



Lausanne World Pulse

Providing Evangelism & Missions News, Information and Analysis

Lausanne World Pulse, P.O. Box 794, Wheaton, Illinois, USA, 60187

Email: info@lausanneworldpulse.com

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

January/February 2011

PUBLISHER'S MEMO

To Hell with the "Centrisms"

By Lon Allison

I'm of Paul. I'm of Peter. I'm of Apollos. Such idolatrous-like associations bothered Paul greatly. They should us as well. During Cape Town 2010, I ran into this phenomenon with many people: *I'm a Chinese Christian. I'm an African Christian. I'm all about younger leaders. I'm all about the Diaspora or the AIDS crisis or trafficking, I'm with such-and-such denomination. I'm with such-and-such organization. I believe the local church is THE only means to save the world, etc.*

Ethnocentrism, issue-centrism, and organizational-centrism are the main causes of division in the Christian Church today. These idolatrous "centrisms" are also a major hindrance to world evangelization. It makes me very sad.

We all know the words of Jesus in his high priestly prayer (John 17). We should be "one" as the Father and the Son are "one," that the world may know the Father sent the Son. The sobering truth is that we are often only willing to be one when "our agenda" drives the oneness. I admit my own propensity toward centrisms. I fall into the sin by trying to make the case, especially to donors, that the vision and mission of the Billy Graham Center at Wheaton College is God's first and best means for saving the world.

That is idolatrous-centrism. At least I can name it. Perhaps if we call it idolatry it will help us steer away from the attraction to it? Not likely. Awareness of a sin rarely results in the ability to stop the sin. Not even the consequences of the sin of idolatry seem to lead to a cure. And don't mistake this: *the consequences of idolatrous centrism are daunting and include division in the Body, ineffectiveness in mission and evangelism, and inefficient use of resources.*

We don't have the time for this sort of sin. Every day, 150,000 people die in our world. Fifty million people have entered eternity in 2010. Many entered a Christ-less eternity. Let us repent of our idolatrous centrisms. Let us instead speak well of each other, bless each other always, and collaborate wherever and whenever we can. Surely that is the instruction we have from our Lord.

The urgency of the hour is not the only reason to repent. Another reason is more selfish, or to put a better spin on it, more "theologically accurate." Truth be told, we are more content and happy when we pursue partnership and oneness with other persons, churches, and organizations.

Such a desire for oneness in plurality is the very nature of our God and part of what it means to be created in God's likeness. God has perfect unity in plurality in the God-head. Is it any surprise then that we are at our best and are most-fulfilled when we allow him to shape oneness in the Church?

"Dear God in three Persons, work out your essence of oneness in us, that we may glorify you, experience your joy, and fulfill our redemptive destinies in this life. Amen."

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

January/February News from around the World

ALBANIA: Radio Station Births New Ministry Out of Kosovo

An Albanian radio station created by [Words of Hope](#) is now paying it forward by spreading the ministry to Kosovo. Until fairly recently, Albania was a closed, communist country in which religion was almost completely extinct. When the ministry first began broadcasting through Radio 7 in the 1980s, listening to the broadcast was forbidden in the Marxist country. Today, the Church in Albania is beginning to grow again. On any given Sunday, officials estimate that there are about eleven thousand Christians worshipping in Albania. Radio 7's ministry is so vibrant that they recently began broadcasting to neighboring Kosovo as well. The station has received a license to broadcast directly from Kosovo's capital city, Pristina.

([Mission Network News](#))

ALBANIA: 135 Evangelical Churches Receive Legal Status

In 1965, the Albanian government announced the closure of all religious institutions in the country, declaring Albania the world's first officially atheist state. This included 2,169 churches and mosques. Religious-based town and city names were changed, as well as personal names. All religious practice and clergymen were outlawed and those religious figures who refused to give up their positions were arrested or forced into hiding. Things in the country have come full circle with what many Albanian Christians believe is a miracle. On 22 November 2010, the Albanian Minister of Culture signed an agreement with the Albanian Evangelical Alliance, granting legal status to over 135 evangelical churches in Albania.

([Assist News Service](#))

AROUND THE WORLD: Audio Bible Translation Hits Milestone

This month marks an exciting landmark in the world of audio Bible translation: five hundred languages now have access to their own recording of scripture. "About 4.6 billion people speak those [500] languages in the world today," says Bill Lohr with [Faith Comes By Hearing](#) (FCBH). "[This] puts us a quarter way to our goal, [so that by] 2016 we want to have 2,000 languages recorded. That will effectively be about 97 percent of the world's population." ([Faith Comes By Hearing](#))

INDIA: Indian Rescue Mission Rescues Six Girls from Forced Prostitution

After prompt and timely action was taken by the [Indian Rescue Mission](#) (IRM), police in Mumbai arrested a brothel owner and manager and rescued six girls on 6 November 2010. The raid was conducted on a brothel in the Simplex Building in the Grand Road area. The Indian Rescue Mission had been investigating the case for five days. Speaking about the rescue operation, James Varghese, founder and president of the IRM, said, "Soon after the information was given to the police, the whole Grand Road

area where this brothel was located was tipped off was somehow alerted to the possible raid, so hundreds of girls were sent out to different locations and were hidden." ([Assist News Service](#))

IRAQ: Iraqi Christians Murdered in their Homes

Hundreds of Iraqi Christians are fleeing Baghdad and Mosul as murderers target families in their homes and workplaces. According to a news release from the Barnabas Fund, an elderly Christian couple and their daughter became the latest victims when they were killed in their home on 5 December 2010. The Barnabas Fund said the victims, like many Iraqi Christians, had left the capital and gone to live in the north. They had returned briefly to Baghdad to finalize the sale of their home and furniture. Two Christian brothers were also shot dead in their car workshop in Mosul. The incident followed the assassination of two other Christians by gunmen who burst into their Mosul home. These raids come after the 31 October 2010 hostage siege at a Baghdad church that left more than fifty people dead. The Islamic State of Iraq (an Al-Qaeda front group) claimed responsibility for that attack and threatened further violence. They said the "killing sword will not be lifted," and that Christians everywhere were "legitimate targets." ([Barnabas Fund](#))

PAKISTAN: Five Christians Murdered in a Week under Pakistan's Blasphemy Law

Muslim extremists are blamed for the murders of five Christians in Pakistan in less than a week. Greg Musselman, spokesman for [Voice of the Martyrs Canada](#), says 22-year-old Latif Masih was shot to death shortly after he was granted bail in a "blasphemy" case. He was accused in early November under Law 295c—the infamous "Blasphemy Law"—in which the two militants claimed he burnt pages of the Qur'an. Days earlier, on 12 November 2010, in southern Punjab Province, police say Lashkar-e-Taiba militants killed four family members because of their Christian faith. There are concerns that the violence against Christians will continue. The marked increase in these cases has created a renewed call by human rights watchdog groups for an end to the blasphemy law. The support couldn't come at a better time. Musselman says, "Christians are always under this kind of law. In recent days, it's received international attention because of some of the other cases that are happening. The international community is saying, 'This is ridiculous. You can't have these kinds of laws.'" ([Mission Network News](#))

PAKISTAN: Peace March Allows Ministry to Distribute CDs

[Global Recordings Network's](#) (GRN) Ishmael Project personnel were able to help with the coordination and production of audio materials for a large outreach held recently in Pakistan. The event centered on Peace March, organized by national Christians as a political event to request that the human rights of Christians in Pakistan be honored and that discriminatory laws be abolished. As part of the Peace March, the group was able to share tens of thousands of CDs with the people in the capital city, explaining their beliefs. Much prayer is still needed for ongoing fruit from the event—and for the peace of Pakistan and the massive rebuilding after a recent devastating flood. ([Global Recordings Network](#))

THEMED ARTICLES: The Power of Partnerships

Generosity Networks: Developing Partnerships in Giving and Stewardship

By Sas Conradie

A few months ago I asked a number of ministry network leaders about potential key donors in their countries. Most had no idea who they were. About the same time a Christian businessman told me that he and other business people would like to give more to Christian causes if they could find projects worth investing in.

Why couldn't the ministry leaders and those willing to give find each other?

Is this disconnect between potential givers, ministries, churches, Christian professional networks, and other Christian groups discouraging or hindering Christian generosity? Could this be a contributing factor as to why Christians give on average US\$177 per year or about 2.14% of their total income to Christian causes, and on average only US\$10 per year to global mission? Could this disconnect be a reason why only one cent of every US\$100 the Global Church spends on ministry is spent in countries where the majority is unevangelised?

