

ENRICHMENT

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A JOURNAL FOR PENTECOSTAL MINISTRY

M^{inistry} Matters

BY WAYDE I. GOODALL

THE INDIGENOUS CHURCH

Most parents want their children to be healthy, grow strong, develop their gifts, and enter life feeling somewhat independent. Oh, we love for them to call and ask for our opinion or assistance. But healthy parents understand that if their young person continues to have basic dependence needs, then that young adult will not develop the strengths necessary to succeed in a competitive world. It's a good thing for our children to grow up, enter their chosen career field, and make their own wise decisions.

Our government has struggled with its welfare system. How much assistance should it give to those in need? How long should the assistance last? Most experts agree that it is generally healthier for individuals or families to receive assistance for only a limited time rather than indefinitely. They should be encouraged to find employment and live with little or no government assistance. They will be happier, more fulfilled and confident, and they will be stronger because they have worked hard for the roof over their heads and the food on their tables. They become independent and self-supporting.

New Christians must grow to the point where they become mature. They must learn to develop a prayer life, to study the Word for themselves, and to share the faith just as someone shared it with them. This is healthy and natural. The new church that is mothered by a larger church, the new group of believers in a foreign land, the mission station that began with personnel and financial help from outside must become independent. It's for their own good.

As an indigenous church or mission station gradually is released to its own


national leadership and independent support, it grows in maturity and confidence. Like loving parents, the organization or persons that were involved in the inception of the work feel a maternal connection. They want to always be involved somewhat because they will always care. They will be there if a need arises. They love the indigenous church, mission station, or young leader. But they realize that it is God's will that the indigenous work become strong with its own leaders, in its own culture, and among its nation's people.

In December 1996, the Assemblies of God of Burkina Faso, a republic of West Africa, celebrated its 75th anniversary. As George O. Wood, Assemblies of God general secretary, preached to over 100,000 believers, he mentally said to himself, *I wish I could have brought every Assemblies of God minister and layperson to see firsthand the results of missionary investment and passion that has resulted in this strong indigenous church.* A few young missionaries went to this land 75 years ago with a dream to begin a church. The church grew—one believer at a time. In turn it started another church. Leadership was selected from among its national people. Now, 75 years later, this indigenous group is a sterling example of the strength of becoming independent and self-reliant rather than being continually dependent.

The church of South Korea is now sending out missionaries to unreached people groups and spiritually starved nations. The churches of Argentina, Brazil, Singapore, and numerous others are walking by their own vision and strength. If any of the indigenous churches become needy for assistance,

prayer, or advice, others within the body of Christ should care for them in any way possible; however, the work should remain independent.

It is selfish for parents to want their children to always be dependent on them. Why? Because children will not develop their own independent strengths, gifts, and dependence on God if they are dependent on their parents. It is also selfish for people or organizations to want new churches or mission stations to continually depend upon them. National leaders must be developed and must assume responsibility. In turn, they must not only care for their various ministries but find ways to care for other ministries. Their foundation of maturity will grow deep and strong when they are autonomous.

"We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ" (Colossians 1:28, NIV). 



Wayde I. Goodall, D.Min., is executive editor of *Enrichment* and coordinator of the Ministerial Enrichment Office, Springfield, Missouri.

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INTERVIEW WITH THOMAS E. TRASK

I Ask the Superintendent



You cannot be Pentecostal without being missions minded.

Part of the threefold priority reason-for-being of the Assemblies of God as stated in the Fellowship's Constitution and Bylaws "is to be an agency of God for evangelizing the world." That the Assemblies of God exists expressly to give continued emphasis to world evangelization is evident throughout its 83-year history.

In its first year as a sending agency (1919), the Assemblies of God commissioned 195 missionaries representing 27 countries. Today, the missions landscape of the Fellowship has grown to 1,775 missionaries serving in 148 countries.

The Spirit of Pentecost has been the vital link to the success of Pentecostal missions around the world. The dynamic for world evangelism came on the Day of Pentecost and continues to this day.

In his quarterly interview, General Superintendent Thomas E. Trask takes up the subject of the Holy Spirit and missions.

WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MISSIONS AND PENTECOST?

You can be missions minded without being Pentecostal, and many worldwide evangelical organizations are making a significant missions impact. But you cannot be Pentecostal without being missions minded. Missions is the result of Pentecost. That's why Pentecost was given—so the Church would become a missions-driven body.

Yet a significant number of churches are Pentecostal in doctrine and practice but are not missions minded. They have missed the purpose for why God gave the infilling of the Holy Spirit to the Church.

There are those who are not missions minded, and then there are those—an army of men and women—who have offered themselves for the cause of missions. The Assemblies of God has high regard for individuals who have answered the call of God to foreign or home missions service. Many of these people could have wonderful ministries or successful business careers. Instead, they have forsaken other careers to fulfill the call of God upon their lives. This is commendable—a marvelous testimony. We dare not forget our great missionary family.

Missions is the result of Pentecost.

WHAT IS YOUR CHALLENGE TO ASSEMBLIES OF GOD CHURCHES CONCERNING MISSIONS?

First, I want to say, "Thank you missionary family for your sacrifice, your contribution, and your dedication, both to the Great Commission and to the Assemblies of God. You are making a difference in our world."

Then I want to challenge churches who are not part of the missions program—those doing very little for missions. Every Assemblies of

God church ought to have a missions convention. Every Assemblies of God church ought to be supporting personnel for the cause of missions. Every Assemblies of God church ought to be obedient to the Great Commission by having missions projects. Missions is not something the Assemblies of God has come up with. The Great Commission is a directive given to us by Jesus. When we participate in missions, we are living in obedience to His command and to His Word. This is critical because if we fail to obey, we can't expect His blessing. But if we obey, we can expect His blessing, His approval, and His grace to rest upon all that we do.

You cannot have a harvest without a planting. And the missions arm of the Church is the planting arm God has given to us. God will see to it there is a harvest. We don't have to worry about that. We can't make the harvest happen. But we have the responsibility of making the planting happen and the joy of participating in the harvest for the Church.

Every Assemblies of God church ought to have a missions convention.

THE ASSEMBLIES OF GOD HAD OVER 500,000 REPORTED CONVERSIONS IN 1996. WHAT DOES THIS SAY TO US?

Actually, it's over 508,000 (see sidebar for additional ACMR statistics). These statistics tell us that whenever the Church is in the middle of revival and renewal, people's passion and compassion intensify. With spiritual vitality we are more aware of needs and the heart of God. Our ears are sensitive to His voice. Our hearts beat with His heart. This is not just programming. Our response grows out of a desire to win the lost. It grows out of relationship with Christ—individual relationship and the

body of Christ's corporate relationship with Him. As we see the intensity of the Spirit moving, it is for the purpose of reaching the lost through missions at home and abroad. And this will result again in harvest.

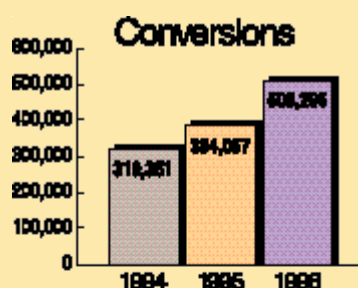
The Great Commission is a directive given to us by Jesus... if we fail to obey, we can't expect His blessing.

Annual Church Ministries

REPORT STATISTICS FOR 1996

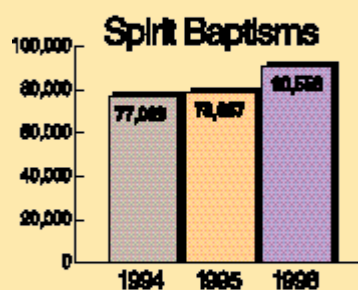
The following statistics are from the Annual Church Ministries Report for the U.S. for the 1996 report period ending December 31, 1996. Totals are based on current ACMRs from 64 percent of churches, and 1995 or older ACMRs/estimations from 36 percent of churches.

Change is based on a 1-year comparison of 1996 to 1995.



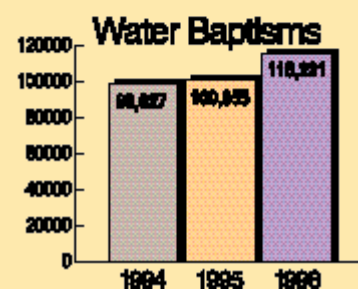
CONVERSIONS

After hovering at the 200,000 **conversions** level during the 1980s and 300,000 in the first half of the 1990s, reported conversions exceeded the 400,000 level entirely to a total of 508,296 in 1996. This is an amazing 32 percent increase over the 1995 total of 384,057.



BAPTISMS

Spirit baptisms grew 15 percent from 78,687 for 1995 to 90,558 for 1996. **Water baptisms** also rose 15 percent from 100,955 in 1995 to 116,221 in 1996.



ATTENDANCE

We saw a gain of 3.3 percent in **adherents** (2,467,588); 2.2 percent in **members** (1,407,941); and 2.8 percent in Sunday a.m. **worship** attendance (1,573,108). **Sunday school** attendance was stable at 1,011,258, a gain of only .5 percent, and enrollment grew 1.4 percent to 1,417,500.


—Sherri L. Doty is the statistician for the Assemblies of God, Springfield, Missouri.



WHAT IS THE CHURCH'S RESPONSE TO THE TASK OF THE GREAT COMMISSION?

The Spirit is energizing the Church to accomplish the task, and the Church is responding to the Spirit. We are living in great days of opportunity. God has given us tools for the gospel's sake that we never had in our early missions endeavors—the Internet, international air travel, and satellite communications, to name a few.

The Spirit is energizing the Church to accomplish the task, and the Church is responding to the Spirit.

The Church is rising to the opportunities and to the challenge. We now have more people offering themselves for full-time missions work, and more doors have opened to us than any time in the 83-year history of the Assemblies of God. It's a wonderful day—a challenging day for the church of Jesus Christ. 

**Foreign missions giving for 1996 totaled \$117,942,262. World missions giving was \$235,416,240 for 1996.*

Whenever the Church is in the middle of revival and renewal, people's passion and compassion intensify.

WHAT IS THE CHALLENGE FOR US FROM SUCH A HARVEST?

The challenge for the Church is to preserve the harvest. We must have discipleship programs in place, so we can serve and keep the new converts we are reaching.

In response to this challenge, missionary giving from our churches in 1996 was an all-time high and continues to escalate.*

The Lord of the harvest is saying to the Church again, "Work...[for] the night cometh, when no man can work. Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest" (John 9:4; 4:35).

Embracing Christ's Mission in Our World

Jesus would never
send us on a mission
that had no hope
of success.

BY GEORGE O. WOOD

Matthew's Gospel closes by giving Jesus' standing orders—known as the Great Commission—to His disciples of all times: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go 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 I have commanded you. And surely I will be with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:18–20¹).

THE GREAT CLAIM

We get the sense of the Greek text better when we translate the opening phrase, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me, *and I still have it.*" It's a bold claim. His authority is never limited to one period of time nor are His power and throne in danger of being toppled. Jesus would never send us on a mission that had no hope of success.

A friend told me that when he was a young seminary student in New York City shortly after World War II, a close acquaintance urged him to buy stock in a new Japanese company breaking into the American market. Even though he could have bought stock for a dime a share, my friend ignored the advice. Had he invested, he would have made a fortune. The company? Sony Corporation. He told me, "If only I had known..."

Jesus' claim to "all authority" lets us know we can't go wrong when we invest our lives in Him. His authority embraces all heaven and earth—angels, saints in glory, the created order in space and time, the devil and his minions, powers, principalities, thrones, and dominions. All are subject to Him; He has the final word.

At the outset of His ministry, the devil offered Jesus "*all* the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. *All* this I will give you," he said, 'if you will bow down and worship me' " (Matthew 4:8,9).

Assuming that the devil had the power to make the offer and that he would have performed on the promise had Jesus bowed down,

Jesus' rule would have been only temporary. The devil offered an earth that is passing away. His offer did not include authority in heaven nor did it include authority to forgive sins or grant eternal life.

How much greater authority Jesus has because "he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:8–11).

We will all appear before God. We will not give account to Buddha, Confucius, Muhammad, or any other religious authority. We will answer to Jesus Christ.

THE GREAT RESPONSIBILITY

The great responsibility flows from the great claim. "Therefore" is the connective word. The commission to us arises out of the power claimed by Christ: All power is given; therefore, go and make that power a reality.

**With the Lord's resources,
we will always
be impelled into
the Great Commission.**

If we do not recognize the "therefore," we may never go. Too many believers and churches look at their small resources rather than His and say, "We can't." But with the Lord's resources, we will always be impelled into the Great Commission.

Jesus used four verbs to describe our great responsibility: *go, make disciples, baptizing, and teaching.*

In English, two verbs are imperatives (commands): *go* and *make disciples*; and two are participles: *baptizing* and *teaching*.

In the Greek text, only one verb is imperative: *make disciples*. The other three are participles: *going, baptizing, teaching*.

**We have unwittingly
redefined the
Great Commission
so that we think
it says: "Have
people pray the
sinner's prayer."**

Consider the implications of this grammatical distinction.

The imperative: *make disciples*

The responsibility is to *make disciples*. How we do that is described by the three participles.

Each year our churches report the number of persons converted and baptized. Annually we usually show at least 300,000 conversions but less than

make disciples of all nations or ethnicities.

Notice the two *alls* so far in the Great Commission: "*all* authority" and "*all* nations." Someone has said, "A cosmic significance is assigned to Christ, and a universal destination is assigned for the gospel." The clearer our perception of Jesus' power, the more extensive will be our concern to share the good news.

He responded that when he was a missionary child in northwest China and Tibet on a boring day, he and his friends would jump barefoot into a warm pile of yak manure and then go for a swim afterwards. Kneading the warm yak manure with their toes felt good but accomplished nothing.

Jesus did not command: "Take trips." Rather, He commanded us to "make disciples." Unless our going has a purpose, it's only a feel-good experience that benefits no one but ourselves.

The participle form of the verb means it's not a question of whether or not we go. Jesus assumed we would go when He said "as you go." Jesus' confidence in His first disciples was not misplaced: "Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere" (Mark 16:20).

The apostle Paul gives practical recognition that not all believers will be able in their *going* to cross oceans, languages, or cultures; therefore, their responsibility is to *send* (cf. Romans 10:14,15). Oswald J. Smith put it this way: "We must go or send a substitute." He also said, "The light that shines farthest shines brightest nearer home. The church must be active at the extremities or it becomes chilled at the heart; it must be enlarging its circumference, or its center tends to shrink."

