



# Lausanne World Pulse

Providing Evangelism & Missions News, Information and Analysis

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A free, monthly, online publication that provides you with evangelism and mission news and information.

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## PUBLISHER'S MEMO

### Persecution: "Do Not Go Gentle into that Good Night"

By Lon Allison

I recently opened the "News from around the World" section of the June/July issue of Lausanne World Pulse and found that forty percent of the news articles were focused on the persecuted Church. Consider these article titles and first lines:

#### **Algeria: Christians Stand Firm, Meet in Vandalized Church**

*"Even on an ordinary Sunday, it takes courage for Pastor Mustapha's church to meet together."*

#### **Bangladesh: Buddhist Extremists Drive Christians Out of Village**

*"Four Christian families in southeastern Bangladesh left their village on 2 May 2010 under mounting pressure by Buddhist extremists to give up their faith in Christ."*

#### **Indonesia: Extremists Infiltrate Pluralistic Nation, Upset Religious Harmony**

*"Life is becoming difficult and dangerous for Christians in Indonesia because of outside extremists."*

#### **Uzbekistan: Churches Raided, Christians Detained and Questioned**

*"On 10 April 2010, eight police officers raided a Protestant church's youth conference held in the village of Baraj."*

The Church lives in the reality of persecution. It is normal, expected, even anticipated in much of the world. I first wrote on this topic in our November 2008 publisher's memo ("[Persecution of the Church: Hot, Warm, Temperate](#)").

In this publisher's memo, I quote the Welsh poet, Dylan Thomas, when he wrote, "Do not go gentle into that good night." His poem was for his atheist father nearing death. Shaking his hands at heaven he cajoles his father to not go to his death easily, but to fight it. He asks his father to "Rage, rage against the dying of the Light."

I borrow Thomas' phrase for another, and I believe, more noble purpose. I encourage the Church, wherever she dwells in our world, to not go gentle into the night of persecution, and resist all attempts to kill the light. Thomas sounds a bit like the Apostle Peter:

*Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. (1 Peter 5:8-10)*

In this edition of Lausanne World Pulse, you will read stories of Christians and Christian churches standing strong for Christ in the midst of travail. Peter encourages both them and us to be sober-minded concerning suffering. Certainly, persecution is a form of suffering, but not in the individual sense. More, it is when God's people corporately suffer for their belief in Jesus. Peter uses the term "sober-minded," suggesting that the Church not be in denial about suffering and persecution.

Persecution comes and is a part of what it means to be the light in a dark world. Therefore, we can expect persecution, and not be surprised or shocked when it arises. The Church should also be "watchful," Paul states. The guards on the city walls were always watching for trouble. To be watchful allowed them to warn the city of impending danger. They could anticipate it, and thereby prepare for it.

Peter then reminds the Church that supernatural evil is behind the suffering and persecution. Therefore, resisting the devil wardrobed in human disguise is a reality the Church must keep in the forefront. Resistance comes through prayer and the pursuit of justice when law supports freedom of religion.

Finally, Peter suggests that comfort in persecution comes in the companionship of persecution. We are never alone. The Church of Algeria stands with the Church of Bangladesh. The Indonesian Church is not alone; Uzbekistan is alongside.

Persecution is a given in this darkened world. We should expect it, prepare for it, resist it, and find comfort in the companionship of it. Most of all, because we have hope in the eternal glory coming, we can endure it. Heaven is at the door. I hear her knocking...

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## **NEWS BRIEFS**

### **AROUND THE WORLD: Living Water International Celebrates Twenty Years**

In 1990, a group of believers went on a mission trip to Kenya. When they came back, they began [Living Water International](#) (LWI), an organization now celebrating twenty years of bringing clean water and the gospel to thousands of people around the globe. "God just broke their hearts," says LWI's Paul Darilek. "They came home thinking about people who didn't have clean water...it was an eye-opening experience. They soon learned that a billion people don't have clean water." LWI now works in twenty-six countries. ([Living Water International](#))

### **BOLIVIA: Radio Broadcasts Reach Thousands of Mennonites**

Nearly thirty-one thousand Low German-speaking Mennonites live in Bolivia. And although most are without television or Internet access, [TWR](#) is able to reach them with the gospel. In May 2010, *Thru the Bible* (TTB), broadcast via TWR partner ministry RTM-Bolivia, was fully translated into Low German. TTB is a radio program consisting of Bible teaching from Genesis through Revelation over the course of five years—a total of 1,299 programs. The programs will also be available on CD. RTM-Bolivia also

broadcasts original Low German worship songs. Radio ministry in Bolivia has spawned many new churches in the country's indigenous listening area. Beyond radio, on-the-ground missionaries in Bolivia recently completed Casa Mariposa, a women and children's shelter. (TWR)

#### **CARIBBEAN: Saenz to Serve as Interim Caribbean Regional Director**

Luis Carlos Saenz has been elected by the Board of General Superintendents to serve as the interim director of the Caribbean Region for the Church of the Nazarene until a successor is elected and qualified by the General Board in their February 2011 meeting. In early June, former Caribbean regional director John Smea announced his retirement. Saenz continues to serve as the Mexico and Central America (MAC) regional director. The General Board adopted a resolution in their February 2010 meeting to "create a new region from the Caribbean and MAC regions." (Nazarene Communications Network)

#### **DOMINICAN REPUBLIC/PUERTO RICO: "My Hope" Sees Nearly Seventy Thousand Come to Christ**

Christians across the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico recently opened their homes for meetings and witnessed more than sixty-nine thousand people make commitments to Jesus Christ through the Billy Graham "My Hope" TV outreach. The programs culminated in a combined total of more than fifty-nine thousand home events in March and April, which included a TV program featuring a sermon from Billy or Franklin Graham and a personal testimony from the host. In the Dominican Republic, 55,391 people made commitments to Christ, with 13,797 doing so in Puerto Rico. Altogether, more than 5,500 churches from across the evangelical spectrum were involved in the projects. (Assist News Service)

#### **EGYPT: Muslims Attempt to Behead "Apostate"**

The latest in a string of failed attempts by Muslim fanatics on the life of Egyptian Muslim-born Maher el-Gowhary, who publicly converted to Christianity in 2008, took place on 5 July 2010. As 57-year-old el-Gowhary left his secret lodging, two unknown men on a motorbike attacked him with daggers. The attackers called him an infidel and cursed his Christian faith. El-Gowhary was left with heavy wounds, but fears seeking medical treatment. Shortly after his conversion to Christianity became public, he and his 15-year-old daughter Dina, who also converted to Christianity, were forced into hiding. They have been living on the run, changing lodging as frequent as once or twice a month for fear of their identity being discovered. (Assist News Service)

