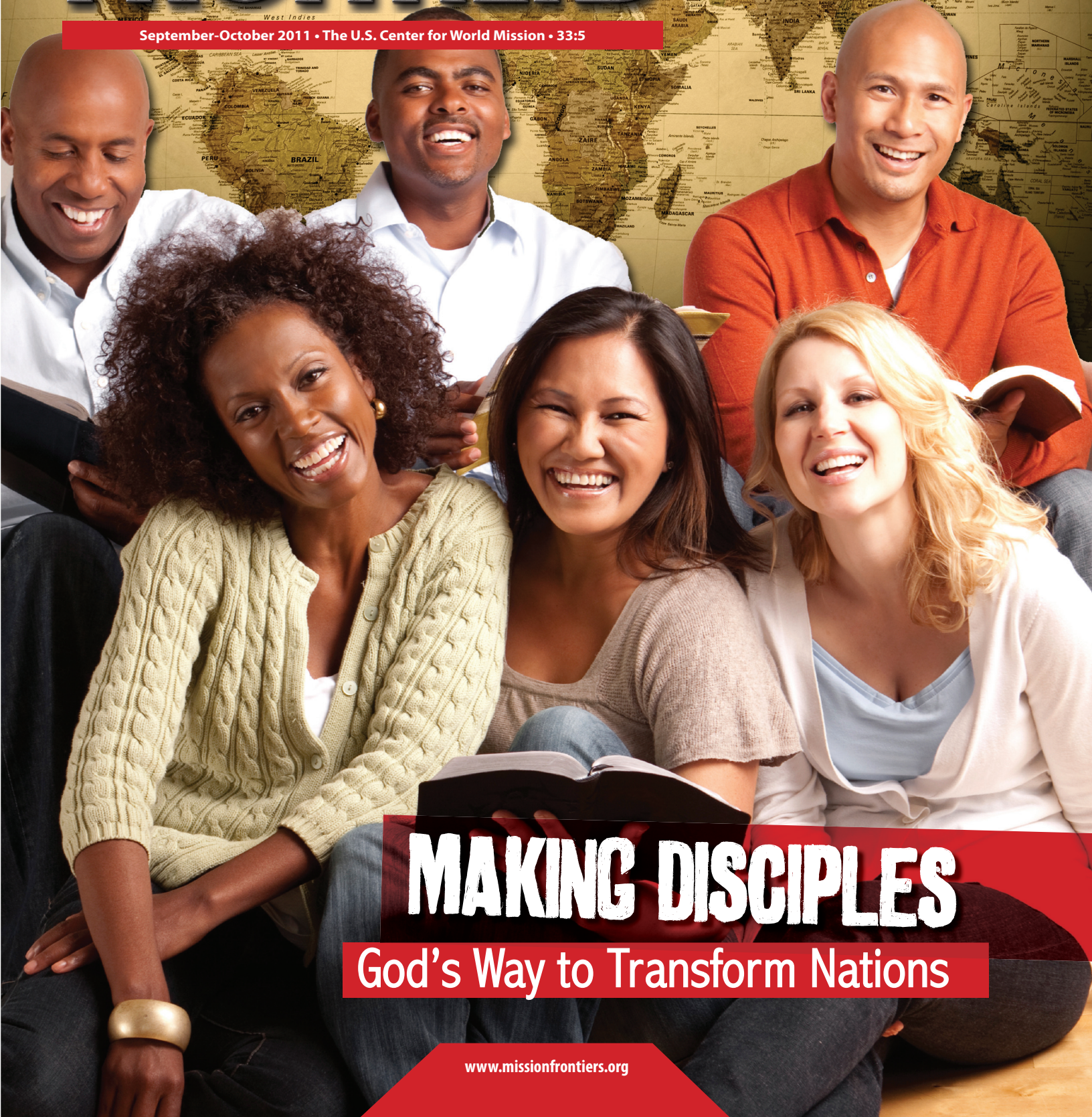




# MISSION FRONTIERS

Projecting Poverty Where  
It Doesn't Exist, p. 27

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## MAKING DISCIPLES

God's Way to Transform Nations

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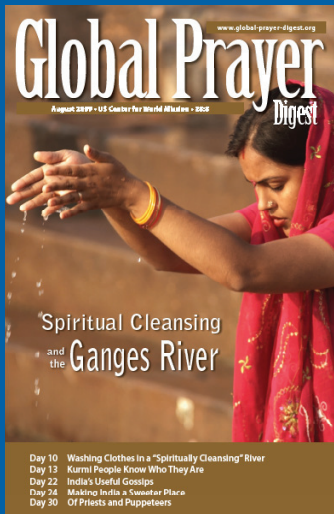


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# MAKING DISCIPLES

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# Editorial Comment



## What Is Our Mission?

Rick Wood, Editor, *Mission Frontiers*

In John 17:4, Jesus prayed to the Father, “I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do.” Jesus knew what the Father had called Him to do. But do we know what the Father has called us to do? There seems to be a great deal of confusion in the Church about what is and what is not the mission that God has given to us. And if the leaders are confused, then how can the average church member possibly understand what God has called us to do? The more ominous question is whether the Church as a whole has adopted the wrong mission and as a result we have not fulfilled what God has intended.

In this issue we take a look back at our Evangelical and biblical heritage to better understand the mission that God has given to us, and answer the often-debated question, “Does God just want us to get people saved and bound for heaven, or does He care about our lives in this world as well?”

Based on the ministry strategies that have been employed over the last 100 years, it is fair to deduce that a major emphasis of our efforts in the Church has been to get as many people saved as possible and not to disciple new believers. We have held mass evangelism crusades in stadiums all over the world. Our churches gather the best speakers, musicians and programs, all designed to attract as many people as possible to the church so the pastors can present the gospel to the unsaved. All of these methods are centered upon “professional” leaders delivering the gospel message and not on equipping all believers to carry out the work of ministry.

Should the number of people who have prayed to receive Christ be our measure of success? Is this completing the work that God has given us to do? If we think so, then I believe we have adopted an extremely truncated view of what God wants from us. Being saved from our sins, while essential, is only the beginning. God wants us to grow in maturity to become obedient followers of Jesus who are able to make disciples. Jesus wants us to fulfill His command “to make disciples of all nations.”

THE SUNDAY MORNING SERMON IS ONLY A PART OF DISCIPLESHIP AND TO THE DEGREE THAT THE CHURCH RELIES ON IT ALONE TO DISCIPLE PEOPLE IS THE DEGREE TO WHICH WE WILL CONTINUE TO FAIL TO TRANSFORM OUR NATION AND THE WORLD.

We have paid a terrible price by focusing so much on just getting people saved and not enough on making them disciples who can and should change the world.

Robert Osburn makes the point in his article, *Feeding the Wolves*, on page 24, that as a church we have not put enough emphasis upon discipling people so that they become the seed that Jesus talked about falling onto good soil and producing a crop 100 times what was sown. Robert asks the question, “Is it any joy that so many sprang up “quickly” and then “withered” (Mt. 13:5) or were eventually “choked?”

The irony is that effective discipleship is the best way of getting as many people as possible saved over the long term. The church has largely bypassed the difficult work of disciple-making in favor of mass communication strategies. Discipleship starts out slow, but if done properly builds exponentially to encompass far

more people than the “quick and easy” mass strategies that may get people into the Kingdom quickly but do not adequately disciple them. Discipleship harnesses the enormous power of all believers to be disciple makers not just the professionals.

### Wesley Showed Us the Way

The mission that Jesus gave His church was to make disciples, not just so His people would go to heaven when they died but so they would live before the world—lives that have been transformed

by God—bringing Him the greatest glory. The gospel is the power of God to bring transformation to individuals and to nations, but this transformation only takes place through effective discipleship.

The reality of this truth is seen in our first article on page 6, which describes John Wesley’s discipleship movement that transformed England in the 18th century. Wesley was not just after gathering people into churches who had “prayed the prayer,” but he sought to bring people to maturity in Christ whereby their lives would be changed. Transformed people transform nations, and that is what happened to England in Wesley’s day. People who came out of Wesley discipleship movement were called Methodists because of the specific methods that were used to make disciples who were obedient to Christ. Their mission was to transform lives and they



created the means to accomplish this. As reported in the sidebar on page 7, the Methodist movement died because they replaced the key elements that made their discipleship movement work. One tragic mistake was to stop requiring participation in the small group discipleship meetings in favor of Sunday

THE GOSPEL IS THE POWER OF GOD TO BRING TRANSFORMATION TO INDIVIDUALS AND TO NATIONS BUT THIS TRANSFORMATION ONLY TAKES PLACE THROUGH EFFECTIVE DISCIPLESHIP.

services. The Sunday morning sermon is only a part of discipleship, and to the degree that the Church relies on it alone to disciple people is the degree to which we will continue to fail to transform our nation and the world. There is nothing wrong with gathering for worship and a sermon, but it cannot fulfill all of the training and discipleship needs of the Church. To only rely on a once-a-week sermon is to abandon our ultimate mission to make disciples.

The other mistake Methodists made was to move from a grass-roots approach to developing leadership where people in their discipleship groups could become itinerant preachers to insisting on professional, seminary-trained clergy. We make the same mistake today. Instead of just using professionally trained pastors and missionaries, we must begin to employ effective discipleship methods that can equip all believers to be disciple-makers. John Wesley showed us long ago that it is possible to do so and transform a nation in the process. We should learn from his example and develop the strategies to disciple the peoples of our generation. We have presented some of these strategies in recent issues of *MF*.

All we have to do is open our eyes and look around to see that the Church in the West is losing the battle against the forces of humanism, secularism, atheism, etc. We live in the midst of a culture in decline. There are too few followers of Jesus who have been adequately disciplined so that they can be the agents of transformation within our culture and around the world. Either we will disciple the people of our churches or the world will. Right now in the West the world is winning.

## Another Example for Us to Follow

One agent of transformation was William Carey, who established the first protestant mission in India in 1793. He is a good example of what one committed disciple can accomplish in transforming a nation. The impact of

his work lasts to this day. He spent four decades not only spreading the gospel but transforming the culture of India as well. Scott Allen explains Carey's view of ministry in his article on page 15, "He looked outward across the land and asked himself, 'If Jesus were the Lord of India, what would it look like? What would be different?'" This question set his agenda and led to his involvement in a remarkable variety of activities aimed at glorifying God and advancing His kingdom." Carey followed in the footsteps of the Evangelical movement in England, where the mission of God was not just about getting people saved but it was about doing what was right in the sight of God. William Wilberforce is another product of the Evangelical awakening of the 18th century who worked tirelessly to transform the culture of England and bring glory to God in the process.

Can you see a pattern here? The Evangelicals of the 18th century believed that following Jesus meant not only getting people saved but also living out their faith in transforming the cultures around them. They saw the works of the devil and they went about destroying them. As they did, lives were changed, society was transformed and God was glorified. Their faith was not a once-a-week sermon experience but a 24-hour-a-day walk with Jesus that impacted everything they did, regardless of their occupation. They were full-time disciples of Jesus determined to bring glory to God in every aspect of their lives. We would do well today to follow their example. In so doing, we will bring glory to the Father by beginning to complete the work He has given us to do.

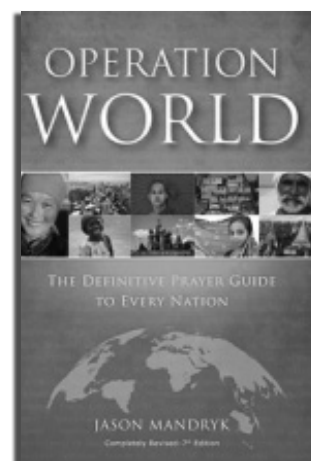
## Pass On the Vision

We continue to make progress in gathering new financial partners to support the work of *Mission Frontiers*. We are asking for 1,500 of our readers to send in a gift of \$180 or \$15 a month to help support the work of *Mission Frontiers*. We currently have received gifts of various amounts equal to 238 of these gifts. We also appreciate larger and smaller donations which will also count towards reaching our goal of 1500 donors of \$180. These funds will enable us to send *MF* to Christian leaders all over the world.

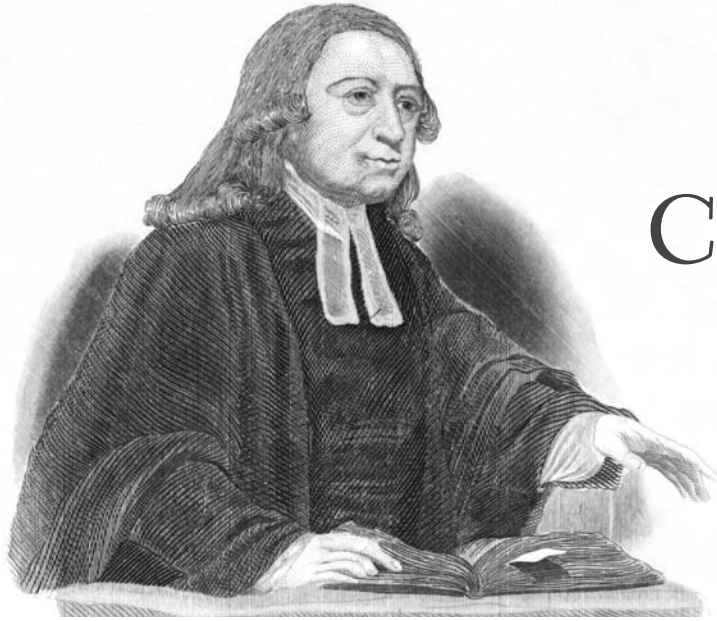
Here is what one new supporter wrote recently, "Rick, just wanted to say thanks for all your work at *Mission Frontiers*. It has changed our lives and spurs us on to live as Christ calls us. We have been challenged by the articles and can't wait for the next issue to arrive. We will be sending in \$1,000 to encourage your efforts with *Mission Frontiers*. Blessings, Tim and Wendy from Kansas."

