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

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PUBLISHER'S MEMO

Goodbye for Now...But Stay Tuned

By Lon Allison

Dear Readers,

I am somewhat saddened to inform you that this will be the last official issue of Lausanne World Pulse (LWP). This summer, the international Lausanne Movement leadership and our team from the Billy Graham Center (BGC) at Wheaton College realized we have different goals for ongoing communications. Thus, we mutually and amiably agreed to conclude LWP at the end of 2011. But, please keep reading!

The Lausanne Movement has some good plans for online content heading into the future that all LWP readers should consider. Please continue to visit their website.

We at the BGC continue to consider our next steps. Having been very pleased with LWP over the past six years, we hope to continue offering a similar format in the future. With this as our goal, we are currently in dialog with other Christian organizations about the possibility of publishing something similar to LWP.

We give thanks to God that for the last six years we've been able to offer you inspiration, information, and instruction in global evangelism and missions. Each issue has been received by more than six thousand readers from over one hundred nations. More than one-third of our authors have been from the Majority World. I've learned a lot from these contributors and hope you have as well. I'm also very grateful to the Lausanne Movement for partnering with us in this project. This has been a model of two organizations working closely together to do what neither could have done as effectively alone.

After 1 January 2012 we will write again to let you know what God is leading us to do. Until then, remember you can access all the past issues through the website. There is tremendous content there that has been and continues to remain free to you. You are also welcome to contact us at info@lausanneworldpulse.com. We would love to hear from you and any ideas you have regarding the future of this type of publication.

Until then, enjoy this final issue of LWP, which is focused on "Early Church Models of Evangelism and Mission." Our authors take you deep into the importance of prayer, fellowship, scripture, and evangelism as lived out by the early Church.

Happy Christmas to all! May the wonder of the life, death, resurrection of Jesus Christ and the coming of the Holy Spirit enlarge your souls in mysterious and wondrous ways.

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NEWS BRIEFS

AROUND THE WORLD: Major Demographic Shift Underway in Christianity

Scholars claim the biggest change in the history of Christianity is underway amid the religion's move to Africa, Latin America, and Asia. "The story of Christianity as a worldwide faith is being written before our eyes," declared Dana Robert of Boston University School of Theology, as she addressed a group of world church leaders at the Global Christian Forum (GCF) in Indonesia. The gathering brought together leaders from major church traditions, theological perspectives, and world communions. According to Peter Crossing of the Center for the Study of Global Christianity, in 1910 about sixty-six percent of the world's Christians lived in Europe; a century later it was only twenty-six percent. He said the overall percentage of Christians had remained fairly constant over the last century, but there had been a dramatic change in the center of gravity of global Christianity. The global reconfiguration raises critical questions for all churches, said Robert. "Contemporary Christians are focusing on mission for multiple purposes--both to recover tradition and to recover from tradition." (Ecumenical News International)

AROUND THE WORLD: e3Resources Challenges Christians to Share the Gospel

To commemorate twelve years of EvangeCube, between now and 12 December 2012 e3 Resources is challenging one million Christians to use EvangeCube and share the gospel with one new person each month for twelve months—with the goal of twelve million gospel presentations. Why twelve? It represents perfection. It is the product of three (which represents what is perfectly divine and a heavenly number) and four (which represents the earth, what is material and organic). The number twelve also has prominent usages throughout the Bible—tribes of Israel, judges, gates, disciples, etc. Beginning with the creation of EvangeCube in 2000, e3 Resources now provides an extensive line of tools and resources used in over seventy-five countries. (e3resources)

HORN OF AFRICA: Rains Hindering Relief to Millions

More than thirteen million people are currently threatened by the effects of drought in the Horn of Africa. The drought has driven up food prices and weakened livestock, thus increasing malnutrition, hunger, and famine. According to Jeff Palmer of Baptist Global Response, "The good news is that rains have started in a number of those areas. But in a drought place where we're doing food dispersal, one of the things that we're trying to get around now is the rains, [which are] hindering getting the food in." The long-term cycles of severe hunger have been sharpened by decades of failed crops, economic crises, and climatic changes. As a result, the people are suffering through the worst drought since 1951. (Mission Network News)

KAZAKHSTAN: New Anti-Religion Laws

The government of Kazakhstan enacted two new laws, further restricting freedom of religion. All registered churches must now re-register with the government, and only churches meeting new criteria will be registered. Forum 18 News reports that the first law imposes a complex registration system, bans unregistered religious activity, enforces greater religious censorship, and requires both central and local government approval to build or open new places of worship. Any current church that does not re-register faces court liquidation. The second law amends nine existing laws and legal provisions. (Voice of the Martyrs)

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA: Two Major Mission Associations Merge

In October 2011 the memberships of CrossGlobal Link and The Mission Exchange agreed to merge, forming a body representative of 35,000 evangelical missionaries deployed in every country by more than 190 agencies and churches. "The merger will create better synergy, more effective use of resources, and eliminate needless competition and duplication of programs, products, and services," said Marv Newell, executive director of CrossGlobal Link. "We must have a united voice to honor God as we move forward in this ever-changing world." The goal is to unveil the new name and brand at a special celebration in Salem, Massachusetts, where, two hundred years ago, the first North American missionaries were commissioned for overseas service by an organized mission society. (The Mission Exchange)

URUGUAY: RTM Uruguay Celebrates Thirty Years

On 1 October 2011, TWR's Uruguayan partner, Radio Trans Mundial (RTM), celebrated thirty years on the air. "During these years, I have learned many lessons about God's faithfulness and provision. From my perspective this has been an amazing school for our faith," said Esteban Larrosa, RTM Uruguay's director. Many people have been saved, and others receive their daily spiritual food to grow in their faith in Christ as a result of RTM. (TWR)

THEMED ARTICLES: Early Church Models of Evangelism and Missions

Evangelism and the Early Church

By Jerry Root

There has been no perfect period in church history. The first-century Church must not be over-idealized. According to theologian Walter Elwell, in the New Testament epistles alone, the Church had to be corrected some 150 times.¹ We must always be careful to avoid projections and over-idealizations of any time or place.

Nevertheless, the early Church still has much to say to us today, and it is wise to be attentive to its lessons. There are two mistakes that can be made about traditions of the past: (1) to reject the past altogether as archaic and irrelevant and move on to questions of the present and (2) to be dominated by the past, letting the calcifying conventions of days gone by tyrannize healthy communal development.

G. K. Chesterton says a proper understanding of the past is to make some accommodation so its voice might still be heard. Every time a given age sits at the table to consider an event or challenge, it should always give a seat to the voice of the past. It is, according to Chesterton, democracy extended through time.²

A true grasp of tradition gives a vote to the dead. This way, the wisdom of the past is not neglected and the challenges of the day benefit by such wisdom while also being infused with fresh ideas. Bringing this kind of balance into the discussion, we must consider:

- Does the early Church contribute anything to today's Church relative to its mission in the world?
- What are the ways Christians in the past shared their faith in Christ, and can that positively affect the ways Christians share Christ with others today?

When Jesus gathered his disciples to himself, he used one of two methods.

1. **Contact evangelism.** Jesus simply came to some and called them to follow. One example of this is Matthew. There may have been an earlier relationship that existed between Matthew and Jesus, but there is no textual reference to it.

Therefore, it can be imagined that Jesus simply encountered some people and called them into relationship. Similarly, some people can be led to Christ after an initial contact. It is wise to be sensitive to how the Spirit of God may be moving in any given conversation as he woos others to himself through us.

