again, all their notions of disease and its treatment are so directly contrary to European notions that it is absolutely useless to prescribe for them, unless you nurse them also... Many of the cases have been very serious ones – fevers of various types, liver and other serious diseases, which, from my knowing nothing of medicine, except as I have been forced by circumstances to consider something of it, has pressed very much upon my mind as well as taxed my time, and I have had some anxiety from not having on hand the proper medicines indicated by the symptoms." As the nearest chemist's shop (pharmacy) was more than 300 miles away and its supplies very expensive, William Bowden commenced a study of homeopathic remedies, finding some to be very effective. One such remedy became widely known as "Bowden's Indian Balm".²

An Indian famine

In 1877 there was a terrible famine in southern India – 5½ million people died. Hindu preachers were preaching, "Suffering is the punishment for sins committed in a previous life." Buddhists were preaching, "Suffering does not exist for the enlightened person." Muslims were preaching, "It is the will of Allah – submit to it." Christian missionaries were also preaching, saying "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved," and they began to distribute rice provided by believers in England. They also protested to the government about the export of grain needed in India. The churches were soon filled with 30,000 Indians who wanted to be Christians. Of course they understood very little. But once the famine was past, the churches could teach them the essential facts of the gospel, and the number of committed believers grew substantially.³

¹ A paradigm shift simply means a change.

² E B Bromley, *They Were Men Sent From God* (The Scripture Literature Press, Bangalore, 1937), pp.101-2

³ Eugene Stock, *The History of the CMS* (London 1899), Vol.II, p.170-172, Vol.III, pp.172-173; M Christhu Doss, *Protestant missionaries and depressed classes in Southern Tamil Nadu 1813-1947*, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Ph D thesis, 2009, pp.53-57

An Indian plague

“The majority of the Mahars perhaps never thought about Jesus as the Saviour of the world but rather saw Jesus as a liberator in the context of their situation... Education not only raised their status and led them to a life of dignity and identity but also taught them good habits. Their *Maharwadas* [i.e. ghettos] had been the dirtiest places in the village. The diseases the Mahars suffered in the past were mostly due to their unhygienic lifestyle. The missionaries taught them to have baths regularly and wear clean clothes. The missionary doctors treated them for their sicknesses. The dreaded plague spread everywhere in the last few years of the 19th century but it was mentioned that ‘The Christian community was largely free from the epidemic, partly because of better habits of living than some of their neighbours, partly because of their isolation and separation from the Hindus and Muhammedans, who died by thousands, and in many cases by their acceptance of inoculation and other preventative measures.’”¹

*** What does the New Testament say about proclamation and holistic ministry?****Proclamation and Holistic ministry in the New Testament****1. Proclaiming the gospel was Jesus's priority.**

If Jesus had simply healed the sick and fed the hungry, he could have remained immensely popular.

But he chose to teach as well. In fact he made teaching his priority (Mark 1:38).

And what he taught made him intensely unpopular.

Nicodemus was attracted by Jesus's holistic ministry. He said, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.”

Jesus immediately challenged him: “You must be born again.”

The miracles were not enough, and belief in him as a teacher sent by God was not enough.

Nicodemus and all the Jewish people needed to be born again.

In order to be born again they had to understand the proclamation and the testimony:

Jesus said, “Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things?”

What were the things they needed to understand?

“The Son of Man must be lifted up, so that whoever believes in him may have eternal life” (Jn 3:14-15).

2. Proclaiming the gospel was the apostles' priority.

Jesus sent his disciples into all the world to proclaim the gospel and testify concerning him (Acts 10:42).

He did not send them to launch healing ministries or to feed the poor (Acts 6:2).

Paul saw himself as a man with a message: “to us has been sent the message of this salvation” (Acts 13:26).

“entrusting to us the message of reconciliation” (2 Cor 5:19).

“the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it” (2 Tim 4:17; also Rom 10:14, 17).

3. Holistic ministry is the responsibility of churches, not apostles.

Caring for others is not a strategy for mission; it is the normal Christian life.

Every believer is taught to be like the Good Samaritan, loving his neighbour as himself...

but the church is not called to send out Good Samaritans to every tribe and tongue.

It is called to send out gospel preachers so that individuals may be born again and become Good Samaritans.

That is the missionary vision of the New Testament.

Apostles and evangelists proclaim and testify. They make disciples, start churches...

then leave those churches to care for the sick and needy.

In every fellowship there will be “gifts of healing, helping, administering” (1 Cor 12:28).

These gifts in every fellowship are immensely useful for caring and holistic ministries.

4. The gospel becomes holistic to everyone who accepts it.

Being born again affects the whole of life, transforming character and refining relationships.

It results in happy homes, productive work, compassionate caring, honest service, joyful fellowship etc.

But the NT does not say that a person can have the blessings of the gospel without believing in the gospel.

Indeed, the best blessings of the gospel are not in this world but in the world to come.

They are eternal and belong to an age when human need and holistic ministry are past and gone.

5. We should do as much good as possible to everyone, but secretly.

A loving and compassionate heart will want “to visit orphans and widows in their affliction” (Ja 1:27).

¹ Atul Y Aghamkar and Vishwas Padole, *Christian Missions in Maharashtra* (TETRAWPOI, Bangalore, 2010), pp.142, 144-5, quoting William Hazen, *A Century in India* (American Marathi Mission, 1913).

Even in conflict situations, "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink" (Rom 12:20).

But our giving and helping should be *in secret*... not in order to be seen and honoured by men (Matt 6:1-4).

So how can we let our light shine so that people see our good works and give glory to God (Matt 5:16)?

They will give glory to God if we *explain who God is* and teach them carefully about him.

Then they will *thank him* for sending us before they think of *thanking us* for coming.

6. We must explain clearly that we are not earning our salvation by doing good deeds.

If we emphasize "good works" rather than faith, people may think that we (and they) can be saved by works.

They will assume that we do good deeds because good deeds add credit to our account with God.

We must explain *in words* the reason why we are wanting to help them.

The reason is that we have *learned to be compassionate from Jesus*, the most compassionate of men... and because *his Spirit in our hearts* fills us with the same compassion.

Some more true stories

Take what they give!

In Morocco a new convert was introduced to an old Christian. The old Christian advised him, "When the missionaries come, take what they give but ignore what they say."

An unwelcome foreigner

I went to live in a Muslim town with no known Christians. I tried to tell them about Jesus but no one would even talk to me. They disliked foreigners and I had nothing to offer that they wanted. Another servant of Christ went to a similar place and built a water tank on a hill and installed a pump so that three villages could receive piped water. Because of this he was welcomed into many homes and was able to tell hundreds of people about his faith in Jesus. There are now several families who have accepted the gospel.

Note: You may know other true stories, showing the value of relief and development work in pioneer gospel outreach. You may also know of other holistic ministries that did not lead people to faith in Christ.

Responses to holistic outreach

There are certain problems we face when launching holistic missions to unreached people in pioneer situations.

They may easily get the wrong idea about us. Let us try to look at the situation from their point of view.

When they see what we are doing, what are they really thinking about us?

What are they saying behind our backs? They may be saying...

1. These are practical people but not at all religious.

Whenever we launch a physical ministry without mentioning Jesus (or God),

we convey the idea that we are physical people and that Jesus (or God) is not important to us.

If we later make reference to Jesus (or God), the people will understand that our belief is something additional but certainly not essential. They assume there is no need for them to change their religion.

2. These are sensible people who will respect our religion.

Our holistic project may have made us so popular that we are reluctant to spoil our relationships.

We don't want to damage our reputation by talking about Jesus.

Helping people without *saying* anything can be an easy, and perhaps a cowardly, option.

Relief and development work may easily take up our time and energy.

We think we are doing all that God asks of us.

If we are meeting physical needs we think that he will call someone else to help these people spiritually.

In fact, they may never hear the gospel if we do not tell them.

People with a holistic emphasis often quote the words of Francis of Assisi, a Roman Catholic.

He said, "Preach the gospel always, and if necessary use words."

That is nonsense. It is like saying, "Tell me your phone number, and if necessary use numerals."

You cannot preach the gospel without words.

You may help people, but if you say nothing about Christ you have not preached the gospel.

3. These are wealthy people and easy to exploit.

Holistic ministry can easily produce "rice Christians".

So long as they get free clothes they come to you, but when there are no more clothes, or when someone else offers better clothes, you do not see them any more.

4. These people are as dishonest as everyone else.

It is often difficult to find trustworthy Christian staff to maintain holistic ministries in pioneer situations.

There may be evidence of dishonesty in our converts.

People may assume that we too are stealing from the stores or the funds just like our converts.

5. These people are in it for their own advantage

Holistic ministry may cause resentment. It can seem *manipulative*.

They say, "You're giving us these things so we'll do what you say. Then you'll have control over us."

Holistic ministry may seem *corrupt*.

People say, "You may be helping us but at the same time you're making a profit.

You're gaining more than we do. In fact you are exploiting us.

You go to churches and show pictures of *us*, so they will give money to *you*."

6. These people are political and dangerous.

In tense political situations a missionary may be suspected as an agent of foreign interference.

Supplies sent by development and relief agencies may be seized by political factions or governments ... and sold in order to finance armed conflict.

The question has been raised, "What good is it to heal and feed and educate a wicked man?"

That will just make him stronger to steal and kill, to exploit and oppress."

A true story from India

Some missionaries in India launched an educational and medical programme. They expected that after these ministries were running, the people would be willing to hear about the gospel. On the contrary, the people told them, "We can see you are experts in education and medicine but when we want advice about religion we will go to our priests."¹

A true story from Africa

In a central African country, a succession of employees at a school and clinic were dismissed for theft although they all claimed to be Christians. They stole toys and books from the school; they stole medicines from the clinic; they even stole Bibles from the bookshop, knowing these could be sold for a good price. Christians have acquired such a reputation for dishonesty that some schools and clinics prefer to employ non-Christians.

Summarizing the debate:

Holistic Mission	Proclamation Mission
People urgently need to be healed and fed.	People urgently need to be right with God.
The holistic fruits of the gospel are for everyone.	The holistic fruits of the gospel are for believers.
People need rice, whether or not they are Christians.	Giving rice will make "rice Christians" (hypocrites).
Missionaries should help people.	Missionaries will start churches that help people.
Holistic ministry is the task of the missionary.	Holistic ministry is the task of the church.
Holistic ministry is the best strategy for mission.	Holistic ministry is the normal Christian life.
Apostles should care for widows, and also preach.	Apostles should preach while deacons care for widows
We offer health and prosperity now.	We promise health and prosperity when Christ comes.
We help people to have abundant life in these days.	We help people to have eternal life in the age to come.

An ideal solution?

We may try to do both... but it will be hard for one person, with limited time and energy, to do both.

Two missionaries may work together, one meeting physical needs and the other teaching the gospel.

Conclusions:

1. Holistic ministry is a valid ministry of the church, especially meeting the needs of believers.
2. It can also be pre-evangelistic, and in some circumstances may open doors to gospel proclamation.
3. It should not replace gospel proclamation, which is always the priority in the New Testament.
4. In pioneer situations it may be possible to avoid some problems in holistic mission if...
 - We make our faith in Jesus clear from the start.
 - We take reliable believers with us to staff our institutions.
 - We ensure our relief or development work is *pre-evangelistic* by making definite plans for gospel proclamation.

Bear in mind that a change of government may result in a take-over of hospitals, schools and other institutions.

¹ David J Hesselgrave, *Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally* (Zondervan 1991), pp.634-5

The Lausanne Covenant

In 1974 at Lausanne, Switzerland, there were gathered 2500 Evangelicals from 150 countries and 135 denominations for an International Congress on World Evangelization. The leading figure at the conference was Billy Graham. Like most Evangelicals he held the view that the Great Commission required gospel proclamation to the unreached peoples of the world followed by the gathering of converts into local fellowships where they would be well taught. In time these churches might then initiate programmes to relieve the social, economic, educational, medical or political needs faced by the believers and by the wider society.

John Stott disagreed. When the Lausanne committee met again the following year, Stott threatened to resign if social action were not included in the definition of God's mission to the world. Stott was supported by delegates from the World Council of Churches, who had always emphasized social and political involvement. To the regret of many delegates, Stott eventually prevailed and the Lausanne movement shifted towards a more holistic emphasis, which it has since maintained.¹

John Stott himself was not a missionary. In 2004, as chairman of the Lausanne Forum For World Evangelization held in Thailand, he defined mission as: "everything that the church is sent into the world to do". He approved the term *missio Dei* to describe this – a Latin expression derived from Roman Catholicism.

Many people have been influenced by Stott's reputation as an evangelical scholar of repute. But as an Anglican, Stott was committed to his own church tradition. The Church of England, like other national churches, participates in the government of the United Kingdom. Its bishops vote in the house of Lords, and it has always concerned itself with social and political issues. Anglicans are taught that the church has a responsibility to co-operate with non-Christian powers and authorities – and with representatives of other religions – for the general welfare of the nation. Of course this is difficult, if not impossible, to justify from the New Testament. Government duties were never part of apostolic mission.

But the problem should not be overestimated. The significance of the Lausanne movement may be far less than its leaders suppose. The real work of mission is not being done by Western scholars and administrators debating definitions in comfortable places such as Lausanne. It is being done in hot dirty places by indigenous evangelists like Paul. Through many difficulties and dangers they are helping men and women to find peace with God through faith in Christ. They take the New Testament as their guide for gospel outreach, unaware of the covenants and manifestos issued in English by foreign church leaders at vast expense from luxury hotels.

Dominion, or Salvation?

In essence this is a controversy about the Kingdom of God.

Jesus taught us to pray, "Your Kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

*** But what are we asking for when we pray this prayer?**

Are we asking for God to *gradually make the world more Christian...*

and so establish his authority in every nation?

Or are we asking him to bring Christ back, *destroy the earth as we know it...*

and establish his rule in a new heaven and earth?

In other words: Is the Kingdom of God to come *safely and progressively...*

as we bring modern development and Christian civilisation to every nation?

Or is it to come *dangerously and suddenly...* when Christ returns as king?

How we understand the Kingdom of God will determine how we teach mission in our churches,

how we present the gospel, how we invest our mission finance, and what we do as missionaries.

What is the Kingdom of God?

Some say:

When Jesus came two thousand years ago he launched the Kingdom of God.

Then he started to reign on earth, and ever since he has continued to reign on earth.

This means that the Kingdom of God is here and now.

Our job is to advance it, to build it, to make Jesus lord in every place...

to make him lord of every culture, institution and nation.

It means we are responsible to solve the problems of the world.

As Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever,

we believe he will continue to do (through us) the same things he did during his ministry on earth.

Like him we should therefore proclaim good news to the poor (making them rich),

liberty to the captives (setting them free), recovery of sight to the blind (making them see);

we should release those who are oppressed (work for social justice and equality),

¹ See Alister Chapman, *Godly Ambition* (2012).

and so enjoy the years of the Lord's favour (Lk 4:18-19).
As we do this, his Kingdom will gradually come everywhere,
and *his will shall be done increasingly on earth as it is in heaven*.
So we believe **the Kingdom is coming here and now**.

Others say,

The kingdom has a physical aspect and a spiritual aspect.

When Jesus came to earth physically the Kingdom came *physically*.

He healed the sick, fed the hungry and raised the dead – the people experienced *physical salvation*.

When Jesus ascended physically, the Kingdom was removed *physically*.

The disciples must wait to receive power from on high.

When Jesus sent his Spirit, the kingdom came *spiritually*.

From then onwards he awakens faith and transforms character – we experience *spiritual salvation*.

On the great day when Jesus will come again physically, the kingdom will come again *physically*.

The dead will be raised imperishable. All who belong to him will have *full salvation*.

He is the same yesterday, today and forever, but he *does not do the same things* yesterday, today and forever.

For a time he did miracles on earth; now he intercedes at the Father's right hand; soon he will come in glory.

When he comes, it is Jesus himself who will resolve the problems of the world (Eph 1:10; Rev 21:5).

He will raise the dead, heal the sick, feed the hungry, and welcome us into a new heaven and earth.

That is when the Kingdom will come. *Then his will shall be done perfectly on earth as it is in heaven*.

So we believe **the Kingdom will come when the king comes** and not before (2 Tim 4:18; Ja 2:5; 2 Pet 1:11).

This gives rise to two schools of thought. Each has an agenda for mission.

The first we might call **Dominionist**, and the second **Salvationist**.¹

This is not just a theoretical matter. It affects how we plan our mission and everything we do as missionaries.

With a **Dominionist** strategy, we may buy land and invest in major development and building programmes.

We will aim to transform communities, cities and nations, because we believe this is the will of God.

We are looking for *physical blessings now* and *spiritual blessings later* (in a spiritual heaven).

With a **Salvationist** agenda, we will travel widely, urging people to put their trust in Christ and so be saved.

We want them to escape from the corruptions of this age and prepare for life in a new and better world.

We expect *spiritual blessings now* and *physical blessings later* (in a renewed earth).

Here is a paradigm showing a contrasting point of view on a wide range of issues.

Some statements are extreme and will be accepted by extremists although not necessarily by all.

Dominionist	Salvationist
The Kingdom is coming here and now.	The Kingdom will come when the King comes.
We are advancing the Kingdom.	We are waiting for the Kingdom.
We expect the world to get better before Christ comes.	We expect the world to get worse before Christ comes.
The second coming of Jesus is not important to us.	The second coming of Jesus is our great hope.
We expect to eradicate disease.	When Christ comes he will eradicate disease.
We expect to make poverty history.	When Christ comes he will make poverty history.
We disciple the nations by encouraging democracy and teaching a Christian worldview.	We disciple the nations by leading individuals to faith in Christ and starting churches.
We invite every nation to glorify God.	We invite every individual to be saved.
Our task is <i>evangelization</i> – introducing Christian principles of government, education and healthcare.	Our task is <i>evangelism</i> – proclaiming the way of salvation and offering eternal life.
We will try to make our nation a peaceful land with Christian morals.	We will lead as many individuals as we can to faith and holiness in Christ.
We want to transform villages, towns, cities, nations.	We want to transform individuals.
Transforming society will change human nature.	We cannot transform society without changing human nature.
We want to improve or redeem traditional culture by adding Christian principles to it.	We want to teach gospel culture in order to form a new cultural community.
Our churches are places where everyone can worship.	Our churches are fellowships of sincere disciples.
We expect Christian leaders to do miracles.	We expect false prophets to do miracles.
We aim to influence and control institutions and governments so they will uphold Christian standards	We respect institutions and governments but do not expect them to uphold Christian standards.

¹ Salvationist is used here as a theological term. It does not refer to members of the Christian organisation known as the Salvation Army.

We expect governments to eradicate evil and create purpose-driven Christian nations.	We expect governments to oppress Christians and make harsh laws against us.
We demand justice for the poor.	We help the poor with compassionate gifts.
We are working to unite all churches and so bring the Bride of Christ to perfection.	We cannot hope for the Bride to be perfect until Christ comes to separate true from false.
We are called to do what Jesus did.	We are called to tell people what Jesus did.
We incarnate Christ and so exercise his authority.	Jesus incarnated God and so all authority is his.
We are advancing and winning the world for Christ.	We are testifying and suffering in the world for Christ.
We expect a mass movement in every tribe.	We expect some to believe in every tribe.
We expect to conquer the nations by spiritual warfare.	We expect to inherit the earth as a free gift.
We must gain territory from Satan by prayer.	We must gain souls from Satan by prayer.
Our priority is physical transformation.	Our priority is spiritual transformation.
We help people to have food, medicine and education.	We help people to have faith, hope and love.
We care for body and then soul.	We care for soul and then body.
We are resolving many problems now.	We know Christ will resolve all problems when he comes.
We work now to restore all things to God.	We urge people to accept Christ who will restore all things to God.

The Dominionist Agenda

The term “Dominion Theology” is based on Genesis 1:28, where God granted humankind “dominion” or control over the Earth.

The underlying idea is that when Adam and Eve listened to Satan rather than God, Satan took control of the world. Since then, God has been calling us to re-establish his own dominion and make him Lord. Our task is to overcome evil, undo the work of Satan and regain control of the kingdoms of this world (the education system, health service, arts and culture, economic and political systems), and so eradicate poverty, ignorance and disease etc. As we take control of the world for God, his Kingdom will gradually come to every nation and his glory be seen everywhere as the waters cover the sea (Hab 2:14). By restoring God’s authority in every sphere of human activity, the whole earth will become fully prepared to receive and enthrone Christ as king over all (Rev 11:15).

In recent years, a popular course *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement* has strongly promoted a Dominionist agenda. One of its chief advocates is **Peter Wagner**. He says, “Our theological bedrock is what has been known as Dominion Theology. This means that our divine mandate is to do whatever is necessary, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to *retake the dominion of God’s creation* which Adam forfeited to Satan in the Garden of Eden. It is nothing less than seeing God’s Kingdom coming and His will being done here on earth as it is in heaven.”¹ Similarly, **Ralph Winter** wrote, “Missions is essentially the restoration of God’s Kingdom and rule and power on this earth. It involves the re-establishment of His glory, of His honour of His control of things.”²

Most Dominionists expect the world to continue in existence for a very long time and are therefore willing to invest a great deal in its improvement. They attempt to institute Christian laws, establish commerce and agriculture on Christian principles and create a strong Christian presence in the police and army along with many holistic ministries. At the time of writing, one man (Rick Warren) is proposing to turn Rwanda and Uganda into what he calls “purpose-driven nations”. How will he accomplish this? By sending medical and educational aid with loans for starting small businesses. By sending Christian policemen from America. By urging the authorities to work for justice, eliminating wastage and corruption... It is all supported with much prayer, and of course much finance.³

On this basis, the *Perspectives* course summarizes its theology: “God pursues a global purpose that will reconcile all things to himself. Specifically, God is on a mission to be loved, served and worshipped by people from all humanity. To accomplish that end, God acts with a determined purpose that will not only affect all peoples but also defeat evil spiritual powers.”⁴

It is this desire to overcome evil that perhaps raises most questions. The *Perspectives* Study Guide speaks of “the global war against evil,” and then asserts, “The Bible clearly shows God’s determination to dismantle every evil power.”⁵ Ralph Winter agrees: “We must realize that stopping evil wherever it is found is part of that mission.”⁶ Does this imply launching campaigns against governments whose policies seem evil, or attempting to undermine corrupt regimes. Could it justify the use of physical repression or even violence? We are simply told,

¹ C Peter Wagner, public letter, May 31, 2007 (freely available on the internet)

² Ralph Winter, “Mission Frontiers Bulletin”, May 18, 1998

³ David Van Biema, *Time Magazine*, August 15, 2005; http://www.rickwarrennews.com/080329_uganda.htm (accessed 7 Jan 2014)

⁴ Steven Hawthorne, *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: The Study Guide* (4th edn., William Carey Library, 2009), p.4

⁵ Hawthorne, *Perspectives*, p.23

⁶ Ralph Winter, “Mission Frontiers Bulletin”, May 18, 1998

“God will overcome evil powers in order to liberate people and, ultimately, to bring all things under his everlasting and complete governance. This Kingdom reign is the substance of the blessing he brings to the nations.”¹

Connected with this idea of gradually reclaiming God's dominion over the world is the belief that God's greatest desire is for glory and praise. So *Perspectives* tells us, “Jesus's life purpose was to bring about God's glory on earth”² This theme has been developed especially by **John Piper**. He states, “Missions is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is.” From this viewpoint, world mission is not inspired by the compassion of God for the lost or his call for us to bring them to safety. It is driven by his own desire for praise and glory and by the pleasurable experience of Christian worship: “In missions we simply aim to bring the nations into the white-hot enjoyment of God's glory.”³

Dominionist ideas are often supported by references to the Old Testament but rarely to the New. As we have seen, mission inspired by the Old Testament will not easily find room for the gospel. There is no need for a new covenant secured by atoning sacrifice, no need for personal faith in a risen Saviour, no need for the convicting power of the Holy Spirit, and no promise of eternal life. All we hear is a call for nations to glorify God. And where does that take us? Any Muslim can accept such an agenda and claim to be glorifying God far more than we are.

From this position, Dominionists can very easily become Universalists, believing that as God is now restoring all things so he will accept all people. The uniqueness of Christ is then easily forgotten, along with the need for personal faith in him to save.

The Salvationist Agenda

The salvationist approach is motivated by the belief that people are lost and urgently need to be rescued (Eph 2:12). Our task is therefore to go into all the world and offer salvation through personal faith in Christ.

While helping to relieve suffering in many ways, Salvationists do not expect the whole earth to become a wonderful place for everyone before Jesus returns. They point out that he commissioned his followers, not to take dominion over nations and transform their institutions and economies, but to lead individuals to safety and help them be changed inwardly through the Holy Spirit and the renewal of their minds (Titus 3:5; Rom 12:2).

Salvationists believe that before Christ comes the condition of the earth will become not better but worse. They point to scriptures showing that dominion will be taken, not by the disciples of Christ, but by the Beast and the false prophet. A world power like ancient Babylon will arise to control the world's economy, requiring religious submission and conformity in an empire of sexual anarchy and materialistic hedonism (2 Tim 3:1-5; Matt 24:11-14). Jesus will return, not to receive worship and glory from a believing, happy, peaceful, united world, but to rescue a persecuted suffering minority who are struggling to survive in the midst of universal violence and corruption (John 15:19; Matt 10:16-25).

Practical problems with the Dominionist agenda

Critics might allege that...

1. It is a struggle for power.

In order to create a democratic government and institutions with a thoroughly Christian ethos, Christians must first become the political majority in a nation and win significant elections. Political campaigning therefore becomes the essential priority for an effective Dominionist agenda.

In these circumstances, a Dominionist desire to gain territory will undoubtedly clash with political Islamists, Hindus and others who also wish to gain or retain territory.

A nation or a state cannot be maintained in peace and prosperity, and certainly cannot take over additional territories, without the threat and if necessary the use of force. Disciples of Jesus Christ must think very carefully when proposing policies requiring the use of force.

2. It cannot stop corruption.

For a Dominionist agenda to succeed in any place, every individual living there must accept and support it. A “purpose-driven nation” following Christian principles can only be created and maintained if the entire population is honest, compassionate, wise and unselfish, desiring to share what they have with any in need.

So long as people with other worldviews exist in a nation, they will continue to promote their own agendas. So long as greedy, selfish people remain in a nation, they will manipulate circumstances to their own advantage. So long as dishonest, corrupt people remain, they will exploit the weak for their own benefit. A nation entirely submitted to the dominion of God is only possible when sin is completely removed and all are filled with the Spirit of Christ. There is no mission programme able to promise or accomplish this before Judgment Day.

¹ Hawthorne, *Perspectives*, p.4

² Hawthorne, *Perspectives*, p.v

³ John Piper, *Let the nations be glad* (Baker, 2nd. edn. 2003), p.17

3. It offers a flawed social gospel.

Dominionism could be seen as a programme to impose western culture on the developing world. Its roots lie in the political religion of Christendom, the civilised Protestantism of the British Empire, and the great American dream, rather than the apostolic mission described in the New Testament. It is the old social gospel repackaged with fresh optimism, slick advertising and sophisticated technologies.

4. It has a most unhappy history.

History tells of many governments enlisting the support of a powerful church for the administration of a nation. In most cases the church was Catholic or Orthodox, but in some it was Protestant and Evangelical.

In the Roman Empire from Constantine onwards, men and women were imprisoned and killed for refusing to conform to the official church. In Medieval Europe, believers were burned by government officials after condemnation by Catholic bishops. In Geneva, a state tribunal executed Michael Servetus on account of his theological disagreement with John Calvin. "If he comes," said Calvin, "I will never let him depart alive if I have any authority."¹ The Anabaptists were savagely persecuted by Lutherans, Calvinists and Catholics, all maintaining the power of national state churches. In America the early Protestant authorities decreed, "If any man after legal conviction shall have or worship any other god, but the lord god, he shall be put to death."²

Throughout history the alliance between church and state has proved a bitter and tragic one. This was the case in Germany at the time of the Reformation, in the Holy Roman Empire under Charlemagne, in Spain, Portugal, Mexico and Peru under the Inquisition, in England under the Tudors, in France during the Wars of Religion, in much of central Europe during the Thirty Years' War, and as recently as the twentieth century in Colombia, Ethiopia, Croatia, Poland, Russia and several other countries. These governments all had a Dominionist agenda in which the Church worked with the ruler to control the nation.

5. It is not succeeding.

Dominionists are confident, optimistic and triumphalistic but ignore a most inconvenient fact: the world is not getting better but worse. There is more persecution of believers; borders are closing to gospel outreach. We see the rise of aggressive Islam, Hinduism and atheism, with a growing irrational hatred of Christians in every continent. In fact more Christians have been killed for their faith in the past century than the previous two thousand years. There is a rising tide of corruption, violence and warfare. Natural disasters, plagues and epidemics are all on the increase. The Dominionist programme is simply not happening. The plan is not working. The world is not becoming more Christian.

Is there any nation on earth where the Dominionist plan has worked? Did it work for the British Empire? Is it working for America? Dominionism has not achieved its goals anywhere on earth. Utopia remains an impossible fantasy for this present fallen world in rebellion against God. The Kingdom will not come before the Day of Judgment and the coming of the King.

Practical Problems with the Salvationist agenda:

Critics might allege that...

1. It is unduly pessimistic.

Seeing little or no hope of improvement in the world, Salvationists may overlook the progress that is being made in many spheres of life.

Salvationists would reply that their position is both realistic and optimistic, enabling them to deal rationally with present problems while looking forward with assurance to the day of Christ's return when all wrongs will be put right.

2. It is irresponsible.

If all their hopes are fixed on Christ's return, Salvationists may take little interest in economic, social and political issues that mean life or death to vulnerable individuals, families and peoples in the world today.

In reply they would point out that evangelical believers and churches are often doing more to help people in need than national governments or secular agencies. By leading people to faith in Christ, they are constantly adding to the number of godly men and women available to staff institutions, establish honest businesses and engage in compassionate administration.

Required Reading: chapters 3 to 6 of *Mission Strategies Then and Now*.

¹ T H L Parker, *John Calvin* (Lion, 1975/1982), p.140

² Massachusetts Colony, "*Body of Liberties*", dated 1641

7. More Current Issues in Mission

Class Notes 7: Give out the Class Notes BEFORE STARTING THIS SESSION. They contain items for discussion.

Primordialism, or Pragmatism?

Evangelicals have always insisted that the New Testament shows us what to *believe*.

They say, "We must maintain New Testament *doctrine*."

But there are some who go further than this. They say, "The New Testament also shows us what to *do*..."

We should maintain New Testament *practice*."

Here we have two points of view.

A) "The Lord has shown us in the New Testament how he wants us to run our churches and missions."

This is a **Primordialist** approach (sometimes called a Primitivist approach).

B) "So long as our teaching is sound, we can run our churches and missions any way we choose."

This is a **Pragmatic** approach.

Let us look more closely at these two words.

Primordialism

When we talk about *primordial times*, we mean the times when things got started.

Those were the early days when everything was pure and good, before corruption set in to spoil it.

A Primordialist is someone who longs for the good old days.

He tries to do what was done then... to restore things to the way they were.

His motto might be, "Stand by the roads, and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is; and walk in it, and find rest for your souls" (Jer 6:16).

A Primordialist will try to do as the earliest Christians did.

He observes that the NT was written as Jewish history. As such it reveals God's will through his works.

It records precedents, establishing principles, to guide and inspire every generation.

The New Testament is therefore a guide to mission methods that may be followed in every time and place.

When a Primordialist starts a church or mission, he wants it to be **like those described in the New Testament**.

Pragmatism

A Pragmatist is focused, not on the past but the present. **He wants to know what will work best now.**

His motto might be, "Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?" (Is 43:19).

He argues that we are not compelled to use the same methods used by early believers in the first century.

He points out that our circumstances are quite different from theirs.

The early church was a small persecuted minority, expecting the end of world in their generation.

They did not know that emperors would accept Christ and nations submit to the word of God.

The possibilities before us are vastly greater than the early church could imagine.

And all of modern technology is available to help us accomplish greater things for God.

When a pragmatist starts a church or mission, his great desire is for it to **grow well and be successful**.

The **Church Growth Movement** was started by Donald McGavran, and later led by Peter Wagner.

It has a pragmatist ethos. Its priority is to increase the number of people who come to church.

Its "seekers' services" are adapted to attract the maximum number of people.

Pragmatists will find out what "the unchurched" enjoy – football for example, or food or dancing – and give it to them in church.

They hope that if outsiders enjoy being in church, they will accept us, make friends with us, and join us.

Then before long the newcomers will begin to think as we do and believe as we do.

This requires us to be tolerant of false ideas and bad behaviour, accepting everyone as they are.

Then we may influence them for good and lead them to faith in Christ.

Pragmatism is certainly not a new idea. It has always been the basis of Roman Catholic mission.

In India, for example, Catholic shrines look like Hindu temples, with brightly coloured pictures and statues.

The idea is to welcome in as many outsiders as possible and then influence them for good.

The difficulty is that *if people feel accepted as they are, they will see no need to change*.

They will move easily from a Catholic cathedral to a Hindu temple...

or from a Protestant auditorium to a downtown cinema or bar.

The result can be a large degree of hypocrisy in the church.

Many attenders, and even some leaders, may participate actively in the church programme...

without feeling any need to be born again or committed to a godly life.

So we have two points of view. It amounts to a simple question::

Are we aiming to be **scriptural**? Or to be **successful**?

If our aim is to be *scriptural*, we risk being old fashioned, legalistic, uncreative and unsuccessful.

If our aim is to be *successful*, we risk turning away from genuine New Testament Christianity.