Would you like to join Tim and Wendy in supporting the work of *Mission Frontiers*? Just go to [www.missionfrontiers.org/donate](http://www.missionfrontiers.org/donate). You can also give by means of Paypal. 🌐

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# John Wesley's Church Planting Movement:

Discipleship That Transformed a  
Nation and Changed the World

BY CHARLES EDWARD WHITE WITH ROBBY BUTLER

**W**hen John Wesley was born in 1703, four million out of Britain's five million people lived in absolute poverty—unless they found enough food for that day, they would begin to starve to death.

When John Wesley launched a Church Planting Movement in this context, he not only changed the eternal destinies of an estimated one million people who came to Christ through his ministry, he changed their economic status as well. Not only did the Methodists he led get saved, they got out of poverty and became a powerful influence in discipling their nation. Wilberforce and other "spiritual sons" of Wesley honored him as the "greatest man of his time."

The Methodists made such an impact on their nation that in 1962 historian Élie Halévy theorized that the Wesleyan revival created England's middle class and saved England from the kind of bloody revolution that crippled France. Other historians, building on his work, go further to suggest that God used Methodism to show all the oppressed



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*Robby Butler is a contributing editor for Mission Frontiers.*

peoples of the world that feeding their souls on the heavenly bread of the lordship of Christ is the path to providing the daily bread their bodies also need.

*Could Church Planting Movements of our day apply these same teachings with similar impact?*

## Personal Impact

Coming to Christ under the influence of the Wesleyan Methodists changed people by making Jesus the Lord of their lives. "Methodists" were given that name because they methodically sought to obey the Lord in all areas of their lives by obeying three main rules:

- one, do no harm;
- two, do as much good as you can; and
- three, use all the means of grace that God has provided.

The resulting spiritual change affected their daily lives in four main ways, each of which improved the social and economic status of the new believers:

- First, they *abandoned sinful habits* which had previously ruined their lives.
- Second, they *began a new life of holiness* which led to health and wealth.
- Third, by going to the Methodist meetings they *learned to read*, which gave them upward mobility.
- And fourth, they developed a *new view on money*, which enabled them to profit from the technological innovations of their age.



### Abandon Sinful Habits

Toward helping Methodists obey the first rule, they were gathered into cell groups where they confessed their sins to one another and prayed for one another to receive the self-control which is a fruit of the Holy Spirit. They thus aided one another in gaining the strength to abandon sinful habits which had previously ruined their lives and consumed their resources.

In explaining the rule against doing harm, Wesley specifically mentioned drunkenness and fighting. When describing the change made by coming to Christ, he noted "the drunkard commenced sober; the whoremonger abstained from adultery and fornication." Wesley may have mentioned the three sins of drunkenness, fighting and immorality because their effect was so obvious in his society.

Hogarth's print, *Gin Lane*, shows the social decay of Wesley's age. Gin had recently been invented. One-half of each year's grain crop was turned into this poisonous

liquid instead of being baked into healthful bread. A quarter of the houses in London were licensed to sell it and the police were powerless to stop the crimes of desperate drunken men.

BECAUSE LITERACY WAS THE ADMISSION TICKET TO THE MIDDLE CLASS, METHODISM PROVIDED THE MEANS FOR THE UPWARD MOBILITY OF HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF POVERTY-STRICKEN PEOPLE.

The police were also overwhelmed by the fighting and killing of the mob. The law executed people for 169 capital crimes, but the regular march to the gallows did nothing to make the streets safe at night. Sexual immorality was common at all levels of society, and the nation was overwhelmed with illegitimate children.

When people got saved, they repented of their sinful lives. For-saking drunkenness, fighting and immorality made obvious changes in their lives. Believers stayed sober and quit doing the crazy

and dangerous things intoxicated people do. They stopped fighting and thus avoided the injuries and feuds that destroy productivity. They abandoned promiscuity and started valuing their families and

raising their children. Simply renouncing these three self-destructive behaviors greatly improved the economic lives of the Methodists.

### Begin a New Life of Holiness

While Wesley's first general rule stopped the downward path of the Methodists, his second general rule, "Do all the good you can," led them out of abject poverty. Wesley described this positive change: "The sluggard began to work with his hands, that he might eat his own bread. The miser learned to deal his bread to the hungry, and to cover

## Why Methodism Ceased to be a Movement

BY FRANK DECKER AND DARRELL WHITEMAN

The Wesleyan renewal stimulated the transformation of a generation, and is well known for its balanced emphasis on practical disciple-making coupled with an ardent ministry to those in material need. However, in the latter part of the 19th century two significant decisions were made which caused the emphasis on the former to wane.

1. It was officially decided that membership in a small group ("class meeting") would no longer be required for church membership. This was unfortunate because it was in these class meetings that the truly practical encouragement and equipping took place, what Wesley called "watching over one another in love," enabling transformation in the life of believers in a

way that attendance at only the larger Sunday gathering was unable to provide.

2. An emphasis on formal seminary education supplanted the previous grass-roots process by which leadership was largely developed. In early Methodism one could rise from class membership to the level of an itinerant preacher, but the subsequent emphasis on more formal education fomented a greater professionalization of the clergy.

Many churches today have also adopted these two aspects of ministry to their detriment. According to Mark Nysewander in *No More Spectators*, these two "plate shifts" are what caused Methodism to cease to be a movement over a century ago. Nonetheless, the example of the early Methodists remains as an excellent template for holistic mission today.



XXIX. GIN LANE. 1751. Engraving. 11 3/4 x 14 in.

the naked with a garment. Indeed the whole form of their life was changed: they had 'left off doing evil, and learned to do well.'"

In his second rule Wesley said that Methodists should live with "all possible diligence and frugality" and "employ them [other Methodists] preferably to others, buying of one another, [and] helping each other in business."

These new lives of honesty and industry helped some Methodists succeed in business and others to become dependable and truthful employees. Besides raising their incomes, Methodism helped people curtail needless expenses and save their money for worthwhile endeavors. Wesley noted that the disciplines of the Christian life often lifted people from poverty: "For wherever true Christianity spreads, it must cause diligence and frugality, which in the natural course of things, must beget riches!"

### Learning to Read

A third way in which salvation changed the economic life of Methodists was by teaching them to read. One of the means of grace which Methodists used in obedience to Wesley's third rule was attending Methodist meetings. At these meetings Methodists were urged to read the Bible and taught to sing to hymns of Charles Wesley. As illiterate people learned to sing these hymns, they also learned to read.

Charles wrote thousand of hymns for the people called Methodist, who usually learned them by singing

them one line at a time as they were called out by the song leader. This "lining out" of the hymns enabled the singers to memorize the songs they sang. When John later published the hymns and sold them cheaply, people could match the words they knew by heart with the printed words on the page, and thus teach themselves to read. Since the Methodists usually sang five hymns at every meeting, each gathering functioned as a thirty-minute adult literacy session.

Because literacy was the admission ticket to the middle class, Methodism provided the means for the upward mobility of hundreds of thousands of poverty-stricken people.

### A New View of Money

Finally, Methodism gave people a new view of money.

Wesley often preached on this topic; his most famous message on

money made three points: Gain all you can; save [economize] all you can; give all you can.

First, Methodists were to make as much money as they possibly could. Wesley said that despite its potential for misuse, there was no end to the good money can do: "In the hands of [God's] children, it is food for the hungry, drink for the thirsty, raiment for the naked. It gives to the traveler and the stranger where to lay his head. By it we may supply the place of a husband to the widow, and of a father to the fatherless. We may be a defense for the oppressed, a means of health to the sick, of ease to them that are in pain. It may be as eyes to the blind, as feet to the lame: yea, a lifter up from the gates of death!"

Wesley urged Methodists to gain wealth through honest wisdom and unwearied diligence. "Put your whole strength into the work. Spare no pains," Wesley exhorted. But make sure the work does no ill to oneself or to the neighbor. Thus Methodists must avoid work with dangerous chemicals or in unhealthy environments. They must also not endanger their souls by any work that involves cheating or lying. Likewise, any trade that hurts the body, mind, or soul of the neighbor is out of bounds. Thus distilling liquor, running a tavern, or peddling patent medicines were forbidden to Methodists.

Wesley's second injunction, "Save all you can" had many practical implications: save all you can by refusing to gratify the desires of the flesh. "Despise delicacy and variety and be content with what plain nature requires." Refuse also the desire of the eye with superfluous or expensive clothing, and reject the pride of life, buying nothing to gain the praise or envy of others. Wesley pointed out



that gratifying such desires only increases them, so if people were to throw their money into the sea, they would be doing themselves and others less damage than if they bought needless goods.

Finally Wesley told Methodists to "Give all you can." He pointed out that all money comes from God, and that people are not the owners, but only the trustees, of God's money. He said that God wants believers to make sure that they and their families have adequate food, housing, clothing, tools and savings to do all the work which God has appointed for them to do. He then stated that any money beyond these necessities must be given to the poor. "Render unto God not the tenth, nor a third, not half, but all that is God's (be it more or less) by employing it all on yourself, your household, the household of faith, and all mankind in such a manner that you may give a good account of your stewardship."

Altogether, this advice stirred Methodists to become "early adopters" and to benefit from the new opportunities the Industrial Revolution afforded.

Wesley's teaching to pursue wealth in order to use it for good was not without its danger. Toward the end of his life he gave increasing attention to the dangerous temptation to justify buying whatever we can afford.

### Discipling the Nation

Coming to Christ through the Methodist movement changed the lives of a million people in Britain and North America in the eighteenth century. As in other cases of "redemption and lift" through the power of the Gospel, most of these people and their children moved from the desperation of hand-to-

mouth poverty to the security of middle-class life as they made Christ their Lord and experienced the impact of His power on their economic lives.

As these people moved up the social ladder, they began to influence the political life of their nation. They helped to transform Britain from an eighteenth-century kleptocracy—where the powerful fueled their lives of indulgence by exploiting the poor, into a nineteenth-century democracy—which abolished slavery and used its empire to enrich the lives of every subject of the crown. 🌐

### For Further Study

Here are three worthy efforts to summarize Wesley's influence and/or his perspective on money:

- *England Before and After Wesley* by Donald Andrew is a distillation of John Wesley Bready's 1939 book by the same title. [www.currah.info/pages/dis744/england-before-and-after-wesley.pdf](http://www.currah.info/pages/dis744/england-before-and-after-wesley.pdf).
- *Four Lessons on Money From One of the World's Richest Preachers* is my own more detailed analysis of Wesley's teaching, model and observations [www.ChristianityToday.com/ch/1988/issue19/1921.html](http://www.ChristianityToday.com/ch/1988/issue19/1921.html)
- *What Wesley Practiced and Preached About Money* is adapted from *Four Lessons on Money* [www.Mission-Frontiers.org/issue/article/what-wesley-practiced-and-preached-about-money](http://www.Mission-Frontiers.org/issue/article/what-wesley-practiced-and-preached-about-money)

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# Blessing as Transformation

BY SARITA D. GALLAGHER AND STEVEN C. HAWTHORNE

**Editor's Note:** What is the link between evangelism and efforts to bring about societal transformation? Throughout Scripture we see God enlisting a people with and through whom He can work to bring blessing upon all the peoples of earth. This blessing has several facets: relationship with God, material and social abundance and peace with neighbors. Christ's commission to disciple all peoples accelerates the enlistment of a community of followers to become the promised people of blessing in the midst of the nations. Thus evangelism (the initial enlistment) and discipleship (which brings that enlistment to maturity) are the foundation for every other ministry and initiative to realize God's blessing among the nations. Wherever this enlistment has not yet effectively begun, priority should be given to evangelism and discipleship (in the sense of order, not importance) because of the blessing, or transformation, which can potentially flourish. This article is an abridged form of an article by the same title in the Fourth Edition (2009) of *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*.

**G**od's promise to Abraham was effectively a promise to the world. In Genesis 12:1-2, God declared that He would not only bless Abram (his name at that time), but that Abram would become a blessing. The next verse reveals the amazing magnitude of that blessing: "In you all the families of the earth will be blessed." How was it possible that one man would become a blessing to all of the families throughout the earth? Even though Abram obeyed God, it's unlikely that he grasped the global implications right away. The complete promise, as Abraham heard it repeated in

the years to come, had three parts: land, family and blessing. The first two parts about land and family probably made some sense right away. But what probably remained a mystery was the promise that somehow through his family, blessing would come upon every nation on earth.

While years passed without receiving the promised land or sons, Abraham must have pondered just what the fulfillment of God's promise would look like. We would do well to ponder it as well. The promise that "all nations will be blessed" is still being fulfilled in our day. What does it mean for



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*Steve Hawthorne co-edited, with Ralph Winter, the Perspectives Reader and authored the Perspectives Study Guide. He works with WayMakers, a mission and prayer mobilization ministry. He travels widely helping the Perspectives course get underway in strategic settings.*



a nation or people to be blessed? What should we be looking for as stewards of Abraham's promised blessing by faith in Christ?

