

# Biblical Missiology: Class Notes

## 1. Introduction to 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.

## World Trends, Opportunities and Strategies

If we want to be effective in mission, we must address the issues of the modern world:

### 1. Increasing travel

People travelling or living far from home will expect new experiences, choices, challenges and opportunities. They may be unsettled, traumatised, hopeful or ambitious. Away from the constraints of their traditional community, they are usually more willing to consider new ideas and adopt new lifestyles.

### 2. Increasing importance of cities

City people, especially those who have recently moved to the city, may be lonely, unsettled and hoping to improve their circumstances. They may be more open to the gospel than the more traditional rural people. In the great cities of the world, where immigrants from many places are gathered together, there is great potential for cross-cultural mission.

### 3. Increasing globalization of culture

Global culture has effectively undermined traditional values and beliefs by emphasising personal assertion and enjoyment, by demonstrating new freedoms and lifestyle choices, and by promoting all the things that money can buy.

### 4. Changing social relations

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

Countries and regions that are "closed" to the gospel may require more creative strategies for entry, survival and outreach. But many ordinary people are embarrassed and disillusioned with the fanaticism and terrorism of extremists.

### 6. Increasing physical suffering

There are many opportunities to give compassionate help to people in physical need. But as financial stress, debt, bankruptcy and unemployment affect the churches, the missionaries they send are finding it increasingly difficult to raise support and pay their own expenses.

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

As evangelical faith declines in the West, spiritual responsibility for world mission passes to Nigerians, Brazilians, Indians, Chinese etc.

## Global Statistics

Almost one third of the world's people call themselves Christian. That is more than any other religion.<sup>1</sup>

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.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Operation World* (7<sup>th</sup> edn., 2010), p.3

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.worldevangelicals.org/resources/about/> (accessed 19 April 2014)

Every day **69,000 people** are converted to Christ (more than to any other religion).<sup>1</sup>

Evangelicals are increasing at an annual rate of **2.6%**... much quicker than Islam (1.9%) and Hinduism (1.2%).<sup>2</sup>

In Africa, for every 10 so-called Christians converted to Islam, 17 Muslims are converted to Christianity.<sup>3</sup>

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

Between 1940 and 2010, "Bible-believing Christians" increased from just **3%** of the world population to **12%**.<sup>4</sup>

Evangelicals are increasing worldwide twice as fast as the population, and perhaps three times as fast.

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

## What does the Bible say about Mission?

In recent years, the word "mission" has acquired many different meanings. This can be very confusing.

In the NT the concept of mission is expressed in the word **apostleship** (Gk. *apostolē* – Acts 1:24-25; Gal 2:8; 1 Cor 9:2).

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

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

**An apostle is someone sent from one place to another place.** He is sent to do something there.

Words from the *apostellō* family are found **almost 200 times in the 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 are 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 people doing this work today. We often call them missionaries.

During the past hundred years the word "missionary" has acquired a meaning quite different to anything in the NT.

In many places it now means a white person accountable to a foreign missionary society rather than the local church.

But there is no such distinction of race or accountability in the New Testament.

More recently we have been 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.

We understand from scripture that **not all are apostles** (1 Cor 12:29).

The word "**evangelist**" (Gk. *euangelistēs*) also has two elements: *eu* meaning "good", and *angelos* "messenger".

In the NT an evangelist is "a messenger of good", a person who brings good news (Acts 21:8; Eph 4:11; 2 Tim 4:5).

He **sows seed** and moves on. He does not usually travel so far as an apostle. He does not generally start churches.

He will usually have a home and family. He earns his living, and proclaims the gospel in his spare time.

Please note the difference between **evangelical** (believing the gospel) and **evangelistic** (offering the gospel to others).

## The Origin of Mission: the Lord God

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**.

**There are no missionaries in the Old Testament.** The Israelites had no gospel – no good news – for 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 and 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.

Yet God had promised a blessing through the offspring of Abraham...

to "all the families of the earth" and "all the nations of the earth" (Gen 12:3; 26:4).

Long before he made a covenant with Israel, God planned **to bless all nations**.

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

But we are shown a glimpse of it... at the very end of the Bible... describing the very end of the world (Rev 7:9-10).

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

**Required Reading:** *Sorsa Sumamo* to page 40.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.islamreview.com/articles/mythaboutislam.shtml> (data from David A. Barrett, *World Christian Encyclopedia*, 2001, p.4)

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

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.islamreview.com/articles/mythaboutislam.shtml> (accessed 19 June 2014)

<sup>4</sup> "The Amazing Countdown" (US Center for World Mission, 2010); *Operation World* (7<sup>th</sup> edn., 2010), pp.3-4

## 2. A Biblical Theology of Mission I

### The Purpose of Mission: Salvation

The Old Testament shows us many attempts **to try and solve the problems of the world**.

But **it was Jesus alone** who could heal the sick, feed the hungry, still the storm, raise the dead and forgive the wicked.

He alone could bear in his body the sin of the world and forge a new covenant in his blood for all who will trust in him.

People in OT times longed for this complete salvation, but “Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking” (Rom 11:7).

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

But the OT does not teach us how to solve the problems of the world. It does not teach 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.

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

how much we need to be forgiven, to be filled with the Holy Spirit and assured of eternal life.

The promise to Abraham is fulfilled by Christ, the offspring of Abraham (Gal 3:16).

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

The difference between the OT and the NT is Jesus Christ.

He is the only Saviour. That is why “we proclaim Christ” (Acts 8:5; 1 Cor 1:23).

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

**We must help people to find safety (salvation) by putting all their trust in Jesus Christ.**

There are significant differences between Israel and the Church...

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
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

Do a word-search for “mission” in the OT... You will find it refers in almost every case to murder or genocide!!!

We face problems when missionaries do not realise that the old covenant has been replaced by the new (Heb 8:6-7).

### The Message of Mission: Christ

**What is the gospel?** 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

In the book of Acts we see that every time the apostles spoke to a crowd, they taught three basic facts about Jesus:

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 points: **4. Jesus is coming back to raise the dead;** **5. He will then establish his kingdom for ever.**

Having said this, the apostles urged the people to **commit themselves to the Saviour** and so be saved.

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

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

But what is “repentance”? And what is “remission of sins”?

**Repentance** (Gk. *metanoia*) means a change of mind. It means “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.

**Remission** (Gk. *aphesis*) means removing or undoing. To “remit” means to remove or to undo.

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

The apostles proclaimed that Jesus could remove sin and all the consequences of sin.

When he healed the sick and raised the dead, he removed sin and its consequences from those people.

These miracles were “signs”... a foretaste of a work to be completed and fulfilled when he comes back.

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

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

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

The gospel is the good news about 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).

### Some false gospels

From early times, some preachers distorted the gospel... focusing on something else, not Christ (Gal 1:6-7; 2 Cor 11:4).

Today some focus on development, justice, prosperity, health, dreams, the church, territory, the glory of God etc.

A common mistake is to start by trying to persuade people they are sinners. The apostles did not do that.

It is the Holy Spirit who convicts of sin (Jn 16:8). That is not our task. We come not to condemn but to save.