2. **Relational evangelism (i.e., “webs of relationship”).** In John 1, Andrew went and brought his brother, Peter, to Jesus. Likewise, Phillip found his friend, Nathaniel. So too, God may have us share Christ through friendships we already have. We must not neglect the fact that God often reaches out through established relationships in order to make Christ known in the world.

Both contact evangelism and relational evangelism have their risks. In contact evangelism, the difficulty is in trying to find natural segues for the gospel with a person we have only just met. It is also difficult to establish credibility. On the other hand, an old friend or family member who knows our history also knows our shortcomings. This can harm our message. We must confess personal failures and testify to the love and forgiveness of God and its ongoing power to forgive and transform. When this occurs, even our failures can be an asset when sharing Christ.

Learning from the Early Disciples

The disciples engaged in both kinds of evangelism. There is much we can learn from those who first took the gospel to others. The Book of Acts certainly makes a case for contact evangelism:

- Paul talks one-on-one with others in the marketplace.
- Philip speaks with the Ethiopian eunuch whom he just met on the Gaza road.
- Cornelius reaches out to Peter so that Peter might share the gospel to the entire web of family relations in Cornelius’ household.

But the Gospels and the Book of Acts speak of other kinds of evangelism as well:

- Jesus addresses and shares the gospel with large crowds of people.
- At the Feast of Pentecost, Peter preaches openly about Jesus in the public square.
- Paul goes to the partially-informed people gathered at the synagogue; that is, he reaches out to those with an affinity for religion but who have not yet encountered a relationship with the living Christ.
- Paul uses letters to present the gospel to others. (Today’s equivalent of email and social networking provides ample opportunity to do something like this.)

What can we learn from the approaches employed by the early Church to reach others for Christ?

1. They were men and women whose **lives were transformed demonstrably by the love and forgiveness of Christ**, and it was out of a full heart they shared the gospel with others. When we neglect to share Jesus with others, we might ask if a fresh rekindling of God's love needs to be generated so that his grace may again flow freely.
2. Early Christians, whose love burned hot for Christ, found **obedience to the Great Commission**. Their great desire was to tell the world about Jesus death and resurrection for the forgiveness of sins. They proved themselves faithful to the call of God in their lives.
3. Whether it was to the one unknown person in a public place, to the gathering of a small group of friends and acquaintances invited to hear about Christ, or to an assembled crowd, early church members **made the most of the opportunities before them**.
4. Early Christians appeared to **demonstrate great creativity** manifest in the ways they continually sought to share the gospel. This should inspire all who read the New Testament to look for fun and creative ways to make Christ known to others.
5. Early Christians **were not willing to let fear keep them from the joy of telling others about Jesus**.

While no period in church history has ever had it all together, one thing can be said about the early Church: they were bold about fulfilling their calling to make Christ known to others. In this regard, they have much to tell the Church in every age. The hope for the Church in all times, whatever mistakes may be made in any period of history, is that the Body of Christ not neglect the high call of making Christ known to the world.

Endnotes

1. Comments made to me in conversation in the late 1980s.
2. Chesterton, G. K. 1986. *Orthodoxy. The Collected Works of G. K. Chesterton*. Vol. I. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 251

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When You Cannot Preach: A Case for Relational Evangelism

By Dion Forster

Introduction

I have been a pastor for almost twenty years. I was trained to preach—in fact, I was trained to take the truths of the gospel and present them in the clearest and most convincing manner I could. I have viewed the task of proclaiming the gospel as one of the most critical functions that every minister (and believer) should fulfill.

However, when I moved from pastoral ministry to teaching at a university, and later, to working in a large company, I realised I had very few opportunities to preach to the people among whom I worked every day.

In fact, most Christians live their lives in an environment that is hostile to the proclamation of the gospel. Two of the many challenges include:

- **Some contexts are hostile to proclamation evangelism.** Many Christians live in nations (e.g., Turkey and China) that forbid Christian evangelism; others simply work in environments that discourage evangelism (e.g., workplace, university, or school).
- **The effects of postmodernism are a threat to proclamation evangelism.** Traditional evangelistic methods are based on “propositional evangelism.”¹ In its basic form evangelism by proclamation relies on a Christian making “truth statements” about God and God’s love for the world, and then challenging his or her hearers to respond to those propositions.

For example, someone may say, “God loves you and wants to forgive your sins and give you everlasting life.” The person being evangelised to would then have to respond to this proposition: “Do I believe what I’m being told? Does it make sense? Will I choose forgiveness in Christ, or continue life without him?”

The problem with propositions is that they are very difficult to understand if they have no context. For example, if I tell someone that God loves him or her and he or she has never experienced God’s love, it is difficult for that person to make an informed decision based only on a statement.

What further complicates the matter is that Western media has begun to convince the world that the Church and Christians are not to be trusted. There have been many scandals and struggles in the Church in recent decades. Ed Silvoso sums up the problem as follows: “Preaching the good news without love is like giving someone a good kiss when you have bad breath. No matter how good your kiss, all the recipient will remember is your bad breath.”²

These realities, however, don’t mean that we should stop evangelising. Not at all! They simply mean that we must find more creative ways of presenting the unchanging gospel of Christ in an ever-changing world. It is in this context that relationship evangelism makes so much sense. The biggest changes come through love.

Introducing a Seemingly Upside-down Model

It is a mistake to think that the majority of people come to faith in Jesus through crusades and evangelistic outreaches. Of course these events are effective. But they are less effective than we imagine. For instance, when did you last attend an event like this? How often do they happen in your town or city? More importantly, when did you last invite someone to go with you to a church service or an evangelistic outreach?

Ask ten of your Christian family or friends who introduced them to Jesus. Likely, the majority will tell you they came to know of Christ’s love through a close friend or family member. Most people come to experience the truth of the gospel through loving people and acts of blessing and service long before they’re convinced by theological truths such as the divinity of Jesus and the concepts of salvation and forgiveness through faith.

In my experience, faith is most often caught before it is taught.

Coming to Grips with Relational Evangelism

What do you think of when you hear the words *evangelism* and *evangelist*? Most of us tend to think of evangelism as a form of preaching in which one shares truths about God's love for people and the world with individuals or groups. When we think of an evangelist, we tend to think of people like Billy Graham preaching to massive crowds of eager listeners. As incredible a gift as persons such as this are to the Christian faith, they are the exception rather than the norm. I am convinced that God's evangelistic desire involves far more than just a few gifted preachers.

I encourage you to read one of the clearest and most accessible images of evangelism in the Bible. It is the one Jesus himself taught his disciples when he sent them out into the world to witness to his love for the first time. You'll find this remarkable model of evangelism in Luke 10:5-9.

You may be surprised to see how simple, yet different, Jesus' model of evangelism is when you compare it to many of the more popular models used today.

The Greek word used in the Bible, from which we get our English word evangelism is the verb *euangelizo*, which means to bring "good news." The more popular understanding of "preaching the good news" comes from another Greek word, *kerusso*, which means "to proclaim" or "to preach."

This second understanding of "preaching the good news" has become an almost exclusive approach to evangelism in much of the Church. There is little doubt that it can be effective in many situations. However, as stated above, there are some contexts in which this is neither possible nor effective in introducing the good news of Christ.

So, what is the solution? I'd like to introduce a method of bringing the love of Jesus to people that has had powerful and lasting results in our context. I first learned about this approach when I read one of Silvano's books.³

Luke 10 Transformation: A Model of Friendship Evangelism

If we were to describe the most common models of evangelism used by Christians, they would probably fit the following pattern:

1. Preach the gospel → 2. Minister to those who respond → 3. Facilitate fellowship and relationship → 4. Bless

This pattern may work fairly well in the church, but it is not very effective from Monday to Saturday, during which Christians spend most of their waking hours.