The second participle: *baptizing*

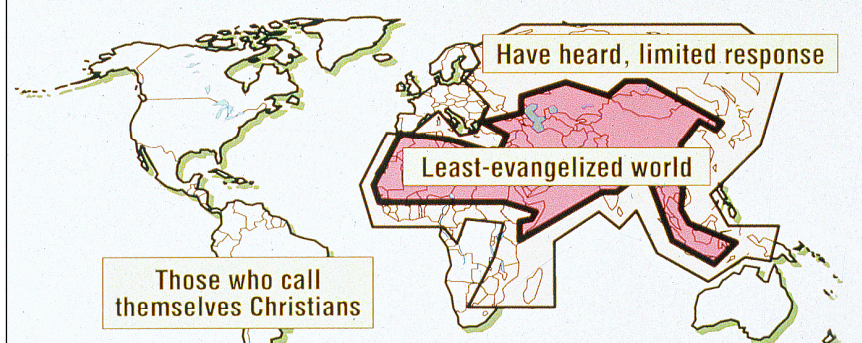
In many third-world countries, people are not recognized as Christian until they have been baptized in water—publicly declaring they are serious about their faith.

We are so quick to add people to the count that we forget true conversion results in someone becoming a disciple of Jesus.

Obviously, one can be saved without being baptized—witness the dying thief on the cross next to Jesus. But he was not the norm.

The Didache (teaching), a late first-century or early second-century

The status of the Great Commission



100,000 water baptisms, and the net gain in membership and Sunday church attendance remains negligible.

What's wrong? We have unwittingly redefined the Great Commission so that we think it says: "Have people pray the sinner's prayer," or "Get souls saved." We are so quick to add people to the count that we forget true conversion results in someone becoming a disciple of Jesus.

The business of the Great Commission is not only to get people ready for heaven, it's to get heaven into people—to make them like Christ. It involves transformation of lives on earth.

The word *disciple* means *learner*—one who is growing. For the Christian, school is never over.

Our focus on discipleship has propelled our Movement into developing colleges, Bible and graduate schools, distance education, and ministerial training programs around the world. Why? Because we cannot make disciples unless we are disciples. The responsibility is not just to make disciples but to

The fact that our mission is to all ethnicities means we must step out of the comfort of our own group, language, and culture. It is an obligation given us by the Lord himself.

The first participle: *having gone or as you go*

Judaism was not a missionary religion, with little thought of going. Jesus held otherwise: "Therefore, *as you go*, make disciples."

Evangelism is integral to our faith. It is no more right for us to keep quiet than it is for a research doctor who has discovered a cure for cancer to remain silent.

What difference does the verb form make—whether it's imperative *go* or the participle *having gone* or *as you go*?

If it's an imperative, then we may falsely feel our obligation has been performed if we simply go. But there must be a purpose to the going.

My missionary cousin David Plymire has said kiddingly that he wants to start a new venture called "Yak Manure Ministries." I asked him why that name.

postapostolic work, called for baptism to occur in running cold water. Only if cold water was unavailable could warm water be used. The running water symbolized the washing away of sins; the cold water symbolized the rigor of the Christian life.

Baptism helps the new convert understand that living the gospel is not a matter of convenience but of commitment. Jesus' focus was not on self-fulfillment but self-denial, not on cross avoidance but cross bearing. Baptism constitutes an initial act of obedience to Christ followed by a lifelong obedience to Him as Lord.

Water baptism is "in the *name*" of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, not "in the *names*." One God, eternally existent as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—into His life we are placed; baptism bearing visible witness of the invisible and spiritual reality of our presence in Him.

The third participle: *teaching*

Going, baptizing, and teaching are the show-and-tell of the gospel.

What are we to teach? The curriculum in the lifelong course of discipleship: "to obey everything [literally: *all things*] I have commanded you."

Here is the third all in the Great Commission.

- *All authority.* There is no power omitted from His control.
- *All nations.* No person is to be excluded.
- *All things.* No precept of Jesus should be ignored.

We find everything He has commanded in His personal example and in His teachings. Our Lord never foresaw a time or circumstance when any part of His teaching would become antiquated or untrue, inappropriate or needless.

It's so easy in our culture to preach only some things Jesus said or to substitute *our things* in place of *everything* He has commanded. In *A Biblical Theology of Missions*, George W. Peters quotes Hugh Thomson Kerr as aptly reminding us to anchor our teaching in the curriculum given by Jesus: "We are sent not to preach sociology but

salvation; not economics but evangelism; not reform but redemption; not culture but conversion; not progress but pardon; not a new social order but a new birth; not revolution but regeneration; not a new organization but a new creation; not democracy but the gospel; not civilization but Christ."

THE GREAT ASSURANCE

Jesus promised His disciples: "And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Our obedience to Jesus' mandate of *making disciples* by *going, baptizing, and teaching* is based on His total and unquestioned authority and encouraged by the promise of His unfailing and sustaining presence.

We are more than sent. We are accompanied, companioned by the Lord himself.

Personal

His presence is personal. The Greek text reads: "I *myself* am with you." The reflexive personal pronoun underscores Jesus' guarantee that we never do His work by ourselves.

David Livingstone wrote in his journal² dated January 14, 1856: "Felt

much turmoil of spirit in prospect of having all my plans for the welfare of this great region and this teeming population knocked on the head.... But I read that Jesus said: '*Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.*' It is the word of a gentleman of the most strict and sacred honour, so there's an end to it.... I feel quite calm now, thank God!"

The business of the Great Commission is not only to get people ready for heaven, it's to get heaven into people.

Later that same year, Livingstone returned from Africa. As he stood to address the faculty and students at the University of Glasgow—gaunt and haggard from long exposure to the tropical sun and numerous bouts with fever and severe illness—the hushed assembly heard him declare his resolve to go back to the continent of his calling. "But I return without misgiving and with great gladness. For would you like me to tell you what supported me through all the

Focus on the Great Commission

A clear sense of direction and vision are needed to keep churches focused on our God-given mandate.

Ways to keep churches focused on the Great Commission include:

Stated goal. A commitment to the Great Commission should be included in the church's purpose statement, making it clear that this is God's mandate.

Pastoral leadership. Pastors should preach specifically on the Great Commission several times a year and be living examples of its principles.

Small group emphases. Keep missions before the congregation through traditional missions activities, Sunday school classes, and other small groups within the church.

Hands-on missions involvement. Direct participation in missions activities dramatically boosts missions enthusiasm. People who return from missions trips learn they can make a difference.

Allocation of money and staff. Churches serious about the Great Commission invest money and personnel to encourage participation of church members in missions as well as to support ongoing missions work.

—Adapted from *Current Thoughts & Trends*, February 1997. Summarized from *Growing Churches*, Winter 1997 issue. Used by permission.

years of exile among people whose language I could not understand and whose attitude toward me was always uncertain and often hostile? It was this: 'Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.' On those words I staked everything, and they never failed!"

The responsibility is not just to make disciples but to make disciples of all nations or ethnicities.

More than resources or material blessings, Jesus promised us himself.

Abiding

Jesus stated He would be with us "always" (literally *all days*). This is the fourth *all* in the Great Commission:

- *All authority*. There is no power left out.
- *All nations*. There is no person left out.
- *All things*. There is no precept left out.
- *All days*. There is no time period left out.

All days includes days of strength and weakness, success and failure, sorrow and joy, youth and age, life and death—all the days, every last one.

Victorious

He promised He would be with us "to the very end of the age." The preposition *to* does not set a time limit on His presence. He will be with us past the age and into the age to come. The difference is that His presence now is invisible, but when this age is done we shall see Him face to face.


Frank Boreham wrote of David Livingstone's last hours. "He was away up among the bogs and marshes near Chitambo's village in Ilala. Save only for his helpers, he was all alone...at the end of everything. He walked as long as he could walk, rode as long as he could ride, and was carried on a litter as long as he could bear it. But now, with his feet too ulcerated to bear the touch of the ground, with his frame so emaciated that it frightens him when he sees it in

the mirror, and with a horrible inward hemorrhage draining away his scanty remnant of vitality, he can go no further. 'Knocked up quite!' he says, in the last indistinct entry in his journal."

The next morning they found him dead, on his knees. At the end, it appears he died alone. But look again, Boreham asks us. "He died on his knees! Then to whom was he talking when he died? He was talking even to the last moment of his life to the constant Companion of his long, long pilgrimage! He was speaking, even in the moment of death to the 'gentleman of the most strict and sacred honour' whose word he implicitly trusted. 'He will keep His word'—it is among the last entries in his journal—'He will keep His word, the gracious One, full of grace and truth; no doubt of it. He will keep His word, and it will be all right. Doubt is here inadmissible, surely!' "

Likewise for us, we have the word of a "gentleman of the most strict and sacred

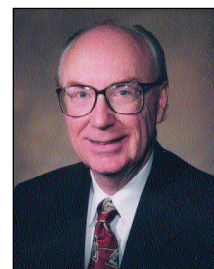
honour": "And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Our great responsibility is always sandwiched between His great claim and His great assurance. We will never fulfill the Great Commission unless we remember that the task He has given us is too big without Him! 

ENDNOTES

1. Scripture quotations are from the New International Version.
2. The references to David Livingstone are from a sermon by Frank William Boreham, "David Livingstone's Text," in Andrew W. Blackwood, *The Protestant Pulpit* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1977).

George O. Wood is the general secretary for the Assemblies of God, Springfield, Missouri.



INTERVIEW WITH DOUGLAS F. CLARK AND JERRY L. PARSLEY

The Emerging Muslim Convert Church



Douglas F. Clark (seated on the far right), sharing refreshments with the guards at the summit of the Khyber Pass in Pakistan.

There's tremendous freedom in most Middle East countries...to proclaim the gospel and reap a harvest.

—CLARK

The Church's obligation of taking the gospel to the ends of the earth is as urgent and compelling in 1998 as it was in the days of the apostles.

Until recently, the great missionary expansion of the Church over the past 200 years has been met with little resistance from non-Christian faiths. However, the tide of nonresistance has changed. Missions enterprises around the world are reevaluating the way they do missions.

The spread of the gospel to Islamic nations represents one of the greatest challenges to the Church. Muslims are the fastest growing major religious group, largely a result of their high birth rate. Islamic population is doubling every 22 years. By the year 2000, there will be an estimated 1.2 billion Muslims, over 80 percent of whom will have never heard the gospel.

Jerry Parsley, Eurasia field director, and Doug Clark, Middle East/North Africa area director, discuss with Executive Editor Wayde I. Goodall of Enrichment Journal, the challenge and progress of missions to the Islamic world.

HOW MANY ASSEMBLIES OF GOD MISSIONARIES ARE UNDER YOUR DIRECTION IN YOUR RESPECTIVE PARTS OF THE WORLD?

PARSLEY: We have 242 family and 28 single missionary units ministering in Eurasia.

CLARK: We have 32 family and 6 single missionary units ministering in the Middle East. They are scattered along the 5,500-mile stretch from Morocco in North Africa to Pakistan in Southern Asia.

WHAT'S THE STATUS OF THE CHURCH IN THE MIDDLE EAST?

CLARK: There are actually four major churches in the Middle East: the traditional Orthodox Catholic church, the Roman Catholic church, the Evangelical church, of which the Assemblies of God is a part, and the Muslim convert church.

There's been a tremendous move of the Holy Spirit among the Orthodox churches, especially among the Coptic Orthodox believers in Egypt, similar to what we saw in America among the charismatics in some of our traditional churches in the 1970s and 80s. The Evangelical churches in the Middle East are generally seeing steady growth in most countries. The Muslim convert church is growing extremely slow in some areas, but in other areas it's growing like wildfire. The growth is interdenominational and Pentecostal.

There's tremendous freedom in most Middle East countries for Evangelicals and Pentecostals to proclaim the gospel and reap a harvest—this includes not only the

Assemblies of God but also the Baptists, Presbyterians, and Church of God groups. In Lebanon, Jordan, Israel, and Egypt, the Assemblies of God churches are by far the most aggressive churches on the block.

PARSLEY: The one difficult thing in this whole issue is that some of the best stories cannot be told because of the risk it puts on our missionaries. There are sovereign moves of the Holy Spirit where we have missionaries in a number of isolated places. We are seeing small beginnings in these areas. Scripture reminds us not to despise these small beginnings. The Church is being planted, but sometimes it yields a very tender plant.

CLARK: We have some countries where you can count the members of the Muslim convert church on the fingers of two hands. Yet we have another country in our area where the Muslim convert church numbers over 100,000 believers.

PARSLEY: In many of these countries, the Assemblies of God church is recognized by the government as being viable and having relationship with them. But when we talk about reaching out to Muslims, then we can have problems.

IS PERSECUTION INTENSIFYING IN THE MIDDLE EAST?

CLARK: In some specific areas where Fundamentalists are particularly strong, persecution is intensifying. Many in these regions are bent on destroying believers and every vestige of their faith. But in the Middle



Jerry Parsley (right) using one-on-one evangelism to share the gospel.

East, as a whole, I'd have to say absolutely not. That's true as well for Muslim converts. In most of our countries, converts are under great social pressure from their families and occasionally from their governments as well.

But there are relatively few places where simply becoming a believer in Jesus is an automatic death sentence. Muslim believers who put their trust in the Lord and grow in their faith will often see their families come to a point where they can at least live with that family member's decision to follow Christ. That's especially true of believers who receive the strength and wisdom that comes with the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

Most of the intense social persecution comes from being ostracized by the family. But that's not a peculiarly Muslim thing; it's true in Jewish families as well. Everyone knows we've lost some of our Muslim convert pastors to assassination. But threats and beatings and being fired from one's job are far more common kinds of responses that converts have to face.

PARSLEY: One of the things we teach our missionaries is to be good citizens of whatever country they find themselves in. So we do try to respect the authority and pray for those in leadership. We are good

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—PARSLEY

The world by religion

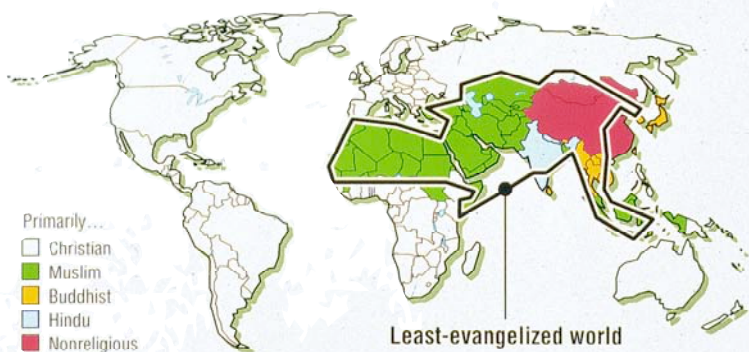


PHOTO: MARC

*We have
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—CLARK

citizens, but we demand and insist that we practice our faith and share the good news of the gospel with those with whom we come in contact.

HOW DOES THE BELIEVING COMMUNITY RESPOND WHEN THE CHURCH AND CONVERTS ARE THREATENED OR GO THROUGH PERSECUTION?

PARSLEY: For the most part throughout Eurasia, you see the Church becoming bolder in its faith. We see a coming together, with the national church putting its faith and trust in the Lord. Persecution works to our advantage as far as strengthening the Church.

CLARK: The traditional response of Christians in the Middle East over the centuries has been to withdraw into the religious and cultural community. That has often led to a theology that reinforces the idea that believers in Jesus have no missionary obligation toward the majority Muslim community around them. Even our own Assemblies of God churches have been slow to break through this kind of thinking. But in those countries where we have been willing to reach out to the Muslim with love and understanding, we've often found a Muslim who knows there's something unique about Jesus and wants to know more about Him.



