



Lausanne World Pulse

Providing Evangelism & Missions News, Information and Analysis

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PUBLISHER'S MEMO

Story-telling and the Gospel throughout Our World

By Lon Allison

I recently read an excerpt from Henri Nouwen in his book *the Living Reminder: Service and Praying in Memory of Jesus Christ*.¹ He says, "The rabbis guide their people with stories; ministers usually guide with ideas and theories. We need to become storytellers again." I concur.

In this issue of Lausanne World Pulse we give attention to what is now termed in mission circles as the "Orality Project." I thoroughly enjoyed the article by Carla Bowman titled, "The Storytellers of Dulumpur." It is in fact about Dulumpur, Vietnam, Kenya, Ethiopia, Chad, and Mauritania. Through storytelling primarily utilizing the narratives of scripture, ministers of the gospel are seeing marvelous responses from people in cities and villages around the world.

I only wish Carla would have spoken of the value of storytelling preaching in London, Sydney, Chicago, and Vancouver as well. Perhaps that is more the responsibility of someone like me. The masters-level course I teach at Wheaton College on preaching combines instruction on the theology of the gospel, and how to speak it in the West and in the Majority World.

I believe story is the best container for the gospel for all listeners, everywhere in the world. But a caution: story proclamation is not easy. It is an art form in itself. It requires a blending of the cognitive, which is the organ for reason, and the imagination, which is the organ for meaning. Further, it requires that gospel speakers learn to present their biblically-centered messages in increasingly compelling ways utilizing the best in dramatic art that is available.

I don't wish to overcomplicate the challenge, but I do wish to engender a healthy respect for effective evangelism preaching (which I believe best happens through the form of story). Let me take the reader back to Nouwen again:

The story confronts, but does not oppress; the story inspires, but does not manipulate. The story invites us to an encounter a dialog, a mutual sharing. A story that guides is a story that opens a door and offers us space in which to search and boundaries to help us find what we seek. As long as we have stories to tell each other, there is hope. As long as we can remind each other of the lives of men and women in whom the love of God becomes manifest, there is reason to move forward to new land in which new stories are hidden.

I commend to every reader who publicly shares the gospel of Jesus Christ to become a student of the art of gospel storytelling. And as an encouragement, just remember that our Master was the master of the art—so he is the perfect example!

Endnote

1. 1984. New York: HarperOne.

Dr. Lon Allison is executive director of the Billy Graham Center at Wheaton College in Wheaton, Illinois, USA. He also serves as director for the Institute for Strategic Evangelism at Wheaton College. He is co-publisher of Lausanne World Pulse.

NEWS BRIEFS

AFRICA: New Africa Regional Director Elected

Filimao M. Chambo has been elected the new Africa regional director of the Church of the Nazarene. Chambo, a native of Mozambique and resident of South Africa, replaces Eugénio Duarte, who was recently elected general superintendent. Since 2007 he has been serving the Africa region as coordinator of Nazarene Education and Discipleship (NED) services. He has a doctorate in biblical studies from the University of Johannesburg. He was installed as the fourth regional director for Africa at the Good News Convention Centre in Johannesburg, South Africa, 18 September 2009. ([Nazarene Communications Network](#))

AROUND THE WORLD: World Evangelical Alliance Welcomes Kosovo and Azerbaijan

Kosovo and Azerbaijan recently became the latest alliance members of the [World Evangelical Alliance](#) (WEA) through their affiliation with the [European Evangelical Alliance](#) (EEA). “Church growth in both Kosovo and Azerbaijan is exciting,” said Gordon Showell-Rogers, general secretary of the EEA. “And it is wonderful to see how the formation of Evangelical Alliance has multiplied their impact. The WEA international director Dr. Geoff Tunnicliffe welcomed the two alliances with the following statement: “...While both these alliances represent minority movements in their countries, we are encouraged to see the recent growth of the Church and their growing unity. As a global community it is important that we stand with each of these alliances as they seek to live out kingdom values in often challenging circumstances.” ([World Evangelical Alliance](#))

AROUND THE WORLD: WEA Rallies against Human Trafficking

The [World Evangelical Alliance](#) (WEA) has recently created a taskforce on human trafficking in an effort to raise awareness across the WEA community that represents 420 million evangelical Christians worldwide. The taskforce, headed by the WEA spokesperson on human trafficking, Commissioner Christine MacMillan, aims to prevent and combat trafficking by developing strategic and effective actions and tools that will help equip local churches and their leaders to become responsive to the victims of human trafficking. Dr. Geoff Tunnicliffe, WEA international director, commented, "It is a travesty that more than one person a minute is trafficked across borders every year. It is my hope and prayer that this WEA initiative will help mobilize and train our global community to respond in meaningful, effective and biblical ways. As Christ followers we must do all we can to help end the injustices of this worldwide calamity." ([World Evangelical Alliance](#))

CONGO: A “Great Harvest Field”

Churches in the Democratic Republic of the Congo run 145 grade schools serving an estimated forty thousand students. Only about ten to twenty percent of the students come from Christian homes, and the

government actually requires that schools provide religious instruction. [Grace Ministries International](#) (GMI) is sending out teams trained by [OneHope](#) to help evangelize students and communities. "This is just a great harvest field," said Sam Vinton of GMI. "We feel that our focus is going to continue in this area for quite a while with the number of students we have." Teams do outreach in the schools, distribute tracts with the help of local Christians, and show *The GodMan* film in the evenings. So far, estimates report about seven hundred students have made professions of faith, over eight hundred people have professed faith in response to the tract distribution, and more than a 1,500 people have professed faith in response to *The GodMan*. ([Mission Network News](#))

INDONESIA: Consultation Addresses World Concerns

Despite the Jakarta bombings and the H1N1 flu scare, ninety-one participants from twenty countries took part in the [Asia Theological Association's](#) (ATA) consultation on *Christian Leadership Formation in an Age of Crisis: Our Response to Globalization and Religious Pluralism* 21-24 July 2009 at the Seminari Alkitab Asia Tenggara in Malang, East Java, Indonesia. Heads of seminaries, church pastors, and leaders in the public sector responded with commitment and positive enthusiasm to the issues of economic and social globalization and religions seeking to re-establish their control over society. In his keynote address Dr. Joseph Shao, general secretary of ATA, stated that Asia can no longer be defined by ethnicity, but rather by common values. He added, "We live in the midst of a lonely generation, a fatherless generation and a 'me' generation, so that pre-evangelism is needed to loosen the soil for the gospel. The Kingdom of God has no borders." ([Asia Theological Association](#))

IRAQ: Christians Persevere Amid Increased Danger

In August 2009, it was reported that after a period of relative peace, the situation in Iraq has gotten worse again. There have been explosions, and many people, including both Christians and Muslims, have been killed in the attacks. Carl Moeller, with [Open Doors](#), says while many Christians have left Iraq, many remain. "While violence mounts, Moeller says, "The Church is growing. And one of the great testimonies to the power of the Holy Spirit and the witness of Jesus Christ is that he is actually appearing to many 'seeking Muslims' in dreams and visions." ([Mission Network News](#))

KYRGYZSTAN: New Council to Crack Down on "Religious Extremism"

In order to crack down on religious minorities, Kyrgyzstan has established a state Coordinating Council set to fight against what the country views as religious extremism. On 5 August 2009, the Prime Minister signed the decree establishing the council. [Forum 18](#) shared some of the text of the decree, which reads in part that it was created "for the purpose of ensuring concerted action and coordination of activity of state agencies and local governments of Kyrgyzstan in prevention of the spread of and resistance to religious extremism, fundamentalism, and conflicts on religious grounds." Faith-based groups, as well as civic agencies, are alarmed by the scope of power bestowed upon the council. According to Forum 18, Raya Kadyrova of the Foundation for Tolerance International, says, "Unfortunately, our laws give a very wide definition of religious radicalism and extremism." ([Mission Network News](#))

PERU: North American Youth Outreach Strategy Taken to South American Youth

After wrapping up [Summer of Hope 2009](#) in the United States, the [Ron Hutchcraft Ministries On Eagles' Wings](#) (OEW) team traveled to Peru, where pastors selected two indigenous Christians from six key regions of Peru to participate in training and evangelism with the OEW team. In a two-day training camp, Ron Hutchcraft and his team trained the Peruvians to do outreach and cast vision for revival to be led by youth reaching their peers. "Peruvian young people are, like their peers around the world, shaped by the American youth culture," Hutchcraft explained. "The Church doesn't understand them, and they are often overlooked." The experience with the OEW team kindled a fresh fire in the hearts of the twelve Peruvian youth for reaching their peers with the gospel. The inspiration, however, went both ways. The passion of these youth also gave the OEW team a renewed passion for evangelism. ([Ron Hutchcraft Ministries](#))

SINGAPORE: Convention Aimed at Inspiring South Asian Youth

In July 2009, nearly 350 delegates and invited guests between the ages of 16 and 45, varying from students to young urban professionals and ministry leaders, and representing more than fifteen different denominations, attended the third [South Asian Global Convention \(SAGC\)](#) in Singapore. This third international and trans-denominational gathering of South Asian Christian youth, young adults, and ministry leaders centered on the theme “Beyond Boundaries,” based on Isaiah 54:2. According to Pastor Pritam Singh Sandhu, founder of [South Asian Connection](#), God laid a vision in the hearts of various leaders of the South Asian Diaspora for a new and relevant work aimed at the present and next generation of young South Asians. Fifteen different mission organizations and specific South Asian youth ministries were represented at SAGC through informative exhibit booths and video presentations. ([Assist News Service](#))

UNITED STATES: SIM Names New U.S. Director

SIM ([Serving In Mission](#)) has named Bruce Johnson as its new United States director. Johnson, a 35-year veteran in ministry leadership, started 1 July 2009 on the SIM USA Leadership Team. Beginning 1 October 2009 he replaces Dr. Steve Strauss, who is leaving to become professor of world missions and intercultural studies at Dallas Theological Seminary. Johnson came to SIM from Asian Access, where he served seven years as vice president of ministry and also as interim president. Prior to that he served with Arrow Leadership, NextLevel Leadership, and Campus Crusade for Christ. SIM began 116 years ago in Nigeria and is now an international mission with more than 1,600 people from fifty-five nations serving on six continents. ([Serving In Mission](#))

UNITED STATES: Greg Laurie’s Twentieth Annual Harvest Draws Record Numbers

More than 126,000 people made up the standing-room-only crowd for the twentieth annual [Southern California Harvest with Greg Laurie](#). Many more around the world participated online and via Twitter. The crowd lined the concourse at Angel Stadium in Anaheim, California, 14-16 August 2009, while fireworks exploded overhead, celebrating lives changed through the event. Nearly twelve thousand people committed their lives to Christ over the three nights. A media release said that tens of thousands of people from over one hundred countries also attended “virtually” using the Internet and live iPhone streams. ([Assist News Service](#))

UNITED STATES: Joni and Friends Celebrates Thirtieth Anniversary

As Joni Eareckson Tada observes her sixtieth birthday in October, this year also marks the thirtieth anniversary of the ministry she founded to provide support and outreach to individuals with disabilities and their families—inspired from her own experience as a quadriplegic trying to adapt and survive in an inaccessible world. [Joni and Friends Ministries Inc.](#) includes Tada’s internationally-syndicated radio program “Joni and Friends”; the Wheels for the World program, which provides wheelchairs for individuals with disabilities all over the world; and family retreats, during which individuals with disabilities and their entire families are encouraged and given a real respite during a week-long “summer camp” atmosphere. As the ministry turns the corner on this its thirtieth year, it continues to fulfill Tada’s vision of accelerating ministry to those with disabilities. “If churches around the world would grasp the revolutionary truth that Christ’s transforming power always comes through sacrifice and weakness, it would dramatically alter the landscape of the global church,” Tada said. ([Christian Newswire](#))

THEMED ARTICLES: The Gospel in Oral Tradition

The Impact of Technology on Bible Translation

By Reinier de Blois

Bible translation has always been painstaking, laborious work. It is not just the difficulty of the work

itself; there are also the technical challenges translators face. In the old days each draft had to be typed manually—four or five times!—before the project was completed. And once the text had received final approval, the entire manuscript had to be re-typed by the typesetter before it could be printed.