Primordialism	Pragmatism
We want to be scriptural.	We want to be successful.
We want a church of godly people.	We want a church of many people.
We should get back to the Bible.	We can't possibly get back to the Bible.
The New Testament gives us a model for both doctrine and practice.	The New Testament gives us a model for doctrine, but we can decide our own practice.
We should make our church like those in NT times.	We should adapt our church to the age we live in.
The NT shows us how to start and run churches.	The churches were not yet properly organised in NT times.
The NT Church was much better than the modern Church.	The modern Church is much better than the NT Church.
Christian traditions have spoiled the Church.	Christian traditions have benefited the Church.
The NT shows a clear strategy for mission.	The NT shows various mission activities.
The New Testament provides a manual of mission methods suited to every time and place.	The New Testament shows us mission methods suited to the first century.
If we did as the apostles did, we might see the same wonderful results they saw.	If we did as the apostles did, we'd be considered very old-fashioned.
God has shown us in the New Testament how he wants us to do mission now.	God has shown us in the New Testament how he led them to do mission then.
The New Testament is a Jewish book revealing the will of God for church and mission.	The Jewish origin of the New Testament has no significance for the methods we use.
The convicting power of the Holy Spirit is the key to effective mission.	The Holy Spirit will use modern technologies to bring success in mission.

Targeting the Unreached, or the Responsive?

When Jonah went to Nineveh with bad news, the people accepted his message and believed God (Jon 3:5).

When Jesus went to Nazareth with good news, they tried to throw him off a cliff (Lk 4:16-30).

When Paul preached to the Jews in Pisidian Antioch, they drove him out of the synagogue (Acts 13:42-45).

When he proclaimed the same message to the Gentiles in Corinth, they heard it with pleasure (Acts 18:5-8).

At first the Jewish leaders liked what they heard from Jesus and Paul, but then turned violently against them.

There are several things we may learn from these events.

- People are not all the same.
- One race or tribe or social class may listen more willingly than another.
- People may be responsive in one place, and resistant in another place.
- They may be at first responsive and then become resistant.

We see the same thing today:

In some places people will hear us willingly.

Gospel preachers may be very welcome among people who already call themselves Christians.

They have Christian names, believe in God, go to church... yet they are ignorant of the true gospel.

Knowing they will listen, we have wonderful opportunities to teach them the way of salvation.

In "Christian" villages or nations, we may launch major preaching campaigns.

House-to-house visiting and special events may lead hundreds to saving and life-changing faith in Christ.

These are **responsive** places, and anyone who is seeking the truth *may easily find it there*.

In some places the gospel is not welcome at all.

In many places, people have other religions or beliefs and are prejudiced against Christianity.

Missionaries and evangelists may be excluded by the government or threatened by fanatics.

These are usually regions with almost no churches and hardly any Christians of any sort.

They are **unreached** places. The good news has not reached the people living there.

If any are earnestly seeking the truth, *they will not easily find it there*.

This raises a question: Should we go to the responsive? Or to the unreached?

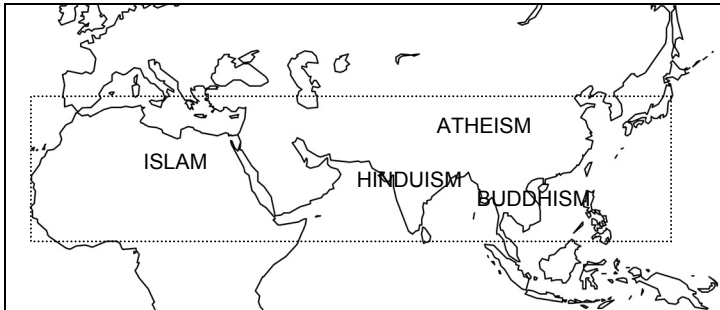
A *primordialist* may focus on the unreached, thinking of the Great Commission and the example of Paul.

A *pragmatist* may target the responsive, desiring immediate success.

So we have two points of view. The first says: We must go to...

The unreached

* Have you heard of the "10-40 Window"?



It is a wide band across the globe between 10 and 40 degrees north of the equator.

The "10-40 Window" covers much of North Africa, the Middle East and Asia.

It is the area of the world least touched by the gospel, and also the least responsive to the gospel.

Most people in it are strongly Muslim, atheistic, Buddhist or Hindu.

About 80% of the world's population lives in the 10-40 Window...

but only 4% of evangelical missionaries are working to reach its unreached inhabitants.¹

1,390 people-groups in the 10-40 Window do not have any scriptures or the Jesus film in their main language, comprising 260 million individuals.²

In the world today there are almost 17,000 people-groups. 42% of these are *unreached*...

(more than 7,000 people-groups).

They have no realistic chance of hearing the gospel. Missionaries have not been sent to them...

and they have no community of local believers strong enough to evangelize their own people effectively.

Most of the world is still waiting to hear the gospel...

865 million unreached Muslims in 3330 cultural sub-groups

550 million unreached Hindus in 1660 cultural sub-groups

150 million unreached Chinese in 830 groups

275 million unreached Buddhists in 900 groups

2550 unreached tribal groups (which are mainly animistic) with a total population of 140 million

17 million Jews scattered across 134 countries³

* Why are there still regions of the world almost totally unreached today?

1. Because only a very small number of us go there.

Most evangelists and pastors are working in their own homeland where there are already many Christians.

Most missionaries are working in places where there are already some believers and churches.

Only 10% of foreign missionaries work among *unreached people-groups*.⁴

Although many of these people-groups are small, others have more than a million people...

and some have fifty or even a hundred million.⁵ Most are found in the 10-40 Window.

2. Because when we do go, we find them resistant and unresponsive.

Most governments in the "10-40 Window" do not tolerate the preaching of the gospel.

To serve Christ in these places we must expect to take a secular job and testify discreetly whenever we can.

The work is slow and hard.

¹ <http://www.thetravelingteam.org/stateworld/1040-window> (accessed 8 Jan 2014)

² http://joshuaproject.net/global_statistics (accessed 2 June 2014)

³ <http://home.snu.edu/~hculbert/1040.htm> (accessed 26 May 2014)

⁴ <http://www.aboutmissions.org/statistics.html> (accessed 19 June 2014)

⁵ http://joshuaproject.net/global_statistics (accessed 2 June 2014)

A true story

There was a young doctor from Scotland called Cuthbert Nairn. In 1888 he went to Marrakech, the largest city in the south of Morocco. For 56 yrs he gave medicines to the sick and told people about Jesus. At the age of 80 he was stabbed to death by a Muslim fanatic. At the time of his death he did not know of a single person who had believed in Jesus as a result of his witness. His work might seem a failure. But some remembered him with great respect and there is now a street in Marrakech named after Dr Nairn.

Despite the difficulties, some missionaries will insist that we go to the *unreached* as our most urgent priority.

They offer three compelling reasons:

1. The Great Commission requires us to reach them.

Jesus said “all the world” and “every creature”... not just the easy places, not just the friendly people.

He has commanded us: “Go and disciple every *ethnē* [ethnic group]” (Matt 28:19).

It is the one great task he has given his church to do.

That is sufficient reason to invest our best resources for its completion.

It is our responsibility as followers of Jesus to provide every tribe and nation with a real opportunity... to hear the gospel in a language they can understand.

It may be that we shall sow in faith without seeing any fruit in our lifetime...

trusting that others will reap what we have sown (Jn 4:37-38).

2. Jesus will not return until we reach them.

Jesus said, “This gospel of the Kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the inhabited world as a testimony to all the *ethnē* [ethnic groups] and then the end will come” (Matt 24:14).

This corrupt and tragic age will not give way to the new heaven and earth...

until every ethnic group has been given an opportunity for eternal salvation.

A day will come when the hosts of heaven worship Christ, declaring,

“You were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation... and they shall reign on the earth” (Rev 5:9-10).

That day cannot come until people from every tribe and language have heard and accepted the gospel.

Peter says we “look forward to the Day of God and *speed its coming*” (2 Pet 3:12 NIV).

* **What does Peter mean?** See 2 Pet 3:8-13.

* **Why does the Lord delay his coming?** So that more people may repent and be saved before he comes.

* **How can we speed his coming?** By giving everyone on earth an opportunity to repent and so be saved.

3. Their great need compels us to reach them.

* **We think of Paul as a great theologian, and so he was. But what was Paul's ambition?**

“It has always been my ambition to proclaim the gospel where Christ is not yet known” (Rom 15:20).

* **Do you think any place should hear the gospel twice if another place has not heard it once?**

God our Saviour “desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim 2:4).

The closer we walk with him, the more we will have the same desire.

Therefore...

We must translate the scriptures and proclaim the truth until we have made disciples in every ethnic group.

Only then will the gospel be accessible to everyone on earth. Only then will Christ return.

Are there 7,000 pastors in our nation?

Could we send them to those 7,000 unreached people-groups?

Are there immigrants from unreached people-groups living near us?

Could we lead some of them to Christ, so they can then go and reach their own people with the gospel?

If so, perhaps we could reach the whole world in one generation, and Christ will return in our lifetime.

But other people say: We must go to...

The responsive

There are four compelling reasons:

1. We should go where God himself is at work.

Every farmer knows there is a time to reap and a time to sow and a time for fields to lie fallow.

In the unfolding history of the world *there are spiritual times and seasons*.

“When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son” (Gal 4:4).

The Lord God uses world events to awaken a desire for him...

“having determined *allotted periods* and the *boundaries* of their dwelling place, that they should seek God, in the hope that they might feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us (Acts 17:26-27).

He opens doors at particular times and places when people become responsive.

“A wide door for effective work *has opened* to me, and there are many adversaries” (1 Cor 16:9).

We should look for open doors, responsive people. We should not try to work where God himself is not at work.

The prodigal son was not ready to repent until he had suffered the full consequences of his folly.

It would be futile to offer him forgiveness while he was still enjoying his sin.

He must come to his senses before he seeks his father's house.

We should not throw our pearls before pigs, offering forgiveness to people who feel no need for it.

We should go where the Holy Spirit is at this moment convicting of sin, righteousness and judgment to come.

2. We should increase our numbers as quickly as possible.

If all the responsive people accept Christ, there will be far more of us to help the unresponsive.

If we are many, we will have more influence in our town, state, nation, continent and world.

Foreigners coming to a Christian town or tribe or nation will then be surrounded by believers.

Believers from that place can go to work and share their faith in many other places.

If we are many, we can afford to support more evangelists and missionaries.

Paul identified the Gentiles in the synagogues as a responsive group and invested his effort in reaching them.

We should look for the people who are most responsive, and focus our attention on them.

If city-people respond best, they can then reach the rural people – customers, family, students, suppliers etc.

If one tribe is responsive, they can then reach the other tribes – in the fields, shops and markets.

3. We must make the best use of our resources.

Jesus said, “By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit” (Jn 15:8).

We should look for places where there is much fruit, where “the fields are white for harvest” (Jn 4:35).

The money available for mission support is limited – we must invest it as wisely as possible.

The number of believers gifted as apostles and evangelists is limited – they must be located as effectively as possible.

We should not *waste the opportunities* we have.

A people-group may not be responsive for long. Soon they may not be responsive at all.

If we ignore the interested, and waste our energies on the uninterested, we deserve to die out altogether.

4. We can identify windows of opportunity.

Much has been said about the “10-40 Window”, but it might be better to think of the “**4-40 Window**”.

This represents people aged between 4 and 40. It is the age when people are most responsive.

We should invest especially in ministry to children, youth and young adults.

In some places there is also a “**65-80 Window**”. After many years of employment, people retire at 60 or 65.

Suddenly they have no responsibility, no purpose for living, no sense of progress or achievement.

They have lots of time to think about the values of life and death, and about God and eternity.

This is the case in Japan, Britain and many Western countries.

There are windows of opportunity for us if we focus on these age groups.

Now we can summarize the debate:

Go to the unreached.	Go to the responsive.
Jesus said “all the world” and “every creature”.	Jesus appointed us to “bear much fruit”.
Paul went where the name of Christ was not known.	Paul went to people who would accept him and listen to what he said.
We can hasten the return of the Lord by reaching every ethnic group.	We can trust the Lord to reach every ethnic group before he comes.
We must give everyone a chance to hear the gospel.	God will find ways for everyone to hear the gospel.
We should preach the gospel in places that are ignorant of God.	We should preach the gospel in places where God is clearly at work.
Our church leaders should go to people who have never heard.	Our church leaders are doing God's work effectively where they are.
We are willing to give our lives in spiritual sacrifice for Christ.	We should not waste our time with people who do not want us.
We should preach in season and out of season.	We should not throw our pearls before pigs.
We must sow in faith on barren land, trusting that others may one day reap a harvest.	We should reap in fields that are already ripe for harvest.

*** Which of these do you think is the priority?**

We see that some missionaries will say: Go to the unreached! And some will say Go to the responsive!

Perhaps both are right. Some of us should go one way, and some the other.

But the wisest of all may be those who say, Go to...

The unreached who are ready to respond.

A people-group unresponsive for many years or generations may suddenly become interested in the gospel.

Something has happened to shake complacency, bringing disillusionment or awakening a desire for change.

Suddenly a lot of people in one place are very open to hear and accept the gospel.

• They may have **suffered a local or national catastrophe.**

A natural disaster (flood, famine, earthquake etc.)...

or a human crisis (civil war, political upheaval, new government policies etc.)

The old belief system has failed in two ways:

1. It cannot explain why the disaster happened, and 2. It does not help people to cope with their situation.

• People who are in **trouble and grief** are often very glad of help:

prisoners, vulnerable women and children, the homeless, the elderly...

also the unemployed, people in debt or in need of guidance with legal and administrative matters.

• Families, castes, tribes and nations may become **dissatisfied with traditional beliefs.**

In Ethiopia and South Sudan, for example, many are turning away from African Traditional Religion.

• After years of isolation, people may be **curious to know** what the Bible says and what we believe.

This was the case when Communism collapsed in Eastern Europe.

• Men and women urgently want to **improve their circumstances.**

There is a general desire for education, medical care and employment.

Christianity may be seen as a path to personal comfort, progress or prosperity.

• Young people may be desperate **to experience global culture** through contact with the wider world.

In Morocco this was true of many young men in the 1980s.

• Many people have **left their homeland**, willingly or unwillingly, and are trying to start a new life.

Some displaced people are unhappy, such as refugees from tribal conflicts or natural disasters.

Others are ambitious, like black African students in Morocco, or many immigrants in Britain or America.

• Some may have **suffered racial or political marginalization** and blame the majority religion.

They are open to a Christian alternative. There are many like this, such as the Kabyles in Algeria.

God works all things together for good...

In Anhui Province, one of the poorest parts of China, "Farmers face especially difficult livelihoods. Failed Maoist policies, poor administration and corruption, combined with famine and frequent floods, brings desperation and disillusionment. These have led many to turn to Christ. As a result, Anhui enjoys one of China's highest proportion of Christians."¹

Final Thoughts

We should not ignore places with many believers and many churches, for two reasons

1. **They can be mobilized for world mission.**

Are we inspiring them with a vision for gospel outreach and training them to reach the unreached?

2. **They live in the midst of immigrants** from unreached nations or regions.

Are these immigrants hearing the gospel and receiving scriptures in their own languages?

We should constantly look for opening and closing doors:

1. **A nation or people-group that is responsive today may become closed and resistant tomorrow.**

Some countries, through pressure from religious extremists, seem to be rapidly closing.

Work while it is yet day. Suddenly we may find that "night comes when no one can work" (Jn 9:4).

2. **A place that is closed now may suddenly open up.**

Don't be taken by surprise and miss the opportunity.

Study the book Operation World and pray for every nation. Learn some useful languages.

Follow the world news, understand the significance of current events...

and *be ready to go in quickly and effectively* as soon as conditions make this possible.

¹ Operation World (7th edn., 2010), p.228

Today's greatest missionary problem – a student response

In Africa and India many young believers earnestly wish to go out as pioneer missionaries. They have a genuine call from the Lord to proclaim the gospel and make disciples in unreached places. But their churches say there is no money to support them.

Those churches have enough money to support a pastor or two pastors, but cannot – in addition to this – afford to support a missionary.

Why is so much of the world still waiting to hear the gospel? The reason is that evangelical churches have a long tradition of supporting pastors rather than missionaries. Perhaps they consider a pastor more important or more necessary than a missionary. Perhaps they cannot imagine a church without a pastor.

This is a European tradition going back to the Roman Catholicism of the Middle Ages, where each church was dependent on a priest administering sacraments and performing rituals. But the New Testament churches supported missionaries, not pastors, and that is why they were able to carry the gospel to the ends of the earth.

There are more than 180 million Evangelicals in Africa, and more than 26 million in India.¹ If we calculate that the average pastor has a church of five hundred believers, there will be 46,000 pastors in Africa and India. If these churches sacked their pastors (or reappointed them as missionaries), they could afford to support 46,000 missionaries.

If all the evangelical churches of Africa and India told their pastors to stop leading worship services for believers and go out to explain the gospel to strangers, there might soon be people from every tribe and tongue hearing and believing. Thousands of new fellowships in new languages and cultures could be launched, and the blessings of Christian compassion would reach every town and village in the world.

But so long as the churches are paying pastors to lead worship services, this will never happen. The believers remain weak and unable to teach one another, the pastors repeat the same ceremonies and sermons, the world longs to hear the good news, and Jesus Christ waits for us to do what he has told us to do.

*** Someone says: The churches of Africa and India cannot be a blessing to the world until they decide to support missionaries instead of pastors. Would you agree?**

Targeting Marginal People, or Mainstream People?

First of all we must define our terms:

Marginal people are like the water at the edge of a river... flowing slowly, blocked by stones and branches.

They are hindered by personal difficulties. They may be...

blind, deaf, lepers, orphans, war victims, refugees, street kids, prostitutes, prisoners, AIDS sufferers etc.

All these can be very open to the gospel if it is offered with practical care.

But other people may then think that Christianity is a charitable service to a marginal group...

and therefore not for normal people.

It may even be misunderstood as an exploitation of the needy for purposes of power and propaganda.

Mainstream people are like the water in the middle of the river... moving strongly and successfully.

They may be healthy and wealthy, high status people, social leaders.

Most are comfortable, contented with their circumstances, and not open to change.

They are usually resistant to the gospel.

But when a high-status person does accept Christ, that person may strongly influence others.

A group of high-status Christians can be very influential.

*** What kind of men did Jesus choose for his disciples? Were they mainstream or marginal?**

They were fairly mainstream, as they had jobs with a reasonable income.

They would be respected by the people around them.

But they were not highly educated or wealthy, nor socially or politically prominent.

*** Would you say the ministry of Jesus was to marginal people? Or mainstream people?**

Both. He taught crowds so that everyone could hear him.

But he also spoke to beggars, prostitutes, sinners, lepers and people with evil spirits (marginal).

And to a centurion, a member of the Sanhedrin (Nicodemus), a ruler of the synagogue (Jairus) (mainstream).

*** Would you say the ministry of Paul was to marginal people? Or mainstream people?**

Paul went first to the mainstream people of the Jewish community. (Romans might consider them marginal.)

Later he aimed for rulers and administrators and the emperor himself (high-status mainstream).

¹ *Operation World* (7th edn., 2010), pp.32 and 408

But he also helped marginal people, such as the slave girl at Philippi and the thieving slave Onesimus. The early churches did not aim at social marginals, nor the sick, nor political misfits or malcontents...nor rulers. In general they aimed at forward-looking, modern, progressive, intelligent people... of all social classes.

*** Do you think some people can be both marginal and mainstream?**

A mainstream person may do something shameful and become marginal.

And the opposite may be true. A marginal person may succeed in life and so join the mainstream.

It is also evident that a person may be respected by some and despised by others.

Zacchaeus, for example, was an important person in the Roman administration (mainstream)

but despised by the Jews and excluded from their homes (marginal).

Paul was accepted as an educated man and a Roman citizen by some people (mainstream)...

but to others he was a fool, disreputable, hungry, thirsty, poorly dressed, buffeted and homeless, persecuted, slandered, like the scum of the world (marginal).

In our own day a Christian leader may seem important to his congregation (mainstream)...

but irrelevant, stupid or subversive to newspaper editors and government officials (marginal).

Many of us would be considered mainstream by certain people and marginal by others.

*** Is it possible to reach both marginal and mainstream people?**

We have seen that Jesus did, but it is not easy.

There are often tensions when the same gospel is offered to marginal and mainstream people at the same time.

The high-status people may not want to mix with their social inferiors.

The low-status people may feel embarrassed and frightened.

Ministry to marginal people may *alienate mainstream people*.

High-status doctors or dentists may be annoyed if you offer free medical or dental care to the poor.

Powerful people may be angry if you offer education, legal advice or employment to people they exploit.

Ministry to mainstream people may *cause marginal people to suspect you*.

They may think you are supporting a system of corruption or oppression and helping their enemies.

It is difficult to please everyone.

*** Can you think of any tensions between mainstream and marginal people in the ministry of Jesus?**

See Lk 7:39; 19:7; Jn 7:45-49; 9:34.

Note: You might give some examples of ministries to mainstream and marginal people in your own experience. Have you found it possible to reach both at the same time and place?

A true story

In south Thailand a medical work among lepers led some of them to faith in Christ and they began to meet together as a fellowship of believers. Other people, seeing this, assumed that Christianity was a religion for lepers and therefore not for them. They did not want to meet with deformed people and in consequence the general population became more resistant to the gospel.

Conclusions:

Marginal people are usually more *open* to the gospel than mainstream people.

But a group of marginal converts will not easily attract mainstream people.

Mainstream people are usually more *resistant* to the gospel,

but a group of mainstream converts may strongly attract marginal people too.

For our outreach to be effective we should look especially for...

- mainstream people who are dissatisfied and open to change.
- marginal people with the potential to become respected and influential.

Ministry to marginal and mainstream people at the same time may cause problems.

A missionary may decide to focus on one or the other, as Paul did.

Some of us may work with mainstream people, and others with marginal people...

leading to the creation of two distinct fellowships (following the Homogeneous Unit principle)...
or drawing them together into one fellowship (following the All-one-in-Christ principle).

Required Reading: chapter 7 of *MSTN*, and *A Practical History of Gospel Mission*.

8. The World History of Gospel Mission I

Note: Before starting this session, make sure your students have read the document *A Practical History of Gospel Mission*. Your purpose in class is to consider the information in that document and discuss the practical lessons to be drawn from it. Display a large world map if you have one and indicate the location of the places mentioned. You might start this session by asking your students to open their Bibles and turn to Acts chapter 29. Where is it? What happened to it? Then ask them: Do you know what happened next, after chapter 28? What could we write in chapter 29? Give out the Class Notes AT THE END OF this session.

* **Do you find history interesting?**

* **Do you think history is useful?**

Some people enjoy history, and some don't.

Most people do not learn anything useful from history, and that is why they repeat the same mistakes.

History shows us success and failure. Studying it, we may discover how to be successful and avoid failure.

Looking at the history of gospel mission in certain parts of the world we will consider...

1. What *methods* have been used in the spread of the gospel?
2. Which methods were *successful*? Which were *unsuccessful*?
3. Which methods might be effective *today*?

The value of history

"Consciously or unconsciously, all of us are historians. We can plan for the future only because we remember the past. We can add to our knowledge only because we do not lose memory of former experiences. Everyone, from the peasant to the scholar, tries to meet new situations by discovering familiar elements that make it possible to evoke analogies with the past. An individual who has lost his memory, or who has forgotten his own history, is helpless until he has recovered his past or has slowly built up a new past to which he can refer.

"What is true of individuals is also true of societies. No community can survive and no institution can function without constant reference to past experience. We are ruled by precedents as much as by formal laws, which is to say that we are ruled by memories of the past. It is the memory of common experiences that unites individuals into communities, and it is the memory of his own experiences that makes a child into an adult. Some of the memories may not be happy ones, but in reacting against them we are still linked to the past that produced them...

"History at its best gives us a chance of reacting sensibly to problems as they arise. It does not guarantee the correctness of our responses but it should improve the quality of our judgment. Good judgment about human behaviour in society is badly needed today."¹

* **Do you think Christianity is a Western religion?**

* **Where did Christianity start? Where did it flourish during the first two centuries?**

Christianity started, of course, in the Middle East among the Jews.

The gospel was known in Africa, India and Arabia long before it reached England, America and Korea.

Within 50 years of Christ's Sermon on Mount there were churches all along the Mediterranean coast of Africa.

Despite intense persecution, the number of believers increased rapidly. We have documents describing this.

The First 600 Years

Three main centres of African Christianity are mentioned in writings from the first four centuries:

Alexandria (Egypt), Cyrene (Libya), Carthage (Tunisia).

The Mediterranean coast of North Africa

To the west of Egypt, the Roman Empire controlled a narrow strip of land along the Mediterranean coast.

But the gospel was not restricted to the Roman territory along the coastal plain of Africa.

Further inland were tribes of Imazighen or Berbers (at that time known as Getules and Moors).

Tertullian was an early Christian writer in Carthage. Around the year AD 200 he wrote about...

"the inhabitants of the African country beyond Cyrene... and the varied races of the Getules and the vast territories of the Moors, inaccessible to the Romans *but subjugated to Christ*."²

There are remains of church buildings and inscriptions far beyond the Roman frontiers.³

¹ from the foreword to Strayer J R & Gatzke H W, *The Mainstream of Civilization Since 1500*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1979

² Tertullian, *An Answer to the Jews*, 7

³ For an account of early Christianity in North Africa, see Robin Daniel, *This Holy Seed* (Tamarisk, 2010).

*** How did the gospel reach the inland parts of North Africa?**

1. Raiders attacking Roman property on the coast captured Christians and carried them inland as slaves.
2. Christian refugees fled inland from pagan persecutions on the coast.
3. Church leaders were banished by law from Roman territories and forced to live inland.
4. Farms were established inland by retired Christian soldiers and officials, employing local people.
5. Imazighen came to the coast for trade or work, heard the gospel and took it back to their family and friends.

*** Do you think any of these methods would work in cross-cultural mission today?**

*** What problems did the early believers face?**

This was a time of persecution. Bibles were burnt, meeting rooms destroyed, believers tortured and executed.

The Roman authorities, who were persecuting the Christians, were also in conflict with the African tribes.

Christianity became an African resistance movement. For 300 years the North African churches flourished.

They produced some of the greatest theologians of all time: Tertullian, Cyprian and Augustine.

In AD 313 the Edict of Milan ended the persecution and gave power to the Catholic Church.

But the inland African (Donatist) churches refused to be controlled by the coastal Roman (Catholic) churches.

The concept of a Christian empire was promoted by Augustine in his famous book *The City of God*.

He hoped the Roman government and the Catholic Church could work together for the benefit of all.

But everyone must belong to the same Church. This gave rise to the concept of "christendom".

*** What is the meaning of christendom?**

The suffix *-dom* probably comes from the Latin *dominus*, "lord", indicating a sphere of influence or control.

From this we get other words such as dominate and dominion.

As a king controls a kingdom, or a duke controls a dukedom, so Christianity would control a christendom.

It was more than just a Christian sphere of influence. It was a political zone under Christian authority.

Christendom, with a capital C, refers to the continent of Europe during the Middle Ages (5th to 15th centuries).

This was a large territory comprising a number of states or nations governed by Christian rulers.

In each state, the Ruler supported the Church, and the Church supported the Ruler.

At the highest level, bishops were advisors and administrators for the Ruler.

At the lowest level, priests controlled the activities of the local people in each parish.

Together they ensured that no other religious or political groups could emerge to challenge their authority.

Most rulers in Christendom were Catholic but some were later Protestant.¹

*** What happened when persecution ended?**

After the Edict of Milan in AD 313, believers in North Africa had freedom from persecution.

They even had government approval and support.

Now surely they could launch a mission *taking the gospel throughout Africa*. But it did not happen.

The Catholics, supported by the Roman state, made it their priority to take over all the African churches.

For a hundred years there was a bitter denominational power struggle.

Catholic control was finally decreed by the Emperor in Rome and enforced by his soldiers.

Latin was established as the language of Christianity in Africa, and the indigenous movement was crushed.

The Catholics now had the power they desired...

but even with government support they could not secure the future of Christianity on this continent.

When the Vandals and Arabs came in the 5th and 7th centuries, the churches could offer no spiritual resistance.

Within a few generations North Africa had become "the land of the vanished church".

*** Why did the African churches fail?**

Catholic and Donatist churches were actually quite similar and had the same weaknesses. We can see in both...

1. A false gospel – with faith in the Church rather than in Christ...

depending on priests and sacraments rather than the Saviour.

2. A false ministry. In each church there was one man appointed as pastor or minister.

The congregation sang and listened to the sermon and gave offerings but did not seek or serve the Lord.

They were Sunday Christians, accustomed to sin all week and receive forgiveness on Sundays.

Saints and sinners were mixed in church, with many hypocrites among them.

There was no idea of mission because the lay people were too ignorant...

and the clergy too busy with church services.

3. False leadership. Power was focused on the control of church buildings.

When the hierarchy of authority was destroyed by controversy and conquest, they could no longer function.

4. False holiness. There were holy times, places and ceremonies, but not holy hearts.

When the church buildings and shrines of the saints were destroyed, the church was gone.

¹ On the religion of Christendom, see Stark and Finke, *Acts of Faith* (Univ. California Press, 2000), pp.63-71.

5. Ignorance of God's word. Many errors and abuses in the churches were a result of ignorance.

In Catholic churches the Bible was read and taught in Latin, which most Africans could not understand.

In Donatist churches much of the teaching was probably in the local Tamazight language.

But this was not a written language. Scripture was not translated into local languages.

Even the Latin scriptures – copied by hand – were hard to find and expensive to buy.

6. Political alliances. For a hundred years Christians had been disputing with other Christians.

The Catholics had supported Roman power while the Donatists backed African independence.

The result was conflict, disillusionment, and sometimes fighting, burning of property and even loss of life. Catholic victory was brief. When the Roman Empire fell, the exhausted African churches fell with it.

*** As missiologists, what can we learn from the history of early Christianity in North Africa?**

- The gospel spreads when people travel naturally from place to place.
- A crisis situation will easily trigger a mass movement.
- The church grows better through persecution than prosperity and power.
- Believers without scriptures in their own language find it hard to survive.
- Political alliances distract the church, corrupt its witness, and threaten its destruction.

*** It has been said that the early success of North African Christianity was Salvationist, and the later failure Dominionist. Would you agree?**

Alexandria, Egypt and the Nile valley

The gospel came very early to Alexandria. Believers at that time still knew and taught the true gospel.

It found a response in the large synagogue community of Jews and Gentiles committed to the God of the Jews.

The Christian apologists Clement of Alexandria and Origen taught and debated here.

By the second century the gospel had travelled at least 500 miles (800 km) up the River Nile to the south.

Christians were speaking and writing there in Coptic, although their teaching had become seriously corrupted.

*** What were the reasons for early success in Egypt and the Nile Valley?**

1. Gentiles in the synagogue communities were accessible and open to the gospel.
2. Greek culture respected Christian morality.
3. Egyptian culture was obsessed with death, and the gospel offered a strong assurance of eternal life.
4. A belief in pharaohs as the incarnation of gods made it easy to accept Jesus as God incarnate.
5. There was easy transport up the river Nile to all the important towns.

*** By AD 300 there were two strands of Christianity in Egypt, reflecting two cultures. What were they?**

Greek Christianity was dominant in Alexandria and the major towns near the Mediterranean.

Coptic Christianity was found mainly inland among the uneducated and the poor.

*** At the time of the Arab invasion, why did the Coptic church survive better than the Greek church?**

1. By the 7th century the Greek church was divided, with many false teachings (500 sects in Alexandria).
2. Many members of the Greek church fled from Egypt to escape the Arabs.
3. Identifying with their own people and culture, the Copts were resistant to Arab control.
4. The Coptic Christians were poorer people, further inland, and could not move away from Egypt.
5. Copts spoke and read Christian texts in the Coptic language. Their cultural heritage was precious to them.

Coptic Christianity has survived to this day, although Coptic Church practices have diverged from the NT.

Influenced by pagan and Jewish ritual, they have priests, sacraments, icons, fasting, chanting etc.

They are taught to depend on the Church rather than on Christ.

Greek Christianity was revived when the Greek Orthodox Church was later re-established in Egypt.

Note: Coptic and Greek forms of Christianity both belong to the "Orthodox" tradition. See the box below titled The Orthodox Churches.

*** As missiologists, what can we learn from the history of early Christianity in Egypt?**

- Traditional beliefs and customs may help people to understand and accept the gospel.
- Christianity may appeal in different ways to the educated and uneducated (to city people and rural people).
- A marginalized people (Copts) may see Christianity as a unifying force against political and religious oppression.
- Syncretism may aid acceptance but also lead people away from the true gospel.
- The use of local languages, for teaching and writing, may be a key to long-term survival.¹

¹ For a fuller account see Mark Shaw, *The Kingdom of God in Africa* (Baker Book House, 1996), chapter 2.

Ethiopia and Nubia

* What kind of Christianity came to Ethiopia?

Ethiopia was not reached in the early days when Christians proclaimed the true gospel and taught the NT.

In the fifth century, the king accepted a form of Christianity administered by priests.

The priests wanted all the people to be baptised, to take a new name and receive sacraments in sacred buildings.

The Church gained much land and became a political power.

But the people were Christian in name only. They were not well taught in their own languages.

There were still sacred groves and many pagan beliefs and practices.

Relics and icons were more respected than the Bible.

This was a corrupt form of Christianity, and we must question whether it was Christianity at all.

* What kind of Christianity came to Nubia?

Nubia was also unable to hear the true gospel in the early days.

The first evidence of Christianity is seen in the remains of monasteries along the Nile (late 5th century).

Rival teachers representing various Christian sects appeared at the royal court in the following century.

After much dispute and controversy, the Greek Orthodox church won power and allied with the government.