Parsley enjoys taking a moment on a busy street to share Christ.

PHOTO: DAVID DOBSON

Let me give you an example. At a recent International Book Fair, the Bible Society booth was mobbed by Muslims who wanted to buy a special double offer—a copy of the New Testament and a video of the *Jesus* film. Over 2,000 copies of the film were being sold every day at the fair. A columnist for the leading newspaper in the Arab world went to the fair, bought a copy, took it home, and watched it twice—once with the sound on, once with the sound off. The next day he filled half a page with his column and said, “This film is so powerful you don't even have to listen to it. Just watch it!”

There's enormous hunger in the Muslim community to know about Jesus if we'll just find culturally acceptable ways to present Him.

*We are good citizens,
but we demand and insist
that we practice our faith
and share the good news
of the gospel with those with
whom we come in contact.*

—PARSLEY

ARE YOU OBSERVING REVIVAL IN THE MIDDLE EAST?

CLARK: We are not seeing revival in the terms that most pastors in America think of. But we are seeing steady growth, and we are seeing churches and individuals far more open to the prompting of the Holy Spirit to share their faith with their Muslim neighbor, friend, or boss than they have ever been in the past. In this part of the world, that's a sign of revival.

PARSLEY: Recently at a conference with missionary and national leadership, decisions were made to form and develop our own missions agency in order to share the claims of Jesus Christ throughout the region. That's revival when the church says, “We've got to go beyond our walls—even beyond our own country—to share the good news.”

CLARK: This has helped the Arab believers in our churches. They are just now beginning to wake up to their responsibility to spread the

gospel beyond the boundaries of their own Arab Christian communities.

PARSLEY: The seeds have been planted, and the plants of personal and corporate responsibility are starting to grow among the Arab believers in Jesus.

***There are relatively few places
where simply becoming
a believer in Jesus is an
automatic death sentence.***

—CLARK

RELATE A MIRACULOUS STORY OF AN ISLAMIC PERSON COMING TO CHRIST.

CLARK: A Messianic Jewish believer from the U.S. came to work for the Lord in Israel. He felt the Holy Spirit leading him to share his faith with Arabs. Soon he led an Arab teenager to the Lord. The young Arab's father was the sheik (religious leader) in the town, and when he learned of his son's new faith, he was furious because his family would be humiliated. He demanded a meeting with the man who had shamed them. When the Messianic Jewish believer arrived at the home of the sheik, he expected a rough reception. The sheik told him, "I called you here to kill you for what you did to our family name. But last night Jesus Christ walked into my bedroom through two locked steel doors and sat beside my bed. I was terrified, but He reached out and stroked my head and told me, 'Don't be afraid; I love you.' I felt such peace come over me. Now I want you to tell me everything you can about Him."

PARSLEY: One common thread you will find in Muslims coming to the knowledge of Jesus and faith in Him is that it often started with a vision. This is true throughout the Middle East and Asia. I suspect it is true in other areas of the world as well. I could tell you countless stories of those who have had dreams or visions. Perhaps a family member, an angel, or Jesus himself has come and said to them, "What you are studying, what you are thinking about is true. Be sure to follow that direction." It has supernaturally opened up their understanding.



Douglas Clark (right), holding an AK-47, the standard weapon of armies throughout the Third World, with one of the guards at the summit of the Kyber Pass in Pakistan.

CLARK: With a Muslim, a dream or vision is very often the starting point for their spiritual pilgrimage to belief in Jesus. A book to read along these lines is *I Dared To Call Him Father* by Bilquis Sheik.

Persecution Against Christians Increases

Despite the end of the Cold War and the spread of democracy, worldwide persecution of Christians continues unabated. While not confined to Muslim areas, 8 of the 10 top countries on Open Doors' 1996 "Watch List" are Islamic. North Korea and China are also on the list. Evangelicals in Eastern and Central Europe and Latin America face opposition from established churches.

Brian O'Connell, director of the World Evangelical Fellowship's Religious Liberty Commission said, "We're being persecuted because we're winning, not because we're losing." Hundreds of Christians around the world are in prison because of their faith, and the 500 known cases are but the "tip of the iceberg."

More and more public attention is being focused on the issue of global persecution. The RLC is helping national churches address issues of persecution, relate to government and media, and learn communication skills. Lack of knowledge is not the only problem, however. The Rutherford Institute's Pedro Noreno said, "The church in many places is bringing the persecution upon itself." Christians are seen as having little concern for society, for excellence, or for setting an example of hard work. Christians must externalize their revivals into society if they hope to be taken seriously.

The battle against persecution takes place in three arenas: politics, public awareness, and prayer. The most important thing Christians can do is pray.

*—Adapted from Current Thoughts & Trends, January 1997.
Summarized from Evangelical Missions Quarterly,
October 1996 issue. Used by permission.*

Persecution works to our advantage as far as strengthening the Church.

—PARSLEY

The Muslim world

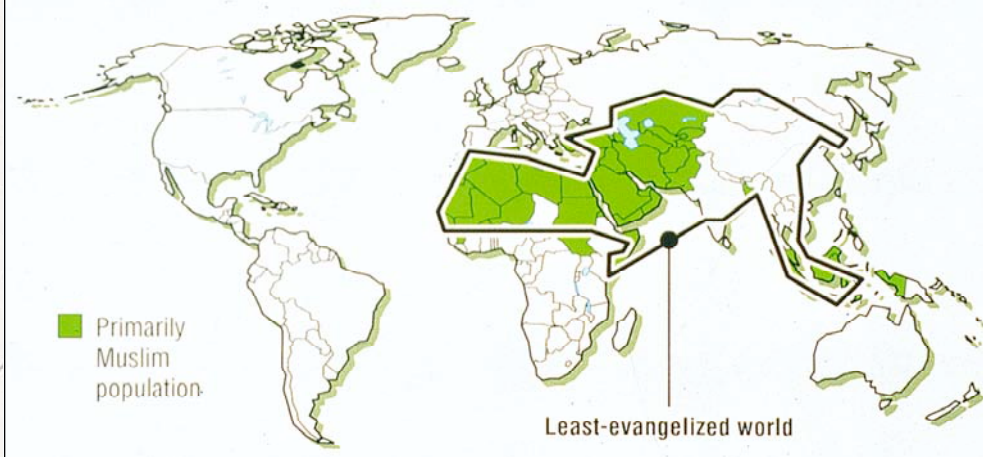


PHOTO: MARC

WHAT WOULD OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN CHRIST IN THE EAST SAY TO US IN THE WEST?

PARSLEY: The message I hear and resonates in my heart is “Stand with us in prayer.” You don’t need a visa. You don’t need a passport. You don’t even need to get an injection. Today through prayer, you can be in the center of many difficult areas of our world. I would request that those believers in the U.S. pray for the Middle East—for those in leadership and for those who are on their journey to find Jesus as their personal Savior.

Muslim believers...often see their families come to a point where they can at least live with that family member’s decision to follow Christ.

—CLARK

CLARK: The American church needs to wake up. Islam is coming into the States at a rate that ought to concern all U.S. pastors and send them to their knees in prayer. Islam is threatening to take over our inner cities because it promises to minister to the needs of destitute- and drug-blighted black neighborhoods that middle-class evangelical churches of America can’t relate to anymore. We need to ask for a

spirit of compassion and repentance. The problems and the threat of Islam in our own backyard are serious, and we need to move far beyond where we are today if we are to meet the challenge.

Two things Islam does not comprehend are the holiness of God and the love of Christ. These two ingredients are missing from Islam. They are the two points at which it’s most vulnerable. If we can get hold of both of these and display them in our lives before the Muslim world, we will see Muslims come to believe in Jesus as the Son of God.

We need to pray for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit across the Muslim world. We can work and witness—Islam has heard it all before—but when the power of the Holy Spirit is present and reveals Jesus as the perfect sacrifice for sin, the Church grows even in the tough soil of Islam.

***Pray for the Middle East—
for those in leadership and for
those who are on their journey to find
Jesus as their personal Savior.***

—PARSLEY

PARSLEY: Skilled and schooled people can debate with Muslims, but the most powerful thing we can express is a personal relationship with God. It cannot be refuted. It is something


for which they long.

HOW OPTIMISTIC ARE YOU FOR THE MIDDLE EAST?

CLARK: I'm intensely optimistic. I believe the Spirit of God is doing

something so deep and so unique that there is nothing to compare it with at any time in history anywhere else in the world. I believe God is building a Muslim convert church that is going to be so huge it will be far greater in size

than the traditional Christian churches in the Middle East. I really believe it's going to be a new work—the kind God talked about when He said, “Look at the nations and watch—and be utterly amazed. For I am going to do something in your days that you would not believe, even if you were told” (Habakkuk 1:5, NIV). I believe the emerging Muslim convert church in the Middle East and around the world is going to be even more of a new creation at the turn of the century than the Pentecostal church was at the turn of the last century.

PARSLEY: It is happening, my friends, even as we speak. There is tremendous boldness. There is tremendous growth. There is tremendous hunger for more of God. 

Douglas F. Clark is Division of Foreign Missions Middle East/North Africa area director.

Jerry L. Parsley is Division of Foreign Missions Eurasia field director, Springfield, Missouri.

Pentecostals: An Empowered Witnessing Community

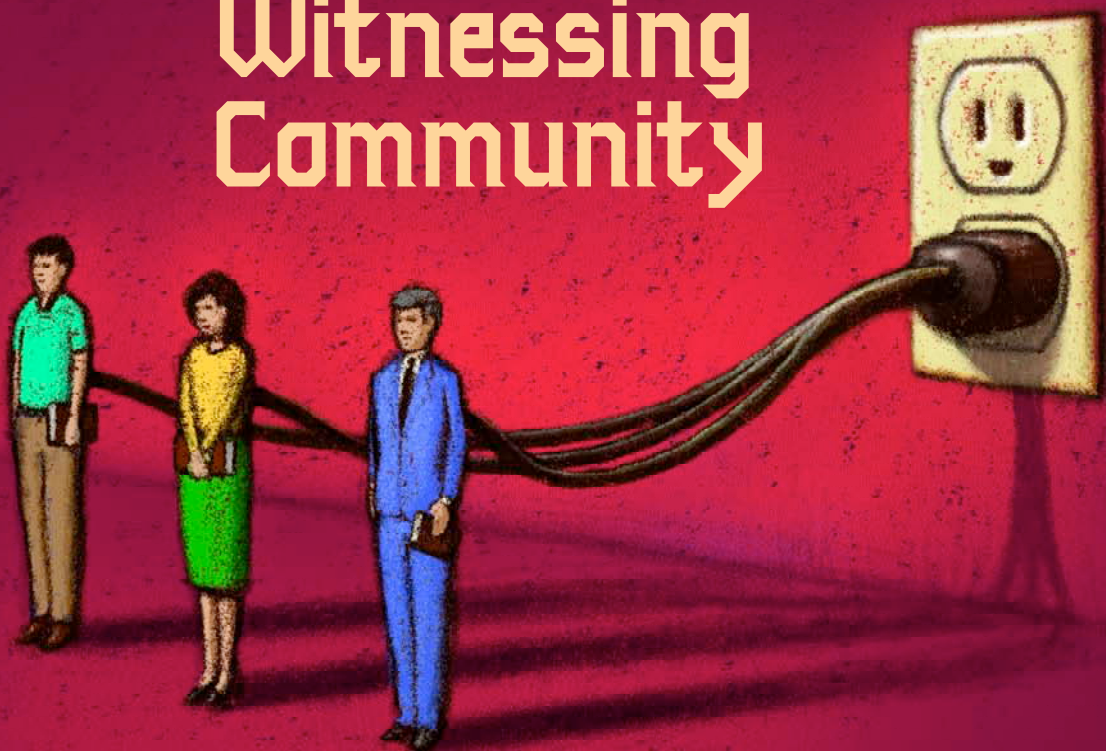


ILLUSTRATION: THE ART SOURCE

BY DOUGLAS P. PETERSEN

The power of the Spirit is given for the purpose of empowering, for witness to the good news of what God has done in Christ in all the world.

Attempts to define Pentecostals according to a specific confession of faith is a challenging task—even when we try to do it within the Movement. In fact, theological sophistication has sometimes been regarded with considerable suspicion, and diversity in spiritual experience has been the norm. But no matter our theological interpretations and differences, we all hold that the basis for Pentecostal theological thinking and action springs from a transforming experience—an empowerment derived from an intense, transcendent sense of divine presence. We believe that the Holy Spirit

enables a believer to translate creed into conduct, faith into practice, and doctrine into daily living.

The modern-day Pentecostal movement was not birthed as a theological movement. From their inception, Pentecostals have had the sense that they have been called to be *doers* of the Word. They viewed the outpouring of the Holy Spirit as the empowerment needed to generate the gospel witness “unto the uttermost part of the earth” prior to the return of Jesus Christ. Their on-fire-ministryvision produced a dynamic theology marked by a sense

of urgency that was proclaimed from Pentecostal pulpits and sent workers into missions efforts around the world.

Over the decades there has emerged, within certain sectors of the church, excessive influence on an initial enthusiasm that inevitably runs smack up against the wall of reality. Some Pentecostals are unaware of their need to be accountable to themselves and others for the meaning of what they are doing.

Three areas are foundational for the lives of believers who desire to be called and empowered: (1) All of God's marvelous acts should be initiated from an adequate understanding of the Trinity. (2) Empowerment must be undergirded daily by practice of the spiritual disciplines. (3) Our calling and empowerment should demonstrate compassionately and supernaturally the signs of the kingdom of God made evident in the ministry of our Lord Jesus.

AN EMPHASIS ON TRINITARIAN THINKING

I would like to invite us to embrace afresh the powerful name of the Trinity. Could it be of value for us to cultivate again within our mission a practicing understanding of the roles of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit? It is undeniable that Pentecostals have made much room for the work of the Spirit, manifested in experience. But this Spirit experience should never be separated from the other members of the Trinity. The authentic work of the Spirit will always glorify the Father and cause the participants to center upon the Son.

God's rule is at the core of all things. It is God who sustains. God who cares. God who rules. The incarnation, death, and resurrection of the Son are the most decisive events in salvation history in which "the reconciliation of all things"—God's plan established before "the foundation of the world"—reveals God's heart. And in the coming of Jesus, we recognize the inauguration of the good news of the kingdom of God invading human history.

Those believers who accept the Son and enter into the Kingdom become agents of the Kingdom, empowered by the presence of God's Spirit himself, to bring a foretaste of the eschatological end when "all things will be reconciled to God." God's kingdom, evidenced

by the presence of God the Son, will be the consummation of our glorious future. Until this fulfillment, we are called and empowered to be the people of the future in the present age.

As the gospel penetrates every part of the world, the revolutionary character of the Spirit-filled believer demonstrates to the world

[Early Pentecostals] viewed the outpouring of the Holy Spirit as the empowerment needed to generate the gospel witness.