### What Does "Blessing" Mean?

If our only source were the book of Genesis, we would still learn a great deal about the idea of blessing. In Genesis, the word "blessing" is used to describe a pronouncement or endowment of blessing. It is an act in which a future destiny or goodness is spoken, and thus bestowed upon the person or entity being blessed. The term blessing is used to describe the fulfillment of what was promised, whether material or otherwise. God pronounced blessing at creation, empowering animal life and humanity to fulfill the mandate He had given, to "be fruitful and multiply and fill" their respective domains. Throughout the rest of Scripture, when blessing is fulfilled in creatures, people, households or nations, they are enabled to flourish and to move toward their intended fullness and destiny.

In Genesis we also see clear references to how the promise of blessing was fulfilled in tangible ways. Near the close of Abraham's life we read that God "had blessed Abraham in every way" (24:1). What exactly were these diverse ways that Abraham had been blessed?

We can find three broad categories of blessing in the Genesis story. First, we see blessing as material wealth and fruitfulness (24:35, 30:27, 30). Second, we see blessing as favored relationship with God and the experience of His presence (14:19-20, 21:22, 26:22). And third, we see blessing bringing about a measure of peace amidst families and peoples (21:22-23, 26:18-29).

### Beyond Abraham's Family

We've seen what it meant for Abraham and his family to be blessed. But do we also see the nations blessed in the stories of Abraham's family in Genesis?

Of course, we see Abraham and his family sometimes becoming anything but a blessing. Abraham lies to his foreign hosts with drastic results (12:10-20, 20:1-18). Jacob's sons wipe out the men of an entire Canaanite city (33:18-34:31). Despite these and other events, God did bring help to other nations through Abraham and his descendants. For example, Abraham came to the rescue of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 14), which had been taken captive by raiding armies that had seized "all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah and all their food supply" (14:11). Not long after this, Abraham prayed that God would spare the entire city of Sodom (no doubt including some who he had already rescued from captivity). He argued his case before God, not just for Lot and his family, but for "the whole city" (19:28). Even though the city was destroyed, the point is that Abraham initiated intercession to save the entire city.

It is significant that near the end of Genesis, we see Abraham's grandson Jacob pronouncing a blessing upon the Pharaoh himself. The exact words aren't recorded, but there was a formal occasion in which "Jacob blessed Pharaoh" (47:7,10).

The crescendo of Genesis is the story of Joseph. Like Abraham and Isaac before him, the incredible productivity of Joseph's work caused watching foreigners to conclude that God's presence with Joseph had brought a surprising abundance. "The LORD was with him and ... the LORD caused all that he did to prosper in his hand"

(Gen 39:3). His master recognized that "the LORD'S blessing was upon all that he owned, in the house and in the field" (39:5) because of Joseph.

### Blessing Egypt and the People of All the Earth

God gave Joseph an interpretation of a dream that predicted a seven-year famine. Pharaoh acknowledged Joseph's wisdom as coming from God and declared, "See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt" and further, "Without your permission, no one shall raise his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt" (41:41, 44). When the famine came, its devastation "spread over all the face of the earth" (41:56). Joseph was positioned to extend blessing to many nations, as "the people of all the earth came to buy grain from Joseph" (41:57).

In the second year of the seven-year famine, Joseph distributed food in exchange for money and livestock (47:14-17). As the final year of the famine came, he had arranged for the survival of the people of Egypt. In exchange for state ownership of land and a 20 percent tax (a very generous arrangement compared to most feudal systems), he offered grain to be used as seed for planting as a way of restarting agricultural cycles after the famine (47:18-24). As the famine ends with hope for long-term survival, the statement of the people is telling: "You have saved our lives!" (47:25).<sup>1</sup>

### Later Will Be Greater: Fulfillment in Descendants

Did Abraham comprehend the blessing to the nations that God was promising, especially the eventual magnitude of it? In each of the five times God spoke to Abraham (Abram), Isaac and

Jacob (Israel), promising blessing to the nations, He amplified and clarified how His promise would be fulfilled.

### **The Promise Fulfilled in Christ**

Most Christians have been taught well about Jesus Christ coming to provide a way for people to be adopted as sons and daughters into the family of God. In the book of Galatians, Paul says that "when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son... that we might receive" adoption as children of God (Gal 4:4-5). But a few verses earlier in the same book Paul says that those who believe in Christ have been joined with Christ in such a way that they become part of Abraham's family. "If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise" (Gal 3:29).

The way the promise was given to Abraham, blessing would be fulfilled in the "seed" of Abraham. This word is often used as a "collective singular," speaking of many seeds. Thus, the term can refer to one descendant or to a multitude of descendants. Which is it?

Paul answers the question this way: Both are true. There is one pre-eminent son of Abraham: "The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, 'And to seeds,' as referring to many, but rather to one, 'And to your seed,' that is, Christ" (Gal 3:29). Christ is the one seed of Abraham, but Paul also declares that since people become sons and daughters of Abraham's family by faith, the promise is being fulfilled by their faith as those who inherit the promise:

"It is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham. The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith,

preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, 'All the nations will be blessed in you.' So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham" (Gal 3:7-9).

Christ has now ended the curse and opened the family of God. Now people from every family on earth can be part of Abraham's family by faith in Christ. They inherit the full family heritage of being blessed in order to be a blessing to the nations.

### **God's Promise Becomes Our Mandate**

God's promise to bless the nations through Abraham's descendants carries mandate force for all who have been joined with Christ by faith. The promise so clearly reveals God's purpose, that Christians rightly consider it to convey God's mandate to serve as His agents of blessing among all the peoples of the earth.<sup>2</sup> We are blessed in Christ in order to bring forth the blessing of Christ among all the nations. But what are we hoping for? What does it mean for the nations to be blessed? And how are we to pursue it? The promise of blessing shapes and integrates our mission in two important ways.

### **Relational Blessing: Belonging to God's Family**

The greatest blessing imaginable is the privilege of belonging to God's people, and therefore, belonging to God as His children. Christ has opened Abraham's family to all. We now participate in bringing people from every people, tribe and clan to be joined with Christ by faith and enfolded into the people of God. Extending the invitation to belong to God's family is the greater part of what it means to bring blessing to the nations. We cannot consider that the Abrahamic blessing

has visited a people today if the gospel of Jesus Christ has not yet been clearly conveyed to them.

What will it look like when this aspect of God's blessing is fulfilled? We can look forward to the day when we will see at least some from every people on earth trusting and following Christ. The blessing of the nations means much more than evangelism, but it certainly can mean no less than the evangelization of every people.

We have seen in the book of Genesis that God displayed evidence of His dynamic presence with His people. God will be no less present amidst the peoples of the earth as groups of obedient followers of Christ emerge and grow among the nations. As in the book of Genesis, the presence of God with His people in our day is the beginning of all of the more tangible aspects of blessing that God brought about. This means that evangelization has a special priority (in order, not importance). God's promise to bless the nations is the framework in which Christ's commission makes sense. This same promise authorizes Christ's followers to hope and to work for God's life to abound in every people.

### **Material and Social Blessing: Abundance and Peace**

We can expect the blessing of belonging to God to become a reality amidst every people. But we can look forward to so much more! We can expect to see significant displays of the abundance of God's life. We should not expect a utopian perfection. But we can work and pray with a strong hope, partly informed by what we see in the book of Genesis, that God will be with His people to bring forth significant measures of blessing among the nations.

And so we ask again, what will the fulfillment of God's promise to bless the nations look like? Of course, it will be different in every place and people, but we should expect God to bring forth every kind of blessing, such as economies that flourish with justice and righteousness, agricultures and industries that abound with plenty for all, and peace throughout communities and between peoples and races. We can expect that God will enable His people to wage war with disease, to break the vicious cycles of poverty, to provide water in desert lands, and to be present with healing in the midst of catastrophe.

We should expect that some of Abraham's children by faith will be used by God to preserve life after the example of Joseph. We are probably seeing now in many cities an answer to Abraham's prayer for the city of Sodom in Genesis 18. In that prayer God said that an entire city would be spared the immediate consequences of their sin because of the righteousness of a few. In Abraham's day there were less than ten. Now there are millions of his faith family spread throughout many of the cities of the earth.

### **Blessing as Transformation**

Recently the term "transformation" has helped many express hope that Christian mission can be directed beyond successful evangelism to also seek lasting changes in society which reflect the justice and character of Christ. The biblical ground for integrating evangelism with social action is usually found in numerous biblical texts dealing with the hope and reality of the kingdom of God. It could be that we have been overlooking another body of biblical truth that supports a robust and strategic

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holism. God's ancient promise of blessing provides a vivid, rich and powerful framework for integrating the pursuit of societal transformation and the completion of world evangelization.

Here are six reasons why the Abrahamic promise of blessing provides a framework for us to pray, plan and co-labor for the evangelization of all the peoples of the earth with hope that the results will include significant transformation.

#### **1. God Works With and Through His People**

God's people work with intentionality, strategy and hope, using all of the grace, skills and resources God has entrusted to them. But at the same time, God infuses the work of His people with His power and life. Blessing is a function of the work of people and the presence of God. Blessing is always more than the sum of all human efforts.

#### **2. Increase and Fullness, but Never Perfection or Utopia**

A blessed city or people is not a perfect society. Instead, hope for blessing gives us courage to pray and to work toward societies that flourish in every way—spiritually, relationally, physically, economically, aesthetically and environmentally.

#### **3. Not Exclusive to God's People**

While God's people are distinctively blessed, God intends that

blessing to extend beyond His people. The well-being of entire cities and nations can be pursued without respect to how the gospel may have been received or rejected.

#### **4. Growth Rather Than Redistribution**

Generosity is certainly a virtue of anyone who would desire to be a blessing in a biblical sense. But being a blessing means something other than merely sharing wealth with equality in view. The basic idea of blessing is that God's life multiplies and comes to an abundance or fullness by God's doing.

#### **5. Blessing Even From the Poor and Powerless**

Throughout Genesis, God brought about great blessing through weak, comparatively poor or powerless people. Being a blessing in God's hand is never the exclusive privilege of those who are wealthy or well-positioned by global standards.

#### **6. Blessing is Variable, Slow-Forming and Long-Lasting**

Changes that can be attributed to God's blessing often take place over a period of years, generations, or even centuries. The fruition of blessing appears in comparable, but never identical ways in every people or place.

#### **Co-Workers with God to Bring Blessing**

We find in the Genesis account a remarkably clear prophetic sketch of the broad scope of



God's purpose for His people. Since God's promise to Abraham embodies His purpose and our mission, then we are right to expect that our mission will lead to social and material change or transformation. But the main lesson to be learned is not that God's mission includes concerns for social and physical issues. The greatest lessons we may find are those which show us how to co-work with God to bring forth His blessing. To be God's blessing among all the peoples will require our utmost effort somehow blended with the exertion of God's miraculous, life-giving power.

As God continues the fulfillment of His promise in our day, we can learn important lessons about how we can co-work with God from the lives of Abraham's family. Perhaps the person in Genesis that best exemplifies the mystery of God at work with His people to bring forth blessing is Abraham's great-grandson Joseph.

### 1. Co-working With God

Joseph worked with God and God worked through Joseph. When Potiphar's household was blessed, the miraculous increase was said to be "the Lord's blessing." But the abundance multiplied in extraordinary ways because of the diligence and wisdom of Joseph's efforts. We see God at work in supernatural ways by giving Joseph abilities to interpret dreams. But it was Joseph's skill and wisdom, given by God, that put together a long-range plan to help the people of Egypt survive the famine and to restore economic and agricultural abundance.

### 2. Working Faithfully Regardless of Position

When Joseph worked as a slave, he worked diligently so that blessing abounded throughout all of

his master's affairs. Even while in Pharaoh's dungeon as a prisoner, he proved trustworthy and was put in charge of running the prison because "whatever he did, the LORD made to prosper" (Gen 39:23). He was promoted to the highest pinnacle of power in an extensive empire. In that position he was used to save many lives and to restore the fertile agricultural economy of Egypt.

### 3. Serving as One Sent by God

Joseph gradually came to understand that he had been sent by God. He could have lived out a story-line of victimization as someone who had been brutalized by his family, unjustly treated as a slave, wrongly accused and forgotten in prison. But instead, he recognized that God was aiming at something far beyond his own well-being. God was using circumstances intended for evil and turning them toward good (50:20). Joseph told his brothers, "God sent me before you to preserve life" (45:5). Joseph is the first person in the story of Scripture who verbalizes a recognition that they have been expressly sent by God to accomplish a mission of any kind.

### 4. Accomplishing God's Purpose

As Joseph stated it, the purpose God sent him to accomplish was simply to "preserve life." Joseph preserved the lives of his own family, but the grateful exclamation of the Egyptian people tells the greater story of lives saved throughout Egypt and Canaan: "You have saved our lives!" (47:25).