Changing Tools for Bible Translation

The revolution started around the mid-1980s, when more and more translation projects began making use of the personal computer. Thanks to the PC, a text had to be typed only once. After that, only the corrections needed to be entered and upon completion of the project, the text could be sent to the printer in digital format.

In those early days the software for typing and printing scripture files was designed almost exclusively by the Summer Institute of Linguistics (now [SIL International](#)). SIL also produced tools enabling translators to type special characters, check punctuation and accents, and create word lists.

Creating word lists is not the kind of task anyone would have seriously dreamed of undertaking until the personal computer arrived, but it is precisely its time-consuming and laborious nature that makes it so suitable for an electronic brain. What it involves is extracting all the unique words from a text file and displaying them in alphabetical order, or sorting them by the frequency with which they occur. This allows Bible translators—or editors of any kind—to improve the text by easily identifying spelling mistakes or literal errors and correcting them.

But it was in 1997 that [United Bible Societies](#) (UBS) made a special new computer tool available to Bible translators. Called Paratext, one of its many remarkable features was that it allowed the computer to display the Bible's source texts in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek side-by-side on the computer screen. Furthermore, it offered dictionaries of the biblical languages; translations in languages from all over the world allowed users to draft their own translations and incorporated many other tools designed to improve the consistency of the text.

Since 1997, a number of other tools have seen the light. A research team at the [British and Foreign Bible Society](#) (BFBS) spent many years developing software that would eventually facilitate comparisons of two versions of the same text in different languages, examining the internal structure of the words in both texts, and, on the basis of statistical analysis, determine which word in text A corresponds to which word in text B.

In addition, a tool was created that displays the source texts of the Bible in an interlinear format, together with the analysis of the structure of each word and its definition in English. This program allows users to perform relatively complex searches in the biblical texts. It also allows them to keep track of the way they have translated each word—thus enhancing the consistency of their translation. Finally, it provides links to other helpful digital resources such as the Logos Libronix Library.

Another extremely important tool now available is called *Publishing Assistant*. Developed by UBS with assistance from SIL, this program takes the completed translation produced in Paratext and converts it to the format required for the software used by typesetters in such a way as to speed up the typesetting process significantly.

Paratext 7.0

Paratext 7.0 was released in summer 2009, and at a workshop held just before the UBS Triennial Translation Workshop in Bangkok in June 2009 some forty staff from the four UBS areas were thoroughly familiarised with its new features so that they in turn can now train the Bible translators working in the field.

This new version has integrated most of the other tools mentioned with its existing functions, making it a piece of software that facilitates a translation project from its early stages right up to the moment the text is published.

Also, the security of the translated texts has been enhanced: it has become extremely easy to store a copy of the text in a safe place via the Internet or to back up the data on another device. All changes made in the course of a translation project are automatically documented and stored along with the project, so that different stages of the translation and versions of the text can be compared.

This new program benefits all three main categories of people involved in the process of Bible translation.

- **Translators** have access to all the resources they need to do their translation in a responsible way. They can add notes to specific passages, explaining their translation decisions; they can also list the questions they want to put to the consultant on his or her next visit. Tools to check that the text conforms to the spelling rules are also available. The program also allows users to keep track of the way they have translated particular biblical terms, depending upon the context. The computer can assist them in building lists of equivalent translations for checking purposes, saving a significant amount of time.
- **Translation consultants** can benefit from these tools as well. In addition to the features mentioned, they also have access to the so-called “interlinearizer,” a program that uses the calculations devised by the BFBS team to generate and format a back-translation of a given text. If the program miscalculates and offers an incorrect translation, the user can correct the data manually in order to “teach” the program how to analyse and translate each word or combination of words correctly. This enables the consultant, to a certain extent, to verify a translated text without having to depend upon either an oral or hand-written back-translation. This also means consultants can do part of their work from a distance.
- **Typesetters** will receive a text that is almost completely ready to be printed and requires substantially less time of processing.

So, the impact of technology on Bible translation can be summarized under three headings: time, quality, and cost-effectiveness.

1. **Time.** Thanks to the new technology, a translation project can progress faster. A word of caution is required though. Technology brings setbacks as well as advantages. Everyone who uses a computer knows about the frustrations of losing data when the hard drive crashes or a CD gets damaged. Software can even carry bugs that destroy important digital files. At the same time, using a computer carelessly brings risks as well. Making back-ups is essential, but it is something most people only learn to do—if they learn it at all—from hard experience. Efficient working procedures and proper training can help prevent unnecessary setbacks.
2. **Quality.** Of even more significance is the way the quality of Bible translations can be improved by the application of advanced technology. The tools now available help to produce Bible translations that: are better renderings of the original texts, are consistent where they need to be consistent, and contain fewer errors in both spelling and formatting.
3. **Cost-effectiveness.** It goes without saying that a translation project that is completed in less time is more cost-effective than other projects. There is more to say about this, however. One major factor in the high cost of translation projects is consultants’ travel. In many cases, the progress of

Technology will keep on developing all the Bible translators' tools, but perhaps the last word—for the time being—should be in praise of Paratext, firmly established as the jewel in the UBS crown as far as Bible translation is concerned.

Dr. Reinier de Blois lives in Reeuwijk, The Netherlands, and works as a translation consultant for the [United Bible Societies](#). He is the editor of the *Semantic Dictionary of Biblical Hebrew* and a member of the software development team that created Paratext.

Online Mission

By Peter Fischer-Nielsen

Since its popular introduction in the mid 1990s the Internet has changed how we communicate.

Getting a message from one part of the world to another has become so easy, cheap, and quick that geography is no longer the same barrier for communication that it was in the past. At the same time the Internet has expanded our understanding of communication. Using the Internet is not just about passing on a message.

When we send an email or a message through the Internet, we link to the many million websites that are part of the World Wide Web—either directly by placing a hyperlink in our message or indirectly, since what we write and send will be evaluated in the light of other information that can be found online. The Internet has also increasingly become a social experience. We are not just there to communicate, but also to socialise, sometimes as the persons we really are and sometimes, for different reasons, behind a pseudonym.

It's Here to Stay—So Use It!

The popular breakthrough of the Internet forces the Church, and many other institutions, to think in new ways about its communication. The complex nature of the Internet (being a medium, an information archive, and a social space) demands equally complex thinking from the Church. This article will present a few fundamental ways in which the Internet can be used by a church with a missional agenda, but it will by no means cover every issue associated with the Internet and churches.

My goal here is both to encourage churches to a more focused use of the Internet and point to some of the possible pitfalls that exist when churches go online. My approach to the Internet is very pragmatic: it is there, it is important for our communication today, and most likely it has come to stay. Therefore, it is not fruitful to discuss whether we should use the Internet or not. Instead, we should focus our energy on how to use it in the best way possible.

The mission of the Church is to reach the world with the love of our saviour Jesus Christ by words and through a visible engagement in society. This mission is the same when the Church goes online. Here there is both a need for the proclamation of Jesus Christ in words and the presence of Christians who represent the Kingdom of God in their online behaviour. Both aspects can be formalised in church web

initiatives, but must also be held up as a personal responsibility for the individual Christian. There is a temptation to think of the Internet as a non-real space where lying, cheating, disrespecting, and ignoring your cyber-neighbour are more harmless than acts committed offline.

Teaching in Christian Internet awareness must deal with these aspects just as much as with the more outgoing evangelistic aspects and must help individuals to maintain their Christian identity online.

Church-initiated Side of Online Ministry

As mentioned previously, one of the obvious advantages of the Internet is its large reach. This goes well with a church that is eager to follow the words of the Great Commission to “go and make disciples of all nations.” In countries where traditional mission approaches are difficult because of the religious or political climate, the Internet can be an easy, safe, and cheap way in. Although some regimes try to control which websites a population can visit, it is almost impossible to suppress unwanted information altogether given the fluent and decentralised character of the Internet combined with the receiver’s possibility of surfing the Internet in privacy. When it comes to the West and “traditional” Christian countries, the reach of mission is also increased by the Internet.

Especially in Europe, secularisation has estranged large parts of the population from their Christian roots. People are not familiar with the church and with its language and might find it awkward to go to a church with their questions. For many, it is easier to experiment with religion on the Internet, where a discrete investigation can be carried out from the living room, and a first contact to a church or a minister can go through an anonymous email.

Still, there is a great difference between the potential and the actual reach of a Christian web initiative. Even seekers will probably not know what they need when they are looking for answers on the Internet. Most people will find a Christian website through Google (or another search engine) via a link or by coincidence; therefore, if a website cannot be spotted these ways, it will probably not be seen at all.

Even more difficult is getting in touch with non-seekers who do not actively search for answers. They will not visit a Christian website, but are more likely to be met on the websites they usually visit. Therefore, the church must not isolate itself on its own websites; instead, it must take part in the fluent online traffic and develop initiatives on various platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, and Wikipedia.

The Church in Mission

A church in mission will always try to call people into community with God and with other people. When it comes to media, the Church is often better at distributing the Christian message than creating Christian communities. People might be excited about the gospel when they hear it in a television or a radio programme, but the distance between the sender and the receiver often makes it difficult to establish a social space where the two can meet.

Internet mission is interesting in that regard, since it, more than other media, is able to provide a social space where people can interact in various ways and meet as church. These online communities are not a replacement to traditional physical congregations, but a supplement and sometimes, and for different reasons, a better choice for the individual Christian—in the non-Christian parts of the world because it can be dangerous to meet in public or simply because it can be difficult to find other Christians in the neighbourhood; in the West because many feel disappointed with the church, have left their church, or simply don’t feel comfortable in a traditional church. In both cases, the Internet offers a social space where other Christians can be met and where you can develop your faith in freedom.

The downside of online communities is the lack of physical nearness and bodily shared experiences. Singing, praying, and receiving communion will probably never be the same online as it is offline, and people will continue to be in need of these elements as well. Therefore, the church should not feel threatened by the Internet. It is an extension of our communication and social life, but it can never be a replacement of physical contact. Consequently, part of the online mission should always be to point to the offline experiences which the church can offer.

More could and should be said about these issues. Here I have just mentioned how the Internet can be used by the Church to reach more people and create social communities. I have briefly suggested that online mission is also about representing Christian ethics when going online both as church and as an individual Christian. From my point of view this specific point demands more attention from the Church in the future. Finally, it must be mentioned that the Internet also provides an excellent platform for networking, further discussions about online mission, and the sharing of ideas. The Internet has come to stay and the Church must continually be in dialogue concerning how the Internet can be used to serve its mission.

Peter Fischer-Nielsen is PhD fellow at the Faculty of Theology, Aarhus University, doing research on church communication on the Internet. He works for the [Areopagos Foundation](#) and the Danish newspaper *Christian Daily*. Follow his blog at www.e-religion.dk.

The Gospel in Oral Tradition

By Morgan Jackson

Most of the world's people live in oral cultures. They learn about their history and transmit their values through song, chant, story, and drama.

But when they listen to the Bible, oral people don't separate themselves from the stories. As they listen, they are drawn in and find themselves walking alongside Jesus.

When the Kabiyé people of Togo heard the word of God in their language for the first time, their reaction was, "God speaks our language. We don't need a translator to talk to God. God can address us directly." And for so many around the world, they've been told and taught that God doesn't understand their prayers.