Fulfilling the Master's Command

Almost 2,000 years ago Jesus gave His disciples what seemed to be an impossible assignment. In His pronouncing the Great Commission, He asked them to go out and change the world. It seemed preposterous at the time that this group, who weren't highly qualified by human standards, would be able to fulfill the desires of our Master.

However, on the Day of Pentecost, they felt the mighty rushing wind move into the Upper Room. They were all filled with supernatural spiritual power and began the movement that would change the world. The apostle Peter's keynote message on that occasion was, "Let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36). Over 3,000 people gave their lives to the lordship of Christ.

As a result of that momentous experience, the apostles filled Jerusalem with their doctrine. When persecution arose, they spread to the surrounding provinces. They did what the pagan armies could not do; they took the claims of Jesus Christ to the confines of the Roman Empire and brought it to its knees.

In 1914, approximately 300 men and women gathered in Hot Springs, Arkansas, to join forces to continue the process the first-century Christians began in obedience to the Great Commission. The founders of the Assemblies of God felt impelled by Jesus' words: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). Today, the Assemblies of God is over 30 million strong worldwide.

We thrill as we see national churches in over 140 countries being led by mature and wise leaders who have taken up the mantle of the Great Commission. They too are impelled to double their efforts to do something about reaching the world in our generation.

It's a great day for the Church—with greater challenges, more opportunities, and more open doors. What seemed impossible just a few years ago is now possible. The Berlin Wall has fallen, and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union have opened to the gospel. Opportunities are opening in countries like Mongolia and Albania, where for years the gospel was not preached in an overt manner.

The exponential factors of church growth make it possible for the Church to fulfill the Great Commission in our day. It is time for the Church to rise up in faith, with new vision, and see the fulfillment of our Master's command. As the Church mobilizes and multiplies in these last days, it is possible to reach the entire world with the gospel. Let us rise to the challenge of the hour to go out and change the world.

—L. John Bueno is the newly elected executive director for the Division of Foreign Missions.

what the kingdom of God looks like. Signs and wonders are visible expressions of the firstfruits of the divine kingdom of God present in human history.

The demonstrations of the power of the Spirit in the life of the believer are *always* to reveal the person of Jesus and to bring glory to God the Father. Power manifestations not characterized by the unity and community of the Trinity are an abuse of the power of the Holy Spirit and do not emanate from the same Spirit.

PERSONAL SPIRITUALITY AND EMPOWERMENT

Pentecostals only have authenticity when their inner lives are continuously being refreshed and renewed by communion with every person of the Trinity.

Recently, a missionary colleague just diagnosed with cancer shared a paragraph from devotional writer Thomas Kelley:

“But the light fades, the will weakens, the humdrum returns. Can we endure this fading? No, nor should we try.... The Eternal Inward Light does not die when ecstasy dies.... Continuously renewed immediacy lies at the base.... Let us explore together the secret of a deeper devotion, a more subterranean sanctuary of the soul, where the Light within never fades, but burns, a perpetual Flame; where the wells of living water of divine revelation rise up continuously; day by day and hour by hour, steady and transforming.”

Kelley's words not only comforted my friend in his moment of crisis but also reminded me again that the empowered life is always lived on two levels. On the physical level, we are constantly working, thinking, making decisions, and meeting the expectations of daily life. On the deeper and more profound level—the level that must really control all of our daily activity—we should be practicing prayer, song, adoration, and gentle receptiveness to divine breathings. It is only as the inner beings of our souls are constantly and forever dwelling with and being nourished by the Spirit that we can expect to be truly

called and empowered.

Such a life promises that our words and deeds will be characterized by a sense of credibility and authenticity in the face of a disbelieving world. Empowered believers in daily communion with the Lord bear witness that the power of Satan has been broken, wherever it may be found—sin, sickness, suffering, poverty, or oppression. They move beyond personal edification and present to the world the mission and message of Jesus Christ.

The basis for Pentecostal theological thinking and action springs from a transforming experience—an empowerment derived from an intense, transcendent sense of divine presence.

HOPE AND PRAYER

The power of the Spirit is given for the purpose of empowering, for bearing witness to the good news of what God has done in Christ in all the world. The outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost, and individually and corporately within our own lives and churches, provides an

empowering dynamic to practice all “that Jesus said and did.”

The power of this charismatic community is clearly illustrated in the Book of Acts. People were added to the church daily. Signs and wonders were performed by the power of the Spirit. Social as well as spiritual dimensions were challenged. Gender distinctions of male and female were expunged by the empowerment of the Spirit. Economic distinctions between rich and poor were overcome by the power of the Spirit. Cultural distinctions between Jew and Gentile were crushed within the community of believers by the coming of the Spirit. By the time the story of Acts concluded, the gospel had gone unbounded throughout the world by means of a called and Spirit-empowered community.

Similarly in our modern context, Pentecostals believe we are called and empowered to be a witnessing community to the signs of what God has done in Christ. Our engagement in worldwide evangelism and compassionate service is energized by a deeply held belief that it is “not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit” (Zechariah 4:6). Supernatural enablement for ministry is the motivational force behind our ever-expanding pastoral and missionary activity.

THE END IS NEAR

We must announce with an extraordinary sense of urgency that the kingdom of God has broken into the present and has established signposts that the end of all things is near. That is why the disciples, with immediacy after Pentecost, followed the Spirit's bidding, and people were added to the church daily. That is why Paul was urged by the Spirit to move quickly from one new church to the next. That is why pastors,

missionaries, and all of God's empowered people must hasten to act quickly in bearing witness to the present power of the Kingdom that is but a foretaste of the final fulfillment.

The loving Father and the Son have sent us the Comforter—empowering us to carry a redeeming message of word and deed to a hurting world. Our message should always be delivered with a sense of urgency and with the words on our lips, “even so come Lord Jesus.” 📖



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Empowered: Global Mission in Pentecostal Perspective and author of Not By Might Nor By Power: A Pentecostal Theology of Social Concern in Latin America.

"I tell you that in the same way
there is more rejoicing in heaven
over one sinner who repents than over the
ninety-nine righteous persons
who do not need to repent."

(Luke 15:7)



Reaching the Unreached

BY DONALD R. CORBIN

The most visible, lasting characteristic of true Pentecostal visitation is an intense passion to reach the lost—the unreached. From its inception, the Assemblies of God trademark has been commitment to aggressive evangelism. Our founding fathers boldly declared in 1914: “We dedicate ourselves to the greatest evangelism the world has ever seen.”¹ The Spirit created a passion within them to reach the unreached everywhere, by every means.

This same passion marked early Methodist revivalism. John Wesley declared: “Woe is me if I preach not the gospel wherever I am in the habitable world.”² Jesus’ examples in Luke 15 of humanity’s lostness were favorite themes in Wesley’s sermons. No wonder he wrote to his Methodist charges in 1784: “You have nothing to do but to save souls.”³

Strange words to ears tuned to fast-paced, administratively structured, consumer-oriented ministries in the 90s. Yet are they not a haunting echo of Jesus’ commentary on reaching the unreached in Luke 15? Should they not be heard and heeded again today, especially as the Church approaches the third millennium?

THE INTRINSIC VALUE OF A LOST SOUL

Luke 15 indicates that commitment to reach the unreached begins with a clear understanding of the inestimably high value Jesus attributes to every lost soul. For Him, motivation to

reach the unreached has nothing to do with their location in exotic corners of the globe. Rather, because they have the highest possible value to Him and are lost from His fold—the company of the redeemed—they must be reached. Christ “came to seek and to save what was [and still is] lost” (Luke 19:10).⁴

Jesus went straight for the cultural and economic jugular of His listeners—tax collectors, Pharisees, teachers of the law, sinners—a crosscut of society then and now (cf. Luke 15:1,2). He intimated that in their culture they would consider:

The most visible, lasting characteristic of true Pentecostal visitation is an intense passion to reach the lost.

- Sheep as a source of family wealth and prestige. Therefore, one lost lamb could never have more fair market value than 99 sheep *in the fold*.

- A married lady’s coins as proof of her married state, and her security if widowed. So how could anyone attribute more value to a single lost coin than to nine still *in hand*?

- An elder son *in house*, destined to inherit and manage his father’s wealth, as more important to the family than a younger son, especially an absentee, rebellious, prodigal.

Jesus declared pointedly, “I tell you that in the same way there is more rejoicing in heaven

From its inception, the Assemblies of God trademark has been commitment to aggressive evangelism.

Commitment to reach the unreached begins with a clear understanding of inestimably high value Jesus attributes to every lost soul.

over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent" (verse 7).

Jesus does not evaluate the worth of a soul in cultural or economic terms. Nor should we. He used graphic, parabolic illustrations—a lost sheep, a lost coin, a lost son—to insist that the soul has intrinsic, eternal value that transcends human measurements. It is this surpassing value that calls for every effort, dollar, extra mile of love—whatever is necessary—to reach the lost of Eurasia, Africa, Asia Pacific, Latin America, and North America.

Thus, Luke 15 challenges us to answer a vital question: Will we follow the voice of culture and economics, or will we follow the Savior who attributes eternal, surpassing worth to every lost soul?

THE PRIORITY TASK OF SEEKING THE LOST

Jesus' words paint three convicting portraits: (1) A true shepherd who leaves 99 sheep out "in the open country"—vulnerable and unprotected—in order to seek 1 lost sheep endangered and separated from the flock. (2) A wife who lights a lamp, sweeps, and searches high and low for one lost coin rather than spending her energy protecting and polishing the nine that remain. (3) A waiting father who watches eagerly for the return of his younger, prodigal boy rather than dote on his resident, elder son.

Logic tells us that people and things closest to us—in the fold, in hand, and in house—should be our first priority. They should have greater value than one, a few, or even many

lost souls in Niger, Tuva, Uruguay, or Bhutan; and greater value than Hadzabé tribesmen in Tanzania, homeless mothers in Washington D.C., or drug addicts in Seattle. But Jesus lived by Kingdom logic! He taught by precept and example that seeking the lost, whether one, few, or many, is our No. 1 priority. Therefore, we must answer this second vital question: Is seeking the lost truly our first priority?

Will we follow the voice of culture and economics, or will we follow the Savior who attributes eternal, surpassing worth to every lost soul?

THE EQUALITY OF LOSTNESS AND DEATH

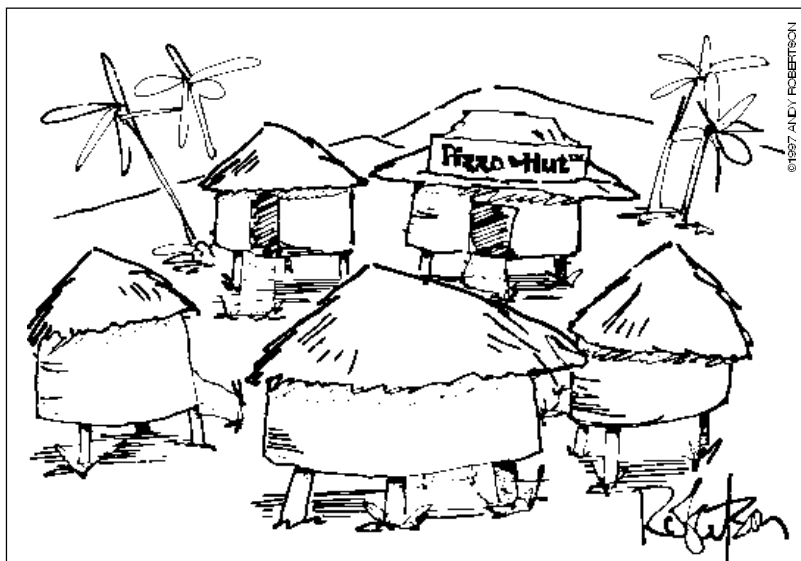
Jesus adds urgency to priority by setting unchanging, irrevocable truth as the bedrock on which priorities stand. His truth? Lostness is a life-and-death issue. Twice the waiting father equated his Prodigal Son's lost state with death: "For this son of mine was dead...he was lost" (verse 24); "This brother of yours was dead...he was lost" (verse 32). For Jesus, the unreached were *dead lost*.

In the same phrases, the waiting father equated finding his son with resurrection: "For this son of mine...is alive again" (verse 24); "This brother of yours...is alive again" (verse 32).

The penetrating question Jesus puts to us is: Do we truly believe our sons, brothers, parents, children, and neighbors are lost?

John Wesley did. Regarding the statements of Scripture about man's lost condition and the reality of hell, he thundered, "If there be 'no unquenchable fire, no everlasting burnings,' there is no dependence on these writings wherein they are so expressly asserted, nor of the eternity of heaven, any more than that of hell. So that if we give up the one, we must give up the other. No hell, no heaven, no revelation."⁵

Will we dare echo Wesley's words today? Oh, God, grant that we will, for they echo Christ's words of desperate urgency in Luke 15. The *dead lost* cannot be put on hold. They must be rescued now.



THE SHALLOWNESS OF PERSONAL INTERESTS COMPARED TO RESCUING THE LOST

Jesus' portrait of an angry, envious elder brother is troubling and convicting. Blown away by his father's generous forgiveness to his prodigal brother, he "refused to go in" (verse 28). Then he declared, "I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends" (verse 29). Compared to finding the Prodigal Son, the elder brother's complaints seem so shallow, selfish, and cheap.

In verse 30, he said in effect, "No parties, padded pews, deep-pile carpet for me, but for him, a world-class shindig. He wastes his life with prostitutes, and you give him all the goodies. It's unfair. And I'm outta here." A major attitude problem. True. But before we condemn the elder brother too quickly, what about a few 90s attitudes?

Do elder brothers of the church ever say, "I'm tired of hearing about people 10,000 miles away. But I'll be back next week for the film series on *Steps to Success*"? Have pastors ever said, "We're *saturated*—too many missionaries, too many appeals"? How many intinerating missionaries have heard, "We can't support you brother. With our building, staff, and programs, the budget's too tight"? Or a more recent, disconcerting declaration: "We're not scheduling missionaries. We're in revival and mustn't quench the Spirit." Tilt.

You have nothing to do but to save souls.
—John Wesley

Petty? No. Frightening? Very. These statements send chills of fear up my spiritual spine. Our 90s words may be closer to the shallow, selfish words of the elder brother than we might imagine. Luke 15 challenges us to ask honestly: Could we ever allow our interests to replace His priority—to leave the 99 in the open country and go after the lost sheep until we find it?


THE INCOMPARABLE SATISFACTION OF FINDING THE LOST

The Master expressed His greatest joy in His descriptions of finding the lost: "When he

finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders" (verse 6); "Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep" (verse 8,9); "Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin" (verse 9). Finally, His crowning statement: "Everything I have is yours. But [there is a better reason for rejoicing] we had to celebrate...because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found" (verses 31,32).

Jesus calls us to a higher source of satisfaction than protecting our coddled sheep, polished coins, and self-approving brothers.