#### **GHANA: Freed Sex Slaves Begin Slow Rehabilitation Process**

Fifty-five sex slaves from the "Thunder god" shrine of the tribal religions of Ghana were liberated 25 March 2010. The liberation of these women was partially due to their head priest turning to Christ and leaving his profession. Workers with Every Child Ministries (ECM) just finished a three-week rehabilitation program where they worked with seven of the freed women. ECM created a personalized plan for each woman's future, held Bible studies twice a day, and taught them how to sew. ECM hopes to offer the next step of rehabilitation to any of the freed women who are interested. This will include more information about starting a business and learning more skill sets. Many of the women have also turned their lives over to Jesus. (Mission Network News)

#### **NIGERIA: Eight Christians Killed in Nigerian Muslim Attacks**

According to a report by International Christian Concern (ICC), on the night of 3 July 2010, several Muslims attacked Kizachi village in Kaduna State and killed five Christians, including a primary school teacher and a mother of six children. The Muslims also burned down five Christian homes. Nigerian sources told ICC that the police had stopped protecting the village on 2 July after the government failed to pay their salaries. In the second attack, on the night of 4 July, Muslims armed with guns and machetes invaded Ganawuri community, near Jos. Three Christians are feared dead. This latest violence came on the heels of a 7 March 2010 jihad attack against Christians in Jos in which over five hundred mainly

women and children were murdered. It is estimated that many more thousands of Christians have been killed in northern Nigeria since the introduction of *sharia* law in 2001. ([Assist News Service](#))

### **UNITED STATES: Study Discusses Teenagers' Openness to Evangelizing**

A recent Barna Group study shows that Christian teens from the U.S. are less and less enthusiastic about sharing their faith. Information on the study released last week provided evidence that "among born again Christian teenagers, the proportion who said they had explained their beliefs to someone else with different faith views in the last year had declined from nearly two-thirds of teenagers in 1997 (63%) to less than half of Christian teens in the December 2009 study (45%)." Not only does it appear that evangelism among teens is in danger, but the study also noted that Christian teenagers are much less likely to even interact with non-Christians than they were ten years ago. Yet the results are not exclusively accurate; at least, not if you ask those from [InterVarsity Christian Fellowship](#). "Over the last five years, we have actually seen a record number in our history of conversions," explains Terry Erickson, InterVarsity national director of evangelism. ([Mission Network News](#))

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## **THEMED ARTICLES: Living Acts 9:16 in Today's World**

### **Prayer that "Fights"**

By John Godson

*"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms." - Ephesians 6:10-12*

**The Christian life is spiritual warfare.** Many Christians are prone to overlook or minimize this, but we cannot run away from it. We are in warfare. The day we decided to become disciples of Christ we declared war against the kingdom of the devil and all his works in our lives and communities.

The war is real. There are real casualties. We can either decide to fight or we will be defeated. Many of us are not experiencing any warfare because we have long been defeated and the enemy doesn't bother us anymore.

The picture Paul used was that of a Roman soldier who needs to be strong and watchful in order to fight. It is a picture of a soldier who needs to be careful and prepared at all times. Spiritual warfare is not about making noise. It is above all being able to overcome the enemy, his temptations, and his traps. It is about winning new territories for God.

The reason why spiritual warfare is so important is that prayer is not only about talking to God, but about defeating the devil and his evil plans. The devil has a ministry. His 24/7 ministry is to steal, kill, and destroy. His main calling is to make sure you go to hell. His passion is to make people doubt God.

Many Bible verses show the nature of spiritual warfare. I would like us to look at the example of Daniel. Daniel 10:2-11 reads:

*At that time I, Daniel, mourned for three weeks. I ate no choice food; no meat or wine touched my lips; and I used no lotions at all until the three weeks were over. On the twenty-fourth day of the first month, as I was standing on the bank of the great river, the Tigris, I looked up and there*

*before me was a man dressed in linen, with a belt of the finest gold around his waist. His body was like chrysolite, his face like lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, and his voice like the sound of a multitude.*

*I, Daniel, was the only one who saw the vision; the men with me did not see it, but such terror overwhelmed them that they fled and hid themselves. So I was left alone, gazing at this great vision; I had no strength left, my face turned deathly pale and I was helpless. Then I heard him speaking, and as I listened to him, I fell into a deep sleep, my face to the ground.*

*A hand touched me and set me trembling on my hands and knees. He said, "Daniel, you who are highly esteemed, consider carefully the words I am about to speak to you, and stand up, for I have now been sent to you." And when he said this to me, I stood up trembling.*

This is a very interesting story about prayer and spiritual warfare. Daniel, the man of God, decided to seek God's face in prayer and fasting. He prayed and fasted for many days, but no response was coming. On the twenty-first day, the answer came through an angel (likely Gabriel). What was the angel's explanation for the delayed answer? Daniel 10:12-12 says,

*Then he continued, "Do not be afraid, Daniel. Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them. But the prince of the Persian kingdom resisted me twenty-one days. Then Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, because I was detained there with the king of Persia.*

His answer was that the prince of Persia withstood him and delayed him. God had given an answer to Daniel from the very first day he started praying. The answer did not get to him until Michael came to help the angel to fight the prince of Persia, who was a demonic prince over the kingdom of Persia. What would have happened if Daniel had stopped praying? His prayer brought help. The book *This Present Darkness* by Frank Peretti shows vividly what spiritual warfare includes.

The devil's ministry is to foil and destroy everything God is doing on earth. We are on earth, inside the devil's kingdom, operating and snatching away his subjects. Do you think he sits down and blesses your work and ministry? No! He is in the business of destroying you. But we are victors because "greater is he [the Holy Spirit] that is us than he that is in world."

### **Who Are Our Enemies?**

Ephesians 6:12 says: "*For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.*" Second Corinthians 10:3-5 reads,

*For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.*

The Bible clearly says that we are not fighting against human beings but against:

- Principalities
- Powers
- Rulers of the darkness of this world

- Spiritual wickedness in high places

The kingdom of the devil is as organized as human kingdoms. There are demonic princes over continents, nations, cities, and towns. The Bible says that it is against them we are fighting. Their work is to make sure that the Kingdom of Jesus does not get established in their dominions. They are invisible, but they are real.

### **Harnessing the Forces of God's Kingdom**

Let us not deceive ourselves into thinking that we can win souls and get people into God's kingdom without direct confrontation with these demonic forces. This is why prayer is key. Through prayer, we harness the forces of God's kingdom (his angels) to fight on our behalf.