**The gospel is the good news about Jesus Christ** – what he has done, what he is doing, and what he is coming back to do.

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

Our task is to proclaim it faithfully and joyfully. We can trust God to convince our hearers of its truth.

## The Place of Mission: the World

Jesus said, “I am the light of **the world**” (Jn 8:12). “I did not come to judge the world but to save **the world**” (Jn 12:47).

He is “the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of **the world!**” (Jn 1:29).

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

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

### 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?** Mk 16:16; Lk 13:22-30; Matt 10:28; Lk 16:19-31.

**What does it mean to be saved?** John 3:16-18; Eph 2:4-7; Rom 5:6-10.

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).

### What about those who have never heard the gospel?

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.

Gentiles may sometimes follow the principles of the Law without knowing it. Does that mean they are acceptable to God?

Rom 2:14-15... “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...

**1. All mankind is in a state of death...** Rom 2:12; Rom 3:23 and 6:23; Eph 2:1-3.

**2. It is Jesus alone who gives eternal life...** Acts 4:12; Jn 14:6; Heb 2:14-15.

**3. A person who has never heard is lost in sin** until he puts his trust in Christ. He remains on the broad road to destruction if he does not hear and follow Christ... 1 John 5:11-12; 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 because everyone everywhere needs to hear... Mk 16:15; Lk 24:47.

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

### 3. A Biblical Theology of Mission II

#### The Method of Mission: Speaking the Word

The work of the apostles is described as “speaking the word” (Acts 14:25; 16:6; 16:32 etc.).

As they spoke they were careful to *proclaim, testify, announce good news, teach, discuss and persuade.*

- They **proclaimed**, giving the facts about Jesus: his death, resurrection, remission of sins, return, coming kingdom.
- They **testified**, telling what they themselves had seen and heard, showing how it affected them (Acts 4:33; Rev 1:9).  
As gospel missionaries we can testify in two ways:
  1. We pass on “the Testimony of Jesus” entrusted to us by his first disciples (Rev 12:17; 1 Cor 1:6; 1 Jn 5:11 etc.).
  2. We add our own personal testimony.
 Paul, like us, was not present during Jesus’s earthly ministry, but like us, he could bear witness 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*... describing his conversion, missionary call and ministry in the power of the Spirit.

The words for proclamation and testimony are *kērugma* and *marturion*, with their associated verbs *kērussō* and *martureō*.

They often go together, and both are usually necessary (Matt 24:14; Acts 10:42).

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.”

- The apostles **announced good news**, they evangelised (Gk. *euangelizō*, to bring good news; *euangelion*, 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). They were concerned to make sure their facts were correct and their information 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)		

The apostles wanted people to think, discuss, ask questions, raise objections and eventually to become convinced.

In a cross-cultural context, people are totally ignorant of the basic facts about Christ (and often about God).

They will need basic information. When we tell them the facts we are **proclaiming** the truth of the gospel.

But before they will listen to the facts, we may need to awaken their interest.

We show how these facts are helpful and useful. In this we see the importance of **testimony**.

We should never forget that our message is **wonderful news** – it transforms lives and expectations.

We **teach** the truth accurately, without exaggeration or distortion, so our disciples know all they need to know.

Finally, we encourage **discussion**, so questions can be answered, problems resolved and people convinced.

#### The Energy of Mission: the Holy Spirit

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 our gospel. We cannot change their mind or their character or their eternal destiny. The things cannot we do, we must ask our Lord to 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 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.

The Holy Spirit 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!

## The Agents of Mission: Men and Women

Are missionaries really necessary? Surely the Lord can reveal himself to people without our help.

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

The Holy Spirit calls humans to go (Acts 11:12; 13:2).

People need to hear the gospel from a human tongue, and to discuss and pray with a human being.

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

The angels call for humans to go (Acts 8:26; 10:22). A human is needed to explain things to a human.

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?

Saul's vision on the Damascus road directed him to a man called Ananias.

God did not send a vision to Macedonia but to Paul, saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us" (Acts 16:9).

A dream or vision will usually lead the needy person to a human.

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

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

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

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

We have the ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor 5:18-20). We proclaim because we are compelled to proclaim (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 Result of Mission: Disciples

Jesus said "Go and disciple all the *ethnē*, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Matt 28:19-20).

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

Jesus commands us to **disciple** every ethnic group.

### What does it mean to disciple an ethnic group?

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.

A **disciple** (Gk. *mathētēs*) is someone committed to a teacher or a teaching, and wanting to learn more (Lk 6:40; 14:26-33).

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

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, we should baptise them and teach them (Matt 28:19-20).

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

Disciples will enjoy meeting together for mutual support, encouragement, teaching and prayer.

A group of disciples is an *ekklēsia* (pl. *ekklēsiae*) – a gathering or fellowship.

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

### What is the aim of gospel mission?

The aim of gospel mission is **not to plant churches** or erect buildings or establish congregations.

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

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

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.

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

## 4. A Biblical View of Culture

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

**Culture includes:** 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

The culture of a people 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.

If we show respect for their culture and for them, people may accept us as intelligent and reasonable people.

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

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

\* **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* (what is their work? where have they come from? what is their religion?).

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

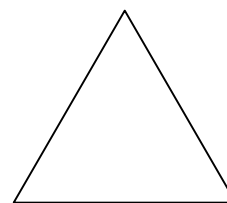
### The Culture Triangle

As a missionary 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.

1. home culture



2. local culture

3. gospel culture

#### Home culture

You say: The Lord has blessed us. We want to start churches like our home church and teach people to do as we do.

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

1. Although your home culture may be very attractive to you, your converts may not like it at all.
2. The kind of church familiar to you may be very expensive for poor people to start and to maintain.
3. If you think, “Our way is the best,” you may easily become proud, critical and divisive.

For most teachers and students, our home culture is closely related to the **global culture** of the twenty-first century.

#### Local culture

You say: We must adopt the culture of the people we are going to reach, living as the local people live.

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

1. Your body is not resistant to the diseases common in other countries.
2. You may find yourself practising witchcraft, bowing before images, marrying several wives, praising a false prophet or getting drunk with your friends and neighbours.
3. Living like a very poor person will make people think you are stupid or are planning to cheat them in some way.

#### Gospel culture

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

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

1. Circumstances have changed. Proclaiming Jesus in a synagogue, we will not get the same response that Paul got.
2. Technology has changed. If we refuse to use modern technology, people will think we are stupid and useless.
3. It is easy to confuse the Jewish or Roman cultures of the 1<sup>st</sup> century with the gospel culture that Jesus introduced.

**What is gospel culture?** We see gospel culture in Heb 13:1-8; 1 Peter 3:1-17; Rom 12:9-21 and Ja 1:26-2:4.

In India, **Bakht Singh** said, “What we need in the Body of Christ is not Western or Eastern culture but Biblical culture.”<sup>1</sup>

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

**Third Culture Kids** are usually the children of missionaries. Their third culture is gospel culture.

<sup>1</sup> Koshy, T E, *Brother Bakht Singh of India* (Secunderabad, OM Books, 2003), p.456; see also p.537.