Without clarity about God's greater purpose unfolding over many years, it's doubtful that Joseph would have recognized that God had sent him at all. Joseph could have arranged that his re-

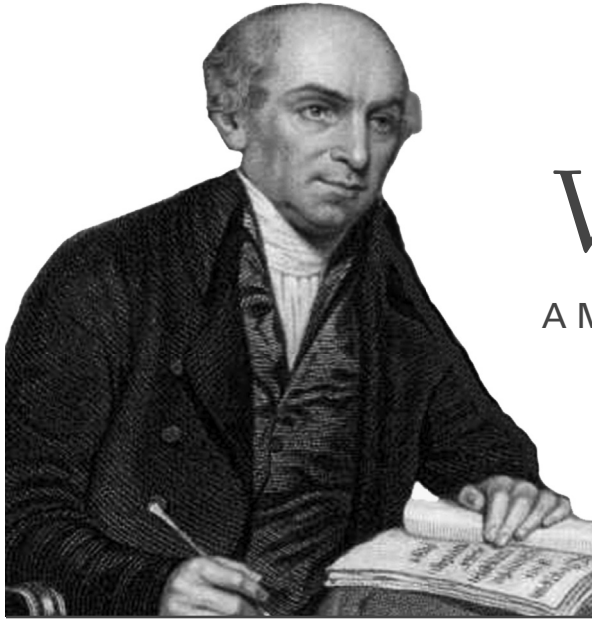
mains would have been entombed in grand Egyptian style. Instead, he insisted that his remains be carried back to the land that God had promised Abraham (Gen 50:25, Heb 11:22). Joseph realized that he was pursuing a purpose that would be fulfilled beyond his own life span.

### You Have Been Long Awaited

We know that Abraham gazed at the sky, counting the stars, believing that his family would number in the billions. But according to Jesus, Abraham saw more than the sky at night. He saw the day. The Day of Christ. A day in which billions of his children would be blessed and be a blessing among all the peoples of earth. No wonder he was moved with joy. Jesus said, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad" (John 8:56).<sup>1</sup>

1 Some observers have interpreted Joseph's action as a shrewd act of oppression denying impoverished people ownership of land. The account emphasizes that many lives were saved. When viewed in light of most famines that wiped out millions of people in the ancient world, along the likelihood that many regimes would have allowed much of the population to slowly starve, it is possible to see Joseph's work as a work of salvation. But because there was a restoring of agricultural abundance, it should be considered an act of blessing.

2 In Genesis 12:2, the Hebrew expression "be a blessing" is in the imperative mood. Taken by itself this verb could be considered to be a clear command to Abram to somehow become a blessing. But even though the word itself is in the imperative mood, the grammar of the entire expression frames this phrase as a forceful way to express the purpose of the three cohortative Hebrew verbs immediately before it (to make Abram a great nation, to bless him, and to make his name great).



# William Carey:

A Missionary Who Transformed a Nation

BY SCOTT ALLEN

When Englishman William Carey (1761–1834) arrived in India in 1793, it marked a major milestone in the history of Christian missions and in the history of India. Carey established the Serampore Mission—the first modern Protestant mission in the non-English-speaking world—near Calcutta on January 10, 1800.<sup>1</sup> From this base, he labored for nearly a quarter century to spread the gospel throughout the land. In the end his triumph was spectacular. Through his unflinching love for the people of India and his relentless campaign against “the spiritual forces of evil” (Eph. 6:12), India was literally transformed. Asian historian Hugh Tinker summarizes Carey’s impact on India this way: “And so in Serampore, on the banks of the river Hooghly, the principal elements of modern South Asia—the press, the university, social consciousness—all came to light.”<sup>2</sup>



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Who was William Carey? He was exactly the kind of man that the Lord seems to delight in using to accomplish great things; in other words, the kind of person that most of us would least expect. He was raised in a small, rural English town where he received almost no formal education. His chief source of income came through his work as a cobbler (a shoemaker). He had an awkward, homely appearance, having lost almost all his hair in childhood. Upon his arrival in India and throughout his years there, he was harassed by British colonists, deserted by his mission-sending agency, and opposed by younger missionary recruits who were sent to help him. Despite these setbacks, he became perhaps the most influential person in the largest outpost of the British Empire.<sup>3</sup>

Carey didn’t go to India merely to start new churches or set up medical clinics for the poor. He was driven by a more comprehensive vision—a vision for discipling the nation. “Carey saw India not as a foreign country to be exploited, but as his heavenly Father’s land to be loved and served, a society where truth, not ignorance, needed to rule.”<sup>4</sup> He looked outward across the land and asked himself, “If Jesus were the Lord of India, what would it look like? What would be different?” This question set his agenda and led to his involvement in a remarkable variety of activities aimed at glorifying God and advancing His kingdom. Following are highlights of Carey’s work described in Vishal and Ruth Mangalwadi’s outstanding book *The Legacy of William Carey*:

*A Model for the Transformation of a Culture.*<sup>5</sup>

Carey was horrified that India, one of the most fertile countries in the world, had been allowed to become an uncultivated jungle abandoned to wild beasts and serpents. Therefore he carried out a systematic survey of agriculture and campaigned for agriculture reform. He introduced the Linnæan system of plant organizations and published the first science texts in India. He did this because he believed that nature is declared “good” by its Creator; it is not *maya* (illusion) to be shunned, as Hindus believe, but a subject worthy of human study.

Carey introduced the idea of savings banks to India to fight the all-pervasive social evil of usury (the lending of money at excessive interest). He believed that God, being righteous, hated this practice which made investment, industry, commerce, and economic development impossible.

He was the first to campaign for humane treatment of India's leprosy victims because he believed that Jesus' love extends to leprosy patients, so they should be cared for. Before then, lepers were often buried or burned alive because of the belief that a violent death purified the body on its way to reincarnation into a new healthy existence.

He established the first newspaper ever printed in any Oriental language, because he believed that “above all forms of truth and faith, Christianity seeks free discussion.” His English-language journal, *Friend of India*, was the force that gave birth to the social-reform movement in India in the first half of the nineteenth century.

He translated the Bible into over 40 different Indian languages. He transformed the Bengali language, previously considered “fit

for only demons and women,” into the foremost literary language of India. He wrote gospel ballads in Bengali to bring the Hindu love of music to the service of his Lord.

He began dozens of schools for Indian children of all castes and launched the first college in Asia. He desired to develop the Indian mind and liberate it from darkness and superstition.

He was the first man to stand against the ruthless murders and widespread oppression of women. Women in India were being crushed through polygamy, female infanticide, child marriage, widow burning, euthanasia, and forced illiteracy—all sanctioned by religion. Carey opened schools for girls. When widows converted to Christianity, he arranged marriages for them. It was his persistent, 25-year battle against widow burning (known as *sati*) that finally led to the formal banning of this horrible religious practice.

William Carey was a pioneer of the modern Christian missionary movement, a movement that has since reached every corner of the world. Although a man of simple origins, he used his God-given genius and every available means to serve his Creator and illumine the dark corners of India with the light of the truth.

William Carey's ministry in India can be described as wholistic. For something to be wholistic, it must have multiple parts that contribute to a greater whole. What is the “whole” to which all Christian ministry activities contribute? Through an examination of Christ's earthly ministry, we see that the “whole” is glorifying God and advancing His kingdom through the discipling of the nations (Matt. 24:14; 28:18–20). This is God's “big agenda”—the principal task that

he works through His church to accomplish.

If this is the whole, then what are the parts? Matthew 4:23, highlights three parts: preaching, teaching, and healing. Because each part is essential to the whole, let's look at each one more carefully.

*Preaching* includes proclaiming the gospel—God's gracious invitation for people everywhere to live in His Kingdom, have their sins forgiven, be spiritually reborn, and become children of God through faith in Christ. Proclaiming the gospel is essential to wholistic ministry, for unless lost and broken people are spiritually reborn into a living relationship with God—unless they become “a new creation” (2 Cor. 5:17)—all efforts to bring hope, healing, and transformation are doomed to fail. People everywhere need their relationship with God restored, yet preaching is only one part of wholistic ministry.

*Teaching* entails instructing people in the foundational truths of Scripture. It is associated with discipleship—helping people to live in obedience to God and His Word in every area of life. In Matthew 28:20 Jesus tells His disciples to “teach [the nations] to obey everything I have commanded you.” Unless believers are taught to *obey* Christ's commands, their growth may be hindered. Colossians 3:16 says, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom.”

*Healing* involves the tangible demonstrations of the present reality of the Kingdom in the midst of our hurting and broken world. When Jesus came, He demonstrated the present reality of God's Kingdom by healing people. “The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured,



the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor," was Jesus' report to His cousin John the Baptist in Matthew 11:4–5. Jesus didn't just preach the good news; He demonstrated it by healing all forms of brokenness. Unless ministry to people's physical needs accompanies evangelism and discipleship, our message will be empty, weak, and irrelevant. This is particularly true where physical poverty is rampant. The apostle John admonishes, "If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth" (1 John 3:17–18).

Here's a picture of the basic elements of a biblically balanced, wholistic ministry:

other words, each is understood and implemented through the basic presuppositions of Scripture. In summary, preaching, teaching and healing are three indispensable parts of wholistic ministry, whose purpose is to advance God's kingdom "on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10). Without these parts working together seamlessly, our ministry is less than what Christ intends, and will lack power to transform lives and nations.

To comprehend the nature and purpose of wholistic ministry, two concepts must be understood. First is the comprehensive impact of humanity's spiritual rebellion. Second is that our loving, compassionate God is presently unfolding His plan to redeem and restore all things broken through the Fall.

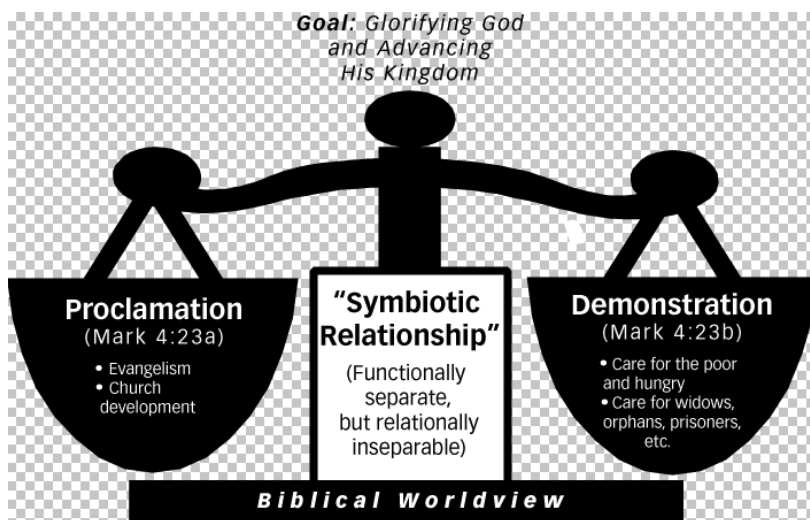
When Adam and Eve turned

This was the primary relationship for which they had been created, the most important aspect of their lives. When their relationship with God was broken, their other relationships were damaged too: their relationship with themselves as individuals (Gen. 3:7, 10), with each other as fellow human beings (Gen. 3:7, 12, 16), and with the rest of creation (Gen. 3:17–19). The universe is intricately designed and interwoven. It is wholistic, composed of multiple parts, each of which depends on the proper functioning of the others. All parts are governed by laws established by God. When the primary relationship between God and humanity was severed, every part of the original harmony of God's creation was affected. The results of this comprehensive brokenness have plagued humanity ever since. War, hatred, violence, environmental degradation, injustice, corruption, idolatry, poverty and famine all spring from sin.

Thus, when God set out to restore His creation from the all-encompassing effects of man's rebellion, His redemptive plan could not be small or narrow, focusing on a single area of brokenness. His plan is not limited to saving human souls or teaching or even healing. Rather, it combines all three with the goal of restoring everything, including each of the four broken relationships described above. Colossians 1:19–20 provides a picture of God's wholistic redemptive plan:

For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in [Christ], and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. (Emphasis added)

God is redeeming *all things*. Through Christ's blood our sins are forgiven and our fellowship



First, there are multiple parts—preaching, teaching and healing. These parts have distinct functions, yet they are inseparable. All are essential in contributing to the whole, which is glorifying God and advancing His Kingdom. Lastly, each part rests on the solid foundation of the biblical worldview. In

their backs on God in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:1–6), the consequences of their sin were devastating and far-reaching; they affected the very order of the universe. At least four relationships were broken through the Fall. First, Adam and Eve's intimate relationship with God was broken (Gen. 3:8–9).

THE GOSPEL IS NOT ONLY GOOD NEWS FOR AFTER WE DIE;  
IT IS GOOD NEWS HERE AND NOW!

with God is renewed. And not only that—we also can experience substantial healing within ourselves, with others, and with the environment. The gospel is not only good news for after we die; it is good news here and now!

The task of the church is to join God in His big agenda of restoring all things. We are “Christ’s ambassadors,” called to the “ministry of reconciliation” (see 2 Cor. 5:18–20). In the words of Christian apologist Francis Schaeffer, we should be working “on the basis of the finished work of Christ . . . [for] substantial healing now in every area where there are divisions because of the Fall.”<sup>6</sup> To do this, we must first believe that such healing *can* be a reality here and now, in every area, on the basis of the finished work of Christ. This healing will not be perfect or complete on this side of Christ’s return, yet it can be real, evident, and substantial.