Mark 3:27 says, *"In fact, no one can enter a strong man's house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man. Then he can rob his house."*

This is one of the weak points of the Church in Europe. We neglect fighting in prayer for our nations and our people. We just give up and give in. We pray routine prayers that are dead and that do not make an impact on God's work.

Fighting in prayer is radical, violent, and passionate. It is indeed a fight. Read Matthew 11:12: *"From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it."*

God wants us to fight the devil and his demons. God does not give us the weapons of warfare (Ephesians 6:10-16) so we can just dress up and look like soldiers. He has given us those weapons so we can fight and win. He expects us to win. James 4:7 says, *"Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."* First Peter 5:8-9 reads,

*Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.*

I remember a story told by a man of God. He had a vision. Jesus was standing about ten meters away. All of a sudden a demon that looked like a monkey started making noises and smoke beclouded his vision of Jesus. He was waiting for Jesus to rebuke the demon, but he didn't. In the end, this pastor rebuked the demon and it just disappeared. He asked Jesus why he didn't rebuke the demon and Jesus said that it was because he had given him the power to do so. Read Luke 10:19-20:

*I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.*

We should not be afraid of fighting this war. We are called to be soldiers of Christ. God has assured us victory and those who overcome shall reign with Jesus forever. Therefore, fight. And never give up.

*(This article is edited and taken from John Godson's book Effective Prayer, see [www.pielgrzym.org/articles.html](http://www.pielgrzym.org/articles.html))*

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## **To Speak of Jesus Is to Speak of Martyrdom**

By Thomas Schirmacher

### **Jesus Is the Prototype of the Martyr**

Jesus is the archetype of the martyr. “Early Christianity defined the work of Christ in the categories of martyr theology, and interpreted the fate of the martyrs according to the fate of Christ.”<sup>1</sup> A letter written to the churches in Vienne and Lyon in 177 AD calls him, “Christ the faithful and true martyr.” The prediction of his martyrdom accompanies his whole earthly ministry from the very beginning (e.g., Matthew 16:21; 17:22-23; 10:17-19; 26:2).

The Passion takes up the longest part of the Gospels and relates Judas’ betrayal; the false accusations; the illegal trial, torture, and the excruciating execution at the hands of Israel’s leaders; and the Roman government in great detail. Paul consistently presents Jesus as the archetype of the martyr and as an example for all Christians.<sup>2</sup> The early Church’s documents on martyrdom thus considered Jesus to be the prototype of the martyr, who could not be excelled by any other.

### **To Die for Friends Is the Highest Form of Love**

To give one’s life for others is the highest form of love in this world. Because Jesus clearly taught, “*My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends*” (John 15:12-13), a Christian’s love is continually oriented toward Jesus’ greatest sacrifice: his death on the cross.

Ephesians 5:2 reads, “...and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.” For this reason, the husband should be willing to die for his wife—a denial of any dictatorial ideas of “headship.” Ephesians 5:25 reads, “*Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.*” The early Church did well to consider martyrdom for Jesus’ sake the highest proof of one’s love for God.

### **All Persecution Is Actually Directed toward Jesus**

Jesus is the actual object of all persecution. For this reason, Jesus asks Saul, “*Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?*” (Acts 9:4; 22:7; 26:14) and identifies himself as “... *Jesus whom you persecute*” (Acts 9:5; 22:8; 26:15).

The true reason for Christian suffering is Christ, who justifies the contradiction: “The clearer the Church recognizes Christ and testifies of him, the more certain it will encounter the contradiction, the confrontation, and the hatred of the Antichrist.”<sup>3</sup>

Jesus himself frequently reminded the disciples that they would be persecuted for his sake (e.g., Matthew 10:22; Luke 21:17). Matthew 16:25 reads, “*For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it*” and Luke 21:12 reads, “*But before all this, they will lay hands on you and persecute you. They will deliver you to synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors, and all on account of my name.*”

### **Continuation of the Suffering of Christ**

The suffering of the Christian is distinctive because it continues Christ’s sufferings. The re-collection of

Golgotha is essential to an understanding of the Church's sufferings. Howard A. Snyder describes the cross as the guarantee of the Church's suffering, not its escape from persecution.<sup>4</sup>

Paul did not regard his own suffering as redemptive<sup>5</sup>, but still described it as "*fellowship with the suffering of Christ.*" In 2 Corinthians 1:5 ("For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows."), Paul relates suffering under persecution with the sufferings of Christ. He repeats the idea more explicitly in Colossians 1:24: "*Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church.*" Again, in Galatians 6:17, he writes, "*Finally, let no one cause me trouble, for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus,*" and in Philippians 3:10 he wishes to "*...know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death...*"

In 2 Corinthians 4:8-10, he adds,

*We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body.*

In his words about "fire" and "testing," Peter shares Paul's view and writes, "But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed" (1 Peter 4:13).

### **Jesus as Role Model; the Martyrs as Role Models**

Jesus' martyrdom makes him our role model when we suffer persecution. Jesus himself suffered just as much as the martyrs of his Church and more: "*Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted*" (Hebrews 2:18; 4:15).

Martin Luther wrote, "The Lord Christ had to suffer persecution at the hands of the devil and the world: we should not desire anything better."<sup>6</sup> Jesus reminds his disciples, "*Remember the words I spoke to you: 'No servant is greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also'*" (John 15:20; for the context, read 18-21). When we read his words, "*I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves*" (Matthew 10:16), we must remember that he is the Lamb of God sent among the wolves to suffer and die peacefully for others.

His own example, which plays such an important role in the New Testament<sup>7</sup>, includes his suffering and his dealing with persecution. Paul knew that the reality of his own sufferings had taught Timothy to handle such situations:

*You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, persecutions, sufferings—what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the persecutions I endured. Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them. In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.* (2 Timothy 3:10-12)

The Thessalonians also became not only imitators of Paul, Silas, and Timothy under persecution, but also role models for the believers in neighboring provinces: "*You became imitators of us and of the Lord; in spite of severe suffering, you welcomed the message with the joy given by the Holy Spirit. And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia*" (1 Thessalonians 1:6-7).