Experiencing the Bible for the First Time

I wish people could go into a village and watch people as they hear—for the first time—the Bible in their own mother tongue. In my mind, I can still see them—people gathering from all directions. Most are walking in groups of three or four. Others ride bicycles, creating clouds of dust as they come. All are dressed in bright, traditional clothing. When they get closer, I can see the obvious excitement on their faces.

These people, like hundreds of thousands of others around the world, will be participating in a Bible listening group. For many, it will be the first time they have ever heard the word of God in their heart language. Most of them cannot read and must depend upon someone else to read and interpret scripture for them—at least until now.

For the past twenty-six years I've had the amazing privilege of being part of [Faith Comes By Hearing](#), a ministry which makes Audio Bible recordings available to people just like these—people who otherwise would have no personal access to God's word. It's awesome to watch these people engage the stories

from the Bible. Oral learners have a way of putting themselves into the stories that make them feel like they are actually there. When Jesus is giving the Sermon on the Mount, they are right there sitting in the field, listening. When he lays his hands on people and heals them, they can see and feel the emotion of the moment. They cry or laugh or shout. When they hear the crucifixion, they weep and sob. Some actually fall on their faces and throw dust on their heads!

I'm also amazed at which passages speak to them on a deep level—often things we wouldn't even mention if we were teaching. When's the last time you heard a sermon on a biblical genealogy? Yet look at how the New Testament starts: "*The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob...*"

And so forth for sixteen verses. We may well be inclined to just skip to verse 17, but oftentimes I've heard listeners from oral cultures say, "Wait! Stop it right there. Play that part over. I've heard of some of those guys." They play it three or four times, fascinated that Jesus had a real genealogy that could be traced all the way back to Abraham. That sort of thing is important to them—where someone came from, and who their ancestors were. Many have told me they accepted Christ just because they heard his genealogy.

The Woman with the Issue of Blood Relating to the Quechua

Some years back I was visiting Bible listening groups among Quechua people in Bolivia. In the first village I visited, I asked the pastor if there was any particular story that really touched the people in his church. He immediately said, "The story of the woman with the issue of blood. Where the woman reached out and touched Jesus, and he stopped and asked who did it." Although I thought this was strange, I didn't think too much about it. In the next village the same thing was the case—the pastor said, "It's definitely the woman with the issue of blood." This went on day after day until about the seventh village.

Then I remembered a story a friend of mine, Romulo Sauñe, told me years back. Romulo was an indigenous Indian pastor (later martyred by the communist guerillas in Peru). He told me that during the communist uprising, his people had to flee their rural homes to the cities. When they did so, they would approach the Spanish-speaking churches and ask to use their buildings for services when no one else was in them. They were frequently told that they couldn't because they were too dirty, or had bugs and diseases. A few were allowed in, but were soon kicked out by the city people who said things like, "We don't want these animals using our church."

So, here I am with indigenous people in Bolivia who are crying when they hear the story of the woman with the issue of blood. Why was she afraid to let Jesus know she had touched him? Because she was unclean. She wasn't supposed to be touching people. But she was so desperate and so certain that she could be healed that she did what was culturally unacceptable. She touched Jesus.

All of sudden I made the connection. These Quechua listeners had entered the story; it was they themselves who reached out to touch Jesus. When he turned and asked "Who touched me?" it was like he spoke to them. They were afraid he was going to say, "You dirty Indians, don't you dare touch me." But instead he said "Daughter, your faith has made you well." Not only did he not turn her away, he called her "daughter"—his own child.

That's why the Quechua love this story and why it makes them weep. Their own culture told them they were unclean, but they heard Jesus speaking to them in their own language and calling them his own children.

That's why I love what we do at Faith Comes By Hearing. We take the whole New Testament, and make a dramatized recording with multiple voices, music, and sound effects. In this way, we get the pure word of God to poor and illiterate people in their heart languages. When they listen to the Bible in their own language, Jesus speaks right to their hearts.

Morgan Jackson is the international director of [Faith Comes By Hearing](#). He began ministering to oral peoples at age nine. He now travels extensively, speaking to audiences all across the world, and sharing the need for God's word in audio.

The Storytellers of Dulumpur

By Carla Bowman

It is nightfall in Dulumpur, a miniature hamlet in tribal Jharkand, East India. Thousands of stars cling recklessly onto an ebony sky. The tribal welcome foot washing and the artful, ritually paced serving of the meal on giant leaves take place as if in slow motion. Below the star-encrusted sky this place is suspended in time. Shrouded women dance in a millennia-old line. To the silken movement of saris they rock faintly back and forth on bare feet to an irrepressible, soft, high-pitched, repetitive chant of a biblical song.

The perceived sluggishness of the dance, the foot washing, the ritual meal, and the hypnotic sounds of the music-chant are illusory because there is evidence all around of the reality of hard work: rice and lentils cooked for hours on dry, dung fires; swept dirt streets; immaculate, smooth, plastered, mud-brown walls adorned with white geometric designs and painted with whimsical gazelles floating in a line under tiny windowsills.

Abruptly, a loud beating of the *dolak* assaults the night silence. It is a drumbeat contradicting the slow rhythm of swaying hammocks that creak as the rope-ends make contact with the trunks of the *kikar* tree. Contrasting with the slow motion of village ritual, the drum heralds an arrival. A team of community church planters has arrived at the house of peace, a place for night fellowship consisting of a ceremony of scripture, story, song, drama, dance, and prayer.

Adam, Eve, and the Church Planters

On this night, a story of Adam and Eve is told and enacted by the community church planters. It is part of the Old Testament Series, a set of stories being presented in Dulumpur and other tribal villages. A pervasive silence hangs in the air as the drum stops and the actors playing Adam and Eve stroll forward.

The subtle chant-song of the narrator begins. Her voice penetrates the night as she begins to sing the enthralling tale from Genesis 3: "Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made." At this instant a large serpent slithers across the dirt, weaving and gliding toward Adam and Eve. The observers, enraptured and speechless, are gathered under the thatched roof veranda. One can hear a simultaneous, forceful gasp from the audience as the serpent moves across the ground.

It is in reality a small woman wrapped in a silk-stripped sari, slinking realistically in curved slow motion toward Eve. As the serpent lets out a hissing sound the narration in the form of song continues: "The serpent said to the woman, 'Did God really say, you must not eat from any tree in the garden?'" Eve is startled. Her face shows incredulity. The narrator continues in song, changing nothing from scripture, not adding or deleting from the Word of God. The story moves on to its conclusion as the villagers of Dulumpur have watched electrified, spellbound.

BRIDGES Curriculum in Southeast Asia

The performer church planters are talented and creative. Their success is due in no small part to the fact that they have been trained flawlessly by Master Trainers in the Madhupur-based “Engage India” hub that is located in the geographical center of the large Indian state of Jharkhand. These master trainers of *Communication Bridges to Oral Cultures* (“BRIDGES”) curriculum have insightfully identified the communication style of the Santali people group and have used to huge advantage the tribal skills in dramatic arts, music, and dance. Their repertoire of stories complete with drama, song, and dance reaches upward of thirty. The stories are sung to one of twelve traditional tunes with total fidelity to the biblical text.

Other stories have been memorized, but are not yet developed in drama and song. The church planters have been taught to revisit these same stories with dialogue later as the villagers sit in a circle around the storyteller. The trainers have taught the church planters to help the listeners discover the meaning of the story through dialogue. The semi-literate storytellers use the printed Santali Bible as an aide to memorization. They are the ideal practitioners of an orality-based method of evangelism and church planting that has gained popularity and momentum in the past decade.

Communication Bridges to Oral Cultures curriculum has been developed by **Scriptures in Use** (SIU), an agency focused on orality training. It is at the heart of the SIU ministry ethos that a systematic church-planting curriculum designed specifically for oral cultures is a powerful tool when it is in the hands of national churches, agencies, and trainers.

We see evidence of the effectiveness and innovation of the Indian trainers by the results in Dulumpur and scores of other villages dotted around Jharkand, where many scripture stories have been adapted to drama. We see results north of Dulumpur, several hundred miles across the Nepalese border, where teams of Master Trainers travel on foot, boat, bus, train, jeep, donkey, and yak to reach their venues. For years now, these teams have faithfully multiplied “BRIDGES” training all across Nepal and on the borders with Tibet and Bhutan.

We see the effectiveness of national trainers multiplying this training among twenty-eight Majority World churches and agencies of South Asia. Their ownership of the method and material has inspired the translation of manuals and video supplements into eleven languages of the Indian sub-continent alone. We have observed the leaders of training hubs develop their reproducible innovations: the House Church Bridges Model, Bridges in a nutshell, Bridges for Women on-site demonstrations, Integrated Children’s Ministry, the Esther Institute, Story Bible schools, Bible story training during tailor classes, story memorization after prayer meetings, and multiplying the Bridges for Women training in small groups.

There have been other forms of innovation to multiply the training and encourage self- sustainability. Some believers bring goats and rice so food may be shared with participants. Trainers meet with church planters once a month in the context of normal coaching and mentoring. It is no mystery why oral communication methods have been so successful in South Asia. For people groups like the Santali of Dulumpur or the Banjara of South India, the creative arts are their heart and soul. But the success national trainers have had is not limited to that region of the world.

Storytelling Trainers Journeying from the Rising of the Sun to Its’ Setting

In Vietnam, storytellers journey with their “Traveling Bibles,” the Word of God safely stored in their minds and hearts as they go from village to village. In Sumatra, storytelling teams dramatize Old Testament stories of the prophets and chant corresponding Psalms. In Latin America, we have seen innovative nationals create urban *barrio* story groups in Peru, as well as jungle story groups in Brazil.

Across the Atlantic to the continent of Africa, innovation and multiplication abound: among the Pygmies, an oral Bible school, which is in reality a simple grass-roofed veranda in the heart of the rainforest; long storytelling afternoons under the acacia trees among the Turkana of northern Kenya; storytelling among the nomadic MBororo of Niger; story and dance by firelight for the Tuareg, who have come to the Lord by family group conversion.

In Ethiopia, hard-working trainers travel long distances to be greeted by church planters who welcome them eagerly and embrace their teaching. In Khartoum, the stories from God's word are "internalized" by non-reading oral culture believers after the effective training by an African national from Kenya. In Chad, classes on oral culture communication are filled to capacity, sometimes exceeding seventy students. In Mauritania, stories are encouraged as sweet mint tea is passed.

All across the globe national training teams are presenting what we consider the essential elements of effective oral communication of the scriptures. They instruct new storytellers to memorize the biblical story exactly as it is written. They teach that printed scriptures are an aide to memorization and that the stories must be told with complete biblical accuracy and fidelity to the text.

At the same time storytellers learn how to create introductions and develop dialogue. They are taught how to differentiate wisely between dialogue for stone clearing and dialogue for discipleship. They are instructed to follow chronological order in their storytelling, as well as to select from worldview story collections. They are encouraged to have command of 50-225 stories. Although scripture tapes, media, and radio presentations are useful tools, participants learn that face-to-face interaction and community relationships developed through storytelling and dialogue are crucially important. They have also learned that literacy is not dispensable. Literate mentors are essential to teach the stories to non-reading believers and are a key to maintaining fidelity to the word.

In addition to the quality of instruction in the essential elements of oral communication presented in hundreds of events yearly by national training teams, it has been a significant joy to the Scriptures in Use team to see the innovative adaptations made by nationally-led training hubs.

It is a credit to mission leaders and practitioners in the Majority World that they have so quickly become staunch advocates and champions of oral communication of the scriptures. They have demonstrated vision, adaptability, and willingness to venture forward in a new paradigm for missions, utilizing ancient communication methods of the oral arts.

Carla Bowman and her husband, Jim, co-founded [Scriptures in Use](#). SIU currently holds nearly ninety training events each year in over fifty countries. The Bowmans served as missionaries in Latin America, and subsequently extended their training courses worldwide.