Jesus calls us to a higher source of satisfaction than protecting our coddled sheep, polished coins, and self-approving brothers. It is in finding the lost. In fact, this is the validating test of a true church. Wesleyan influence made it so. *The Book of Discipline of the Methodist Church* yet declares: "The only infallible proof of a true church of Christ is its ability to seek and save the lost, to disseminate the Pentecostal spirit and life, to spread scriptural holiness, and to transform all peoples and nations through the gospel of Christ."⁶

One final question then: How close is my church to being a true church? 

ENDNOTES

1. *Minutes*, General Council of the Assemblies of God, St. Louis, 1914.
2. John Wesley, *Journal*, cited by Robert E. Coleman, *Nothing To Do But To Save Souls* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Francis Asbury Press, 1990), 32.
3. John Wesley, included in *Minutes of Several Conversations...in 1784*, *ibid.*, 16.
4. All Scripture quotations are from the New International Version.
5. John Wesley, "A Letter to Mr. Law," dated January 6, 1756, Coleman, 51.
6. *The Book of Discipline of the Methodist Church* (Nashville, Tenn.: United Methodist Publishing House, 1988), 10.

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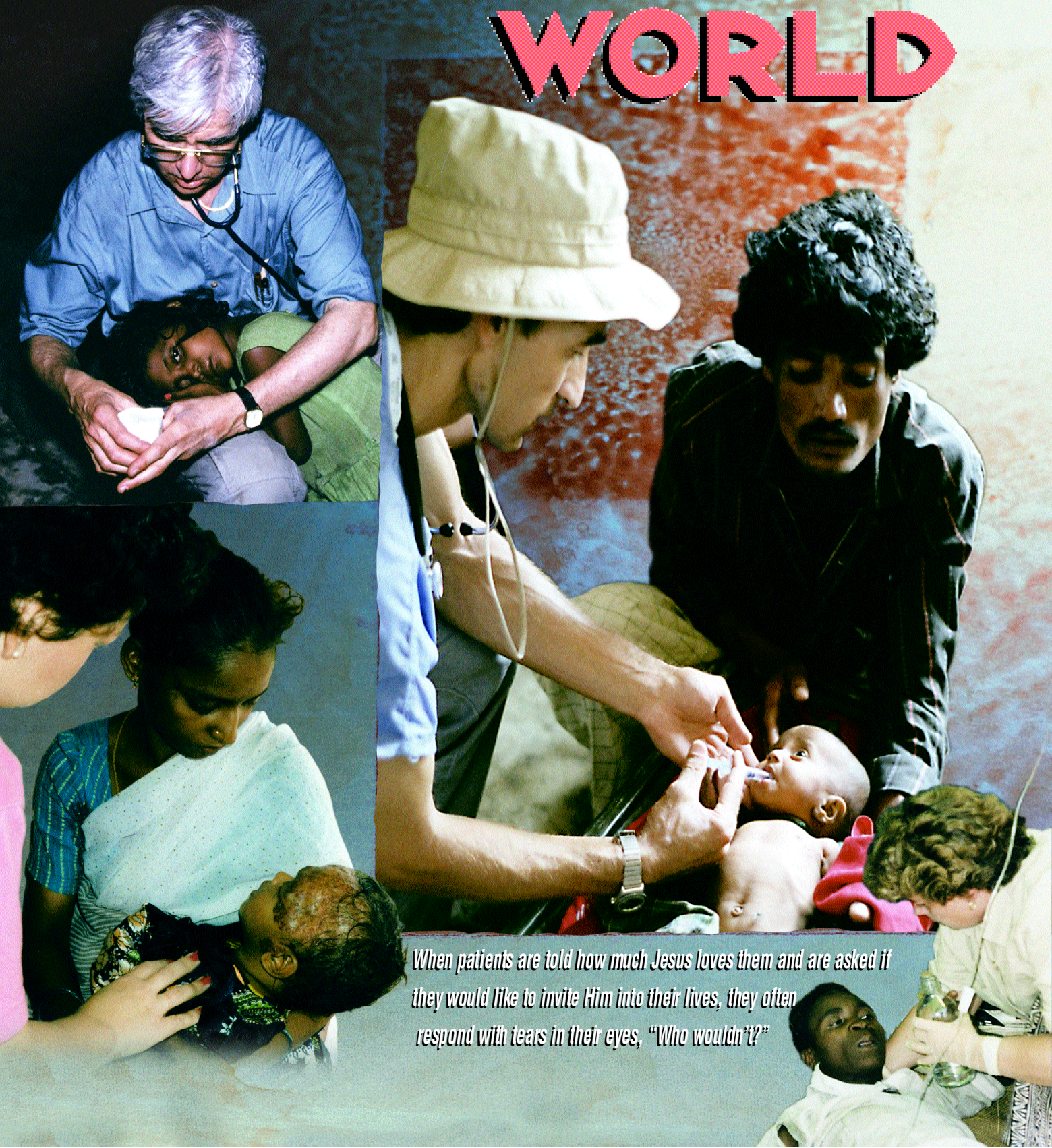


The only infallible proof of a true church of Christ is its ability to seek and save the lost, to disseminate the Pentecostal spirit and life, to spread scriptural holiness, and to transform all peoples and nations through the gospel of Christ.

—*The Book of Discipline of the Methodist Church*

The Great
Commission

MENDING A BROKEN WORLD



When patients are told how much Jesus loves them and are asked if they would like to invite Him into their lives, they often respond with tears in their eyes, "Who wouldn't?"

BY PEGGY JOHNSON

Climbing out of the chopper onto the typhoon-wracked island off the coast of Bangladesh, the HealthCare Ministries disaster relief team will never forget the emotionally traumatized faces that met them—the wounded, orphaned, dying children...the devastation.

Dr. Jim Wood vividly recalls the first night: "A little 6-year-old girl was brought in—thirsty, massive diarrhea, dying from cholera. Nothing had been unpacked. I needed fluids. I picked the little girl up, and someone brought me oral rehydration fluids. I began to spoon fluids into her mouth. She would sip a little, smile at me, and slump back into a semiconscious state. She recovered gradually."

HealthCare Ministries, the medical missions arm of the Assemblies of God Division of Foreign Missions, reaches out in many ways. Whether feeding a starving child in Somalia, loving the poor in the garbage dumps of Manila, or teaching hygiene in Honduras, HealthCare Ministries extends hands of mercy to the world's wounded. HCM is often called in times of disaster. By working with the national church, areas are often opened up to the gospel as a result of the compassionate care given to those in need.

Tom Hinton, missionary to Chile, said, "HealthCare Ministries short-term medical evangelism teams are doing precisely what Jesus asked us to do: to integrate the best of ministry to the sick and hurting through medicine, through the power of the Holy Spirit, and through the proclamation of the gospel."

Two years ago at the invitation of missionaries and the Chilean national church, HCM conducted a tent clinic in El Bosque. Many people prayed the sinner's prayer that week. Fourteen months later, a congregation of over 400 dedicated a new building and have since opened 7 outstation churches.

During HCM orientation, medical team members are told to "love people to Jesus." Although people come because they have physical needs, their hearts are open for further ministry. When patients are told how


much Jesus loves them and are asked if they would like to invite Him into their lives, they often respond with tears in their eyes, "Who wouldn't?"

After their physical needs are treated and they are given opportunity to receive prayer and accept Christ, patients are sent to a spiritual counseling area staffed by local people who invite them to church and follow up after the medical teams leave. This is one of the unique privileges of working together with the missionaries and national church.

Of the physicians, dentists, pharmacists, nurses, and other medical professionals from our U.S. churches that join HCM on the 12–18 trips taken each year, many say they will never be the same. One physician, after his first trip with HCM, stated, "It is for this that I have been born." He is now in medical missions full time.

In addition to health care, HCM also distributes approximately 800 pairs of donated eyeglasses on each trip. People weep in gratitude as they are given possibly the only pair of glasses they will ever own. The greatest joy, however, is helping them receive their spiritual sight.

Children's health and health education are strong emphases of HCM. HealthCare Ministries conducts seminars in the U.S. and overseas and has developed health materials including: a children's health book, a pastoral manual on caring for people with AIDS, and a text *Biblical Foundations for Health* for use in overseas Bible schools.

More than a humanitarian outreach, HealthCare Ministries extends Christ's hands to bring not only physical help but spiritual healing to a desperate, wounded world. 



Peggy Johnson is a missionary for HealthCare Ministries.

*HealthCare
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INTERVIEW WITH L. JOHN BUENO

L. John Bueno, Newly Elected Executive Director of the Division of Foreign Missions

L. John Bueno

recently shared with Enrichment Journal Executive Editor Wayde I. Goodall his first thoughts on entering his new position as executive director of the Assemblies of God Division of Foreign missions.



L. John Bueno speaking at an Assemblies of God Theological Seminary chapel.



L. John Bueno and Richard Nicholson (Caribbean area director) at the 1997 General Council in Haiti.

AS YOU ENTER THIS OFFICE, WHAT ARE YOUR FIRST THOUGHTS?

Most of my life has been dedicated to one part of the world. So naturally one of the challenges of this new responsibility is to broaden my focus and see the whole world. In the initial stages, I also want to work very closely with the home team and mobilize our efforts here.

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO COMMUNICATE TO THE WORLDWIDE MISSIONARY FAMILY?

I want them to know how anxious I am to serve them—to respond to their questions, concerns, and needs. I'm in a listening mode now to the missionary family to see what's on their heart and how I can help them in the missionary process.

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO SAY TO OUR U.S. PASTORS?

First of all, I was overwhelmed to see the response from all the pastors at General Council—to see the consensus

among them for this post.

I know our pastors have a lot of concerns because it's on their shoulders to finance our Assemblies of God foreign missions program. I want to respond to their major concerns about foreign missions as it relates to them as pastors in our Fellowship.

We can never underestimate the power of the missions heart in our Movement. It's there. It's a strong current. It's flowing deep.

As we develop strategies and emphases for the 21st century, I desire to get into the flow and hear our pastors' concerns for the next century.

IDENTIFY IN YOUR THINKING THE GREATEST CHALLENGE BEFORE US AS WE APPROACH THE NEW MILLENNIUM.

Our biggest challenge is to reach countries resistant to the gospel and see revival break out among the unreached people groups of our world.

I would guess that a quarter of the world's population is Muslim. We must


speed up the process and see what the Lord would have us do to reach Muslims.

Of course, at present, many countries remain closed to a missionary presence. But we have seen how the Holy Spirit works even in closed countries. China is a good example. The underground church is going strong although there is no formal missionary presence there.

We need to ask the Lord of the Harvest what our responsibility is in these resistant areas.

WHAT ARE SOME OF TODAY'S GREATEST OPPORTUNITIES?

There is a great wind of the Spirit blowing in our world today. I associate this with harvest because the two must be related. Revival needs to reach the lost. We need to be sensitive enough to the move of the Spirit in our day that revival doesn't dissipate into just feel-good experiences. Revival must reach into the world of the lost and accomplish things that are long-term for the Kingdom's sake.

We must be sensitive to what the Spirit wants to do through this revival so that we make progressive inroads into the enemy's camp. 

*Regardless of
our generation,
how can we disobey
the Lord's direct
command and still
please Him?*



Sharpening Your Church's Global Focus

BY HOWARD L. CUMMINGS

One generation says they will support a cause only if they can control it. Another tells us to present the gospel but not in a Bible-slapping way: "The less Bible preaching and Scripture quoting, the better!"

Many young adult Americans seem to have no particular loyalty toward any organization. Even Christian baby boomers do not respond to appeals that activated earlier generations. In some quarters, traditional missions work is regarded with skepticism. Only 10 to 15 percent of our present church generation has voiced a strong interest in expatriate-oriented missions strategy (resident missionaries who live within a culture and learn the language.)

This hodgepodge of generational conflict confronts and challenges every spiritual leader when presenting the Great Commission. Many church members see the task as complete and ready for the Lord's return.

According to George Barna, "Today's youngest adults...have different lifestyles and values than do their predecessors; they will follow a leader differently." But an overwhelming majority "crave strong leadership just as intensely as do older adults."¹ They want their leaders to lead, and they want their pastors to articulate a vision for the future.

How do we cast the vision that will captivate this generation? Three factors impact the missions agenda for the 21st century.

COMMAND

The Great Commission hasn't changed in the last 2,000 years. It is the same for every generation, and it comes from the highest authority. We must heed Scripture; we cannot compromise the command.

Recently, a guest speaker in our church asked, "What part of *go* don't we understand?"

No way can a believer ignore the Great Commission and please God. The gospel message is: Jesus is Lord. Regardless of our generation, how can we disobey the Lord's direct command and still please Him? Spiritual

Spiritual leaders must base their vision on the bedrock of obedience.

Levels of Foreign Missions Participation

Below is a breakdown of levels of giving to the Division of Foreign Missions for 1996 by number of Assemblies of God churches. You will notice that only 603 churches (5.1 percent, top six categories of giving) gave over half (52.5 percent) the total amount given to foreign missions. And 2,074 (17.5 percent) of Assemblies of God churches gave nothing to the annual foreign missions income.

Number of Churches	Percentage of Total Churches*	Categories of Giving	Percentage of Total Giving to DFM and Supporting Ministries*
33	.3	Above \$200,000	13.4
84	.7	\$100,000 – \$200,000	12.7
52	.4	\$75,000 – \$100,000	4.9
126	1.1	\$50,000 – \$75,000	8.4
120	1	\$40,000 – \$50,000	5.9
188	1.6	\$30,000 – \$40,000	7.2
326	2.7	\$20,000 – \$30,000	8.7
328	2.8	\$15,000 – \$20,000	6.3
667	5.6	\$10,000 – \$15,000	9.0
1,488	12.5	\$5,000 – \$10,000	11.7
544	4.6	\$4,000 – \$5,000	2.7
695	5.8	\$3,000 – \$4,000	2.7
987	8.3	\$2,000 – \$3,000	2.7
1,544	13	\$1,000 – \$2,000	2.5
1,066	9	\$500 – \$1,000	.84
1,253	10.5	\$100 – \$500	.35
314	2.6	\$01 – \$100	.01
2,074	17.5	\$0	
TOTALS: 11,889	100.00		100.00

*Percentages rounded to nearest tenth of a percent to total 100.00.

—Information provided by the Division of Foreign Missions.

leaders must base their vision on the bedrock of obedience.

A group of theology students were involved in a discussion. One asked, "How do you interpret the Great Commission?" Another student, formerly in the military, responded: "You don't interpret a command; You obey it!"

CAPABILITY

At no time in history has the church had such capability for reaching the

unreached and bringing this age to closure (cf. Matthew 24:14). We are discipling a generation that has the available tools to preach in every language and to all peoples of the world. The perceptive leader is sensitive to attainable opportunities and flexible enough to incorporate innovative methods.

Capability Countdown: Your Church Can Participate in Global Missions

10. *Travel.* People can travel anywhere in the world and in a few hours be

involved in gospel preaching and teaching.

9. *Communication.* Because of fax, E-mail, Internet, worldwide interactive computer instruction, and desktop publishing, the dissemination of the gospel is a much simpler matter for this era of missions.

8. *Media ministries.* Via television, radio, video, and audio tapes, we can blanket the globe with the good news.

7. *Political doors.* Countries closed just a few years ago are now open.