Some missionaries have experienced the culture triangle in this way:

### **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 else 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).

## **The Culture of the World**

The idea of culture is seen in the biblical concept of "the world" (1 Jn 2:15-16; Ja 1:27; 4:4; Gal 4:3; Matt 18:7; 1 Pet 1:1).

"Moses was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians" (Acts 7:22)...

but there is no trace of Egyptian culture in anything Moses wrote or said or did. Why not?

## **Culture in the Bible**

### **How much should we study culture?**

#### **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.

Learn to be sensitive, humble, teachable, ready to apologise, 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.

Don't worry too much about offending people.

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, and will not quickly take offence.

#### **2. As much as we need in order to win acceptance and communicate our message.**

Study how people communicate (language, gestures, facial expression),

how they acquire information (newspapers, radio, TV, books etc.),

how they win friends and influence people (hospitality, use of humour, stories, proverbs etc.),

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 daily life.

Identify the aspects of their own culture that cause people to be anxious and dissatisfied

(stress, conflict, death, fear of failure, fear of God etc.).

Understanding this, you may show how certainty and satisfaction are found in Christ.

You can make good use of the culture in order to communicate the gospel.

People 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, there will be times when local people are doing something you would not normally do.

You may wonder whether to join in with it, or ignore it, or deliberately go against it.

There may be a public religious ceremony, a day of fasting, a political rally, a sporting event, a community celebration.

Should you join in the cultural event, or ignore it, or oppose it... or make good use of it?

There are two questions to bear in mind (1 Cor 10:31-33).

#### **1. If I conform to 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 conform to their culture, will it help the people to be saved?**

In other words: Will it help them to see that they are lost and need a saviour? Or will it hinder their salvation?

*continued on page 10*

**Required Reading:** chapters 6 to 10 of *New Life for All*.



## 5. New Testament Mission Methods

It could be argued that Jesus was not a cross-cultural missionary. He learnt no new language and adopted no new culture. He was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matt 15:24).

It could be said that the twelve apostles were not cross-cultural missionaries. They adopted no new language or culture. They proclaimed the gospel to Jews and Gentiles who were already committed to the God of the Jews.

It could even be said that Paul was not a cross-cultural missionary. He spoke in synagogues to people like himself. He did not learn a foreign language or study foreign customs or beliefs. When travelling in Gentile areas he took with him co-workers from those cultures.

### How the Gospel Crossed Cultures

If the NT missionaries worked largely within their own culture, how did the gospel enter new cultures? They found people from foreign lands *who had already entered their culture* before hearing the gospel. After the Day of Pentecost, the Jerusalem visitors could go and tell their own people in their own languages. After the Ethiopian met Philip, he could go and tell his own people in his own language. After Cornelius and his friends heard Peter, they could go and tell their own people in their own languages.

How did the gospel enter new cultures through the ministry of Paul?

1. He went to the synagogues, where 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 then 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.**

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.

### The Natural Way for News to Spread

There is a natural way for news to travel 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.**

That is probably how Jesus expected it to travel. That is probably 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 go and tell their own people in their own language...

and in ways appropriate to their culture, customs and traditional beliefs.

Many missionaries travel from place to place preaching the gospel to crowds in public.

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.

Whenever someone buys something, he can tell them about Jesus and give them a leaflet.

That is a very natural form of cross-cultural mission. It is culturally sensitive.

**Required Reading:** chapters 11 and 12 of *NLFA*; introduction and first two chapters of *Mission Strategies Then and Now*.

continued from page 8: *A Biblical View of Culture*

## Contextualization

Some missiologists say that the gospel can (and should) become incarnate in any culture... just as a liquid can be poured into a cup and so take on the same shape as the cup.

They say that we should accept the old **form** and introduce new **content**.

So, in a Muslim area, Christians may choose to look and behave like Muslims whilst inwardly believing in Jesus.

This is a way of becoming a Muslim to the Muslims in order to win Muslims.

Practising Christianity in a Muslim way may 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 the people around us *while they remain in their own culture*.

But Jesus sometimes ignored or defied the cultural expectations of the people around him. So did Peter and Paul.

The gospel was a new culture. They would make use of the old cultures in order to communicate it clearly.

But the old cultures did not have any authority to control their character or behaviour.

**Their aim was to establish a new community on new principles,**

not to pour the new principles into an old mould shaped for a very different set of beliefs and behaviours.

Jesus said new wine cannot be poured into old skins or a new patch sewn on an old garment.

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.

For Paul, **both the content and the form must change**. There is a reason for this. It is a reason that still applies today.

In all religions, apart from Christianity, **the form is what really matters**. What you do outwardly is your religion.

The form (the religious ritual) is far more important than the content (the personal belief).

For this reason it is 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 the form and ignore the content.

Paul said: "What pagans sacrifice, they offer to demons, not to God. I do not want you to be partners with demons."

(1 Cor 10:20). In Corinth the form represented the content... and the form was not acceptable.

## Making good use of cultures

There may be many things in a culture that we can adopt (and adapt) in order to make known the gospel.

In particular there will be methods of communication that are appreciated and respected by the people:

parables, proverbs, songs, drama, teaching or discussion that are familiar to them.

But our personal culture is the gospel culture we have learned from Jesus and from the word of God.

It determines how we think and behave. It has authority over all other cultures.

**We saw that culture usually has three elements.**

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

As gospel missionaries entering a different culture, we will probably follow 1... adapt 2... and replace 3.

Don't be intimidated by local or global cultures. You have something better to offer; you have learned it from Jesus.

It is a new culture that is far better than any other. It is good news for people around us.

It is not negotiable and it takes priority over every other culture.

## Conclusions

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 principle 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.

## 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 own 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).

## 6. Some Current Issues in Mission

There is no quick and easy method in cross-cultural mission but sometimes a fresh approach may help.

### Start with Adam, or with Jesus?

In South America, the New Tribes Mission found primitive people who seemed to know nothing about God or Jesus. The tribal people did not feel a need for God. Stories about Jesus did not interest them.

As the villagers sat outside their huts every evening, there was plenty of time to sit and talk with them.

So the missionaries tried a new method.... telling God’s story from beginning to end... one session every day...

Over a period of weeks or months, they taught the whole Bible... starting with creation and Adam...

then Noah... Abraham... Joseph... Moses... Joshua... David... the prophets...

Eventually they reached the birth of Jesus... his ministry... rejection... death... resurrection.

By now the whole tribe was interested and the whole tribe was ready to accept the Saviour.

This method is called **Chronological Storying**. Many missionaries all over the world became very excited about it.

But there is no evidence it works anywhere except in primitive tribes. It does not work in a Muslim context.

Why not? Educated Muslims already have a strong concept of God, and a strong prejudice against Christianity.

They have different stories about OT characters, so they will argue about the OT before they get as far as the NT.

This illustrates the difficulty of taking a method that works in one place and *expecting it will work everywhere*.

### Homogeneous Units, or All One in Christ?

**Donald McGavran** said people prefer to mix with people like themselves – people who have the same culture.

So we should have a **separate church** for each culture, that is for each people-group.