A politically powerful form of Christianity now offered sacraments and compelled conformity...

but showed little understanding of the need for personal trust in Christ or growth in Christian character.

* What can we learn from the history of early Christianity in Ethiopia and Nubia?

- If we are slow to reach an unreached people, they may hear and accept a corrupt Christianity or other religion.
- The conversion of a powerful ruler can open a nation to a new faith.
- If the truth is not taught from scripture, the Church will be corrupt.

Evangelical faith

* We have frequently spoken about Evangelicals or evangelical believers. What does evangelical mean?

The word "evangelical" literally means "of the gospel" or "of the good news".

It was first used in England in 1531 when William Tyndale wrote about "the evangelical truth".

This meant the truth revealed in the Gospels.

One of Tyndale's friends was called an "evangelical brother", meaning "a person who has the gospel".¹

* What differences are there between Evangelicals and other "Christians"?

Evangelicals *put all their trust in Jesus* as Saviour and Lord.

Others will usually put their trust in other things... priests, sacraments, saints, penance, the Church etc.

Evangelicals *take the Bible as their highest authority* in all matters of faith and practice.

Others will usually give more respect to church authority and tradition, or to culture and science.

Evangelicals have these two basic beliefs:

1. The only way to find acceptance with God is by personal trust in the atoning death of Jesus Christ.
2. The Bible is inspired by God and has final authority in all matters of faith and practice.

Other points are sometimes added to these.

Some people now claim to be evangelical yet reinterpret or deny these two basic beliefs.

* Is "evangelical" another word which is changing its meaning and losing its value?

The Roman Catholic Church

* Someone says, "Roman Catholics are believers like us. We should not send missionaries to Catholic countries." How would you reply?

Power and persecution

From early times the churches in major cities such as Alexandria, Carthage and Rome exerted an influence over the surrounding regions, but it was not until the fourth century that Rome began to take precedence over all. At this time there were a number of Christian denominations, each with its own churches and leaders. In the fourth century, for example, the majority of Christians in Africa were members of the Donatist Church, refusing to submit to Catholic authorities in Rome or Africa.

In AD 313, when persecution by pagan rulers had ceased, the Emperor Constantine commissioned the Catholic Church in Rome to administer religion throughout his domains. With government support, Catholic

¹ Tyndale was the first person to translate the New Testament into English from the original Greek, and the first to take advantage of the printing press for producing and distributing many copies in English.

authorities then started to harass, interrogate, arrest, torture and kill men and women who did not subscribe to their beliefs and practices or submit to their control. The emperors Theodosius II (AD 408-450) and Justinian (AD 527-565) were especially concerned to destroy all “heresies” disapproved by the Catholic Church.

Since that time there has been a long history of co-operation between rulers and bishops in Europe and elsewhere, with violent suppression of all other churches and beliefs – with burning of Bibles and indeed of the men and women who read them. Underlying this is the persistent belief that “heresy” is a deadly and satanic disease which must be cut away for the safety of the nation and its people.

Roman Catholics claim to be the only true Church on the basis of “apostolic succession” (authority passed down from man to man since the time of the first apostles), although their teachings and practices have departed far from those of the first apostles. In this course on Biblical Missiology we will say very little about Roman Catholic missions, because the religion they have taught is quite different from the gospel of salvation through faith in Christ alone.

Catholic Mission strategy

The basic strategy of Roman Catholic missions was to send celibate priests to the ruler of a nation, hoping to convert the ruler and his advisors, and then take over the religious administration of the country. The aim was to gain territory, then baptise everyone in that territory and teach the children to be good Catholics. Local beliefs and customs were tolerated and often embraced, resulting in much syncretism. Emphasis was placed on the need for sacraments at the major stages of life (birth, marriage, death and after death).

The main commitment for Catholic converts was attendance at Mass every Sunday, where the sacred bread and wine would be transformed into the body and blood of Jesus and offered as a sacrifice to God. Celibate separation from the world was required of monks and priests. Greater moral laxity was allowed for the laity, who must then regularly confess their sins to a priest. Their schools taught a catechism affirming Catholic beliefs in addition to prayers, mostly in Latin, addressed to Mary and the saints, but did not teach the Bible.

Roman Catholics in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries criticised and ridiculed the Protestant emphasis on translating and distributing scripture. As Catholic missions had operated effectively for 1500 years without using the Bible, they saw absolutely no need for it. Indeed, a Catholic review of missions in 1870 compared Protestant and Catholic methods, noting “a direct contrast between the two classes of missionaries... in the instrument which they respectively employ in their attempts to convert the heathen.” While Protestants are busy distributing literature, the Catholic missionaries “die for the salvation of souls.” Indeed, it is “an immutable law of the Christian apostolate, that the souls of the heathen can only be purchased by blood.” As the death of the missionary will secure the souls of his flock, the writer concluded that “the Bible... was not designed by its Author even to assist in converting the heathen.”¹

Beliefs and practices

The essence of Roman Catholicism has always been faith in the Church. A Catholic will go to heaven because he or she is in the safe keeping of the Church – supported by the prayers of the saints, and nourished by the sacraments of the priests belonging to the Church.

It is an essential principle that all spiritual authority has been granted by Christ to the Pope and his council, who may therefore reinterpret, overrule and supplement the teaching of the first apostles. If directed by the Church, a sinner may atone (pay) for specific sins, and so reduce the time spent in purgatory (a place of painful purification after death). Such atonement may be made through personal suffering, martyrdom, penance, wearing an uncomfortable shirt, exile to the desert, reciting prayers and saying masses, or indeed by labouring in a Catholic mission far from the safety and comfort of civilisation.

Supporting a Catholic ruler, priests and bishops have engaged in warfare to conquer nations and take over their religious administration. They have raised armies for Crusades to persecute religious groups including Evangelicals in France and Spain, and to gain or regain territory from Muslims in the Middle East.

For many generations, the inhabitants of Catholic countries were forbidden to read the scriptures until, with widespread distribution, this policy became impossible to enforce. Catholic authorities consistently condemned and burned men like Hus, Wycliffe and Tyndale who translated and taught scripture in local languages, insisting that the Bible is too mysterious for ordinary people to understand, and must be interpreted by the Church.

Current policies

In some countries, Roman Catholics are now allowed and even encouraged to read the Bible, and an increasing number may now understand the gospel taught by the earliest apostles. But their affirmations concerning “the faith of the Church” can be misleading. Accepting in theory that Christ died for their sins, they are still taught in practice to rely on what the Church can do for them. It is sometimes stated quite openly that salvation is a sacrament administered by the Church. If there are Catholics who have put all their trust in Christ, their Church may be more of a hindrance rather than a help to their spiritual growth.

¹ T W M Marshall, *Christian Missions*, 3rd edn. (D & J Sadler, 1870) Vol.1, pp.9-10

There is also a considerable difference between the educated Catholicism of the West and “folk Catholicism” practised in most of the world. The religion of “folk Catholicism” consists of processions, pilgrimages, statues, images, offerings, candles, superstitions, spells and incantations. Most of its devotees have never heard or understood the gospel.

History shows that for 1500 years the Catholic Church has tried, with persistence and often with violence, to hinder true gospel preaching. Catholicism (like Islam) is tolerant when weak and intolerant when strong. If placed in a position of power today, Catholics will still use it to hinder or prevent the conversion of people to evangelical faith. This is evident in Latin America and elsewhere. Underlying this is the persistent belief that there is no salvation for anyone outside the Catholic Church.¹

Conclusion

A biblical missiologist is responsible to identify the true gospel, and then to distinguish those who proclaim it from those who oppose it.

In recent years it has become fashionable for Western missiologists to accept Roman Catholic missions as genuine expressions of true Christianity. Some have even had their books produced by Roman Catholic publishers.² It may be that North Americans, unaware of the tragic history in Europe and Latin America, fail to appreciate how much we have suffered at the hands of Catholic authorities whenever they have power to persecute. Scholars with limited experience of pioneer mission may also be unaware of the profound ignorance of the gospel so sadly evident in Roman Catholic countries today. If some are hoping to influence the Catholic Church for good, it remains to be seen which way the influence will flow.³

We will consider gospel outreach to Catholic people in Session 10.

The Orthodox Churches

*** Someone says, “Orthodox Christians are believers like us. We should not send missionaries to Orthodox countries.” How would you reply?**

Origin and Policy

The Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches separated in the year 1054 AD. Each claimed to be the only true church. While Catholics are all governed from Rome, the Orthodox churches have at least twenty different Patriarchs, each administering a designated area. There is one, for example, in Alexandria, another in Moscow, another in Jerusalem. The Orthodox Churches have two major communions (Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox), with a further twenty or more national or regional Orthodox communions officially separated from both.

In the 1830s there was an attempt by Protestant missionaries of the Church Missionary Society to work with the Orthodox Church in Ethiopia. Their aim was to teach and purify the Church from within whilst respecting its leadership and many of its traditions. But these missionaries could not persuade the Orthodox leaders to reconsider their devotion to Mary, and they were formally expelled in 1843.⁴

In a course on Biblical Missiology there is nothing to be said about Orthodox mission, and this for two reasons. Firstly, the Orthodox churches have had no policy to send out missionaries, believing that the presence of a church is sufficient to attract anyone wanting spiritual help. And secondly, the Orthodox churches do not offer salvation through personal faith in Christ as Saviour. They do not teach “the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3).

Beliefs and practices

Many beliefs and practices of the Orthodox Church are derived not from the New Testament but from “sacred tradition”, that is from church councils and from the accumulated teachings of the “Church Fathers” during past centuries and up to the present day. Greater emphasis is placed on mystical revelation and monasticism than on biblical scholarship or practical activity.

In Orthodox congregations, the purpose of Christ’s atoning death may be known and understood and even believed, while in practice faith is placed in other things – the Church, relics, priests, saints, sacraments, religious practices etc. Orthodox Christians look for help especially to the saints in heaven, who by their holy lives achieved *theosis* (likeness to, or union with, God). Pictures of the saints, and especially Mary, are much used for personal and corporate devotion. The desire to please God is also satisfied by avoiding certain foods on certain days, and for this reason, restaurants in Ethiopia have a “fasting menu”.

¹ See for example, <http://www.catholic.com/magazine/articles/what-no-salvation-outside-the-church-means> (accessed 7th June 2014).

² The American Society of Missiology, for example, publishes its works with Orbis Press of the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers.

³ On modern Catholicism, see James G McCarthy, *The Gospel according to Rome* (Harvest House, 1995). For a brief overview of Catholic mission in Africa see Shaw, *The Kingdom of God in Africa*, chapter 7.

⁴ Shaw, *The Kingdom of God in Africa*, pp.216-7

Orthodox services consist of ceremonial worship conducted by priests, with incense and chanting using ancient languages such as Ge'ez, Coptic or Syriac, which are not understood by the congregation. The "Divine Liturgy" is a mystical sacrifice in which the bread and wine are said to become the genuine body and blood of Christ, offered to God and then received by the worshippers. This is considered the most important thing in Orthodox Christianity.

Baptism is believed to be a sacrament which cleanses an infant or adult from sin and unites him spiritually with the body of Christ. Prayers are offered for the dead on the third day, ninth day, fortieth day, and the one-year anniversary of their death in order to ease their condition in the afterlife.

Persecution of Evangelicals

The Orthodox church is believed to be the Kingdom of God on earth. On this basis, the Church and State together will rule a nation, meeting all its physical and spiritual needs, and engaging in "patriotic wars" if necessary, with the suppression of all other religious groups.

In Ethiopia, as elsewhere, the strategy of the Orthodox Church has been to gain territory by erecting a building and then forcing animistic people to be baptised, to change their name, and to listen day and night to public chanting and preaching. Orthodox authorities have consistently persecuted Evangelicals whenever they have sufficient power to do so. This has happened in Ethiopia, and as Orthodoxy regains its position in Russia, it is starting to happen there.

Conclusion

Orthodox leaders often condemn evangelical faith as "Western Christianity" rather than biblical belief. With increasing access to the Bible, we may hope that some will begin to understand the true gospel and loosen their ties to Church ritual and authority. But wherever the Orthodox Church has power to hinder gospel outreach and suppress indigenous evangelical fellowships, this persecution seems likely to continue.¹

We will consider gospel outreach to Orthodox people in Session 10.

Early Protestant Missions (17th – 19th centuries)

*** Why were the European Evangelicals so slow to start cross-cultural mission?**

The Waldensians, Moravians, Lollards and Protestants were persecuted by the Catholic powers in Europe.

For four hundred years they were simply trying to survive.

The Protestants depended on protection from Protestant rulers of small territories in Germany and elsewhere.

Their chief concern was to establish national state churches holding to Protestant doctrine.

Their priority was to refute the errors of Roman Catholicism and also the errors they saw in each other.

They also had three beliefs which discouraged world mission:

1. The ruler of each nation is responsible for the religion of his people.
2. The Great Commission was given only to the twelve apostles, and completed by them.
3. God will himself convert all who are predestined to salvation.

*** "The ruler of each nation is responsible for the religion of his people." How would you reply?**

*** "The Great Commission was given only to Twelve Apostles, and completed by them." How would you reply?**

*** A pastor said, "Young man, sit down. When God pleases to convert the heathen, he will do it without your aid or mine." How would you reply?**

Evangelical Mission Strategies in the 19th Century

*** What was the *Reforming* strategy? How successful was it?**

In the 1830s the Church Missionary Society (CMS) hoped to reform the official Orthodox Church in Ethiopia.

If the Orthodox Church could be converted to the true gospel, they might carry it throughout Africa.

The missionaries translated the Bible into the Amharic language of the ruling tribe and taught the people to read.

They accepted many things in the Orthodox Church, but they would not pray to Mary and the saints.

Nor would they use pictures and relics in public and private devotion. They did not encourage monasticism.

Relations grew very tense and eventually they were expelled from the Orthodox Church and from Ethiopia.

*** What was the *Diplomatic* strategy? How successful was it?**

In 1875, Henry Morton Stanley spoke with king Mutesa of Buganda (now part of Uganda).

The king and his counsellors decided Christianity was more powerful than Islam, and so should be adopted.

¹ See ed. David Hilborn, *Evangelicalism and the Orthodox Church* (Paternoster, 2001).

Roman Catholics also came, and argued against Protestant beliefs.

Catholics and Protestants both refused to baptise Mutesa.

They saw he was very violent, selling many people into slavery, and had many wives.

Mutesa's son later persecuted the believers. A civil war broke out between African Catholics and Protestants.

*** What was the Colonial strategy? How successful was it?**

The British Empire governed almost one-fourth of the earth's land area, and one fifth of its population.

Many people hoped the British Empire would introduce civilisation and Christianity to all its territories.

This would set an example for others to follow, resulting eventually in a Christian world.

Some missionaries believed that the priority was to Christianise (convert) the British colonies.

Others said the first task was to civilise (develop) them.

In prosperous regions they usually stressed Christianising, and in poorer regions civilising.

The theological background of the missionaries also influenced their strategy.

In the 18th century, most were post-millennialist, which accorded with *civilising*.

In the 19th and 20th centuries many were pre-millennialist, which accorded with *Christianising*.

In places that were formerly under British control, many people now consider themselves *civilised Christians*...

but they do not always seem to be committed followers of Christ.

*** Do you think the British Empire was a help, or a hindrance, to cross-cultural mission?**

It was a help.

It brought law and order, ended tribal wars, improved communication, abolished slavery.

It built roads, railways, ships, bridges, introduced new crops, machinery, better food, medicine and surgery.

Western technology and industrial products awakened an interest in the wider world and new ideas.

It was a hindrance.

Many officials were arrogant and immoral, promoting commerce and administration, not Christianity.

They gave power to Muslim chiefs, and established political boundaries that still cause wars today.

Some encouraged trade in liquor and guns. By force they compelled the sale of opium in China.

There were many conflicts between colonial authorities and missionaries who protested against their actions.

Some missionaries were expelled from European colonies on account of wars in Europe

*** What was the Pioneering strategy?**

Missionaries simply went to an unreached place and told the people about Jesus.

*** What methods did they use?**

They learned the local language, travelled widely, preached in public and translated the scriptures.

They opened orphanages and schools for children, started churches, and sent out evangelists.

*** What made it especially dangerous for white missionaries?**

White people had little resistance to tropical diseases and climatic conditions.

They had no support in these places from governments or police or soldiers.

*** How successful was the Pioneering strategy?**

After 100 years (by 1975) the pioneering "faith missions" had won more than 6 million converts in Africa alone.

*** Would you agree that the most important work of a pioneer missionary is translating the New Testament? Is there anything more important?**

We have looked at the Reforming strategy, Diplomatic strategy, Colonial strategy and Pioneering strategy.

*** Which of these were used by early missionaries in your country? How successful were they?**

Missionary support for indigenous peoples

"In the 1790s a movement began in England and Scotland which had an immense influence on the future of the Pacific islanders – the formation of a number of missionary societies... The United States was also the home of a vigorous missionary activity, the Americans resembling the British in propagating a simple evangelical type of Protestantism.

"The social achievement of the missionaries was of [great] importance and may even have amounted in some places to the preservation of the native peoples from extermination. For the missionaries bridged the long interval between the intrusion of uncontrolled adventurers into the islands and the assumption of responsibility by civilized governments. In that interval a great deal of harm was done by the vendors of drink and muskets [i.e. guns], the blackbirders [i.e. slave traders], escaped criminals, deserters, and racketeers who preyed upon native simplicity; and the harm would have been infinitely greater but for the missionaries.

"Their activities were twofold: to report and denounce the ill-doers to European governments and clamour for remedial action, and at the same time to advise and fortify the island kings and chiefs and train them in the ways of civilized rule and negotiation.

“In all this long period [from 1800 to about 1870]... the missionaries... were against European annexation, and were confident that the native rulers could be strengthened and educated to hold their own in civilized independence.”¹

Christianity, Commerce and Civilization

“David Livingstone is often misunderstood as being a conscious promoter of European colonization [i.e. exploitation] of Africa. On the contrary, he believed that the key to Africa's future was the stimulation of indigenous development and good government. Such ‘civilization’ could only be achieved by the combination of Christianity with legitimate commerce, to replace the Slave Trade which had been the bane of Africa's development for centuries.”²

In his Cambridge lecture of 1857 Livingstone said, “My object in going into the country south of the desert was to instruct the natives in a knowledge of Christianity... I might have gone on instructing the natives in religion, but as civilization and Christianity must go on together, I was obliged to find a path to the sea...

“In going back to that country [Angola], my object is to open up traffic along the banks of the Zambezi, and also to preach the gospel. The natives of Central Africa are very desirous of trading, but their only traffic is at present in slaves, of which the poorer people have an unmitigated horror. It is therefore most desirable to encourage the former principle, and thus open a way for the consumption of free productions, and the introduction of Christianity and commerce... Those two pioneers of civilization – Christianity and commerce – should ever be inseparable... I go back to Africa to make an open path for commerce and Christianity; do you carry out the work which I have begun. I leave it with you!”

Financial support

*** How have missionaries from the West been supported?**

1. Early 19th century... chaplains and personal representatives

Church ministers were appointed to serve people of their own race and denomination.

In their spare time they could offer the gospel to local people.

Some missionaries were sent out from their homeland by wealthy friends at home.

Some were supported by Christian farmers, soldiers or businessmen working in the European colonies.

2. Mid-19th century... voluntary societies

Societies associated with various denominations were sponsored by investors in the homeland.

Agents were paid to proclaim the gospel and start churches of their own denomination in other countries.

3. Late 19th century to late 20th century... faith missions

These missionaries had no salary and never asked for financial support or contracted debts.

Their policy was to pray and trust God to provide.

Christians in the homeland (UK) would also pray for guidance in what money they sent.

4. End of 19th century to present... pledged gifts

Missionaries would ask friends and churches in the homeland (USA) to promise a sum of money each month.

Every few years they must go on “home assignment” to raise their pledged support to an agreed level.

5. Every period... tent-making

Following Paul's example, they support themselves with secular work, sharing their faith whenever possible.

*** What are the advantages and disadvantages of “tent-making”?**

A person preaching in his own time, at his own expense, may be respected more than one paid to preach.

A secular job may offer natural contact with local people and give a good example to converts.

Employment may provide a secure income. In some countries this is the only way to obtain residence.

But time and energy are used up in secular work rather than gospel mission.

*** Do you think any of these methods of financial support might work in your situation?**

*** Think of the missionaries you know. How are they supported financially?**

*** Can you think of other good ways to support missionaries today?**

Nineteenth century business/mission in India

In 1844 the civil engineer Colonel Arthur Cotton was asked to construct a major irrigation system in the Godavari³ delta of eastern India. The project would employ thousands of Indian labourers. Colonel Cotton

¹ James A Williamson, *Cook and the Opening of the Pacific* (Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1946), pp.228-9. For details see the archives of the London Missionary Society (SOAS, London).

² F Nkomazana, “Livingstone's ideas of Christianity, commerce and civilization” (*Pula: Botswana Journal of African Studies*, 12, 1998)

³ Godavari is pronounced *go-dav-ri* without special emphasis on any syllable.

invited an evangelist, William Bowden, to preach the gospel to these men, and from his own salary provided financially for the evangelist and his family.¹

In 1847 the brothers Henry and Frank Groves established a large sugar refining factory near Mysore² in southern India. This provided employment for many Indians. The brothers opened a schoolroom and chapel for their workers, supporting an Indian evangelist who could teach their children and explain the gospel to them in their own language.³

Twenty-first century business/mission in China

Zhejiang⁴ is one of China's wealthiest and most stable provinces. Ninety percent of businesses here are privately owned. "Zhejiang's Christians have done much to evangelize other parts of China, as well as the two million migrant labourers who work here. Many wealthy Christian entrepreneurs use their business skills to reach the rest of China, travelling around on business and setting up fellowships (and businesses) as they go. These 'boss Christians' use their business acumen and their companies as a means to spread the good news."⁵

Comity

*** What is Comity?**⁶

an agreement to divide an area between different denominations or mission societies

*** Do you think Comity was (or is) necessary? Is it a good thing, or a bad thing?**

At first it helped to stop converts and employees moving constantly from church to church.

But it emphasized denominational differences, and it restricted the free travel of evangelists.

Comity caused frustration when societies or denominations failed to work effectively in their designated area... or when new agencies arrived in a place.

It became meaningless when believers moved to towns.

*** Were there any comity agreements in your country? If so, how effective were they?**

The benefits of competition

Contrary to what we might expect, sociologists have found that competition is good for mission and church growth. Competition increases effort, interest and commitment in missionaries and converts.⁷

An English missionary, Anthony Norris Groves, moved to Chittoor in southern India in 1837, hoping to work with another missionary, John Bilderbeck, who had a chapel there. But Bilderbeck refused to welcome him, and publicly criticised his teachings and beliefs.

The result was not confusion and disillusionment as we might suppose. On the contrary, Bilderbeck registered more Indian converts during the following year than any previous year, and Norris Groves also established a flourishing new congregation and school.⁸

Christian settlements

*** What can we learn from the experience of Sierra Leone and Liberia?**

*** Do you think it might be possible to create new Christian settlements today?**

Trends in the 20th and 21st Centuries

*** What effect did the two European "World Wars" have on world mission?**

*** What effect did these wars have on the churches of Africa and India?**

*** What is the ecumenical movement?**

*** Do you think the ecumenical movement has helped cross-cultural gospel outreach? Or hindered it?**

Recent controversial issues have divided African and Western church leaders in certain denominations.

*** Do you think this will affect their mission programme (financially or in other ways)?**

Required Reading: chapter 8 of *MSTN*, and *Rapid Mass Movements*.

¹ Lady Elizabeth Reid Hope, *General Sir Arthur Cotton* (Hodder and Stoughton, 1964)

² Mysore is pronounced with the emphasis on the second syllable: *my-SORE*

³ [Harriet Groves], *Memoir of the Late Anthony Norris Groves*, 3rd edn. (James Nisbet, 1869), p.549

⁴ Zhejiang is pronounced *JER-jang*.

⁵ *Operation World* (7th edn., 2010), p.251

⁶ Comity is pronounced with the emphasis on the first syllable: *COM-ity*.

⁷ Stark and Finke, *Acts of Faith* (Univ. California Press, 2000), pp.223-228

⁸ R B Dann, *The Primitivist Missiology of Anthony Norris Groves* (Tamarisk, 2007), pp.69-70

9. The World History of Gospel Mission II

Indigenization and Indigeneity

As early Western missionaries won converts in many countries, they erected church buildings, schools, clinics.

They planted fields, built houses and workshops, set up printing presses, on substantial mission compounds.

Salaries were paid to the local school teachers, evangelists, pastors and other church workers.

All this activity was expensive to maintain.

By the mid 19th century, mission administrators were convinced that a change was needed, for two reasons:

1. Many missionaries were too busy with the administration and finance of churches and compounds.

This meant that the work of gospel outreach was greatly hindered and in some places neglected.

2. The societies found it hard to pay for all the mission activities and employees around the world.

They saw a definite need to pass on the responsibility and the expense to local Christians.

Then the Western missionaries could move into new areas where the gospel was not yet known.

It became an urgent priority for the churches to become *indigenous*.

* What does indigenous mean?

Something that grows naturally in a place is indigenous. It belongs to that place.

* Do you think it would be an advantage, or a disadvantage, for a church to be indigenous? Why?

* Are there things more important than being indigenous? If so, what things?

The three-self principle

Henry Venn was secretary of the Church Missionary Society, associated with the Church of England in Britain.

In 1854 he proposed a scheme to encourage local churches in India and elsewhere to *become* indigenous.

The same idea was promoted by **Rufus Anderson** associated with the Congregationalist Church in the USA.

They wanted their missionaries to hand over all responsibility as soon as possible to their local converts.

The national churches must bear the financial burden of the schools, clinics, farms, workshops, printing presses.

Local believers must be trained and appointed to do what the Western missionaries had previously done.

The missionaries must help the church to think in terms of self-support, self-government and self-propagation.

This was called the **three-self principle**.

To illustrate this, they compared the mission society to *scaffolding* used in construction of a building.

It would remain in place until the church was complete and able to stand alone.

Then the mission support should be *removed*.

But Venn and Anderson discovered several unexpected problems with this strategy:

1. The upkeep of buildings and the wages of schoolteachers, pastors and evangelists involved a lot of money.

Transport was expensive and so were books, seeds, animals, bundles of paper, and medical supplies.

Taxes had to be paid on land and property.

The local believers were poor people and could not afford to pay all this.

2. Many of the employees on mission compounds were skilled workers but not good Christians.

The missionaries felt they could not be trusted with money or with other responsibilities.

3. The missionary societies had always dealt with legal matters.

They possessed some influence with the government and with local officials.

While missionaries were there, local believers felt they had a measure of protection from corrupt officials...

but this protection would be lost as soon as the missionaries left.

4. The local churches were identified as Anglican or Methodist or Baptist or Congregational, according to the foreign denomination that had started them.

The building, the clothes, the books, the hymns – everything about the church was foreign.

The local people said: As this church was started by foreigners following their customs,

it has always been the foreigners' responsibility and always will be.

5. The missionaries enjoyed supervising activities on mission compounds

(and some may have been reluctant to take on the more difficult work of pioneer evangelism).

The missionaries felt their presence was essential.

Many of them protested that the local people were still too weak or ignorant to take responsibility.

The "scaffolding" could not yet be removed, they said, because the "building" was still incomplete.

Everyone could see how difficult it was to dismantle the mission "scaffolding".

But hardly anyone had ever considered an alternative strategy for creating indigenous churches.

One who did so was Anthony Norris Groves...

New Testament strategy

Fourteen years earlier, in 1840 in India, Anthony Norris Groves had suggested a very different approach.

He studied the New Testament to see how apostles started churches.

In the Acts and Letters he did not see foreign missionaries buying land, erecting buildings and paying salaries... and then asking local people to take on the responsibility and the expense.

He did not see property belonging to one body (the society) transferred to another body (the church).

There was only one body, the body of Christ, which possessed no property at all.

It grew naturally through the spontaneous outreach of the local believers.

Norris Groves reached a startling conclusion... "The work societies endeavour to accomplish can be done better, because more scripturally, *by the Church herself*."¹

There was no question in his mind of a foreign scaffolding to be erected and then dismantled, no process of handing over responsibilities and properties from foreigners to indigenous believers.

In the New Testament he saw a very effective strategy and resolved to follow it:

1. Sending missionaries to proclaim the gospel...
2. Teaching their converts well...
3. Forming active house-fellowships...
4. Encouraging the emergence of local leaders...

These would then restart with 1. sending missionaries to proclaim the gospel further afield.

This was a simple and dynamic method for the spontaneous growth and spread of indigenous churches, taking the word of God to the ends of earth.

There was no need for foreign denominations and societies and comity agreements and hand-overs.

It was the New Testament strategy for mission. So Norris Groves declared, "My earnest desire is to re-model the whole plan of missionary operations so as to bring them to the simple standard of God's word."²

Most Western denominations and societies since then have followed Henry Venn's policy of **indigenization**.

They have not even considered the idea of **indigeneity** proposed by Norris Groves.

In the 1920s Norris Groves's ideas were restated by **Roland Allen**...

but it was not until the 1950s that mission leaders in the West began to take the idea of *indigeneity* seriously.

Perhaps they had become aware of how effective it was in China and India.

Watchman Nee and Bakht Singh both had a deliberate policy of *indigeneity*.

They did not depend on foreign money or foreign control. Both were influenced by Norris Groves.³

Ni To-sheng (Watchman Nee) in China.

From the early 1920s, the "Little Flock" movement, associated with Watchman Nee, grew rapidly.

By 1949 it had gained over 70,000 members, in five hundred fellowships.

By 1956 they outnumbered any other Christian group in China.

Bakht Singh in India.

In the 1930s the evangelist Bakht Singh conducted open-air campaigns and tens of thousands were converted.⁴

During a period of 18 years, more than 200 local fellowships were started by his converts.

These were the fastest growing churches in India and now number more than 2000.

What is the difference between indigenization and indigeneity?

English words ending with *-ization* (or *-isation*) usually indicate *change*.

For example: industrialization, urbanization, colonization.

Words ending with *-eity* usually indicate *consistency*. For example: homogeneity, spontaneity, deity.

So we may compare these two possible strategies for creating indigenous churches:

Indigenization – change (Henry Venn)	Indigeneity – consistency (Norris Groves)
Foreign missionaries start churches and then ask local converts to take over.	Foreign missionaries help local converts to start their own churches.
The foreign mission is like a scaffolding which can be removed once the church is well established.	The foreign missionaries belong to the local fellowship as members in the body of Christ.
Missionaries provide teaching, pastoral care, sacraments, buildings, finance, authority, discipline.	Missionaries provide teaching and pastoral care alone.

¹ R B Dann, *The Primitivist Missiology of Anthony Norris Groves* (Tamarisk, 2007), p.81. For a biography of A N Groves, see R B Dann, *Father of Faith Missions: the life and times of A N Groves* (Authentic/Tamarisk, 2004).

² Dann, *Primitivist Missiology*, p.202

³ Dann, *Primitivist Missiology*, pp.215-220.

⁴ In English the name Bakht Singh is pronounced *Bakt Sing*.

Missionaries train local converts to take over these responsibilities.	Local converts have full responsibility from the beginning.
The church <i>becomes</i> indigenous.	The church is indigenous <i>from the start</i> .
It <i>becomes</i> self-supporting, self-propagating and self-governing.	It <i>has always been</i> self-supporting, self-propagating and self-governing.

- * **Do you think it is necessary for a church to be indigenous from the start? Or can it *become* indigenous?**
- * **Would you agree that *indigenization* is pragmatist, and *indigenity* primordialist?**
- * **Have you seen either of these methods in practice? How successful have they been?**

Note: You might like to give examples from your experience of churches that were indigenous from the beginning, or churches that were started by foreigners and later handed over to local believers. What problems were there, and how easily were these overcome?

Four true stories from Africa

1. A CHURCH-PLANTING PASTOR

In one central African country, a mission society has a well-defined strategy. When a tribe or village without an evangelical church is identified, a young pastor is sent to ask the people if they would like a church. If they would, the villagers choose a piece of empty land as a place to erect a simple shelter for meetings. They also provide a small house for the pastor and his family.

The pastor then starts to lead services on Sundays and other days, with special classes for children. He uses the national language, as he does not yet know the local language.

The mission society sends the pastor a monthly allowance for two years. This is then gradually reduced, and eventually stopped at the end of the fourth year. At the same time the believers are learning to tithe. As soon as ten families are tithing, the pastor's family can live at the same level they do. When twenty or thirty families are tithing, they will buy materials to erect a proper building. A survey of churches planted in this way showed that 80% are now self-supporting.

* **Would you say this is a biblical strategy?**

Does the NT show us apostles living in villages, erecting shelters, arranging services, asking for tithes?

* **Would you say it is a good strategy?**

Have you seen this strategy being used anywhere? Was it effective?

* **What might be the benefits of this strategy?**

It enables nominal Christians to receive teaching and pastoral care and so become genuine believers.

It may attract people of other beliefs and religions.

It raises up a new generation of Christian children who will be better Christians than their parents.

* **What might be the problems with this strategy?**

20% of churches started this way are not self-supporting, so the pastor may be very short of money.

The pastor cannot understand what people say in the local language.

The pastor may be so busy conducting services for believers that he cannot go out to the lost.

Poor people may not want to join if they cannot afford to tithe.

This strategy focuses on Christians rather than people from other backgrounds.

There may easily be hypocrites who attend church services but live evil lives.

2. A FRIENDSHIP EVANGELIST

Another mission society, in a predominantly Christian country in Africa, has a different strategy. They do not think the Christians are serious, so they ignore them and go to live among the Muslims.