To counter this, the Resource Mobilisation Working Group (RMWG) is concluding that Christian networks, ministries, churches, and other groups need to work together to motivate Christians to give more of their income to Christian causes and to encourage Christians to become better stewards of their resources.

The RMWG, itself a joint initiative between the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization and the World Evangelical Alliance, seeks to catalyze a global culture of Christian generosity and effective stewardship of God's resources to support world outreach.

The RMWG also provides a networking point for generosity ministries such as Stewardship Council (publisher of the *Stewardship Study Bible*), the National Christian Foundation in the U.S., Foundations, MinistrySpotlight (a technology-based generosity platform), the Strategic Resources Group, and others.

The RMWG has developed "Generosity Networks" as an approach to facilitating greater collaboration between Christians around generosity and stewardship issues. The idea is for local, national, regional, and global Generosity Networks to connect Christians and enable a global culture of increased generosity and stewardship. As Phill Butler, Lausanne's senior associate for partnership, says, "Connectedness is no longer an option—it is the name of the game." Today, collaboration enables extraordinary opportunities for creativity, innovation, and acceleration of evangelism and related ministries.

The Generosity Networks idea was launched at Cape Town 2010. While still in the formative stages, Generosity Networks are intended to have the following characteristics:

- Involve Christian business people, churches, Christian networks, parachurch ministries, Christian professional fellowships, Christian prayer networks, and theological institutions who work together to increase Christian giving and improve stewardship.
- Identify barriers to giving and determine ways to overcome those barriers or identify examples of good giving practices that could be shared with other networks to encourage them in their giving.
- Discuss issues around generosity and stewardship (such as financial management) and organize workshops, seminars, and conferences to deal with these issues.
- Develop strategies for increased giving and improved stewardship in their communities/countries/regions.
- Provide a space for linking resources with needs in a local community, country, or region.
- Encourage the development of generosity and stewardship ministries and writing of generosity materials that could then be shared with other networks.

- Encourage the teaching of generosity and stewardship in their areas of operation.
- Encourage prayer for giving.

Generosity Networks are local, national, and regional partnerships of different Christian stakeholders working together to enable increased Christian giving and improve stewardship from their contexts. Additionally, the networks could also be started within individual companies.

Since the launch of the concept in October 2010, six hundred people from nearly every country in the world have indicated that they are interested in becoming involved. National Generosity Networks are already emerging in a number of countries, including in the Netherlands and South Africa. It is hoped that a Generosity Network will be started in each country in the next few years to enable increased Christian giving.

A regional North American Generosity Network has been launched under the leadership of David Wills of the National Christian Foundation in Atlanta. In cooperation with regional Evangelical Alliances and other Christian networks, the RMWG is seeking to catalyze further regional Generosity Networks in Latin America, Southern Africa, East Africa, West Africa, Francophone Africa, North Africa and the Middle East, South Asia, North Asia, Europe, Eurasia, Southeast Asia, and the Pacific.

The RMWG is supporting the networks as a discussion forum, connecting link, resource base, and facilitation point.

For more information, email sas.conradie@cms-uk.org or visit www.givetogenerosity.org.

Dr. Sas Conradie, a South African by birth, is currently living in the United Kingdom, where he is head of the Global Mission Fund and coordinator of the Lausanne /World Evangelical Alliance-related Resource Mobilization Working Group.

Rwanda: Together in Partnership

Rwanda is a country deeply scarred by a movement of genocide that just seventeen years ago killed over one million people in one hundred days. Neighbor turned against neighbor and family member against family member.

In the midst of this horror, how can there be true reconciliation when trust and forgiveness is still not easily granted? As political reform, economic improvements, military might, and educational advancement fall short, church leaders have come together as partners to draw people to Christ.

In fellowship with Cape Town 2010, the Huye Rwanda Mission for Jesus, one of twenty-one Mission Africa evangelistic events conducted across Africa, was the largest mission organized in the city since the 1994 genocide. Working together as partners, pastors stated that the God-given results of the outreach far exceeded their expectations, much like that promised in Ephesians 3:20: “Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us.”

African Enterprise Rwanda partnered with international evangelist Sammy Wanyonyi to mobilize thirty-five area churches to reach more than twenty-five thousand unchurched people in the community. In total, nearly fifty thousand people (including church members) attended over eighty events organized in

stadiums, open-air sites, *Jesus* film screenings, churches, evangelistic conferences, universities and schools, leader's dinners, and prisons.

More than ten thousand individuals made commitments to Christ during the campaign and each had a personal story. For twenty years, "Feza" had been angry, aggressive, and filled with bitterness.

She came to the open-air preaching sessions with the intent to disturb the mission. Instead, she listened to the message of the love of Christ and publically committed her life to Christ. The rage and bitterness was immediately removed. She is growing in her relationship with Christ and has become a testimony of his forgiveness to the entire community.

Witchcraft has had a strong grip on the spiritual climate of the entire region. In the eastern part of the city, more than five well-known witches came to Jesus during the outreach, confessed him as their Lord and Savior, and are now taking discipleship courses in local churches.

While full reconciliation from the deep scars of the genocide will take years to heal, Huye Rwanda has taken major steps forward in that process. Partnerships of local churches and international ministry teams working together have pointed the community to the only way to heal...through Christ.

The "power of partnership" demonstrated was reported at Cape Town 2010 as an encouragement and challenge for ministries to join in a partnership ministry to conduct evangelistic campaigns with ministries from other parts of the world. Over one hundred ministries from forty-three countries committed to exploring a partnership with a different ministry. To inquire about how you can join in this ministry "matchmaking" process, email s.chibambo@aeint.org or info@goodwordpartnership.org.

Rejoice Liberia

By Mike Parker

Liberia is a country in Northwest Africa. In the past thirty years it has been devastated by three protracted civil wars, brutal dictators, and corrupt governments. The result has left the country in ruins. It is believed that eighty-five percent of the people in the country are unemployed. Because traditional farming is in ruins, many NGOs are reintroducing livestock.

Almost forty-five percent of the country is starving or malnourished. Two generations have largely only known war and are without education. Many younger men were child soldiers or fled to the jungle to hide so they would not be captured. There are still thousands of U.N. peacekeepers providing stability to the country.

Yet Liberia is slowly rising from the ashes. *Rejoice Liberia* took place in March 2010 as the first event of Mission Africa. Mission Africa was conducted in fellowship with Cape Town 2010: The Third Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization. Psalm 126 states that

...when the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dream. Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy; then they said among the nations, the Lord has done great things for them. The Lord has done great things for us, we are glad.

This is the context for *Rejoice Liberia*—that the Lord would do such a mighty work in the land that mourning is turned into laughter and the nations surrounding Liberia would say "look at what the Lord had done."

The Power of Partnerships

All Nations Ministries spearheaded a multi-faceted and multi-partner evangelistic festival in Kakata. The small town was chosen because it was the location where some of the fiercest fighting took place in 2003 and was a choke point leading into the capital of Monrovia.

The festival was a powerful model of partnership. What one ministry or church could not do alone, many could do together. Rejoice Liberia included three indigenous ministries (GEEF, OrphanAge, and Chrisma), as well as twenty-one local churches. It also included both formal and informal partnerships with seven other international agencies, including Desiring God Ministries, OrphanAge, Luis Palau Evangelistic Association's Alliance Ministries, All Nations Ministries, a relief and development agency, and a church-planting and medical ministry.

Over the course of the week, the team held several events, including a pastor's conference, a women's conference, and a children's ministry leader's conference. Each of the three hundred leaders in attendance received two books and a Bible. A medical team examined and treated 267 children. Another agency provided discipleship for three months to 120 pastors with the end goal of determining the community development needs that can be met through local churches. Three orphanages were given food and basic vitamins to last three months.

In the local prison each prisoner received socks, soap, toothpaste, a blanket, and the Gospel of Luke. The prison received food to last a couple of months. Although the prisoners were not aware of the gifts until after our team departed, ninety-five percent of the prisoners nonetheless responded to the gospel when it was presented.

For Kakata, the ministry in word and deed and the power of partnerships was a shining example that in Christ Jesus there is no division. And that in Christ Jesus is the power to heal, restore, and unite.

“They Were Wild”

God ordained for the festival grounds to be located near a mosque and Muslim area of Kakata. On the first night the imam tried to disrupt the event, to scatter the children and youth so they would go home. He even gathered other Muslim men to help disrupt the festival.