In fact we must aim to start a **mass movement** in each people-group.

Some of his followers refuse to accept individual converts, as this might cause tension and hinder a mass movement.

This is the **Homogeneous Unit Principle**. But it has been criticised on the following grounds:

1. People often do not want to be separated.
2. Separating people-groups stops the gospel entering new people-groups.
3. Individual converts need help.
4. Separating believers is unscriptural. It opposes the **All One in Christ Principle** (Gal 3:28; Eph 2:14).

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.

**But the Homogeneous Unit idea is still helpful.**

It reflects a reality of life. People will accept the gospel most easily if they hear it from someone like them.

In **evangelism**, it will encourage us to be sensitive in our outreach to different cultures.

In **church**, it will encourage us to respect the varied cultures and races that make up our fellowship.

### Proclamation Mission, or Holistic Mission?

Launching a mission to a new area or people-group, there are two possible ways we might start:

- **Proclaim the gospel message** and urge people to believe in Jesus. We could call this Proclamation Mission.
- **Meet some practical needs** – providing water, food, education, medicine etc. – and showing them the love of God. We could call this Holistic Mission. Here is a summary of these two points of view:

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 this present age.	We help people to have eternal life in the age to come.

**Some say we should start with holistic aid or development...** for the following reasons:

1. Jesus was always concerned with both the physical and spiritual needs of people, and so were the first apostles.
2. Actions speak louder than words. If you meet people’s need they will see your love, and may then listen to your words.

3. Many places closed to gospel proclamation are open for humanitarian work.
4. It will quickly awaken the interest and enthusiasm of the whole community, and so may start a mass movement.
5. When others see what is happening, it may open doors to neighbouring people-groups.

**Some say we should start with proclamation...** for the following reasons:

1. Jesus and Paul both made proclamation and teaching their priority.
2. It quickly shows that peace with God and eternal life are more important to us than anything in this world.
3. It attracts people seeking spiritual and religious change. We are less likely to make “rice Christians”.
4. Proclamation is much less expensive, and so can easily be continued by our converts.
5. It can more easily adapt to social, political and economic changes.

**Conclusions:**

- We may try to do both... but it will be difficult 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.
- Holistic ministry is a valid ministry of the church, especially meeting the needs of believers.
- It can also be pre-evangelistic, and in some circumstances may open doors to gospel proclamation.
- It should not replace gospel proclamation, which is always the priority in the New Testament.
- 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.

### Dominion, or Salvation?

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 can't 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.
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.

**Required Reading:** chapters 3 to 6 of *Mission Strategies Then and Now*.

## 7. More Current Issues in Mission

### Primordialism, or Pragmatism?

A Primordialist wants to restore the old ways of the early days when everything was pure and good.

A Pragmatist wants to do what works best now and will guarantee success.

The ethos of the **Church Growth Movement** is pragmatist – to increase the number of people who come to church.

Pragmatists will look carefully to find out what “the unchurched” enjoy and give it to them in church.

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.

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.
We are guided mostly by scripture.	We are guided mostly by culture.

### Targeting the Unreached, or the Responsive?

**Why are there still regions of the world almost totally unreached today?** There are two reasons...

1. Because few go to them. 2. Because when we do go, we find them unresponsive and resistant.

The **10-40 Window**... between 10 and 40 degrees north of the equator... has 80% of the world's population.

It is the area of the world least touched by the gospel. It is also the least responsive (strongly Muslim, Hindu or atheistic).

Only 4% of evangelical missionaries are working to reach its unreached inhabitants.

It has 1390 people groups without Scripture portions or the Jesus film in their main language.

The world has almost 17,000 people-groups. 42% of these are *unreached* (7,000 people-groups).

They have no missionaries and no community of local believers strong enough to evangelise their own people.

They have no realistic chance to hear the gospel. Most are found in the 10-40 Window.

Some of these people-groups have more than a million people and some have fifty or even a hundred million.<sup>1</sup>

Some missionaries say... **We must go to the Unreached...** that is the priority.

Jesus said “*all the world*” and “*every creature*”... not just the easy places... not just friendly people.

Rom 15:20 What was Paul's ambition? ... where Christ is not known.

2 Pet 3:9-12 How do we hasten the Day of the Lord? By helping all to reach repentance.

Rev 5:9-10 Do you think any place should hear the gospel twice, if another place has not heard it once?

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.

Some missionaries say... **We must go to the Responsive...** that is the priority.

1. We must **go to places where God is at work**... Don't try do his work where he's not wanting it done!

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*... for individuals and for nations.

Gal 4:4 Jesus came at the ideal time for world mission.

Acts 17:26-27 Every nation is under the control of God. 1 Cor 16:9 He opens doors and closes doors.

2. We must **increase our numbers in our nation and worldwide as quickly as possible**.

If all the responsive people accept Christ, there will be far more of us to tell the unresponsive.

<sup>1</sup> Statistics from [http://joshuaproject.net/global\\_statistics](http://joshuaproject.net/global_statistics) (accessed 2 June 2014)

A Christian majority in a democracy can vote for Christian policies affecting not just one nation but many.

If we are many, we will be able to support more evangelists and missionaries.

3. We must **make the best possible use of our missionaries and our money.**

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.** Do not focus on the 10-40 Window...

Focus instead on the “4-40 Window” – people aged between 4 and 40... the age when they are most responsive.

Also the “65-80 Window” – retired people who suddenly have no purpose, no sense of progress or achievement...

but lots of time to think about the values of life and death, and about God and eternity. Go to these people.

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.

**The Ideal Solution? Go to the Unreached who are about to respond**

Look for unreached places where *the fields are ripe for harvest*...

Something has happened to shake complacency, bring disillusionment, awaken desire for change...

Perhaps a natural disaster... racial oppression... persecution... political change... government policies...

uprooted populations (refugees, students)... a growing desire for education, medical help, employment.

And finally, remember four things...

1. Places with many believers need us to train those believers for mission to places where there are none.
2. Places with many believers may also have many immigrants from unreached nations whom we can easily reach.
3. A nation or people-group that is responsive today may be closed and resistant tomorrow...  
If you find a responsive place, work while it is yet day... Night comes! (Jn 9:4)
4. A place or group that is closed now may suddenly open up. Pray and prepare, and be ready to enter immediately.

**Targeting Marginal People, or Mainstream People?**

**Marginal people** are like the water at the edge of a river, moving slowly, hindered by personal difficulties.

They may be blind, deaf, lepers, orphans, war victims, refugees, street kids, prostitutes, prisoners, AIDS sufferers etc. All these may be very open to the gospel when it is offered along with practical care.

But Christianity may then be seen as a charitable service to a marginal group (and therefore not for normal people),

It may even be seen as an exploitation of the needy for purposes of power and propaganda.

**Mainstream people** are like the water in the middle of a river, moving strongly and successfully.

They may be healthy and wealthy, high status people, social leaders.

Most are comfortable, contented with their circumstances, not open to change, resistant to the gospel.

But when a high-status person does accept Christ, that person may strongly influence others.

Jesus ministered to both... to beggars, prostitutes, sinners, lepers, demoniacs... also to centurions and synagogue rulers.