6. *People and materials.* We have the labor and materials available to finish the task. When MacArthur called for 1,000 missionaries for Japan at the close of World War II, only a handful responded. Yet today, if properly challenged, thousands of young people are ready to become the most dynamic *labor pool* in the history of Christian missions. They are better educated and more crosscultural in their perspective.

*At no time in history
has the church had
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age to closure.*

5. *Global consciousness.* Lee Iacocca, the well-known ex-CEO of the Chrysler corporation, said, "We must have a global view to survive!" This corporate concept applies to missions. Because they have constant media exposure and travel opportunities, young adults will think and act globally if Christian leaders present the Master's mandate.

4. *Media exposure.* Network news and numerous parachurch and charitable organizations make us aware of global emergencies such as famines, earthquakes, wars, intertribal genocide, and pandemics. Christians made sensitive to the world's hurting people by the Holy Spirit are often just waiting for leadership to challenge them to act in translating tragedies into opportunities

Practical Ways To Get Your Church Involved in Missions

- **Missions convention.** Plan a year in advance and involve members of the congregation on committees. Materials are available from the Division of Foreign Missions and the Division of Home Missions.
- **Missions march.** Stage an annual missions march with adult and children's choirs decked out in native costumes. Have the youth parade large flags, and give a small flag to every person in attendance as a reminder to pray for that country.
- **Missions musical.** Make use of the annual DFM missions theme musical and video.
- **Missions banquet.** Pick an international theme and be as elaborate or as simple as you wish. Introduce the missions budget and faith promise goals for the coming year.
- **Children's activities.** Use the annual DFM children's missions activity packet during Sunday school or hold a children's missions pizza banquet concurrent with the adult banquet. Try a Junior Missions Retreat for the older elementary kids.
- **Short-term missions project.** Encourage your church members to participate in short-term home or foreign strategic missions projects.
- **Faith promise.** Each member can make a missions faith promise. Emphasize the difference between a promise and a pledge. Distribute and collect these at the annual missions emphasis. Set a goal, tabulate the card amounts, and then share with the congregation the total pledged.
- **Action committee.** Organize a layperson's missions council to educate the congregation about missions, to oversee the annual missions banquet and care of visiting missionary guests, and to raise project moneys for short-term missions teams.
- **International festival.** Have groups set up displays on various missions projects and ministries and host a food fair.
- **Informational home meetings.** A group of 10 to 20 people meet and interact with a visiting missionary in a relaxed atmosphere and share dinner or dessert.
- **Missions video.** Make use of 3- to 6-minute video clips on missions revivals and outreaches available from the Assemblies of God Headquarters.
- **Missionary window.** When there isn't time for missionary guests to have a full service, give them a 5- to 7-minute window in the Sunday morning service to communicate their missionary vision.

—Howard Cummings

for gospel witness.

3. *Basic missions philosophy.* Pioneer missionaries emphasized the training and discipling of national leaders in primitive areas. They stressed that the truly indigenous church is not only self-supporting but self-propagating. Our missions philosophy is a success. Today strong national churches in emerging nations are raising up mighty missions forces among their own people. It is a joy to work together with these autonomous groups in an ever-increasing number of countries.

2. *Short-term missions.* This modern-day missions phenomenon should not be seen as competition but seen within the context of cooperation. Without career missionaries—those who live with a people, learn their customs, adapt to their culture, and contextualize their ministry to effectively disciple converts—the short-termers would accomplish very little. Wise career missionaries, however, see short-term missions as a wonderful adjunct to their ministry, knowing that the returning teams build missions enthusiasm at home. Understanding missionary leaders orchestrate this teamwork.

1. *Available money.* The church has enough *disposable cash* to finish the Great Commission task in a short time. But will the church invest that money in missions? (See sidebar, “Levels of Foreign Missions Participation.”)

*We are discipling
a generation that
has the available tools
to preach
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and to all peoples
of the world.*

COMMITMENT

The church must set priorities for the money it has. This will come through expanded commitment. And missions commitment must first be demonstrated

by leadership.


Pastor, raise the level of your commitment as a leader to include expanded global missions outreach. Determine that your church will be a Great Commission church. A vital dimension of your commitment will be to lead your congregation in faith, living, and giving. Announce publicly that you are setting a personal faith promise goal, believing God will channel additional funds beyond your tithes through you and your family to invest in missions. Your congregation will follow your example. Dedicated believers quickly learn that God is a miracle-working God of provision in response to applied faith.

*People can travel
anywhere in the world
and in a few hours be
involved in gospel
preaching and teaching.*

The faith promise impels the church to a new level of stewardship. It is not a pledge but a faith pact between the believer and the Lord for expanded giving. It is a commitment to give known funds for world evangelism, augmenting that by promising to give funds

that are as yet not realized—moneys that God will provide. The *faith* portion is trusting God to provide both means and ideas. The *promise* portion is keeping our word when the Lord produces a miracle of provision—to recognize financial blessings and unexpected receipts as being placed in our hands for investment in souls rather than indulgence on self.

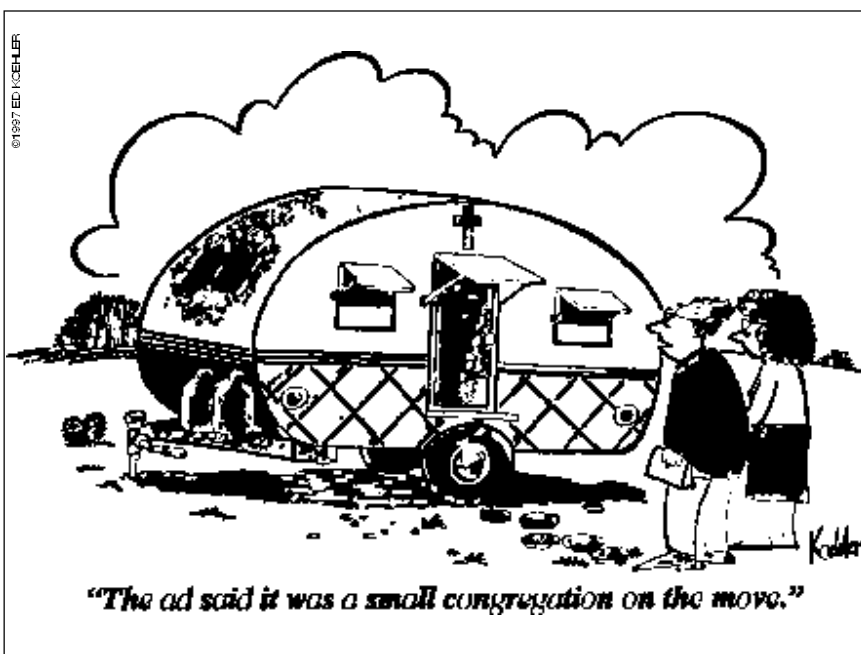
Since we began teaching the faith promise principle in our church, our giving to missions has multiplied almost 20 times, and our total church budget has grown tenfold. The faith promise principle is easily understood and enthusiastically applied. It is consistent with our theology of stewardship. It's trusting God by making a commitment of intent.

Think bigger, and cast your church's missions vision toward the next millennium. 

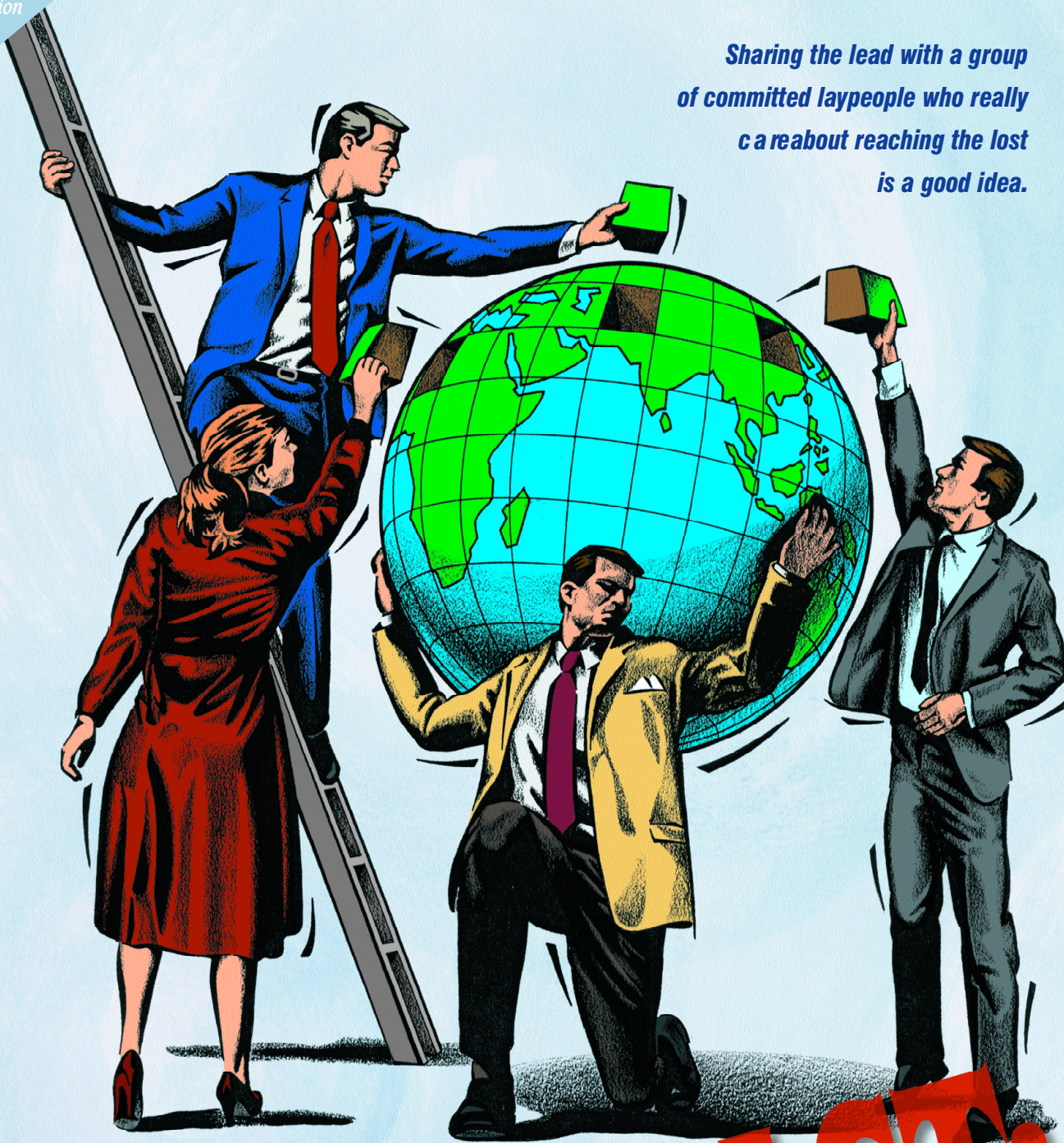
ENDNOTE

1. *The Barna Report* 1, no. 6, (1997): 2–3.

Howard L. Cummings is senior pastor of First Assembly of God, Aurora, Colorado.



*Sharing the lead with a group
of committed laypeople who really
care about reaching the lost
is a good idea.*



LESS HASSLE, MORE **IMPACT!**

One Church's Task Force Approach to Missions

BY DEAN MERRILL

Missions?

Yes sirree. It's one of those mom-flag-and-apple-pie endeavors that every pastor salutes. No minister, regardless of how harried his or her schedule or how penniless the church treasury, would say a word against raising money and

prayer support for world evangelism. It's right there in the Bible. It's also a given for any self-respecting congregation, large or small.

The only trouble is, how do you make missions soar when your "to do" list is already running off the bottom of the page? What pastor has time to read all that mail, take all those

ILLUSTRATION: THE ART SOURCE

beseeking phone calls from eager itinerants, do the foreign and home missions paperwork, think up splashy promotions every fall, and lift members' eyes beyond their own city limits?

Running a missions program in a local church is not simple. You can't whip it together in one-half hour on Thursday afternoon once a month and see glorious success. There are too many parts, too many interlocking dynamics, too many complications waiting to swallow you.

***Running a missions program
in a local church is not simple.
You can't whip it together in
one-half hour on Thursday
afternoon once a month and
see glorious success.***

That's why sharing the load with a group of committed laypeople who truly care about reaching the lost is a good idea. In our church the concept took the shape of an International Ministries Task Force. This group came alongside our senior pastor Bob Towell at the beginning of 1992 to reignite the church's anemic missionary vision.

WHAT'S ALL THIS PAPER?

I remember the first time I stopped by the church office to pick up the accumulated missions mail. A stack 6 inches high was sliding off the ledge onto the floor—newsletters and envelopes of all sizes and shapes, some with postmarks up to 4 months old. We obviously hadn't done a very good job recently of attending to our missionaries.

In the launch meeting the previous Saturday morning, our task force of 15 had sculpted a brave purpose statement: "We exist to inform, challenge, and involve the entire congregation in fulfilling the Great Commission and responding to the needs of hurting people through praying, giving, and going." Clearly, we needed to start by informing ourselves.

Another couple, my wife, and I armed ourselves with four strong letter openers and waded in. We soon realized we had a mixture of material from not only old friends but other missionaries we'd never heard of. We sorted them into two piles, dubbing one Our

Missionaries, and the other the Wannabes.

We also realized something else: Nobody was going to plow through this much reading month after month. We had to pare it down to a manageable size. So we divided up the names alphabetically among the four of us, and by the next month's IMTF meeting, we had collaborated on a six-page briefing report that boiled down the essence of each missionary's activities and needs.

Now more than 5 years later, this format continues to serve the group. It is handed out to the IMTF members the Sunday prior to the next session so they can come to the meeting already briefed. Besides the assorted field reports, a special section presents prayer needs, and another gives financial projects in need of funding.

CLEANING UP OUR ACT

Meanwhile, others on the task force were discovering their own areas needing attention. A roster of names we actually supported each month revealed some people we hadn't heard from in a long time.

We also noticed that our pledges, accumulated randomly over the years as various missionaries had come through, were off balance: We had six commitments to Africa and only one to all of Asia. We determined to shore up our Asian attention in the months ahead.

It was exciting to gather each month on a Monday or Tuesday night and begin taking serious care of this important area of the church. The main elements of the evening are the same today as they were in the beginning:

- *Prayer.* Members intercede for current needs of our missionaries and hot spots in the U.S. and around the world.
- *Approval of minutes.*
- *Financial report.* The amount of faith promise money that came in the previous month determines how much can be disbursed later in the evening.
- *Verbal review of the briefing report.*

***The only trouble is,
how do you make missions
soar when your "to do" list
is already running off
the bottom of
the page?***

***"This is the
first time in
my ministry
that I've
worked
with such
a structure
It gets more
people involved
in the vision."***

—Pastor Bob Towell

INTERNATIONAL MISSIONS

TASK FORCE ORGANIZATION

Composition. At least 10 members, no more than 20. Cross section of the church, i.e., marrieds, singles, from Gen X'ers to retirees.