First Thessalonians 2:14-15 reads,



*For you, brothers, became imitators of God's churches in Judea, which are in Christ Jesus: You suffered from your own countrymen the same things those churches suffered from the Jews, who killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets and also drove us out. They displease God and are hostile to all men...*

### **A Theology of the Cross (“Theologia Crucis”)**

Without the offence of the cross there would be no persecution. Ethelbert Stauffer, writing about the discussion of the persecution of Christ and the apostles, says, “This ‘theology of martyrdom’ finds the center of its framework and its meaning in the fact of the cross.”<sup>8</sup>

Paul thus writes<sup>9</sup>, “*Brothers, if I am still preaching circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been abolished*” (Galatians 5:11). Without the cross, there would be no persecution. He accused his opponents of being circumcised only to escape persecution: “*Those who want to make a good impression outwardly are trying to compel you to be circumcised. The only reason they do this is to avoid being persecuted for the cross of Christ*” (Galatians 6:12; see also verse 14).

The word of the cross may be foolishness to unbelievers (1 Corinthians 1:18), an impediment to the Jews, and nonsense to the Gentiles (1 Corinthians 1:23), but it is the center of salvation history. The heart of the apostolic message is thus “Jesus Christ, and him crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:2). The message of the cross is thus the glory of the gospel *as well as* its foolishness (1 Corinthians 1:17-25; Galatians 6:11-14). Theology is either a theology of the cross (“theologia crucis”) or no theology at all, as Martin Luther and John Calvin have insisted.

### **Endnotes**

1. Stauffer, Ethelbert. 1933. "Martyrertheologie und Täuferbewegung." *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 52:547-548.
2. See Pobee, John S. 1985. *Persecution and Martyrdom in the Theology of Paul*. Sheffield, England: JSOT Press, 74-92.
3. Martin Luther's *Sämtliche Schriften*. 1986. Ed. Joh. Georg Walch. *Harms: Groß Oesingen* (reprinting of 1910). Vol. V, 106.
4. Snyder, Howard A. 1977. *The Community of the King*. Downers Grove, Illinois, USA: InterVarsity Press.
5. See also the “Martyrdom of Polycarp.” 1972. In *The Acts of Christian Martyrs*. Ed. Herbert Musurillo, 2-21. Oxford: Clarendon Press. The descriptions of the martyrdom of Polycarp (ca. 155-157 A.D.), for example, distinguish between the redemptive sufferings of Christ and the sufferings of the martyrs.
6. Martin Luther's *Sämtliche Schriften*, Vol. III, 691.
7. See Schirrmacher, Thomas. 2000. "Jesus as Master Educator and Trainer." *Training for Crosscultural Ministries*. World Evangelical Fellowship. 2:1-4.
8. Stauffer, 1933, 546.

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## **The Persecuted Church: An Exploration of International Laws in Support of Religious Freedom**

By Bjørn A. Wegge

**The persecuted Church has been in focus from the very beginning of the Lausanne Movement.**

Article 13 of the [Lausanne Covenant](#) deals with “Freedom and Persecution.” The article ends with these words: “We do not forget the warnings of Jesus that persecution is inevitable.”

Throughout history, the persecution of Christians and the Church has been overwhelming. It started with the Romans during the time of the early Church. Some research today says that more than 200 million Christians are suffering from misinformation, discrimination, and persecution. All simply because they are Christians.

It is of great importance that the Lausanne Movement keeps a permanent and strong focus on the persecuted Church. Those in the West need to listen to their voices and speak up for our suffering brothers and sisters.

In 2005, the [Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization](#) (LCWE) printed a report on “The Persecuted Church” ([Lausanne Occasional Paper No. 32](#)). It was a result of the work of “Issue Group 31” at the Lausanne 2004 Forum for World Evangelization in Pattaya, Thailand.

I had the chance to participate in Pattaya and attend the meetings of this Issue Group. It was an encouraging time when Christians from different denominations, churches, and movements came together for the same purpose. As a result of this meeting and the close fellowship created within the Issue Group, the Religious Liberty Partnership (RLP) was established in 2006. Members of RLP are mainly CEOs of leading Christian NGOs around the world fighting for freedom of religion. Once a year we meet and share our visions, burdens, and experiences.

The theology of persecution and the suffering Church is well-documented in many Lausanne papers and publications. In this short article I will point to the most important tools and instruments available when dealing with the persecuted Church and the issues related to international legal protection of the freedom of religion and belief.

Of course, prayer is tool number one. However, below we will take a short look at more worldly instruments at hand.

### **International Rights and Freedom of Religion and Belief**

Freedom of religion and belief is a fundamental human right; it is one of the foundations of a democratic society. Historically, religious freedom was one of the first recognized human rights; today, there is international legal protection of freedom of religion and belief.

The basic elements of freedom of religion and belief have the status of international customary law. A country is thus obliged to respect the right regardless of ratification of international texts. This point of view is primarily based on the general acceptance of the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) (UDHR, 1948) and on the many countries who have ratified the [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#) (CCPR, 1966).

UDHR is the main international text on human rights. However, being a declaration, the text is not directly judicially binding, and therefore not “law” in its strictest sense. CCPR is the only international, judicially-binding text that expressly deals with freedom of religion and the right to choose a religion.

Another important United Nations (UN) declaration is the *UN Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion and Belief* (1981); however, this is a “soft law” like UDHR.

The right to change one’s religion is also expressed in some regional instruments, such as the *European Convention on Human Rights* (ECHR, article 9) and the *American Convention on Human Rights* (article 12).

### **Universal Declaration of Human Rights**

The UDHR is the most famous UN declaration. It is quoted in thousands of books, articles, periodicals, public relations campaigns, and political speeches. Article 18 covers our topic: religious freedom:

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

Article 29 of UDHR then gives reasons for limitations on the rights and freedoms.

### **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights**

Article 18 of the CCPR also deals with religious freedom. It states that:

1. Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion. This right shall include freedom to have or adopt a religion or belief of his or her choice, and freedom, either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his or her religion or belief in worship, observance, practice, and teaching.
2. No one shall be subject to coercion, which would impair his or her freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his or her choice.
3. Freedom to manifest one’s religion or beliefs may be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary to protect public safety, order, health, morals, or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others.
4. The parties to the covenant undertake to have respect for the liberty of parents and, when applicable, legal guardians, to ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own convictions.

### **Limitations**

As the reader will discover, article 18 in the CCPR contains the possibilities of restrictions and limitations. And here we touch a very important element in the declaration. All of the readers who have been involved in religious freedom and human rights issues will express a big “Yes!” and immediately refer to their knowledge of bad practice.

The most common excuse for state involvement, restrictions, and trouble for churches in many countries is the “care for” public safety and “national harmony.” Some say that if a person leaves one’s religion and converts to the Christian religion, he or she will create social unrest and disturb the harmony in society.