The missionary sits with Muslim men under the trees, and his wife goes to the Muslim women in their homes. They read the Bible with the Muslim villagers and pray for the blessing of Allah on the crops and herds and children. The society sends the missionary a monthly allowance for food and rent as long as he stays in the village.

* **Would you say this is a biblical strategy?**

Does the New Testament show us apostles ignoring Christians who are not serious, and making friends with people of other religions?

Does the New Testament show us mission societies sending a monthly allowance?

* **Would you say it is a good strategy?**

Have you seen this strategy used anywhere? Was it effective?

* **What might be the benefits of this strategy?**

It takes the gospel directly to those who have never heard it.

It may challenge and stimulate the Christians to be more serious.

It may build good relations between Muslims and Christians.

It does not require any tithes or offerings from the converts.

*** What might be the problems with this strategy?**

It could make the Christians critical of the missionary and jealous of the Muslims.

The Christians might say, "If we were paid like the missionary, we would be more serious."

If some Muslims accept Christ, the Christians will not believe they are serious.

The missionary's converts will not be accepted in the churches.

3. A CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

In another African country, evangelical believers are a small minority. A child-sponsorship society, funded from the West, is working closely with a local evangelical church. On the church compound, a day school and clinic have been started for the village children, on condition that they also attend Sunday school. The society provides clothing, books and teachers. It also gives health and hygiene classes for the mothers, supplying simple medical care and essential food when necessary.

In this way the church compound has become the social centre of the village, and the church continually grows. As some children come from far away, their parents request similar projects in other villages. In this way the evangelical churches are beginning to flourish over a wide area, and thousands of people are hearing and accepting the gospel.

*** Would you say this is a biblical strategy?**

Does the New Testament show us churches starting day schools and clinics in villages?

*** Would you say it is a good strategy?**

Have you seen this strategy used anywhere? Was it effective?

*** What might be the benefits of this strategy?**

It draws the entire village to the church so they will hear about Jesus and believe.

It continually opens doors to other villages.

It might also attract people from other religions and belief systems.

*** What might be the problems with this strategy?**

It may result in many nominal Christians who attend church but do not really follow Christ.

It depends on foreign money. If the political situation changes, the work might stop.

4. AN INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIP

In another country a local church was started by an African evangelist who preached the gospel to a neighbouring tribe. But the evangelist had no money to support himself or to buy land, so he wrote to a church in America.

The Americans sent a group of young people on a short-term mission, bought some land and erected a beautiful building. They appointed another man to be pastor of this church and paid him a good salary. He showed the villagers how to have a church like the churches in America. Most of the young people were happy but the older people did not like it and stopped going.

*** Would you say this is a biblical strategy?**

Does the New Testament show us pastors appointed and paid by people far away?

*** Would you say it is a good strategy?**

Have you seen this strategy used anywhere? Was it effective?

*** What might be the benefits of this strategy?**

The pastor may be respected because he is well trained and well supported and very modern.

There is little financial burden on the local people.

*** What might be the problems with this strategy?**

It may not show respect for the elders and the customs of the tribe.

The evangelist may be upset and discouraged.

It may not be easy to disagree with the pastor or to question his opinions or actions.

It may not be easy for other believers to share in leadership or ministry.

It may not be easy to start other churches like this.

It depends on foreign money. If the political situation changes, the work may stop.

A universal problem (19th and 20th centuries)

In central India... "While appreciating that the missionaries did all in their capacity to help establish local churches, giving them freedom in every respect, we should also accept the fact that the missionaries were not able to impart missionary vision to the churches... The churches began to manage their own affairs, but they rarely saw beyond their own four walls to the unreached."¹

¹ Atul Y Aghamkar and Vishwas Padole, *Christian Missions in Maharashtra* (TETRAWPOI, Bangalore, 2010), p.128

In Africa... "Faith missions, which had so severely criticised the churches in their home countries for their lack of missionary vision, produced churches which lacked exactly that... The missionary vision was often not passed on to the 'young' churches."¹

* **Why was there no missionary vision in these churches started by missionaries?**

1. Everyone assumed that church was for the converts, and mission was for the foreigner.
2. Gifted converts became pastors rather than evangelists or missionaries.
3. If the church was to become self-sufficient, "foreign money" should not support "indigenous workers".
4. Comity agreements prevented believers from going to neighbouring tribes and regions.

* **Can you suggest how to impart missionary vision to new converts and churches?**

Rapid Mass Movements

Note: Make sure your students have all read the document *Rapid Mass Movements* before you start this session. In class you will be testing and discussing what they already know.

Please note that we deliberately avoid the words "revival" and "awakening" as these usually refer to times of spiritual refreshment *within churches*. Our concern is with those *outside the churches* – people following other systems of belief – who turn to Christ in large numbers. We call this a "rapid mass movement".

The document *Rapid Mass Movements* suggests that mass movements are usually triggered by:

1. **General tension** in the region or the church. Men and women are unhappy with their circumstances.
2. **People are accessible.** They welcome someone who will speak to them about Christ.
3. **Earnest public preaching.** A positive message boldly addresses current needs, supported by much prayer.
4. **The good news becomes a general talking point.** Everyone is aware of the problem and solution
5. **The people respond to the Holy Spirit.** They want to change and so accept the gospel with enthusiasm.

* **Why was Paul's proclamation of the gospel so quickly accepted by so many people?**

1. There was a situation of great tension. Jews were frustrated and humiliated.
Gentile converts to Judaism were unhappy with its racial and religious restrictions.
Other Gentiles were disillusioned with paganism.
2. People were accessible and willing to listen – especially in the synagogues.
3. Teachers such as Paul came with a positive message.
4. The good news became a general talking point. Everyone heard about it.
5. The people responded immediately to the Holy Spirit because they urgently wanted a change for the better.

We will look at several other mass movements. In each case we must ask...

* **What was the cause of tension?**

* **Why were people willing to listen and to respond?**

* **What actually started the mass movement?**

* **Why was there a mass movement... in North Africa between AD 150 and AD 400?**

A situation of tension as the Imazighen marvelled at Roman civilisation but suffered from Roman power.
They found Christians in the same situation. They would listen to such people.
They responded to a positive message which became the basis of an African resistance movement.

Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu, southern India (1859-1865)

There was tension in the Catholic and Anglican churches – drunkenness, lying, quarrelling and lawsuits.
A positive message with strong testimonies led to conversion of many nominal Christians and also Hindus.

Wales, United Kingdom (1904-5)

The introduction of English industry and language brought development, but also hardship and poverty.
Many were attracted to Welsh-speaking chapels where their own heritage and language were maintained.

Korea (1890-1910)

Korea was threatened and then conquered by Japan, but the small Korean church used the Korean language.
Christianity was seen as a patriotic resistance movement and attracted large numbers.

Rwanda and Uganda (1929-41)

There were moral, theological and racial tensions in the Anglican and Catholic churches and hospitals.
Confession and testimony led thousands of nominal Christians and animists to real salvation.

¹ Klaus Fiedler, *The Story of Faith Missions* (Oxford, Regnum, 1994), p.364

Walayta people, southern Ethiopia (1937-43)

When the Italians invaded, the Walayta were freed from oppression by the Amhara tribe and Orthodox Church. Believers imprisoned by the Italians became a heroic symbol of Walayta identity, attracting many to faith.

West Timor,¹ Indonesia (1965-72)

There was drought, famine, inflation. After a failed Communist coup, everyone needed a religious identity. Many chose to adopt Christianity and so heard the gospel and believed.

Malto people in Jharkhand² (1985-2003).

In poverty and debt, the Maltos (of Dravidian race) were despised and exploited by the Hindus of Aryan race. Indian missionaries of Dravidian race brought a positive gospel which affirmed their culture and language.

China (2000-12)

Mao Tse-tung's "Cultural Revolution" caused great disillusionment with Communism. House fellowships provided excellent support for vulnerable people and attracted many who had suffered.

Kabylia,³ Algeria (2009-10)

Islamic extremists were about to take power, planning the arabization and Islamization of the Kabyle people. Christianity, identified with the Kabyle language and culture, became a symbol of resistance to Arab Islam.

Launching a mass movement

*** Is a mass movement simply a sovereign work of God that we cannot plan or control?**

*** Do you think we can start a mass movement? Is this a viable mission strategy?**

*** Is there anything we must do in order for it to happen?**

We cannot normally create a crisis, but *we should be able to identify a crisis* when we see one. Look for...

- general disillusionment with traditional religion
- resentment against social or political or racial oppression
- an urgent physical need such as hunger or disease
- fear that a distinctive culture and language are under threat
- frustration with corruption and compromise in a church or Christian institution.

In these circumstances, people are unhappy and willing to listen.

Then someone comes who is a catalyst for change... offering a new idea, a solution to the problem... speaking earnestly, prayerfully, persistently, convincingly... bringing hope in place of despair.

*** How can we prepare for such a moment?**

1. by learning languages, by studying cultures and religions, by gaining experience in various places... so that when a door opens in a crisis context **we can quickly go in...** and speak to people who will immediately listen to us and gladly accept what we say.
2. Some mass movements have started when many nominal Christians come to faith in Christ. Their testimonies of salvation and reconciliation attract outsiders from other religions and beliefs. Many churches need such awakening. They live in a permanent crisis and **we can go to them at any time.**

*** In a crisis situation, do you think believers might support political revolt or armed factions?**

Taking up weapons of violence is not an option for us since Jesus taught us to love our enemies (Lk 6:27-30) and commanded Peter to put his knife back in its sheath (Matt 26:52).

We are taught to respect the legal authorities, remembering that any authority is better than none.

In a situation of anarchy there is no restraint on wickedness at all (Rom 13:1-7).

*** If a mass movement starts, what can we do to help it spread widely and continue as long as possible?**

Men and women who have been transformed must testify, not just in their own community but elsewhere too.

If there is a mass movement in one area, look for other areas with the same problems and potential for change. Take some new converts to speak to the people there.

Help the converts to grow spiritually. Teach them. Make sure they read or hear the scriptures every day... and encourage them to teach others what they learn.

That is the only way for a movement to keep moving.

Required Reading: chapters 9 to 11 of *Mission Strategies Then and Now*.

¹ Timor is pronounced *TEE-more*.

² Jharkhand is pronounced *jer-KOND*.

³ Kabylia is pronounced *kab-EEL-ya*. Kabyle is *KAB-eel*.

10. Special Approaches for Particular People

Note: In this session we will consider how evangelists and missionaries may approach people who follow three major religions – nominal Christianity, African traditional religion (ATR) and Islam.

Other world religions and belief systems (such as Buddhism, Hinduism, Shintoism, Humanism, Marxism etc.) are not discussed in this course, but the principles identified here may also be applied to those cultural and religious contexts.

The Work of an Evangelist

* Do you think every believer can be an evangelist?

The Lord gives different gifts to different people in the body of Christ.

Some (though not all) will have a gift for evangelism (Eph 4:11).

A person with a gift for evangelism will have a strong and constant desire to proclaim the gospel and testify.

They will enjoy this work of outreach and usually do it very well.

Timothy as only a young man, so he would not expect older people to listen to him (1 Tim 4:12).

He was probably rather quiet and inclined to be fearful (2 Tim 1:7).

But Paul said to him, "Do the work of an evangelist" (2 Tim 4:5).

We might think Timothy was not the sort of person to be an evangelist.

Indeed, Timothy probably did not have a gift for it, *but he could still do it.*

Like Timothy, *every Christian leader will be able to do the work of an evangelist.*

In fact every disciple of Christ will love the gospel and be happy to explain it if people are interested.

We only become nervous if we think people are not interested.

But they may become very interested if we speak to them in the right way.

Sharing the gospel with others is not so difficult as we might think.

And preparing ourselves carefully and prayerfully will make it much easier. Here is the advice we need:

"In your hearts honour Christ the Lord as holy, **always being prepared** to make a defence to anyone who **asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you**; yet do it with **gentleness and respect**" (1 Pet 3:15-16).

In this verse there are three important things to note:

1. We are hopeful, cheerful, optimistic people. Our positive attitude encourages others, making them feel better. For this reason *they ask us to explain* what makes us different. They wish they could have what we have. So we tell them how Christ is our Lord and has changed our lives.
2. We should be *well prepared* so we have something simple and positive to say when the opportunity comes.
3. We must say it with *gentleness and respect*.

When talking with people about Christ we may be tempted to say, "You are wrong and I am right."

But not many will be persuaded that way. Remember to be gentle and respectful.

It is better to ask yourself,

"How can I introduce the gospel to the people around me so they quickly see it is good news... so they understand why it gives us hope?"

There are two things to consider:

1. What is the content of the gospel?

What are the essential facts that I must pass on?

2. Which part of the gospel should I start with?

Which specific aspect of the gospel meets the immediate need of the person I am with?

What can I say so they will quickly understand it is good news and brings hope?

* What is the content of the gospel?

We have seen that in the New Testament, there are three basic facts about Jesus in the gospel message:

1. **death** – suffering to atone for us and set us free
2. **resurrection** – proving he is alive to help us now
3. **remission of sins** – removing sin and its deadly consequences for all who will put their trust in him.

Paul liked to add two more points:

4. **Jesus is coming back to raise the dead**, and
5. **he will then establish his kingdom for ever.**¹

The apostles then urged the people to **commit themselves to the Saviour** and so be saved.

¹ See *MSTN*, ch. 8, Paul's message (pp.80-2).

The gospel does not change its content from age to age or from place to place,
but we must know how to introduce it to different types of people.

Each person has particular problems and questions, and needs to know how the gospel can help them personally.

We are sure that the gospel is good news for everyone... but we must think carefully:

What will a Muslim find in the gospel that is specially good news for him or her?

What will a follower of African Traditional Religion find there for him or her?

How will the gospel help a condemned criminal, or a little child, or a drug addict, or a businessman...
or an old person who is very ill?

We need to consider the beliefs and circumstances of the people we are with...

in order to offer the gospel in a way that makes sense to them...

so they understand immediately that it is good news for them and brings them hope.

*** Do we need to know everything about a religion or worldview in order to reach those who follow it? No**

*** What exactly do we need to know about the people we want to help?**

1. their personal felt-needs...

What are their spiritual and emotional needs (fears, doubts, anxieties, guilt, depression, hopelessness etc.)?

What are their physical and social needs (food, health, work, good advice, nursing care etc.)?

2. their religious frustrations...

What problems does their religion or belief-system cause them?

What things does it fail to help them with? What needs does it fail to meet?

3. their natural affinities (points of openness)...

What true things do they already know and believe?

How can this knowledge and belief become a bridge leading them to Christ?

A skilful evangelist will start by saying things that his hearers willingly accept.

He wants them to agree with him and to say "Yes." So he asks questions to which they will answer "Yes."

Once they are accustomed to saying "Yes", they will more easily accept new ideas he wants to offer them.

As soon as a person is inclined to say "No", he will backtrack to a point where they will say "Yes"...

and then lead off again from that point.

Nominal Christians

*** What is a nominal Christian?** A nominal Christian is a Christian *in name*.

Some people think they are Christians because they go to church...

or because they have a name from the Bible, or were baptised as a baby.

But they have never personally put their trust in Christ. They have no assurance of eternal life.

They are not sure God will accept them. Their lifestyle is not inspired by the Holy Spirit.

*** Where can you find nominal Christians?**

There are nominal Christians all around us in many parts of Africa and other parts of the world.

There may be many in your church, perhaps regular attenders, perhaps some who come occasionally...

or visitors who have come just once to see what it is like.

Nominal Christians may already know you and respect you (friends, neighbours, family members etc.).

Others you may meet in the normal course of daily life (in shops and markets, at work or school or college).

Many will be strangers (taxi-drivers, policemen, guards, cleaners etc.)

Others you can meet deliberately by going door to door, or by preaching, or giving leaflets in public places.

Ask the Lord to open your eyes to the spiritual condition of the people around you.

*** How can you tell whether someone is a real Christian or a nominal Christian?**

One way is to ask, "Are you a Christian?" If they say, Yes," then you may enquire...

"How do you know you are a Christian?"

If they reply, "I'm from a Christian family" or "I was baptised as a baby" or "I have a Christian name"...

or "I go to church" or "I try to be a good person,"...

you can be fairly sure they have not understood what a Christian is.

*** What is the one great difference between a nominal Christian and a true Christian?**

A nominal Christian is depending on something apart from Jesus... but a true Christian depends on Jesus alone.

Let's consider this more closely...

A nominal Christian is trusting in something apart from Jesus, or in addition to Jesus.

It may be sacraments, saints, priests, the Church, religious duties, good deeds, or simply hoping for the best.

They may be very sincere, wanting to do what is right, but *live all their lives in doubt...*
never sure if they have done enough to satisfy God or the Church.

Others are not sincere but lazy, dishonest, greedy and selfish...

because the Holy Spirit has never started a deep work of transformation in their character.

A nominal Christian may be emotionally unstable, with times of depression or anger, fear or aggression.

They may be in bondage to demons or occult practices...

trying to combine witchcraft or fortune-telling with Christianity.

Many are Sunday Christians, worshipping on Sundays but far from God the rest of the week.

Many are head-Christians, not heart-Christians. They know about Jesus but do not want to live by his teaching.

A true Christian depends on Jesus alone, putting all their trust in him.

They know for sure that he will save them, guide them and take care of them in this world and the next.

They have *assurance and confidence* because they know Jesus has put them right with God.

They have a *sound faith* (2 Tim 1:13) and bear *good fruit* (Gal 5:22-23).

They are consistent and reliable every day of the week. They are whole-hearted followers of Jesus.

*** Why do you think there are so many nominal Christians?**

Many are born into a family or tribe which has a Christian identity.

Some have found work with a Christian business or a church, and therefore live among Christians.

Some have no interest in religion but say they are Christians so they don't need to think about it any more.

Some may attend worship regularly in a church without understanding the gospel or really following Christ...

Some attend Catholic or Orthodox churches.

You will probably find they are depending on saints, priests, rituals and sacred objects rather than Jesus.

Their religion consists of simple tasks and duties.

They will compare you to their priests (who perform religious rites but don't discuss religious questions).

They may be disappointed if you don't write spells and perform sacraments.

They may be prejudiced against you, so you must win their respect and confidence by your wisdom and love.

They may not like the idea of reading and learning, and praying using their own words.

You have something wonderful to offer such a person –

the assurance of full acceptance with God through simple faith in Jesus.

Some attend charismatic or prophetic churches.

Some pastors misunderstand certain things in the Bible, or add ideas which are not in the Bible at all.

Some churches sing a lot but learn very little. Some offer blessings in exchange for money.

Some proclaim prosperity and health but cannot really make people prosperous or healthy.

People attending such churches will think they are Christians, but many have never heard the true gospel.

If you can explain the true gospel to them, and share your personal testimony, they may be very interested.

You may have opportunity to read the Bible with them. They may even invite you to preach in their church.

You may help their pastors and Sunday-school teachers to understand and teach the gospel more accurately (as Priscilla and Aquila helped Apollos in Acts 18:26).

Some attend sound Bible-teaching churches.

They may have grown up in an evangelical family but never made a personal decision for Christ.

They may be rebelling against their family or their church, or against the Lord.

They have not asked Jesus to save them and fill them with his Spirit of holiness.

They have not asked him to direct their steps in the path he has chosen for them.

Pray with them. Offer sympathetic advice with any doctrinal or relational issues they may have.

Explain how they can start to follow God's plan for their life by putting all their trust in Jesus.

*** What do we need to know about the circumstances and beliefs of nominal Christians?**

1. their personal felt-needs.

Find out what really worries this person. What is he or she afraid of?

How can the gospel help with that particular worry?

They are often unhappy. Some will say:

"God is not blessing my life, or answering my prayers, or making me prosperous, or healing my illness."

"I give to God on Sundays but God gives nothing back to me the other days of week."

"I don't know what will happen when I die. I'm not sure of anything."

"I'm afraid of darkness, or evil, or accidents, or spells and witches. I have many troubles."

"My family are all Christians but we're always arguing and fighting."

Here we see their spiritual and emotional needs (fears, doubts, anxieties, guilt, depression, hopelessness etc.). There may also be physical and social needs (food, health, work, good advice, nursing care etc.).

2. their religious frustrations.

What do they find difficult about their church or their faith?

They may feel it is their duty to do religious things, to attend ceremonies, say prayers, give money etc... simply in order to maintain their position with God and the Church.

They are not making any progress or achieving anything.

They may feel they can never do enough to satisfy God or the Church.

They may be critical, saying,

“There are many hypocrites in church.” “One of the priests was really a bad man.”

“My children are not interested in church, and always in trouble.”

“The pastor is much richer than I am, so why does he still ask me for money?”

The church may try to control many aspects of their life while failing to help with their real felt-needs.

3. their natural affinities (points of openness).

Nominal Christians already believe in God and respect Jesus.

They accept the Bible as a book which teaches the truth.

They have heard there will be a Day of Judgment and that bad people will go to hell.

They know something about prayer. They have a desire for blessing and assurance.

You can talk openly about your faith in Jesus and they will usually listen without argument.

* How can we offer the gospel to nominal Christians?

As each person is different, pray for discernment.

Ask yourself: What is hindering this man or woman from following Christ?

It may be a love of sin, a love of money or a love of power. It may be the world, the flesh or the devil.

It may be traditional church customs or complete ignorance of the gospel.

You will need to explain carefully, and perhaps many times, the difference between going to church on Sundays and committing yourself to Jesus for ever.

As an evangelist, remember there are three things to do:

Share your testimony, proclaim the truth and ask for a response. So at first you will say...

“This has really helped me in my life... God has blessed me in this way...” Then...

“The Bible says... Jesus taught us that...” And finally,

“Do you think this could help you? Would you like to put your trust in Jesus and give your life to him?

Would you like to pray with me now?”¹

* Nominal Christians may raise objections. Can you think of a Bible verse to answer each objection?

- I am too sinful. It's too late for me to become a religious person. 1 Tim 1:15-16
- I would like to become a true Christian but I could never keep it up. Jude 24
- I'm doing the best I can. I'm not a bad person. 2 Cor 10:12; Rom 10:3
- I have to make money any way I can, even if it's dishonest. Mk 8:36
- I was christened as a baby so I'm alright. Jn 3:3
- There are hypocrites in church. Rom 14:12
- There are spirits who will destroy me. Jn 10:28
- I'll think about it when I have time. 2 Pet 3:10-11; 1 Thess 5:3
- God has given me a bad time. I'll not do anything for him till he does something for me. Matt 5:3-5

Remember that some wonderful mass movements have started when nominal Christians were living sinful lives.

Then someone started preaching and praying earnestly, testifying to true salvation and fullness of life.

Then sinful people started to put things right – in their relationships with each other and with God.

When nominal Christians are truly converted and testify to a changed life,

then outsiders from other religions may also be drawn to faith through their testimony.

African Traditional Religionists (ATR)

The word **Animism** is sometimes used to describe African Traditional Religion.

Animism also plays a large part in many syncretistic “folk religions” in other parts of the world, especially those derived from Catholicism, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism.

¹ For an approach to nominal Christians and agnostics, see R B Dann, *The Love of God – Is anyone there?* (Tamarisk, 2013).

Animism is the belief that there is no separation between the spiritual and physical world.

Souls or spirits exist not only in humans but also in animals, plants, rocks,

and in landscape features (mountains or rivers), and natural phenomena (thunder, wind, and shadows).

The noun Animism is derived from the Latin *animus* meaning “soul” or “life”.

Animists assume that there is soul or life in almost everything. This makes it act in a certain way.

The soul or life of anything can be manipulated by people with the power to do so (witches or sorcerers).

A change in the soul or life will cause a similar change in the physical condition of the object it occupies.

This perspective is so obvious to them that they usually have no word in their language to identify it.

The term “animism” is used by outsiders, not by the people themselves.

The Anuaks of Southern Sudan

“The Anuaks are animists, seeing living spirits in everything. It is a spirit that makes the wind blow, the dog run, the tree grow, the river flow. These spirits can sometimes be heard. For example, when two sticks are hit together, the spirits cry out. Some of these spirits are good, but most are evil. No Anuak would start a journey by land or water without first making a sacrifice. He would not build a house or plant a field until the spirit had been propitiated. A sick child is possessed by an evil spirit, and so is an aching tooth. These beliefs have been deeply held for many generations.”¹

*** What are the personal felt needs of ATR people?**

Many people feel they are surrounded by dangers, enemies, problems they cannot resolve.

The most obvious felt-needs are often *physical*, but they feel powerless to meet their physical needs...

because they are *spiritually weak* – oppressed, discouraged and hopeless.

They are not able to work hard or to take wise initiatives.

Some have almost given up trying because life seems out of control.

They long for safety and security, for health, or food or work, or a home to live in.

They may already have these things and still want more, to become rich, successful and prosperous.

Some are longing for freedom from parents or relatives or government officials or religious leaders.

When born again, they get fresh hope and strength to do practical things and overcome many difficulties.

*** What are the frustrations in their religion?**

*** What problems are caused by their religion? What things does it fail to help with?**

It can be hard to please every one of the spirits, witches and sorcerers.

Every effort is defensive, to try and prevent harm. There is nothing good or positive on offer.

In the conflict between black and white magic, it is hard to know who is good, who is bad...

hard to know who is for us or against us... who may be putting a spell or a curse on us, our family or property.

There is often fear –

fear of death, spirits, animals, demonic attacks – fear of failure, disaster, curses – fear of breaking taboos.

There is always doubt – no certainty, no widely accepted book of true teaching, no promises.

You never know if you have done the right thing or done enough.

There is no community of trust or acceptance, no assurance of love or kindness.

Sacrifices can be very expensive. In some places you must kill 22 chickens when a baby is born.

Some people may feel oppressed by religious leaders who have power over them and bully them.

There is no help with the practical problems of life – safety, health, food or income.

*** What are the natural affinities (points of openness) of ATR people?**

*** What true things do they already know and believe, which could lead them to Christ?**

1. ATR people usually believe there is one creator God above all other spiritual powers.

Many would like to know more about the Most High God who is stronger than anything and anyone, and who is also very loving and ready to help.

Ask them, “Did you ever talk to the God of heaven or feel he answered you?”

Many people reply that when they were young it was so.

Then ask them, “Why do you think it stopped?” They may say, “Because I started to do bad things.”

2. They know there is a battle between good and evil.

It is a battle between God and Satan. Tell them Jesus has come to defeat Satan and bind all evil powers.

Read and discuss some incidents from his life (such as Lk 10:18; 13:16).

Emphasize that he loves us, and he sends his Spirit to give us strength.

He gives us victory over temptation, bad behaviour, bad spirits and bad people.

¹ letter from Don McClure in Charles Partee, *Adventure in Africa: The Story of Don McClure* (Zondervan, 1990), pp.146-7

3. They may believe in reincarnation of a person's spirit.

Tell them about the reincarnation (resurrection) there will be for all who believe in Jesus.

Jesus rose from the grave and he has promised he will raise us too when he comes again (Jn 5:24-25).

Then our spirits will rise and receive new bodies.

We will live in a new earth where there is peace and prosperity for all.

4. They may feel they are dependent on their family and responsible to support all its members.

Tell them how we can also belong to the family of God who loves us as a perfect Father.

Jesus is not ashamed to call us brothers (Heb 2:11). He has made us members of his family in all the world.

5. They may think a lot about their ancestors.

Tell them how Jesus was our spiritual ancestor long before our other ancestors were born.

He is not from earth, a place of weakness, but from heaven, a place of power (1 Pet 3:22).

He knows us far better than our earthly ancestors do, for he is watching from above and listening to us.

He is more powerful than they are and can help us far better with the problems of daily life.

He makes everything work together for good. He gives us wisdom to speak and behave well.

*** How can we help an ATR family or village make a communal decision to follow Christ?**

The conversion of a community has sometimes followed a *crisis moment* or "power encounter".

It means deliberately defying the traditional culture. This happens when believers *publicly* ignore a taboo... or take "Christian medicine", or declare the truth, or rebuke a demon in the name of Jesus Christ.

When no harm comes to those who do this, fear of the traditional spiritual powers and obligations is broken.

Elsewhere it may take a long time of consecutive teaching with pictures, drama and songs.

Men and women who believe in Jesus should be encouraged to make songs; these can be used in outreach.

Ask them, "What is very good about being a Christian?" And then, "Can you make a song about that?"¹

Recommended Reading: Lois Fuller, *A Missionary Handbook on African Traditional Religion*

Muslims

*** Have you had any discussions with Muslims? How did those discussions go?**

*** Have you found a good way to share your faith with Muslims?**

*** Do you know any Muslims who have come to faith in Christ? How did it happen?**

Many people living under Muslim authority will say that Islam is a religious and political system controlling people through fear.

Some Muslims enjoy having power to control others through laws, threats and violence, but most Muslims do not like being controlled, threatened and frightened.

This means there is a basic weakness in the system.

Many will try to escape from it as soon as they have the opportunity.

Young people in particular may associate being free with Christianity.

Whenever Islamic control weakens or collapses for some reason, there is potential for mass movement to Christ.

As we go out to share the good news with Muslims, three things in particular should encourage us:

1. God is with us. "God making his appeal through us" (2 Cor 5:20)

"If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Rom 8:31).

2. Human beings can easily change. Wherever Muslims are found, there are many types of Muslims.

Although some are fanatics committed to a programme of world dominion, others are more concerned to raise a family, pursue a career, or just earn enough money to be comfortable.

Many are disillusioned with Islam, irritated by its bullies, embarrassed by its fanatics, opposed to its terrorists.

In practice there are many who put more faith in scientists and doctors than in mullahs and imams.

Muslims are human beings, and we know that humans change from year to year, from month to month.

A lukewarm person can become a fanatic, and a fanatic can become lukewarm.

Just as there are Christians who doubt, so there are Muslims who doubt and become open to new ideas.

¹ For an interesting account of successful pioneer mission in an ATR context, see Ronaldo Lidorio, *Unafraid of the Sacred Forest* (WEC/Christian Focus, 2007).

3. The statistics are very positive. In the world there have always been more Christians than Muslims... and there still are... 2.2 billion *Christians* (32% of the world population) and 1.6 billion *Muslims* (23%).¹ Evangelicals worldwide are increasing at an annual rate of **2.6%**... much quicker than Islam (1.9%).² Muslims increase in number mainly through a high birth-rate; Christians increase mainly through conversions. Muslim populations grow in areas with many Muslims, but Islam does not spread much into new areas. In Africa, Christianity is growing and spreading much faster than Islam. If you hear of 10 so-called Christians converting to Islam in Africa... you will know that during the same period 17 Muslims have converted to Christianity.³

How to share your faith effectively

* How can we make spiritual contact with Muslims?

Every place is different, so you will need to assess the best methods to use where you are.

There will be a difference, for example, between the cities and the countryside.

In cities and towns the police may keep a close eye on all activities.

You may be arrested if they think you are causing trouble or offering incentives, even if you are not.

In country areas or mountains, there may be no police at all.

Here, if you are wise and gentle, you will not cause offence and may even receive a warm welcome.

You can talk freely about Christ and even give out gospel tracts or CDs.

Friendship evangelism

In places where direct evangelism is impossible...

you may try to build friendships and then look for opportunities to share your testimony.

This may be effective, but friendships can take much time with little opportunity to speak of Christ.

Having made a friend, you may hesitate to speak of Christ for fear of spoiling the friendship...

yet if you hide your faith, you may give the idea that it has no importance or you are ashamed of it.

In some places you may say from the start that you are a Bible teacher or a "pastor" or a "Christian imam".

People will then expect you to speak about Christ, and you can do so more openly.

* How can I share the gospel with a Muslim?

Remember that Muslims are trained to attack Christianity. They have a simple system.

They will insist that God has no son, that Jesus did not die, and that the Bible is corrupt.

Their training teaches them to say this and does not allow them to listen to your response.

Do not discuss these things with them. Do not fall into this trap.

So long as you are discussing their objections, you are defensive, trying to justify your own beliefs.

You are playing *their* game which is designed to make you anxious, frustrated or argumentative.

Be very clear in your mind that *you must set the agenda*. You must decide what you will talk about.

Your job is to *proclaim* the gospel and to *testify* concerning how it has changed and helped you.

Talk positively and joyfully about Masih (Christ) – how he is unique and wonderful...

and how he is coming back to earth to save all who have put their trust in him.

Tell them about the hope you have and the reason for it (1 Pet 3:15).

If they interrupt to raise one of their three objections, you can simply reply,

"We'll talk about that later, but first let me tell you why I have put all my faith in Masih."

Muslims believe Masih is one of the prophets but do not see *why we put all our trust in him* and not the others.

You do not need to know a lot about the Qur'an or about Islamic beliefs or practices.

You simply need to know *why you have put all your trust in Christ*. It is because...

1. He is unique and wonderful...

in his birth, names, character, miracles, teaching, sufferings, resurrection, ascension, return, invitation.⁴

2. He can do for us what no one else can do...

a new covenant, assurance on the Day of Judgment, peace with Allah, forgiveness of sin, eternal life etc...

restored relationships, resolved problems, victory over evil, sincere friendships, happy marriages etc...⁵

¹ *Operation World* (7th edn. 2010), p.2

² *Operation World* (7th edn. 2010), pp.2-3; http://joshuaproject.net/global_statistics (accessed 19 June 2014)

³ <http://www.islamreview.com/articles/mythaboutislam.shtml> (data from David A. Barrett, *World Christian Encyclopedia*, 2001, p 4) (accessed 19 June 2014)

⁴ The document *What do you think of the One who will come?* is written as a direct message to a Muslim friend explaining these things. It is also available in Arabic from the publisher.

⁵ See the Parable of the Three Dossiers in the document *How to Speak in Parables*.

What are their natural affinities (points of openness)?