Preaching, teaching, and substantial healing in every area where brokenness exists as a result of the Fall—in essence, wholistic ministry—is the vision that Christ had and modeled for us on earth. It was the vision that set the agenda for William Carey in India. It is the vision that should set the agenda for our ministry as well.

When Jesus sent out His disciples on their first missionary journey, “He sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick” (Luke 9:2). Yet today it’s common for Christian ministries to separate the twin ministry components. Some focus exclusively on preaching, evangelism, or church planting, while others focus on meeting the physical

needs of the broken or impoverished. Typically these two groups have little interaction. This division is not what Christ intended. By focusing on one to the exclusion of the other, ministries are limited and ineffective in bringing about true, lasting transformation.

The Bible provides a model of ministry where preaching, teaching, and healing are, in the words of Dr. Tetsunao Yamamori, “functionally separate, yet relationally inseparable.”<sup>7</sup> Each part is distinct and deserves special attention and focus. Yet the parts *must* function together. Together they form a wholistic ministry that is both powerful and effective—a ministry able to transform lives and entire nations. The work of William Carey in India gives historical testimony to

this fact. According to theologian David Wells, preaching, teaching, and healing must be “inextricably related to each other, the former being the foundation and the latter being the evidence of the working of the former.”<sup>8</sup>

- 1 Ruth and Vishal Mangalwadi, *The Legacy of William Carey: A Model for the Transformation of a Culture* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1999), p. vx. Available at [www.missionbooks.org](http://www.missionbooks.org)
- 2 Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 10.
- 3 *Ibid.*, p. 13
- 4 *Ibid.*, p. 24.
- 5 *Ibid.*, pp. 17-25.
- 6 Francis A. Schaeffer, *Pollution and the Death of Man: The Christian View of Ecology* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1970), p. 68.
- 7 Tetsunao Yamamori, *God's New Envoys: A Bold Strategy for Penetrating "Closed Countries"* (Portland, OR: Multnomah, 1987), p. 135.
- 8 David F. Wells, *No Place for Truth, or, Whatever Happened to Evangelical Theology?* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1993), p. 103.



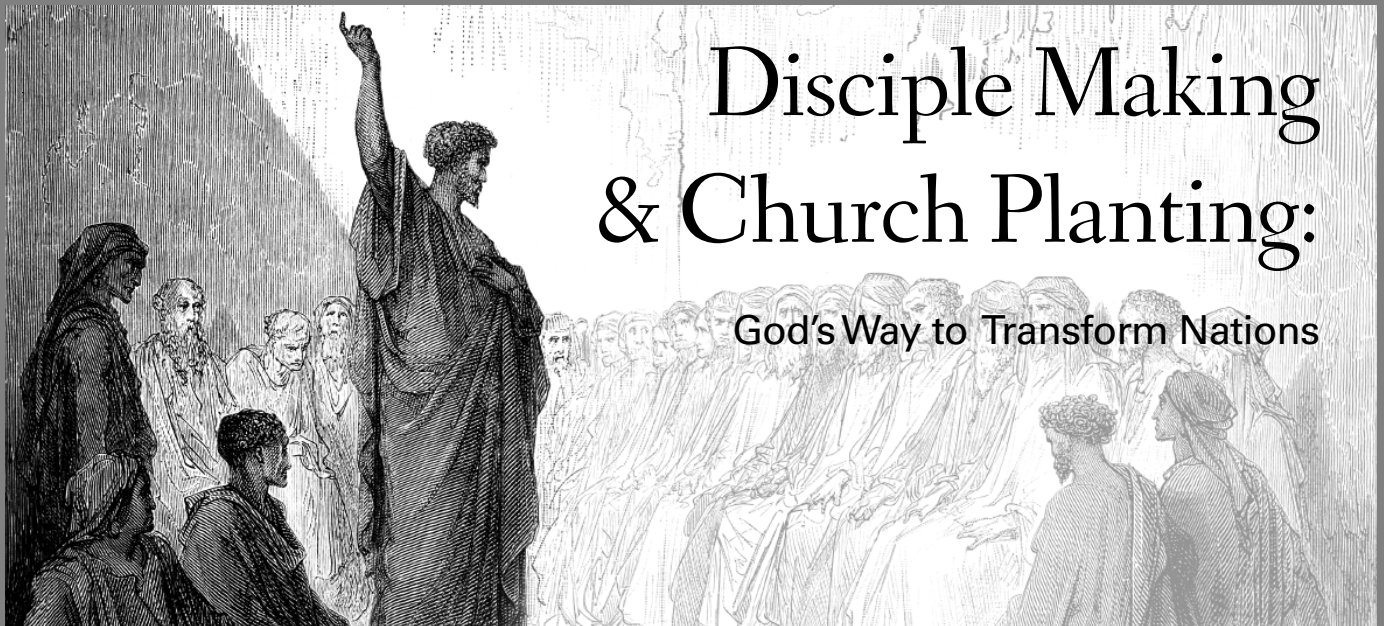
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1761-1834

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The online William Carey International Development Journal will be publishing its first quarterly issue focusing on the 250th anniversary of William Carey. Please visit our website at: <http://www.wciujournal.org/>



# Disciple Making & Church Planting:

God's Way to Transform Nations

BY FLOYD MCCLUNG

Jesus bypassed the cumbersome religious structures and irrelevant worship practices of his day, and started something living and organic. The word “organic” is a good one to describe a spontaneously reproducing simple church movement because it describes something that grows naturally, without artificial additives. It consists of elements that exist together in natural relationships that make growth and multiplication possible. That is how a simple church movement grows: it is not a top down hierarchical organization, but a movement held together by people who share the same vision and values. I have observed that successful churches in the conventional church model can actually be a hindrance to a simple church planting movement.



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*All Nations offers church planting equipping programs called CPx in Kansas City and Cape Town.*

*For more go to [www.allnationsworldwide.org](http://www.allnationsworldwide.org) or [www.floydandsally.com](http://www.floydandsally.com).*

Notice the way Jesus got the disciples exercising gifts of leadership from the outset, before they were “ready.” Jesus didn’t wait for disciples to be born again, baptized, trained theologically and supervised under a safe religious system with guaranteed controls before He was involving them in leadership. He got them out telling others about Him within a few weeks of being with Him (Matt 10:1–14). He led the movement He began from underneath, very quickly involving the disciples in leadership assignments without mentioning positions or titles. He had a radically different paradigm from that of the religious leaders of His day, and of our day as well. He was training them to lead before they were actually born again, in our evangelical understanding of what that means. After all, the journey of discipleship doesn’t start when a person comes to faith in Christ, but long before.

## Movements not just meetings

In his book *Organic Church<sup>2</sup>*, Neil Cole describes his journey from a static kind of church planting model to a dynamic and rapidly expanding organic movement of over 800 simple churches. Cole describes his journey of disenchantment with “church growth” seminars that attributed the secret of growing churches to clean toilets and plenty of parking spaces. Cole comments: “Apparently, the kingdom of God is held up by dirty toilets and poor parking. Jesus will have to wait for us to clean up our act. In India and China, however, where the church



is growing fastest, among the most noticeable missing ingredients are clean toilets and parking spaces.”<sup>3</sup>

Cole describes coming to the realization that God wanted him to help birth a movement that radically lowered the bar for what it meant to be church, but raised the bar for what it meant to be a disciple in the church. By assertively sharing Christ and making disciples, their movement, Church Multiplication Associates (CMA), grew in just a few years to over 800 churches in more than 30 States in the U.S.A. and 25 countries around the world.

How does such a movement happen? There has to be the blessing of God, for sure. But besides that, simple church movements are spurred in their growth by personal discipleship. It is people discipling people. Programs don't disciple people, buildings don't disciple people...people disciple people. And discipled people transform nations.

In our church planting endeavours in Cape Town, we stress the loving invitations of Jesus to everyone, and then teach the loving commands of Jesus to those who are serious. We lower the bar for doing church so that everyone can be part of it, and we raise the bar for being a disciple so that everyone knows what it means to be a disciple of Jesus, a person who lives a transformed life.

Of the four kinds of soil that received the seed in the parable of the sower, only one kind was deep and lasting. That is what we look for to make our disciples, transform communities, and find future leaders. We consciously and unconditionally love all those we minister to, but we also recognize that some people are hungry to learn more about Jesus and some people aren't.

### **Formation, not just information**

When I think about those who have influenced me most in life, it's a few people who made a significant investment in me. These are men and women who believed in me and took time to impart to me what God had deposited in their lives. The goal of discipleship is not disseminating information, but life-on-life formation. I have heard a lot of great sermons in my days. I have read many excellent books. And I have interacted with world-class leaders. But what really changed my life were those who took the time to get to know me and mentor me. Those are the ones who really impacted me. I can count them on the fingers of two hands. God put something in each of them that was unique, and they passed it on to me. I am what I am today because of those men and women.

People like Gordon Fee. Dr. Fee was one of my professors while I was studying at Vanguard University. He was much more than a professor, actually – he became a mentor. He became a friend. He took time to hear my story. He would come by my room in the residence hall to visit with me and the other students. He would stop by the gym and shoot hoops with us as we practiced for our next game. He invited me to his office to chat. He poked around in my heart when he sensed I was not doing well. There has never been a time I have preached God's word that I was not passing on to others what was imparted to me by this man of God.

### **Disciple making is the way Jesus did church**

Jesus chose a few people and poured Himself into them. He preached to the multitudes, but

He spent most of His time with His disciples. Jesus calls us to follow His example by reproducing what He has given to us in others, who in turn are to invest in others also (2 Tim 2:2). Building a disciple-making culture and birthing a disciple-making movement does not happen by accident. Passionate people catch the fire that burns in them from someone else and in turn pass it on to others. Every person who is influencing other people's lives can tell you about the people who impacted upon them.

There are churches and movements today that produce these kinds of results, while others don't even come close. The reason? Some have caught the vision of relational disciple-making, and others have not. How can we expect to reproduce our lives in others, and see whole cities and nations transformed if we don't deliberately pass on to them what God has given us?

Anything good in our life is the result of our being impacted upon by someone else. It began with Jesus and His disciples 2,000 years ago, and it carries on with us today. If you have hope, passion, a sense of purpose and destiny, it is because you received it from someone else. You are one of many in a long line of people who have touched each other's lives. And if others are changed because of you, it will be because you gave to them what has been given to you. Passion for Jesus and His purposes in the earth is received, nurtured, then passed on to others. That's how it lives on in the Church.

Passion and purpose come at no less a price than Jesus and His disciples paid to possess them. If Jesus walked the way of suffering to receive the blessing of the

Father, do we think we can do anything less? If we are willing to align ourselves with a tribe of people with proven passion, it will mean getting out of our comfort zone, taking up our cross, and putting ourselves in harm's way for the sake of the gospel and for nations to be transformed. If we are willing and obedient, we will experience the same fruit as the first disciples.

Jesus chose personal investment in people's lives as the primary way He did church. The Sunday-centric model of church will not change the world. Some think the church started on the day of Pentecost, but I disagree. Jesus led the first New Testament church. He modelled for us how to do church by the way He gathered and invested in the lives of a few men and women. He modelled a new way of doing church. He gathered, equipped and mobilized faithful men and women into a movement of devoted followers (Matt 28:19–20, 2 Tim 2:2). This kind of one-on-one intentional relationship is the key to helping people get freed from their brokenness and turned on to serving Jesus. Discipleship isn't a school or program, but a lifestyle of passion and purpose passed on through personal investment and involvement in one another's lives (1 Thess 2:18–19; 3:10).

I met a young man named Charles a few years ago. I asked him if he had a dream, and he eagerly shared it with me. "I want to have eight generations of disciples. I am an eighth generation disciple. I have traced it back through the guys in our church, starting about 20 years ago." He named the men in the long chain of relationships that Charles knew by heart, and could articulate the principles that made it so powerful.

"I want to start a church planting movement someday, and I know I won't be able to do it unless I invest my life in others," said Charles. He was right. There are no short cuts to doing church the way Jesus did it. He built a team that became a community that multiplied and grew into a movement. You can build a disciple-making church with two or three generations of disciples, but Charles was already dreaming of more than one church, and more than four generations of disciples. He wanted to build a church-planting movement, and he knew it had to begin with him leading people to Christ and investing in them one at a time.

When I quizzed Charles on what steps he was taking to turn his dream into a reality, he told me about room-mates he was reaching out to and new followers of Jesus with whom he was meeting weekly to have a quiet time and share their faith. He was taking simple, practical steps to turn his dream into a reality. He was faithfully working away at it, and you know what? I believe his dream will become a reality.

### **Making disciples is not an option, it's a command**

Jesus said: "Teach them to observe all things I have commanded you." (Matt 28:19–20) Obedient disciples make disciples. It's the heart of what we do. There is nothing more important than investing our lives in other people. There is no more crucial role for leaders in the church. When leaders invest their lives in other leaders, it's discipleship at its best. Why? Because only those who live with apostolic intent can create a leadership culture conducive to attracting and releasing more leaders. When a leader develops

other leaders, the impact of one life is multiplied many times over. It produces more fruit for the kingdom of God.

### **Making disciples is personal in nature but transformational in scope**

Jesus said we are to make disciples of "all nations." It's God's way of spreading His glory to the whole earth. Personal discipleship connects us to God's global purposes.