When you look at Jesus' model of evangelism in Luke 10, you see that he encourages his disciples to apply a different strategy.

First, Jesus says we should start by **blessing** people: "When you enter a house, first say, 'Peace to this house'" (10:5). Everybody longs to experience blessing, acceptance, and love. This is simple and easy to do—sometimes it is just a sincere compliment or a practical act of caring (like helping a co-worker to reach a deadline). Very few people resist genuine and sincere blessings from others. You can also bless a person by offering to pray for him or her. I have even blessed people by praying for them without them knowing it.

Next, Jesus encourages us to **build relationships** with people: “Stay in that house, eating and drinking whatever they give you...” (10:7). I have made a habit of cultivating friendships with people who don’t know the Lord. I belong to a cycling club. I also engage in M.B.W.A at work each day (I say it is better than an M.B.A, it is Management By Walking Around).

I take five minutes each day to say hi to people who work in our company. I make a point of getting to know their names and the names of their spouses and children, and hearing about their interests, challenges, and joys. I keep two simple principles in mind: (1) treat each person as special (Phil. 2:5-7) and (2) always share the fruit of love (Matt. 7:16).

Third, Jesus says that once we’ve blessed people and built friendships with them, we should **minister** to their needs: “...heal the sick who are there...” (10:9). This is the most amazing step in this simple process.

When people have experienced what it is to be blessed, and they trust you because you’ve built a relationship with them, they suddenly start opening up. They start asking questions about faith: “Why are you so calm when things go wrong? Why is it that you cope so much better with conflict than other people?”

More importantly, they ask for help and prayer. I have prayed for many colleagues, friends, and staff over the years simply because they feel they can trust me, and they know that my desire is to bless them.

One further encouragement is to try and respond to people’s “felt needs” first. Hardship, struggle, stress, and pain have a tendency to cause people to adopt a narrow focus. For example, the Salvation Army had the approach of offering people soup, soap, and then salvation. They knew that a person who was hungry and dirty would be less likely to respond to an invitation to salvation than someone who felt fed and cared for.

Finally, Jesus ends up where we most often start—**preaching and teaching**: “...tell them, ‘The kingdom of God is near you’” (10:9). In 1 Peter 3:15 we read, “Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.”

When a person’s need is met, you will have a golden opportunity to share the good news. When a prayer is answered, or a person finds the help he or she needs, you can gently tell him or her about God’s power and provision. My experience is that the most effective preaching you can do is to either give a testimony of something God has done for you or help the person to recognise what God is doing for him or her.

Conclusion

Relationship evangelism cannot replace the proclamation of the truth of Christ’s love. However, it can function as another wonderful resource for evangelising in places where preaching is not possible, or among people who struggle to relate to the propositions of the Christian faith.

Endnotes

1. See www.dionforster.com/blog/2010/7/22/between-the-pew-and-the-pavement-praising-with-the-people-of.html for a discussion of the concept of propositional evangelism.

2. Ed Siloso in Power, Graham and Dion Forster. 2010. *Transform Your Work Life—Turn Your Ordinary Day into an Extraordinary Calling*. Cape Town: Struik Christian Books, 126.

3. Siloso, Ed. 2000. *Prayer Evangelism*. New York: Regal Books. Also see *Transform Your Work Life* for information on the Luke 10 model and testimonies of how it has been used effectively. Also see Willem Joubert's 2007 DVD resource, *Luke 10 Transformation*. Ekurhuleni: The Better Way foundation trust.

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Prayer in the Early Church

By John Godson

“And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.” (Acts 2:42)

Prayer is one of the foundations upon which the early Church was built. It was as natural as breathing. It permeated and undergirded their actions and fellowship. *“And they continued steadfastly ...in prayer.”* To understand the prayer life of the early Church, we must not omit the birthing process of the Church. Without this, the early Church would have been weak, beggarly, and at best, human.

The Birth of the Church

On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.... you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. (Acts 1:4-5, 8)

Before Jesus ascended into heaven, he told his disciples to wait. He knew that without the power from above, they would not be able to fulfill the call and their mission. They had three and half years of theological and discipleship training. They had witnessed lives changed and miracles done. They knew Jesus closely and intimately.

Yet the Master told them to wait for the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Negation of this crucial element is the root of our ineffectiveness as a Church.

When they arrived, they went upstairs to the room where they were staying. Those present were Peter, John, James and Andrew; Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew; James son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers. (Acts 1:13-14)

They obeyed. They didn't rush off to save the world. They didn't despise the words of their Master. They went to the upper room and continued together in prayer and supplication. Men and women prayed and waited for the power from above, for unction from God.

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly, a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. (Acts 2:1-4)

Just as Jesus promised, they were baptised and filled with the Holy Spirit. Before, they had been afraid and cowardly. Now, they had a new boldness and unction that no one could fathom. The Holy Spirit was in control.

Without understanding the above event and experience, it is futile to speak of the prayer life of the early Church. It is the Holy Spirit who gives us strength to pray and to tarry in God's presence. Without him, we don't feel attracted to God's presence. Without him, prayer is an unpleasant chore we want to do away with as soon as possible.

With the Holy Spirit, we enjoy sweet fellowship through prayer. We long to come back to rest and be edified in his presence. We are consumed by his love and endowed with power from above. Prayer becomes a passion instead of a responsibility. It is no more a problem to wake up to spend the early hours of the day with our Master. We seek every opportunity to spend with him. This blessed experience is for every child of God.

How Did the Early Church Pray?

The early Church prayed...

- **Without ceasing.** The early Church had incessancy in their prayers. They prayed at all times, in every situation. Prayer was their lifeline, their source of strength. That was why Paul admonished the Thessalonian church to *"pray without ceasing"* (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

Praying without ceasing is living in God's presence at all times. It is abiding in him and walking with him. It is being connected with God, our source, at all times.

- **Individually.** Jesus taught his disciples to spend time alone with God:

And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. (Matthew 6:5-6)

He not only taught them to pray individually, he also showed by example: *"And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray. Now when evening came, he was alone there" (Matthew 14:23). "And it happened, as he was alone praying..." (Luke 9:18).*

Prayer was a personal habit nurtured by the Lord. The secret of his success in public ministry can be attributed to his prayer in secret. Ministering in public without a life of secret prayer is like being a tree without roots. Sooner or later, that tree will come down or be washed away.

- **Corporately.** In Acts 4:23-31 we see an example of the early Church praying together:

And being let go, they went to their own companions and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them. So when they heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord and said: "Lord, you are God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them..."

Peter and John had been released by the Sanhedrin, who had charged them never to preach the name of Jesus Christ. After returning to their companions, they raised their voice to God with one accord. The place was shaken, and they were filled with the Holy Spirit.

- **With the word of God.** Praying the word of God is one of the most potent weapons we have been given.

"It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.'" (Luke 4:4)

"So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." (Romans 10:17)

"Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people." (Ephesians 6:14-18)

Every aspect of the armour mentioned is defensive. Only one is offensive: the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. God answers our prayers to the proportion his word abides in us: *"If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you"* (John 15:7).

- **Earnestly and fervently.** The early Church was always earnest and fervent in their prayers. They were gripped with the urgency of their circumstances and cried out to God in holy desperation: *"The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much"* (James 5:17).