Oral Communication and the Global Recordings Network

By Allan Starling

Oral communicators (OCs) represent as much as two-thirds of the world's population, perhaps four billion people. *Primary oral communicators* do not read or write. They are the prime ministry focus of [Global Recordings Network](#) (GRN) and of this article. How do we communicate to both the speaking and thinking of OCs?

Avery Willis of the [International Orality Network](#) (ION) has said, "Global Recordings Network is a pioneer in the worldwide effort to promote orality." The founder of GRN, Joy Ridderhof once wrote

about the early days, “It was a pioneer work—searching out languages of illiterate people and finding a way to translate and record the gospel message into those languages...”

Different Communication Styles

OCs learn in different ways, and thus we need to adapt our communication styles. Most sermons in the churches of our literate society present concepts. When Jesus preached to OCs, he told them stories about people with whom they could relate (e.g., shepherds, farmers, and fishermen).

Following Jesus, some have gone as far as to suggest that we should just tell Bible stories. Jesus certainly told stories, but not exclusively. In his Sermon on the Mount he taught about very practical things (e.g., making peace with an enemy; the blessings of humility, prayer, and giving; the futility of worry).

The Apostle Paul used graphic word pictures (e.g., the armor of God). The sacrifices, feasts, fasts, and celebrations in the Old Testament, as well as the Lord’s Supper and baptism in the New Testament, help us to picture important spiritual concepts. The Psalms give us examples of how to praise. Stories and teaching go together.

Oral and Audio Communication

Someone described “audio” as simply “recording written words onto a recording device.” This is in contrast to “orality,” which involves “presenting the message in a comprehensive manner using indigenous input.” GRN has always chosen the latter. To prepare, the recordist asks questions about the people and culture to help determine what messages to record. These messages are adapted to local mores, and he or she gets permission and assistance from local leaders. He or she selects mother tongue language helpers to speak. During recording, each sentence and phrase is discussed and/or modified before a final translation. The script is a basis for translation, but never rendered literally. Rather, the messages are largely dictated by natural linguistic forms and local cultural dynamics.

GRN has never embraced a “one-size-fits-all” model. Each recorded message must not only be in the heart language of the hearers, but as far as possible it must also be culturally relevant without compromising scriptural integrity. This means:

- **Overcoming language barriers.** Some seven thousand languages in the world are subdivided into thousands of dialects. Heart communication requires the message to be in the heart language of the hearer. At a Navajo information center I asked if everyone spoke English on the reservation. “Yes,” the man replied. “But we think in Navajo.”
- **Overcoming religious and social barriers.** To be both understood and accepted, we want to make sure that prejudices don’t prevent people from really listening. Although people in one village may understand every word of a recording made in another, if they dislike each other, they will not listen to it. The message may be linguistically acceptable, but socially rejected.
- **Making culturally relevant messages.** The message must also be culturally relevant. Over the years GRN has developed over five hundred core stories and messages. Different scripts have been written for everyone from animists to those who are orthodox. Depending upon the aim, the final selection may include several messages combined into a custom-made program and modifiable at any point. Recently, a computer program has been designed to help field workers manage their lists of messages.
- **Evaluating the recordings.** Joy Ridderhof once wrote, “As I look back now, I marvel that God could take us—inexperienced, untrained, unskilled—and lead us into experiences which gave us

- **Misinterpreting stories.** Culture affects interpretation! Because their culture was steeped in deception, the Sawi tribe thought Judas was the hero in the gospel story. They only understood and accepted the gospel message when Don Richardson appropriated the redemptive analogy of the peace child, which converted their faulty understanding.
- **Using redemptive analogies.** “*Are you afraid?*” is the title of a much-used message, particularly among animistic peoples. It starts out: “*Are you afraid? Are you afraid of the darkness? Are you afraid to die? ... Do you want fear to leave you forever? Then listen. I have wonderful news for you...*” The recordist will also specify certain fears associated with the local culture, thereby guaranteeing a rapt audience.
- **Adapting to the culture.** We need to stay culturally alert. One GRN message, the story of Noah, includes many sound effects, and in one place the people laugh at Noah. The recordist inserted the sound of laughing from another track, only to discover that this was a different kind of laughter and sent a wrong signal!

The Power of Repetition

GRN's collections of short stories and presentations are extremely reproducible. Years ago, a converted OC took a phonograph and a set of recordings, which he played everywhere. The records wore out, but he would still play the records, repeating accurately what they used to say. Another OC took recordings and a hand-wind player to his village. A month later a missionary found many OCs eager to accept Christ. Each one could repeat the messages by heart!

Continually Improving Technology

GRN's “*Good News*,” “*Look, Listen and Live*,” and “*The Living Christ*” are evangelistic Bible teaching series of attractive, brightly-colored pictures. OCs quickly learn to show the pictures while accurately repeating the message they heard on the recording.

Over the years, GRN technology has changed from phonograph records to audio cassettes to CDs, DVDs, VCDs, MP3s, etc. GRN has freely downloadable recordings on their website in over four thousand speech varieties.

The majority of OCs are still among the least-reached and inaccessible peoples. Accordingly, GRN has designed the new “Saber” hand-wind MP3 player with excellent volume and sound quality—a high-tech machine designed for low-tech people.

Speaking of the Spirit...

Spiritual barriers must always be overcome in the Spirit. One early recordist said, “*We always spent time discussing the culture of the people for each language we recorded... We chose the scripts very carefully after much prayer and investigation of the relevant messages. And of course, we bathed every part of the work in prayer, just as the home staff did.*”

And so with a melding of strategy, technology, partnership, and prayer we reach out to the oral communicators of this world with the promise of scripture ringing in our ears: “Faith [still] comes by hearing. And hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17).

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Allan Starling was born in South Africa. He has served **Global Recordings Network** for forty-seven years and was part of the Lausanne committee that designed the definitions of *Unreached Peoples*. Starling has authored several books and articles on missions.

PERSPECTIVES

The Persecuted Church Taught Me to Pray

By Al Janssen

About six years ago I was asked by a friend to intercede for twenty-two men in an Islamic country. These men were among the first Christian converts in an area dominated by Muslim extremists. With a growing number of followers of Jesus in this region, these brothers had been chosen for seminary-level training in preparation for ordination. Since they could not attend a conventional school, they met in secret for one week each month, changing locations frequently to avoid detection.

Within six months of receiving that assignment, two of these men had died a martyr's death. The loss of these two brothers and the high stakes for those who remained forced me to plead with God like the disciples of Jesus: "Lord, teach me to pray!" In answer to that prayer, God has taught me five lessons that enable me to pray meaningfully for my Muslim background brothers and many others in the persecuted Church.

1. Wait upon the Lord

The first lesson I had to learn emerged out of Jesus' agony on the night he was betrayed. Knowing he was going to the cross, Christ asked his three closest companions to "keep watch with me." Instead, they slept. Jesus pleaded with Peter: "Could you men not keep watch with me for one hour?" (Matthew 26:40). "Watch and pray" he urged them. But what were they watching for? Jesus said Peter should pray he would not fall into temptation. Somehow, by watching Jesus, Peter would see and learn from our Lord's struggle.

In *If Ye Shall Ask*, Oswald Chambers wrote of Gethsemane, saying:

"Tarry ye here, and watch with me." Is my idea of prayer based on the keen watching that Jesus Christ asked of his disciples? These three men were taken and appointed by our Lord for one purpose—to see his agony. ... He did not put them there to go to sleep; he put them there to wait and watch. ... He took these three with him to see the unveiling of his heart—and they slept for their own sorrow.

As I have traveled to the persecuted Church, particularly in the Muslim world, I have frequently prayed this prayer: "Lord, may I see what you see, hear what you hear, love what you love, hate what you hate, and feel what you feel."

I remember an early glimpse God revealed of his perspective: I was dining in Bethlehem with a distinguished professor of Islam and I took advantage of the opportunity to ask him many questions about the practice of his faith. When I asked him about the Hajj—the pilgrimage every Muslim is required to take at least once in his lifetime—I discovered he had led three groups to Mecca and Medina.

For the next hour he described all of the preparation: pilgrims need to ask forgiveness of anyone they have hurt or offended, to pay off their debts, and to read and meditate on the Quran. Then, during their journey they must behave perfectly—if they curse or get angry at another pilgrim, they have failed and might as well stop and go home. At that moment, I felt a deep compassion in my heart, realizing that many Muslims were trying hard to please God through their efforts. This professor knew nothing about grace. That insight led me to pray for him and develop a long-term friendship. It also helped me to realize that many Muslims who persecute Christians believe they are pleasing God by their actions. As a result, I pray for the persecutors—that, like Saul who became Paul, they might see Jesus.

2. Use the Psalms as Your Prayer Book

As a boy, I participated in a famous church choir which sang through the Psalms every month. We tended to judge a psalm by its length—the shorter the better. Today, I see the Psalms as a rich treasure trove to guide my prayer life. Usually I pray through three each day, with at least one dedicated to my friends in the persecuted Church.

For example, following Psalm 55, I pray: “Listen to my prayer, O God.... My thoughts trouble me and I am distraught” (55:1). Although I often have limited information about my suffering brothers and sisters, I can be fairly sure that most of them have troubled thoughts. David goes on to proclaim that the terrors of death assail him, and I know that those I pray for face death threats, sometimes daily. “Oh, that I had the wings of a dove! I would fly away and be at rest—I would flee far away and stay in the desert” (55:6-7). Surely my friends have such thoughts—who wouldn’t yearn for escape from the threats and attacks of Muslim fundamentalists?

Then David complains about how he was betrayed by a close friend. That drives me to pray for the community of believers which often meets in secret—that there will not be a “Judas” among them. David concludes: “Cast your cares on the Lord and he will sustain you. He will never let the righteous fall.” Here’s a promise I can claim for my brothers. “Lord, may they cast all their cares on you. Sustain them; do not let them fall.”

There is one Psalm, 119, that takes three to four days to pray through. I focus on those brothers who are preparing for ordination. They are studying the word of God and this Psalm helps me pray specifically for their studies, and that the word would go deep into their hearts.

3. Pray as You Watch the News

As I write this article a bomb exploded in Islamabad, killing at least six. Looking at the pictures, I glimpse a burned-out car with an ichthys fish on it. I ask: “Was the owner in that car?” I wonder about the effect this latest explosion may have on my brothers and sisters in Pakistan.

The stream of bad news from around the world is almost constant. If it’s not natural disasters, there are wars waged by corrupt dictators or suicide bombings. I’ve learned to ask with each news report: “Is there a church?” Almost certainly there are fellow believers affected by every event. That motivates me to pray.

Sometimes I know someone in the affected area. A couple of years ago there was a suicide bombing at a shopping mall in Netanya, Israel. I knew there was a messianic congregation near there and I emailed one of the leaders to see how they were doing. Fortunately, no one there was hurt this time. But I know there have been attacks on these believers in the past, so I was reminded to pray again for my Jewish brothers and sisters in Israel.

4. Pray Constantly

One day, as I was having coffee with my friend Paul, I noted a horrific news story and mused, “How do

we possibly pray about this?” Paul reminded me that the Church has always had a prayer for such situations: “Lord, have mercy.” When words fail, that prayer seems to say much. I’ve found myself using it often.

Sometimes, even those words seem to stick in my throat. When my friend calls from South Asia to tell me several brothers died in a suicide bombing, only tears and an inner groaning seem to be my prayer. I’m reminded that I don’t have to find the perfect words for prayer. “The Spirit helps us in our weakness,” says Paul. “We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express” (Romans 8:26).

5. Give Thanks for the Persecuted Church

Recently, I visited with some Muslim background believers in Egypt, and I asked them how we in the West could pray for them. “Please don’t pray for us,” they answered. “Please pray with us.”