It was remarkable to watch the believers surround them in prayer and speak words of peace. The imam left the grounds. The men that were with him stayed off in the distance to watch and listen. By the end of the week, it was a clear the hand of God had moved and some of the Muslim men had given their lives to Jesus!

Attendance was largest on the last night of the festival. As the good news was proclaimed and the opportunity to respond was given, a crowd women, children, and men streamed forward. Many of the men were between 17 and 25 years of age. In fact, they were almost exclusively young men. One of the pastors turned to me and said, “They were wild, roaming the jungle and destroying everything. Tonight, you have given these former child soldiers hope, healing, and forgiveness in Christ Jesus.”

Approximately five thousand people heard the good news of Jesus Christ in Kakata. Of this, almost one-fifth responded to the gospel. It was incredible to see what organizations willing to partner together can do when sharing strengths and resources. Further, it is a testimony to the blessing of God when the Church is untied (Psalm 133).

Mike Parker is president/founder of [All Nations Ministries](#), an evangelistic ministry with a focus on least reached peoples of the world. He has ministered in thirty countries of the world.

Partnership in Zimbabwe: A U.S. Perspective

By Carrie Boren

Jesus & the Messengers

Jesus declared, “The Kingdom of God has come near!”

That God has rescued humanity in and through his Son, Jesus, is the most extraordinary, life-impacting, life-transforming, life-giving news the world has ever known. Reading from Isaiah, Jesus proclaimed God's kingdom as “good news to the poor,” “freedom for the prisoners,” “recovery of sight for the blind,” “release for the oppressed,” and the “year of the Lord’s favor.”

And even though Jesus was God on earth, he did not bring this news to the world on his own. He ushered in the Kingdom of God in partnership with others, by calling a band of disciples to accompany him in his ministry of word and deed, and then sending them to share the gospel with the world—two by two, in groups, and as a community.

This power of partnership was never more visible to me and our small team from the U.S. than it was during the Mission Africa outreach to Chitungwiza, Zimbabwe, in September 2010.

In connection and collaboration with Cape Town 2010, Mission Africa asked twenty-one international evangelists to engage in missions in various African countries in partnership with local African evangelists. I was paired with [African Enterprise](#) evangelist Orpheus Hove.

Our team of four (including Barclay Nelson, a young Presbyterian businessman from Dallas; Mary Ann Sherman, an Anglican woman in her 60s from Texas; and Jodie Collins, a young, non-denominational evangelist from England) began communicating with Orpheus via email beforehand.

Before we arrived, much groundwork had been laid in terms of organization and prayer. Orpheus and his team gathered forty churches from various denominations for the first ecumenical mission in Chitungwiza. The pastors and lay leaders prayed together and were equipped staff from the [Navigators](#) to run introductory Bible studies for those who would be committing their lives to Christ.

Before the mission started, the pastors gave testified to the power of meeting together: gathering Christians from various denominations tills the soil for an incredible harvest to come.

And our team in the U.S. began to meet and pray together as well. We already felt deeply connected to Orpheus and the forty churches of Chitungwiza before we met face to face.

God in Community in Zimbabwe

After a two-day journey, our team arrived in Harare, Zimbabwe. Zimbabwe has been through great trials in recent years with the suppressive (and at times brutal) government of President Mugabe. We never stopped at traffic lights due to the risk of being "car jumped." During a recent food shortage some people were reduced to eating cow dung. In the midst of this environment our team found some of the most joyous, light-bearing Christians we had ever encountered.

Orpheus met us and shared the plan for the week. We were filled with anticipation. We bowed our heads while Orpheus prayed. As our heads lifted, I noticed tears were in the eyes of every team member. That night, our U.S. team discussed how we sensed the presence of God through Orpheus.

Ministering in Africa was very unique. For one thing, the concept of time was different. Thinking we were running two hours late, we found ourselves actually three hours early. Difficult roads and few cars presented the challenge of transportation. Additionally, there was always the risk of compromised electricity and unreliable generators for the lights and the sound system.

These difficulties, however, could not discourage the Christian leaders on mission. When challenges arose, Orpheus persevered in making sure the gospel was shared. He would say over and over again, "We will not let the enemy get us down. The gospel will go forth."

For a whole week the gospel was preached in schools and hospitals, on the streets, and in four preaching venues throughout the city. Our team shared the gospel alongside the local African team.

The Power of Diversity in Partnership

I have thought a good deal about why this kind of partnership is so essential for the cause of Christ.

1. *The testimony of different voices coming together.* We demonstrated that the gospel of Jesus Christ is for *all* people and that God desires to transform the lives of each and every person on earth.
2. *The Body of Christ from working harmoniously throughout the world.* Only for the sake of the cross of Christ do Christians from vastly different places and churches join hands and cooperate. And God, of course, is always able to do more than we could ask or imagine. Our love and unity serve as a visible testimony to God.

It was an honor to work alongside these pastors bringing the message of hope in Christ. Night after night, we all piled into Orpheus' truck, picking up pastors and evangelists along the way. The African evangelists moved our team in their tireless delight to share the gospel with their community.

Stories of Transformation & Healing

We saw many people listen intently to the message of Christ and respond. By God's grace, over one thousand people committed their lives to Christ for the first time! We witnessed healings, the driving out of demons, and the repentance of sinners. God's love, power, and grace were palpable. Along with the Apostle John we can say, "We have seen it and testify to it" (1 John).

Two stories especially stood out for our team.

1. Tremendous change in Unit D. We had the opportunity to preach the gospel in an area called Unit D, where the gospel had *never* been preached. Unit D is the most violent area of Chitungwiza, a place of cult practices, child sacrifices, tribal bloodshed, and more recently, mass robberies and killings.

After our team preached the gospel, many came forward and gave their lives to Christ, including young men in their 20s who, as they said, wanted to turn from "evil" and begin again with Jesus. Everyone involved in the mission acknowledged that the spiritual ground had shifted in that place. Peace broke into the chaos; light entered the darkness. And we have since received confirmation from the Zimbabwean pastors that great changes are taking place in the lives of these young men.

One woman came forward with great pain in her stomach, wailing in discomfort. We prayed for her and she fell to the ground moaning. Then, she rose up in perfect tranquility with the pain gone. I have never before seen God's healing power so visibly.

2. Eternal life at a football game. A football match (which was really a gathering for the Christians who had been involved in the mission) was going on during the final day of preaching. After sharing the gospel message over the loud speakers, two young men who had come to watch the football game raised their hands to come forward. From almost a quarter of a mile away, the men began to run to the stage area. The Christians gathered began to cheer. These were the last two people who gave their lives to Christ that week. Having thought they were there to watch football, God had other plans.

Conclusion

I cannot thank God enough for the opportunity to work with Orpheus and the forty other churches in Zimbabwe, and to see God call so many people to himself. We saw the face of Jesus in each of our brothers and sisters in Africa. Indeed, the Kingdom of God came near. To him be glory, for there is power of partnership in the gospel of his Son.

Carrie Boren serves as missioner for evangelism for the Episcopal Diocese of Dallas. She is engaged in evangelistic speaking and equipping congregations to participate in personal and parish evangelism. She works throughout the U.S. and abroad. For more information, visit www.edod.org.

PERSPECTIVES

Bible Storying in America, Part 1: An Overview

By Mark Snowden

(Editor's note: This is the first of a 3-part article on Bible storying. Read [Part 2](#) and [Part 3](#).)

Gaining Perspective

The entire Bible is available in hundreds of languages in print, audio, and Internet downloads. New projects are underway to put the entire Bible onto movies. Condensed versions of the entire Bible already exist as *God's Story* (animated art) and *The Hope* (using storytellers).

Jesus did not address the crowds unless he used parables (Mark 4:31-32). Church leaders have used biblical narratives in sermons and Bible studies for centuries. The melodic preaching found in black churches and mountain preaching predate the 1800s.

Christian movies are loved for their depictions of the life, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus.

Hymnody captures and conveys biblical doctrine. Poets, artists, sculptors, choreographers, and playwrights have contextualized biblical truths in each generation, bringing Bible stories alive while influencing the spiritual climate for kingdom purposes.

Yet kingdom advance is statistically on the decline. Americans experience moral decay instead of spiritual transformation. Vast pockets of lostness still exist, despite estimates that one out of four people in the United States are born-again followers of Jesus. Why are disciples not multiplying? The vast majority of those who identify themselves as Christians in America are not able to make disciples as Jesus commanded in the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20).