The twelve disciples he chose were not marginal people. They were not very high status people either.

Paul engaged first with the mainstream people of the Jewish community and later with high-status Roman officials.

But he also helped people who were marginal... 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.

It is not usually a good idea to offer the gospel to marginal and mainstream people at the same time.

There were tensions between mainstream and marginal people in the ministry of Jesus (Lk 7:39; 19:7; Jn 7:45-49; 9:34).

We should look especially for *mainstream people who are dissatisfied and open to change*, and for *marginal people with the potential to become respected and influential*.

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

### The First 600 Years

#### The Mediterranean coast of North Africa

There are remains of church buildings and inscriptions far beyond the Roman frontiers.

#### 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. Tribesmen came to the coast for trade or work, heard the gospel and brought it back to their family and friends.

**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. The Emperor welcomed the Roman church leaders into his palace... and enlisted their help in the administration of his empire. He himself later requested baptism.

Now the 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 large majority of churches in Africa were linked with an indigenous Christian movement speaking Tamazight.

They had spread far inland. Their most famous leader was Donatus and they were known as Donatists.

They had no wish to be controlled by the Latin-speaking Catholic churches on the coast approved by Constantine.

Instead of uniting to take the gospel throughout the continent, the two denominations began a bitter power struggle.

For a hundred years the Catholics tried to destroy the Donatist leadership of the churches in North Africa.

The concept of **Christian civilisation** was promoted by Augustine in his famous book *The City of God* (AD 426).

Augustine hoped that the Government and Church would work together for the benefit of all.

But this required everyone to belong to the same Church, supporting the government.

This gave rise to the influential concept of **christendom** (a place where Christianity rules).

The Donatists were finally condemned by the Roman authorities in AD 412.

Catholic control of all churches was enforced by fines, beatings, confiscation of property and banishment.

The effect of this was to **establish Latin rather than Tamazight** (Berber) as the language of Christianity in Africa.

The Catholics now had power, but even with government support, they could not secure the future.

When Vandal and Arab invaders arrived in the 5<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> 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?** Catholics and Donatists had similar weaknesses...

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 serve the Lord.  
They were Sunday Christians. 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 buildings.  
When the hierarchy of authority was destroyed by controversy and conquest, the churches 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.
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, and the Donatists backed African independence.  
The result was conflict, disillusionment, and sometimes fighting and burning of property, and even loss of life.  
Eventually the Donatists were defeated by the Catholics and condemned by the Empire...  
but shortly afterwards the Roman Empire fell, and 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.
- Believers without scriptures in their own language find it hard to survive.
- Political alliances distract the church, corrupt its witness, and threaten its destruction.

## Alexandria, Egypt and the Nile valley

### 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 good transport up the river Nile to all the important towns.

**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.

### When the Arab Muslims invaded, why did the Coptic church survive better than the Greek church?

1. By the 7<sup>th</sup> 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 control by Arabs, as earlier by Greeks.
4. The Coptic Christians were poorer people, further inland, and could not move away from Egypt.
5. The Copts spoke and read Christian texts in the Coptic language (although their teaching was not always sound).

### 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.

## Ethiopia and Nubia

### As missiologists 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 some 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.

## Early Protestant Missions (17<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> centuries)

### 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.

### Why were the European Evangelicals so slow to start cross-cultural mission?

For 300 years the early Protestants were persecuted by Catholic powers in Europe. They were simply trying to survive.

Their chief concern was to refute the errors of Roman Catholicism and to establish national state churches of their own.

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.

## Evangelical Mission Strategies in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century

The Reforming strategy, the Diplomatic strategy, the Colonial strategy, the Pioneering strategy.

### Financial support

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1. Early 19 <sup>th</sup> century...                         | chaplains and personal representatives |
| 2. Mid-19 <sup>th</sup> century...                           | voluntary societies                    |
| 3. Late 19 <sup>th</sup> to late 20 <sup>th</sup> century... | faith missions                         |
| 4. End of 19 <sup>th</sup> century to present...             | pledged gifts                          |
| 5. Every period...   | tent-making                            |

### What are the advantages and disadvantages of “tent-making”?

A believer preaching the gospel 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.

**Comity:** an agreement to divide an area between different denominations or mission societies

**Christian settlements:** Sierra Leone and Liberia in West Africa

**Trends in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Centuries:** national churches, the ecumenical movement, issues of authority

**Required Reading:** chapter 8 of *MSTN*, and *Rapid Mass Movements*.



## 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 and clinics. They planted fields, built houses and workshops, and set up printing presses, on substantial mission compounds. Salaries were paid to the local school teachers, evangelists, pastors and other church workers.

By the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, mission leaders and administrators were convinced that a change was needed, for two reasons:

1. Many missionaries were too busy with administration and finance, neglecting the work of gospel outreach.
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.

If that happened, the Western missionaries could then move into new areas where the gospel was not yet known.

It became an urgent priority for the churches to become *indigenous*.

**Indigenous:** Something that grows naturally in a place is indigenous. It belongs to that place.

#### The three-self principle

In 1854 **Henry Venn** and **Rufus Anderson** proposed a scheme for local churches to *become* indigenous.

They encouraged their missionaries to hand over their responsibilities as quickly as possible to their local converts.

National churches must bear the financial burden of the schools, clinics, farms, workshops and 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.

The mission society is like *scaffolding* to be removed as soon as the church is complete and able to stand alone.

#### Problems with this strategy:

1. The local believers could not afford to pay the wages, taxes, transport, supplies and other expenses.
2. Missionaries were unwilling to trust employees on mission compounds with money or with other responsibilities.
3. Legal and administrative protection would be lost if the missionaries left.
4. As the churches were started by foreigners following foreign customs, they must be the responsibility of foreigners.
5. Missionaries enjoyed working on church compounds and felt their presence was essential.

The “scaffolding” could not yet be removed because the “building” was still incomplete.

#### New Testament strategy

In 1840 **Anthony Norris Groves** studied the New Testament to see how apostles started churches.

He did not see property belonging to one body (the society) transferred to another body (the church).

He did not see a foreign scaffolding to be put up and then taken down.

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.

There was no need for foreign denominations and societies, no need for comity agreements and hand-overs.

#### What is the difference between indigenization and indigeneity?

English words ending with *-ization* (or *-isation*) usually indicate **change** (industrialization, urbanization, colonization)

Words ending with *-ity* usually indicate **consistency** (homogeneity, spontaneity, deity)

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 and discipline.	Missionaries provide teaching and pastoral care alone.
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.

Most Western denominations and societies have followed Venn’s policy of **indigenization**.

But in the 1920s Groves’s ideas were restated by **Roland Allen**.

In the 1950s, mission leaders in Europe and America 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 submit to foreign control. Both were influenced by Norris Groves.

### **Ni To-sheng (Watchman Nee) in China.**

From small beginnings in the early 1920s, the “Little Flock” movement, associated with 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.**

The evangelist Bakht Singh conducted open-air campaigns in the 1930s, at which tens of thousands were converted.

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.