To help us reflect, there are, like other limitations and the CCPR, three provisions that each kind of limitation must fulfill:

1. The limitation must be prescribed by law. This is a part of a broader “rule of law” principle.
2. The limitation must be “necessary.” There has to be a “fair balance” between the aim pursued and the limitation. This leads to a principle of “proportionality.”
3. The limitation must serve one of the listed purposes—and only the following purposes may legitimate limitations: public safety, public health, public order.
4. Fundamental rights and freedom of others. The question of proselytism and the “Code of Conduct” (re: missionary activities, etc.).

### **Final Comment**

At Lausanne III in Cape Town this October, there will be representatives from the most closed countries in the world. Some of these will not be able to give their real names or explain in detail where they live and work. If you are attending the Congress, please respect this. But pray for them and with them. Try to learn about their society, the constitution of their countries, and the rule of law (or lack thereof). Article 18 of the CCPR is a good starting point. (Full text can be printed out from Internet). Above all, ask them how you and your church can support them and in what way they want you to be their voice in your local environments.

**Bjørn A. Wegge** has been general secretary of Norwegian Mission to the East (NME) since 2002. NME is a Christian missions and human rights organization in Norway founded in 1967. He holds a M.A. in religion and philosophy from Oslo University and has done studies at Fuller Theological Seminary in California.

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## **PERSPECTIVES**

### **A Tale of Two Pigeons: How the Church Can Step into the Solution to Sex Trafficking**

By Roger Seth

**A recent encounter with two birds became a real-life parable for my family.** We live in India and have been burdened about the fact that no less than two hundred Indian women and girls are believed to enter the sex trade every day.<sup>1</sup> Most cases are coercive—the girl enters prostitution against her will—and the majority of the girls are well under eighteen years of age. The trauma, abuse, and torture being borne by these girls are beyond comprehension.

The scale of such tragedy can have an immobilizing effect. Yet as each of my family members took part in a feathery drama just outside our back window one day not long ago, we found ourselves demonstrating ways to respond to sex trafficking.

#### **Identifying the Problem**

“There’s a dead pigeon hanging from a tree!” My oldest son’s frantic screams from our New Delhi terrace interrupted our preparations for a lazy morning’s breakfast. Everyone else in the family rushed outside to the horrific sight.

Suspended in the air, almost at eye-level to our second-floor balcony, the pigeon’s limp body swayed slightly, an unnatural twist to its neck. Closer inspection revealed that it had gotten caught in near-

invisible string from the wreckage of a kite that could have been left behind last summer by any of a number of children from the apartments which ring the park.

Suddenly, one of us noticed yet another pigeon higher in the air, tangled upside down in the string. This one was still alive, flailing in vain against the line which was wrapped around a foot and one wing. “I can’t bear to watch!” cried my 7-year-old daughter. “It’s too horrible to see that poor bird suffering!”

“Look,” said my younger son, pointing skyward. “There’s a third pigeon circling around. It seems concerned for its friend.” Indeed, one bird was swooping in an oblong orbit, a free but agitated streak of grey feathers. It seemed to be trying to lead the ensnared bird to some imaginary escape up and away, not comprehending that its companion simply could not break free of the string.

### **Identifying How to Deal with the Problem**

“We have to do something,” my wife said, her eyes earnest and determined. But the struggling pigeon was too far up in the air for a ladder to reach, and too far away from our balcony for me to grab the string. My daughter ran inside to her room and shut the door behind her; the four of us continued to watch, feeling helpless. It seemed nothing could be done to save the bird. “Let’s call the guards,” I finally suggested, feeling resigned. “Perhaps they can help.” I phoned the front gate and explained in halting Hindi what was wrong.

“I’ll send a gardener,” the watchmen promised. Minutes later, a young man called to us from down on the ground. We leaned over the balcony rail and pointed at the victims. “Can you assist the bird?” I asked. The gardener stood there, thinking for a moment. His upward gaze somehow attracted the attention of another man, who was soon joined by a third in a track suit—one of our neighbors who was out jogging.

They conferred with one another, and then the gardener ran to a far corner of the park. He walked back with a long bamboo pole—part of the frame of a wedding tent which had been left behind. He carefully worked the pole up far above the pigeon’s head and snapped the kite line. The pigeon half fell, half flew to the ground with an awkward flutter, then skittered across the park in terror, fleeing into a bush. The gardener calmly followed and retrieved the traumatized bird with a firm, but gentle hand.

“Bring some turmeric powder,” he hollered up to us. We had been watching, mesmerized, but now rushed to the kitchen to carry out his orders. My children hastily put their shoes on to follow me downstairs with the yellow spice. Reaching the park, we approached the bird, which was being cradled in the gardener’s hands as another man untangled the twine that had pinned the wing.

The gardener took the turmeric and gently worked the powder into an ugly, red gash where the string had cut into the bird. “It’s a natural antiseptic,” the neighbor wearing sweat pants explained to us. By now the pigeon had calmed down and somehow seemed to understand that these strange hands were helping, not hurting her.

First aid completed, the gardener kept a strong grip around the bird so that she would not struggle free, then walked through the trees toward the edge of the park. He slowly raised the bird level with his face and pointed her head up toward a cubbyhole above one of the apartment windows high in the building. Once he was sure she was looking in the right direction, he released her. She flew straight up and away from the trees and nestled onto her new roost, safe from both cats and kite strings.

Although it was sad to see the gardener cut down the dead pigeon, we returned to our home with a feeling of satisfaction. “At least we were able to save one pigeon,” I said.

### **A Lesson for the Church?**

Almost immediately afterward, my wife and I realized we had all enacted something deeper and more significant. Might it be that the way we had responded to the two pigeons in our colony was symbolic of how people can respond to the girls in our city who are enslaved in brothels?

Consider...

- We had simply discovered the two pigeons hanging outside our balcony that morning. All it takes are eyes to see what is happening at our own back door.
- We experienced a range of emotions: shock, horror, helplessness. Only my daughter—the youngest in our home—ran and hid. The other four family members discussed what to do and took action. Facing the reality that girls as young as eight are being trafficked for sex is emotionally difficult, yet it need not immobilize us.
- Rather than turning our backs on the plight of the trapped pigeon, we did what we could. Ordinary people need to—and can!—act.
- We called the guard, who sent the gardener, who upon arrival attracted the attention of passersby. Our action stimulated further response by the community. Although one person couldn't solve the problem alone, the group was able to figure out what to do.
- Although, being expatriates, we didn't have an immediate sense of how to help the bird, the gardener and neighbors knew to fetch the leftover bamboo pole and turmeric. Effective, local solutions were available once we involved the right people.
- After the bird was doctored, the gardener did what he could to prevent the pigeon from being re-entangled in the kite string by aiming the bird toward a safe place to heal. We don't just need timely intervention—we also need the “big picture” sense to prevent further trauma and to enable long-term healing.