And why is orality seen as something new? First-century believers had very low literacy rates (perhaps as high as ninety percent), yet the gospel advanced (Acts 9:31). Are those who genuinely seek to make disciples of all peoples in America actually making disciples?

Many Churches Today

Examine what is happening in many churches. Sermons are of the highest literate formats possible: fill-in-the-blank sermons; intense expositions of not only single verses, but word-by-word analysis in the pulpit; and overhead projection that provides outlines and pithy quotes sometimes intermingled with video roll-ins that reinforce the worship theme of the day.

In our Sunday School classes (for churches that still have them), we often find quarterlies tucked in Bibles, workbooks, and learning environments that, despite the occasional poster, have the austerity of sterile hospital wards.

Beyond the superficial appearances, the Sunday School teacher is a mini-version of the pastor. He or she gives a lecture. People listen, but passively. They read verses when called upon, but many do not comprehend what is being read. Yet the lecture drones on. And because of budget shortfalls, many churches increasingly cut back on efforts at making disciples among adults.

Contrast this to what is underway in children's areas. Because teachers engage young minds, the learning environments are often bright and filled with music, crafts, well-told Bible stories, teaching pictures, and wall decorations that interpret desired themes for a month or quarter. Somehow between childhood and adulthood, an incredible learning gap has emerged.

In February 2010, I led a storying workshop in Montreal. I tore pages out of a novel and gave it to the sixty people attending and asked them to tell me what they thought the book was about based on that single page. Nobody got it right. Yet Sunday after Sunday we do the same thing in our churches. We may not physically tear out pages, but we focus only on small biblical snippets to make our own themes.

Those who identify themselves as Christians are not being disciplined in the manner they prefer, so whatever efforts are tried, simply do not stick. The result is that many Christians are making up their own doctrine instead of embracing a biblical worldview. There is a learning gap based on learning preferences.

In August 2008, the Barna Group reported that four out of ten people who professed to be Christian said that Satan does not exist, but merely represents evil. This same group indicated that they agreed with a statement that Jesus sinned during his earthly ministry. When it came to the Holy Spirit, more than half (fifty-eight percent) said that the Holy Spirit was not real. One-third of all Christians in America, who indicate that they believe the Bible is totally accurate in its principles, say that the Qur'an and the Book of Mormon are based on the same spiritual truths.¹

Millions who claim to be Christians believe repentance for sins and belief in Christ are essential for salvation, but they also believe that a person can do enough good works to merit salvation.²

Endnotes

1. Barna Group. 2009. "Most American Christians Do Not Believe that Satan or the Holy Spirit Exist." Accessed 23 June 2009 from www.barna.org/barna-update/article/12-faithspirituality/260-most-american-christians-do-not-believe-that-satan-or-the-holy-spirit-exis.

2. Barna Group. 2009. "Christianity Is No Longer Americans' Default Faith." Accessed 23 June 2009 from www.barna.org/barna-update/article/12-faithspirituality/15-christianity-is-no-longer-americans-default-faith.

Mark Snowden co-authored a chapter with Avery Willis in *Orality Breakouts* (ION/LCWE, 2010) for Lausanne III as well as *Truth That Sticks* (NavPress, 2010). He was the Lausanne work group facilitator in 2004 that published *Making Disciples of Oral Learners* and launched the [International Orality Network \(ION\)](#). He is the lead storying trainer for the [North American Mission Board, SBC](#).

Bible Storying in America, Part 2: The Details

By Mark Snowden

(Editor's note: This is the second of a 3-part article on Bible storying. Read [Part 1](#) and [Part 3](#).)

Orality in America

Orality is a field of study, a way of thinking, and can be described as a learning preference. Audio, on the other hand, is neutral, having to do with sound and recording something for playback. Orality and literacy are often shown in contrast because of the two very different approaches to learning that they represent. According to Walter Ong,

Today, primary oral culture in the strict sense hardly exists, since every culture knows of writing and has some experience of its effects. Still, to varying degrees many cultures and subcultures, even in a high-technology ambiance, preserve much of the mind-set of primary orality.¹

Although literates, such as the Scribes, existed in Jesus day, they were a small percentage of the population. We can learn from Jesus that while he was literate (reading the scriptures in Nazareth, for instance), he chose to communicate through poetry (Sermon on the Mount), parables (Good Samaritan), agricultural metaphors (Wheat and the Tares), and concrete images (blessing children).

No stronger dichotomy between oral and literate approaches has emerged than among black churches. Black orality—and the influence it used to carry—has been all but lost in contemporary society. In the now-classic *Black Church LifeStyles*, Ella Mitchell lamented the loss of “oral tradition” contributing to a serious decline in today’s black churches. Slaves that once communicated Christian doctrine and morality through narratives in the regular course of life have been lost to the once-a-week literate learning style imposed by white missionaries.²

In the move toward Sunday Bible lessons, a type of what Mitchell called “mediocrity” was tolerated because it brought recognition to some black teachers. Meanwhile, “teacher self-esteem may have prospered, but pupil learning languished.”³ Mitchell pointed out in that Sunday School provided relational bonding opportunities apart from the instructional periods.

However, she depicted the contemporary black church Sunday School as falling on “evil days” as churches were unable to keep up with entertainment, movement, and wide ranges of relationships that they had once held strong among American blacks.⁴

Orality Indicators

At least half of all Americans prefer what is called an “oral” approach to communicating and learning. Several characteristics serve as indicators for disciple-makers:

1. Reading abilities for continuous prose, like that found in the Bible.

2. When people use printed text when not required by work, study, or leisure activities.
3. Discipling at the heart language addressed by both Bible availability and worldview issues.

Indicator #1: Reading Abilities in America

In 2004, Dana Gioia, chair for the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), held a press conference at the New York Public Library. “America can no longer take active and engaged literacy for granted,” she stated.⁵ She then reported on a reading-related research project of adults in the United States. Only one in three American men is reading literature of any kind. Over the past twenty years, twenty million people have completely stopped reading.

At this rate, we are losing the capacity to communicate with one million people a year using literate means. The largest drop in reading rates was among young adults, age 18 to 24, compared to the rest of the adult population. Overall, less than *half* of all Americans read literature such as the Bible.⁶

While twenty-five to thirty-three percent of the world is truly illiterate, only four to five percent of Americans have not been to school. That has lulled us into overlooking the statistics that show more than one out of two Americans and two out of three of the world’s population do not read proficiently enough for handling prose found in the Bible.

In 2003, the U.S. Department of Education divided literacy into four groupings: *below basic*, *basic*, *intermediate*, and *proficient*. (These terms replace the terms *illiterate* and *functionally illiterate*, which were used in the 1992 survey.)

1. Below Basic—fourteen percent (one in seven)
Signs name, finds medicine dosage
2. Basic—thirty-six percent
Compares ticket prices; reads pamphlet
3. Intermediate—thirty-seven percent
Reads novels; scans the Internet for information; connects through social media, such as Facebook; reads maps and charts, such as checkbook, when required
4. Proficient—thirteen percent
Finds, maintains, and uses information from continuous paragraphs (like this!)

The 2003 National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL) surveyed 18,500 people in their homes or in prisons. NAAL estimates that one in seven adults (about thirty million people) fall in the “below basic” category for handling basic prose in English (like that found in the Bible).

Similar to what the Department of Education reported in 1992, the 2003 interviews confirmed that about half of all U.S. adults (about ninety-three million people) fall into the “below basic” or “basic” reading categories. Although there were more college graduates in 1992 than in 2003, fewer were reading at the proficient level, falling from forty percent in 1992 to thirty-one percent in 2003.

Indicator #2: Using Printed Text When Not Required

The oral approach includes both primary and secondary orality. Primary orality communicators rely primarily on narrative and oral approaches. They cannot read. Secondary oral communicators can be defined as “people who depend on electronic audio and visual communications (multimedia). It is said

that in some developing countries people are moving directly from primary orality to secondary orality without passing through an orientation to print.”⁷

In writing about learning preferences, Grant Lovejoy states, “Secondary orality depends on electronic media and the literate people who operate it. Secondary orality uses television, radio, film, and the like to communicate the staples of oral communication: story, song, poetry, proverb, drama, and discussion.”⁸ He points out that when reading diminishes, then the ability and desire to use that methodology decreases or is replaced by other non-literate learning preferences.⁹

The NAAL report concluded that “literary reading in America is not only declining rapidly among all groups, but the rate of decline has accelerated, especially among the young.”¹⁰ This reflects a significant shift, especially among younger generations toward non-print media for entertainment, information gathering, and education—and not one at a time, but engaging several at once.¹¹

Situations like this in the U.S. and other countries have led to a “digital divide” resulting in declining prose literacy and comprehension rates while demand for electronic (non-print) media access increases.¹²

People scan written material for items of interest. They evaluate them quickly. They scan for a summary or hyperlink to a related topic. Then they’re off to another aspect or possibly a new topic. How do you think such skimming over scripture affects spiritual development?