## **Rapid Mass Movements**

At certain times large numbers of people have come to faith in Christ. 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 among Jews, Gentile converts to Judaism and other Gentiles.
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.

### **North Africa (AD 150-400)**

The Imazighen marvelled at Roman civilisation but resented Roman power. They found Christians in the same situation.

They responded to a positive gospel 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 the 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 people were attracted to Welsh-speaking chapels where their own heritage and language were maintained.

### **Korea (1890-1910)**

The nation was threatened and then conquered by Japan, but the small Korean church was using 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 churches and hospitals of the Anglicans and Catholics.

Confession and testimony led thousands of nominal Christians and animists to real salvation.

### **Walayta people, southern Ethiopia (1937-43)**

When the Italians invaded in 1937, 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 and attracted many to the faith.

### **West Timor, Indonesia (1965-72)**

There was drought, famine, inflation. After a failed Communist coup, everyone needed an official religious identity.

Many chose to adopt Christianity and so heard the gospel and believed.

### **Malto people in Jharkhand (1985-2003).**

Often in poverty and debt, the Maltos (of Dravidian race) were despised and exploited by the Hindus of Aryan race.

Indian missionaries of Dravidian race, like them, 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, 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.

<b>Required Reading:</b> chapters 9 to 11 of <i>Mission Strategies Then and Now</i> .
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## 10. Special Approaches for Particular People

The gospel does not change, but we must learn how to introduce it to different kinds of people.

It is easy to say, “You’re wrong and I am right”... but not many will be persuaded that way.

How can we make it sound like good news to a corrupt criminal? an old man? a Muslim? an animist? a nominal Christian?

**What do we need to know about the person we are with?** Think about their...

*felt-needs*... spiritual and emotional needs... physical and social needs  
*religious frustrations*... problems caused by their religion or belief-system... things it fails to help them with  
*natural affinities*... truths that they already know and believe... which might lead them to Christ

### Nominal Christians

A nominal Christian is a Christian *in name*. You may know some already in your church... regular attenders, or visitors.

Or in your family... Or some of your friends, neighbours, people at work... Or in shops... or taxi drivers... cleaners etc.

Others will be strangers you meet by going door to door, open air preaching, giving leaflets in public places etc.

**How can you tell whether someone is a real Christian or a nominal Christian?**

Ask, “Are you a Christian?” Then, “How do you know you are a Christian?” If they say, “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 really understood what a Christian is.

**Nominal Christians** are depending on something apart from Jesus, or in addition to Jesus...

It may be sacraments, saints, priests, the Church, religious duties, good deeds. They may just be hoping for best.

They often bear sour fruit – a sinful life, bad temper – bondage to Satan, demons, traditional religion or occult practices.

Many are Sunday Christians, worshipping on Sundays but far from God the rest of the week.

Many are head Christians but not heart Christians. They know the facts but do not live the life.

**True Christians**, in contrast, have sound faith (2 Tim 1:13) and good fruit (Gal 5:22-23). *They depend on Jesus alone.*

Ask the Lord to open your eyes to the spiritual condition of the people around you. Think about their...

*felt-needs*... What really worries this person? How can the gospel help with that particular worry?

*religious frustrations*... What do they find difficult about their church or their faith?

*natural affinities*... They think they are Christians, so you can talk openly about God, Jesus, the Bible, faith etc.

Ask yourself: What is stopping this man or woman from following Christ?

Share your testimony, proclaim the truth and encourage a response.

**Nominal Christians may raise objections that you can answer from the scriptures:**

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 or witches 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

Some wonderful **mass movements** have started when nominal Christians were saved and testified to new life in Christ.

### African Traditional Religionists (ATR)

**Felt needs**... Longing for safety and security, for health, or food or work, or a home to live in.

Perhaps longing for freedom from parents or relatives or government officials or religious leaders.

They cannot deal with physical needs because they are spiritually weak – discouraged, oppressed and hopeless.

**Religious frustrations**... It is hard to satisfy all of the gods, spirits and witches all of the time.

It is hard to know who is good or bad, and who may be putting a spell or a curse on us or our property.

There may be fear of demons, spirits, animals, illness, death – fear of failure, disaster, curses – fear of breaking taboos.

Sacrifices are very expensive but do not help with the practical problems of life – safety, health, food, income etc.

**Natural affinities**... ATR people usually believe there is **one creator God** above all other spiritual powers.

Tell them he is stronger than anyone or anything else, and also very loving and ready to help.

They know there is a **battle between good and evil**. Tell them Jesus has come to defeat all evil (Lk 10:18; 13:16).

He sends his Spirit to give us victory over temptation, bad behaviour, bad spirits and bad people.

They may believe in **reincarnation** of a person’s spirit. Tell them about the Day of Resurrection (Jn 5:24-25).

We know our spirits will receive new bodies for life in a new earth where there is peace and prosperity for all.

They may feel they are dependent on their **family**. Tell them how we belong to the family of God (Heb 2:11).

They may think a lot about their **ancestors**. Tell them Jesus is our greatest ancestor, alive to care for us (1 Pet 3:22).

The conversion of a community sometimes happens when believers *publicly* defy traditional culture...

ignoring a taboo, or taking “Christian medicine”, or declaring the truth, or rebuking a demon in the name of Jesus.

In other places, it may need much consecutive teaching with pictures, drama and songs.

## Muslims

Muslims are trained to attack Christianity... They are taught to be negative.

So long as you are defending yourself against their objections you are following their agenda.

You must set the agenda... **Talk positively and joyfully about *Masih* (Christ).**

Your job is to proclaim the gospel and to testify... Afterwards you can look at objections.

If necessary you can say, "We'll talk about that later but first let me tell you why I've put all my trust in *Masih*."

The chief reason that Muslims are held back from faith in *Masih* is not theology but fear... afraid of what people will say... afraid of being alone and despised... but they are often very unhappy with Islam and with life.

**Felt-needs**... Islam is a very physical religion. Some would say there is nothing spiritual about it at all.

It does not help with 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.

But we have learned about "humanity" from "the son of humanity" (*ibn ul-insan*), *Masih* himself.

**Religious frustrations**... Wanting to please Allah and have eternal life, they are never sure they've done enough to earn it. They may be frustrated with the requirements and rules of religion... and the bullying of religious fanatics.

**Natural affinities**... They believe *Masih* is one of the prophets, but do not see *why we put all our trust in him alone*.

A Muslim friend may be very interested to hear you read the *Injil* (New Testament). You could say to him...

"*Masih* did many wonderful miracles. Would you like to hear about one of them?" Then read one of these:

**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 Good Shepherd lays down his life for the sheep who trust in him.

Your friend may say, "That is very good." This means he has understood something new and responded positively.

It is a small step towards faith in *Masih*. Pray for this to be followed by further positive steps.

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.

**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...

### Discipling Muslim-Background Believers (MBBs)

Losing the security of their Muslim family and community, MBBs will need warm friendship and practical help.

They will need to understand the meaning of spiritual growth, responsibility and testimony.

**Contextualization**... 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.

Contextualization has been developed as a strategy in certain Muslim contexts (especially in Indonesia and Bangladesh).