As we reflected on the experience, we were struck by the goodwill and compassion shown by so many neighbors. A total of eight people (including our children) stopped their morning routine to attend to one traumatized pigeon. No one who helped was an “expert,” yet each did what he or she knew.

We all shared a sense of purpose: this little bird must be saved. Although it was too late to help the dead pigeon, we intervened before the trapped pigeon could be attacked by a bird of prey or die of bleeding or shock.

Could we not see this same goodwill and compassion be shown by our communities on behalf of our sisters and daughters who have been caught in harm's way? The problem of sex trafficking is certainly not unique to India. These days it is found anywhere and everywhere. It is probably occurring far closer to your back door than you think.

True, the web of organized crime, greed, poverty, and demand for younger girls by predatory men is a much more complex and intimidating threat than a tangle of kite string accidentally left in a tree. Specialists are needed for certain tasks, such as conducting undercover investigations and collaborating with police to raid brothels and prosecute perpetrators. Experienced trauma counselors have a vital role in helping girls work through the emotional scars of daily abuse.

Yet systems of human trafficking are the outgrowth of multiple forces in society. Looking at the broader picture, we find that many common people contribute to the problem. Who are the men who buy sex in a brothel or on the Internet? Who are the people who perpetuate unfair (and inaccurate) stereotypes of “prostitutes” such that some among us believe that a red light district is filled with women who want to be there? Who is the housewife, the government official, the athlete, the average “Joe” or “Josephine” who turns the other way rather than look at the harsh facts of others’ suffering?

Can’t ordinary people like us part of a solution? We might think we can do nothing, yet as we step forward to act as well as involve others around us, practical solutions will emerge.

Like the dead pigeon, for some girls it is already too late—or it will soon be. However, for others, there is still a small hope, a chance that if we act now, they can be freed like the pigeon whose line was cut and can find a safe place of healing. It may seriously interrupt our everyday routines, but the value of lives saved, rather than lost, will prove well worth it.

### Endnote

1. Dixit, Neha. 2008. “The Nowhere Children.” *Tehelka Magazine*, 1 November.

**Roger Seth** lives in New Delhi, India, with his wife and three children. He and his family seek to collaborate with others who want to help women and children harmed by human trafficking and prostitution.

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## Sex Trafficking, Powerlessness, and Redemption

By Jasmine May

**Human trafficking is one of those realities in which the more you scratch the surface, the more you learn things that make you feel overwhelmed.** We want to help, to do something—but where do we start? Will anything we do make any difference, anyway?

With these problems in mind, one day in my Bible reading I was struck by Jesus’ use of powerlessness as he was crucified. Meditating on the cross of Jesus Christ calmed my heart. Although I still have questions, I found hope that his redemptive work can still be carried out, even in the dark world of human and sex trafficking. But perhaps I should explain more.

### The Problem

My husband and I and a team of friends spent one year in India doing research into the sex trafficking scene. What we learned overwhelmed and horrified us:

- Depending on who you listen to, there are between 2.5 million and 15 million prostituted people in India.<sup>1</sup>
- 50% of women in Mumbai’s brothels are believed to be HIV positive.<sup>2</sup>
- 200 women and girls enter the sex trade in India every day, 160 of whom do so under coercion.<sup>3</sup>
- In a recent study in Mumbai, 90% of adult women currently being prostituted said they had begun sex work prior to age 18. This suggests that most were either born into brothels or sold into sex slavery.<sup>4</sup>

- With customers demanding younger girls, the average age of girls in the brothels continues to go down—currently it is at 14, with girls as young as eight being trafficked for sex.

Behind each statistic are actual people going through hellish stories of kidnapping, betrayal, violent initiation into prostitution, and nightly exploitation.

Shift your focus from the individual to the system as a whole and it's just as overwhelming. Greed and lust fuel the system—greed on the part of pimps, madams, middlemen, and crime lords; lust of the millions of men who seek to buy sex. Truly, powerful forces are at work. Most of the sex trade is operated by organized crime. Human trafficking is the second largest—but fastest growing—criminal industry in the world, making it as difficult to combat as the sale of illicit weapons and drugs.

One lawyer who has worked hard to prosecute arrested traffickers summed up the frustration one feels in the face of such a vast network of evil: “The criminals have so much power, so many connections to government officials and local police, and a seemingly unlimited source of money so that they can escape the justice system very easily.”

Looking at such a huge and powerful problem, it's easy to feel intimidated. How can I even start to help the *exploited*, let alone work against the traffickers? Compared to such large numbers of victims, the help I offer may seem insignificant. Indeed, when I feel overwhelmed and powerless, I start contemplating Jesus' cross.

### **But, God...**

Most of us would agree that the plan of redemption was one of God's biggest designs for humanity. Yet during Passion Week, how did it actually unfold? From a human point of view, Jesus did not exert a lot of personal action or initiative in order to be crucified (although it *was* true that days and months earlier, he had “set his face toward the cross,” indicating his will to follow God's plan). In the end, he was led away by sinful men, like a lamb to the slaughter (Isaiah 53).

Jesus did not make it happen. We are surprised by the apparent passivity of it all. Redemption came about by Jesus letting things happen to him. It wasn't that he acted, so much as others acted upon him. His was injustice caused by others' anger and jealousy. His execution served their ego and pride.

Jesus did not fight. Jesus did not close himself up. He opened his hands to be nailed. With an open heart, he poured out his life. His was the role of victim, seemingly out of control. Redemption, this most powerful miracle of Jesus, came about by being powerless, by being abused, by being shamed at the hands of others.

In the midst of injustice, in the midst of the powerful abusing the powerless, right there in the center at the cross of Christ stands God's biggest plan of redemption.

I can't help continually thinking about sex slaves, trafficked children, and others who suffer because of injustice at the hands of the powerful. They are led away and abused by people serving their own ego, greed, and lust. They do not have any control over their situation. They feel helpless and powerless.

### **A Pathway for Redemption**

When we get a glimpse of such horrific, helpless experiences of those trafficked, it becomes even more amazing to see that Jesus chose the way of the cross, which put him in such a vulnerable situation. With all his power he chose the way of powerlessness—for us. In doing so, he opened up a pathway for redemption that speaks directly to problems as evil as human trafficking.