Churches with a literate approach use a linear, analytical thinking pattern based on print media. It impacts virtually every aspect of church life, imposing learning styles alien to the culture around them. However, the reality is that Christians and non-Christians are just not responding.

Churches increasingly reduce or even stop their disciple-making efforts and focus instead on the worship “experience,” with the full intention of using twenty minutes of preaching on different verses scattered around the Bible to impact disciple making.

According to a Barna report, evangelicals are viewed as out of touch with the reality facing the very people we should be impacting. The 2007 study showed that only three percent of 16 to 29-year-old non-Christians in the U.S. gave favorable views of evangelicals.¹³ Yet, our leaders, evangelism and missions efforts, and ministries miss the opportunity by insisting on a literacy-only approach.

The cultural trends for the “digital age” drive people apart rather than joining them. We are increasingly a generation of “tweeters” and loners. Shane Hipps writes,

If oral culture is tribal and literate culture is individual, the electronic age is essentially a tribe of individuals. This is a confused state of being in which we are thrown together from far-off places. We desire connection and community in our increasingly nomadic existence—yet we wander the globe, glancing off other digital nomads without ever knowing or being known.¹⁴

Learning-style preferences of secondary oral communicators have clearly shifted and have not yet finished. Electronic media are alienating those with Christ from those without Christ. The majority of the youngest generations clearly prefer learning through oral means mediated through electronic channels rather than the printed word and its structures.

Indicator #3: Discipling at the Heart Language Addressed by Bible Availability and Worldview Issues

Just *telling* Bible stories is not the same as *storying* the Bible. Bible storying is an intentional way to

make disciples based on the objective of a single witness or a small group leader. It involves creating a matrix of Bible stories that when told over time work together to allow the Holy Spirit to bring spiritual transformation.

Spiritual transformation can only take place at the deepest part of our beings, our worldview. We often start off addressing beliefs—getting the *facts* right. Or we attempt to address values—getting *life choices* right. Or possibly we attempt to address behaviors—*acting* right. We often think if a person is serving as a deacon, tithing regularly, and knows his or her Bible, that he or she is a follower of Jesus. This is not necessarily so.

Storying addresses the worldview to bring about spiritual transformation. A specific Bible story is chosen because it is a preferred way to learn and because it addresses some deeply-held issue that can be a barrier to discipleship. *Truth That Sticks*¹⁵ outlines a spiritual development progress that helps small group leaders identify progress being made from infant to child to young adult and parent stages.

Establishing credibility for God's Word is important. However, it may or may not be available in the heart language of the people with whom you are working. Out of 6,900 languages in the world, only 451 have been translated. There are 1,185 New Testaments considered adequate in today's context. Keep in mind that it takes nearly fifteen years to produce a new Bible.¹⁶

The Bible is a Christian's sole authority. The following digested accounts provide a good perspective on how Bible storying works in a variety of settings:

- Michael Mohler, a Southern Baptist missionary and founding pastor of Trinity Point Church in Easley, South Carolina, has taken his church from one small adult Bible study with less than a dozen attending to fifteen small groups with more than one hundred weekly participants by using narratives in small group settings. They began with a “redemptive arc”, providing a biblical timeline upon which other biblical narratives may be positioned.
- Stephen Douglass, president of [Campus Crusade for Christ International](#), said he knew that Bible stories worked to make disciples who were illiterate around the world, but he discovered their power among college students. In 2005, he helped a group of students at the University of Central Florida (Orlando) to latch onto Bible storying and transform their Bible studies. Today, Campus Crusade uses storying on forty campuses with new additions every year.
- When [the Navigators](#) began working in the Angola prison in Louisiana, Paul Krueger and Chuck Broughton found that Bible stories provided a way to help prisoners discuss their own problems and come to faith in Christ. They had difficulty memorizing a Bible verse, but they could tell Bible stories accurately that covered several chapters.¹⁷

We can use stories from the Bible as we witness with people and then disciple them, regardless of their reading abilities. The same Holy Spirit that works through a famous preacher or curriculum writer can work through the small group leader. When leaders are genuine about their walk with the Lord, the group will more easily become transparent and hold each other accountable for spiritual development.

Bible storying is a very enjoyable approach for small groups that are intentionally relational, supportive, transparent, and accountable. As oral-preference learners participate, their involvement on a number of learning levels will facilitate their maturity as followers of Jesus, baptized in not only water, but in the ways of Christ, and become equipped so that they can entrust it to others as well (2 Timothy 2:2).

Endnotes

1. Ong, Walter J. 1982. Reprinted 1991. *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*. New York: Routledge, 11.
2. Mitchell, Ella. 1986. "Black Nurture." *Black Church Lifestyles*. Compiled by Emmuel L. McCall. Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman Press, 59-61.
3. Ibid, 65.
4. Ibid, 66.
5. Gifford, Sally. 2004. "Literary Reading in Dramatic Decline, According to National Endowment for the Arts Survey." National Endowment for the Arts. Accessed 30 May 2009 from www.nea.gov/news/news04/ReadingAtRisk.Html.
6. Ibid.
7. Defined in *Making Disciples of Oral Learners*. 2005. New York, Elim Printing, 86.
8. Lovejoy, Grant. Undated. "The Extent of Orality." International Mission Board, SBC, 3.
9. Ibid, 3ff.
10. Results of the first tests since 1992 are available in the publication, "A First Look at the Literacy of America's Adults in the 21st Century". To download the report as a PDF file, visit nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2006470.
11. Roberts, Donald and Ulla G. Foehr. 2008. "Trends in Media Use." *The Future of Children* 18(1):11. Accessed 2 February 2010 from www.eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content_storyage_01/0000019b/80/3d/cd/aa.pdf.
12. Lovejoy ("The Extent of Orality") provides in-depth analysis of the basis for United Nation's (UNESCO) global literacy claims.
13. The Barna Group. 2007. "A New Generation Expresses its Skepticism and Frustration with Christianity." Accessed 2 September 2009 from www.barna.org/barna-update/article/16-teensnext-gen/94-a-new-generation-expresses-its-skepticism-and-frustration-with-christianity.
14. Hipps, Shane. 2009. *Flickering Pixels: How Technology Shapes Your Faith*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 107.
15. Willis, Avery T. and Mark Snowden. 2010. *Truth That Sticks: How to Communicate Velcro Truth in a Teflon World*. Colorado Springs, Colo.: NavPress.
16. Wycliffe International Communications, November 2009. Accessed 21 January 2010 from www.wycliffe.net/ScriptureAccessStatistics/tabid/73/language/en-US/Default.aspx.
17. Snowden, Mark. 2009. "Case Studies in Making Disciples Using Storying." In *Storying in a Day*, unpublished, North American Mission Board, SBC.

Mark Snowden co-authored a chapter with Avery Willis in *Orality Breakouts* (ION/LCWE, 2010) for Lausanne III as well as *Truth That Sticks* (NavPress, 2010). He was the Lausanne work group facilitator in 2004 that published

Making Disciples of Oral Learners and launched the [International Orality Network \(ION\)](#). He is the lead storying trainer for the [North American Mission Board, SBC](#).

Bible Storying in America, Part 3: How to Do It

By Mark Snowden

(Editor's note: This is the third of a 3-part article on Bible storying. Read [Part 1](#) and [Part 2](#).)

Bible storying is a narrative presentation to convey a series of Bible stories that are discussed after they are told orally. There are many different ways to present the gospel or lead a small group.

The small group leader begins by reviewing the previous lesson. This is critical to tracking how the group is progressing. He or she has a listening task. Did the group get it? Is there disobedience or evidence of falling away? The previous session could be repeated.

The new story is selected based on the worldview of the members and issues in their lives. Story sets written for use among other people often fall flat and smack of irrelevance.

Contextualizing the story is important. The leader must describe where the story fits in the overall timeline of the Bible. Details that might be distractions, such as explaining terms or using a map, can be shared beforehand as well to help the story flow uninterrupted.