Earnestness and fervency are born out of faith and a conviction that God is willing to answer our prayers if we ask. They are born out of a feeling of urgency. It is prayer that takes hold of God and wrestles like Jacob did: *"...I will not let you go unless you bless me!"* (Genesis 32:26). It is prayer that causes God to say as he did to Jacob, *"Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed"* (Genesis 32:28). Jesus prayed this way: *"And being in agony, he prayed more earnestly. Then his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground"* (Luke 22:44).

- **With thanksgiving.** Unfortunately, we often focus on our needs and forget to thank God in all circumstances. Paul admonished the Thessalonian church: *“Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you”* (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18). He also admonished the Philippian Christians,

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:6-7)

Where Did They Pray?

The early disciples prayed everywhere:

- In homes
- In the temple (Acts 3:1)
- On the streets (Acts 3:2, Acts 7:59-60)

Jesus also had special places he retreated to for prayer. Peter prayed on the rooftop (Acts 10:9). The choice for places of prayer is not as important as our motivation:

And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. (Matthew 6:5)

In our daily devotions and our weekly, monthly, or annual prayer retreats, we should choose places where we can concentrate on God.

For What Did They Pray?

The early disciples prayed for everything:

- Healing and deliverance from unclean spirits (Acts 3: 2-9, Acts 5:16)
- Boldness to speak the word of God (Acts 4:29)
- Healing, signs, and wonders (Acts 4: 30)
- Forgiveness of their persecutors (Acts 7:59-60)
- The dead to be raised (Acts 9:36-42)
- The persecuted, for God’s guidance, for conversion

The Ministry of Prayer and the Word

In those days, when the number of disciples was increasing, the Hellenistic Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, “It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. Brothers and sisters, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them.” (Acts 6:1-3)

The early apostles were devoted to prayer and to the ministry of the word. They were not to be distracted by engagements and services, which although were needed and good, did not constitute the core of their call.

No matter what we have been called to do, our walk and work should be characterised by prayer. It is a potent weapon God has given his children to fulfill the mission he has committed into our hands. Quality time spent in prayer manifests itself in the quality of our walk with God and our work for God. The Lord is calling his Church to return to the place of prayer. We have victory through prayer.

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.”
(Jeremiah 29:11-13)

John Abraham Godson is a member of the Polish parliament. He came to Poland in 1993 as a missionary with the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students (IFES). He served as deputy chair of the Intercession Working Group of The Lausanne Movement between 2005 and 2010. He is married with four children. They make their home in Lodz, Central Poland.

Ekklesia: A Call to Unity in the Body of Christ

By Dale Schlafer

As a person opens the pages of the New Testament or history books of the first and second century, he or she is confronted by a Church (*ekklesia*) that is both growing and impacting society. There are numerous reasons for this growth, but I want to speak of why unity played such an important role in the growth of the early Church and to share why unity is important today.

Let me ask you this question: “How many Christian churches are there in your city?” If you answer anything except “one church,” you have a defective understanding of scripture. This is because there is only one Church with many congregations. “Oh, I know that, Schlafer!” you may say. However, unless your answer is “one church” every time this question is asked, you may not have this New Testament truth as a part of your spiritual DNA.

Historically Speaking...

It is clear from a reading of the New Testament that when the *ekklesia* was addressed, it was speaking not of a local assembly, but of all believers *in the city or region*. So to the Church (*ekklesia*) of Ephesus, Smyrna, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea, for example (Revelation 2-3), Jesus’ words were addressed to a region, not just a local assembly. Were there local assemblies within the region? Of course. However, they saw themselves not only as individual gatherings, but as a part of the whole area.

This resulted in a continuous expansion and growth of the Church. When you read about the persecution of Christians in earlier days, you never read that the persecutors went after the assembly at so-and-so’s house. Rather, the Christians *of the city or region* were the object of the hate. Even the enemies of Christ saw the Church as one, not separate entities. Because they operated in biblical unity, the *ekklesia* not only grew numerically, but literally transformed the super power of their day.

Unity Today

What are we to make of this? Does anyone really believe that when Jesus prayed that “that they may be

one, Father, just as you are in me and I in you,” that he was indicating that if we simply do a few meetings together with other followers of the Lord Jesus then we have fulfilled this prayer? Or if we gather together to pray once a month, then we have displayed an answer to this prayer of our Lord?

When preaching on this issue, at this point I often break congregations into two groups. One group sings the chorus of “O Come All Ye Faithful,” while the other sings the chorus of “Jesus Loves Me.” When we finish, I ask, “How did that sound?” Of course the answer is terrible. Two songs, both about Jesus, produced dissonance.

Then I have them sing together “O Come Let Us Adore Him,” slowly and in harmony. This sounds much better. What is the difference? I coordinated the singing. If each is functioning independently, they are in competition and the result is dissonance. What we need is coordination, “the harmonious functioning of the parts for the most effective results.” That is exactly what Jesus was talking about in John 17 and what the early *ekklesia* understood (1 Corinthians 12:27). They were to operate together in biblical unity.

We should be so connected relationally with other followers of the Lord Jesus that the non-believing world thinks we are one. John Armstrong once wrote,

When followers of the Lord Jesus Christ live out their spiritual unity with Jesus in the way he prayed for, the results will be exactly what Jesus asked [the Father] to give us. “Then the world will know that you [the Father] sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me” (John 17:23). The Church will be the visible example of the relational and spiritual unity of the triune God.¹

“Impossible, Schlafer. It will never happen,” is what I hear all the time from Christian leaders. To this, I say two things.

First, I am not speaking of what is currently true; rather, I am speaking of what is to be. Jesus prayed that this relational unity would come to pass. Since he is the author of prayer, it must mean that he is going to answer that prayer. Therefore, I choose to be obedient to what he prays and make biblical unity a priority in my life and ministry.

Second, biblical unity is the term for our day. God seems to speak certain words to the Church at various times in history. The words have always been in scripture, but have been unheeded by the vast majority of Christians. For example, “The just shall live by faith” was always in Romans. However, when God whispered it to Martin Luther’s heart, it ignited the Protestant Reformation. It was a word for that season. It has been this way throughout history: things contained in scripture suddenly burst into conscious understanding because God wills it so for that period of history.

Recently, I received an email that contained this statistic: *Five years ago, there were 639 unreached people groups. Today, there are less than 200.* I happened to be preaching the next Sunday and said to the congregation, “Let’s suppose that these statistics are only ten percent correct. All I know is that we are far more into end times than I realized.”

It is no wonder that biblical unity is a term we hear more and more today. Jesus is coming for a bride, not a harem. If we *are* moving into the last days, then it makes biblical sense that unity would be on the Spirit's agenda for our day. We cannot continue to do ministry the way we have been doing it.

I recently came across Matthew 7:23: "On judgment day many will tell me, 'Lord, Lord, we prophesied in your name, and performed many miracles in your name.' But I will reply 'I never knew you. Go away, the things you did were unauthorized.'"

It was the word "unauthorized" that stopped me cold. In other words, we can do all kinds of ministry, but unless it is authorized by God, it is an abomination. Biblical unity has been authorized by our Lord. The question for us is: are we doing it?

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Two New Prayer Tools to Fuel the Prayer Movement

By Carol Madison

***Prayer Connect* magazine and Praybook (a Facebook connection site) are two recently launched prayer resources that have the potential to greatly expand the prayer movement nationally and internationally.**

***Prayer Connect* magazine** (with the tagline: "Connecting to the Heart of Christ through Prayer") published its premiere issue in July 2011. Founded by Jon Graf of Harvest Prayer Ministries and the Church Prayer Leaders Network, *Prayer Connect* is also sponsored by America's National Prayer Committee, the Denominational Prayer Leaders Network, and the International Prayer Council.