Thus, it is now possible for those suffering women and girls to place all of their powerlessness and hopelessness on the cross, and experience redemptive transformation. They just need people who will care enough to rescue them from their slavery and walk with them through the healing journey—and who, in the process, will introduce them to the Redeemer.

We who work against trafficking can also bring our feelings of helplessness and intimidation to the cross, so that in overwhelming situations we can find strength to press on with the Redeemer in the mysterious mix of both his vulnerability and the power of resurrection.

I still often feel overwhelmed when confronted with the deep abuses of trafficking. But when I contemplate Jesus' cross, I feel peace—even excitement—to wonder what God could do in that very place where I feel powerless.

True, many today look with grief and helplessness at the problems of trafficking and the deep wounds borne by the trafficked—the same grief and hopelessness the disciples must have felt as they gazed upon the cross where Jesus was dying. Yet is it possible that somehow, even in the center of these most inhuman abuses and violent acts by the world's powers, that God's bigger (albeit hidden) plan of redemption is being carried out?

#### **Endnotes**

1. A report by the Ministry for Women and Child Development, Government of India, lists the number of prostitutes as 2.5 million; while Human Rights Watch estimates it to be 15 million.

<http://www.merineews.com/article/prostitution-a-burning-issue-in-india-today/131963.shtml>.

2. <http://whqlibdoc.who.int/wpro/2001/9290611588.pdf>; World Health Organization 2001.

3. United Nations Centre for Development and Population Activities, as cited in “The Nowhere Children” by Neha Dixit, *Tehelka Magazine*, 1 November 2008.

4. *Justice & Care*, 2009

**Jasmine May** lives in Asia and is a wife and home school mother of three children. She was born in a Buddhist family in an Asian country, and became a believer through reading a Gideon Bible in a motel when she was thirteen years old. Later, God brought her through a painful but redemptive journey of healing from childhood abuse. She and her husband are working in Asia to establish an aftercare home for girls rescued from sex trafficking.

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## **LEADERSHIP PROFILES**

### **Leadership Profile: Anne Grizzle, Family Therapist, Social Activist, USA**

#### **Q. Tell us about your family.**

**A.** I have been married to my husband, David, for thirty-one years. We met at the Christian fellowship at Harvard College and developed a passion for missions through attending Urbana '76. We have three sons, two daughters-in-law, and two granddaughters. I have tried to engage each of my sons with missions through a relational experience.

My oldest, Ben, went with me to Amistad Mission in Bolivia, and he eventually brought an Olympic Games experience to an orphanage through an Eagle Scout project. I climbed Mt. Kilimanjaro with my son, Josh, and a Massai Christian leader; Josh went on to live, teach, and help develop a mission school in Kenya.

My youngest son, Andrew, has gone with me to Guatemala, where we worked with special needs children in a Mayan village. My husband jumped off the corporate American ladder for fourteen months to serve with the State Department in Afghanistan and is now Chief Counsel for the Federal Aviation Administration and serves on the board of International Justice Mission. As a family, we like to challenge and encourage each other in missions, seeing our family as a base camp from which we restock for kingdom purposes.

**Q. Give a brief overview of your work and ministry.**

A. My professional work has primarily been as a family therapist, where I consider it a great honor to be invited into the suffering stories of those with whom I work. I also serve as a spiritual director and retreat leader in a variety of settings, from church groups to mission organizations to individuals. I am on the board of **Leighton Ford Ministries** and act as chair of Leighton's mentoring community, which seeks to train and empower Christian leaders to mentor younger leaders to lead to Jesus, for Jesus, like Jesus.

I also work with **Amistad Mission** serving abandoned, orphaned children in Bolivia and serve on the board of **InterVarsity Christian Fellowship**. I have tried to engage my American community with the needs around the globe through co-founding **Women of Vision** (which partners with World Vision) in Houston and Washington, DC.

**Q. What is your favorite quote?**

A. "As thou art in church or cell, that same frame of mind carry out into the world, into its turmoil and its fitfulness. Deep within us all there is an amazing inner sanctuary of the soul, a holy place, a Divine Center, a speaking Voice, to which we may continuously return. Eternity is at our hearts, pressing upon our time-torn lives, warming us with intimations of an astounding destiny, calling us home unto itself....Here is the Slumbering Christ, stirring to be awakened, to become the soul we clothe in earthly form and action." - Thomas Kelly

**Q. Who has been the most influential person in your life/ministry, and why?**

A. Betsy Inskeep Smylie, an older student at college with me who became an Intersivity staff worker and eventually an ordained minister. Betsy was down-to-earth, brilliant, and totally in love with Jesus. She was the first woman to letter in riflery at Harvard, baked the best homemade bread you've ever eaten, and preached Jesus with abandon.

**Evangelism. On Point.**

**Q. Describe a time in which you shared your faith in Christ with someone who didn't know Him, and then saw God clearly work in that situation.**

A. A few months ago a mother whose

Betsy modeled how to be a Christ follower in the midst of a secular, academic world. She taught me Bible study methods in college and later walked with and prayed for me as a spiritual director. She showed me how to walk the path of suffering and death, while loving Jesus passionately to the end of this life. She is one of the host of witnesses who cheer me on, and she now offers the communion of saints to me from across the thin veil of heaven and earth.

teen son had been kidnapped and brutally murdered attended a “Strength for the Journey” retreat and was in my small group. She was angry at God and had not been back to church since his murder four years earlier. By listening to her wrestling with anger and pain, and sharing/being the weeping Jesus with her, she came back to a place of prayer and hope. Within the next week God spoke to her in the curious form of a picture of a lighthouse on her computer that would not delete. She is moving forward in faith, with the hope that one day she will see her son again.

**Q. What is the best piece of advice you’ve received?**

**A.** In my first meeting with her as a formal spiritual director, Betsy challenged me to take a 24-hour silent retreat with God. I did. It changed my spiritual life forever; silence with God became my deepest well for drinking Jesus’ living water. That source has sustained my soul for almost thirty years.

**Q. What one issue do you believe is the greatest barrier or opportunity to evangelism, and why?**

**A.** A barrier I grieve, when I experience it, is insensitive, judgmental, and haughty (rather than compassionate, humble, Christ-like) attitudes of Christians to those different from themselves. The vast sufferings and needs of the world give us opportunities to offer cups of cold water and compassionate care in the name of Jesus. Care and counsel should not be a small segment of work done by a few; rather, it is the way to advance and live out the gospel.