Most Muslims already believe some things that can awaken interest in Masih:

- He is the word of God (*kalimat ullah*) and a spirit from him (*ruh minhu*).
- He had no human father but was conceived by the Spirit of Allah (*ruh allah*).
- He did greater miracles of healing than any other prophet... he even raised the dead.
- When rejected and threatened by men, he did not fight or flee but trusted in Allah to save him.
- He had victory over death and is now alive and close to Allah.
- He will return on the last day to remove all evil from the world.

We can *affirm these truths* and emphasize their significance.

Most Muslims disapprove (in theory) of adultery, gambling, drinking alcohol, smoking, disrespect of elders etc.

We can *affirm all this* and show that we live according to these principles.

But many of their beliefs are *not true* and so cannot be bridges to the gospel.

Some Muslims, attempting to be friendly, will say that Islam and Christianity are really the same.

Some will describe the childhood miracles of Jesus. Some may say that Jesus's mother was Moses' sister.

Many will use the name *Eisa*, a corruption of his God-given name *Yeshue*.¹

These are errors, to be overlooked at first and later corrected.

Our Saviour's name

During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Western missionaries in certain places adopted the Quranic name and title Sidna 'Isa (*Sidna Eisa*). It was used in Bible translation, and in prayers, hymns etc.

Some would consider this a serious mistake, obscuring the truth that Jesus is unique. A Muslim will see no reason to put all his trust in one of the many Sidnas... and especially not in 'Isa, whose only significant achievement was to foretell the coming of Mohammed.

The missionaries were perhaps unaware that Arab Christians, before and after the rise of Islam, have always called him *Yeshue*, after the Hebrew for "salvation" as explained by the angel Gabriel (Matt 1:21). Many believers consider the name 'Isa to be a false name invented by a false prophet. In hymns and prayers, and in conversations with Muslims, they prefer to speak of "The Saviour" or "The Saviour Masih", emphasizing his uniqueness and his ability to save.

What are their felt needs and religious frustrations?

As Muslims are trained to argue about theology, such argument is usually fruitless.

A discussion about problems (felt-needs) is likely to be far more productive.

If you can find a book of traditional proverbs in the local language, this may stimulate such discussion.

The felt-needs of the poor are familiar to us... longing for safety, security, health, work, a home to live in.

They have seen how Islam teaches religious duties but offers little help or comfort.

It fails to meet the deepest needs of men or women.

Islam is a very physical religion. Some would say there is nothing spiritual about it at all.

It does not help with emotional or personal problems.

It does not usually teach people to be kind or helpful or sympathetic.

Islamic charity is often tied to political activism and even terrorism, demanding more than it gives.

When a Muslim is kind or helpful or sympathetic, he calls this humanity (*al-insaniya*), not Islam.

We can lovingly tell him we have learned about "humanity" from the Son of Humanity (*ibn ul-insan*)... from Masih himself, the kindest man who ever lived.

The main reason that Muslims are held back from faith in Christ is not theology but fear.

They are afraid of being bullied by religious fanatics or government officials...

afraid of what their families will say... afraid of being alone and despised.

But they are often very unhappy with Islam, and with life.

Theological felt-needs of many Muslims	How Masih meets those needs	
Allah seems distant, harsh, uncaring, judgmental. No one can be sure what he will do.	Masih has taught us we are loved by Allah. We can trust him to care for us as a perfect Father.	1 Jn 4:16
There is little trust or true friendship in a Muslim community.	Masih has made us a loving community of friends, with real trust and commitment to one another.	Jn 13:34-35

¹ The character *ε* is a Semitic consonant (*εayn*), sounding like a grunt or groan. It should come at the end of the word, not the beginning. In English the word *Eisa* is pronounced *EE-ssa*.

The world is in a mess, and Islam is not solving the problem. Indeed some Muslims are making it worse.	Everywhere Masih went he solved problems, and he still does. He never caused problems. We see this in the Injil.	Matt 11:28-30
Fear of harm, of wicked people, of evil spirits.	Masih has power over all evil. As we pray in his name the devil must flee. We see this in the Injil.	Matt 8:16
We do not know if we will go to heaven or hell on Judgment Day.	We will not face judgment on that Day for we have passed from death to life.	Jn 5:24
We can never be sure we've done enough to please Allah.	We are totally accepted as companions of Masih because he has perfectly pleased Allah and made an everlasting covenant for his followers.	Rom 3:21-26
Allah and the people who know us will always condemn us for the things we have done wrong.	Masih has suffered the consequence of all our sins on the cross. We are set free from guilt and shame in the sight of Allah and of his people.	Rom 8:1-2
Islam lacks "humanity" (<i>al-insaniya</i>).	We have learned about "humanity" from "the son of humanity" (<i>ibn ul-insan</i>), Masih himself.	Mark 10:45

Personal felt-needs of some Muslims	How Masih meets those needs	
bitterness towards parents	In our fellowship we have spiritual parents we can respect and love. We are learning to forgive.	1 Cor 4:15
guilt over sexual encounters	Masih has atoned for our sin. He can wash us clean with the Holy Spirit and give us power to be pure.	1 Cor 6:9-11
tensions about working and earning	We are learning how to do everything in the power of the Spirit and so work well. We can trust him to provide for us.	Eph 6:5-8
loneliness and lack of true friends	As followers of Masih we are learning to be faithful and loving friends to one another.	Jn 13:34-35
marriage problems	Masih helps husbands and wives to respect and care for one another.	Eph 5:33

Whatever problems or needs a person may have, Masih can solve those problems and meet those needs.

You must show how Masih can save us in this world and the next. He will rescue anyone who trusts in him. Remember that Muslims are attracted not by the superficial similarities between Islam and Christianity... but by the profound differences.

When a Muslim understands the differences, the Holy Spirit can bring him or her to the point of decision.

Focus on three simple points:

Masih is unique and wonderful. He can do for us what no one else can do. That is why we put our trust in him.

*** Do you think it is wise to ignore a Muslim's objections and just speak about the uniqueness of Jesus?**

*** Why do you think a discussion of "problems" may be more productive than a discussion of theology?**

Using the scriptures

A Muslim friend may be very interested to hear you read the *Injil* (New Testament).

You could say, "Masih did many wonderful miracles. Would you like to hear about one of them?"

They will usually agree quite willingly. The best passages to start with are:

- **Widow of Nain** (Lk 7:11-23) showing how the dead will hear the voice of Masih (Jn 5:24-29)
- **Bartimaeus** (Mk 10:46-52) showing how Masih gives new life
- **Paralysed man** (Lk 5:17-32) showing how Masih takes away both the guilt and the consequence of sin
- **Good Shepherd** (Jn 10:7-18) showing how the Shepherd lays down his life for sheep who trust in him

When you have read a passage like this they will often respond by saying, "That is very good."

This means they have understood something new and responded positively.

It is a small positive step towards faith in Masih. Pray for this to be followed by further positive steps.

Be aware of the difficulties they will face in admitting they are changing their beliefs and loyalties.

Do not expect too much too soon. They will have several barriers to overcome...

Barriers to the gospel

1. Ignorance.

Most Muslims have never met a genuine follower of Masih or heard what we really believe.

Christianity is so alien to them that they do not even want to think about it.

2. Racial prejudice.

This dates back to the earliest days of Islam. The Qur'an and traditions often speak about conflicts between the followers of Mohammed and the Jews and Christians of his time.

From the very beginning, the Muslim worldview has meant competing for land, power and wealth.

3. Theological objections.

Muslims worldwide are trained from childhood to raise three basic objections, proving Christianity is wrong.

These simple statements have been repeated so often they are accepted as absolutely true...

and therefore not open for discussion. For this reason it is usually not useful to discuss them.

But when a person does become willing to reconsider them, we must give a sound answer to each objection.

Here they are:

a) The Jews and Christians have corrupted the Bible, so we cannot accept anything it says.

This is my reply:

Here is a bank note. It says 10 but I will add a 0 and change it to 100. Will you accept this note for 100? No?

Why not? Once something is written on paper no one can ever succeed in changing it, because people will notice the change and reject it. What is true of a banknote is true of a book.

That may be sufficient, but if you need to say more you could add the following:

The writings of every prophet are precious to his followers. Which person who honours a prophet would allow the words of their prophet to be changed? Not one of them. A person who believes the words of the Injil would never want to change the Injil himself. And he would never accept an Injil changed by someone else.

The idea that the Injil has been changed is not logical.

When the Injil was written, many copies of it were taken to many places. Do you think someone could find all the copies in the whole world and change them all? Certainly not! **To change the Injil is not possible.**

The Qur'an says: "*la tabdîl li kalimât illah. dâlika huwa l-fawz ul-eadîm*" (No change can there be in the words of Allah. This is indeed the supreme felicity).¹ And again, "*la mubaddil li kalimât illah*" (There is none that can alter the words of Allah).² **To change the Injil is not allowed by Allah.**

Now listen carefully. Corruption is found not in the writings (*kitâbat*) of the Christians but in the practices (*mumârasat*) of the Christians. Masih was a poor man with nowhere to lay his head, but the Pope now lives in a palace. Masih taught, "Love your enemies... Put away your sword" but the Catholic Crusaders carried swords to fight battles. It is true that Christians may change their behaviour, but they cannot change their books. This book in my hands is the true Injil. Now let me read to you about a wonderful thing that Masih did...

b) God has never been born, nor fathered a child, so Jesus cannot be the son of God; he is just a prophet.

This is my reply:

If you don't like the expression "Son of God" I will not say it. Instead I will speak about the "Word of God".

The Qur'an says that Masih is "*kalimatuho alqâha ila maryam wa rûhun minhu*" (his word that he sent to Mariam and a spirit from him).³

Now tell me... When I speak a word, where does that word come from? From my tongue, yes, but even before that it is in my heart or mind. If Masih is the word of God and a Spirit from him, where did Masih come from? He came from the essence (*dat*) of Allah, that is from the heart and mind of Allah.

A word comes from inside a person, revealing the thought and character of the person who speaks. So, if Masih is the word of God and a Spirit from him, he will show us the thought and character of Allah. Masih was filled with compassion for people in need, just as Allah is filled with compassion for us. Now let me read to you about a wonderful compassionate thing that Masih did for a poor man (or woman)...

c) Jesus did not die, so he never atoned for the sins of others.

This is my reply:

What does the Qur'an say about this? "*Waqawlihim inna qatalna l-masîha eisa bna maryama rasoola Allahi wamâ qatalahu wa ma şalabuhu walakin şubbiha lahum*" (They said, 'We killed Masih Jesus the

¹ Şûrat Yûnus, Qur'an 10:64

² Şûrat Al-an'am, Qur'an 6:34

³ Şûrat Ahl-Emrân, Qur'an 3:45; 4:171

son of Mary, the Apostle of God,' but they did not kill him, or crucify him, but so it was made to appear to them).¹

Tell me... Who spoke these words? Who was it who made this boastful claim? Sura 153 shows us it was the Jews. And they were lying. Their land had been colonised by the Romans and they had no power to condemn anyone to death. It was the Romans who condemned Masih to die.

The enemies of Allah hung Masih on a cross. They thought he was dead; they thought they would never see him again. They were wrong. After three days they saw him again, alive. According to the Qur'an, Masih said, "*As-salâmu ʔlaya yawma wulidtu, wa yawma amûtu, wa yawma abʔatu hayy*" (Peace is on me the day I was born, the day I die, and the day I arise alive).² Masih himself was certain about his birth, his death and his resurrection. If he was sure about it, we can be sure about it. Now let me read from the Injil what he said about a good shepherd who truly cared for his sheep...

*** How do you think the barriers to the gospel can be overcome in a Muslim context?**

We overcome ignorance by teaching the word of God.

We overcome racial prejudice by personal kindness.

We overcome theological objections with sound answers.

Discipling Muslim-Background Believers (MBBs)

When a Muslim puts his or her trust in Christ, the existing churches may not be able to help them much.

*** What help is especially important for Muslim-Background Believers?**

A person who leaves Islam may be rejected by their family and community. They may lose their home and job.

It is our privilege to offer warm friendship... and perhaps a home and a way to earn their living.

They will need much prayer and much careful teaching.

*** What teaching is especially important for Muslim-Background Believers?**

1. Spiritual Growth.

Muslims focus on repeated religious duties but do not usually think in terms of progress or growth. This is a new idea to them so we must teach it carefully.

For example, you might say, "When someone is born again, he starts as a baby. Drinking the pure milk of the word, he begins to grow. You do not want to remain a spiritual dwarf but to become a fully grown man or woman of God. As the Holy Spirit begins to work in your heart and mind, you gain wisdom, receive power to overcome sin and develop your God-given abilities to help and serve others. Gradually in this way you become mature; you fulfil your potential; you become like Christ."

2. Spiritual Responsibility.

Muslims will usually obey the requirements of religion because other people insist on it, rebuking any neglect. As a new Christian, he or she may assume there are no rebukes and no requirements in Christianity. In consequence he may feel no need to read the Bible, meet with others, share his faith or do anything at all.

You must teach and motivate him to take spiritual responsibility... to seek guidance and take initiatives. He must learn to be directed not by a negative sense of shame (doing what other people require of him) but by a positive sense of honour (becoming the kind of person he wants to be). He must look for needs that he can meet... teaching, helping and praying for others... not by law but by love.

3. Spiritual Testimony.

Muslims will usually talk freely about their religion, but as soon as they accept Christ, many will suddenly become silent (partly through fear of persecution). The result is that others do not hear their testimony, do not believe, and do not support them in their faith.

Once a convert is sure of what he believes, encourage him to tell his most trusted friends and family about it. Go to meet these people yourself, win their respect and confidence, and draw them into the circle of Christian friends. An ongoing testimony to outsiders is the key to a growing network of believers.

Conclusion: Helping a Muslim come to faith in Christ is not as difficult as many people think.

You do not need to know a lot about Islam or about the Qur'an.

There is **just one thing** you need to know... one thing you need to say.

You say, "I have put all my trust in Masih." Then you explain why... "He is unique and wonderful.

He can do for me what no one else can do. That's why I've put all my trust in him."

¹ *Şûrat En-nisâ*, Qur'an 4:157

² *Şûrat Maryam*, Qur'an 19:33

Contextualization

Many Muslims would not wish to be seen in a church.

They might feel very uncomfortable with what happens in a worship service.

The church members may also find it difficult to accept and trust a convert from a Muslim background.

For these reasons, MBBs may prefer to form a new fellowship of their own.

But what form should this fellowship take?

We looked briefly at Contextualization when considering culture (Session 4).

* What do you understand by contextualization? What does it mean?

Contextualization: "An attempt to adapt Christian beliefs and practices to the local culture, so that people can follow Christ faithfully within their own cultural context."

Contextualization has been developed as a strategy in certain Muslim areas (Indonesia, Bangladesh etc.).

Its aim is to adapt our message and behaviour to the cultural expectations of the people we are with...

in order to win them to Christ. We take the outward *form* of Islam and fill it with Christian *content*.

This is rather like pouring a jelly or pudding into a mould so it takes the shape of the mould.

When we contextualize we will look like Muslims and talk like Muslims but are *really* Christians.

This may have two advantages:

1. It is easier for Muslims to join us.

2. There is less persecution when they do join us.

You will notice that this follows the Homogeneous Unit principle.

Discussing how far they can take this idea,

missionaries have developed what they call a **Contextualization Spectrum**,

representing various possible ways for believers to meet together and form churches.¹

The first level of contextualization (C1) makes little or no concession to Muslim culture.

The final level (C6) submits almost entirely to Muslim culture.

In between are a series of intermediate options. The most controversial level is C5...

because the supporters of contextualization encourage us to adopt this as a serious strategy.

The same approach has been adapted for use elsewhere in Hindu and Buddhist contexts.²

Contextualization spectrum

C1	Foreign-style church using foreign language.	Like traditional churches in Europe, America, India or Africa, with a building, pastor, seats in rows, Sunday services, singing hymns, Western clothes etc.
C2	Foreign-style church using local language.	Like traditional churches in Europe, America, India or Africa, but using a local language.
C3	Contextualized fellowship using local language and local culture	Meeting in homes or other non-religious settings, the believers are mostly of Muslim background while calling themselves Christians. They avoid anything that seems Islamic.
C4	Contextualized fellowship using local language and some Islamic forms of religion	Meeting in homes or other non-religious settings, the believers are almost all of Muslim background although outsiders recognise they are not really Muslims. Believers accept some aspects of Islam but avoid others (They usually use Muslim words, clothing, fasting and food restrictions, but do not go to the mosque.)
C5	Muslims using Islamic forms of religion but openly claiming to believe in Masih	Believers remain legally and socially within the Islamic community, conforming to Islamic requirements. They either A. continue in the mosque, testifying that Mohammed is the apostle of Allah, or B. establish a separate "Jesus mosque", recognised as true Muslims who follow Masih rather than Mohammed.

¹ See John Travis, "Must all Muslims leave Islam to Follow Jesus?" *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, Oct. 1998, 34 (4), pp 411-415.

² See for example, Peter Thein Nyunt, *Missions amidst Pagodas* (Langham Partnership, 2014), pp.108-120.

C6 is really outside the Contextualization Spectrum.

C6	Secret believers in Masih.	Individuals or small groups isolated by extreme hostility. In fear of imprisonment or death, their priority is simply to avoid being noticed. They rarely attempt to share their faith but grow mainly through the conversion of family members.
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The C5 model is strongly advocated by some mission strategists today.

They attempt to start "Insider Movements"...

encouraging Muslims who believe in Masih to remain inside their own religious culture...

and so to stimulate a communal understanding of the gospel and belief in Masih.

These strategists may go as far as to say:

- Chanting the Qur'an in the mosque is genuine worship of the true God.
- A Christian may recite the *Shahada* and testify that Muhammad is a genuine prophet of God.
- A Christian may legally declare conversion to Islam, becoming a genuine Muslim to win Muslims.

A biblical approach

The idea of contextualization is based on Paul's approach described in **1 Cor 9:19-23**. Read this passage carefully and consider:

* **What is Paul's strategy here for dealing with other cultures?**

* **Why did he adopt this strategy?**

* **Then read 2 Cor 6:14-18. Does Paul advocate the same strategy here?**

* **And in 1 Cor 8:9-11? Why did he adopt this strategy?**

* **And in 1 Cor 10:20-24? Why did he adopt this strategy?**

Paul himself did not become a pagan or a worshipper of idols.

He did not want people to see him mixing with idol-worshippers.

He would not do anything that might encourage seekers or believers to worship idols.

With this in mind, some missiologists **reject the idea of contextualization**.

They observe that all cultures are human and corrupt, so we should not change our teaching or our practice in submission to any culture, tradition, superstition or religion made by man.

Our authority and guide is the word of God, not culture.

Indeed, we must save people from their traditional ways in order for them to enter the Kingdom of heaven...

"knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers" (1 Pet 1:18).

But we have seen that **we cannot completely reject any culture**.

We still speak the same language, eat the same food, do the same kind of work, live in the same kind of house.

One of missiology's most difficult challenges is to distinguish between:

1. Things *essential* to the gospel that *cannot* be changed to suit local culture.
2. Things *not essential* to the gospel that *can* be adapted to suit local culture.

Some theological questions

1. Can we, in good conscience, say everything a Muslim must say?

Muslims constantly insist that Jesus is not the Son of God, that he did not die, and that the Bible is untrue.

They will expect all Muslims to affirm these statements. When Muslims repeat these things, can we agree?

If we do not agree, we risk rejection. But if we do agree, are we denying Christ (Matt 10:33)?

Muslims recite the *Shahada*, stating, "There is no deity except Allah, and Mohammed is the prophet of Allah."

When they chant this, shall we chant it too?

If we do not, we may cause offence. But if we do, are we proclaiming a false prophet (2 Pet 2:1)?

In Muslim company, we will often hear unkind and unjust allegations against Christians and Jews.

If we object to this, we risk alienation. But if we accept it, are we judging falsely and denying the truth?

2. Did the earliest apostles contextualize?

Did they try to Christianise the Jewish Temple by doing what the Jews did and secretly believing in Jesus?

No, they preached boldly in the Temple. In consequence they were arrested and condemned (Acts 4:1-3).

Jesus said, "They will put you out of the synagogues" (Jn 16:2). This was Paul's experience (Acts 14:19).

Did the apostles quietly participate in the rituals at pagan temples in order to introduce Christian ideas?

No, they refused absolutely to participate in the worship of demons (1 Cor 10:20-21).

3. Does culture have supreme authority to direct us?

If our main aim is to be *accepted by the people*, we must conform to their culture and do exactly as they do.

If our main aim is to *serve the Lord*, we will “make it our aim to please him” (2 Cor 5:9).

Loving a culture more than truth, we must ignore and eventually deny “the faith once and for all time delivered to the saints” (Jude 3). If culture gains ultimate authority over us, Christ is no longer Lord.

Jewish culture and official authority required Peter and John to stop talking about Jesus.

Their reply was: “We cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:20).

Reciting the *Shahada* and praising Mohammed, we may forget how to discern between truth and falsehood.

Chanting Islamic texts, we may open ourselves to demonic influences which gain real power over us.

4. If we are Christians in a mosque, where is our church?

Jesus said, “I will build my *church*” (Matt 16:18). Paul planted *churches* (Acts 15:41).

But what is a church? The Greek word *ekklesia* is derived from *kaleō* “to call” and *ek* “out of”.

By this definition a church is “a company of people called out of a larger group”. They form a new group. Is it possible to be an *ekklesia* if we remain in the mosque?

Some practical questions

1. Can we, in good conscience, do everything a Muslim must do?

Conforming to the moral and ethical standards of Muslim culture,

our behaviour will no longer be guided by the word of God or the Holy Spirit.

We must behave as they do in business and in the home.

We should treat our colleagues, our rivals, and also our wives and children, as they do theirs.

We must honour those they honour, such as pilgrims returning from Mecca.

We must support students in their Qur’anic training, and bring up our own children as Muslims.

When required, as a patriotic and religious duty, to inform against Christians,

we must either resist authority or betray our brothers in Christ.

2. How will Muslims view a C5 believer?

If I act as a Muslim and yet admit to being a follower of Masih, I am likely to be accused of hypocrisy.

In the Qur’an, a hypocrite is as bad as an unbeliever, or worse.

If I participate with them in Muslim prayer rituals, and fast with them in Ramadan,

I will confirm in their mind that they are right and that all Christians are wrong.

If I act as a Muslim but claim to be a Christian, they will think I like Islam better than Christianity...

but can’t quite give up the last bit of my old Christianity.

They may ask me to prove I am a Muslim by stating that Masih did not die, or by criticising Christians.

In all religions (apart from Christianity), what you *do* is far more important than what you *believe*.

You may say you believe in Masih, but if you *act* as a Muslim, you *are* a Muslim

(though perhaps not a very good Muslim).

3. How can we lead others to faith in Jesus?

One of the biggest problems, in time of persecution, is maintaining an open and welcoming attitude to outsiders.

As a survival strategy, C5 contextualisation may have value, but it will not easily attract newcomers.

A family or group of C5 believers can slip into a comfortable maintenance mode.

They go completely “underground”. They become invisible, and potential converts simply cannot find them.

A group failing to add new members, and losing members who move away, is bound to decline and die.

4. What happens when serious persecution comes?

The real test for contextualization is when serious persecution comes... with threat to home, income or life.

What will a C1 or C2 believer do when arrested and interrogated?

Probably hold firm to his faith, claim protection of a foreign embassy, move to America or Europe, and try to obtain foreign nationality.

What will a C3 or C4 believer do?

Probably hold firm to his faith, at least for a while, and become a secret believer.

He may meet occasionally with others in a home or forest and hope circumstances will change for the better.

What will a C5 believer do?

Probably decide that Islam and Christianity are so similar that it is safest to return to Islam.

He will say it is not necessary to be known as a Christian in order to please Allah.

We can summarize the controversy with a paradigm:

Insider movement (contextualization)	Gathered church
We should become all things to all people.	We should not be partners with idols.
The local culture is an expression of mankind's God-given creativity.	The local culture is a corrupt man-made invention.
We must communicate our message in a way that makes sense.	Our message is eternal and cannot be changed.
We must adapt the gospel to the local culture.	We must introduce a new gospel culture.
An <i>ekklesia</i> can be a loose network of believers.	An <i>ekklesia</i> is a group gathered together for a purpose.

* **Would you approve C5 contextualization as a valid strategy for mission?**

* **Do you think an "insider movement" could be a valid form of "church"?**

* **How would you respond to these theological questions?**

1. Can we, in good conscience, say everything a Muslim must say?
2. Did the earliest apostles contextualize?
3. Does culture have supreme authority to direct us?
4. If we are Christians in a mosque, where is our church?

* **Would you accept any of the following statements?**

- Chanting the Qur'an in the mosque is genuine worship of the true God.
- Christians can recite the *Shahada* and testify that Muhammad is a genuine prophet of God.
- A Christian may legally declare conversion to Islam, becoming a genuine Muslim to win Muslims.

* **What do you think of these practical issues?**

1. Can we, in good conscience, do everything a Muslim must do?
2. How will Muslims view a C5 believer?
3. What happens when serious persecution comes?

A temporary measure

In some countries such as Ethiopia, believers who start with a C5 level of contextualization tend to shift after five or six years towards C4. They stop attending the mosque and start to meet informally in their homes. So C5 may be seen as a temporary phase in the process of full conversion.

This does not mean that these believers will then move on to C3 or C2. The most comfortable long-term model for them may be C4. This will give them some access and acceptance in the wider Muslim community.

Conclusion: In considering contextualization, there are some basic principles to bear in mind:

1. We must be *sensitive* to the culture of those we are called to reach: "I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some" (1 Cor 9:22).
2. Our supreme authority is God's word, not culture. "We must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).
3. Muslims are attracted to Masih, not by the superficial similarities between Islam and Christianity, but by the profound differences. There is no one like our Saviour. That is why we put all our trust in him.
4. Whatever our circumstances, we must find ways to share our faith and draw others to Christ. Media ministries can help with this if enquiries are passed on to local believers for follow-up.

A medieval C5 movement

For four hundred years (12th to 16th centuries), the Waldensians existed as a persecuted C5 evangelical network in many parts of Europe under the political authority of medieval Roman Catholicism.

At the Reformation, some Calvinist Reformers attempted to organise them into C2 parishes with ministers. This unfortunately drew attention to the Waldensians, resulting in savage persecution and an end to their existence in France and Italy.¹

Recommended Reading: *What do you think of the One who will come? How to Speak in Parables*, and Charles Marsh: *Share your Faith with a Muslim and Too Hard for God?*

Required Reading: chapters 12 and 13 of *Mission Strategies Then and Now*.

¹ Malcolm Lambert, *Medieval Heresy*, 3rd edn., Blackwell, 2002, pp.384-390

11. Launching a Pioneer Mission

Note: Much of this content is included in the document *Preparing for Mission* on the Biblical Missiology CD. If your students are in training for mission, you could use this session to discuss their response to that document.

Strategic Planning

We have thought about unreached areas and responsive people.

We have seen that Christ will not return until the gospel has reached every tribe and tongue.

We have spoken about people-groups, and about identifying unreached people who are becoming responsive.

With this in mind, imagine you are wanting to launch a pioneer mission. How will you decide where to go?

* **How can we tell which places are not yet reached?**

1. Research on the ground (e.g. CAPRO reports in Nigeria).
2. Research in magazines and books (e.g. Operation World)
3. Research on the internet (e.g. Joshua Project at www.joshuaproject.net).
4. Talk with immigrants in our cities. Ask them where they come from. Ask if there are any Christians there.

In this way we discover there are...

3 **unreached people-groups** in Zambia, 20 in Ethiopia, 26 in the UK, 70 in Nigeria and 2,500 in India. 240 million Bengali, 40 million Fulani, 30 million Kurdish people... *all ignorant of Christ*.

We can find out exactly where they are, and identify their basic beliefs and probable felt-needs.

Among these unreached people, some groups may already be *particularly responsive* or ready to respond.

* **How can we identify potentially responsive people among the unreached?**

Look especially for people with a *desire for change*.

They may be *dissatisfied* with traditional beliefs, suffering racial or political oppression, *ambitious* (desiring to better themselves through contact with the latest ideas and the wider world), *curious* to know about Christianity (having had no previous contact with Christians), influenced by *dreams*, prophecies or visions.

See if there are any *displaced* or uprooted populations (refugees, prisoners, immigrants, students).

These may have more freedom from social and religious control, and may want to improve their circumstances.

* **Do you have any questions or comments?**

We will now consider three contrasting contexts where missionaries are needed – conflict situations, urban areas and rural areas.

Conflict Situations

In many places there are serious and sometimes violent tensions between racial or religious factions.

This makes cross-cultural mission especially difficult, because conversion can seem like betrayal.

In this situation, the first priority may simply be for peace.

Once there is peace among people, we can begin to help people find peace with God through faith in Christ (1 Tim 2:1-7).

There are two levels at which we work for peace:

1. Multi-ethnic secular associations.

The aim is to create a publicly recognised body encouraging multi-ethnic co-operation for the benefit of all.

A committee may be appointed with representatives from all factions.

These individuals will have a strong desire to promote peaceful and respectful collaboration.

Together they will initiate projects for clean water, health care, roads, law and order etc.

This will involve as many people of goodwill as possible, whatever their race or religious beliefs may be.

It will gradually build relationships of trust that are clearly productive and beneficial for everyone.

2. Multi-ethnic believers' fellowships.

These are usually less publicised, because conversion to Christianity may arouse resentment and anger.

A multi-ethnic Christian fellowship sets an example for the nation, because it welcomes people of many races.

It may also be involved in caring ministries that win widespread respect and admiration.

Its members, and especially its recognised leaders, must be genuinely born again believers.

Its emphasis on gospel culture unifies the believers, enabling strong multi-ethnic relationships to develop.

* **Do you have experience of conflict between ethnic groups or religious groups?**

* **If so, what efforts have been made to resolve the conflict? How successful were those efforts?**

Additional Reading: Pastor Ephraim Kadala, *Turn the Other Cheek* (ACTS, Bukuru, Nigeria, 2009)

Urban and Rural Mission

Salvation in the city

Sociologists have observed that Christianity has been ideally suited, from the earliest days, to help with the problems faced by people in cities: "Christianity revitalized life in Greco-Roman cities by providing new norms and new kinds of social relationships able to cope with the many urgent urban problems. To cities filled with the homeless and impoverished, Christianity offered charity as well as hope. To cities filled with newcomers and strangers, Christianity offered an immediate basis for attachments. To cities filled with orphans and widows, Christianity provided a new and expanded sense of family. To cities torn by violent ethnic strife, Christianity offered a new basis for social solidarity. And to cities faced with epidemics, fires and earthquakes, Christianity offered effective nursing services... No wonder the early Christian missionaries were so warmly received in this city. For what they brought was not simply an urban movement, but a *new culture* capable of making life in Greco-Roman cities more tolerable."¹

Most 19th and 20th century gospel mission was in the countryside, but rural people are now moving to the cities.

In 2011, 52% of the world's population was urban.² The United Nations expects this to rise to 70% by 2050.³ There are now more unreached people in the cities than in the countryside.

In every city there are immigrant communities, usually gathered in particular parts of the city.

Many immigrant communities are ignorant of the gospel and very accessible.

Other immigrant communities are evangelical believers. They could introduce the gospel to the whole city.

Strategic opportunities

Palembang is a Muslim city of one million people on the island of Sumatra in Indonesia. There are 29 Protestant churches in Palembang, but they all serve small people-groups who have moved to Palembang from other parts of Indonesia. The Muslim majority in the city is largely neglected. How might these immigrant churches start to share their faith with the majority population?⁴

In several Arab cities there are flourishing evangelical churches of students who have come to study from African countries south of the Sahara. How might these evangelical students share their faith with their Muslim classmates at college and university?

* What do you think are the differences between urban mission and rural mission?

Rural mission

In rural areas, the authorities may welcome a missionary who wants to start a local church or school or clinic.

This may attract the whole village to faith in Christ.

People from neighbouring villages may then ask for something similar to be started among them.

Urban mission

In cities, missionaries may visit door-to-door or hold public campaigns with open-air meetings.

The authorities may allow this, but will not usually welcome it.

The missionaries hope to attract individuals, and then gather converts into house fellowships and churches.

Many other strategies may be possible, but a rural strategy will usually be quite different from an urban strategy

Urban mission	Rural mission
City people are often restless, intelligent and progressive.	Rural people are usually more passive and traditional.
City people may be lonely, unsettled and hoping to improve their circumstances.	Rural people are often content with the way things are.
They are likely to be young and well-educated.	They are likely to be older and less educated.
In the cities there may be more men.	In the villages there may be more women.
In a city the gospel can be communicated informally and rapidly to many people crowded together in a small area.	In a village the gospel must be formally introduced to the local leaders, or communicated to small numbers of scattered individuals.
New ideas usually start in the cities and move to the country. City people are shapers of the culture.	Rural converts will not easily influence the culture or take the gospel to the cities.
Many immigrants can be reached in the cities and trained as missionaries to their own homelands.	There are usually far fewer immigrants in the rural areas.