### **Making disciples is God's way of transforming cities and nations**

To quote Landa Cope: "A reached community is not a disciplined community." God uses the process of personal discipleship to bring about spiritual transformation in individuals' lives, and in turn, those transformed individuals influence their business, family, school and, in time, whole cities and nations. As Landa says, it is possible to evangelize people by the thousands and millions, but that does not mean they have been disciplined.

Africa, the continent where I live, has actually been evangelized over and over again. But it has not been disciplined. Africa desperately needs a new kind of Christian and a new way of doing church. When we disciple people in small groups, we are doing church the way Jesus did it. He modeled a new concept of church by gathering a few men and women and teaching them to love and obey Him. In this sense Bill Hybels is right: the church is the hope of the world. Hybels declares: "The church is the only God-anointed agency in society that stewards the transforming message of the love of Christ ... the local church is the hope of the world."

If the church is to steward the message in the same manner as Jesus, we must make disciples who know, love and obey Jesus. This means that every aspect of their life must be different: how they work, love their family, tell the truth, handle money with integrity, and reach out to the poor. Personal salvation is not enough. It is the beginning of a relationship with Jesus Christ, but if we follow the example of Jesus, calling people to obey Jesus is the goal. Discipleship is intended by God to lead to transformation, both on a personal level and in the surrounding community.

and women to bring in a great harvest, we're commissioned to do the same thing in our sphere of influence. Jesus did not come to establish an institution called church, but to empower people to do church intentionally. God has a passion to gather a great harvest for His glory—and He is inviting us to work with Him as His co-labourers to draw in the net.

To weave an effective discipleship net means gathering and equipping people to be disciple-makers themselves. That means modeling disciple-making in our lives. It comes down to small groups and

Discipling someone means intentionally identifying with God's interests in that person's life. When someone says yes to your invitation to spend time together, get to know them – ask questions, draw them out, develop genuine interest in their lives. By prayerfully affirming them, you will impart life to them. Tell them God loves them. Pray for them. Bless them. Tell them the things God gives you for them when you pray for them, but don't use churchy language. Your encouragement and belief in them will give them courage to say yes to God's love. Help them realize the great value they have to God. Paul was doing this very thing when he wrote these words to his disciple, Timothy: "I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you." (2 Tim 1:6)

If we don't disciple the hearts and minds of our people, someone else will do it for us. We live in a pluralistic culture. There is a constant battle for people's passion. Every disciple of Jesus is on the front line, frequently alone. Living in such an environment calls for clear biblical thinking, and that means teaching and training. Memorized answers will not be enough. We must not let people think that by going to a meeting once a week they will be ready to face the challenges the enemy throws at them.

We have the awesome responsibility and opportunity to help shape the world-view of people and impart to them kingdom values. We are preparing frontline workers for the kingdom of God. God has called them, placed them where He wants them, and we get to equip them to be "full-time" for Jesus.

DISCIPLESHIP IS INTENDED BY GOD TO LEAD TO TRANSFORMATION, BOTH ON A PERSONAL LEVEL AND IN THE SURROUNDING COMMUNITY. SADLY, MANY LEADERS ARE GETTING PEOPLE TO MAKE DECISIONS ABOUT JESUS BUT THEY ARE NOT MAKING DISCIPLES FOR JESUS.

Sadly, many leaders are getting people to make decisions about Jesus but they are not making disciples for Jesus.

### **Weaving a discipleship net**

When Jesus called Simon Peter and Andrew to become His disciples, He called them to be fishers of men. Later, He described the kingdom of God as being like a net that is cast into the sea to catch fish (Matt 13:47). Though Jesus cared for individuals, He longed for many individuals to experience forgiveness of their sins. If we are to weave a net to catch the harvest God wants to bring through our lives, it means weaving a discipleship net. Weaving a net is another way of saying that God wants us to be intentional about winning and gathering and multiplying transformed people for Him. In the same way that Jesus very deliberately selected and equipped men

one-on-one times with people at work and school and who live close to us. If we select and faithfully disciple a few people in our sphere of influence, and they in turn are discipling others, we take the first steps to build a harvest gathering net for the kingdom.

It begins with casting the vision, then inviting people to respond. Jesus began the process of training His disciples by letting them in on the big plans He had for their lives. He told them He was going to make them fishers of men. He told them, "You will see heaven open." Over and over again He encouraged them to dream big dreams for their lives, helping them catch a glimpse of the courageous men and women He was calling them to become. For those who were willing to obey Him, He invested in their lives, then He asked them to disciple others.



### **The cost of discipleship**

Jesus said that for those who believe in Him, they will do greater works than He did. This promise is not a blanket guarantee for anyone who wants to be a disciple, but it is an insight into how much God wants to work through us. The cost is great, but if we are willing to pay the price, we will inherit the rewards of obeying Jesus. Paying the price means making a conscious decision to live full-time for Him at work, in our residence hall at the university, with our neighbors, and with our family members. It means dying to self, exchanging our life for His, confronting strongholds in our lives (2 Cor 10:4-6), living a life of truth and accountability with two or three others on a weekly basis, and walking with others in honest, accountable relationships. God is calling us to father and mother

movements of men and women who will do mighty exploits for God, and that will not happen if we are not diligent in seeking God and obeying Him.

There are churches and movements today that produce these kinds of disciples, while others don't come close. The reason some churches and movements produce these kinds of disciples is because their leaders have been captured by a vision of laying down their lives for the purposes of God. If the people who lead have this kind of passion and vision, it will be passed on to others. Unless we make disciple-making our main agenda, all our visions are fantasy. It's the difference between dreaming and doing. And to do the job really well, we have to make our main business making disciples who make disciples.

### **Making disciples creates a discipleship culture**

When personal discipleship is a way of life for a church or movement, it ensures that what they stand for is passed on. Discipleship helps create a culture. One person cannot do that by himself or herself. A solitary individual cannot possibly be in enough places to influence enough people. By calling us to birth and nurture a disciple-making movement, God has designed a process that has the deepest impact on the greatest number of people. This is how a movement grows to impact upon thousands and even hundreds of thousands of people, all with the same passions and dreams.

### **Discipleship is the difference**

All kinds of programs and strategies have been developed by Christian organizations and local churches to evangelize the world. All these programs and strategies are great. But programs and strategies don't disciple people. Great ideas don't make disciples. Disciples make disciples. There is no shortcut and there is no other way for a church or movement to reproduce itself and to have a transforming influence on a nation.

You won't reproduce the vision and values God has put in you if you don't make disciples. There is no other way to pass on the spiritual DNA God has put in you. There are many methods that seem more glamorous, and there are many approaches to ministry that get more attention. But if you want to build a leadership culture, if you want to impart apostolic passion to your church or movement, and if you want to see the gospel have its desired transforming effect on people and nations, it will happen because you make disciples. 🌐



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# Feeding the Wolves

BY BOB OSBURN

**T**he intensifying pace of world evangelism is feeding the wolves. Sheep are dying at an ever-increasing pace.

The problem? Decisions are taking precedence over discipleship. In the process, there is an increasing gap between the numbers who are deciding for Christ and the numbers who are being trained as disciples. The wolves are eating the difference.

Is it time to slow the pace of evangelism and to increase the pace of training and discipleship?

“But, you’re knowingly leaving the masses in darkness and the prospect of eternal damnation.”

Is it any worse to offer Christ to people, who, after having decided for Him, lose their faith for lack of training in Christian living, Bible study, sound theology, and apologetics? Could this be the point of Jesus’ story in Luke 11:23-26, where an evil spirit, having been cast out of a person, rounds up seven more spirits to re-inhabit the poor man? “And the final condition of that man is worse than the first.” Matthew’s account adds this application:

“That is how it will be with this wicked generation” (Mt. 12:45b).

The Parable of the Sower (Mt. 13:1-9) should also give us pause. Is it any joy that so many sprang up “quickly” and then “withered” (v.5) or were eventually “choked?” The former “quickly falls away” because of “trouble and persecution” (v. 21). The latter is choked by the worries and cares of this life (v. 22). In both cases, there is no fruit and the metaphorical wolves have been fattened.

A little reflection on the metaphor should alarm us. Does a wolf need fully-grown animals, the kind that can and have been reproducing, bearing children, for its food? Hardly. It prefers the weaker and younger offspring. Newborns are just fine, if you can get to them. Just as young sheep are easy prey for wolves, so are young, undisciplined believers. Masses and masses of young, undisciplined believers, left without training and solid food for growth, leave the wolves salivating overtime. And, reproducing overtime, as well.

Dare we ask ourselves if the proliferation of cults and perverse systems with some tenuous link to the



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Bible are not due to the masses of tender converts upon which to feed and to prey? Is it surprising that the “burned-over” district of upstate New York (a region where every square inch of land was somehow touched by the Second Great Awakening) gave rise to all sorts of false cults (including Mormonism) in the following several decades?

Evangelism no doubt maintains the size of the sheep herd. And, so the church is growing, at least nominally. But, it may also be unwittingly fattening, strengthening and vitalizing the enemies of truth, at the same time.

If it is true that a high evangelism-to-discipleship ratio is actually strengthening the position of fiendish unbelief, how might this situation have occurred? It is because Western-funded and managed Christian movements have measured success in terms of numbers of converts instead of measuring evidences of transformation in people and society. Another way of framing this is to say that modern believers, under the spell of reductionist, modern Western thinking, have so emphasized the evangelistic mandate of Matt. 28:19-20 as to virtually ignore the equally compelling cultural mandate of Genesis 1 and 2. Lest this be seen as re-visiting the old “quantity vs. quality” dilemma, we agree that the book of Acts is replete with numbers of converts (such as Acts 2), but the real question is: “How did the early believers measure the success of their mission?”

Success was measured by evidences of the Kingdom. Personal and social transformation were the *sine qua non* of the early Christian movement. The Apostolic Church beheld the joy of community, of God's reality in their midst. Convert-making programs don't seem to have headed their agenda.

But, let us go back further to Jesus Himself. How did He measure the success of His mission? When the Apostles came back to Jesus after their first journey, He said, “I've seen Satan fall!” We don't see Him quizzing them about the numbers of converts they made. In His earlier instruction before He sent them out, He didn't lay emphasis on methods. He rather said “Proclaim the Kingdom!”

On top of that, He threw up big barriers to discipleship. The narrow road was hardly inviting. The promise of martyrdom attracted the hearty few. If Jesus' view of success was tied into numbers of converts, He was a failure.

A final clue comes in Jesus' High Priestly prayer of John 17. He seems to measure His success by indicating that He had completed the work assigned to Him by His Father, by which He brought glory to the Father. His prayer (at the end of the chapter) is not that more will be added to the small group of followers, but, rather, that they will display an incredible, unheard-of unity.

Let us move to Paul, the best-known of the Apostles, besides Peter. Are there commands to witness, to make converts? Precious few, if any, dot his letters; rather, his letters are written with the clear intent of training and discipleship.

While his epistles offer very little by way of exhortation to evangelism, what we do see are intense commands to effect transformation by the power of the Holy Spirit. And lurking in the background are warnings about our menacing Enemy. He lurks about to devour, to cast fireballs, to deceive, and so forth. His “frontmen” (literally) are those who “take captives by means of hollow and deceptive philosophy.” They

are “mutilators of the flesh, men who do evil” “hypocritical liars” who teach people to “abandon the faith and to follow deceiving spirits.” To summarize, Paul recognized, as did Jesus, that transformation (not numbers of converts) is our goal, a goal that is constantly threatened by, among other things, the presence of false teachers and their teachings.

What is the modest proposal of this paper? Simply, that we throttle-back on evangelism and throttle-forward on discipleship. This is not a call for cessation of evangelism, but rather a plea for us to examine the reality of the situation—many converts, little transformation.

Understanding this may help to understand why places like sub-Saharan Africa teem with converts, and yet, the societies, at least, are going “to hell in a handbasket.” If Christians are the “salt of the earth” whose transformative impact should greatly outweigh our numbers, why are so many developing countries awash with converts and with crushing debt at the same time? Many of these converts will not be able to live long lives by which to glorify God as they fulfill their callings—and why?

Untaught to apply the truth to all dimensions of reality, unskilled in contextualizing Biblical truth in a way so that it transforms their worldview and their way of living, these believers are food for the wolf of hunger as well as the wolf of false teaching. One kills the body, the other the soul, and, in either case, God's Kingdom is hindered.

Is it fair to suggest that our massive crusades and evangelistic campaigns are one vast feeding and breeding ground for the Enemy? Perhaps not, but are we honestly willing to face the problem of the masses of untaught, undisciplined believers? 🌐



# Marginalia

## Our Shrink-wrap World

Dave Datema, General Director, Frontier Mission Fellowship

I was shocked recently with my first-ever purchase of a flat-screen television. Expecting a hernia-inducing effort not unlike the intense strain of an Olympic power-lifter, I was amazed at how much smaller and lighter it was. My “clean and jerk” television-carrying method was no longer needed. Personal computing has gone from desktops to laptops to netbooks and now tablets, and cell phones have now become computers of sorts with a remarkable array of computing/connecting services. While our communicating devices are smaller, the amount of time we spend communicating with them is shorter. With the advent of Facebook and Twitter, we actually read incredibly brief statements of our friends and believe that in so doing we are keeping up with them. Conversations have turned into “tweets” and meaningful dialogue has become a “chat.” We live in a shrink-wrap world where most things have been made smaller.