**Q. What book do you most often recommend to others to read, and why?**

**A.** The Bible, and parts of scripture for meditation. After that, *Sleeping with Bread: Holding What Gives You Life* by Dennis, Sheila Fabricant, and Matthew Linn, which makes the ancient Christian practice of discernment from the Ignacian exercises accessible for modern readers. This is most helpful in discerning God’s direction for your life, staying alert in God, and building community.

**Q. What would you like to be doing in ten years?**

**A.** Being spent for God in whatever ways God has for me.

**Q. How can people be praying for you?**

**A.** On his deathbed, St. Francis reportedly said, “I have done what is mine to do. Now I pray you will do what is yours to do.” I would like prayers that I would do what is mine to do, for God’s glory.

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## **LAUSANNE REPORTS**

### **Unlocking the Church’s Potential: Resource Mobilization**

By Ram Gidoomal

**The mission of the newly-established Lausanne Resource Mobilization Working Group (RMWG) is to enable the global Church to discover, develop, and deploy God’s resources for world**

**evangelization.** Our vision is for a global culture of generosity and effective stewardship of God's resources. With this in mind, we are working to bridge the gap between wealth and poverty and, in so doing, support world evangelization.

One of the aims of the RMWG is to identify barriers to generous giving and effective stewardship to help unlock the resources of both the rich, young ruler and the widow and her mite.

Barriers to giving include:

- a poor understanding of the biblical commands to give,
- a poor understanding of the needs among ministries,
- the lack of information on opportunities to give, and
- a suspicion that the resources are not well utilized.

Our poor understanding of the biblical commands to give is reflected by the fact that from the US\$18.2 trillion earned annually by 2.2 billion Christians across the world, the current level of global giving to the Church is less than 2.5% of income—well below the basic tithing levels. Global mission income makes up only 5% of this already low level of giving to the Church, such that the sum spent on missions (\$23 billion) is less than the level of ecclesiastical crime (\$25 billion)!

The global credit crunch has made matters worse, with many missions complaining of reduced income. But we believe that the global Church has an unprecedented opportunity to make a difference—as individuals working as a body, united through Christ.

### **India's Obscene Contrasts**

Current low levels of giving are also reflected in the extremes of wealth and poverty that we observe today—something that needs transnational and transcultural cooperation. These extremes persist not only *between* developed and developing countries, but within them as well.

Ebe Sunder Raj, former head of the [India Missions Association](#) and current chairman of the [Christian Institute of Management](#), offers the following input on Christian ministries in India:

Our motherland is a land of obscene contrasts. After sixty years of democracy, the disparities have not diminished; rather, they have increased in several areas. India itself is a place of immense wealth and poverty. The highest-paid corporate executive in the U.S. is an Indian, Sanjay Jha, who takes home US\$104 million a year, while one-third of his countrymen back in India live on half a dollar per day. Turn to the Indian Christian world, and you will see that it is not radically different. There are Indian Christian ministers who own a huge amount of personal assets but still appeal through powerful marketing methods for more.

Raj contrasts the above with average grassroots evangelists and pastors in India who go and work in the tribal jungles and Dalit slums and are paid only \$50 a month. Some of this is due to the lack of information on opportunities to give. Often, Christian giving goes disproportionately to ministries with the means to communicate their marketing message, while other ministries (which may be more effective and in greater need of support) go unnoticed because they are not, for whatever reason, able to communicate those needs.

Indeed, the visibility of well-supported ministries may lead some to conclude that their giving is not necessary or, worse, that their gifts are not spent effectively. Still others may despair, concluding that the needs are so vast that our giving does not seem to help or may even make matters worse.

The RMWG is planning sessions for the Cape Town 2010 Congress (16-26 October 2010) that will seek to highlight, explore, and address such issues. We will share information on levels and patterns of global giving in different parts of the world. We will discuss innovative case studies of effective resource mobilization. We will talk about how we can inspire Christians in our churches to give generously as a heart response to Christ's generosity to them.

### **Technology Revolution**

The technology revolution, which has brought the Web, social networking, and mobile communications, provides unprecedented opportunity to eliminate the sorts of barriers we have been discussing, and promote engagement within the Body of Christ.

For example, U.S. President Barack Obama's presidential campaign showed how thousands of donors giving smaller gifts helped mobilize hundreds of millions of dollars for his political campaign. Imagine what we could achieve by using something similar within the Body of Christ.

We believe that strategies that mobilize the many to give whatever little they can are more sustainable for the Church and world mission (and have the potential to release far more resources) than just relying on a few who give a lot. We will aim to demonstrate the use of technology to mobilize resources in this way and highlight practical examples that illustrate this.

The challenges are not just for the wealthy. They are for all of us. Two of the major challenges we face are (1) the limits of our language and (2) a theology that implies the donor is superior to the receiver.

This second point is a fallacy that needs to be addressed urgently and we need to work hard as Christians to remove such misconceptions. If we are serious about moving the dial of giving from the current unacceptable levels of around 2%, we will need to move from the old paradigm of an ownership role to one that sees us all as stewards of God's resources.

We need to move from a culture which tithes (and we're clearly not all there yet) to a culture that sees everything as belonging to God. We need to move from a culture of giving just from income to one that gives from income *and* assets. We need to shift from a culture of tipping to build a global community of believers who work together to fulfill the vision of a global culture of generosity and effective stewardship of God's resources to support world evangelization.

### **Holistic Biblical Stewardship**

To make these seismic shifts in our thinking and behavior, we need to rediscover that biblical stewardship is holistic, embracing every area of life in the context of Christ's total Lordship. I am grateful to my friends at the Stewardship Council for producing the NIV Stewardship Study Bible, which serves as a Bible study tool, a devotional aid, and a year-long course in the theology of stewardship and generosity, all wrapped up into one tremendous resource. Resources like this so vividly remind us that scripture is filled with God's acts of mercy and grace: generous acts of a loving God. One profound implication is that financial generosity cannot be untangled from a broader understanding of generosity.

Since all of life, not just God's grace and mercy, are acts of generosity on God's part, issues of giving can scarcely be separated from this broader understanding of stewardship—that is, God's ownership of all things and our effective management of that which has been entrusted to our care. Ministries will become sustainable for the long term when God's people recapture the vision of holistic, biblical stewardship, understanding that God's generosity touches every area of life.

**Ram Gidoomal** is deputy chairman of the board of the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelisation, chairs the Resource Mobilisation Working Group, and will lead the Multiplex Session, "To Give or Not to Give...The Stewardship Dilemma," during the Cape Town 2010 Congress.

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