¹ Stark, *The Rise of Christianity*, 147-162

² CIA World Factbook (http://joshuaproject.net/global_statistics) (accessed 1 July 2014)

³ <http://www.who.int/bulletin/volumes/88/4/10-010410/en/> (accessed 1 July 2014)

⁴ <https://www.missionfrontiers.org/issue/article/unreached-peoples-in-cities> (accessed 1 July 2014)

A single convert in a city will not be noticed and can usually avoid persecution.	A single convert will be highly visible and is likely to be persecuted.
Urban people are not expected to be all the same. Unconventional behaviour and individual choice are usually tolerated.	Everyone is expected to be the same. It will be essential to gain the support of the whole village, or of the village leader or chief.
Personal identity and status are fluid as each individual acquires a measure of education, wealth and power.	Personal identity and status are fixed collectively by family and occupation.
A "critical mass" or nucleus of interested individuals from various parts of the city can gather in one place to form a viable fellowship attracting others.	Scattered individuals will not form a sufficient "critical mass" to create a viable fellowship. But a "Christian village" may achieve this.
Living close to one another, believers can easily visit and support one another.	Scattered believers cannot easily support one another, but a "Christian village" may provide such support.
There will be instability as people come and go.	There will be more stability as people stay where they are.
Converts may easily and repeatedly move from one church or mission to another.	Converts will identify with a single church or mission.
The missionaries will probably use the national language.	The missionaries will probably use the local language.
It will be expensive for a missionary to live in a city.	It may be cheaper to live in a village.
Urban work may require toleration of noise, pollution and stress.	Rural work may require much driving and walking over long distances.
Medical care, household items and a wide variety of food will be available.	Medical care, household and various food items may not be available.
There may be friends and schools suitable for the missionaries' children.	The missionaries' children may find life in a rural area quite difficult.

* **Do you have any questions or comments?**

Pioneering Strategies

* **How can we begin to make contact with people?**

This depends partly on whether you intend proclamation outreach or holistic mission.

In an unreached place, should we start by telling people about Jesus? Or by offering some material benefit?

Should we start with their spiritual needs, or their physical needs? We may attempt to do both.

We have seen that rural and urban strategies can be quite different.

You should also assess how much freedom you have.

In places that are "open" to the gospel

In places with freedom for the gospel, proclamation outreach may be very fruitful. For example...

1. Mass evangelism

The Nigerian "New Life for All" campaigns offered a very visible exciting programme to the whole population.

Throwing out a wide net we expect to catch all sorts of people.

Then the process of follow-up and teaching will deal personally with individuals...

answering their questions and introducing them to a good evangelical church in their area.¹

2. Personal work:

In your home country among immigrants.

Every city in the world attracts people from other places. They often live in particular parts of the city.

You may be able to go door-to-door in these areas or put up a stall in the market.

Some immigrants have come from places where evangelical fellowships are persecuted or do not exist.

There are Fulanis in Lagos (Nigeria), Yemenis in Bangalore (India), Somalis in Lusaka (Zambia).

They are learning the local language and adapting to the local culture. They may be glad of help with this.

You must win their confidence and awaken their interest in the gospel.

* **Do you think we can be more culturally sensitive to immigrants?**

How may we help them express faith in Jesus in their own way using their own language?

¹ For a very helpful analysis of the NLFA movement, see George W Peters, *Saturation Evangelism*, Zondervan, 1970.

In a foreign country.

Be flexible and open to the leading of the Holy Spirit. Avoid causing unnecessary offence.

Show respect for senior people. Ask permission if appropriate. Be sensitive to their cultural expectations.

Find some way to win the interest and attention of the people.

The method you use will vary from place to place.

Consider what strategy is most appropriate in your particular context.

- A headman may ask you to set up a clinic or school and you are happy to do this (holistic outreach).
- You may show a gospel film in a public place. Everyone is interested and they ask you to start a church (proclamation outreach).
- You may take a job as an English teacher and start a lunchtime Bible club for your students (holistic and proclamation outreach).
- You may have a market stall where you play CDs of music and Bible stories, and talk with people who show interest (proclamation outreach).
- You may visit poor homes, taking food or medical help to the most needy (holistic outreach).

In some places we can work openly as Christian missionaries. Elsewhere we must be more discreet...

in order to avoid the possibility of public disorder, angry complaints or official expulsion.

As a servant of Christ, you will be sensitive and patient, understanding how to help in the best possible way.

*** Do you have any questions or comments?**

Immigrants all over the world

Remember that there are immigrants in other countries too, not just in your own country, and they may be more responsive than the indigenous people there. In London, for example, the black African churches are leading eastern Europeans from Bulgaria and Hungary to Christ. The African churches provide meals and a place to sleep for European men who have come to England looking for work.

Chinese mission

Ni To-sheng (Watchman Nee) described evangelistic outreach in China in the 1920s and 30s. "Suppose we go to Kweiyang to work, what should be our procedure? On arrival in Kweiyang, we either live in an inn or rent a room, and we begin to preach the gospel. When people are saved, what shall we do? We must encourage them to read the word, to pray, to give, to witness and to assemble for fellowship and ministry... We should teach them to have *their own* meetings in *their own* meeting place."¹

"According to the present-day conception, three things are regarded as essential to the existence of a church... These three are a 'minister', a church building and 'church services'... But what is considered essential to a church these days was considered totally unnecessary in the early days of the church's history... The scriptural method of church organization is simple in the extreme... Elders are chosen from among the local brothers... the meetings are in the believers' homes... All make their special contributions in the power and under the leading of the Spirit."²

In places that are "closed" to the gospel

In many places Christian missionaries are not welcome. Careful thought must be given to our strategies there.

Some possibilities...

1. Start a development project.

A clinic, or an agricultural or engineering project, or distribution of reading glasses...

this may enable you to be accepted in the local community and to share your faith discreetly.

2. Start a school.

You may teach reading, writing and general knowledge (including Bible stories if possible).

You may also teach *good behaviour*. Parents and officials will usually be very happy about this.

So we tell the children: Respect your parents and your teachers. Don't smoke, drink, lie, covet, steal, fight etc.

Eventually a child may say, "I can't do all those good things. It's too hard."

This is your opportunity to explain how Jesus can give him or her a new heart and take the bad things away.

Lead that child to faith in Jesus.

3. Find a person of peace.

Wherever you go, pray for the Lord to lead you to someone who will welcome you and become your friend.

(Of course if you are a man, look for a man; and if you are a woman, look for a woman.)

¹ Watchman Nee, *The Normal Christian Church Life* (Living Stream Ministry, 1980 edn.), p.107

² Nee, pp.163-71

Your friend will explain to the local people what you are doing, and perhaps become your first convert.

Look especially for someone who is:

- **a person of peace** – a person who is pleased to accept you. Jesus said, “Whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace be to this house!’ And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest upon him” (Lk 10:5-6).
- **a bilingual person** – who speaks your language and can interpret for you.
- **a respected person** – who has the confidence of his community (a chief or official or head of a respected family). He should not be very young or very poor or a marginal person in any way.
- **a believer**, if there are any (or at least a nominal Christian) – who will support what you say.

If you can find a person with all (or most) of these qualities, commit yourself to him (or her).

Build that relationship before you start sharing your faith more widely. Jesus said, “Whatever town or village you enter, find out who is worthy in it and stay there until you depart” (Matt 10:11).

As your person of peace helps you, he will expect *you* to help him.

To be accepted over a period of time, you must usually offer something he wants (medical care, English lessons, financial backing, trade contacts etc.). Be ready for this.

Make friends with his family and friends. Win the respect and confidence of the wider community.

This will be helpful as you start to learn the language they speak.

Then discern what troubles and anxieties they have and try to help in practical ways.

As opportunity comes to talk about yourself, tell them what you believe and why it is important to you.

Start to teach him and his family and friends about Christ.

Think carefully how the gospel can solve their problems and relieve their worries.

4. Find suitable times and places for bold outreach.

In any nation there may be places where the central authorities keep a close watch on everything.

But there may be other parts where the more relaxed local authorities are in charge.

You can adapt your strategy to the circumstances.

There may even be desert and mountain areas where little authority is exercised at all...

Here, if you keep on good terms with the inhabitants, you can share your faith quite openly and safely.

Almost anywhere, if you move quickly, you may be able to explain the gospel in public places, give out tracts and CDs, and move on before any authorities or fanatics catch up with you.

Leaving your phone number, address or email will enable people who are interested to make contact with you.

You might decide to repeat the visit every month or two.

* **Do you have any questions or comments?**

First impressions

* **When you go somewhere as a missionary, what will people think of you?**

When you first arrive among unreached people, they will immediately form an opinion about you.

First impressions cut deep and are not easily changed, so you must win their respect as quickly as possible.

To them you are...

- **a foreigner.** You may be despised, or you may be respected, but you will always be different from them.
- **a guest.** They may expect to give to you, or to receive from you, or probably both. They may be both hospitable and demanding. Secretly, among themselves, they may be suspicious about your motives.
- **a person who may cause problems.** For this reason be careful to avoid any initial disagreements and bad feeling.
- **a person who may solve problems.** Start by solving whatever simple problems you can.

If you *have not said anything about your personal faith* they may expect you to be...

- **an immoral person** (a cowboy, gangster, hard drinker, sex maniac, film star etc, as seen on television)

If you *have spoken about your personal faith* they will expect you to be...

- **an expert in religion.** If you are not an expert they will see no reason to respect your opinion. Bear in mind that traditional religious leaders are usually practitioners, not teachers. They provide spells, charms, sacraments etc. For this reason people will expect you to *do* something religious for them, not just to tell them about things that happened long ago. You might offer to pray for them or their home and family, or teach them a song, or give them a Bible verse as a promise from God.

* **Do you have any questions or comments?**

a true story

At a market in France I set up a stall offering New Testaments and gospel recordings in Arabic. A Muslim farm-worker came and asked me to write him a Christian charm to resolve a personal problem with a young lady. If this happened to you, how would you respond? What would you say?

Stages in pioneer mission

Before you go to an unreached people-group you will want to learn all you can about them.

Look for articles or books about that group or similar groups.

Learn all you can from people with experience of them.

Then, if appropriate, look for immigrants who have come from that people.

Make friends with them and start to learn a little of their language.

After a while, tell them you would like to visit their homeland.

They may offer to go with you, or ask their friends and family to make you welcome.

When you settle among them, you may find there are five stages in pioneer outreach.

As you learn the language, you will acquire the words you need to deal with each stage.

1. Preparation

- Start to live among the people.
- Make friends and win respect. Tell them about yourself and explain why you have come.
- Acquire the basic language and culture skills you need to survive.
- Prepare for your holistic ministry if you decide to have one.

2. Outreach

- Begin your holistic ministry if you intend to have one.
- Listen to what people are saying as you try to discern their personal felt-needs, their religious frustrations, and their natural affinities (truths already known to them which can lead them to faith in Christ).
- Pray for those who are ill, and give what medicines you can. This will show that you love them and want to help them. In answer to prayer, with suitable treatment, the Lord may quickly restore their health.
- Find a time and place when people will give you their focused attention. If they are not listening, they will not understand or remember what you say. Learn how to gain the full attention of a person by showing personal interest in them, by preparing a few simple introductions, and by emphasizing the value of what you have discovered. As introductions you might use:
 - a **photograph** of your family or a friend's family. Explain how those in the photo who have died will rise when Jesus comes, how the young are learning from him how to live a good life, the married are learning how to have a happy home etc...
 - a **calendar** with a gospel verse for each day. Read and discuss the verse for that day.
 - a **prayer**. Ask, "Would you be willing for me to pray and ask God's blessing on you and your family?" People often learn more of the gospel from our praying than our preaching.
 - a **reading**. Say, "Christ did many wonderful things. Would you like me to read about one day in his life?"
- Discover how to explain the gospel in such a way that they see it is good news for them in their situation. Start by saying it is a wonderful thing. Offer it joyfully. Apply it to your own felt-needs and theirs.
- Create a simple default gospel message appropriate to that culture (something like The Three Rs – ruin, redemption, regeneration, or the Four Spiritual Laws, or the Five Ages of the World – creation, fall, miracles, atonement, eternity). Be ready to offer it at any moment. Take advantage of every opportunity.
- Look for illustrations and parables in local circumstances. Are there bridges that get washed away? Are there crops that demand water but yield no harvest? Is there a power-cut, a polluted well, an effective medicine, a narrow doorway, a poisonous snake, a safe place, a lock and key? Use these to illustrate some aspect of the gospel.
- Translate some scriptures. Learn to preach the gospel from the Gospels using incidents from the life of Christ. Create some gospel songs that you can sing to adults or children.
- Print or record some gospel tools. Remember that printed tracts may be of special interest to people whose language is not normally written. MP3 players and audio CDs will attract people unfamiliar with recordings in their dialect.

3. Fellowship

- When you have a few interested people or definite converts, you will want to meet together... every day if possible.
 - The best place is usually the home of a local person, so they will understand that it is their meeting, not yours. If homes are too crowded, or have too many interruptions, or might endanger the family, you may prefer to meet in a field or orchard or other sheltered place. Inviting them to your own house could be a possibility... but if you do, be aware that the meetings may stop if you are not there. To rent or build a room for meetings will be a more expensive option – let them do this if they want to arrange and pay for it.
 - When you meet together, do as the early believers did in Acts 2:42: Study the apostles' teaching; discuss your circumstances and how the Lord is helping you; share a simple meal remembering Jesus; and pray for one another.
 - Decide how and when to baptise those who put their trust in Jesus.

4. Leadership

- Encourage all the believers to take initiatives and develop their abilities. Notice those who understand the Bible well, live a life of integrity, and show a desire to help others.
- Take some disciples with you when you go to proclaim the gospel or to teach elsewhere. Invite them to speak. You will see which of them are gifted as evangelists or teachers. Help them gain experience and confidence, and encourage them to serve the Lord in their own way when you are not there.
- The standard required for elders in 1 Timothy chapter 3 may not be attained immediately by new believers, escaping with difficulty from a conflicting religion and worldview. Don't worry if a person who is making good spiritual progress suffers a serious lapse. Help that brother or sister to repent, renew their commitment, and continue their growth.
- Remember that Paul usually taught new converts for a period of several months, then left them for a year or two, then returned to see how they were doing. By that time it was clear which of them were respected as leaders, and Paul would willingly recognise the position they had earned.

5. Networking

- Take some disciples with you to visit believers in other places. Encourage them also to make such visits on their own, so that a fellowship network begins to grow across the region or the nation.
- They may decide that their local leaders should meet together in a central location once a year or even once a month. In this way the leaders will gain wider experience and learn to love, support and encourage one another at a regional or national level.
- Further teaching, exhortation and prayer will help to maintain humble and godly relationships between the various local leaders and fellowships, and to maintain high standards in their exercise of discipline.

* **Do you have any questions or comments?**

Making contact with strangers

In order for the gospel to reach new areas and people-groups it must somehow be introduced to men and women outside our personal network of family and friends. We must communicate with people we do not know. Here are some true stories from Morocco showing how the gospel may be introduced to strangers.

a gospel website

A young man in a Muslim country started an internet shop with several computers where people could go on the internet quite cheaply. He googled the name of his language and soon found an attractive site. It was a gospel site. He heard an interesting story in his language and invited his friends to come to the internet shop and listen. Every day they learned more from the website and several of them decided to follow Jesus. So did some of their wives. This was the beginning of a Christian fellowship meeting in the internet shop.

radio broadcasts

A student in the same Muslim country liked to listen to foreign radio stations. One evening he picked up a gospel broadcast from the other side of the Sahara. He wrote for information and began the correspondence courses offered by the radio ministry. Having completed the courses, he was pleased when someone from the radio company visited him bringing a Bible. He declared his faith in Christ, became a great student of the scriptures, and in later years taught many others.

gospel tracts

A young man went to work in a neighbouring Muslim country, and there a tourist gave him a gospel tract. He was not interested in the message of the tract but when he came back to his homeland, a friend saw it among his possessions and asked to read it. This friend immediately wanted to know more and contacted the publisher. He soon declared himself a believer and led several of his other friends to Christ. As a brilliant student, he achieved a first class degree and a doctorate, and later became a professor in a major university.

correspondence courses

An article was printed in a Muslim newspaper complaining about Christian propaganda and warning its readers about correspondence courses sent from Europe. A photo of the application form for these courses was included in the article. One reader ignored the complaints, filled in the form, sent it off, and began to study the courses. The correspondence school introduced him to other believers in his town.

a shop-keeper

A Christian schoolteacher from Europe went every day to the corner shop to buy bread and milk at a time when there were not a lot of customers. As he was learning the Muslim shop-keeper's language, he always made time for a chat while he was there. Some days he read to the shop-keeper some lines from a book and

asked him to explain the meaning. Then he gave him a video about the life of Jesus in his language, and after that some CDs explaining more. The shop-keeper became a believer and led his two brothers to Christ.

scriptures

A young married Muslim man was looking at the second-hand books for sale in the market and one day saw a copy of the Psalms in his language. He bought it for a few small coins. As he read the words of praise and thanksgiving to God he found they touched his heart. Contacting the address in the book, he was soon able to meet a believer in a café, learned a lot more, and put his trust in Jesus. His wife also accepted the Lord, and began to share the gospel with other women. Their home became a meeting place for a growing fellowship.

neighbours

A mother who was a servant of Christ from another country made some cookies and took them on a plate to the Muslim lady next door. There were some little girls the same age as her own children, so she invited them to come and play. Next day the neighbour lady sent the plate back with some couscous and chicken on it. Friendship grew until the children and neighbour lady were listening willingly to stories about Jesus from a picture Bible in their own language.

sowing the seed

During the summer holidays many Muslims travel to and from Europe. They are happy and relaxed and keen for new experiences. Passing through bus stations, railway stations and ferry ports, many receive gospel literature and video or audio discs. One person wrote, "While we were waiting at the port someone gave us a video of the life of Jesus. When we got home I watched it with my family. We all liked it and some cried. Please send us more information about the way of Jesus."

The Process of Conversion

Note: This teaching is presented in the document *The Process of Conversion* on the Biblical Missiology CD. If your students have read that document, you might use this session to discuss their response.

* When do you think Saul of Tarsus was converted? At what point was he born again?

Was it when he saw and heard Jesus? Or when he fell to the ground? Or when he asked "Who are you Lord?" Or when Jesus answered him? Or when Ananias laid hands on him? Or when the scales fell off his eyes? Or when he was baptised? Or when he received the Holy Spirit? We can't be sure.

Conversion is a complex thing.

It has many facets, psychological and sociological, in addition to religious or spiritual.

It may take a short or a long time.

In Christian conversion, of course, we believe that the Holy Spirit is at work...

convincing the mind of truth... and convicting the conscience of sin and forgiveness.

But there are also human forces at play – psychological and social forces.

There are *psychological* reasons why people change their opinions, their attitudes and commitments.

There are *sociological* reasons why they alter their behaviour, their manner of speech and relationships.

There are *many forms of conversion*, both permanent and temporary, and *many processes leading to conversion*.

The word "conversion" is disliked in certain places.

Conversion to Christianity may arouse bitter religious and political feelings among people of other beliefs.

In normal conversation we may prefer another term, such as "rebirth" or "believing" or "coming to faith".

But **conversion is a biblical concept**, as we shall see.

And the word is used in *wider academic circles* by sociologists and psychologists, in addition to theologians.

Every religion or political system will claim to have converts.

People of all types may, and often do, alter or adapt their ideals, morals, behaviour, convictions and priorities. Many have shifted from one belief system to another. Some will practise two or more at the same time.

A man, for example, may act as a Muslim in the mosque and a sorcerer on his farm.

A woman may talk like a modern lady at work and a traditional lady at home.

To see how the process of conversion works, we need to understand *human nature* and *human relationships*.

We must know how, and why, men and women change their views and their behaviour.

With this understanding we should be better equipped to help them become fully committed to Christ, firmly established in their faith and able to share it with others.

We will know how to avoid the mistakes that may hinder them from attaining this assured faith... or cause them to turn back and lose it.

A wise evangelist will be aware of what humans are like. In addition to studying scripture, he will study people.

The sociology of conversion

Every culture is **resistant to conversion**.

Stability in a community or a nation is maintained by a set of common beliefs and expectations.

It is hard for a person to step out of this secure consensus, to question the accepted norms, to adopt alternatives.

If you attempt this, at first people will laugh at you, then they will ignore you; before long they will hate you.

Despite the honesty, kindness and peacefulness of Christian people, we are often considered dangerous.

People are worried that because of us the old beliefs and the old ways may be lost forever.

And this can indeed happen. At any time, *the gospel is a genuine threat to every other belief system*.

In addition, the growing presence of Christians may cause others people (terrorists) to act dangerously.

In these circumstances, *the gospel is a genuine danger to public order*.

In view of the social pressure against conversion, **it is surprising that anyone ever decides to follow Christ**.

The fact that they do so, and persevere despite difficulties, shows *how attractive the gospel is to many people*.

Most people who convert to a new belief-system were *not strongly committed to their previous belief system*.

They had not invested a lot in it. They have relatively little to lose by abandoning it.

In general they were lukewarm or even somewhat disengaged. For this reason...

we will be wise not to focus our gospel outreach on people strongly committed to another belief-system, but to **focus on those who are just nominal adherents**.

In general, people are not seeking a new religion.

They are usually content with what they have and making the best of life as it comes to them.

It is usually not a new teaching or a new idea that interests them...

but *the prospect of a new circle of friends*, or other social contacts, who may bring some new benefit.

In order to develop these new relationships they are willing to learn a new way of thinking and behaving.

A wise evangelist will not only proclaim a message but also develop a wide network of friendships.

He will **introduce a potential convert to believers** who will welcome him or her as a friend.

Once a newcomer is committed to *friendship with the network of believers*, he or she will be motivated to acquire the information and behaviour patterns that bring full acceptance as a member of the network.

It is at this point that he or she may finally understand the gospel and become truly committed to Christ.¹

*** Do you think it is easier for an evangelist to work in a foreign culture or in his own culture?**

- **his own culture**

He can speak his own language and judge exactly what his hearers are thinking. He knows how to help them so they understand the gospel and accept Christ. He comes to them as one of their own people, showing that the gospel is something suitable for them.

- **a foreign culture**

If speaking publicly about Christ requires breaking a strong cultural taboo, it is usually easier to do this in a foreign culture than in one's own culture. (See the text box Breaking taboos.)

Breaking taboos

A taboo is something strongly forbidden by a particular culture. It is an action so offensive that everyone is expected to avoid and condemn it. There are three things we may note concerning taboos.

1. Every culture has its taboos. A local person who breaks a taboo will be mocked, insulted, despised or hated. But *a foreigner who breaks a taboo may be tolerated*, because foreigners are expected to be different, whilst local people are expected to conform.

Many effective evangelists do not care very much what people think of them. We say they have a "thick skin". But a more sensitive person may feel *great emotional tension* if their work of gospel outreach requires breaking the taboos of *their own culture*. In fact it is usually much easier to break the taboos of a foreign culture than those of the culture one has lived in from childhood.

For this reason a British (UK) evangelist may find it much easier to speak openly about Christ in Algeria or Morocco than he does in his homeland. And likewise an Algerian or Moroccan may find it much easier to do so in Britain. We all have a natural fear of messing up our own backyard.

¹ These sociological perspectives are discussed more fully in the document *The Process of Conversion*.

2. In British culture (UK), for example, there are two very strong taboos:

- a. Do not speak about religion!
- b. Do not show any colour prejudice!

A white British evangelist will usually be mocked, insulted, despised and silenced by the people of his own nation. They do not like him speaking about religion. But most British people would not dare to treat an African or Indian evangelist so badly. Afraid of being labelled racist, they will usually show more respect for the African or Indian. In this case, the taboo against colour prejudice is stronger than the taboo against religion.

3. Many missionaries have learned the meaning of words in a foreign language. But in every language, words carry an emotional weight, and not many missionaries have learned the emotional value of all the words they hear and use.

A swear word for example might be humorous, or slightly crude, or mildly disrespectful, or somewhat offensive, or very offensive, or so vile that it is never forgiven. Before using any word, the speaker should judge what its effect is likely to be, especially when expressing a negative opinion. It is often necessary to choose between five or six alternative words in order to select the one that will make the appropriate impact.

We may *learn* the emotional value of various words in a foreign language, but rarely do we *feel* the emotional level as intensely as someone from that culture. For them, every word they hear or speak carries a personal charge of approval or disapproval. To be mocked or insulted *in a foreign language* does not usually hurt nearly so much as when we receive mockery and insults *in our own language* from people of our own home culture. This is another reason why an evangelist may find it easier in a foreign land than he would among his own people.

Conclusion: An evangelist will usually feel less tension when breaking taboos in a foreign culture than in his own. He will also be more easily excused when he does so. As evangelism becomes increasingly difficult for British believers in their own homeland, African and Asian evangelists are especially needed to take the lead in gospel outreach there. The same principles may be applicable in many other parts of the world.

* **Do you have any questions or comments?**

Additional Reading: For a sociological analysis of early church growth, see Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity* (HarperCollins, 1997). On the sociology of religion in the world today, see Rodney Stark and Roger Finke, *Acts of Faith – explaining the human side of religion* (Univ. California Press, 2000), chapters 5 and 9.

The theology of conversion

Other religions or belief-systems may claim that *entire tribes or nations* have been converted and joined them.

But we can never make this claim. Conversion to Christ is **a personal matter for each individual**.

We must each be born again and saved through personal faith in Christ.

In “the book of life” are written the names of believers, not of nations or families or churches.

Jesus said, “If *anyone* has ears to hear... If *anyone* would come after me... If *anyone* keeps my word...”

The offer of salvation is for each man or woman, to be accepted or refused.

This makes Christianity *far more individualistic* than any other religion.

We have considered some remarkable mass movements.

In every mass movement there will be individuals genuinely born again.

There will be other individuals who are outwardly impressed but inwardly unchanged.

Some were at first sincere but later fell away; others may be deliberate hypocrites. (See Lk 8:4-15.)

There is no such thing as a group conversion – only the conversion of individuals within the group.

A change of belief

In the New Testament there are two important Greek words for conversion.

The first is *metanoia*, meaning a change of mind or “second thoughts”.

It describes how a person will abandon one set of beliefs and adopt another, inspired by new principles, ideals and convictions.

John the Baptist and Jesus both began their ministries with this word:

“Repent [*metanoete*], for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt 3:2; 4:17).

They were asking people to think carefully.

The time had come to understand something new, to change their belief system and their worldview.

In the Bible *metanoia* is often translated “repentance”, but it really means a change of ideas and attitudes.

It means a change of **beliefs**.

A change of behaviour

The second word is *epistrōphē*, meaning “a turning from one thing to another”.

It indicates a change of behaviour – a new lifestyle, new activities and new social networks. So we read about “the conversion of the Gentiles” (Acts 15:3).

The related verb *epistrōphō* is used in 1 Thess 1:9: “you turned to God from idols.”

James tells us: “Whoever brings back (*epistrepsas*) a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins” (Ja 5:20).

In the Bible *epistrōphē* is rendered “conversion” – a new lifestyle, new activities and social networks.

It means a change of **behaviour**.

Complete conversion

In Acts 3:19 these two basic words (*metanoia* and *epistrōphē*) are used together when Peter says, “Repent therefore, and *turn*, that your sins may be blotted out.”

This means a change of both belief and behaviour.

These two Greek words *metanoia* and *epistrōphē* focus on human beings.

They show how *we* change what we think and do, how *we* turn from one way of life to another way of life.

But there are other words in the New Testament that focus on the work of *God* in conversion.

For example, in Col 1:13-14 we read, “He has *delivered* us from the domain of darkness and *transferred* us to the Kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have *redemption*, the *remission of sins*.”

This describes the conversion of people in terms of what God has done for them.

Other verses focus on the marvel of rebirth, justification, liberation, reconciliation, purification and re-creation.

These all speak of what *God* does in the process of conversion.

We should never forget that **every conversion is a wonderful, gracious, loving act of God**.

There was a day when the Creator of the universe accepted me in Christ, forgave my sins, wrote my name in the book of life and placed his Spirit of holiness in me.

These are very wonderful things that I could never do for myself.

It is also important to remember that conversion is not our goal. It is merely **the start of a process**.

As soon as I am born as a spiritual baby, I begin to grow. So we read (Phil 1:6):

“He who has begun a good work in you *will carry it on to completion* until the day of Christ Jesus.”

* **Do you have any questions or comments?**

Additional Reading: Dean S Gilliland, *Pauline Theology and Mission Practice* (Baker, 1983), Chapter 4

The psychology of conversion

People are not normally attracted by a new religious doctrine or belief.

They are attracted by the character, lifestyle and community *of the people who believe it*.

In general, when a person adopts a new belief-system, the reason is not because they think it is true...

but *because they think it is beneficial*. It offers an advantage that justifies cutting their ties with the past.

With these insights into human nature, an evangelist will want to:

- introduce newcomers *to the network of believers* as soon as possible
- *speak clearly about the benefits* that come through faith in Christ.

* **What are the wonderful benefits we receive when we are born again?**

Peace with God every moment of the day Rom 5:1-2

Eternal life in the age to come Jn 5:24

Protection from the power of evil 1 Jn 5:18-19; Eph 6:11-18

A purposeful plan for my life Eph 2:10; Rom 8:28

Provision for all my needs Matt 6:31-33; Phil 4:19

Faithful friends to help me Heb 13:7; 10:24-25

The word of God to guide me 2 Tim 3:16-17

The Holy Spirit to transform me Gal 5:22-23; 4:19

There are usually five stages gradually leading to full conversion. Consider them carefully.

1. **discovery** – beginning to understand the basic facts and desiring to hear more..
2. **deliberation** (or discussion) – weighing up the benefits of accepting or rejecting.
3. **decision** – believing that the gospel is helpful and deciding to trust in Christ.
4. **doubt** (or distraction) – facing uncertainties, tensions, temptations and persecutions.
5. **discipleship** (or devotion) – full commitment to Christ and to others who follow Christ.

In practice, many missionaries focus on **3. decision**.

They urge a quick choice... and then feel disappointed when their convert falls away.
But a skilful evangelist will help people to progress through each of these five stages to full conversion.

Think of Philip and the Ethiopian (Acts 8).

If we were in Philip's shoes, many of us might tell the Ethiopian straightaway,

"You are a sinner. Jesus died for you. Believe in him. Now you are saved."

But Philip was concerned to make sure this man *understood*.

He asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?"

Understanding must come before a decision. A person needs to know what he is committing himself to.

A good decision will be an informed decision, based on adequate knowledge.

That is why teaching is so important (Matt 4:23; Acts 4:2; 28:31).

On the day of Pentecost, Peter told the crowd "Let this be known to you."

He then gave them a report of recent events and quoted many scriptures.

It was this information that led his hearers to ask, "Brothers, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37).

First of all then, we should help people with...

1. discovery.

Some people will be thrilled immediately to hear that God loves them and wants to guide and help them.

They will ask questions and want to find out more.

But knowing that humans are often lazy and reluctant to consider anything new...

we may have to awaken their interest, stimulate their spiritual appetite...

and show them there is something of value to discover.

This can be done with an interesting story or a remarkable testimony, or a genuinely loving and joyful attitude.

Our desire is for them to discover what we have discovered.

Once their interest is awakened and they have some basic information, then follows...

2. deliberation (or discussion).

A person who is learning about Christ may see positive advantages in accepting the gospel.

Some benefits will be spiritual (protection from evil spirits, forgiveness, peace with God, eternal life etc.).

Some may be material (new friends, marriage options, travel, personal development, education etc.).

But this person may also have prejudices and hindrances... personal issues, bad habits or besetting sins,

religious questions or objections, opposition from friends and family etc.

He or she will need to weigh up the options and count the cost.

Although following Christ will be wonderful, it may also be difficult or even dangerous.

They will need good reasons to believe and to continue in the faith.

Deliberation and discussion may take some time before they reach the point of...

3. decision.

To repent and believe marks a definite break with the past and the start of a new life.

We may hesitate to embarrass a person by insisting on a definite choice to accept or reject the gospel.

They may prefer to keep their options open.

Like Elijah we may have to say, "How long will you go limping between two different opinions?"

If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him" (1 Ki 18:21).

We may have to warn about the danger of failing to respond: "With many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, 'Save yourselves from this crooked generation'" (Acts 2:40).

After making a firm decision to follow Christ, a convert may then be troubled by...

4. doubt (or distraction).

Almost immediately, or after some time, the new convert is likely to come into temptation.

They may hear their faith mocked, or suffer severe persecution.

It is easy to become unsettled at this point, wondering if they made the right choice...

or whether they should return to their old ways.

They may require much personal kindness, spiritual counsel, biblical teaching and material help

(work, accommodation, legal advice etc.) from the Christian community.

If the difficulties they face are dealt with well, they should emerge from the experience stronger in spirit,

more convinced of the truth and more knowledgeable in the scriptures.

After overcoming these initial issues of doubt, distraction and opposition, the final stage to full conversion is...

5. discipleship (or devotion).

By this time, the convert has acquired the information, answered the objections, faced the difficulties, counted the cost, made a firm decision, and overcome doubts and difficulties.

In addition, they have weighed up their former lifestyle and belief system,

firmly rejected whatever is incompatible with the gospel, and adopted a genuinely Christian way of life.

They have closer friendships with believers than with their previous social and religious community.

By this stage we consider such people fully converted. We have real confidence in them.

Helping people towards full conversion

Our desire as missionaries or evangelists is to *help each person attain full conversion*.

They are likely to need help at every stage. For this reason, they should be welcomed as soon as possible into the company of Christian friends who will accept and support them.

This will give them opportunities to *confess with the lips what is happening in the heart* (Rom 10:10).

When someone joins any social group *they will expect to do what the people in that group are doing*.

This is true whether you join a sports club, a youth club, a music class, a library etc.

People expect this with a church or youth group or Christian project too.

They will want to be part of something worthwhile and to participate in what is being done.

We must help them find opportunities **to do the good things that Christ is teaching them to do...**

not merely as a listener or learner but as an active and useful disciple (Lk 3:8; Jn 15:14).

If there are church activities, holistic ministries, or outreach initiatives, *encourage them to take part*.

An interested or responsive person **should not be left on their own** if they seem to have doubts...

or fall into error or sin. That is when *they most need friendship, compassion and prayer...*

so they may overcome their difficulties and progress towards full conversion.