I was confused by this answer, so one of them explained: “If you pray for us, you will pray for the wrong things. You will pray for our safety. You will pray that persecution will cease. But if you pray with us, you will ask God to bring millions of Egyptians to faith in Christ. You will pray that when the inevitable Muslim backlash comes because of our witness, we will be faithful, even if it costs us our lives.”

I left that meeting amazed at the strong faith of these brothers, and thanked God for their words. How many of us would boldly witness for Christ if we knew it could cause our arrest, torture, or even death. Yet they were joyful and eager to see God produce a harvest of souls among Muslims.

The persecuted Church needs our prayers. But we also need their example. Often, they have told me that they pray for the Western Church—that we will be faithful to Christ in the midst of our materialism and the numerous temptations of our culture. We need their prayers, not least because they need for us to be strong in our faith in order to stand with them. Together we are one body—suffering together and rejoicing together.

Al Janssen is communications director at [Open Doors International](http://www.opendoorsinternational.org) and has written two books with Brother Andrew: *Light Force* and *Secret Believers*. You can learn more about how to pray for the persecuted Church at www.secretbelievers.org.

Surprising Witness: The Story of Christians for Social Justice in Cambodia

By Samantha Baker Evens

June 2006, Phnom Penh, Cambodia: A Christian working in a secular human rights organization started a discussion group for expatriate Christians interested in issues of faith and justice. He did so partly to give himself an outlet for thinking about faith and justice, as any attempt to discuss how his faith impacted his work was met with hostility by other expatriate human rights workers. Three years later, the group has had surprising results as it serves as a bridge that is breaking down barriers between the expatriate Church and secular human rights workers with positive results for the communities that both wish to serve.

An Overview of Christians for Social Justice

Christians for Social Justice (CSJ) was initially focused on raising awareness of social justice issues with concerned Christians and being a place where it was safe to talk about the intersection of faith and justice. It quickly, however, moved toward offering Christians a chance to respond personally to issues of social justice through partnership with a local human rights organization.

Early participation for the CSJ group in social justice issues involved supporting a legal case for two men wrongfully accused of the assassination of a high-profile trade union leader, as well as the case of residents of an urban community who were being violently and illegally evicted from their homes by a land developer with connections to the government.

CSJ members supported the causes by:

- being a presence at trials,
- participating in peaceful demonstrations,
- releasing balloons,
- meeting with their embassies to ask for foreign aid accountability,
- holding prayer vigils,
- attempting to visit political prisoners,
- witnessing evictions to mitigate against violence,
- sleeping overnight in communities with the knowledge of the developer to prevent unlawful evictions, and
- hosting rural community leaders who came to the capital as part of a peace network to lodge petitions with the government over the encroachment and loss of their land and natural resources.

As a leader in CSJ said about attending a recent trial, "The idea is primarily to turn up; sit in the trial and be a presence and a witness in order to show moral support for the two men; send the message to the judge that this cannot be done in a corner, but that people, including the international community, are watching; be praying and interceding for justice and righteousness; and to show solidarity with our friends in the human rights movement."

The unintentional side effect of CSJ's involvement with human rights in Cambodia has been an informal reconciliation between Christians and secular human rights workers. When the group initially formed, there was concern bordering on hostility from expatriate human rights workers toward involvement with Christians.

At one point, the director of the human rights group, who had been attending the CSJ meetings, asked group members to come and talk to her staff because she was having heated conversations weekly with staff who were worried that she was getting involved with Christians. Over time, it became clear that these responses were often coming from deep wounding at the hands of Christians in the past. For instance, there was one investigative reporter who spent a long time researching clergy sexual abuse cases and others who had experienced condemnation and judgment from Christians in their families of origin. There were also concerns that Christians would abuse their positions to proselytize.

Making Progress with Secular Human Rights Workers

The members of CSJ never ended up meeting with the secular human rights workers. Over time, however, the human rights workers were able to see the faithfulness and integrity with which the Christians pursued their work with the human rights organization. As a result, many of the human rights workers who would never willingly darken the door of a church now attend CSJ meetings, the first half of which includes prayer and a faith reflection.

Activist friends regularly express their surprise that Christians are concerned about social justice. Their opinions about Christians, as well as Christ, are changing as they are exposed to Jesus' teachings. For example, a Danish volunteer said, "I don't know if you know, but in Denmark we don't think very highly of Christians. You guys have really made me think." Others have expressed that they have been able to connect with Jesus' teachings for the first time through the writings of Walter Wink and Shane Claiborne.

With few words and loving actions, the CSJ members have been able to build trust with individuals who were previously (often justifiably) skeptical and suspicious.

Finding the Balance

The experience of CSJ in partnering with secular human rights groups is one that is worth replicating in other contexts. The CSJ members have brought the Christian peace-making perspective to the discussion that insists that even the oppressor is a human made in God's image and is capable of redemption and repentance. Their attempts at engaging the perpetrators as fellow children of God have influenced the approach of the human rights organization and changed not only their perspective, but also their approach in engaging the powers in Cambodia.

On the other hand, the secular human rights workers keep the missionaries from becoming too buried in their individual ministries at the cost of ignoring issues of social justice in their context, and therefore modeling an incomplete discipleship that neglects God's heart for peace and justice. They also give the CSJ members opportunities to respond concretely to issues of social justice, despite their busy lives. My connection with them on a personal level has helped me to engage with the teachings of Jesus in fresh ways, as they experience them for the first time, and as they connect them to their own unique spiritual journeys.

The fact that so many human rights workers have expressed to us their surprise at meeting Christians concerned about issues of justice (and that this, in turn, has caused them to re-consider the teachings of Jesus) is a reminder to me that what my husband calls “the gospel lived,” as opposed to the “gospel preached,” is attractive in itself. The kingdom as expressed in Luke 4:18-19 is still good news to those who need it, particularly to those who have already written off Christianity because they have experienced the worst of what is done in the name of Christ.

At the same time, the members of CSJ have done a good job of honoring the spiritual journey that their human rights counterparts are already on—whether they have encountered Jesus personally yet or not.

The Christians have been willing to learn from the humanitarian values that the human rights workers bring to the conversation. The human rights workers, I would hazard to guess, would not be satisfied with formulaic faith, and would have an instinctual distrust for anyone who seems to have all the answers. However, they do seem to find radical discipleship compelling and attractive. What started just a few years ago as a discussion group for Christians has expanded into a partnership of peace and mutual understanding, a surprising witness in a context of violence.

Samantha Baker Evens has been a member of the **InnerCHANGE** community for the last eleven years in San Francisco, Australia, and (currently) Cambodia. She is married to Chris and has two small sons.

I Am Second

By Victoria Childress

Question: How do you ignite a massive evangelism movement that draws hundreds of thousands of people using relevant, modern technology? Add to that the ability to intrigue and capture *any* audience (not a specific group of people, religion, or nation), while uplifting the name of Jesus using the same force of a secular major advertising campaign? Something to the likes of Nike or Coca Cola?

Answer: You don't. God does. And God has.

I Am Second, a Common Thread

I am Second is a simple website with crisp, high-quality videos of people sharing their pasts, including pain and redemption. That is it. We are not selling anything (except *I am Second* t-shirts) or trying to promote some ulterior message. Black setting, white chair, camera crew, and the subject. Pastors, soldiers, rock stars, movie stars, pro ball players, politicians, college students, pageant queens, and housewives all tell their stories. Although they come from very different backgrounds, they all have one thing in common: Jesus and his grace, restoration, and love. They are all stories anyone, anywhere, can relate to.

So *I am Second* is able to platform that commonality. It is this thread that allows people to come together and know that although we may look different, we aren't so different after all. This simple commonality is why the campaign and the website remains as powerful today as the day it launched. Little instruction is needed! What better way to invite your friends into a group and talk about life's issues? Churches are gravitating to the simplicity of *I am Second* because of its grace and its modern nature. Everything that we try to say in a Bible study or group gathering is simplified and powerfully told through the website.

Getting Involved

Recently, iamsecond.com incorporated a new "Get Involved" section to the website. It adds a new dimension to the experience—a dimension that encourages people to start a group based upon the same principles used by church-planting evangelists all over the world. For the masses, iamsecond.com is a place and an opportunity where people can hear a story and tell a story. When the element of people became the driving force behind the spread of *I am Second*, the strategy for reaching the masses became that of e3 Partners': **equip, evangelize, and establish**.

Shannon Culpepper, an undergraduate of Southern Methodist University and a storyteller on **iamsecond.com**, has spearheaded the group initiative on several college campuses in the Dallas/Fort Worth area. She gathered materials from the website (downloadable curriculum such as the Video Discussion Guide), invited some friends to meet at the local coffee house, and brought her laptop. They watched the videos and discussed their thoughts, and for some it brought about resolutions. For others, it was a seed planted. She did this every week for several months during the school year and the impact was and still is profound.

McKinney Fellowship Bible Church has taken *I am Second* by storm. They have started groups and held community affairs centered on the I am Second theme. For their Easter service this past April 2009, the congregants wore *I am Second* t-shirts; on-stage sat a white I am Second-inspired chair with a crown of thorns in its seat. They played the videos during the service and members of the congregation filled the stage with I am Second inspired "cardboard testimonies" saying "Bound-I am Second-Freed" and "Lust-I am Second-Love."

Brian 'Head' Welch, a storyteller on **iamsecond.com** and former lead guitarist for the band Korn, launched his first tour as a Christian artist. We were able to invite followers of *I am Second*, but also his fans to the concert in Dallas. When his video played before the show, many who had not heard of *I am Second* stopped by our information table to learn more about the movement. Likewise, Josh Hamilton of the Texas Rangers spoke during a pre-game concert hosted by *I am Second* and people were able to learn about the website and how to get involved. Greg Ellis of the Dallas Cowboys and other celebrities have made appearances on behalf of I am Second and we leverage their credibility to draw the public eye.

The Future of I am Second

With only a few months of presence online, why is *I am Second* such a revolutionary tool in the world of evangelism? First, the importance of allowing God to do something new took precedence. **e3 Partners**

knew that in order to reach the world, the whole effort would have to be full of grace, authentic, revolutionary, inspiring, pure, and avant-garde. Additionally, we realized that our mission was more than the promotion of a website. It became a catalyst for leaders and young-minded people who had been freed by Christ. It is causing people to boldly lift him up and inspire others to join the revolution.

How can you become a part of the revolution? You already are, because you are already Second to Christ. Now, it is time to inspire others. Christian leaders overseeing a congregation can contact the *I am Second* offices about opportunities to partner with the ministry and learn about the *I am Second* philosophy to planting churches and small groups. Ignite a fire in your ministry by using it as a tool to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ. Use the logo. You can even host a session of confessionals in your church or group that are iamsecond.com-inspired, allowing your members to tell their story and share it with others.

Ultimately, our goal is to equip fifty thousand leaders by December 2011 to start, transition, and lead *I am Second* small groups under the curriculum and guidelines of *I am Second*. I am Second wants to partner with you to reach this goal and beyond! The unique component of *I am Second* is that it is mobile and formative. While the principles will stay the same, different cities and countries have different audiences and media needs. The website is universal; however, the local campaign will be designed with the season and market in mind.

This is a movement that will revolutionize the way we evangelize, and movements of any caliber require the participation and advocacy of the people. It is not simply about the makers of *I am Second* or even the celebrities on the website. It is about you. It is about your story and who you tell it to. It is about how you choose to use this freely available tool to share the love of Christ. It is about uplifting the name of Jesus Christ, so that he can indeed draw all unto himself.