The leader then tells the story with enthusiasm and a certain amount of drama. He or she never embellishes or injects something not found in the story. Only by examining a number of Bible translations and “mastering” the story does the narrative come alive as the Holy Spirit works in the hearts of the hearers.

Following the story, a sequence begins in order to make sure everyone caught the facts of the story, wrestles with the truth, and can accurately apply it to their lives. In order to drive home the story, participants may spontaneously act out the story, draw a picture that represents what the story means to them, or convey the truth through some other creative expression. After all, emotions etch memories and activities serve as a way to connect with the heart of the participants.

When leading a storying workshop, Michael Novelli said, “When you story, the responsibility for learning shifts from the teacher to the student.” In his book, *Shaped by the Story*, he calls this a “learner-centered focus” in which leaders become “experience architects.”¹

When the stories are sifted by the group, the Holy Spirit reveals at least one Bible truth. Sometimes truths can be numerous as well as profound. People often say, “Oh! I get it! I have to totally rely on God just like Moses.” That’s when Bible studies become invigorating. Lives are changed and transformed at the deepest levels.

After people accept Christ, the discipler must not switch to a literate approach. Bible stories can certainly track along a theme for new believers, emerging leaders, and church multipliers. Most storyers start over in Genesis and begin discipleship and leader training efforts. A significant change among believers is that small group leaders begin giving them assignments after each story. Holding all believers accountable for spiritual growth helps believers live out God’s Word in their daily routines and relationships. They need to learn to model godly behavior within their own groups.

Endnote

1. Novelli, Michael. 2008. *Shaped by the Story*. El Cajon, Calif.: Youth Specialities, 88, 91.

Mark Snowden co-authored a chapter with Avery Willis in *Orality Breakouts* (ION/LCWE, 2010) for Lausanne III as well as *Truth That Sticks* (NavPress, 2010). He was the Lausanne work group facilitator in 2004 that published *Making Disciples of Oral Learners* and launched the [International Orality Network](#) (ION). He is the lead storying trainer for the [North American Mission Board, SBC](#).

Jesus: Gentle, Meek, and Mild?

By Ferdinand Nweke

Lord, paint upon the eyeballs of my soul the image of Thy Son. – Charles Spurgeon

One day Jesus, gentle, meek, and mild, went to the temple. He had a whip in his hands, and with a violence which the disciples had never seen before, proceeded to overthrow the tables of money changers and flush out thieves from the temple. "Get these out of here!" He thundered. "How dare you turn my Father's house into a market!" (John 2:16, NIV). That was when they remembered from their childhood Sabbath School lessons something written about the Messiah: "And His disciples remembered that it is written [in the Holy Scriptures], Zeal (the fervor of love) for Your house will eat Me up. [I will be consumed with jealousy for the honor of your house.]" (John 2:17, Amplified)

It is important to read John 2:17 from other translations to understand the holy volcano that erupted from Jesus' heart that day. Here's a sampler:

- "And it came to the minds of the disciples that the Writings say, 'I am on fire with passion for your house.'" (Basic English)
- "The disciples then remembered that the Scriptures say, 'My love for your house burns in me like a fire.'" (CEV)
- "And his disciples remembered, that it is written: The zeal of thy house hath devoured me." (Murdock)
- "His disciples remembered that Scripture said, 'Devotion for your house will consume me.'" (God's Word)

Observe here that a raging fire was *burning* inside Jesus Christ: a passion for God's house consumed him and drove him to do the radical things he did that day. It ate him up, devoured him. I don't believe the disciples ever forgot this scripture verse.

Who could forget that fateful day when the Son of God used a homemade whip to rout a den of thieves? That picture of their master on fire for the glory of God stuck in their minds. The disciples couldn't think of him and be lukewarm. The same thing that ate him ultimately ate them. The fire that burned in him had been kindled in their own souls. And it was a fire the mighty Roman Empire and the ferocious persecution of the Caesars could not contain. They turned the world upside down.

Fire on the Earth

Jesus declared one of his reasons for coming was to cast a fire into the earth:

"I've come to start a fire on this earth—how I wish it were blazing right now! I've come to change everything, turn everything right side up—how I long for it to be finished! Do you think I came to smooth things over and make everything nice? Not so. I've come to disrupt and confront!" (Luke 12:49-51, The Message, emphasis added)

There is something wrong with the bland Jesus being peddled around today. This Jesus is a mimicry, a far cry from the biblical Jesus. When John saw him on the Isle of Patmos,

“...His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.” (Revelation 1:14-16, NIV)

He has eyes of fire. His feet are like bronze glowing in a furnace. Hearts caught fire when he spoke: “Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?” (Luke 24:32). He sent fire on his disciples on the day of Pentecost: “...there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost” (Acts 2:3-4).

Where is this burning, consuming fire in the hearts of those that profess Christ? Zeal is a scarce commodity in today’s church. Where there is zeal, it is not for God’s house, but a strange fire for some other worldly or temporal things. Who can fathom what this fire of zeal can accomplish for God and his purposes in our generation?

Zeal is the cloak that drives and propels you to battle after you have put on all the other weapons of our warfare. When things had deteriorated in Israel, divine zeal came to the rescue. We need a similar fire to reverse our declension:

“We know our disobedience; we have denied the Lord our God. We know what rebels we are and how unfair we are, for we carefully plan our lies. Our courts oppose the righteous man; fairness is unknown. Truth falls dead in the streets, and justice is outlawed.

Yes, truth is gone, and anyone who tries a better life is soon attacked. The Lord saw all the evil and was displeased to find no steps taken against sin. He saw no one was helping you and wondered that no one intervened. Therefore he himself stepped in to save you through his mighty power and justice. He put on righteousness as armor and the helmet of salvation on his head. He clothed himself with robes of vengeance and of godly fury.” (Isaiah 59:13-17, TLB)

“For [the Lord] put on righteousness as a breastplate or coat of mail, and salvation as a helmet upon His head; *He put on garments of vengeance for clothing and was clad with zeal [and furious divine jealousy] as a cloak.*” (John 2:17, Amplified; emphasis added).

He was dressed in these garments of vengeance when he cleansed the temple. It was in this garb of zeal and furious divine jealousy for the purpose of God that he died on the cross to procure our salvation and purchase unto himself, “a peculiar people, zealous for good works” (Titus 2:14). It still burns in his eyes of fire as he sits at the Father’s right hand, from whence he will come again to judge the living and the dead.

Fire in My Bones

It seems all the friends of God in every generation were consumed by this fiery zeal for the house of God.

Jeremiah wanted to resign from proclaiming the Word due to the indignities and ridicule he suffered at the hands of wicked men for proclaiming the truth God gave him for a backslidden nation. But that option was precluded by something beyond him.

“If I say, I will not make mention of [the Lord] or speak any more in His name, in my mind and heart it is as if there were a burning fire shut up in my bones. And I am weary of enduring and holding it in; I cannot [contain it any longer].” (Jeremiah 20:9, Amplified)

The gospel is presently “contained” inside the vast majority of Christians. The reason is simple: nothing is *burning* them. They can “hold in” divine agenda while they go about their own enterprises. They look upon a perishing world and continue business as usual. Occasionally, they let out some praise or other godly activity. Then they return to their *status quo ante*, “containing” the light and life that can save a moribund world.

But not Jeremiah: “If I say, “Forget it! No more GOD-Messages from me!” The words are fire in my belly, a burning in my bones. I’m worn out trying to hold it in. I can’t do it any longer!” (Jeremiah 20:9, The Message).

A raging, internal fire made it impossible for this man of God to keep quiet and mind his business. His only relief came through preaching the message, in season and out of season.

Surface fire is hot enough, but “fire *in my belly*, a burning *in my bones*”? The bone is a very rigid structure with a narrow cavity. Even pus inside the bone (as happens in osteomyelitis and other medical conditions) is terrible. The pus has no outlet and the pressure mounts on very sensitive nerve endings inside the bone, leading to intense pain relieved only by draining the bone cavity. My younger brother had this condition for years before he was cured permanently. He was miserable while it lasted. How much more *fire* shut up inside a man’s bones!

It’s obvious why Jeremiah couldn’t quit or keep quiet. Preaching was no longer optional, but a necessity, demanded by the fire that raged in his bones. It’s for the same reason the apostles declared, “We are *not able not to speak* what we saw and heard” (Acts 4:20, Literal Version, emphasis added).