The aim is to take the outward *form* of Islam and fill it with Christian *content*.

When we contextualize at a C5 level, we look like Muslims and talk like Muslims but are *really* followers of *Masih*.

This may have two advantages: 1. It is easier for Muslims to join us. 2. There is less persecution when they do join us.

But some missionaries will not accept this. Scriptures to consider: 1 Cor 9:19-23; 2 Cor 6:14-18; 1 Cor 8:7-13; 10:20-24.

Insider movement (contextualization)	Gathered church
We should become all things to all people.	We should not be partners with idols.
Local culture expresses man's God-given creativity	Local culture is a corrupt man-made invention.
We must offer 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>ekkllesia</i> can be a loose network of believers.	An <i>ekkllesia</i> is a group gathered together for a purpose.

### Some theological problems with contextualisation

We cannot *say* everything a Muslim must say.

The earliest apostles did not contextualize.

Culture does not have supreme authority to direct us.

Christians in a mosque cannot easily be a church.

### Some practical problems with contextualisation

We cannot *do* everything a Muslim would do.

A persecuted C5 believer may easily return to Islam.

Muslims may accuse a C5 believer of hypocrisy.

A C5 faith will not easily attract others.

**Conclusion:** C5 contextualisation may be necessary as a temporary measure but cannot normally be permanent.

**Required Reading:** chapters 12 and 13 of *Mission Strategies Then and Now*.

# 11. Launching a Pioneer Mission

## Urban and Rural Mission

In 2011, 52% of the world's population was urban. The United Nations expects this to rise to 70% by 2050.<sup>1</sup>

There are now far more unreached people in the cities than in the countryside.

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.
A single convert in a city will not be noticed and can usually avoid persecution.	A single convert in a village 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 the 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.

## The Process of Conversion

### 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 an individual 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, and 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 (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 the difficulties, shows how attractive the gospel is to many people.

### The theology of conversion

**A change of beliefs** – Gk. *metanoia*, a change of mind or "second thoughts".

John the Baptist and Jesus both began their ministries with this word (Matt 3:2; 4:17), 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 represents a change of *ideas, attitudes and beliefs.*

**A change of behaviour** – Gk. *epistrōphē*, "a turning from one thing to another".

"the conversion of the Gentiles" (Acts 15:3). The related verb is used in 1 Thess 1:9: "you turned to God from idols."

<sup>1</sup> CIA World Factbook ([http://joshuaproject.net/global\\_statistics](http://joshuaproject.net/global_statistics)); <http://www.who.int/bulletin/volumes/88/4/10-010410/en/>

And... “Whoever brings back (*epistrepas*) a sinner from his wandering...” (Ja 5:20).

In the Bible *epistrōphē* is rendered “conversion”. It is a change of *behaviour* – a new lifestyle, activities, social networks.

In Acts 3:19 *metanoia* and *epistrōphē* are used together: “Repent therefore, and *turn*, that your sins may be blotted out.”

These two Greek words focus on human changes... but the NT also describes **the work of God in conversion**...

with the marvel of rebirth, justification, liberation, reconciliation, purification and re-creation (Col 1:13-14 etc.).

We should never forget that every conversion is a wonderful, gracious, loving act of God.

And conversion is merely the *start* of a process. As soon as I am born as a spiritual baby, I begin to grow (Phil 1:6).

### The psychology of conversion

A new belief-system is usually adopted not because a person thinks it is true, but *because they think it is beneficial*.

There are usually five stages gradually leading to full conversion.

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.

A skilful evangelist will help people to progress through each of these five stages to full conversion.

A good decision will be an informed decision. That is why teaching is so important (Matt 4:23; Acts 4:2; 28:32).

Philip was concerned to make sure the Ethiopian *understood* (Acts 8).

On the day of Pentecost, Peter told the crowd “Let this be *known* to you” (Acts 2:37).

People are likely to need help at every stage and should be welcomed by Christian friends who accept and support them.

They will want to be part of something worthwhile and to participate in what is being done by the fellowship.

They should have opportunities to confess with the lips what is happening in the heart (Rom 10:10).

They should also have opportunities to do the good things that Christ is teaching them to do (Lk 3:8; Jn 15:14).

### Biblical perspectives on conversion

Several factors contribute to most conversions. We see these at work in the NT, and in the world today.

#### 1. Evidence... either negative or positive.

A person sees something good in Christianity, or something bad in their old belief system.

In some cases the evidence appears 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).

In other cases, people come looking for it (Nicodemus, the Greeks who approached Andrew, Cornelius, Sergius Paulus).

And sometimes after a long persevering quest (the Magi from the East).

#### 2. Mystical experience... a dream, a vision, an angel or revelation... usually quite unexpected.

This usually supplements a previous seeking for facts or discovery of evidence.

It directs the person to seek further information elsewhere.

True mystical experience of God comes to those who are seeking God, not those who are seeking experiences.

Cornelius was busy with his prayers when suddenly he had a vision. It led him to send for Peter (Acts 10:1-3).

Saul of Tarsus was trying to serve God when suddenly he saw a vision. It led him to a man, Ananias (Acts 22:3-9).

#### 3. Social needs... a desire for friendship, affection and affirmation.

This especially affects individuals alienated from their traditional community and culture...

such as the man set free from a legion of demons (Mk 5:18), Mary Magdalene and several other women (Lk 8:2-3).

Paul’s followers were probably attracted by the fellowship they enjoyed together as disciples.

#### 4. Ambition... hoping to escape from poverty and disease, or to achieve stability or security... or affluence and power.

Many needy people came to Jesus asking for his help (Matt 15:25; Mk 9:22).

Some may wish to become rich and famous, like Simon the sorcerer (Acts 8:13,18).

#### 5. Coercion... physical or psychological pressure (Matt 3:7;10:28; 1 Thess 1:10; Acts 2:40).

Violence is not an option for gospel mission. Forced attendance of adults usually results in hypocrisy.

Forced attendance of children may help some to understand and accept the gospel, but may harden others against it.

Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me” – he did not force them to come.

### Consolidating conversion

Confused and ignorant conversion: *The case of Simon the Sorcerer* (Acts 8:9-24).

Superficial and temporary conversion: *The case of the disillusioned disciples* (John 6:26-66).

Profound and permanent conversion: *The case of the eleven apostles* (John 6:67-68).

Temporary conversion becoming permanent: *The case of the Samaritan villagers* (John 4:42).

Permanent conversion becoming temporary: *The case of Demas* (Philem 23-24; Col 4:14; 2 Tim 4:10; see Gal 5:7).

### Ensuring that a conversion is genuine and permanent

Teach all the basic truths of the faith. Make sure your people read or hear the word of God every day. Give much brotherly love. Find some useful task for each new believer. Deal with any bad influences or deeply rooted sins. Help them to be guided by inner conviction (2 Cor 5:9; Rom 7:6; Rom 14:5; Rom 14:13). Be sensitive to any sign of falling away (Heb 3:12).

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 everyone in it) to prepare new believers to be active and useful in service to others (Eph 4:11-12).