*** Do you have any questions or comments?**

Additional Reading: Lewis Rambo, *Understanding Religious Conversion* (Yale University Press, 1993)

We will now consider which of these five stages is the best time to *baptise* someone coming to faith in Christ.

The significance of baptism in conversion*** Why do people get baptised in your church?**

Is it the custom for all babies? Is it a social convention for teenagers?

Is it a requirement for office in the church? Is it a requirement for marriage?

Are people not accepted as genuine believers till baptised (Hindu or Muslim converts)?

*** What does the Bible say about baptism?**

1. A believer identifies with the death and resurrection of Christ (Rom 6:3-4; also Col 2:12).

2. A believer identifies with the followers of Christ (1 Cor 12:13).

*** Would you agree that baptism represents all or some of the following?**

- | | |
|---|---|
| - a public declaration of conversion to Christ | - washing away sins |
| - the convert's acceptance of the gospel | - the convert's desire to belong to the Christian community |
| - God's acceptance of the convert | - the Christian community's acceptance of the convert |
| - the end of the old life and the start of the new life | |

*** At which stage 1-5 do you think we should we baptise a new convert?**

At stage 1. as a commitment to discover more

At stage 2. as a resolve to overcome personal hindrances through deliberation or discussion

At stage 3. as a declaration of trust in Christ to save

At stage 4. as a positive way to overcome doubt or distraction

At stage 5. as an affirmation of fully committed discipleship and devotion

*** At which stage were the following people baptised?**

the Jews in Jerusalem	Acts 2:38, 41	Cornelius and his household	Acts 10:47-48
the Samaritans	Acts 8:12	Lydia	Acts 16:14-15
the Ethiopian official	Acts 8:36-38	the Philippian jailer	Acts 16:33
Saul of Tarsus	Acts 9:18; 22:16		

Biblical perspectives on conversion

Why do people change from one belief system to another? Several influences contribute to most conversions. We can see all these at work in the New Testament, as we do in the world today.

1. Evidence.

A person may become aware of undeniable facts or acquire convincing evidence.

Perhaps a prayer is remarkably answered, or something happens at a crucial moment... which shows them God is at work.

They may hear a sermon, a testimony, or read a Bible verse that makes sense and persuades them.

They may see scientific evidence of the Creator in creation... or historical evidence that Christ died and rose again.

They may be impressed by a believer who lives a beautiful life.

All these things point to the truth of the gospel. They convince a person on the basis of clear evidence.

Evidence may work either negatively or positively.

A person may discover **awkward facts** about their old belief system.

They may see evidence that the old way is wrong, and so become open to a new way.

- Muslims may become disillusioned with violent Islam.
- Rural people may begin to despise traditional witchcraft.
- Urban people may become irritated with corrupt politicians and administrators.

They may also discover **attractive facts** about a new belief system.

This awakens a desire to investigate and accept it.

- Muslims may be impressed by the character of Christians they know.
- Rural people may see that Christians start excellent clinics and schools.
- Urban people may value the integrity and wisdom of Christian leaders.

The Jews were troubled by the humiliation of their nation, the violence of their king, corruption in their Temple.

They were afraid of their own political leaders (Jn 7:13) and their Roman overlords (Jn 11:48).

They resented the religious bullying of the Pharisees in their synagogues (Matt 3:7; 23:4; Jn 12:42).

These were **awkward facts** that undermined their trust in the old belief-system.

At the same time, there were **attractive facts** that drew them strongly to Jesus...

his inspired teaching, his wonderful miracles, his compassionate character.

When his apostles spoke of the prophecies fulfilled and the empty tomb...

many of the ordinary people were persuaded by definite evidence and convincing proofs

(Jn 12:17-19; Acts 13:30-33; 17:2-4). Such people believed because they had good reason to believe.

To some the evidence came **suddenly and unexpectedly** –

the shepherds at Bethlehem, the woman of Samaria, the centurion at the cross, the crowd at Pentecost, the cripple at the Temple gate, the Ethiopian, the Philippian jailer and Lydia.

Others were **deliberately seeking** to discover the truth –

Nicodemus, the Greeks who approached Andrew, Cornelius and his household, the governor Sergius Paulus.

For a few, such as the Magi from the East, it involved careful research and **a long persevering quest**.

So we see that an awareness of facts, both positive and negative, may lead an individual to seek a change...

to abandon the old ways and commit him- or herself to Christ.

We would call this **an evidential conversion**.

2. Mystical experience.

Some people are led towards conversion by a spiritual experience – a dream, a vision, an angel or revelation.

This is usually **an unexpected event**. We cannot prepare or plan for a genuine mystical experience of God.

It is not a strategy we can initiate or practise or manage.

But it comes to **a prepared person**.

It supplements and reinforces a previous seeking for facts or an earlier discovery of evidence.

A genuine experience of God comes to those who are longing for the truth, or for God...

not to those who are seeking exciting or unusual experiences.

Then it directs the person **to seek further information** and shows them where to go.

A dream, a vision, an angel or revelation will lead that person to seek help from God's people.

Cornelius gave frequently to the poor and was busy with his prayers when suddenly he had a vision.

The vision was not sufficient on its own – it led him to send for Peter (Acts 10:1-6).

Saul of Tarsus was trying sincerely but ignorantly to serve God when on the Damascus Road he saw a vision.

The vision led him to a man, Ananias, who explained it and told him what to do next (Acts 22:3-16).

If a vision or other spiritual experience seems to be the major turning point in a person's life, we might call it a **mystical conversion**.

3. *Social needs.*

People have a desire for friendship, affection and affirmation.

We like to be part of a **group offering acceptance and love**.

Social needs may be very significant in conversion...

especially for marginal individuals who are alienated from their traditional community and culture.

When Christians are engaged in activities that seem exciting and worthwhile,

the people around them **will not want to miss out** on the good things that are happening.

This is natural, and it draws men, women and children to Christian fellowship and to faith in Christ.

The motivation may be selfish (to gain personal benefit),

or it may be altruistic (to help advance a noble or idealistic cause). In many cases it is both.

To enter a new social circle is often a **personal choice**.

But sometimes a **whole group** may seek new social connections.

A church may leave a syncretistic denomination to join a genuinely evangelical denomination.

A village may switch from a secular development agency to one that proclaims the gospel.

The underlying desire is for relationship with people whose character, work or worldview are admired.

The decision to join a new social network may often be calm and rational.

But in some cases it may be **highly emotional**, as we see in certain mass movements.

If people around us are stirred up emotionally, it affects us emotionally too.

Social motives for conversion are not easy to identify in the New Testament.

A desire to share in the communal life of Jesus and his disciples may be seen in...

- the man set free from a legion of demons (Mk 5:18)

- Mary Magdalene and several other women (Lk 8:2-3).

A desire to join the church may be observed in Saul of Tarsus (Acts 9:26).

Paul's own followers may have been attracted by his character as much as his teaching,

and indeed by the fellowship they enjoyed together as disciples (1 Thess 1:6).

The Old Testament would give us Hobab who went to assist the Israelites (Num 10:29-32),

Rahab who saw the power of God with them (Josh 2),

the Gibeonites who sought acceptance with them (Josh 9), and Ruth who loved her mother-in-law.

If a human relationship is the first or major component of a conversion...

it would be identified as a **social conversion**.

4. *Ambition.*

In the world today there are countless thousands of people who lack the necessities and comforts of life.

For such people, turning to Christianity may be seen as a way of escape from poverty and disease.

It is a way to achieve some kind of stability or security for an individual, family or tribe.

Many came to Jesus asking for his help (Matt 15:25; Mk 9:22).

There was a desire for basic essentials. No one should be blamed for such an ambition.

But some people may also think Christianity is a way to become successful (blessed) and rich (prosperous),

"imagining that godliness is a means of gain" (1 Tim 6:5).

Some, like Simon the sorcerer, may aspire to celebrity status (Acts 8:13 and 18-19).

A change of religion for the sake of advancement in wealth or status may be called an **ambitious conversion**.

But ambition, on its own, does not normally result in a stable and permanent commitment to Christ.

5. *Coercion.*

History records many cases of religious conversion as a result of physical or psychological pressure.

This may affect individuals, groups or even nations.

Force was effective, for example, in the Islamic conquest and conversion of North Africa (violent attack, occupation, mutilation and discriminatory taxation).

It was also effective in the Catholic conquest of Latin America.

But **violent coercion** is obviously not an option for gospel mission.

Almost as bad is **legal coercion**, because its enforcement requires the threat and if necessary the use of force. There have been times and places when the populace of a nation were compelled by law...

to attend the religious services of the national church and were severely punished for failing to do so.

(John Bunyan, author of *The Pilgrim's Progress* was imprisoned for 12 years for this reason.)

Many people in such circumstances become nominal church-goers and hypocrites in order to avoid trouble.

A measure of **physical coercion** may compel children and youth to attend Sunday school or religious classes.

As a result, many of them may understand and accept the gospel, but some may also be hardened against it.

It may result in a good knowledge of scripture without any faith in Christ to save or sanctify.

Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me"... but he did not force them.

Preaching the gospel, however, will always involve a measure of **psychological coercion**.

• Jesus said, "Fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matt 10:28).

• John the Baptist warned of the wrath to come (Matt 3:7).

• Paul also warned of the wrath to come (1 Thess 1:10).

• Peter advised the people of Jerusalem, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation" (Acts 2:40).

• Peter showed them their guilt and danger. Cut to the heart, they asked, "What shall we do?" (Acts 2:37)

Warning of danger may lead to such questions. It is our privilege then to help our hearers find safety in Christ.

A gospel preacher may feel anxious and emotional about the lost condition of the people around him.

Paul said, "for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish everyone with tears" (Acts 20:31).

Genuine emotion may move the hearts and minds of our hearers.

But this should never become a mere performance attempting to manipulate their feelings.

If a conversion is merely an emotional response to psychological coercion, it is not likely to last.

A **coercive conversion** will always be unstable, because it was not a willing and intelligent choice.

Conclusion: It is clear that a sound and genuine conversion must include a number of these elements.

If it comprises only one of them, it is unlikely to be profound or permanent.

* **Do you have any questions or comments?**

Consolidating conversion

Conversion to Christianity, or any other belief system, may be either short-term or long-term.

We must understand how a partial conversion to Christ may become complete,

how an initial conversion may become permanent, and how a hesitant conversion may become assured.

We must help people to become completely and fully converted.

In the NT we see various incomplete and inadequate conversions, and some genuine permanent conversions:

1. *Confused and ignorant conversion*

In this case the person misunderstands the essence of Christianity, thinking it is one thing when it is really something else.

He or she is committed to the new way but knows little about it.

This may happen especially when the conversion is essentially mystical or ambitious.

The case of Simon the Sorcerer (Acts 8:9-24).

When he heard Philip proclaim the gospel, "Simon himself believed." Then he was *baptised*. But his special interest was in magic, which had previously brought him success and fame: "Seeing signs and great miracles performed, he was amazed."

When Peter and John laid their hands on Simon and others they received the Holy Spirit. But then he offered the apostles money, saying, "Give me this power also, so that anyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit."

* **As a missionary how would you respond to this? How would you deal with Simon?**

Simon was a baptised believer with an *ambitious* conversion. But his desire for status and power was his downfall. Peter said, "May your silver perish with you... You have neither part nor lot in this matter, for your

heart is not right before God. Repent, therefore, of this wickedness of yours.” Simon was still evidently sincere for he replied, “Pray for me to the Lord, that nothing of what you have said may come upon me.”

Simon's conversion was **confused and ignorant**. After Peter's initial rebuke, his need was for teaching and wise pastoral advice. Responding to this, he might overcome his problem and become a sound and intelligent convert.

2. *Superficial and temporary conversion*

The person thinks there may be definite advantages in adopting the new beliefs and practices, but he wants to keep his options open in case there is actually no great benefit.

He might think, “It's worth a try. Let's see what happens.”

But he retains a measure of loyalty towards previous beliefs and traditions, and may continue to do some things he always did. There is no clean break with past.

The case of the disillusioned disciples (John 6:26-66).

Early in Jesus's ministry, many people were following him because they had heard about the feeding of the five thousand. They were genuinely interested in what he could do, but he warned them, “You are seeking me... because you ate your fill of the loaves.” And he advised, “Do not labour for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life... I am the bread of life. If anyone eats of this bread he will live for ever.” This started an argument among his hearers, and some said, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” A number of his followers were upset, saying “This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?” Then we see, “After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him.” Their conversion came to a sudden end.

*** As a missionary how would you respond to this? How would you deal with these disciples?**

They had marvelled at the supernatural but could not understand the teaching. Influenced by unbelievers, they turned away. Their conversion had been **superficial and temporary**. At that point they needed just what Jesus gave them – the challenge to declare their belief or unbelief. Their continued presence would not benefit them and might harm others.

3. *Profound and permanent conversion*

These people have seen good reason to follow Christ.

They have considered and rejected all other options, and committed themselves wholeheartedly to him.

In most cases they were already disillusioned with the old ways and had a strong desire for change.

They may have accepted the gospel very quickly, thinking, “This is exactly what I've been looking for!”

Or they may have weighed it up for a long time, saying,

“I've tried everything else and this is now my only hope!”

Having made their decision, they have little or no desire to return to their former state.

The case of the eleven apostles (John 6:67-68).

We have seen that “many disciples” left Jesus, and Judas too was with them in spirit. But then Jesus turned to the Twelve and asked them, “Do you also want to go away?” Simon Peter answered, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.” For Peter, the change from the old way to the new was well understood. He and the others had rejected the Judaism of the scribes, Pharisees and Herodians. They had enough evidence to believe in Jesus and were committed to him and to the new community of his followers.

Despite personal weakness and failure (when they forsook him and fled), their conversion is shown to be **profound and permanent**.

4. *Temporary conversion becoming permanent*

A person has become interested in the new way and has started to learn more about it.

He or she enjoys friendly contact with the new faith community.

They may start to act as a believer whilst still inwardly uncertain of many things.

Through positive relationships, commitment is deepened.

By gaining more evidence and confidence, belief becomes increasingly firm...

leading to a complete and permanent conversion.

The case of the Samaritan villagers (John 4:42).

The Samaritan woman told her people what Jesus said to her, and they were interested to know more. For two days they then heard what Jesus himself taught them, and afterwards said to the woman, “It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Saviour of the world.”

Another example would be Nicodemus, who heard enough to interest him and went to discover more, which led him to become a secret believer supporting Jesus against the Sanhedrin. Likewise, the Ethiopian official

was committed to what he knew, uncertain of its meaning, humble enough to learn from Philip and then happy to accept what he said.

In each case, the new convert was teachable and responsive. They liked what they heard and wanted to hear more. This led gradually to intelligent faith and full commitment. In this way **temporary conversion became permanent**.

5. *Permanent conversion becoming temporary*

In this case the convert was running well but then stumbled (Gal 5:7).

This may happen when belief is shaken in some way...

through conflicting evidence, unhappy experience, personal temptation leading to sin and hypocrisy...

or through the attraction of other options, or a cooling of relations with the new faith community

(because of physical distance, lack of contact, unfulfilled expectations, conflict etc.).

Converts may also become alienated when they think Christians are not telling the truth.

We will speak more of this (see section below, Discouragement).

The case of Demas.

Demas was one of the most promising young missionaries in Paul's team. When first mentioned as a fellow-worker, his name is placed before Luke (Philem 23-24). In his next letter, Luke is "beloved" but the name of Demas is added without commendation (Col 4:14). In his final letter, Paul tells us "Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica" (2 Tim 4:10). Demas had been a genuine believer and a missionary but lost his commitment and perhaps some element of his faith.

In addition to this sad case, we may also think of Judas. He was chosen as a man with potential to become an apostle like the others. Beginning to steal secretly from the money bag, he lost far more than he gained.

These men who had seemed totally committed to Christ did not continue with him. In their case, **permanent conversion became temporary**.

* **How do you think we might ensure that a conversion is genuine and permanent?**

This is a very important part of making disciples:

1. **Teach all the basic truths of the faith.** Answer all the essential questions and objections. Resolve all the intellectual issues as far as possible. Only then will your convert have real and lasting assurance that he or she is on the right path.
2. **Make sure they read or hear the word of God every day.** Every new believer starts as a spiritual baby and needs to grow in understanding, wisdom and character. Spiritual food is essential to spiritual life, as physical food is to physical life. It must be taken regularly every day.
3. **Give much brotherly love.** Introduce your convert to loving Christian friends so he or she will begin to enjoy fellowship and friendship with people who set a good example, providing emotional and intellectual support.
4. **Find some useful task for each new believer to do** as soon as possible. From the start most of them will want to be useful, and this is both natural and healthy. Do not give them the idea that they must go to church in order to receive something. If they go to church, it should be in order to help others – not to be served but to serve. Many converts remain weak because their church does not give them anything useful to do.
5. **Deal with any bad influences or deeply rooted sins.** Encourage your disciple to tell you honestly about any difficulties he or she may be facing, and treat that information as confidential. Old relationships (with drug dealers, witches, fortune-tellers, false teachers etc.) may need to be ended. Old habits may need to be broken and new habits formed.

Through experience the new believer will learn to draw spiritual strength from the Holy Spirit, gradually becoming mature in Christ. Do not expect perfection immediately, but deal with each question or difficulty in turn. Resolving one problem will increase confidence for overcoming the next.

6. **Help them to be guided by inner conviction**, not by external rules. Encourage in your disciple a desire to please Christ and be worthy of his trust. Show how "we make it our aim to please him" (2 Cor 5:9) and how "we serve in the new way of the Spirit, not in the old way of the written code" (Rom 7:6).

Encourage new believers to work out for themselves what they should do: "Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind" (Rom 14:5). Help them not to criticise or undermine the opinion or action of others (Rom 14:13).

7. **Be sensitive to any sign of falling away.** This may reveal itself in restlessness, disrespect, lack of interest, compromised behaviour, absence from fellowship (Heb 3:12). It may start almost immediately after conversion, or many weeks, months or years later.

Remember that the shepherd will leave the ninety-nine in the fold and go in search of the one who strays. Pray for that person, of course... but also take care to visit them as soon as possible. Affirm your love and acceptance. Be discreet. If they share a personal issue with you, keep that issue private. Do not compel them

to conform outwardly if they still have a problem inwardly. Try to find the cause of the problem and resolve it if you can. If you yourself cannot resolve it, arrange for them to see someone else who can help them.

The care of converts

Helping new believers to become fully converted is an essential part of cross-cultural mission. It receives far less attention than it should.

A gifted evangelist may enable large numbers of people to understand and accept the gospel very quickly at a superficial level. But the evangelist may not be the best person to secure a genuine and permanent conversion for each of them. Moving from place to place, he cannot easily provide the teaching and pastoral care they will need. They must be introduced to friends who can patiently help each one deal with personal questions, doubts and difficulties, and so become fully convinced and committed to Christ, to his teachings, and to the community of his people.

We sometimes call this the work of follow-up but it is far more than that. It is the essential task of the church, and all its members, to prepare new believers to be active and useful in service to others: "He gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry" (Eph 4:11-12).

*** Do you have any questions or comments?**

What would you do?

Here are some situations that happened in a country where believers are harassed and imprisoned for their faith. If you are a missionary what would you do in each case?

1. A dozen believers meet in your home secretly once a week to share the Lord's Supper. They trust your house is a safe place, and that you will not get them into trouble with the authorities. A Christian girl arrives at the door with her Muslim brother, asking if he too can attend the meeting. You have never seen this young man before. He seems friendly but he may be a police informer. What should you do?

- A. Welcome them both into the meeting, trusting that no harm will come of it.
- B. Take them to a different room, offer tea and biscuits, and try to find out where her brother stands spiritually.
- C. Send her brother away with an invitation to your Enquirers' Meeting later in the week... knowing they may both be so offended that they will not come again.
- D. Ask one of the local believers to leave the meeting and take him to a café for a chat about spiritual things.

2. One of the young men in the believer's fellowship insists on praying with his eyes open. The older sisters protest that Christians always pray with their eyes closed. A serious dispute is about to start. What will you do?

- A. Try to prove from Scripture that we should, or should not, pray with our eyes open.
- B. Tell the sisters to be more tolerant of those new to the faith. (They think the young men may be looking at the girls instead of praying.)
- C. Tell the young man to conform to the tradition of the church.
- D. Ask the sisters how they know his eyes were open.

3. The parents of a young Christian girl have arranged for her to marry a Muslim. She has no desire for marriage. What should she do?

- A. Honour her father and mother by doing what they want.
- B. Refuse outright to marry him and so provoke her parents' anger.
- C. Cut herself off from her family by leaving home to look for work in another city.
- D. Agree to the marriage but make excuses to delay the wedding.

4. After a meeting in your home, one of the new believers asks to speak with you privately. Perhaps he wants to enquire about baptism or about a difficult Bible verse. You are disappointed to find he is wanting to borrow money. You have been in this situation before. You lent 500 dirhams to Mustapha, and from that day you saw neither Mustapha nor your money. Later Abd el-Kbir asked to borrow money and you gently refused... then he went and spread malicious rumours about you. What will you do?

- A. Tell him you have an urgent appointment and must go out immediately.
- B. Lend him what he wants and fix a day for him to pay it back.
- C. Tell him that if he is in real need you will not lend but give him a little.
- D. Tell him money is a root of evil and scripture does not allow him to borrow (Rom 13:8).
- E. Advise him to ask brother X who has more money than you.

5. After a meeting in your home, you see that a sum of money is missing. You suspect a girl who has recently been baptised, but there is no definite proof. What should you do?

- A. Ignore the incident and hope it will not happen again.
- B. Accuse her to her face and wait to see what she will say.
- C. Ask one of the older local sisters to question her.
- D. Leave some money in the same place next week and watch to see what happens.

6. You have a young man working for you. He is a believer with severe emotional problems. Despite your efforts to encourage and advise him, he becomes more and more unreliable. Although he is honest with money, and the job provides him with stability and an income, he arrives at least half an hour late for work every day and sometimes leaves the shop unattended. What should you do?

- A. Rebuke him sternly... and risk giving him a nervous breakdown.
- B. Bear patiently with him (and your customers' complaints), knowing your business is rapidly failing.
- C. Reduce the hours of business (and his wages) to suit his capacities.
- D. Sack him, knowing he is unlikely to find another job, and appoint someone else in his place.

7. A young Christian is working for his Muslim uncle, and living with him. The uncle expects him to fast during the month of Ramadan. The young believer does not want to, knowing that fasting is seen as a commitment to Islam. But if he does not conform, he might lose his job and home. What would you advise him to do?

- A. Declare himself a Christian, refuse to fast, and take the consequences.
- B. Keep the fast, but tell his uncle and workmates that he is fasting only to please the uncle, not God.
- C. Fast when people are watching, but take some bread secretly into the toilet whenever he feels hungry.
- D. Fast (and pray) more than his uncle, to show that Christians are set free from the desires of the flesh.

8. Shortly after becoming a Christian, a young man finds he is called up for national service in the army. Soldiers are compelled to observe Muslim religious practices, and the army is now fighting a bloody guerrilla war against rebels. What should he do?

- A. Join the army, submitting to the powers ordained by God.
- B. Bribe the authorities to excuse him.
- C. Refuse to be enlisted, and suffer a lengthy prison sentence.
- D. Run away.

9. A young woman appears unexpectedly at the Sunday meeting. She used to attend the girls' midweek group but then married a Muslim. She has not been seen for three years. Now she says the Lord has spoken to her through a dream and wants to be baptised immediately. She obviously expects everyone will be delighted to see her. You do not want to discourage her but you are not sure if she is sincere. What should you do?

- A. Welcome her into the meeting and say you will discuss the possibility of baptism after she has been coming a number of weeks.
- B. Send her away with a booklet containing lessons to prepare for baptism.
- C. Ask her to come back tomorrow and discuss her "dream" and her desire for baptism.
- D. Baptise her immediately to celebrate her fresh commitment and renewed faith in Christ.

10. A Christian couple believe their baby has been miraculously healed of a genetic heart defect. They are very excited and tell everyone about the Lord's power to heal. You have medical training and know that the child's illness was probably misdiagnosed. This was not a miraculous healing at all. What will you do?

- A. Tell the couple it was not a miracle.
- B. Say nothing about it to anyone.
- C. Rejoice with the couple that their child is well, and agree that it may have been a miracle.
- D. Discreetly tell the other believers the facts of the matter as you understand them.

11. A young believer has just passed his driving test and asks to borrow your car for two months while you are away. He could not afford to repair the car or replace it in case of breakdown or accident. There is no comprehensive insurance cover available. You could not afford to replace it yourself. What should you do?

- A. Let him borrow it, trusting nothing will go wrong.
- B. Explain you cannot lend it to him if he cannot afford to repair it – and risk seriously offending him.
- C. Offer to pay for him to hire a car of his own for two months.
- D. Suggest that he save up to buy a car of his own.

Required Reading: chapter 14 of *MSTN*. **Recommended Reading:** *The Process of Conversion*.

12. Spiritual Health Care for Pioneer Missionaries

Note: This session introduces several practical subjects which are discussed more fully in the document *Preparing for Mission*. If your students are in training for mission, you could use this session to discuss their response to that document.

Missionary Guidance

Starting in mission

We have considered the biblical concept of mission as apostleship (*apostolē*).

The apostles were commissioned to proclaim and testify about Christ in all the world...
and to make disciples of those who accepted the proclamation and testimony.

Now what do you think?

* **Is every believer called to be a missionary (Gk. *apostolos*)?**

* **What is a “missionary call”? Do you think some people can have a missionary call today?**

* **What does the New Testament say about the appointment of missionaries?**

Some things are clear from scripture:

1. Only a small number are called to be missionaries.

Jesus told his eleven disciples to make disciples, and to teach their disciples to make disciples.

From that time onwards, *every believer is called to make disciples*.

But from among his many disciples, Jesus chose only twelve to be called “apostles”...
and trained as missionaries (Mk 3:14).

Later he sent out seventy-two, saying, “The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are **few**.”

Therefore **pray earnestly** to the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest” (Lk 10:2).

For such a great task, seventy-two were considered “few” – they were not enough.

But Jesus did not send out all who believed in him, or all who wanted to go.

The workers were given in answer to **prayer** – special people – suitable, prepared for service, and ready to go.

Only a small number of Paul’s converts were invited to join his team for missionary training and service.

They were skilled at proclamation, experienced in discipling, free to travel far, capable of enduring hardship.

It was a special privilege... to live by faith, seeking their Lord for daily guidance and daily bread.

2. Every fellowship should send missionaries.

When disciples are gathered into fellowships, each disciple will contribute something for the benefit of all.

A variety of spiritual gifts will be found among them contributing to the growth of the body of Christ.

The first gift to be listed in the NT is the gift of *apostleship*. It is the highest gift, the most important gift...

and we are urged to earnestly seek the highest gifts (Eph 4:11-12; 1 Cor 12:28-31).

Not everyone in the fellowship will be an apostle (a pioneer missionary)...

but some will receive this gift from the Lord. It is a gift to the body of Christ, the Church.

The believers will want to send out those who are gifted in this way...

so they can accomplish the apostolic task entrusted to them by the Lord.

3. Missionaries should be highly honoured.

To be faithful as a missionary of the gospel is not easy.

No one should attempt it without being sure of the Lord’s guidance and blessing.

Count the cost before you start to build.

Gain experience of serving the Lord at home and on short-term missions.

This will help you see if you have the ability, the faith and the discipline to succeed.

Epaphroditus was a pioneer missionary – Paul’s “brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier”.

He was sent by the church at Philippi to support Paul’s testimony in a prison and courtroom in a foreign land.

On account of his work for the gospel, Epaphroditus was seriously ill.

Paul said, “Honour such men, for he nearly died for the work of Christ, risking his life” (Phil 2:29-30).

Aquila and Priscilla also endangered their lives, as did Paul himself and Barnabas.

They were deeply loved and respected for that reason (Rom 16:3-4; Acts 15:25-26).

The missionaries we send should never have cause to doubt our love, respect and support for them.

They are denying themselves and facing difficulties in order to take the gospel to the ends of the earth.

So we learn from the New Testament that...

all believers are called to make disciples;

some disciples are called to apostleship;

all believers should love and honour those they have sent out as apostles (missionaries).

*** How can I know if the Lord is calling me to cross-cultural mission?**

*** Who decides if I should be a missionary?**

You may hear a sermon about mission, or meet a missionary, or study a course like this one...

and you begin to feel that perhaps the Lord is calling you to cross-cultural mission.

This is not a decision that anyone should make in haste.

If it is the Lord's will, he will make it clear to you in many ways.

As a first step you will be wise to...

1. Gain some missionary experience.

The best way to start in mission is when a senior missionary asks you to help in the work that he or she is doing.

You will learn many things from a person with skills acquired through long experience.

The Twelve and the Seventy-two learned much from Jesus.

Paul invited young men to work with him and learn from him how to do the work (Acts 16:3; 15:40).

There may be short-term missions organised by your church or by a mission society. Find out about them.

Or you could arrange to visit a missionary and see what they are doing.

Find some immigrants living near you. Make friends, share your testimony and explain the gospel to them.

2. Gain the support of your church.

It is good to be sent by the Holy Spirit and the church.

Paul and Barnabas were sent out by the fellowship in Antioch. As they were praying, "the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them'" (Acts 13:2).

The company of believers will continue to pray for you and will be glad to hear your news (Acts 14:26-27).

3. Gain assurance from the Lord.

Paul was not chosen or appointed by his church. It was God who set him apart before he was born (Gal 1:15).

Mission to the Gentiles was not Paul's idea or his family's idea or the church's idea.

It was revealed to him personally – firstly through his vision on the Damascus road.

Then as he followed instructions step by step, the moment came when Jesus said,

"Go, for I will send you far away to the Gentiles" (Acts 22:21).

The Lord had a plan for Paul's life and he revealed it progressively to Paul himself (Gal 1:15-2:10).

Every pioneer missionary (apostle) should have this sense of personal calling from Jesus.

It will give you strength to persevere when circumstances are difficult or discouraging.

It will help you to do what you believe to be right, even when other people think differently.

*** How do you think a missionary will decide where to go and what to do?**

Some quite obvious things may influence your decision:

- If a senior missionary invites you to join him or her, you will go where they go, or where they send you. So Tychicus, Titus and Timothy went with Paul until he sent them somewhere else.
- If a mission society appoints you to a particular place or task, you will normally be happy to accept it.
- If you have gone on a short-term mission and enjoyed it, you may decide it is the place for you.
- You may become aware of a people-group in spiritual darkness or physical crisis, and decide to go there.
- You may want to look for a completely unreached place or people-group, and find out more about them:
 - research on the ground (e.g. CAPRO reports in Nigeria)
 - research on the internet (e.g. Joshua Project at www.joshuaproject.net)
 - research with immigrants (asking where they come from, enquiring if there are any Christians there).

You may discover that there are 3 unreached people-groups in Zambia, 20 in Ethiopia, 26 in Britain, 70 in Nigeria and 2,500 in India.

You can find out exactly where they are and identify their basic beliefs and probable felt-needs.

You will also be wise to consider the following principles:

1. Start where you are and work outwards.

At the beginning of their missionary career, Jesus told his disciples, "You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

They must start where they are, then go to the surrounding area, then to the next region, then finally – when they have gained much more experience – to places far away.

Learn from this to begin where you are. Explain the gospel to people near you, then a little further away.

Gain experience at each stage, preparing you for the next stage...

until you are ready to go into more remote and difficult places.

2. Look for a place of great need, or a place of great potential.

Don't go where everyone else is going. Identify a place where there is no one else doing what you can do.

Look for a town with no church, a church with no teaching, a tribe with no Christians,
a language with no scriptures, a people who cannot read, a nation which was closed but is now open.
Watching the world news, you may see a place where people are in trouble and would welcome your help.
Or you may hear from a mission society about an urgent and essential task you might be able to do.

3. Consider what your health, your weaknesses and abilities equip you for.

If you can't stand hot weather, don't go to central Africa. If you are allergic to curry, don't go to India.

If you dislike reading, do not expect to be a Bible translator.

If you are shy and quiet, don't agree to lead a series of noisy youth camps.

If you have weak knees, don't offer to trek through mountains in search of nomadic tribes.

And more positively... If you speak a foreign language, look for a place where that language might be useful.

If you sing and play an instrument, or if you have medical qualifications, or if you are good with children,
or if you have a higher academic degree, or if you know about short-wave radio...

look for a place where that skill would be of value.

Personal guidance in mission

First of all, there are two things which may greatly encourage us:

1. The Lord prepares the work for us: "so we may do the good things he has planned for us to do" (Eph 2:10).

2. He prepares us for the work: "for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work" (Phil 2:13).

There are tasks waiting for each of us which the Lord has equipped us to undertake.

But how can we know what they are? How can we know exactly what he is calling us to do?

This is not a matter for hasty decisions affecting your life and the life of many others.

As Paul left Ephesus they begged him to stay; he replied, "I will return to you if God wills" (Acts 18:21).

Planning a trip to Corinth, he told them, "I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills" (1 Cor 4:19).

A missionary must learn to "discern what is the will of God" (Rom 12:2).

There are five principles of guidance taught in the New Testament:

- 1. Search the scriptures** Ja 1:22-25
- 2. Consult other believers** Prov 11:14
- 3. Obtain useful information** Acts 10:29; 8:34; Phil 1:9-10
- 4. Observe providence** Acts 14:27; 1 Cor 16:8-9
- 5. Respond to his Spirit** Lk 4:1; Acts 8:39; 11:12

In the New Testament we see missionaries guided in each of these five ways.

* How were NT believers guided in the following circumstances? How did they know what to do?