Leadership. Pastor and a layperson serve as cochairpersons.

Term of office. All lay members serve 3 years, on a rotating basis, so as not to cause too much turnover at any one time. Maximum service: two consecutive terms, then off for at least a year.

Qualifications. Must be a member of the church. Must be certified by the church bookkeeper as a regular tither and as a missions giver. Once installed, task force member must attend at least 50 percent of the meetings.

Nomination process for new members. Any member may recommend a name. Lay chairperson then confers with church bookkeeper and pastor for acceptability. If cleared, name goes to entire task force for approval, then to board of deacons for ratification.

Individual portfolios. (at least one per member or couple)

- Information from missionaries (the monthly news briefing)
- Information to missionaries (birthday cards, anniversary cards, etc.)
- Information to the general congregation (bulletin spots, newsletters, etc.)
- Information to youth leaders (e.g., STL, AIM)
- Information to children's leaders (e.g., BGMC)
- Information to men (e.g., LFTL)
- Information to Women's Ministries
- Prayer encouragement
- Missions conference planning
- Work/ministry trips
- Financial records
- Hospitality to missionary guests
- Task force minutes
- Task force food

Meeting frequency. Monthly, shortly ahead of the board of deacons meeting so funding matters can be processed quickly.

Meeting location. A place where carry-in food can be served. Also needed: VCR, photocopier.

Handouts in advance. (usually the Sunday before)

- Monthly digest of missionary information
- Monthly financial report
- Last month's minutes

Spending authority. None. Task force may only recommend to the board of deacons. However, good stewardship results in high deacon confidence in the task force's recommendations. Similarly, the task force may choose a missions-giving goal for the year, but the board must ratify.

—Dean Merrill

Members ask questions about various missionaries, comment on particular missionary news items that moved them, and suggest ways to help.

- *Event planning.* During this time, members map out details for missions trips, fund-raisers, speakers, and the annual conference.

Overall, a missions task force has a nonmeasurable but still important effect on the congregation's view of missions: It's not just the pastor's thing. People start to think of world evangelism as their own....

- *Review of standing commitments.* A ledger shows which missionaries are receiving how much from us on a monthly basis and when that commitment should be reviewed. By policy, pledges to overseas individuals are made till the next furlough, while those to organizations and stateside recipients are made 12 months at a time. At each meeting decisions are made to continue pledges, increase support, add additional pledges, or drop pledges. If the task force feels in the dark about a given ministry because of lack of communication, we don't hesitate to put the dollars elsewhere.

Technically, the task force cannot make these decisions in isolation; all spending matters must go to the board of deacons for final action. But what the task force recommends normally prevails.

- *Giving to special projects.* This is overwhelmingly viewed as the fun part of the meeting. The group recommends grants to various outreaches, campaigns, building construction, and equipment purchases all around the world, based on what we learned in the monthly briefing report. All suggestions go onto a list, and then the chairperson calls for votes on each appropriation. If

a particularly high dollar figure doesn't pass, members are free to propose a more modest amount for a second vote.

All of this is constrained, of course, by the available cash in the world ministries account. (A policy requires a \$2,000 reserve at all times so that monthly pledges could be met even if giving were to take a nosedive for some reason. But the general desire is to not let missions dollars gather moss; get them to the fields as quickly as possible.)

LESS WORK FOR THE PASTOR

"This is the first time in my ministry I've worked with such a structure," Pastor Towell said, "and I love it. It gets more people involved in the vision."

What if a pastor said, "Sounds like more bureaucracy to me. I'd rather keep things simple and handle this area myself."

World missions is not just an arcane enterprise for the professional clergy to run while the laity watch quietly and pay the bills. It's a great commission to us all.

"My feeling is just the opposite," Towell said. "This system *relieves* my workload. And the missionaries love it too. When they call I can quickly say, 'You know, we have a task force that deals with all of this. Send your information, and they'll consider it at their next meeting.'

"I've had missionaries express amazement at this. They say things like 'Thank you so much for even taking my phone call.' The reason I took the call, of course, was that I knew I had an answer all ready, and it wasn't just a brush-off; their interests really would be heard by the task force."

Sometimes missionaries are encouraged to show up in person at the task force meeting. This makes the night even more invigorating; members get

to catch the missionary's vision in an up-close, personal way and are able to ask penetrating questions. This works out serendipitously for the missionaries too. They are able to do something productive on a Monday or Tuesday night rather than just waiting for the next church service. Our church has at times made major funding commitments based on this kind of interchange alone, without a Sunday visit from the missionary.

OWNING THE OUTREACH


Overall, a missions task force has a non-measurable but still important effect on the congregation's view of missions: It's not just the pastor's thing. People start to think of world evangelism as their own, knowing that it ranks high with their fellow lay friends. The words *we* and *our* are heard much more often.

And in time, this shows up in the offering plate. We didn't form the IMTF just to boost income. We had a broader purpose in mind. But the numbers have, in fact, turned out to be dramatic. Annual average adult giving was \$109 in 1991 and now averages over \$650 per adult attender.

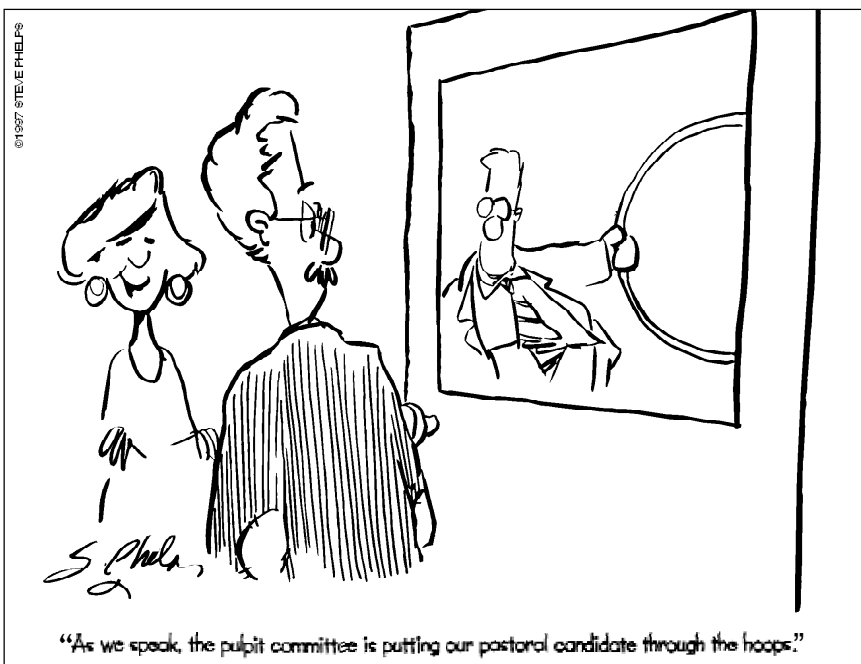
"It has been sort of like lighting a pilot light," David Burdine, IMTF cochairman, said. "The enthusiasm in the core group

spreads. Naturally, every task force member has a different circle of friends in the church. So there's a compounding effect as the missions vision heats up throughout the entire congregation."

What is even more remarkable is that this surge has occurred while the general fund was also digging itself out of a hole. Mortgage payments had been spotty throughout the late 1980s and into the 1990s. But our attention to missions was not viewed as a rival of the mortgage need but rather as a step of faith. God ended up blessing both accounts simultaneously.

World missions is not just an arcane enterprise for the professional clergy to run while the laity watch quietly and pay the bills. It's a great commission to us all. The more people know, and the more they're allowed to affect the outcomes, the more they care and the greater the impact. 

Dean Merrill is vice president and publisher for the International Bible Society. He and his family attend Living Springs Worship Centre (formerly First Assembly of God), Colorado Springs, Colorado.



Enthusiasm is easily generated for short-term missions,
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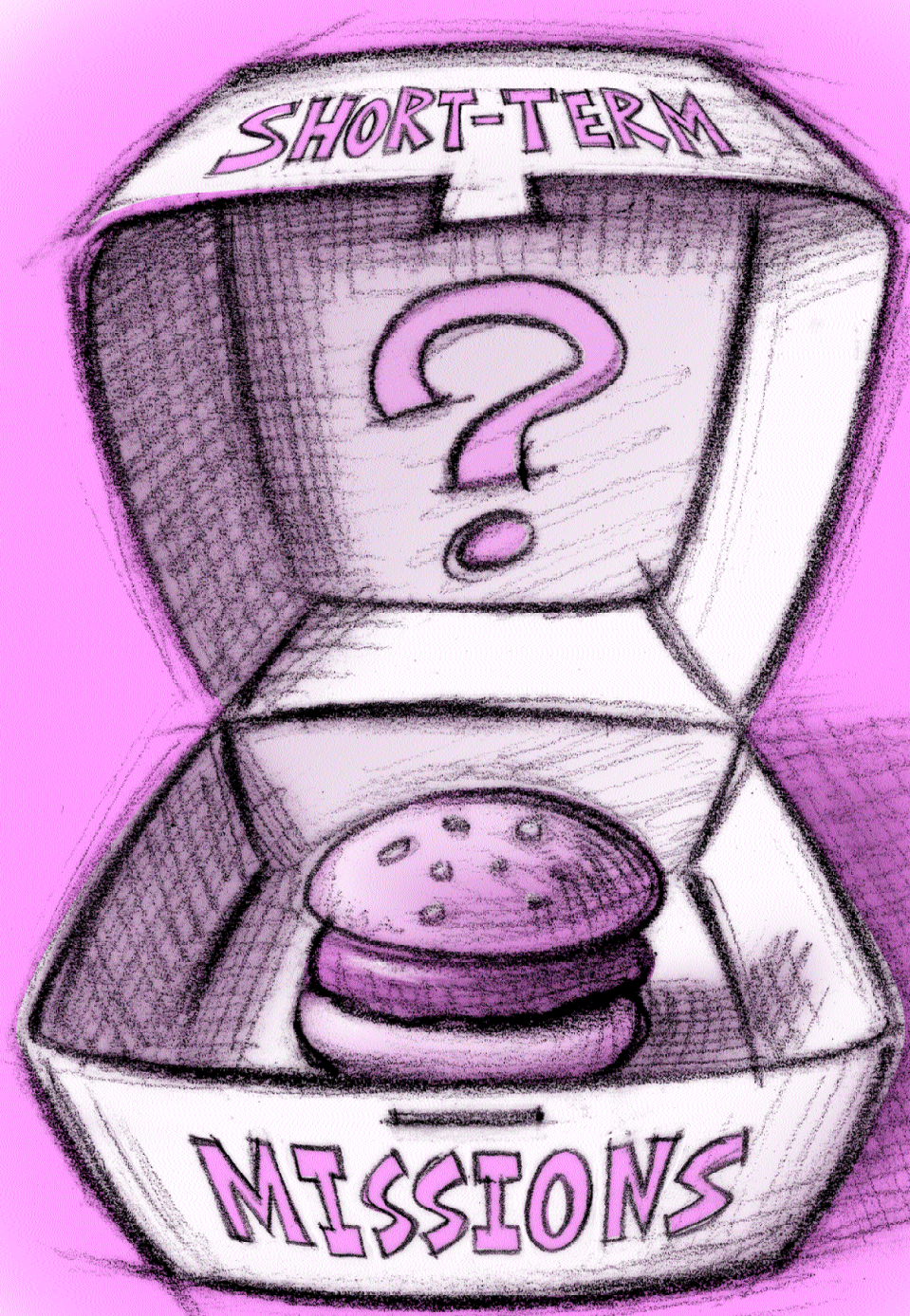


ILLUSTRATION: THE ART SOURCE

McMissions

BY MIRIAM ADENEY

Something is awry in the missions commitments of many congregations. Enthusiasm is easily generated for short-term missions, yet career missionaries discover that few people want to hear about their work. Auctions and car washes raise funds for short-termers, while money for established projects can suffer.

Unfortunately, much of our short-term work fosters dependency instead of empowering people. And because of inadequate preparation, some short-termers damage existing Christian witness or exhaust missionaries and national leaders.

Harsh words? “Surely that’s extreme,” many readers may respond. “My grandchild went on a short-term mission and came home a new person.” Granted, I too have sent my sons on short-term youth missions and will continue to do so. Christian parents should wish for their children a vision for missions.

But any strategy that deflects resources from long-term to short-term workers, even indirectly, is surely misguided. Why do so many congregations assume they must see missions firsthand before they will give? Why do they need to see videos of themselves on location before they care about missions?

*Some short-termers
damage existing
Christian witness or exhaust
missionaries and national leaders.*

Prayer, money, and enthusiasm must focus on long-term workers—both nationals and expatriates—viewing short-term workers as a complement to them. Writing on the downturn in career missionaries, Robert T. Coote says, “In a world where hundreds of millions have yet to hear the name of Christ and additional millions have not heard the gospel presented effectively in their cultural context, there is no

substitute for the career missionary.... One can take only limited satisfaction in the reports of uncounted thousands of short-termers engaged in missions, of local churches and schools undertaking cross-cultural ‘exposure’ forays.... [Short-termers] cannot balance a real decline in long-term commitments by men and women who are prepared to take a profoundly incarnational approach to communicating the gospel of Jesus Christ to people of other cultures.”¹

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from long-term to short-term
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COUNTING SHORT-TERM BLESSINGS

Short terms (which some define as any period of up to 2 years) can be a great blessing—with safeguards. When a church sponsors short-termers, giving and prayer support may increase; and some short-termers feel called to long-term service because of their experience. Some short-termers come back changed, with a bigger view of God and the world and an increased willingness to risk for His kingdom. Short-termers can bring Christ to restricted-access regions where missionaries are not allowed to settle or extend a national church’s or long-term missionary’s ministry. They can provide a vast pool of resources for huge events, like evangelism at the Olympics. Meeting short-termers may encourage nationals in their own witness. And, humbling though it may be, sometimes their contribution is comic entertainment for the locals—no small gift.

CAUTIONARY TALES

In this post-Cold War, inward-looking era, we can thank God for any Christians who want to bless the nations. To maximize the benefits of

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short-term missions, however, we must face three issues: time, intent, and training.

Time. It takes time to learn a language. It takes time to fall into the ground as a seed and lose our life, only to find it again in a hundredfold growth among another people. If love and listening require time anywhere, how much more so when cultural contexts are radically different?

Short terms...can be a great blessing—with safeguards.

Do short-termers adjust calmly to scorpions on the kitchen table? Foreign life is neither exotic nor simply a cauldron of problems. Foreign life is merely another set of arrangements viewed best through local lenses. It takes time to adapt to this.

And it takes time to absorb how to make local patterns work. From the people's

perspective, what is the right way to plan a schedule? To expend money and account for it? To exercise authority? To take initiative? To settle quarrels? These patterns are not mastered in the first week off the plane. Jesus spent 33 years in one place. It takes time to be a friend.

Intent. Let's be honest: In much of our short-term service, we are the ones who benefit most. Volunteer work is therapy—feel-good service. Is this an appropriate objective of our missions efforts?