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URBAN COMMUNITIES

Niamey—What Is Its Context for Christian Service? Part One

By Martine Audeoud

The purpose of this two-part article is to study the various elements that influenced the context for Christian service in Niger and more specifically in Niamey, its capital city. In this article, we look at the historical context—namely, the origin of the dichotomy of the presence of Muslims and Christians in this part of West Africa. In [part two](#), we discover some of the characteristics specific to the worldviews prevalent in Niger, and more specifically, in Niamey. In part two we also examine the different elements that can affect Christian service in Niamey.

History of Niger

Historical evidence indicates that [human presence can be traced in the Sahara of northern Niger at least as far back as 4000 BC](#). Five thousand years later, in the tenth or eleventh century, Islam and its accompanying Arab influence arrived. Several Hausa city-states were developed around the fourteenth century along the east-west trans-Saharan trade routes. Various empires rose up and fought against each other until the nineteenth century, each trying to take over the land, sometimes using the excuse of waging a holy war. Islam was initially confined to the upper classes, but spread to the masses during the jihadist movements, most significantly under Dan Fodio Ustman.

Early in the twentieth century, French military and colonial forces attempted to control Lake Chad and created the military district of Niger. Although the various ethnic groups living in the area—the Bornu, the Hausa, the Fulani, and the Tuaregs—persistently resisted takeover, they had little success. In 1922, Niger was made a French colony.

Niger was administered as a French colony by the regional French governor in Dakar, Senegal. In 1946, French citizenship was granted to all inhabitants of the French territories. On 19 December 1958, Niger became an autonomous state (the Republic of Niger) within the French community. On 3 August 1960, the Republic of the Niger proclaimed its independence.

The growth of the young democracy was hindered at times by military coups and the subsequent overthrow of political leaders. Niger's economy grew substantially in the 1970s with the discovery of uranium. This boom ended in the late 1980s as Libya tried repeatedly to take over the north by fueling the Tuareg rebellion, which has started up again in recent months. Today, Niger enjoys a multi-party democracy, its major concern being the Tuareg rebellion against the government in the northern part of the country. Niger is predominantly Muslim (ninety-nine percent according to the Nigérien government¹), but seeks to remain a secular state where freedom of religion and beliefs is promoted. It has consistently resisted Islamic radicalization.

History of Christianity in Niger

Christians attempted to reach Niger with the gospel on two occasions, but failed to make a lasting impact. In the seventh century, Berber Christians “migrated south after being driven from North Africa by emerging Islam. Isolated from other Christians, the faith gradually weakened.”³ Later on, during the nineteenth century, Samuel Crowther, the first African Bible translator for his own people⁴, the Yorubas, became the head of “The Niger Mission.” The mission declined after Crowther's death and was discontinued for lack of visionary leadership.

Following the First World War, American missionary efforts were again invested in the Sahel region. **SIM** (formerly Sudan Inland Mission and now Serving In Mission) started to work in northeast Niger, and churches were planted. The **Evangelical Baptist Mission** started at approximately the same time and developed quite significantly in the southwestern part of country. Finally, during that same period, the Catholic Church turned its attention to Niger, specifically to the major cities where it gathered mainly expatriate African Christians. Further mission groups and parachurch organizations came in later in the twentieth century.

A noteworthy event was the creation of the Eglise Evangélique de la République du Niger (EERN), the name given to the churches established by SIM in Niger. A couple of church groups split off from the EERN and formed their own church association. Meanwhile, the Alliance des Missions et Eglises Evangéliques au Niger (AMEEN) was started in 1998 “to create a greater sense of community and collaboration amongst the growing number of evangelical mission and church associations.” This association brings together all the evangelical churches in Niger, and its leadership is renewed every few years. By seeking to promote a sense of unity in the Nigérien Church, the AMEEN offers churches and church leaders several opportunities for training and development.

The Christian Church in Niger Today

Today, the Christian Church in Niger has about fifty thousand members with an annual growth rate of 5.4%.⁵ It offers about five hundred churches and preaching points around the country.⁶

Recent conversations with long-term missionaries⁹ have uncovered that church leadership training has been minimal in the country. This has often been due to misunderstandings among Nigérien leaders about

Christian leadership, as well as their strong commitment to keeping power in one's own hands. Church leadership has too often been assimilated with the traditional chieftaincy model of leadership. Furthermore, struggles among leaders within the evangelical Church body, and consequent denominational splits, seem to have stemmed significantly a concerted and visionary effort toward evangelism and church planting.

These internal leadership struggles have unfortunately prevented the Church from making a significant impact on its surrounding Islamic community (estimated to be between eighty and ninety-nine percent of the total population of Niger). Furthermore, constant pressures from the Islamic communities and from Islamic family members make for a very challenging environment for Christians, who often feel emotionally and spiritually drained by these unceasing pressures.

We have briefly looked at the historical background that influences church life in Niger. History has undoubtedly influenced the worldviews Nigérien Christians have adopted. In [part two](#) of this article will attempt to identify and characterize these worldviews.

Endnotes

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3. Schaaf, Ype. 2000. *L'Histoire et le Rôle de la Bible en Afrique*. Lavigny (Suisse): Editions Groupes Missionnaires, 59.
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5. Johnstone, Patrick and Jason Mandryk. 2001. *Operation World*. Carlisle, Cumbria, U.K.: Paternoster Publishing, 485.
6. Evans, Gordon. 2003. "History of the Church in Niger." unpublished.

Martine Audeoud has served for over twenty-five years in Africa and Haiti. She has helped coordinate urban consultations in Abidjan and Haiti and is presently in Niamey (Niger) with her family. Beside her regular teaching job at an American school, she teaches and serves as an administrative consultant at the École Supérieure Privée de Théologie in Niamey. Her vision is to empower francophone African church leaders with contextualized tools that will empower them to respond effectively and creatively to the challenges of the twenty-first century urban francophone African context.

[Niamey—What Is Its Context for Christian Service? Part Two](#)

By Martine Audeoud

The purpose of this two-part article is to study the various elements that influenced the context for Christian service in Niger and more specifically in Niamey, its capital city. In [part one](#), we looked at the historical context—namely, the origin of the dichotomy of the presence of Muslims and Christians in this part of West Africa. Here, we discover some of the characteristics specific to the worldviews prevalent in Niger, and more specifically, in Niamey. We also examine the different elements that can affect Christian service in Niamey.

Worldviews

A superimposition of various worldviews is prevalent in Niger, due to both past and present influences. These worldviews greatly affect the context in which church leaders operate. In order to better understand these worldviews, we will look at their characteristic stories, at their fundamental symbols, at their associated habitual behaviors, and at how they answer the deepest questions of life.

The Traditional African Context

Historically, African people and tribes were fairly self-sufficient and lived in isolation from each other. Each people group's history and values were passed from one generation to the next through the stories of their elders. The village played, and continues to play, a role similar to that of the family unit in the Western world. Extended family members and the village community are strongly bound to each other and will generally support each other in times of need. Finally, African villages are marked by extraordinary hospitality, regardless of their visitors' home countries or regions.

The two largest people groups in Niamey, the Yoruba and the Zarma, each have their traditional stories of a great ancient past, telling of battles between groups under control of the Malian empire. The cola nut was their symbol of both commercial and covenantal transactions. The size of a man's herd of cattle indicated his wealth. Time was non-essential. The position of the sun or the length of a shadow told the time of day. People observed nature very closely and could thus tell when it was time to take the cattle for a month or more to find water and grazing land.

Social rituals varied from tribe to tribe, but some of their values remained constant, such as utmost respect for elders or a chief who may also be the spiritual leader of the community. People lived with the continual awareness of omnipresent spirits, with no dichotomy between the material and the spiritual worlds. The physical and spiritual aspects of their lives were completely integrated, and nature was a dynamic part of their spiritual world. Their lives were in the hands of their gods (i.e., the forces of nature that controlled their lives). Nowadays, this is still very much the case, especially in Nigérien villages, where spiritual life is inseparable from physical and emotional life.

Something else to note is that children are seen as one's only security for the future. Therefore, families tend to have many children, which leads to other challenges when these families move to the city. The typical African framework of thought is geared toward the present, the challenge of daily survival, leaving little room for planning for the future.

The Islamic Context

Coming from the north of Africa in the eleventh century, first to the rich Sahelian traders, and later to the poorer sections of the population, Islam offers the security of a strong, tight community and a life governed by rituals. The main stories passed on from generation to generation are those of Mohamed's life and struggles, and of some of the major prophets mentioned in the Qu'ran.

The prayer mat and the beads (*collier*) are symbols of Islamic faith, as is the minaret from which the prayer call cries forth five times daily. Modesty has led women to cover their bodies as much as possible, as well as to veil themselves, and in some reformed Islamic circles, even hide their faces. The level of modesty varies significantly around Niger and is generally more prevalent in the cities. In some rural areas more traditional clothes are worn, often leaving the breasts exposed. In contrast to this, strict Muslim women in the city of Abalak, for instance, wrap themselves in large plastic mats when they walk down the street to prevent men from seeing even the form of their bodies!

Life in Islamic communities is enhanced by shared acts of worship that set the pace of the day and draw together Muslims from various backgrounds. Young boys are trained in the Islamic faith in Qu'ranic

schools where they, under the supervision of an imam, learn the basics of their faith and memorize large sections of the Qu'ran. Girls' education in their faith is minimal, although some groups of women do study the Qu'ran.

In Muslim thinking, God is in control of everything and one can do very little to change his or her circumstances. "En sh'Allah" ("if it is God's will") is a common phrase that can be heard throughout the day. Submission to God's will, or that of supernatural forces, is therefore part of the typical Nigérien's response to the major questions in life. Therefore, as David Shenk explains, "Islam is the faith for the oppressed, the people at the margins, in contrast to the Western Christian movement that has become the faith of the oppressors."¹

The Nigérien people have adopted somewhat of a superimposition of both their animistic and Islamic worldviews. On the outside, Nigérien life is dictated by calls to prayer and food-related rituals. Alongside these practices, the spiritual world is very much present to the Nigérien person who will be aware of both malevolent and positive spirits affecting his or her life through various events like sicknesses, unplanned blessings, and accidents. This has made the Nigérien people fairly subdued, submitted to the fate of the spirits and to the all-mighty power of God.

The Christian Context

Christianity and missions have influenced the lives and worldview of the Nigérien people in the past century as we have already seen in the historical section. Most of this influence can be noticed in cities where Christian missions have concentrated their efforts. The Christian Nigérien worldview has been heavily influenced by missionaries serving in Niger.

Christian missionaries have told the stories of Christ and salvation. In more recent years, there has been an emphasis on telling the Old Testament stories, which are not offensive to Muslims, as a means to first establish the need for salvation before presenting the Savior. In order to better "connect" with people's lives, many missions have developed humanitarian projects, such as the construction of wells, medical facilities, and agricultural projects. Education has not always been at the top of their list of priorities. However, Catholic missions have developed a fairly extensive network of schools.

Missionaries have frequently imported a great deal of their Western lifestyle, which they have taught (either formally or informally) to Nigérien Christians. Having church buildings, singing Western hymns, and eating three meals a day at specific times, for instance, have become part of the habitual rituals of Nigérien Christians. Furthermore, missionaries made decisions on their own regarding their faith communities, without developing dialogue and partnerships with Nigérien believers. The missionaries were in charge.

Unfortunately, expatriate missionaries have generally not acknowledged the omnipresence of the spirit world in the traditional Nigérien worldview. Consequently, although Christianity has influenced people toward certain values like honesty and accountability, it has failed to integrate its spiritual worldview into a rational and reasonable interpretation of faith. This lack of a holistic approach to the Christian faith has engendered a superimposition of the Christian worldview over the traditional and/or Islamic one. Thus there is confusion and misunderstanding as to how a genuine commitment to Christ is to be integrated holistically in daily life. Christianity therefore has had little impact on the transformation of communities, except perhaps in small towns and cities where missionary influence is more evident (including a change to a more Western lifestyle, as Barbara Cooper² has vividly pointed out in the introduction of her text).