Notice the double negative. They couldn’t hold it in. Jail or torture was a better option. And it was for the same reason Paul cried, “Woe to me if I do not proclaim the gospel” (1 Corinthians 9:16, Literal Version). He wasn’t cursing himself—just renouncing the miserable possibility of trying to contain a raging fire in his soul.

Note that “bones” is plural—“fire shut up in my *bones*,” not “bone.” Every bone in Jeremiah’s body was burning with this fire. It was unremitting, relentless. It was not an occasional excitement or an emotional high, but a constant, blazing fire that used the man himself for fuel.

What else was there to keep the fire burning if not the ignitable, combustible heart and bones of the prophet? The fire “ate” him; it “ate”—consumed—Jesus. “Flame of God, make me Thy fuel,” Amy Carmichael prayed. “Without wood a fire goes out...charcoal fuels burning coals and wood fuels fire” (Proverbs 26:20-21, God’s Word).

And it just might be this possibility of being *used for fuel* that keeps the vast majority of Christians from seeking this fire.

My spirit craves the same fire that burned in my master. In a lukewarm age, nauseating to an absolute God, I long for the same devotion to God's house, purpose, and agenda in my generation. I want it to eat me, consume me, devour me, and motivate me to the highest sacrifice and selfless service for the house of my God.

May Thy rich grace impart
Strength to my fainting heart
My zeal inspire
As Thou hast died for me,
Oh, may my love to Thee
Pure, warm and changeless be
A living fire.¹

My earnest expectation is that this living fire will not burn in me alone, but will ignite others as I journey through time to eternity.

Endnote

1. "My Faith Looks Up to Thee"; words by Ray Palmer, music by Lowell Mason.

Dr. Ferdinand Nweke, a medical doctor in Nigeria, coordinates Eternity Ministries, which focuses on maximizing Calvary and living with eternity in view. He has authored several books and songs.

Indian Megachurches' Centripetal Mission

By Imchen K. Sungjemmeren

The growth in the number of megachurches around the globe is an interesting phenomenon.

Researchers like John Vaughan¹ and Scott Thumma and Dave Travis² have defined megachurches as churches where two thousand or more attendees worship every weekend. Many researchers have been reporting about such churches from around the globe. Below I attempt to give an overview of these churches in India.

Three Indian Megachurches

Case studies of three megachurches revealed that Indian megachurches are a different breed of churches in India. These three were located in two major cities of India—Kolkata and Bangalore. Each had a humble beginning.

The Mark Buntain Memorial Assembly of God Church. Located in Kolkata, this megachurch was started by American missionary Mark Buntain, a contemporary of Mother Teresa. It began as a tent meeting, but today stands majestically as a marbled structure with air conditioning cooling the hot Kolkata air. The present senior pastor is a scholar. He believes in making Jesus famous rather than Christianity or the Church as an institution.

The worship services are conducted every weekend in eight languages: English, Bengali, Hindi, Malayalam, Nepali, Oriya, Tamil, and Telegu. This church has begun developing the cell group structure of operation, which (according to an associate pastor) is an effective way of reaching millions in Kolkata who belong to diverse faiths, cultures, and lifestyles.

Full Gospel Assembly of God Church. This megachurch is in Bangalore. It was started by an Indian, a theological graduate in the 1980s. He would walk through the lanes and streets of the city praying to God for a church. He and two others constituted the first church. After more than twenty years, this church claims to have seventeen thousand attendees every Sunday.

The founder, a man of prayer, is now the senior pastor. He prays that India will be washed by the blood of Jesus. Such radicalism has attracted many threats; but it has also attracted many attendees. Worship services are conducted in five languages: English, Kannada, Tamil, Malayalam, and Nepali. This church has begun focusing on media evangelism. The senior pastor claims to telecast the gospel through 32 channels with viewership of 300 million a week.

Bethel Assembly of God Church. This megachurch is also in Bangalore. It was started by Bible college teachers as a house church in the 1950s. By the 1960s it obtained land and erected buildings. Today, this church is located on the outskirts of the city and has sufficient space for parking—an attraction for many.

This church conducts services in four languages: English, Kannada, Malayalam, and Tamil. It has grown through cell groups and volunteer leaders. One distinguishing feature is that it conducts days and nights of fasting prayer many times throughout the year.

Characteristics that Attract Non-believers

These Indian megachurches exhibit *centripetal mission*. The adjective *centripetal* implies moving or directed toward the center; *centrifugal*, on the other hand, means mission that is sending or moving away from the center. This may seem paradoxical, but it is not. The opposing implications of these two terms can be resolved if mission is considered in terms of church growth.

Therefore, the activities or characteristics of a church which attracts or brings attendees (thus making the church grow in attendance) can be considered its centripetal mission. Below are ten characteristics these churches display.

1. **They are strong in giving.** They believe that a *giving church grows*; thus they put a strong emphasis on giving. These churches are able to collect huge sums of money. They also believe that a *growing church gives*. And so they give away major portions of the offerings to help the needy. They also sponsor seminarians, give aid to church planters, manage children's homes, maintain their huge buildings, pay full-time workers, and pay the bills of different projects and programs (like the production of CD-ROMS and TV programs and the publication of tracts and books for evangelism and other church-related ministries).
2. **They have magnificent buildings.** These Indian megachurches have outstandingly huge and magnificent buildings. For an *aam admi* (average Indian), these buildings appear luxurious. The one in Kolkata is like a theatre where seats are cushioned. The two in Bangalore have enough chairs for everyone who comes to the worship service (this is unlike some churches in India, where according to gender, age, caste, or class, some or all sit on the ground). Worshipping in a huge congregation provides attendees a psychological boast in a place where belonging to Christianity makes one a minority, and highly susceptible.
3. **They are focused on developing full-time ministers.** The Indian churches sponsor seminarians who become full-time ministers. Some become full-time ministers in the megachurches; others become church planters and pastors in areas beyond the megachurches.

4. **They have networks of cell groups.** These churches have numerous cell groups of twenty members each. The senior pastor of the English congregation of one of the megachurches in Bangalore emphasized that these cell groups multiply mitotically after it has maximum strength. After attracting twenty members, a group divides into two of ten each. Both groups begin to function as separate units and continue to attract non-believers.

The senior pastor of the Malayalam congregation of the same megachurch explained that each church member tries to be sensitive and look out for people in need. Anyone in need is attended to quickly. If they respond to this initiation, then they are asked to join a cell group. After attending the meeting several times (and if they want to continue), they are incorporated into the church.

5. **They focus on the participation of lay people in mission.** The word-of-mouth form of witness plays a significant role in advertising Jesus in unreached India. Lay people invite neighbors and friends to their cell groups and Sunday worship services. They are also quick to help neighbors and friends who may be seekers or non-believers. Many who need healing and deliverance respond and are ultimately incorporated into the church. A sensitive cell group can achieve much, even in a religiously-plural country where people who are needy still look for divine help and guidance. Cell groups and lay persons become missionaries, carrying the good news of Jesus.
6. **They focus on training volunteer leaders.** Many lay persons in the churches are interested in studying theology, but do not have time to go to a residential program. To such people, these churches offer courses on theology and leadership. They are given a certificate or diploma from a seminary with which the church is associated.

For example, the South Asian Bible College identifies those who have taken courses from the Full Gospel Assembly of God Church in Bangalore. These certificate or diploma holders can join their seminary when they can find time, or they can become leaders of different cell groups or used elsewhere in the megachurch. Volunteer leaders range from youths to senior citizens. This is the strongest centripetal mission force found in the Indian megachurches.

7. **They have a strong emphasis on the senior pastor.** The senior pastors are strong attracting agents. One said that it took many years to overcome many obstacles and discouragements to come to a point where his church (located in a mixed residential and commercial area) cannot accommodate more people, even after six worship services are held in a Sunday. He believes in prayer while the attendees look to him for meeting their needs. In the other two churches, the senior pastors were not the founders, but their charisma has been found to be the source of attraction. Their gift of preaching, leadership, healing, and blessing are highly sought after.
8. **They emphasize fasting and prayer.** In secular India, where advancement in medical research provides some hope, even those who belong to other faiths seek help and healing from these churches. In fact, it is prayers that sustain the growth of the churches, said the senior pastors of both megachurches in Bangalore.
9. **They emphasize charity and meeting physical needs.** When a tsunami struck the southern part of the country, one of the megachurches in Bangalore was one of the quickest churches to respond. Attendees emptied departmental stores, loaded goods in trucks, and sent the items to the people in distress. Homes for lesser fortunate children are built to provide education and proper care. Trainings are offered to help the least fortunate stand on their feet.