The magazine's first issue focuses on "Can Prayer Save America?" This call to greater prayer on behalf of the nation will be complemented by the second issue (to be published late 2011) on the theme: "Fresh Fire: Hope for a Christ-centered Revival." The two issues include authors David Bryant, Claude King, Steve Hawthorne, Billy Wilson, Bob Bakke, and Dave and Kim Butts.

The current issue can be purchased in single or bulk copies at www.prayerconnect.net. You may also indicate a desire to subscribe to future issues.

Praybook is a new website that interfaces with Facebook as a tool to mobilize thousands of people to pray for thousands of "friends." It takes the enormous power of social networking and links it with the supernatural power of prayer. Launched in June 2011, this Facebook connect site could prove to be an important breakthrough in filling up the nations of the earth with prayer!

Praybook is a simple and systematic way to organize your Facebook friends into a daily prayer list. You may choose a monthly, quarterly, or yearly rotation, selecting a manageable number of friends you will pray for each day. You can then send them a personal notification of your prayers. In addition, Praybook keeps a cumulative total of those you've prayed for, as well as the increasing thousands who are being prayed for throughout the Praybook family.

Since its recent launch, more than thirty thousand friends have been lifted up in prayer, and users can be found in thirty nations. Prayer leader Bob Bakke describes Praybook as a "grand conspiracy" to fill the earth with prayers for the glory of Christ.

Imagine millions of Facebook users praying for hundreds of friends, making the Praybook tagline more of a reality: "Lifting up the world one friend at a time." To join Praybook, go to www.praybook.com.

Carol Madison is the editor of *Prayer Connect* magazine and the content provider for Praybook. She is a freelance writer and editor, serving several prayer ministries. Her heart is for revival and spiritual awakening, and her personal website is www.justcarol.com.

PERSPECTIVES

Contemplative Activism as a Model for Mission

By Phileena Heuertz

The signs of the times can be troubling. Poverty and exploitation, wars and terrorism, global warming and over-consumption plague our planet. Although there are marks of beauty, creativity, justice, and peace, we have a long way to go before our world is fully redeemed. Being a part of an international community committed to serving Jesus among the most vulnerable of the world's poor gives me an uncommon, intimate understanding of the ways in which our personal lives can impact others—either for good or for harm. Contemplative activism roots us in offering the good.

It is estimated that twenty-seven million people are victims of modern day slavery—trafficked into all forms of bonded labor, including the commercial sex industry.¹ Today in Kolkata, some of my friends are fighting for their freedom from such a degrading "trade."

As I write, nations proliferate nuclear weapons and economic sanctions endanger the well-being of innocent people. The threat of terrorism lingers and nation states make war against one another for many reasons—power, control, security, survival, and autonomy. Wars are even made in the name of God.

Leaders wield their power to determine the impact of their nation-state conflicts, but the personal impact of war on themselves does not compare to that of their innocent citizens who suffer the devastating effects of armed conflict. Some of my young friends in Sierra Leone are such victims. They are making the long and arduous journey of transformation from the hell they experienced after being inscripted into rebel forces during the notorious blood diamond battles. Children of war and war brides are some of the most vulnerable victims of armed conflict.

Global warming, over-consumption of non-renewable natural resources, and the exploitive way we produce and eat food can be linked to our disregard for the created world and our human family who

share the space in which we live. Scientists and spiritual teachers illuminate how greed, inequality, and disrespect for the other are connected to the abuse of our ecosystem.

For us in the affluent West, the impact is felt most widely in the need to “tighten our belt” a little bit, purchase fewer lattes than we use to, and exchange our SUVs for more fuel-efficient vehicles. But for my friends in South and South East Asia, the impact is much direr. The most vulnerable always suffer the most. And they are the ones for whom God has always shown particular interest. Scripture indeed indicates that the essence of our faith will be measured against how we treat people who are poor.

It seems domination and exploitation is commonplace almost everywhere we turn— nation to nation, person to person, and in relationship to the earth. Christians too are often implicated in the violence. How can we offer a different kind of presence in the world and really make a redemptive impact?

Responding through Contemplative Activism

Contemplative activism as a spiritual posture is essential.

Contemplation is the space and presence-of-being that allows for the dismantling of our illusions that wreak havoc on the world and nurtures the growth and development of our true selves. Action without contemplation can be a dangerous road—leaving us blind to the pitfalls of our false self motivations—even in mission.

What will history write about us?

Contemplative activism makes way for:

- Freedom for everyone instead of power and control of the few
- Cooperation instead of selfish grasps for security and survival
- Divine love instead of lustful cravings of ego

Contemplative practices reinforce a posture of regular abandonment and surrender to God—in our exterior as well as our interior lives. Surrendering to the immanent presence of God around and within us allows for greater transformation on a personal, communal, and global scale.

Action without contemplation is not an obedient life and appears rather absurd when we honestly examine it. Henri Nouwen encourages us to turn from an absurd way of living to an obedient life. According to Nouwen, the English word *absurd* comes from the Latin word *surdus*, meaning deaf.

An absurd life is a deaf life—one in which we cannot hear the Voice in silence. The many activities we are involved in—as noble as they are—and the cacophony of sounds around us often drown out the voice of the One who calls us the Beloved. We must adopt contemplative disciplines that help us tune into the voice of God.

Action Born from the Heart of God

Without contemplation, the liberation and fecund life that Jesus taught is out of reach, and his admonition that we would do even greater things than he seems impossible.

Contemplation leads to just and compassionate action, and action born from the heart of God leads to contemplation. Even Thomas Merton, who committed to long periods of hermitage steeped in solitude, silence, and stillness, became an active voice for justice in the face of the social evils of his time.

A commitment to contemplation leads to radical action. In the words of Mother Teresa,

The true inner life makes the active life burn forth and consume everything. It makes us find Jesus in the dark holes of the slums, in the most pitiful miseries of the poor, in the God-Man naked on the cross, mournful, despised by all, the man of suffering, crushed like a worm by scourging and crucifixion.²

Contemplative activism makes us supple in the hands of God. By way of Christ’s ongoing, transformative work in us, we are able to love and serve more freely, purely, and unconditionally—like Jesus.

Rather than divide the active life from the contemplative life, an authentic and relevant life brings union to the active and contemplative dimensions of our spirituality.

Consider the wheel as a symbol for life. Contemplation will be found in the center axis, and the active life will extend out in the spokes. All the while the wheel turns and progresses forward.³ Without the center axis, the spokes would lose their anchor and be unable to support the forward motion of the wheel. Without the spokes, the center axis would be deemed extraneous.

When we are least connected to our contemplative center, our life is most tense and chaotic and more likely to breed violence and exploitation. When we are anchored in contemplative spirituality, the active, exterior expression of our life is more peaceful, purposeful, and effective.

In a reality plagued by human exploitation, armed conflict, and destruction of our ecosphere, we owe it to the world and to God to nurture contemplative activism. Thankfully, the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus opens a way for us to live with redemptive impact. Contemplative activism as a spiritual posture for Christian mission is essential to purifying our presence in the world.

Suggested Practices for Getting Started on the Journey of Contemplative Activism

- Breath Prayer
- Centering Prayer
- Labyrinth
- Lectio Divina
- Prayer of Examen
- Welcoming Prayer

Descriptions for each prayer can be found by [clicking here](#).