The Colonial Context

Niger became a French colony in the early 1920s and was administered, along with Burkina Faso, through

the French regional Governor in Dakar. Although World War II did not greatly affect Niger, the colonial era in general left its mark and influenced the way the country is administered. Stories of slave traders or of dictatorial local governors are still in the minds of many.

The colonial influence has been felt especially in cities which foreign governors organized according to Western models. Identification cards were introduced, as well as drivers and commercial licenses, and a fairly extensive educational system. In government offices, it is not unusual to hear the pounding of the old-fashioned typewriter, a symbol of the francophone bureaucracy that characterizes administrative relationships, in which governmental positions may often overlap with traditional leadership positions. Thus, for example, a local chief may also be the local administrator or governor who settles administrative issues.

The colonial worldview taught Nigérien people that they have very little value in themselves, are not capable of making wise decisions on their own, and are only valuable to be sold as slaves. It taught them that the white person has authority, power, intelligence, and resources. This has affected the way Nigérien people look at themselves. Their sense of self-worth is fairly low. Coupled with Islamic fatalism, people hold little hope for their future.

The French dichotomy between spiritual and physical life has influenced the relationship between the government and religious entities. Although the government wants its population to be educated, it has also been fairly reluctant to authorize missions, either Catholic or Protestant, to set up extensive educational institutions. But the lack of spiritual emphasis of the French colonial worldview has also enabled Niger to resist pressure to become an Islamic state.

The Urban Context

Niger is primarily a rural country, but substantial recent migrations to major cities have changed this demographic, especially in Niamey, the capital city. With its 863,000 inhabitants, Niamey is located on the banks of the wide Niger River. Filled with water during the rainy season, but running low much of the year, the river is Niamey's primary water source. It is the *raison d'être* for the city, which was an important commercial center during the Songhai/Malian Empire of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

There are several stories about the origins of Niamey, two of which will be mentioned here. In one of them, a Maouri (one of the local tribes), new to the region, was authorized to build his hut at the place where his mother used to fetch water, i.e., at *Nia* ("mother") *Mé* ("access"). Others are convinced that the newcomer established his camp under a *Nia* ("tree"), close to the river. These linguistic terms have since evolved into the name *Niamey*. This story emphasizes how language was used to locate places and thus give deeper meaning to them. Obtaining water is perhaps the most important task for people in the Sahel.

Another story goes this way: A long time ago, Yédji Kouri of Sargan, accompanied by his seven slaves, came to settle his camp in the area of the present *sous-préfecture*. He was authorized by the inhabitants of Goudel (a nearby village) to cultivate the surrounding area. In directing his slaves to clear the fields, he said to them, "*Oua niamma né, oua niamma né!*" ("Go over here, go over there!"). According to tradition, the area was called "*Niamma*," and then *Niamey*. This second story gives a glimpse into the role of slavery in the agricultural tradition in the area.

Under French domination, it wasn't until 1926 that the village of Niamey became the capital of the Niger territory. In 1931, it had only 1,730 inhabitants, compared to 30,000 in 1959 before independence. Little by little the surrounding villages were incorporated into the city as its administrative role developed.

People of several different ethnic groups call Niamey home. The Hausa have traditionally been involved in commerce and trade as part of a larger ethnic tradition throughout West Africa. The Zarma came from the former Songhai/Malian Empire and have been living in the city for centuries. It is primarily Zarma who were trained by French colonists for governmental and bureaucratic positions. With the expansion of the Sahara Desert and subsequent diminishing of their herds, the traditionally nomadic Tuareg and Fulani peoples are moving to the city in search of subsistence. With the increase in urban migration, Niamey is presently welcoming more people than its infrastructures and economic structures can handle.

The only bridge crossing the Niger River and leading south and west to other West-African countries has become the symbol of the city's connectivity with the wider West-African and more modern culture. The bridge is becoming more and more crowded as camels, donkeys, and cattle (as well as an increasing number of cars, trucks, and buses) move back and forth between the city center and neighborhoods to the south. Interactions with countries to the south (especially Benin and Togo) are on the increase, as are attempts to modernize life in the city.

Niamey boasts a great variety of mosques, ranging from small grass structures to the impressive Grand Mosque financed by the government of Libya. No community is without a mosque. These constant reminders of the omnipresence of Islam are reinforced by the prayer calls beginning before sunrise each morning, and ending around 8 p.m. Gathering mostly men, these prayers seem to dictate the pace of city life. Other symbolic reminders of Islam's presence are the prayer beads that the men often carry with them as they go about their daily business or sit and drink Arab tea while swapping stories with their friends.

Tuareg men are easily recognized by their famous cotton turbans, a length of which can cover their faces as protection from the sun or biting, windswept sand. Most Nigérien women, whether Christian or Muslim, wear light, colorful veils. These, like the men's turbans, were traditionally worn to block the sun and the sand. However, Muslims have adopted the veil, giving it additional meaning as a symbol of modesty. Reformist groups have traded the colorful veils for black ones, completely covering the head, leaving only an opening for the eyes.

The homes of wealthier people are alongside the river gardens, while poorer people generally live further away and need to cover some distance in order to reach local markets. Adobe mud houses, and clay or grass huts with thatched roofs, are frequently seen beside modern houses of brick and cement. The city's poor struggle for survival, many by trying to set up micro-enterprises, but always hoping for a better job.

The streets are crowded with pedestrians, including itinerant businessmen carrying their wares on their heads. Women sit on small stools outside their houses, selling vegetables, grain, or other low-cost staples. Tin shacks are transformed into "shops" which house more extensive goods, ranging from plastic containers to various food items. More permanent small stores will offer electrical supplies or hairdressing services. Relationships are priority, and people stop and talk, paying little attention to motorbikes and cars buzzing past.

Younger children walk around, often without supervision, but seem to know where they are going. Cattle, goats, and sheep share the public space with people, cars, and trucks, giving the city a rural feel. Niamey's pace is fairly slow compared to that of other African capitals. It completely shuts down for a siesta break between 12:30 and 4:00 p.m., due to the heat. It is somewhat peaceful and subdued atmosphere makes it an enjoyable place to live, when the electricity and water are not cut off!

When people move to the city, family communities loosen up, as do their traditions. Families are less tightly knit and people are more prone to taking on the Western habits they see around them. They are

also influenced by television. Although most people do not own a television, those who do share them with the neighborhood. People spend their evenings outside, gathered around a community television with their neighbors. The traditional structures set up to deal with difficulties in the village are weakened by the modernizing influences of the city. However, city dwellers quickly develop their own networks, which include traditional spiritual leaders next to the Islamic ones.

The Islamic presence in Niamey formally gives the city its answer to life's big questions: "Allah's will" publicly accounts for everything that happens, whether positive or negative. But many city dwellers have not forgotten their animistic roots and often go in secret to visit the traditional *fetishist*, seeking quicker and more effective answers to their problems and questions. It is interesting to note that some of the Muslim leaders are also recognized to have spiritual powers through the use of fetishes, or special potions they prepare. Another example of this superimposition of the traditional and Muslim worldviews is the amulets frequently worn by Muslim babies, believed to protect them from harm.

Modernity has come into the city through foreign communities, both African and non-African. A handful of grocery stores run by the Lebanese community provide the city with Western-style food and goods imported from elsewhere in Africa, as well as the United Arab Emirates, and Europe. Many of the younger generation have adopted Western-style clothing and it is not unusual to see a teenage boy walking with his cap and Walkman. However, in times of trouble, young people will readily return to their traditional beliefs and resources.

As seen above, Christianity does not seem to have had a major impact on the city of Niamey. However, the number of churches in the city is growing, as is people's exposure to Christianity. A major event that raised a lot of questions in people's minds early in 2007 was a revival and healing campaign organized by the American evangelist Richard Roberts. The campaign was heavily promoted on local media and supported by some well-known government officials. The event shook both Muslim and Christian communities out of their lethargy and opened people's eyes to other spiritual perspectives, giving churches opportunities for follow up and further dialog. Another outcome of the campaign is that of showing Niamey that the Christian faith is allowed to be practiced in this country. It is now seen by many as a viable option that answers the big questions about life and eternity.

The Worldviews I Have Attempted to Influence

The first set of worldviews and assumptions this study is attempting to correct is regarding the concept of leadership. According to traditional and colonial worldviews, for many Nigériens, being in a position of leadership means to be in power, to have undisputed authority over a certain group of people, and to be wealthy. A leader remains a leader for life and does not seem to be held accountable by anyone.

Therefore, a traditional leader always strives to guard his (because a leader is generally a male) area and territory of leadership and authority. His focus is mainly on himself and on his extended family, who usually benefit significantly from his leadership position and try to take advantage of it as much as possible. Therefore, I feel that it is of utmost importance that Christian leaders understand the biblical principles and values that sustain a leadership position. Christian leadership is not undertaken because of natural human values. Christian leadership is given by God, often recognized through the Christian community, to serve and transform communities, to seek to give instead of seeking to take, without favoring certain groups of people because of their family or ethnic affiliations. The focus of Christian leadership needs to shift from self to Christ.

Closely related to the previous statements is the observation that church leadership training is a matter that may be seen as important to missionary agencies, but not to national churches. This belief may result from the colonial mindset that the Nigérien people have observed and lived with for decades. They have

seen the French government make decisions as to whom to send for further education and leadership training while providing for the needed funding and opportunities.

The Nigérien Church has transposed this worldview to their situation. Mission agencies have been identified with colonial powers. They are the decision makers and funding providers. If they want to train church leaders, they need to make those decisions and provide the means and the funding accordingly. This is well documented in Cooper's text, in which she shows that church elders were chosen by missionaries unilaterally without seeking input from congregations or setting up a collaborative decision-making process regarding the choice of elders.

Two other aspects of current Nigérien worldviews also need to be addressed. Both are consequences of the prevalent traditional or Islamic worldviews, and both are related to powerlessness in leadership.

The first one assumes that being a Christian means being powerless. Somehow, because of the overwhelming influence of Islam, Christians feel outnumbered and therefore powerless. The fact that numbers are low means that power is negligible. However, this is not a biblical concept. Throughout scripture we see that God generally does not operate with big numbers. On the contrary, he tends to operate with small numbers in order for men and women to bring glory to him instead of drawing glory for themselves.

The second assumption regarding powerlessness in the church concerns women. Many Nigérien Christians believe that women have no role or responsibility in the leadership of the Church, nor are they expected to have such roles. Women do much of the physical work to sustain the life of the family, but are generally not consulted in decision-making processes.

Furthermore, they are generally banned from church leadership positions, and will hardly ever be called upon to be a church elder, to preach, or to contribute to church decisions. This seems to be a consequence of prevailing traditional and Muslim worldviews. But this thinking, until recently, has also been strongly supported by the conservative Christian views of SIM missionaries. On the other hand, Christian women have been like the cement that has held believers together, maintaining relationships in spite of the various splits within the SIM churches. Even nowadays, women from various and conflicting church denominations come together for annual gatherings.

We have thus briefly reviewed the various worldviews that influence Nigérien Christians. Some statistical data will now provide a more formal picture of the population in Niger.

Statistical Data

According to the National Institute of Statistics in Niger³ there are about 13.5 million people in the country, about half of whom are female. Almost half of the total population is aged 14 and under. The annual population growth rate is estimated at 3.3%, with a birthrate of 46.1 per 1,000. Niamey is estimated to have 863,000 inhabitants. Beside Niamey, there are a handful of cities and towns, mostly in the southern part of the country as the north is desert.

According to various online publications, between eighty and ninety-nine percent of Niger's population is Muslim. No recent census gives more accurate data. This indicates a heavily Islamized country. However, the present government wants to maintain a free secular state, and has so far resisted pressures from Islamic reformist groups who are striving for an Islamic republic.