10. **They have seeker-friendly worship services.** The reduction in the use of offensive words is one of the centripetal forces. The megachurch in Kolkata calls believers “Jesus’ followers”, “Jesus’ disciples”, or *Yesu bhakt* rather than “Christians”. India was colonized for many years and the experiences of the people by the dominating power is not forgotten by many Indians. Moreover, although baptism is a must to avail membership, anyone can attend these churches. They wait for a seekers to make their own decisions to be baptized. The reduction of pressure on seekers to get converted or baptized helps them feel at home.

Two Approaches

Indian megachurches have two different approaches: a *non-provocative approach* and a *fortitude approach*.

Non-provocative approach. Speaking the truth in love has been the approach of the megachurch in Kolkata. The church has been highly cautious not to offend seekers. It has also shown that waiting upon the Holy Spirit for convicting seekers yields an increase in believers. Moreover, the sensitivity of this church helps to avoid intimidation of those from other religions. In a pluralistic India, where Christianity is a minority and is often in a persecuted state, this church gives a good model of doing mission with safety.

Fortitude approach. Being bold even when the odds are high has been the approach of one of the megachurches in Bangalore. The founder and senior pastor has not wavered from his desire that India one day be washed by the blood of Jesus. There have been reports of threats to the pastor and the church. Some Christian mission strategists fear that such a church instigates opposition from fanatics in India. But this church is still standing; I believe, in many instances, it is its sheer size and strength that has dispelled real opposition.

Endnotes

1. Vaughan, John N. 1993. *Megachurches & American Cities*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books.
2. Thumma, Scott and Travis Dave. 2007. *Beyond Megachurch Myths: What We Can Learn from Mega-church's Largest Churches*, First Edition. Jossey-Bass Leadership Network Series. Indianapolis, Ind.: Jossey-Bass.

Imchen K. Sungjemmeren (Meren) was a missionary teacher for two years at South Bank Baptist Mission in Assam, India. After which he and his wife joined the Par Terok Mission, which supports a church in Arunachal Pradesh. He is now on faculty in the Department of Missiology at Union Biblical Seminary in India.

LEADERSHIP PROFILES

Leadership Profile: Chris Heuertz, Activist, Author, Public Speaker, USA

Q. Please tell us about your family.

A. I've been married to Phileena for fourteen years and we share our home with a blue fish named, "A Unicorn Named Diamond".

Q. Please give us a brief overview of your work and ministry.

A. Phileena and I serve as the co-executive directors for **Word Made Flesh**, a community of contemplative activists called and committed to serving Christ among the most vulnerable of the world's poor. Phileena's distinction in the co-directorship is for accompaniment and mine is for partnership.

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

A. Between 1993 and 1996 I had the privilege of sitting down with Mother Teresa more than a dozen times. Her kindness and love made quite an impact on me. Her availability surprised me. Watching her pray, seeing her serve, and observing her in community with the other Missionaries of Charity made a deep vocational impression on me.

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

A. I think many evangelicals have perfected a form of theological reductionism, over-identifying people as potential converts rather than loving them for the sake of love. We've turned people into a "target audience" and failed to recognize the divine imprint of God in all humanity. I think it's an earnest and sincere mistake, but one that has contributed to the diminishment of all of us in community. Reflecting on the relationship between Jesus and Judas helps us unravel some of these tendencies, Jesus' "success" with Judas wasn't demonstrated in Judas' response to Christ's love, but was validated in the fidelity of love Christ had for Judas.

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

A. My wife's book, *Pilgrimage of a Soul: Contemplative Spirituality for the Active Life*, is a theological narrative that is mapped against the metaphor of pilgrimage that invites men and women into a deeper understanding of the movements of the soul toward union with Christ.

Q. What websites, bloggers, and Tweeters do you regularly follow?

A. Twitter: @phileena, @wordmadeflesh, @jesus, @zwilliamsmusic, @charlestlee; Blogs: www.faithandleadership.com/blog; <http://michaelhyatt.com>; www.ourtimetoact.com

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

A. I hope I continue to provoke an alternative evangelical consciousness towards hope, justice, and freedom for all, not something sub-cultural, but counter-cultural to how Christians see these things now.

LAUSANNE REPORTS

Partnerships in Evangelism: An Overview of Mission Africa

By Scott Lenning

Mission Africa was birthed out of the desire of leaders in Cape Town discussing the possibility of hosting the **Third Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization**. The desire to host this Congress was very strong, as was the aspiration to use the momentum of the Congress to be actively engaged in evangelism.

Leaders discussed the model Billy Graham set in the original 1974 Congress to hold an evangelistic crusade prior to the Congress. The Cape Town discussion grew in excitement to attempt to host the Congress *and* have an evangelistic mission throughout Africa.

Once Cape Town was chosen for the site of the Congress, Michael Cassidy, founder of [African Enterprise](#), became chair of the Cape Town 2010 mission committee and the planning was underway.

The concept of ministry partnership was foundational. Under Cassidy's leadership, Songe Chibambo, Pan African director for African Enterprise, and I (Scott Lenning, executive director for the U.S.-based [Scott Dawson Evangelistic Association](#)) became co-directors. Shortly thereafter, Eliot Winks of [Christ Awakening](#) joined the leadership team. We worked with Cape Town 2010 Congress director Blair Carlson for the next two years.

Cassidy's desire was to do "matchmaking" between ministries from around the world. Chibambo and I quickly developed a working relationship that was designed to model the power of partnership to the ministries that would become actively engaged in Mission Africa.

Chibambo worked within known networks across Africa to discover host ministries and communities for missions. I began building a network of international evangelists who would travel to Africa to be ministry partners with local host ministries. An evangelist "profile" was developed to make sure participating ministries worked together in the practice and theology of the original Lausanne Covenant.

Cassidy also discouraged any attempt to micromanage the individual missions. A preparation guide was developed to give ministry partners an outline of steps to take to conduct an event with the highest possible impact in a community for Christ. The guide was based on two hands, a *spiritual hand* and a *physical hand*, working together to prepare for the mission.

The fingers on the spiritual hand included prayer, friendship evangelism, counselor training, and program and long-term follow-up throughout churches. The physical hand included organizational committees, promotions, fund raising, facility arrangements, and volunteers. Even this visual illustration of two hands working together represented the future partnerships that would be necessary to make Mission Africa a reality.

After two years of work and communication between emerging partner ministry teams, the first mission took place 1-7 March 2010 in Via Town, Liberia. Over the next six months, twenty-one Mission Africa events took place. Each event was a culmination of the partnerships between ministries from around the world working together.

Teams worked together from Ethiopia and New Zealand, Kenya and the USA, Rwanda and Kenya, Australia and South Africa, Germany and Tanzania, the USA and Zimbabwe.

The Lord blessed these partnerships and the other fifteen teams with a total estimated attendance of 488,394, and 58,243 individuals making commitments to Christ!

Ecclesiastes 4:12 states, "Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken." Early in the Mission Africa preparation process, we adopted a saying: "Attempt something so big for God, that it is doomed to failure unless God be in it." The three-strand cord that made Mission Africa have such a strong impact for Christ was between two ministries and the Lord. That is truly a partnership which cannot be broken.

Reporting the Mission Africa story at Cape Town 2010 created a buzz of excitement...not simply about the missions that had just concluded, but of the model of partnership that inspired individuals to want to join and be part of it in the months and years ahead.

The power of partnerships is a must for the days ahead. No longer can we operate as “Lone Rangers”; we must work together to reach this world for Christ. Pray for Mission Africa Stage 2 that is in the early phase of development. Pray that the Lord would direct these future ministry partnerships into effective ministry models for years to come.

In this issue of Lausanne World Pulse, you will read about several of the partnerships that resulted in thousands of people coming to Christ.

Scott Lenning is executive director for the U.S.-based [Scott Dawson Evangelistic Association](#). Formerly, he was a crusade director for Billy Graham. Lenning served as co-director of Mission Africa in fellowship with the Third Lausanne Congress on World Evangelism in Cape Town.

Terms and Conditions of Use

All material from LWP is copyrighted by Evangelism and Missions Information Service (EMIS), its partners, and authors. All rights are reserved. Except for personal use, no part of LWP may be reproduced by any mechanical, photographic or electronic process, or in the form of an audio recording, nor may it be stored in a retrieval system, transmitted or otherwise copied for public or private use without written permission of EMIS. For information regarding reprints or permissions, email info@lausanneworldpulse.com.