- | | |
|---------------|---|
| Acts 5:28-29 | 1. by the biblical principle of obedience to him |
| Acts 8:4-5 | 4. by providential circumstances |
| Acts 9:23-30 | 3. by useful information and 2. advice from other believers |
| Acts 13:1-3 | 2. by consulting the believers and 5. the witness of Spirit |
| Acts 13:46-47 | 1. by the written word of God |
| Acts 15:6-25 | by all five |
| Acts 16:6-10 | 5. by the witness of the Spirit and 4. providential circumstances |
| Acts 16:13-14 | 3. by useful information (discovering there was a place for prayer by the river) |
| 2 Cor 2:12-13 | 5. by spiritual concern (through the Holy Spirit) |
| Gal 2:1-10 | 4. by a providential revelation and 2. by consulting other believers |

Seeking guidance carefully and prayerfully, a missionary will learn to be...

"filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding" (Col 1:9).

We search the scriptures, consult other believers, obtain information, observe providence, respond to the Spirit.

Living like this, we can be sure the Lord will guide our steps.

So we have his promise: "In all your ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct your paths" (Prov 3:6).

Missionary Motivation

For churches...

* **How can we motivate believers to become active in cross-cultural mission?**

* **How can we encourage our churches to support missionaries?**

For missionaries...

* **How can we maintain our own motivation for cross-cultural mission?**

* **How can we encourage other missionaries?**

There are several reasons why believers get involved in mission (as missionaries or as supporters of mission). Our great desire may be...

1. **to glorify God.** As servants of God, we want all the world to know his glory and enjoy fellowship with him (Phil 2:10-11).
 2. **to obey Christ.** As disciples of Jesus, we want to please him by obeying his Great Commission (John 14:15).
 3. **to rescue the perishing.** As sinners saved by faith, we want to help others escape eternal condemnation and gain eternal life (Matt 7:13; Jn 3:16).
 4. **to hasten the coming of Christ.** Longing for the return of Christ, we desire to hasten that day by testifying to every tribe and tongue (Matt 24:14; 2 Pet 3:11-12).
 5. **to love my neighbour as myself.** Concerned for the needs of others, we desire to ease suffering of every kind and share our many blessings (Mark 12:31; Matt 14:14).
- * **Which of these would you say is your greatest motivation for mission?**

In the history of evangelical missions from the West, these five motivations have been highly significant... but not all at the same time. The letters of missionaries reveal four successive phases of mission:

In the 18th century, a desire **to glorify God.**

In the 19th century, **to obey Christ.**

In the 20th century, **to rescue the perishing**, and also to **hasten the coming of Christ.**

In the 21st century, **to love my neighbour as myself** (providing holistic health and comfort for all).

Of course, this is no more than a general pattern. There have been many exceptions.¹

* **What do you think were Paul's motives for mission?**

- * **Read Phil 1:15-26... What motives for mission do we see here? Any bad motives? Any good motives?**
envy, rivalry (v.15), selfish ambition (v.17)
good intentions (v.15), in love (v.16), to exalt Christ (v.20), the progress and joy of others in the faith (v.25)

Some people want to become missionaries for wrong reasons.

It may be a desire for adventure or for admiration and status in the church, a desire for financial support.

It may be zeal to promote a certain church denomination or doctrine against another.

In some cases it may be a desire to atone for some past sin or to make me a better Christian.

It may be an attempt to escape from a bad situation at home or in church.

What happens when someone has false motives?

The Lord does not bless their work. They usually get frustrated and give up.

We need to be right with the Lord and with other people. If we are not, then he will not bless us or our work.

But sometimes a person who becomes a missionary for a wrong reason, later discovers a right reason...
and *becomes an excellent missionary.*

A missionary in Angola, c.1940-60

"Trekking among the bush villages of Central Africa was hard but it was a constant joy to me... I walked many miles along those narrow paths through the long grass each day, stopping now and then with my fellow travellers to tell different village people the message of God's love for them..."

"Upon reaching a village I always spoke first to the chief to ask permission to hold a meeting. In keeping with African custom, the visit must begin with gift-giving. I would offer the chief a gift which he would have to (and want to) accept, then he would reciprocate with something such as a live chicken for my evening meal.

"Around the camp fire at night it was my greatest thrill to speak to these people in the villages living and dying without a knowledge of the Saviour. These were men and women to win for the Master who had sent me to them, among whom I could live for him, and whom I could help in their sicknesses and sorrows. My earthly home is there with these jungle dwellers, whose language I learned, and whose ways and customs surrounded [my wife] and me for so many years that they became our own."²

Here are two texts from Nigeria which show how the Lord may guide us in cross-cultural gospel outreach.

Maijiki is a Muslim boy of the Fulani people in northern Nigeria. Here he tells us his story:

Twice a day we took our cows to the bush. Every morning we were in the bush from 7 to 10 o'clock. One afternoon, while I was reading my Islamic book in the Hausa language, we heard some people coming towards our camp. We saw about eight young men and a white man. When they arrived we gave them mats to sit on. We

¹ R B Dann, *The Primitivist Missiology of Anthony Norris Groves* (Tamarisk, 2007), pp.39-42

² R Crawford Allison, *Leaves from the African Jungle* (John Ritchie, 1999), pp.36-38

also brought them a large calabash of milk to drink according to our custom. After drinking, we asked them what brought them to us. The white man said, "My name is Ralph Dek. I am a teacher at the Mkar Teachers' College. The young men with me are students there. We have come here to bring you wonderful news about our Saviour, Jesus Christ."

We wanted to hear some good news, so we asked him to share it with us. On that day he preached the word of God to us. That was my first time of hearing the name of Jesus Christ. Mr Dek continued to visit our home and share the word of God with us. He was never afraid to travel in the bush even though the paths were bad. Not only did he visit our camp, but he still continued with his other work. If all Christians obeyed the Almighty God, the whole of Africa would become Christians.

After a while, Mr Dek asked me to go with him to other Fulani camps to preach the gospel. He preached in English and I, Maijiki, translated what he said in the Fulani language. Sometimes our people asked him to heal them of their sicknesses because they thought that a white man like him would have the spirit of healing. But Mr Dek told them, "I am not a doctor." He told them it would be better if they would go to the hospital at Mkar and see a doctor.

I believed what Mr Dek was preaching. But to confess this was very hard because I was afraid of my father. He was one of the very strong Muslims among the Fulani. I would like to tell you what Mr Dek did for me. He gave me the most wonderful gift in the world. This was the Holy Bible in the Hausa language, a language which I could read. I was very happy to have this wonderful book. My reader, I am telling you that I did not sleep that night. I stayed up all night reading this book, and each day I continued reading it. I would visit Mr Dek at his home and every Sunday we would go to the Fulani camps to preach the gospel.¹

Peter is a Christian farmer of the Berom tribe in central Nigeria.

One Monday morning, Peter and his oldest son were walking to their farm. They were nearly finished with their harvest. They only had one week of cutting maize stalks and they would be through.

They continued up the road to their farm but when they were nearby, they could see cows in their field! They walked faster until they could see a young Fulani man watching the cows.

Peter looked at the cows. He wanted to tell the Fulani to go somewhere else with his cows, but he decided to let him stay. Peter looked at his son and said, "Let's get to work."

They started cutting and stacking the maize stalks. Peter heard someone chopping behind him. To his surprise the young Fulani man was chopping stalks too and stacking them on their piles. He worked with them all morning, talking a little with Peter's son. In late morning, a young Fulani girl brought a calabash with food for the Fulani. He asked Peter if they would like food, but Peter wasn't sure that he wanted to eat Fulani food *with* a Fulani. He just said, "No" and went on working with his son.

The Fulani man worked beside them some more, but in the early afternoon, while he did his Muslim prayers, his cows moved away. The Fulani followed them.

On Tuesday Peter and his son found that the Fulani man had returned. To their surprise, some Fulani women were also there, putting up their leaf houses. As Peter and his son walked onto his farm, an older Fulani man walked over to them and greeted them warmly. He invited them to come with him. They moved to the shade of a tree, where the older man had put a mat.

They took off their shoes and sat down. Peter did not know what would happen. The old man came back and greeted them again. He seemed a bit nervous. One of the women brought a calabash with some food. The Fulani man said, "Eat, eat!" He didn't say much, but Peter knew what God was telling him to say. He asked, "Would you like to live on our farm during dry season? If you'd like to live here, you have my blessing." Peter smiled.

The Fulani man looked surprised. He did not answer quickly. After a few moments, he said that he would like for his family to live there for a few months. "That's good," Peter said. "We would like to be your friends."

(This story is fiction but based on genuine experience. The story continues, showing how the Fulani came to faith in Jesus Christ through the kindness of Peter and his wife, and the opportunities they took to share the gospel.)²

In these two stories...

- * **How did the Christians make contact with the Muslim people?**
- * **What did the Christians offer?**
- * **Why do you think the Christians decided to do what they did? What was their motivation?**
- * **Why was their outreach effective?**

¹ abridged from Maijiki Usman, *An Autobiography of a Christian Fulani* (from ACTS, Bukuru, Plateau State, Nigeria)

² abridged from *How to Share Jesus with the Fulani* (Baptist Press, Ibadan) (from ACTS, Bukuru, Plateau State, Nigeria)

Culture Shock

* What is culture shock?

a feeling of anxiety, stress, disorientation, uncertainty or confusion when operating in a foreign culture.

* When do people get culture shock?

When they enter a culture which is unfamiliar and uncomfortable for them.

It may be in a different social community, another tribe, or a foreign country.

A biblical approach to culture shock

* Can you think of any Bible characters who faced culture shock?

* Which of these dealt well with culture shock and which badly?

Abraham left the city of Ur for a nomadic life.

For his own safety or benefit, he deceived his host in Egypt by saying his wife was his sister.

Lot chose to live in Sodom and was "greatly distressed by the sensual conduct of the wicked".

He barely escaped with his life.

Joseph became a slave in a foreign country. Adopting Egyptian culture, he kept his faith and rose to power.

He said, "God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction."

Moses fled from civilised Egypt to the wilds of Midian and married a Midianite (a descendant of Abraham).

He benefited from the advice of her father and brother (Jethro and Hobab).

Samson embraced and then rejected Philistine culture.

Ruth left her homeland of Moab and went to live in Israel.

She said, "Your people shall be my people, and your God my God"

Daniel in Babylon refused to compromise with the local culture on food issues and religious issues.

He was eventually able to influence the Babylonian government.

Esther was taken from her Jewish home to become a Persian queen.

Peter, when instructed to eat Gentile food, replied, "By no means, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean" (Acts 10:14). But then he was the first to proclaim the gospel in a Gentile home.

Paul was upset by idolatry in Athens and by misunderstanding in Lystra.

He was accused of advocating customs that were not lawful for Romans (Acts 16:21).

Many of the major Bible characters faced culture shock.

Some dealt well with it, and some less well. We can learn a lot from them and be encouraged.

The document *Preparing for Mission* identifies **four stages** that people go through when entering a new culture:

1. Excitement 2. Assessment 3. Adjustment 4. Attainment

* Have you experienced any of these four stages?

Survival strategies for culture shock

* How would you advise someone who is experiencing culture shock?

1. Maintain a measure of personal normality.
2. Don't invest major energy in minor problems.
3. Accept the things you cannot change.
4. Change what can be changed.
5. Build some local friendships.
6. Write it all down.
7. Pray.

Culture shock is a learning experience.

If you deal well with culture shock, you will come through it a wiser and more balanced person.

You will learn to think more clearly, to evaluate cultures more effectively (including your own culture).

Eventually you will find you can help other people adapt to a new culture as you have done.

Be prepared for culture shock, learn something from every experience...

but do not become obsessed with cultural issues.

Your aim in life is not to become an expert in culture but an effective ambassador for Christ.

Pastoral Care for Missionaries

Note: This is an essential subject that should not be overlooked. But make sure to respect privacy and confidentiality. Some students may have personal issues which they would prefer to discuss privately.

Personal problems that missionaries face

* What problems do you think missionaries may face?

1. Some are inadequately supported.

They may not have enough money for food and rent.

This can happen if their home church lacks love or respect for them, or loses interest in their work.

- It may be their own fault if they have failed to send news of what they are doing.
- It may be the fault of the church leaders if they fail to read out the news in a main meeting.
- It may be a failure in the church administration if they fail to collect and send sufficient money.

Financial support may be low if their friends at home suffer poverty.

It may also be low if their home church expects someone else to support them (a foreign society or another church).

With thought and prayer the church may find ways to raise more money for them.

Inadequate support may lead some missionaries to seek part-time employment.

Others may supplement their income by growing vegetables or raising livestock.

This may also help them to be known and respected in the community.

Some missionaries may be advised or required by their society to visit a wealthy country to raise support...

but this would take them away from their work and is hardly likely to cover the expense of their travel.

2. Some have difficult living conditions.

They may be suffering from many aspects of culture shock (we have considered this).

Their house may not be comfortable, healthy or safe.

The people around them may be suspicious or unfriendly.

They may have had bad experiences – accidents, cheating, theft, illness.

Not understanding the language, they may misinterpret what is said to them and make serious mistakes.

3. Some have disagreements with other missionaries.

People who go to serve Christ in foreign countries are usually strong-minded and strong-willed.

Paul and Barnabas found they could not agree and so went in different directions (Acts 15:39).

Senior missionaries have established their way of working and may not accept new ideas.

This can lead to serious tensions and conflicts. It has caused many young missionaries to return home.

Pastoral care and wise advice may be needed... to ensure that everyone is effective and happy in their work.

4. Some are worried about their children.

If young children are away at school, their parents may be worried they are unhappy or homesick.

The cost of keeping them at a boarding school may also be a concern.

If the children are with their parents, they may not settle at school in a foreign language and culture.

There may be no other children of Christian families nearby who could be good friends for them.

Childhood illnesses and accidents may be a continuous anxiety to parents.

5. Some may not know what to do each day.

Some missionaries are not very good at organising their personal activities or planning systematic outreach.

Most will benefit if they have a daily schedule to follow.

At first there will be regular periods for language study, and particular times of day for developing friendships.

Later there should be a deliberate programme for active evangelism.

6. Some may suffer persecution.

This is an important subject which we will consider in due course (see below, Opposition and persecution).

7. Some may get discouraged.

Many missionaries get discouraged. Even Paul was discouraged about the Galatians and the Corinthians... and about those in Asia who turned away from him and those who abandoned him at his trial

(Gal 3:1-6; 1 Cor 1:10-12; 2 Tim 1:15; 4:16).

It is vital for us to do all we can to encourage our missionaries.

In their difficult circumstances they may need to share personal problems and decisions.

They will value the loving sympathy of friends at home.

We must pray for them, listen to what they say, help in any way we can, offer prayerful advice and counsel.

The role of churches and mission societies

* **If you are a pastor, would you be happy for your church to support a missionary?**

* **Do you think that sending a missionary would be a burden to your church... or a blessing to your church?**

* **Would you encourage your young people to consider going as missionaries?**

- * **Do you feel positive towards the missionaries you have sent? Do you get on well with them?**
- * **Could you improve the relationship?**

Missionaries should generally be sent by churches.

A person desiring to become a missionary should always seek the approval of his or her home church.

There are three reasons for this:

1. The church will know **the character of the person**. They will have seen if he or she is a godly believer, faithful and persevering in service and so worthy of confidence as a missionary.
2. The church will know **the abilities of the person**. Having identified the spiritual gifts that he or she has exercised in the activities of the fellowship, they should be able to advise about where those abilities might be put to good use.
3. If the church has approved and sent out the missionary, **they will be far more committed to praying and supporting** the person they have sent.

- * **How might a church be a real blessing to the missionaries they have sent?**

- * **Are you aware of any mission societies? Or missionaries working with societies?**

There are certain advantages in joining a mission society:

1. Its experienced leaders may have **much useful advice**. They will be aware of needs and opportunities in particular places where your abilities might be put to good use.
2. Its leaders may be invited to **speak in many churches**, stimulating prayer for you and also financial support.
3. They may provide **good friendship and pastoral care** for you (and your children), and help you deal with missionary problems that your church will not understand.

But a mission society may also put pressure on you to leave your work in order to attend conferences or visit places or write reports or accept administrative duties. This can seriously distract you from language study and from the work of evangelism and discipling.

There may sometimes be **special circumstances**. For example a believer may wish to become a missionary but his church does not agree, and refuses to offer him any financial support. He contacts a missionary society but they will not accept him until he has a certain amount of money from his church. In these circumstances...

* **What would you advise him to do?**

He might continue to serve faithfully in the ministry of his church, growing in spiritual knowledge and ability, sharing his missionary vision and praying that the church will eventually want to support him.

Or he might apply for a secular job in a spiritually needy place and share the gospel there while earning his own living.

A teacher or a person on national service may be sent somewhere far from home. This young man or woman may be the only Christian believer in their school or town.

* **From your experience do you think their home church would consider this person to be a missionary?**

Will their church pray for them, encourage them and counsel them to share the gospel and make disciples?

Will that person feel they can do something in that place for Christ?

Or will they feel they can do nothing because they do not have the title of "missionary"?

* **Do you think a missionary needs special training?**

The best possible training was that received by Peter, John, Silas, Timothy and others in the New Testament.

They learned by working alongside an experienced missionary.

Many churches do not provide good opportunities for their young people to learn through experience like this.

Some do not provide adequate knowledge of the Bible or apply it to the problems of life in different cultures.

For this reason a **short-term mission** with a well-organised society may be very helpful indeed.

A course of study in a **missionary training school** may also be very helpful.

There are areas of knowledge that most believers do not need but which are **essential for a missionary**.

Consider what preparation would be most *useful for the place you are going to* and the work you will be doing.

Learn what you can about the beliefs and customs of the people you intend to reach.

Consider their felt-needs and how the gospel will be good news for them in their circumstances.

Learn some of the local language so you can immediately make friends and win respect.

Medical or engineering skills or language teaching may prove useful and gain you many friends.

Repairing a car or generator, and growing tropical crops, may add to your comfort, health and safety.

Every missionary should acquire some understanding of First Aid, hygiene and basic medicines.

*** How do you think we can help our churches to become more involved in mission?**

1. **Teach the church** about mission in the New Testament and especially from the book of Acts.
Challenge young people to seek the Lord's will for their life and consider mission as a possibility.
2. In the main meetings of the church, **bring interesting news** of progress in mission around the world.
Pray regularly for missionaries known to the fellowship.
3. Encourage the leadership to **re-assess the spiritual priorities** of the church.
Is a building project really more important than supporting an evangelist to an unreached tribe?
Could your church compound become a place where foreign visitors might receive help and find Christ?
4. **Launch a gospel outreach** in your neighbourhood or further away.
This will enable young believers to gain experience of evangelism and to develop their ability and vision.
It could be an excellent preparation for mission in more difficult places.
5. **Start a mission training course** to prepare your youth for cross-cultural outreach.
This will provide some specific teaching... like that presented in this course on Biblical Missiology.
6. **Encourage missionaries to visit your church.**
Make them feel appreciated and give them opportunity to speak about their work.
Encourage your children to make friends with their children.
Help the missionary family to feel loved so they know your church is their church too.
7. When missionaries return to their work, **send frequent messages** with news from the church.
Assure them of your prayer. Think what they might need and send it if possible. Remember,
"If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together" (1 Cor 12:26).

*** How can a pioneer missionary always keep happy in the Lord when far from home?**

Learn how to be self-sufficient, and how to live cheaply using local vegetables and fruit.

You may be able to grow certain vegetables or keep hens for eggs.

You will have a sense of achievement if you can repair your house, make your clothes, mend your shoes etc.

Paint the walls, put up shelves. Make your own mark on the place you live and you will feel more at home.

Take some good books and CDs – for Bible teaching and for relaxation.

Get an internet connection if possible, especially for use of Skype and email so you can communicate.

Visit your home church once a year – not more often or you may never settle into the routines of life in the field.

Family life

Single or married?

*** Do you think it is better for a missionary to be single, or married?**

Paul has an opinion on this matter:

"To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is good for them to remain single as I am" (1 Cor 7:8).

*** Why does he think this way? Read 1 Cor 7:32-34.**

A single person has certain advantages:

1. A single person is concerned simply to please the Lord and is always available to do his will... and to help anyone in need. He or she can quickly change plans without needing to consult anyone.
2. A single person is free from concern for the needs of children, the preferences of a spouse... and the responsibility to provide for them.
3. A single person can occupy a smaller house and so pay less rent.
He or she can eat and travel more cheaply, and be less of a burden when visiting other people.

But a single person may also experience particular difficulties:

1. We all have a natural desire for love and affection, and for someone to confide in.
2. In time of illness or accident, a person on their own may be vulnerable.
3. There may be emotional or sexual frustrations: "It is better to marry than to burn with passion" (1 Cor 7:9).
4. A single person may be less trusted than a married person.

In many cultures an unmarried adult will be unusual and will be watched for signs of oddness.

For this reason it may be harder for a single person to "avoid every appearance of evil" (1 Thess 5:22).

Marriage may largely resolve these issues, and in addition may provide:

1. a Christian home where a fellowship of believers can meet (1 Cor 16:19).
2. a model of Christian marriage and child-raising that others may copy.
3. a family of well-trained children who have learned how to follow and serve Christ.
They will be godly leaders and role-models for the next generation.

The missionary couple

People hearing the gospel for the first time will have no understanding of Christian marriage or family life.

New converts will watch a missionary couple or family very carefully to see how they live.

They will notice how the husband and wife speak to one another and interact, and how the children behave.

The new believers are learning from your example.

There can be tensions between responsibilities in mission and responsibilities in marriage.

An evangelist may often be away from home and neglect his wife.

A pastor may devote his time to the members of his church and forget about his own children.

A missionary mother may be so involved with a school or clinic that she cannot care properly for her family.

Or... a missionary may be so busy looking after his wife, or improving his house, or schooling his children...

that he has little time for gospel outreach or teaching new believers.

Every missionary couple will need to discuss issues of this sort and reach agreement.

*** Do you know any missionary couples whose marriage is a good example to others?**

The missionary family

*** Do you know any missionary parents whose children are a good example to others?**

*** What particular difficulties do you think missionary children may face?**

The missionary home

*** "In any Christian home, visitors may experience a foretaste of paradise." Would you agree? Do you know of any homes like this?**

*** "The gospel will not reach our neighbourhood until we welcome our neighbours into our home." Would you agree?**

*** Have you seen how a contrast of cultures and languages may affect the relations between the guests and the children of a missionary family?**

*** "A Christian home is still the best place in the world for teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread and prayer." Would you agree?**

*** A fellowship may often meet in a home, but what happens when there is a family crisis?**

Note: The section **Family Life** in the document *Preparing for Mission* offers advice for missionary couples and parents.

Accountability

*** What do you understand by the word "accountability"?**

"the obligation to inform someone else about our actions and decisions, and to justify what we have done".

Or "the duty to inform and satisfy a superior".

Missionary accountability

As missionaries, we should always thank our friends warmly for their support and send them regular news.

They will then be sure we have received what they sent and will gladly pray for us in our work for the Lord.

This is simply a matter of courtesy. No one could possibly find fault with this.

But in recent years there has been an *increasing emphasis on missionary accountability*.

A missionary may be required to keep an exact record of the money he receives and spends...

and even to show what he has done each hour of the day.

A report must then be sent every month to the headquarters of his society or the mission board of his church.

This form of "accountability" raises more questions.

*** Would you say that accountability is a feature of Western culture? Of African or Indian culture? Of gospel culture?**

*** Is missionary accountability a biblical concept? Do we find it in the Bible?**

*** If we do good, should we tell people about it? Or should we do it secretly? (Matt 6:4)**

*** Should we work as people-pleasers? (Eph 6:6).**

It could be argued that every Christian is accountable in three directions:

Accountability to the Lord

“Each of us will give an account of himself to God” (Rom 14:12).

“Each one will receive his commendation from God” (1 Cor 4:4-5).

“God is not unjust so as to overlook your work and the love that you have shown for his name in serving the saints” (Heb 6:10).

We work, not as people-pleasers, but as servants of Christ, looking to him for our reward (Eph 6:6-8; Col 3:24).

Being accountable to God, we may even hide what we do from the people around us (Matt 6:4, 6 etc.).

Accountability to your own conscience

Satisfying his conscience mattered more to Paul than satisfying the Jewish council (Acts 23:1).

“With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court” (1 Cor 4:3).

His conscience helped him in every decision...

“I always take pains to have a clear conscience” (Acts 24:16)... “the testimony of our conscience, that we behaved in the world with simplicity and godly sincerity” (2 Cor 1:12)... “We are sure that we have a clear conscience, desiring to act honourably in all things” (Heb 13:18).

He always examined himself and his work... “Let each one test his own work” (Gal 6:4).

“Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God” (1 Jn 3:21).

Accountability to other believers

Paul considered himself **a steward and a servant** to the entire Church of Jesus Christ...

labouring “for the sake of his body, that is, the Church, of which I became a servant according to the stewardship from God that was given to me” (Col 1:24-25).

He was determined that **no one should ever find a genuine fault in him**.

“We take this course so that no one should blame us” (2 Cor 8:20).

“We put no obstacle in anyone’s way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry” (2 Cor 6:3).

He made sure that those who supported and prayed for him received **news of his work**.

He reported back to the Antioch fellowship that had sent him out (Acts 14:27).

He sent a friend to pass on his news and encourage the believers in Ephesus (Eph 6:21-22).

He wrote letters to many churches so they would know how his ministry was progressing (1 Cor 16:9).

He was quick to thank those who sent a gift (Phil 4:14-18).

But Paul **never put himself under the control of anyone**.

He did not submit himself to a sending church or society compelling him to follow a system of accountability.

He insisted, “If I were still trying to please human beings, I would not be a servant of Christ” (Gal 1:10).

Issues of accountability

In our own day many missionaries are required to write regularly to their mission agency or home church... giving news of their work. Why is this so strongly emphasized?

1. We need people to **pray for us** (Rom 15:30-31; Eph 6:19-20).
2. We need people to **support us** financially (so the work we are doing may continue).
3. We need to show we are working hard and therefore **worthy of their trust**.
4. We have opportunity to encourage and inspire our churches, and to **set an example** that others may follow.

But the question of accountability can sometimes become a serious problem.

We may have too much accountability... or too little. It is hard to keep the balance.

Some agencies require financial accounts every month and detailed reports on the use of time.

A missionary who wants to go out and preach the gospel must spend hours at the computer typing reports.

He wonders why it is considered necessary, and may begin to question, “Does it mean they don’t trust me?”

It is usually not a question of trust but a desire to awaken missionary interest and raise more support for you.

When people see that you are using their money well, they will be happy to provide for you.

Receiving regular news, they will be able to pray more intelligently for you.

What you write will be a blessing to them if you are prayerfully led by the Holy Spirit in what you write.

But it is also possible that they do not trust you, after bad experience of missionaries who were not faithful.

This does not mean they suspect you personally of being unfaithful. But if they have been hurt by others... you may need to win their confidence and show you are worthy of their trust.

* **In what church or mission circumstances do you think detailed accountability might be necessary?**

* **When would accountability be unnecessary?**

Accountability, integrity and fellowship

After discussing all these aspects of accountability, there may be some missionaries who still dislike the word. They point out that “accountability” is a business concept from the world of industry and commerce. It differs significantly from the biblical idea of *koinonia* (fellowship or partnership).

In a relationship of accountability, one person has power over another. The subordinate is required to justify his actions and may at any moment fail to fulfill the expectations of his superior. There is always the possibility of shame and rejection, which can become a constant fear. When one person is *accountable* to another, he or she will be tempted, and perhaps compelled, to join the ranks of those who offer “eye-service as men-pleasers” (Eph 6:6).

Detailed reports may be appropriate for industrial and commercial enterprises, where an employee, like the dishonest steward of the parable, must give an account of oil and wheat (Luke 16:1-8). Reports may even be advisable in a large Christian institution dealing with medical supplies or school equipment. But *accountability* may seem quite the wrong word to use when thinking of a man or woman who has forsaken home and comfort for a dangerous task of pioneer outreach that offers little honour or reward in this world. It seems equally inappropriate for any happy relationship of mutual love and respect between brothers and sisters in Christ as they work together in his name. That is why the New Testament describes such relationships in terms of fellowship, service and love, rather than accountability. Indeed, in many cultures of the world, to require accountability of a Christian friend or colleague will inevitably imply mistrust, and this can be acutely offensive.

The shame cultures of the world must usually be driven by networks of accountability. But we are not of the world. We have a new culture learned from Christ, a conscience culture with gospel principles governing all we do. Instead of accountability, we have learned to think in terms of integrity, honesty, faithfulness and a clear conscience. We have integrity towards God, towards ourselves and towards others.

If we write reports, the details will confirm our integrity. But we do not maintain our standards of integrity for the sake of our reports. We are honest, faithful, hard-working and pure in heart because we are disciples of Christ and that is sufficient reason.

If a system of accountability is in place, we may willingly accept it – like any system of law – for the sake of peace and for the safety it brings when people with different standards are working together (1 Tim 1:9). But your own strength will lie in your clear conscience before the Lord. You are walking in the light; you have nothing to hide. You carry confidence and self-respect with you wherever you go. You know that God will bless you, and that people have good reason to trust you. You are at peace with yourself, with your Lord, and with everyone else.

The natural life-span of a mission society

The history of evangelical missions shows a repeated pattern. Each mission society starts with a dynamic vision proposed by an individual totally committed to Christ and willing to labour and suffer in order to carry the gospel to unreached peoples. Recruits are inspired by bold plans and immediate progress, and significant numbers of young men and women join the mission with high ideals and expectations.

These now require a measure of organisation. Leadership of the mission passes to administrators and accountants, and gradually bureaucracy takes over. Many of its best missionaries leave. Before long it ceases to play a significant part in gospel outreach. The vision and dedication of the founder are now considered somewhat extreme and regrettable.

As its members decline in number, the organisation is taken over by another organisation and so ceases to exist. The whole cycle can take 50 years or 100 years or more. In some cases it has been completed within the lifetime of the founder.

*** Do you think this sequence is inevitable? Is there any way to avoid it? Is it actually a good thing, allowing new missions to emerge in each generation?**

Opposition and Persecution

Note: See the section **Opposition and Persecution** in the document *Preparing for Mission*, and also **Preparing for persecution** in chapter 14 of *MSTN* (pp.169-174).

*** Have you experienced opposition or persecution on account of the gospel? How did you deal with it?**

*** Why do you think the followers of Jesus are persecuted today?**

Most persecution is inspired by ignorance. People are often afraid of things they do not understand.

We overcome ignorance by teaching and living the truth (Rom 12:17-18; 1 Pet 3:14-16; 4:13-16).

* **Persecution may come from government authorities, or from fanatical individuals and crowds. How are these different, and how may we deal with each?**

* **What doors may open as a consequence of persecution?** (See *MSTN* chap.14: Opportunities for witness.)

* **How can we help believers who are suffering persecution right now?**

Remember these basic principles:

1. Don't cause unnecessary offence.
2. Preach a positive message.
3. Be glad for each person who comes to faith.
4. Offer your suffering to Christ as a gift of love.
5. Be assured that you are on the victory side.

A dangerous technology?

Living for fifteen years in a Muslim country, we chose to have no telephone. There were several reasons for this: 1) None of the believers had a phone and we were trying to live as they lived. 2) We knew that phones were tapped by the police. 3) People would come to our house if they wanted to talk and this made it a wonderful place of fellowship and prayer.

Then mobile phones became available quite cheaply. As the believers acquired mobile phones they wanted to phone us, so we felt obliged to buy one too. There were several consequences: the believers started to phone instead of coming to the house; our conversations became shorter and less spiritual, and we rarely prayed or read the Bible over the phone. But most important... as the phones were tapped, the authorities could hear every conversation and could also tell exactly where the phone was. Whenever a believer was questioned, all his phone contacts were known too and quickly investigated. Sometimes I would phone a brother arranging to meet him and find the police already there to watch us. Then the believers received threatening phone calls night and day. The new technology – the mobile phone – made it very easy for the authorities to destroy the fellowship.

* **What other technologies do you think may do more harm than good?**

* **Would you be willing to give up a technology if it might hinder the work of God?**

Dealing with Discouragement

Note: See the section **Dealing with Discouragement** in the document *Preparing for Mission*.

* **What do you think are some things that discourage missionaries?**

A missionary may be thinking: This is a terrible place. The language is too difficult. The people are not interested. The converts are very weak. Nothing is really happening.

* **Have you had any experience of missionary discouragement? How did you deal with it?**

* **Some discouragements may be unnecessary or even foolish. How can we avoid these?**

Be hopeful but also realistic. Do not have *false expectations* about mass-movements, miracles etc.¹

* **Can you think of some ways to encourage missionaries?**

Paul was an expert in the art of encouragement.

- He reminded his friends of **gospel truths and promises that do not change...** and then added, "Encourage one another with these words" (1 Thess 4:18).
- He showed **his appreciation** for what they were doing (Col 1:3-4; Philem 4-5 etc.).
- He assured them of **his love and affection** (Phil 1:3-8)
- He focused not on the discomforts of prison but on **progress for the gospel...** knowing this would lift their spirits (Phil 1:12-14).

* **Which sentence in the Serampore agreement most inspires or encourages you?**²

The ability to encourage is a gift from the Lord (Rom 12:8).

It makes us sensitive to the circumstances of people we are with...
so we know what to say to each one (Col 4:6; Eph 4:29).

An encouraging person will never be short of friends, and will not for long be short of converts.

Required Reading: chapter 15 and Additional Notes of *MSTN*. **Recommended Reading:** *Preparing for Mission*.

¹ See the document *Rapid Mass Movements* and the text box on Miraculous Healing (page 22 of this book).

² See the document *Preparing for Mission* p.44. Serampore: pronounced *Say-ram-poor*.