Suggested Resources for Disciplines

- *The Examen Prayer: Ignatian Wisdom for Our Lives Today* by Timoth M. Gallagher
- *Divine Intervention* by Tony Jones
- *Lectio Divina* by M. Basil Pennington
- *Centering Prayer and Inner Awakening* by Cynthia Bourgeault
- *Open Mind, Open Heart* by Thomas Keating
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Colorfully Contextualized Evangelism in the Context of the New Testament

By Daniel Daesoon Kim

When we look at the Bible, we find that the noun *evangelism* does not occur in the Bible and the word *evangelist* is used only three times in the New Testament. Phillip is referred to as an evangelist (Acts 21:8), Timothy is exhorted to do the work of an evangelist (2 Timothy 4:5), and we are told that some are called to be evangelists (Ephesians 4:11).¹ Despite this, the *concept* of evangelism is strongly represented in the New Testament.

The Greek word-groups that are used for evangelism are *euangelizo* (to share good news), *kerysso* (to preach), and *martyreo* (to bear witness). The proclamation of Jesus' birth is one of the first examples of evangelism recorded in the New Testament as the angelic chorus bear witness to the good news: "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David, a Savior, who is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:10-11).

Contextualized Evangelism

The New Testament itself offers an excellent example of contextualized evangelism in the character of the four Gospels, which are in effect four contextualizations of one story:

Each of the four Gospels reflects the cultural orientation of its author and is clearly addressed to a particular audience. Matthew's Jewish orientation is reflected in his emphasis on messianic prophecy, kingship, the divine titles of Jesus, and the Aramaisms which characterize his Jewish-Greek language. Luke, on the other hand, reflects a distinctly Hellenistic mind-set....The comprehensive range of Luke's Gospel with its emphasis on the universal implications of the gospel gives it a unique appeal.²

In the early Church, evangelism was viewed in the

...narrow sense of the verbal proclamation of the good news of salvation with a view of leading people to a right relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ. But it touches on other aspects of "mission," which also includes the non-verbal aspects of Christian witness to non-Christians...³

Robert Coleman describes how Jesus viewed his role as an evangelist:

Jesus interpreted his mission as fulfilment of this promise (Luke 4:18-19). He saw himself as an evangelist, announcing the coming of the Kingdom of God. This message was to be proclaimed in the context of demonstrated compassion for the bruised and forgotten people of the world.⁴

As a result, Coleman cautions against truncated views of evangelism as either just the verbal declaration of the gospel or just caring for people and rectifying injustices in the society. Both are necessary elements of evangelism: “If Jesus had not born the sorrows of people and performed deeds of mercy among them, we might question his concern. On the other hand, if he had not articulated the gospel, we would not have known why he came, nor how we could be saved.”

The model of Jesus suggests that authentic evangelism that changes and transforms lives requires more than talking about Four Spiritual Laws or passing out gospel tracts. It is a message that needs to be fleshed out in word, deed, and sign in ways that are relevant and meaningful for hearers in their own cultural context.

As the New Testament progresses from the Gospels to the Book of Acts, we see that the task of evangelism passes on from the disciples with their Jewish origin to the wider Church. The Church is vividly portrayed as the missionary agent of God’s redemptive plan of salvation. Jesus commanded the Church to go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation (Mark 16:15).

The Holy Spirit came to empower the community of believers so that they could be powerful witnesses both locally and globally (Acts 1:8). This has implications for cross-cultural evangelism. The purpose of the Body of Christ, the community of active disciples, is to present Jesus Christ in the world as tangible, real, visible, and effective. For us to do this in ways that are tangible and effective implies that we will proclaim a contextualized gospel.⁵

Incarnational Life for Contextualized Evangelism

How was Jesus able to effectively practice contextualized evangelism? What does the New Testament say is the essential key to contextualized evangelism? It distinctly presents incarnational life as the cornerstone and prerequisite of successful contextualized evangelism. The absence of incarnational life can lead to “transplanting evangelism” from one place to another place, an imperialistic approach.

How would Jesus and the evangelists in the New Testament react to a missionary who cannot speak the local language and is not inclined to take time to stop and study it?⁶ Would Jesus and Paul use interpreters for their evangelism? Never.

Matthew’s Gospel distinctly portrays Jesus as the disciple-making missionary. In his incarnation, Jesus was born to inaugurate the Kingdom of God through discipling his people. He was a local Galilean who committed his life to discipleship and to exhibiting the model of how to evangelize and disciple people groups. His last and most heart-gripping command was to make disciples, not just converts who pray a prayer after raising their hands to accept Christ. A biblical evangelism in the New Testament never focuses on making converts, only on making disciples.

In John’s Gospel, the greatest mission story was revealed when God decided to tent (dwell) among his people. The New Testament vividly depicts that the eternal Word of God was enfleshed in Jesus of Nazareth (John 1:14) for thirty years, during which time he immersed himself in a local cultural context prior to launching his three years of public ministry.

In his incarnation, Jesus exegeted the Father to us. He was thoroughly immersed in his Jewish culture; he participated in its celebrations and traditions; he spoke Aramaic with a Galilean accent; he had distinctive physical features and personality traits.⁷ His thirty years of incarnational life enabled him to engage in his three years of contextualized evangelism.

The mission of God was achieved by the incarnation of Jesus. Jesus, in turn, said to his disciples and to us, "As the Father has sent me into the world, so send I you into the world" (John 20:21). The incarnation is the foundation of his global vision for every people group being evangelized and disciplined through the Church incarnating among the people groups. The early Church focused on effectively incarnating among people both locally and cross-culturally for contextualized evangelism, not hiding out or separated from the world by towering walls.

Colorful Evangelism in Colorful Contexts

Jesus was a colorful evangelist who expected the Church to be creative in implementing colorful evangelistic methods with suitable contextualization to evangelize colorful people in colorful missional contexts. The New Testament portrays at least twelve types of evangelism the Church in the twenty-first century can learn.

1. Prayer Evangelism (Acts 2; 16:13, 16, 25)
2. Power Evangelism (Acts 2:22; 4:30; 5:12; 6:8; 8:6; 19:11; and 3)
3. People Evangelism (Acts 2:46; Romans 16:3-5)
4. Proclamation Evangelism (Acts 2; 13:16-41; Romans 10:17)
5. Provision Evangelism (Romans 12:13; 1 Peter 4:9)
6. Perseverance Evangelism—persecution is a door of evangelism (Acts 7:58; 16:24)
7. Pen Evangelism—Luke used his pen to explain the gospel (Luke 1:3)
8. Presence Evangelism (Matthew 5:16; 2 Corinthians 2:15; 3:3; 5:20)
9. Personal Testimony Evangelism (Acts 22; 26)
10. Praise and Worship Evangelism (Acts 2; 16)
11. Persuasion and Apologetic Evangelism (Acts 17; 18:28)
12. Process Evangelism (John 3; 19)

Conclusion

The New Testament depicts that the success of evangelism always depends upon the divine factor of God's divine sovereignty. Jesus was the central focus in evangelism and mission of the early Church. With all authority in heaven and on earth (Matthew 28:18), Jesus laid out the incarnational model for the Church to imitate for effective contextualized evangelism.

As the Church in the twenty-first century effectively incarnates among people, it can formulate colorful contextualized evangelism to reach the world. Then, the Lord will add new disciples to his Church day by day (Acts 2:47).