**Required Reading:** chapter 14 of *Mission Strategies Then and Now*. **Recommended Reading:** *The Process of Conversion*.

## 12. Spiritual Health Care for Pioneer Missionaries

### Missionary Guidance

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).

How can I know what he is calling me to do? This is not a matter for hasty decisions.

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; see also Col 1:9; Prov 3:6).

#### Personal guidance in mission:

- |                              |                               |                          |                          |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Search the scriptures     | Ja 1:22-25                    | 4. Observe providence    | Acts 14:27; 1 Cor 16:8-9 |
| 2. Consult other believers   | Prov 11:14                    | 5. Respond to his Spirit | Lk 4:1; Acts 8:39; 11:12 |
| 3. Obtain useful information | Acts 10:29; 8:34; Phil 1:9-10 |                          |                          |

### Missionary Motivation

**Why get involved in mission?** (as a missionary or as a supporter of mission):

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1. to glorify God (Phil 2:10-11).                | 4. to hasten the coming of Christ (Matt 24:14; 2 Pet 3:11-12). |
| 2. to obey Christ (John 14:15).                  | 5. to love my neighbour as myself (Mark 12:31; Matt 14:14).    |
| 3. to rescue the perishing (Matt 7:13; Jn 3:16). |  |

There have been five successive phases of mission from the West, inspired by these five different motivations:

In the **18<sup>th</sup>** century, a desire to **glorify God**.

In the **19<sup>th</sup>** century, to **obey Christ**.

In the **20<sup>th</sup>** century, to **rescue the perishing**, and also to **hasten the coming of Christ**.

In the **21<sup>st</sup>** century, to **love my neighbour as myself** (providing holistic health and comfort for all).

### Culture Shock

**Culture shock:** a feeling of anxiety, stress, disorientation, uncertainty, confusion when operating in a foreign culture.

It is a learning experience. If you deal with it well, you will come through it a wiser and more balanced person.

#### Stages most people go through in adjusting to a new culture

1. Excitement
2. Assessment
3. Adjustment
4. Attainment.

**Some Bible characters faced culture shock:** Abraham, Lot, Joseph, Moses, Samson, Ruth, Daniel, Esther, Peter, Paul

Some dealt well with it, and some less well. We can learn a lot from them and be encouraged.

#### Coping strategy for culture shock: Some survival techniques

- |   |                                  |
|---|----------------------------------|
| 1. Maintain a measure of personal normality.    | 5. Build some local friendships. |
| 2. Don't invest major energy in minor problems. | 6. Write it all down.            |
| 3. Accept the things you cannot change.         | 7. Pray.                         |
| 4. Change what can be changed.                  |                                  |

### Pastoral Care for Missionaries

What are the problems faced by missionaries?

How might a church be a real blessing to the missionaries they have sent?

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?

What training should a missionary have? How can missionary societies and churches help one another?

How can a missionary keep happy in the Lord when far from home?

#### Encouraging our churches to become more involved in mission

- |                                   |                                       |   |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|
| 1. teach the church about mission | 4. launch a gospel outreach           | 6. encourage missionaries to visit the church |
| 2. bring interesting news         | 5. start a missionary training course | 7. send frequent messages to missionaries     |
| 3. re-assess priorities           |                                       |   |

### Family life

#### Is it better for a missionary to be single, or married?

**Single?**... 1 Cor 7:8; 1 Cor 7:32-34

A single person can travel freely and live cheaply... always available to the Lord and to people in need.

#### Married?

1. A married person may be more trusted than a single person...

It may be harder for a single person to “avoid every appearance of evil” (1 Thess 5:22).

2. 1 Cor 7:9: “It is better to marry than to burn with passion.”

3. A Christian home is a great place for ministry... Rom 16:3-5; Philemon 1-2.

4. Our children are our disciples... we can train them for the work of the gospel... 2 Tim 3:15.

### But if you are married...

1. Do not destroy your family for the sake of your mission... 1 Tim 5:8; 1 Tim 3:5.  
What shall it profit a man if he gains fame and success in ministry, and loses his sons and daughters?
2. Do all you can to make your marriage and parenting a good example to others... Eph 5:33; Eph 6:4.  
Almost every problem in marriage can be traced back to a lack of love in a husband or a lack of respect in a wife.

## Accountability

**Accountability:** “the obligation to inform someone else about our actions and decisions, and to justify what we have done”.  
Or more briefly, “the duty to inform and satisfy a superior”.

A missionary is usually considered accountable in three directions:

- to the Lord...** Rom 14:12; 1 Cor 4:4-5; Heb 6:10; Eph 6:6-8
- to your own conscience...** Acts 24:16; 23:1; 2 Cor 1:12; Gal 6:4; Heb 13:18; 1 Jn 3:21; 1 Cor 4:3-4
- to other believers...** Col 1:24-25; 2 Cor 6:3; Acts 14:27; Phil 4:14-18; Gal 1:10

As Paul reported to his supporting churches, they had confidence in him (Rom 15:19; Phil 4:14-18).

We can have too much accountability... or too little... It is hard to keep a balance.

1. Some agencies require detailed financial accounts every month... and detailed reports on use of time.  
The missionary may wonder... Does that mean they don't trust me?
2. If you are wise you will do better to ask, Am I always worthy of trust?  
Paul said, “I always take pains to have a clear conscience toward both God and man” (Acts 24:16).
3. In writing reports some missionaries may be tempted to exaggerate personal success... or personal needs.  
Some missionaries may spend too long writing accounts when they should be out proclaiming the gospel.
4. In reports we must respect the privacy of our contacts and converts. Don't pass on personal details.

## Opposition and Persecution

We should avoid trouble as far as possible... but also know how to deal with it when it comes.

### 1. Don't cause unnecessary offence.

Our task is not to criticise other religions or beliefs. It is to proclaim Christ.

The only offence should be “the offence of the cross” (Gal 5:11).

### 2. Preach a positive message.

Our task is not to tell people that they are bad. It is the Holy Spirit's work to convict of sin.

Our task is to *proclaim* the truth about Christ and *testify* about our experience of salvation.

### 3. Be glad for each person who comes to faith.

Whenever a sower sows the word, some will fall in good soil (Lk 8:8).

Learn to rejoice with the angels in heaven when a single soul believes and finds safety (Lk 15:7).

There will be some who prove faithful and true – focus your thoughts on them.

### 4. Offer your suffering to Christ as a gift of love.

Many of us must endure hardship in the proclamation...

and some may die in the attempt (Heb 10:32-34; Col 1:24; 2 Tim 4:6).

Offer your tears, sweat and blood as a gift of love, and be sure he will not forget (Matt 10:25; 1 Pet 4:16; Heb 6:10).

### 5. Be assured that you are on the victory side.

A day will come when “every knee shall bow... and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord” (Phil 2:10-11).

“If God is for us, who can be against us?” (Rom 8:31; Matt 16:18).

## Dealing with Discouragement

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).

Discouragement is often made worse by *false expectations*.

We may hope to start a mass movement by fulfilling certain conditions – prayer, faith, fasting, miracles etc....

but we have seen that there are *other reasons* why mass movements start at certain times and places.

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).

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*.