Yet one thing that hasn't been shrink-wrapped is the amount of information now available to us, which is expanding exponentially. The smaller our devices get, the more powerful they are and the more unable we are to keep up. We are no match for these machines. They give us more bytes about everything than we ever dreamed possible. Because we have so much more information and can access it so much faster, we are easily overwhelmed by it. Recently, I devoted one year to reading biographies. Two of them were John Mott and Oswald Chambers, men who lived about 100 years ago. In both cases, they traveled by ship. And in both cases these trips were often the only respite they seemed to have in otherwise hectic and busy ministries. It was on board those ships that they had time

to reflect and think and...gulp...relax a little. But those days are long gone. Now we are just glad that there is wi-fi on board so that we can keep up with our inbox. Such is life today.

Viewed positively, this shrink-wrap world has dramatically increased our understanding of the scope of the mission task. As the theme of this issue illustrates, we are not only out to preach the gospel, we are out to transform the world in every area of society. We would do well to note the magnitude of this shift. Did the missionaries of yesteryear even think about transforming the very societal framework of the places in which they worked? Did they contemplate and write strategic plans about how they would change societal structures, the so-called “seven mountains” of society: business, government, media, arts and entertainment, education, the family and religion? In some cases, they were simply trying to stay alive and show the love of Jesus in a hostile environment. By contrast, we are today witnessing many innovative strategies never conceived before.

Viewed negatively, the more we know, the more complex issues become. The bliss of viewing the world in hard and simple categories is no longer possible for us. What the microscope and telescope did for the expansion of learning about the natural world, the new technologies and new media have done for the expansion of just about everything else. While in one sense mission theory and strategy has been advanced and become more sophisticated, in another sense it has struggled to keep up with the complexities of a world better understood through these new technologies.

In some ways, the more we know the more we realize what we don't know.

It used to be that we would talk about “world religions” that neatly divided the world faiths into clean and neat categories. But as my colleague HL Richard has pointed out, the concept of “religion” itself is dubious. In fact, there are many Christianities, many Islams, many Hinduisms and Buddhisms. Neat categories have been replaced by very messy constructs much closer to the reality on the ground. So what are we to do? We need to carefully walk the tightrope and balance the tension between generality and specificity. We speak in general terms because it makes communication possible. As mobilizers, we can't get away from the general way of looking at things. However, we must recognize that such communication is only a beginning. Technically, it is virtually impossible to communicate meaningfully at the complex level if we only speak in generalities. We cannot overlook complexity in the hope that it will just go away. “Keep it simple, stupid” has a short reach. As strategists, we must embrace specificity and complexity.

The generalists and specialists in the mission enterprise need to work together, even while we speak a somewhat different language. This distinction reminds me of a similar reality that often exists between the marketing and research/development divisions of a company. While they are usually a lesson in stark contrast, they are nevertheless necessary to each other. Similarly, while mobilizers and strategists usually live in different worlds, the consequences of ignoring each other are grave. 🌐



BY STEVE SAINT

I have been in relationship with the Waodani since 1956, when they killed my dad Nate and four of his friends. My relationship continued through the time my aunt Rachel lived with them beginning in 1958 through her death in 1994. I most recently lived with the Waodani beginning just after Aunt Rachel's death in 1994 until later in 1997, maintaining a house and spending about one quarter of my time with them until 2008.

When people visit the Waodani, they look around and think, "Wow, these people have nothing!" People from the outside think the Waodani are poor because they don't have three-bedroom ramblers with wall-to-wall carpeting, double garages so full of stuff the cars never fit and, I guess, because they never take vacations to exotic places like Disney World.

So, on speaking tours I began describing these jungle dwellers as "People who all have water front

# PROJECTING

## POVERTY<sup>1</sup>

### Where it Doesn't Exist

property, multiple houses and spend most of their time hunting and fishing." The most common response I have gotten when describing the Waodani this way is, "Wow, would I ever like to live like that!" I agree completely.

Mincaye, on the other hand, sees the way we "Outsiders" live here in "The foreigner's place" and makes comments like; "Why, never sitting, do the foreigners run around and around in their car things speaking to each other on their talking things but never hunting or fishing or telling stories to each other?" After traveling and speaking with me in the U.S., Canada and Europe, Mincaye is always greatly relieved to get back to his thatched roof hut, with the open fire wafting smoke in his face, eating whatever happens to be in the cooking pot. He sits around in jungle-stained clothes and the look on his face tells it all. He would not live in North America for all the green paper and little pieces of plastic he could carry. He doesn't understand how money and credit cards work but he knows foreigners can't leave home without them.

Mincaye is a rich man. Or, he was until someone taught him to drive a golf cart and he started thinking how much fun it would be to take his 57 grandchildren for rides up and down the Nemom-pade airstrip where we used to live together. Now he wants his own golf cart (which means he would need a charging station, and a solar panel farm to power it, and a shop to maintain it, and spare parts to keep it running...)

From my life experiences with the Waodani—and other people groups in Africa, Asia and South America who live simply and materially content-



*Steve Saint was born and raised in Ecuador where his parents were missionaries. His father, Nate Saint, was the "Jungle Pilot" who was one of five young men killed in 1956 by the Waodani Indians (known as Aucas) whom they were trying to reach with the gospel. Steve founded and currently leads the ministry I-TEC (Indigenous People's Technology and Education Center) with the vision of finding better ways of doing missions and giving indigenous God-followers the tools they need to fulfill their roll in the Great Commission. Steve has authored three inspiring books: The Great Omission, End of the Spear and Walking His Trail.*



edly—I have learned that it is unreasonable to evaluate their “lack” based on our distorted and exaggerated perception of need. When we try to meet phantom needs of people who live at a lower material standard than we have learned to consider “minimal,” we not only fall into a trap that keeps us from seeing their real needs but we also tempt them into a snare that can raise their perception of need beyond what their economy can support.

When we project poverty on people where it doesn't exist, we also overlook the actual poverty with which they struggle. Solomon said it well, “Whoever loves money never has enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with their income. This too is meaningless. As goods increase so do those who consume them” (Ecc 5:10–11).

### **Dangerous Charity**

Often charity to help the poor attracts more people into poverty. One example I have noticed takes place when North Americans try to care for the needs of orphans in cultures different from our own. If you build really nice orphanages and provide good food and a great education, lots more children in those places become orphans. I see this happen all over. When we attempt to eradicate poverty through charity, we often attract more people into “needing” charity. It is possible to create need where it did not exist by projecting our standards, values and perception of need onto others.

So what is poverty? We in the “Wealthy West” have little understanding of “poverty.” As our standard of living has risen in developed countries, our perception of poverty has changed.

Consider how our definition of an orphan is different from most other cultures. In the U.S., you are an orphan if your mother and father have died. In South America

(where I grew up), as in other contexts where extended family structures are intact, you are not really considered an orphan as long as you have a living grandparent, uncle, aunt or older brother or sister who is capable of helping take care of you. So when North Americans build an orphanage in South America, we “create” orphans by tempting family members to take advantage of our well-intentioned largess. This is seldom in the best interest of those children who are “orphaned” by our desire to meet what we perceive as their need.

### **Provoking Poverty**

In the same way, proximity and exposure to wealth can provoke a sense of poverty. A group of North Americans going on a short-term mission—with our international cell phones, iPads, fancy clothes and fat wallets to buy curios and spend on hotels and restaurants—can create more comparative poverty than most of us can imagine.

But, all of that is not the issue. Do we have a responsibility to care for the poor? Yes. 1 Cor 8:11–15 hits the nail on the head. Let me summarize—“No Christ follower should have too much while anyone else has too little.” So, should we all become poor so that we are no longer responsible? No. Paul also points out that this teaching is not intended to put the poor at ease and to burden the wealthy (2 Th 3:6–12).

Among *people living simply amidst abundant resources*, poverty is not measured in annual income or net worth, but in “what I have in comparison to what those around me have.” In such contexts poverty is more of an attitude and a mood than an actual state of having or not having something. In such contexts, contentment is the secret. Some people think 1 Timothy 6:6 says “Godliness is a means of gain,” but really it says “Godliness with contentment is great gain.” Where

there is godliness with contentment there is no perceived “poverty” until discontentment has been stirred.

### **Building Up Christ's Body**

Our goal in planting Christ's church where it doesn't exist must be to produce churches that are self-propagating, self-governing and self-supporting; especially where the members come from a background of hopelessness, powerlessness and inadequate resources. The most important aspect of church planting is whatever that fledgling congregation needs most. In a growing number of cases, the greatest need new churches have is to become self-supporting.

Giving handouts creates more problems than it solves. It is like casting out demons with long leases. Break the lease or they will come back and bring more roommates (Lk 11:24–26). Where the Church is being established among people that perceive themselves as powerless, there is a great need for deep discipleship, wrestling with the roots of poverty at the community level rather than concentrating on the individual.

Financial help that does not develop sustainable, local, financial self-sufficiency is much more likely to create poverty than it is to meet real needs. Until we realize that we can't overcome poverty with handouts, we will never be much help in completing Christ's Great Commission.

As followers of Christ we must fight poverty through discipleship rather than covering it with spiritual frosting. Either we do God's will God's way or we aren't doing His will at all. Discipleship means teaching others what we have learned so they can teach others to care for their community's physical, economic, emotional and spiritual needs on a sustainable basis! (2 Tim 2:2, Mt 28:19–20) 🌐

# SALVATION & SOCIETAL EDIFICATION

BY DON RICHARDSON

**L**inking personal salvation with societal edification is our duty.

I recall that some Sawi tribesmen who worked for me or brought me food, firewood, etc. wanted to be paid with colorful beads or tobacco. Unlike Roman Catholic priests in the region, I declined to be a bead or tobacco merchant on the grounds that steel tools, salt, fishing line, fishhooks, soap, nails, etc., would benefit the people much more than baubles and smoke (though these latter items of course would have cost me much less, especially in terms of air freight).

I dispensed medicine free of charge to the ill but strengthened the remarkable work ethic the people already had by requiring them to work for everything else they wanted from me. Learning that a Roman Catholic priest in another area was reputedly doling out goods free of charge to anyone who asked, three Sawi men asked me, "Can he do that because he is richer than you, or is it just that he loves the people of that other tribe more than you love us?"

I replied, "If indeed he gives them things other than medicine free of charge it is because he sees them as children and himself as their father. If I saw you as children I could do the same. But I know you are men just as much as I am a man; that is why I require you to work for the things you need." They were quite pleased to know I regarded them as men, so that was the end of that.

Some missionaries teach the Ten Commandments by rote but fail to exemplify lessons such as these, lessons so basic to helping redeemed people contribute to the edification of the overall society. I taught key Sawi men how to teach the gospel, yes,



but I also taught them to own and operate their own retail stores and tithe their weekly profits.

Exploitive outside merchants are loathe to come in and compete with reasonable markups set by honest local merchants, so I deflected considerable predatory encroachment by teaching Sawi Christians how to be merchants.

If Christianity in some regions is "a mile wide and one inch deep," I suspect missionary failure in matters of common sense teaching of ethics is partly responsible. I also believe that failure to link the gospel effectively with redemptive analogies may leave converts with a weaker appreciation for the marvel of God's grace.

In our work, medicine, hygiene, economics, introducing new crops and education progressed hand-in-hand with the work of church planting. This was largely true of all the ministries carried out by evangelicals in what was then Irian Jaya, now Papua. Eventually, though, if the missionary stays too long, he generates a dependency syndrome which hinders both the growth of the church and the social and economic development of the society. People have to be given space and time to apply what they have been taught, thereby claiming ownership of it by fitting it to their own culture and environment. 🌐



*Don Richardson is a missionary statesman representing World Team, under whom he served overseas for 15 years among a cannibal-headhunter tribe called the Sawi. As World Team's minister-at-large, Don teaches worldwide in churches, conferences, and other venues on topics related to missions and cultures. He has authored five books, including the best-seller *Peace Child*, and paints scenes of tribal life in New Guinea.*

# Raising Local Resources

## All Without Money

Jean Johnson, guest author

In mission circles, I hear the question: “How much money is it going to take?” more than I hear “How much of the Holy Spirit is it going to take?” Jesus knew what fulfilling the Great Commission would take: “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water but in a few days you will be baptized in the Holy Spirit” (Acts 1:5).

Luke, the writer of Acts, describes the day that 3,000 people joined the 120 believers (Acts 2:41). Money was not mentioned as the “deal maker.” Actually, money did not enter the equation at all. What or who did play a role in this people movement for Christ? The Holy Spirit! The Holy Spirit empowered Peter to speak the gospel with boldness and clarity. The Holy Spirit moved upon people’s hearts with conviction. The Holy Spirit, using Peter, did this all without money.

As affluent North American churches and missionaries, we have communicated through words and actions that we cannot fellowship as a community of disciples (called the church) without an infusion of money. In the book of Acts, we see that the community of believers “had church” and God added to their number 3000 daily. Did money enter the equation this time? It sure did, but not through foreign donations unleashed on a local community of believers. Rather, the local believers shared selflessly with one another. If outsiders had donated money to help advance the local church in the Book of Acts, they could have crushed the Holy Spirit-generated giving of the local believers.

As we read on in Acts, the community of believers grew from 3,000 to 5,000. Was money the “bottom line this time?”