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Ministry to the Partially Evangelized

By Chris Castaldo

***Angela's Ashes* is the autobiography of Frank McCourt, who describes his life in Ireland during the 1930s and 1940s.** His family lived in a hovel with one bare light bulb and bedbugs, on a dirt lane, and shared one outdoor toilet with all the neighbors. Because his dad was an alcoholic and seldom found work, they subsisted on unemployment. For many painful years the family lived on bread and tea.

In the early part of the film, Frank's mother (Angela) loses her three babies to "consumption," the dreaded disease which plagued the poor. As I sat with my heart glued to the screen, I wondered how the McCourts would draw from the resources of their Christian heritage to persevere through the dark valley of suffering. In various scenes, the family addressed God by means of candles, veneration, and other sacramental rituals. Yet, in their variegated approach, Jesus and the gospel were notoriously missing.

Who Are the Partially Evangelized?

Trials, such as the McCourt's, can be illuminating. They often display the substance of one's character, or lack thereof. But struggles aren't the only metric for identifying the nature of one's faith. Other measurements include generous giving to ministry, the activity of gospel witness, and spiritual disciplines such as prayer, Bible reading, and participation in a local church. The last of these is especially revealing as we consider the contours of religious commitment in the U.S.

According to the [Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life's U.S. Religious Landscape Survey](#), over 132 million Americans identify with the Mainline Protestant, Catholic, and Eastern Orthodox traditions. Sociologists of religion say that three in four of these individuals neglect church participation.

While these people generally use the designation "Christian," they are in fact only "partially evangelized" since the person and work of Jesus remain absent or ancillary to their life. Despite exposure to the Christian tradition, the "gospel" (in terms of new life in Christ, the authority of scripture, and an active commitment to outreach) is conspicuously missing. This is precisely the need which evangelicals are poised to serve.

Engaging the Partially Evangelized

Let me introduce you to a partially evangelized person. Under the portico on Via Cavazzoni, I met Rosa in northern Italy. Because her café was directly across the street from my residence, I visited often. Given Rosa's outgoing personality, it was easy to discuss God with her, especially when I learned that she and her husband hailed from Catania, Sicily, my grandparents' hometown. In much of southern Italy, there's a social Catholicism which is well-acquainted with cathedrals, rosaries, and festivals. Rosa described these customs at length.

The cannoli, cornetti, and Napoletani rivaled the artistic quality of the Sistine Chapel. Before biting into something lovely that I couldn't quite pronounce, I asked Rosa about her relationship with Jesus. Her answer was fascinating. "My spiritual beliefs are private," she said. "The Bible I don't believe because it was written by men." She also had some rather pointed words for the Catholic clergy. Finally, she described a certain Sicilian parade dedicated to the patron saint of fishing.

Having established a bit of rapport with Rosa, I possessed enough relational currency to ask a few follow-up questions. So I started:

Chris: "Now that's a fish parade I want to see! Is the cross of Jesus depicted in any particular way?"

Rosa: "Yes, Monsignor Giuseppe carries the crucifix, elevated high for everyone to behold."

Chris: "And what's the significance of the crucifix?"

Rosa: "It shows the death of Jesus Christ wearing the crown of thorns with drops of blood marking his face."

At this point, I asked Rosa a few questions intended to elucidate the love and justice of God and the personal significance of Jesus' passion for Rosa in particular. It was brief, but meaningful. My goal was to connect the dots between Rosa's limited understanding of the Christian story and the particular truths of Jesus' death, resurrection, and inaugurated kingdom. There was no dramatic conversion, but I would like to think that she was in some way drawn closer to the Savior by the seeds that were planted.

The Opportunity before Us

This brings to mind a few principles for serving the partially evangelized with the gospel. The sequential ordering of these points is not essential beyond the first one.

The initial step must be to **recognize that we ourselves, despite our theological pedigree or best intentions, are partially evangelized, and desperately so**. Let me assure you, the word "desperately" is not for rhetorical affect. There is, even on our "best" days, a sizable disparage between the holiness, peace, and love of Christ and the pattern of life in which we walk. We are entirely dependent upon God, and, therefore, we must proactively "evangelize" ourselves, remembering the old life which is now behind us and the new creation which has come.

Each morning when I awake, I must preach the gospel to myself (after pouring a cup of coffee, that is). It is a privilege, as God's sons and daughters, to enter the Father's presence in the name of Jesus and remind ourselves that we are no longer defined by sin and shame, but rather by the perfect righteousness of Christ—although our sins be as scarlet, they are now white as snow.

We also remind ourselves that God has poured forth his Holy Spirit into our hearts for us to embody and proclaim the good news to the world. In short, we can't effectively evangelize others until we have first evangelized ourselves.

Second, it's also necessary for us to **see the partially evangelized—to the extent that such people ignore new life in Christ, the Bible, and ministry—as eternally lost**. One of my favorite quotes is by French theologian Yves Congar, who said of the missionary statesman, Angelo Roncalli, "Here was the secret of his personality: he loved people more than power."

Such men have a way of seeing others not as a means to an end, but as those for whom Christ died. I also think of Francis Schaeffer who, according to my friend, Lane Dennis (a student of Schaeffer's), would shed tears when describing those outside of Christ.

Third, **the leading edge of our approach should be gradual and relational**. Sometimes, when we think about evangelism, we limit it to a particular method. For many, it's the crusade approach made popular by D.L. Moody or Billy Graham. Accordingly, we think of evangelism as a full-blown gospel presentation that begins by explaining the human problem of sin, necessarily culminating in an invitation for one to receive Christ.

I don't know about you, but most of my gospel encounters don't allow for a full-orbed sermon. In a crusade, the goal of the evangelist is to clearly present the entire message and urge someone to make a decision. (There is a reason why the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association's magazine is named *Decision*.)

However, if you define all evangelism encounters this way, what happens when you have two minutes to talk to a colleague beside the water cooler during break? How do you witness to the checkout person in the supermarket, or to a family member who knows what you believe and is utterly disinterested in hearing any more sermons? The answer is—you don't. You don't say a thing. We can't share in that kind of way without completely alienating ourselves; therefore, we don't share at all. The outcome is the same as hiding our lamp beneath the proverbial table.

The above principle is especially relevant to the partially evangelized because one's embrace of the gospel is usually a process. This is not to minimize the fact that conversion is based upon the regenerative work of God; but it is to acknowledge that in most instances God leads people through an existential journey in which they travel from darkness into the light.

What we need, therefore, is to learn how to plant seeds of gospel truth that help the partially evangelized to move from the borders of Christian tradition to the center, one incremental step at a time.

Finally, and most fundamentally, we must **pray for the partially evangelized**. What is now only a trickle of Christian identity, God desires to make a raging river of faith (Ezekiel 47); what is a small cloud, God wishes to develop into a torrential rain (1 Kings 18:44); what is a modest-sized lunch, God will multiply a thousand times over into a feast (John 6). Indeed, this is our hope, according to the life-changing power of the gospel.

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LEADERSHIP PROFILE

Marcos Amado, Teacher, Pastor, Brazil

Q. Tell us about your family.

A. Rosangela and I have been married for twenty-seven years. We have two children: Priscila is about to turn 21 and Filipe (married with Cristina) is 25.

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

A. For more than twenty years we were involved in Muslim ministry. We initially lived in North Africa and, later, in Southern Spain, where I became the international director of PM Internacional, a Latin American mission agency that trains and deploys Latino workers to different parts of the Muslim world. I am presently taking the first steps to start a missiological center in São Paulo, Brazil. I am also the mission pastor of a growing and vibrant Baptist church and Lausanne international deputy director for Latin America.