As far as church growth is concerned in Niamey, there was only one church in the 1970s. Today, there are about fifty Christian churches in the city. According to *Operation World*,⁴ there were about three hundred

evangelical churches in the country in 2001—a number which has likely since climbed to about five hundred. The annual growth rate for Muslims is 3.9% versus 5.4% for Christians. The annual growth of Protestants (i.e., evangelicals) seems to average 12%. This shows that Christianity, and more specifically the evangelical churches, has grown significantly lately and is on the rise.

The literacy rate is also interesting to take into consideration for this study as it will give some hints about how education in general and Christian education more specifically is approached by the population. Only about 29% of people aged 15 and over can read or write. About 43% of males are literate, compared to only 15% of females. This shows that females are considered at a lower level than males, with fewer privileges and less access to education. This data explains some of the discrepancies noted above, and heavily influences the approaches and methods for church leadership training.

Girls are often discouraged from pursuing an education beyond primary school, if they are sent to school at all (44% of girls went to school in 2005-2006). Males dominate in secondary and higher education. Among the Tuareg families, many have not sent their children to school, fearing schools as “[sources of government control and cultural change](#).” In lower socio-economic groups, children are often not sent to school for lack of financial means or because they are needed to help supplement family income.

Therefore, one can understand how narrow the pool of potential trained church leaders can be. On the one hand, this data could trigger some church-wide awareness campaign that could, among other things, promote female literacy and foster their access to leadership. Some SIM missionaries have caught this vision, but primarily to provide their young men with Christian wives.⁵ A broader vision for the education of girls would definitely bring a more dynamic atmosphere into the Church. On the other hand, Catholic missions seem to have had a broader vision for the education of children and have set up several schools where many, if not most, of today’s top government officials have been educated.

We have seen the historical background of Niger, which has just been rated by the United Nations Development Programme as the third poorest country in the world. We have also identified the worldviews that have influenced its people as well as its religious make-up. We have looked at some statistical data about Niger that will influence and explain approaches to church leadership training.

Conclusion

Although the culture of this country and its background seem to represent a huge challenge for any leader seeking to be an agent of transformation for his or her community, we can note that there is also a huge potential and vast need for community transformation. The possibilities are endless, but the workers are few. This is why this country, and more specifically its capital city, offer an ideal situation for God to deploy his glory in a complex poverty context with a very limited number of workers. Who, then, is ready to respond to this challenge while leaning on God’s powerful arm?

Endnotes

1. 2003. *Journeys of the Muslim Nation and the Christian Church*. Waterloo, Ontario: Herald Press, 231.
2. 2006. *Evangelical Christians in the Muslim Sahel*. Bloomington, Indiana, USA: Indiana University Press.
3. 2007. *Le Niger en Chiffres—Edition 2007*. Niamey, Niger: Institut National de la Statistique.
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5. See Cooper, 203, 269-271.

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LAUSANNE REPORTS

And the Walls Came Tumbling...

By Elke Werner

Time is running. It feels as if it was just yesterday that Germany was reunited as a country. But as of this year, 2009, it is already twenty years ago that the momentous event took place: the wall came down.

For more than forty years our country had been divided into West and East—the Federal Republic of Germany in the West, where I grew up, on the one side of the wall, and the German Democratic Republic, a socialist country with strong links to the Soviet Union, on the other. Berlin, the former capital, was divided as well, and a wall throughout the city separated the two parts. Countless people, who tried to flee to the West, lost their lives at this terrible dividing wall.

It was the best protected border in human history. It was also twenty years ago, in late summer of 1989, that I came as a participant with the German delegation to the **second Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization in Manila**. At that time, I was still undergoing chemotherapy treatment. In October 1988, the doctors had detected Morbus Hodgkin, a cancer of the lymph system. It was in its last stage and the doctors told my husband that I would live until Christmas, but that they could not guarantee I would make it to Easter. With this understanding I started the process of chemotherapy; God began to heal me slowly, but completely. After one year, I was in complete remission and the cancer has never re-occurred.

Seeing God's Work through Women

In the middle of this very hard year of treatment I went to Manila. I did not really know what to expect, but what I experienced there revolutionized my life and ministry. I still remember the sessions vividly: the worship, testimonies, videos, and challenges presented before us. What struck me most was the involvement of women in every part of the program. The MCs at the plenary sessions was a couple, among the main speakers there was a good number of women, and the Lord's Supper celebration was led by men and women. It was as if the wall of separation between men and women in the Church had finally come down.

I was encouraged, inspired, and thrilled to see that it was possible to share leadership, ministry, responsibility, gifts, and burdens. When my husband, Roland, and I came home, he was asked to be the MC at the German follow-up Lausanne II follow-up congress in Stuttgart. Roland and I led together.

Breaking Down the Walls, Opening Up the Dialogue

In church and mission it often seems as if men and women are working in two separate worlds. Many men do not realize how much women contribute to world evangelism; how women hold minister in the most difficult areas of the world; and how women reach and teach children, other women, and if allowed, men. In church history we see again and again that women were leaders during revivals in the Church.

But when structures, power-plays, and institutions came into place, oftentimes women were pushed back into their small corner of women's work or Sunday school. It is needless to say that these ARE very important areas of ministry and very effective ones as well.

Now that I am the senior associate for women with Lausanne, I am excited to travel and meet wonderful women around the world—strong women who serve the Lord with all their heart, who use their spiritual gifts wisely, and who invest their lives to reach others for Christ.

At the [Lausanne 2004 Forum for World Evangelization in Pattaya, Thailand](#), I happened to sit next to an Indian lady. She told me that her back was hurting. When I asked her what had happened, I expected a story about an accident. She smiled and said, “Last Sunday I baptized about two hundred people and I stood in the river too long!”

For Cape Town 2010 the leadership of Lausanne has decided to embrace what women are doing for the kingdom. We want to break down the walls that separate men and women from working together. We want to break down the walls that hinder women from using their full potential. We want to encourage the whole Church, meaning men and women, to bring the whole gospel to the whole world. That is why we ask all participating countries to send at least thirty-five percent of women in their delegations. That is also why we want to have women as speakers and share in the programme.

My prayer is that in Cape Town we will meet these wonderful women. We will rejoice together, praising our Lord, who came to reconcile the world with himself. In him there is neither male nor female; in him we are truly one!

(This article, in longer form, appeared as a [blog](#) for Cape Town 2010.)

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Engaging in the Digital Age: Harnessing Its Power for Good

By Sandra S. K. Lee

Communication is the very heart of the gospel and evangelism. Just as Christ's incarnation and work on earth was and continues to be God's ultimate communication of his heart to love and redeem his people, the communication of God's heart for people continues today through evangelism.

Over the centuries, the message has not changed; however, the means to communicate and deliver the message has changed. Although the communication of the gospel essentially takes place from one person to another through words and signs, over the last century, with the radical evolution of technology, the means by which this communication takes place *has* changed and multiplied exponentially.

We are now well in the throes of the digital age and the means by which to communicate to a mass audience at a mere blink of an eye continues to multiply. Not only can we communicate via print media, telephone, radio, and television, but through email, Gmail, Hotmail, and Redmail. We can follow updates from news sources, corporations, governments, and individuals through SMS, RSS, Twitter, Facebook, MySpace, as well as be endlessly entertained through CDs, DVDs, mp3s, and YouTube. Communication has become faster and more interactive than ever.

Utilizing and Adapting to Emerging Technologies

The challenge in evangelism now lies in how we can best utilize these different mediums effectively. Historically, the missionary movement has been quick to utilize and adapt emerging technologies (such as print materials, films, and mp3 players) to communicate the gospel. Currently, however, some traditionally-minded churches and mission organizations seem to approach emergent digital technologies with fear or reluctance. As a result, they often lag behind the creative work of businesses and people who have embraced these new mediums, seizing the opportunities to communicate to new audiences and to grow in innovative directions.

We must learn from our brothers and sisters around the world, particularly those from Pentecostal and Charismatic backgrounds, who are effectively harnessing the power of these new technologies, as well as from mission organizations who have already been creatively integrating the Internet in their evangelism and ministry. From counseling services, advocacy, interactive engagement, sharing, and witnessing, as well as resources for preaching and missions, to networking, discussion boards for new ideas, and low-cost audio and video broadcasting, the possibilities are endless!

Changing the Dynamic of Evangelism

Not only have these new technologies changed the methods by which we communicate and collaborate, they have also changed the dynamic of evangelism in the digital medium. It has given individuals the opportunity to take the initiative upon themselves to explore the message of the gospel rather than first waiting for the gospel to be shared. This necessitates a more individual approach to evangelism that is interactive, dynamic, and “user-based.”

No longer can we rely upon church websites with church service location and times to be effective. Instead, we need to actively seek to use current research on how to make websites more effective for churches to reach out to the community around them. What must be done to present the gospel effectively online so that non-Christian readers eagerly and effectively engage with the message? A good resource to help us do a better job is [Internet Evangelism Day](#) and its [blog](#).

One such medium in which individuals take the initiative in communication and enter into dynamic interactive dialogue is through Twitter. Twitter is one of the fastest growing communities on the web with a growth rate of over one thousand percent in the twelve months leading up to February 2009. Interestingly enough, the largest group of users are not under age 18, but among 35 to 49-year olds.

Companies are using Twitter, realizing that conversation is both powerful and persuasive; currently, Twitter is where the conversation is taking place. But as Kaila Colbin, a social marketing agent in New Zealand, remarked, interactive tools such as Twitter are effective only if you are prepared to invest in relationships: “A Twitter presence requires constant two-way communication to be effective. It also requires a level of transparency and selflessness that most companies aren’t used to employing in their marketing efforts. You can’t pretend to be perfect, and you can’t talk only about yourself.... Would you like to be the one having that conversation with your customers, or would you rather your competition do it?”

Establishing Relationship

Missionaries have long understood that personal relationships are the key to winning hearts and minds, as people are less likely to listen to an unrelated stranger than to a friend. Indeed, establishing relationships are essential to effective communication, whether it is face-to-face, or on Skype, videochat, email, or Facebook.

Although face-to-face communication is most effective for evangelism as it allows participants to read nonverbal cues and vocal tones, even with the possibilities of being misunderstood, email, IM (real-time chatting), blogging, or Facebook networking are powerful tools for evangelism as they are based upon establishing relationships.

Dave Bennett, U.K. national director of [Bridge Builders](#) (formerly Pocket Testament League) found in his study of lasting adult conversions that conversion took a “long time,” with an average of about two years. The biggest factor by far was ongoing relationships with Christians, seeing faith modeled in their lives. This far exceeded other factors such as reading books, tracts, the Bible, or watching videos. This highlights the importance of any digital evangelism to ultimately aim toward drawing people into relationship, rather than focusing solely on instantaneous gospel presentations.

Moving Forward in the Digital Age

As exciting as the possibilities are with digital media, we must also be mindful of its limitations, especially when we consider world evangelism, and that access to electronic media is limited. We must remember that overall, developed countries have the highest percentages of Internet users, and that seven of the ten countries with the lowest percentages of Internet users also have the lowest GDPs, lowest adult literacy rates, lowest school enrollments, and the highest levels of corruption. We must work harder in creatively utilizing these powerful tools of communication to reach the least of these with the life-changing message of the gospel.

It is in the spirit of cooperation and communication—the Spirit of Lausanne—that we must engage with the challenges of reaching all peoples with the powerful tools of the digital age. How must we increase creativity, cooperation, and communication for this global task?

It is my hope and prayer that as we examine and work toward finding solutions to the challenges of digital evangelism that we would be inspired and re-energized to work boldly and innovatively in new and unfamiliar territories and means to bring the good news to all.

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