As a matter of fact, Peter exclaimed to the beggar at the Gate of Beautiful: “Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk” (Acts 3:6). Money did not add 2,000 more disciples. A miracle of kindness from God to a beggar and the disciples’ proclamation, along with suffering and obedience led to the incredible growth of this movement for Christ. God, through the disciples, did this all without money.

The community of believers’ first written prayer was not at all about money. They did not say, “We cannot continue to spread the gospel without money. God, extend your hand and provide us with ample resources.” Rather, they prayed for boldness and that God would perform signs and wonders through the name of Jesus.

As I read story after story in the book of Acts, money does not play a role in the conversion of masses of people. The apostle Paul indeed received occasional support from churches that he planted, yet he worked to support himself. Paul and his companions had to pay for lodging, passage and food along their missionary journeys. The book that Luke authored through the Holy Spirit is not about the “acts of money,” but the Acts of the Holy Spirit through the apostles.

Have we allowed material and economic abundance to be the hallmark of our mode of operation rather than (or more than) the acts of the Holy Spirit and our humility, boldness, suffering and obedience? Have I found it easier to minister out of affluence in order to gain an audience rather than go through the grueling work of building relationships? Have I sidestepped suffering, making my resources too valued to those with whom I share the gospel? While serving as a missionary in the Buddhist nation of Cambodia I

observed that we missionaries were often tolerated for the money we brought, more than the message we had to share. Does the easy access to the money missionaries may bring cheapen the meaning of the gospel, resulting in shallow conversions and half-hearted disciples?

Glenn Schwartz, the author of *When Charity Destroys Dignity*, once received an email from a missionary in Zambia. The missionary voiced concern that his mission may have been viewed by the local culture as Mission Jireh (the mission, our provider), rather than Jehovah Jireh (God, our Provider). If so, have we not cheated those we seek to serve?

Throughout my missionary experience I have seen the harm money can do to the Church of Jesus. Like the camel herder, many people have been led to believe that Christianity requires lots of “stuff” and lots of money. Such an expensive form of Christianity is dependent on the affluence of outside cultural groups. Let’s redouble our efforts to make the Good News all about the power of the Holy Spirit to transform lives. Remember, Christ himself said – about desiring the good life – “But seek first his [the Father’s] Kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.” Transformation of the heart comes first. 🌐



*Jean Johnson served as a missionary with Assembly of God World Missions in Cambodia for 16 years. She is currently a senior consultant on issues of sustainability with World Mission Associates. She lives and*

*works out of Minneapolis, MN. This month she presents this article as a guest columnist on behalf of Glenn Schwartz. She can be reached by e-mail at [jeanjohnson@wmausa.org](mailto:jeanjohnson@wmausa.org).*

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Edgar J. Elliston holds a PhD in Curriculum and Instruction with cognates in International Development and Intercultural Studies from Michigan State University. He completed his MA in Missiology at Fuller.

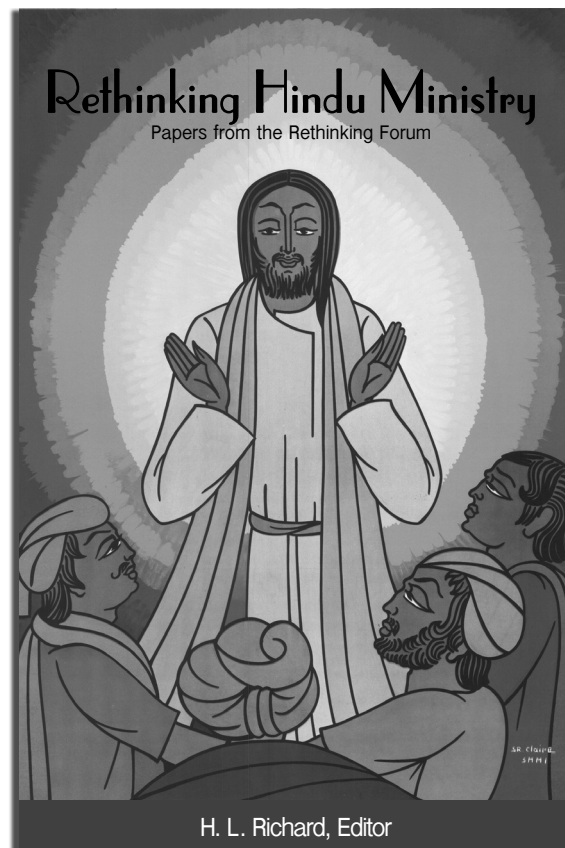
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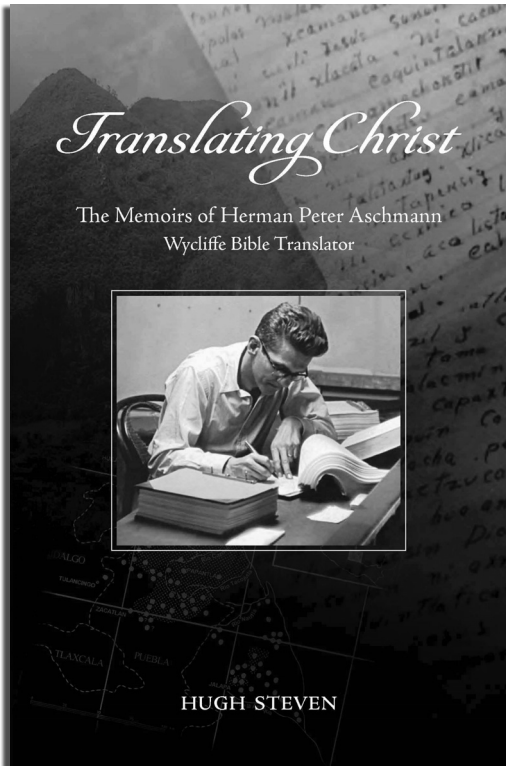
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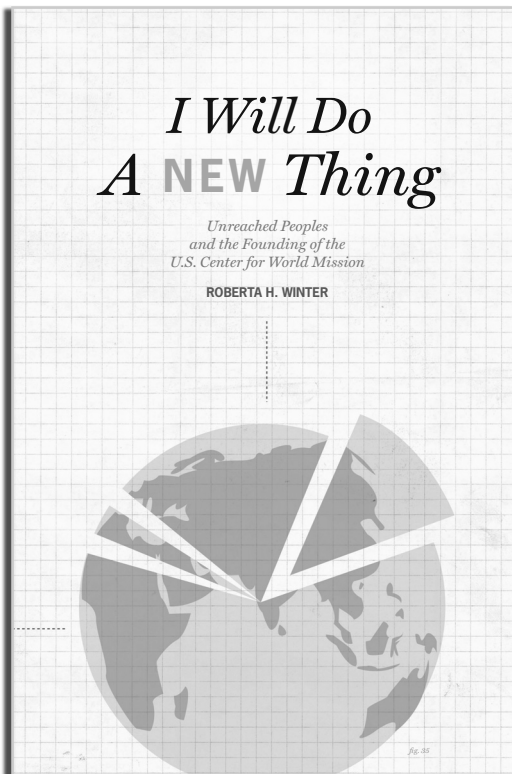
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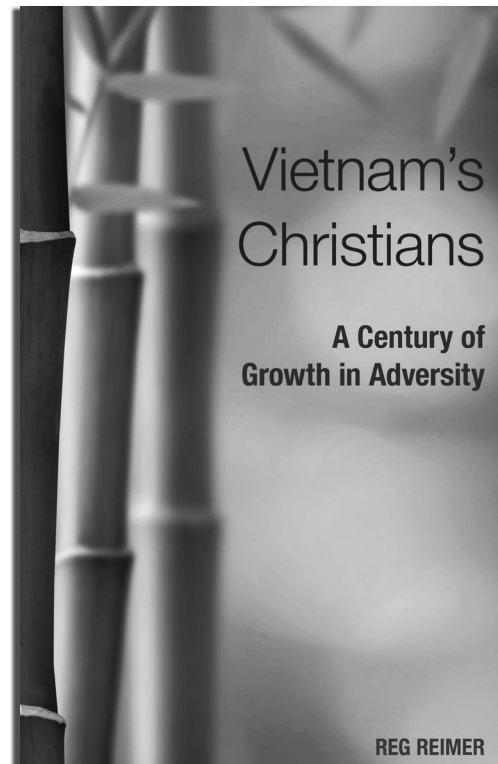
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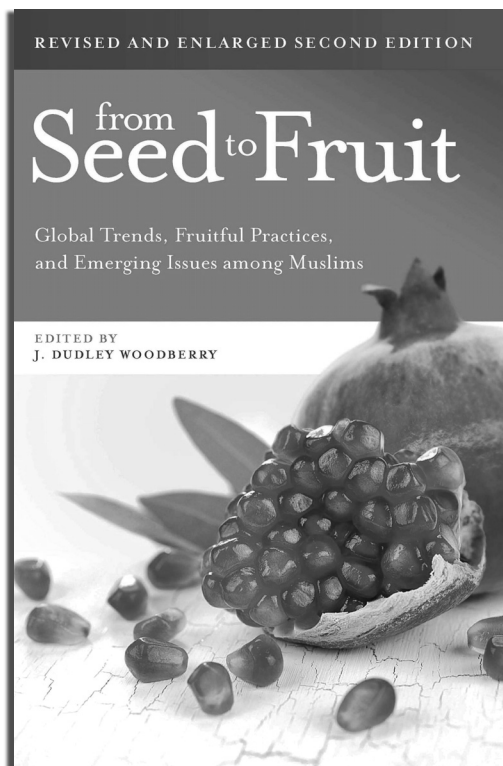
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# Further Reflections



## The Stuff of Basic Evangelicalism

Greg H. Parsons, Global Director, U.S. Center for World Mission

Earlier today John R. W. Stott died at the age of 90.

I can't think of another evangelical theologian who would come close to Stott, both in the depth of his diligent scholarship and in the breadth of his unifying work in the global Body of Christ, especially through the Lausanne Movement.

I first heard him at Urbana in 1976 while I was still in college. That is where he delivered his message "The Living God is a Missionary God," which is the lead article for Lesson 1 of the *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement* course. Later, I spoke with him briefly during a meal at Billy Graham's Amsterdam 2000 gathering. Almost an octogenarian by then, Stott moved slowly but preached powerfully; the contrast was startling.

It is probable that his involvement in guiding and crafting the masterful Lausanne Covenant (1974) will be the most enduring single thing for which he will be remembered. As a part of the Statement Working Group at Lausanne's Cape Town 2010 meeting, I can say that we knew well that we were not trying to replace that document—which is amazingly timeless in many respects.

I wonder what evangelical leaders would write today? Could a wide-ranging group of committed believers agree on something important? Certainly, the Cape Town Commitment suggests that such agreement is possible (<http://www.lausanne.org/ctcommitment>).

But I am more and more convinced that, at another level, we must disagree—in love—for God to use our differences to further display His glory. In theory, we know God works through

WILL FUTURE HISTORIANS MAKE A LIST OF THINGS EVANGELICALS REQUIRE PEOPLE TO STOP DOING BEFORE THEY CAN FOLLOW CHRIST?

different approaches and giftings. In practice, however, we often we think we know what His preferred approach is for us—and for everyone else!

Since we aren't going to agree on every issue, we need to reemphasize the core: Repentance and salvation by grace through faith in Christ. Yet when I look at such a phrase, I am tempted to add more words in order to clarify its meaning still further, additional ideas that, according to my understanding of the gospel, are an integral part of the gospel. I include things like, "based on His death on the cross," "by the power of the Holy Spirit," and "resulting in fruit that remains."

What else do we think the unreached need to do or believe?

It's instructive to see how historian Mark Noll describes 18th-century evangelicalism, looking back on what he calls the period of "rising," when godly men like Edwards, Whitefield, and the Wesleys led the charge. He summarizes the core of evangelicalism as follows:

- justification by faith, not human works;
- the sole sufficiency of Christ for salvation, without the need for human mediation;
- Christ's death on the cross as a once-for-all act, not something that needs to be repeated (as in the Catholic mass);
- belief in the final authority of the Bible, which every believer should read, rather than in the Bible as a

means, which the priest interprets;

- the priesthood of all believers, rather than inappropriate reliance on a class of priests ordained by the church.<sup>1</sup>

Noll's summary reflects the cultural, religious, and historical setting in which Edwards and the others ministered. I wonder what future historians, writing about today's evangelicals, would place on our list as we reach out in mission? Will they make a list of things we require people to stop doing before they can follow Christ? Or a list of things we have added to the basic requirement of faith. If so, that would reflect a dangerous loading on of works from our western Christian sub-culture.

Let's be very careful not to add to the basic "requirement" of faith or we could be in danger of loading on the works of our current western Christian sub-culture to the gospel.

It was Martin Luther's stand on *Sola fide*—faith alone—that began the Protestant Reformation. As we strategize to reach the unreached, we must clarify what "faith alone" means at some level. Certainly we include the works for which God has created us (Eph. 2:10).

So, echoing Stott's words in section #3 of the Lausanne Covenant, we: "... proclaim God's love for a world of sinners and ... invite everyone to respond to Him as Saviour and Lord in the wholehearted personal commitment of repentance and faith." 🌐

<sup>1</sup> Noll, Mark 2003, *The Rise of Evangelicalism: The Age of Edwards, Whitefield, and the Wesleys*, 16-17)



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