Q. What is your favorite quotation?

A. "Grant, O Lord, that in the written word, and through the spoken word, we may behold the living Word, our Saviour Jesus Christ." - Simon H. Baynes

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

A. I served on the OM ship Doulos for three years. I was quite young and deeply impressed by the prayer life, passion for world missions, and solid Bible teachings of Frank Dietz (the ship's director), who I consider to be my first mentor.

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

A. "Stop feeling sorry for yourself! Get up and get going!" It was hard to hear, but turned out to be very important in my life.

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

A. The greatest barrier to evangelism is the influence that modern and post-modern ideas are having on Christians of all ages and in places, mainly the idea that we should avoid suffering at all costs. There is no way we will finish the task if we do not understand that our willingness to pay the price is essential to our walk as faithful followers of the Lord.

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

A. As a pastor, I am always challenging people to read the Bible. Other than that, I often recommend a little book by Charles Sheldon called *In His Steps, What Would Jesus Do?* Although it was written several decades ago, it is still challenging and helps Christians to consider if their priorities are right in relation to what we learn from the Lord through scripture.

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

A. I would have finished my DMin, be very involved with the missiological center I am hoping to form in São Paulo, and be training, teaching, and challenging Brazilians and Latin Americans to get serious about the Great Commission.

Q. How can people be praying for you?

A. Right now we are in the middle of a ministry transition. I will be less involved with our local church and more engaged with the Lausanne Movement and the formation of the missiological center. This kind of transition always presents a number of challenges for the whole family. I would appreciate prayer that the Lord would give us protection, wisdom, and discernment.

Nana Yaw Offei Awuku, Evangelism Coordinator, Teacher, Mentor, Ghana

Q. Tell us about your family.

A. I live with my wife, Beth, and children, Christie-Joy and Eben-Joy, in Ghana, West Africa.

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

A. I currently serve on the senior management team as the national coordinator for schools and camping ministries with Scripture Union (Ghana). I also coordinate evangelism and discipleship work in 1,600 school Bible clubs in Ghana. I am committed to Bible teaching and the development of younger leaders

Q. What is your favorite quotation?

A. "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work." – Jesus (John 4:34)

Evangelism. On Point.

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

A. As part of my ministry with our home church I have been leading a Bible study. Some of the attendants have come from spiritism. They had heard about Christ, but had not recognized him as Lord and Savior. It has been wonderful to see the transformation the Lord is doing through the study of his word. Their lives have turned upside down and their eagerness to know more about the Lord and his word is simply fantastic.

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

A. Dr. Martin Lloyd Jones. His book, *Sermon on the Mount*, has had the greatest impact on my Christian life.

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

A. "God is more interested in who you are than in what you do." - Jude Hama, former CEO, Scripture Union (Ghana)

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

A. Barrier: Emphasis on methods rather than lives reflecting Christ. **Opportunity:** The great army of young people in the Church, particularly in Africa, who are ready to be mobilized in the power of God for world missions.

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

A. *Purpose Driven Life* by Rick Warren. It has been very helpful in getting young people to focus on God's priorities for their lives and mission.

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

A. Bearing much fruit through Bible teaching and developing younger leaders.

Q. How can people be praying for you?

A. That I would live and lead like Jesus; that God would give me wisdom and fruitfulness as I serve as Lausanne EPSA international deputy director; and for my family and for my ministry among young people with Scripture Union.

Evangelism. On Point.

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

A. We met a young person at the beach one day during a time of prayer and I was deeply impressed to share the gospel with her. She received God's word and committed her life to Christ. Later, she confessed how desperate she was the day we met. She had decided to end her life, had gone off food for three days, and had come to the beach to drown herself. Today, she joyfully serves Jesus in her local church. Glory to God!

INTERNATIONAL PUBLISHING

Should Christians Convert Others?

By Soo-Inn Tan

(**Editor's note:** This edited article was first published in *Graceworks* on 25 July 2003.)

It was quite jarring to walk into bookstores in Malaysia to be confronted with the cover of the 30 June 2003 issue of TIME magazine. The headline screamed, "Should Christians Convert Muslims?" The fact is, there are state laws in Malaysia that penalize anyone caught "enticing" a Muslim to leave his or her faith. Therefore, the issue of *how* Christians should reach the Muslim community for Christ is hardly discussed in public in Malaysia.

My first response was that I would have framed the question differently. Scripture teaches that conversion is the work of the Holy Spirit (John 16:8-11). A Christian may share the truths of the gospel and appeal to others to embrace those truths, but he or she cannot convert anyone.

Indeed, the Church has often gotten into trouble when it tries to do the work of the Holy Spirit, "helping" people to convert through the use of military or governmental powers, or enticing people to Christ through the giving of aid in times of need. (**Note:** Christians are called to show compassion to all in need, giving with a free hand and unconditionally. This indirectly reveals the heart of Christ. However, we cannot imply that in order to receive help, one must first embrace Christianity.)

We cannot convert anyone. Nevertheless, there are certain truths in scripture that are clear.

First, **Jesus is the only solution to the root problem of humankind**, that is, sin. *"There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved"* (Acts 4:12).

Second, **followers of Jesus are called to bring this message to all races and communities**. *"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age"* (Matthew 28:19-20).

The irony is that Islam and Christianity share a number of things in common. One is a common adherence to the concept of objective and absolute truth. Standing against the postmodern mood of many truths for many people, Islam and Christianity would say that if either were true, then other answers to the fundamental questions of humankind (*Where did we come from? Why are we what we are? What is the ultimate solution for humankind's problems?*) are wrong.

The temptation for Christians and Muslims is to jettison our commitment to absolute truth. We are told to "play nice"; that any position that takes truth as absolute will lead to fanaticism and violence since we are a pluralistic world of many faiths; and that every faith community should be able to do their own thing and not "convert" others. This position is appealing because there many conflicts around the world that appear to be rooted in religious differences.

Unfortunately, any backing away from a commitment to absolute truth undercuts the very basis of the truth of the gospel. If Christianity is not true for all, it is not true at all. Why should God come and die on the cross if there was another way? I am always amused when I hear people say that all religions are essentially the same. Such people betray the fact that they have not studied religions with any degree of depth.

Of course, no one wants intercommunal violence. What this means for Christians is that we must take a long, hard look at how we share the gospel. I am particularly partial to Lesslie Newbigin's suggestion that the lives of Christians must be so different that we arouse the curiosity of those outside the faith (see *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*).

When they ask why we are different, then we answer with the gospel. For example, I recall the enemies of Christ having to acknowledge "how they love one another" when they looked at the early Christian communities. I wonder if they would say the same today.

The whole question of Christian-Muslim relationships is complex. Christians follow a crucified Christ and have been warned that his followers would suffer the same fate (2 Timothy 3:12). Suffering is intertwined deep in the Christian DNA. We must never kill for Christ (Matthew 26:47-56), but we must always be ready to suffer and die for him.

Before we even think of such heroic possibilities, we must first ask: *What is the quality of our life in Christ? Do Christians and churches reflect so jarringly the love and holiness of God that people pause to ask questions? Or are we qualitatively no different from those who do not follow Christ?*

If there is no real difference, then there really is nothing for people to "convert" to, is there?

Rev. Dr. Soo-Inn Tan is director of [Graceworks](#), a ministry he leads with his wife, Bernice. Graceworks is a training and publishing consultancy committed to promoting spiritual friendship in church and society. He is committed to connecting the word of God to the struggles of daily life through teaching, mentoring, and writing. He writes a weekly e-newsletter and his latest book is *Thinking On The Run*.

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