What is top priority—our benefit or others? Although Christ went to the cross motivated by the joy beyond, He did not take on human form primarily to enhance His own experience. Do we have the right to use others to sensitize us to poverty and lostness if it means dampening their initiative and reinforcing their dependency on outside materials and skills?

What nurses and doctors are taught is appropriate for missionaries too: "First, do no harm." To say that something is better than nothing is no justification for poor missions work. Some missions work—even though it stimulates us—can be worse than nothing.

For example, years of gracious witness by local believers and missionaries can be damaged by careless "tourists for Jesus." And a noncontextualized witness can inoculate people against the gospel when a more attuned witness arrives.

To say that something is better than nothing is no justification for poor missions work.

For indigenous Christian leaders, regular short-term help can nurture dependency and retard grassroots leadership development. When people wait for the planes to fly in with supplies and experts, they are not empowered; they have become dependent on outside aid.

Too often we swoop down to clean up a disaster at the bottom of a cliff when we ought to be helping the people build a fence across the top. We should stop and ask: Why are so many people sick? Poor? Uneducated?

Frequently, local Christians have some answers. They see causes and can suggest preventive measures. They can prescribe potential

QUESTIONS

LOCAL CHURCH MISSIONS COMMITTEES SHOULD ASK

1. Do we focus prayer, money, and enthusiasm on long-term missionaries and nationals?
2. Do we seek and follow the counsel of thoughtful and appropriately trained indigenous leaders before planning our short-term projects?
3. Do we seek to be part of long-term systemic solutions, rather than piecemeal projects?
4. Does our work empower locals, leaving them with greater confidence to apply their own resources to solve their problems?
5. Do we buy the resources for our projects locally to support the local economy and to model the use of indigenous materials?
6. Do we minimize our consumption of the long-termers' time and resources?
7. Do we train our short-termers thoroughly in Scripture knowledge, spiritual disciplines, culture knowledge, and interpersonal skills?
8. Do we cultivate humility, recognizing that there are no instant experts?
9. Do we refuse to evaluate our project primarily by its effect on us?

infrastructures to enable their own people to build their own churches, publish their own books, and train their own preachers.

But such solutions are complex, even risky. For the sake of feeling good about our efforts, we pragmatic Americans like quick, measurable solutions: Ten wells dug. Ten dramas performed. Ten sermons preached. One hundred people won to Christ. We do not like long discussions fraught with ambiguity and long-term strategies with potential for failure—especially when we don't even speak the language.

For indigenous Christian leaders, regular short-term help can nurture dependency and retard grassroots leadership development.

Training for effectiveness. Many short-termers have a heart for the Lord but only a sketchy knowledge of Scripture, little experience in evangelism or apologetics, and a lackadaisical practice of spiritual disciplines.


How well can they answer the question, Who is Jesus? And do they know how He is interpreted in another culture? As a great prophet? The cosmic power that infuses all reality? One of many incarnations of God? Are short-termers trained to discuss such distinctions winsomely and persuasively? What if indigenous concepts of God, human nature, sin, and revelation are part of a system alien to American ways of thinking?

Do the short-termers we commission know the great themes of Scripture? Do they know how to discuss difficult questions with non-Christians? Are they experienced in sharing their faith with others? In helping a new Christian grow? In mediating interpersonal conflicts? Are they faithful in their own practice of daily spiritual disciplines?

Even the carpenter, the surgeon, and the closed-country visitor whose witness is largely Christian presence need to be able to give an answer for the hope that is in them. Well-prepared teams often find a chance to witness in the most formidable places. Poorly prepared teams see the chances of a lifetime slip away.

Cultural knowledge and interpersonal skills deserve thorough attention too. For example, the frequent immodesty of short-termers'

dress and body language appalls long-term missionaries, who cry for better cultural orientation.

Watch out for short-term missions! Better yet, improve them. Give short-termers the most thorough preparation possible. Send them to projects that empower local people, at the invitation of the locals. Do not drain people already on the field. Do not drain donors of attention, prayer, and money that should be dedicated to long-term workers. With these safeguards, short-term missions can offer ordinary Christians a chance to make a difference and to bless the nations. 

ENDNOTE

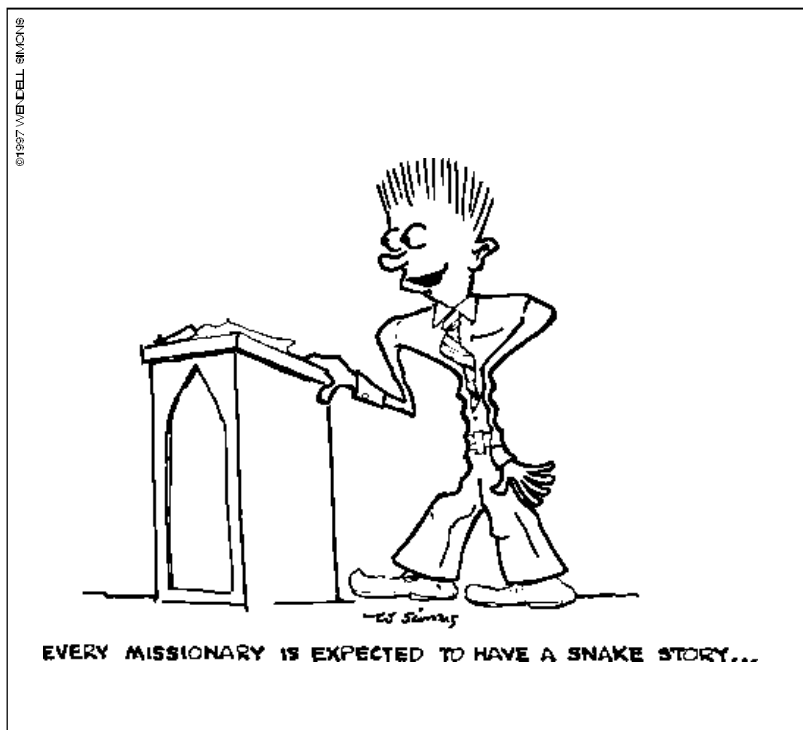
1. Robert T. Coote, *International Bulletin of Mission Research*, January 1995.

Adapted from Miriam Adeney, "McMissions," Christianity Today, 11 November 1996, 14–15. Used by permission.

Miriam Adeney is a contributing editor of Christianity Today; she is research professor of mission at Regent College (Vancouver, B.C.) and associate professor of cross-cultural ministries at Seattle Pacific University.



Too often we swoop down to clean up a disaster at the bottom of a cliff when we ought to be helping the people build a fence across the top.



BY ROBERT W. HOULIHAN

The gospel has always advanced by signs and wonders. When Jesus preached the coming of the Kingdom, He performed miracles to display the power of God and to overthrow the rule of Satan. When Peter preached to the crowd on the Day of Pentecost, he stated that Jesus “was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs” (Acts 2:22).^{*} The disciples saw Jesus as their model and followed Him in the ministry of signs and wonders.

NEW TESTAMENT PATTERN

The Great Commission was given in an atmosphere of the Resurrection, the baptism in the Holy Spirit, and the miraculous. Matthew articulated Jesus’ power and authority over everything in heaven and earth. Mark stated that “these signs will accompany those who believe...they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues”; they will be protected from danger and heal the sick (cf. Mark 16:17,18). Luke emphasized that “with great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 4:33). John reinforced Jesus’ model of ministry in miracles: “As the Father hath sent me, I am sending you” (John 20:21). This same power and authority to perform signs, wonders, and miracles in the name of Jesus have been given to those who are sent to the lost.

The Book of Mark demonstrates the power of the Kingdom in conflict with Satan’s rule. In the first chapter, Mark set the stage for the life of signs and wonders. When God announced the coming of His beloved Son, Satan tried to weaken Jesus’ authority by attacking Him with the temptations. After Jesus’ victory in the desert, He preached: “The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news” (Mark 1:15).

Jesus counterattacked Satan’s kingdom by casting the evil spirit out of the man in the Capernaum synagogue (cf. Mark 1:24–26). The result was that the news about Jesus spread over the whole region of Galilee. As soon as the gospel goes to new areas, signs and wonders accompany the declaration.

When Jesus sent out the Seventy-two, He told the missionaries to “heal the sick who are there and tell them, ‘The kingdom of God is near you’ ” (Luke 10:9). When the disciples returned, they were full of “joy and said, ‘Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name’ ” (verse 17). Jesus declared that signs and wonders are part of the mission when He said, “I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions [a possible allusion to Satan and his demons] and to overcome all the power of the enemy” (verse 19).

*The disciples saw Jesus
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After the Great Commission was given, the apostles began doing the same ministry Jesus had on earth. After the Resurrection, during the 35-year period of the Book of Acts, over 80 references of the miraculous in the ministry of the apostles and the disciples are recorded.

One of the truths of missions is the relationship of signs and wonders to the coming of the kingdom of God in new cultural groups. As the gospel is preached to the unreached, miracles will take place to authenticate the coming of a greater Kingdom into the rule of Satan. When Philip went to Samaria to proclaim Christ, the people saw miraculous signs, and then they all paid close attention to what he said (cf. Acts 8:6,7).

The man most responsible for the persecution of the young church was blinded by a light from heaven. Even the men with Saul were speechless because they heard the miraculous voice from heaven but didn’t see anyone. After the Lord convinced a layman named Ananias that he was to be the instrument of God in this situation, Paul received his sight (cf. Acts 9:1–19).

Peter was probably the most sectarian of the disciples. It took the Lord’s voice three times in a vision to get him to understand the transcultural emphasis of the gospel. The miraculous

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SIGNS

and WONDERS

on MISSIONS

Power and authority to perform signs, wonders, and miracles in the name of Jesus have been given to those who are sent to the lost.

vision was the only way to get Peter beyond the Jewish restrictions of the gospel. When Peter and those with him saw that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles and that they spoke with tongues, it was enough to convince them that the gospel was to move beyond the Jewish people (cf. Acts 10:9–48).

God's miracles through Philip brought the gospel to Samaria and thereafter the continent of Africa. The healing of Paul's blindness took the Kingdom truth to the Gentiles as far away as Europe. Signs and wonders at a Roman soldier's house took the gospel to the group most hated by the Jews. When the gospel goes to the unreached, it is accompanied by signs and wonders.

MODERN-DAY PATTERN

The pattern established in the New Testament on the relationship of the advance of the gospel with signs and wonders is true today. Everywhere the kingdom of God is preached, miracles occur showing the power of God and the coming of a New Ruler.

Vietnam

In Vietnam a young man was arrested for

running drugs. He met two Assemblies of God pastors in prison who led him to the Lord. The pastors were released after 2 years, and 1 month later the new Christian was released and entered Bible school. After completing his first semester, he went home and preached the gospel to the unreached White Tai tribe. In 1 month, 753 of them from 5 villages responded to the gospel. The kingdom of God came to the White Tai people.

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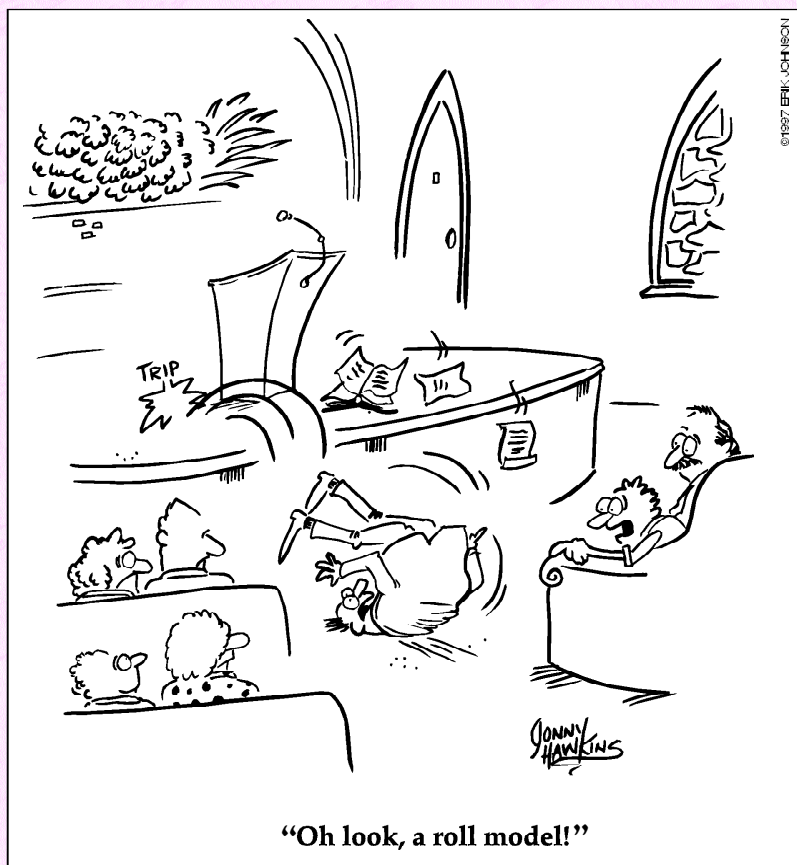
Mongolia

Outer Mongolia was isolated from the gospel for 2,000 years. The people are proud of their ancestral heritage with Genghis Khan. These nomadic people live in *gers* (felt tents) across the plains north of the Gobi Desert. When a crack came in the door to the country and it was about to open, Assemblies of God missionaries went to see what could be done. With no Bible in the Mongolian language and only a minimum of Christian literature, a crusade was held in the capital Ulan Bator. The first night a young deaf man was healed in the meeting, and others were touched by the power of God. In 3 days, 500 people responded to the gospel. The last night a demon-possessed monk was trying to prevent people from coming to the Lord. In front of 800 Mongolians, the power of God bound the power of Satan. People who lived in fear of demonic power and control witnessed a greater power. The kingdom of God came to Mongolia.

After the monk was cast out of the meeting, people ran forward to the altar. As they came, they discarded their Buddhist prayer papers, their amulets, and their prayer beads. Signs and wonders authenticated the call to follow Jesus.

Myanmar

There are 135 people groups in Myanmar (Burma). Because many are isolated in remote areas, they have yet to hear the gospel. Until a




few years ago, one of these groups was the Arakans.

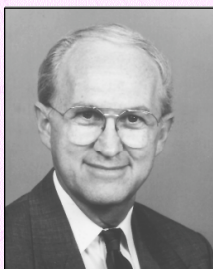
A Buddhist monk heard the gospel by short-wave. He became curious about the God named Jesus, so he left his monastery and came to the capital Yangon. He found the radio preacher Myo Chit, was led to Christ, and turned from his trust in Buddha. The new Christian entered Bible school and after several months returned to his home, burdened to tell the Arakans about Christ. The monks who used to be his companions prohibited the people from listening to the evangelist talk of this new God. All alone in his hometown, the new Christian continued to read the Word of God.

At the time there was a drought in the province. As the new convert read the Scriptures, he came across the story of Elijah and the prophets of Baal. Elijah challenged the prophets of Baal to a power encounter—the true God would send fire and rain.

With the Bible as his script, this lone Christian challenged the monks. The farmers heard the word gladly for they needed the rain. The Buddhist monks prayed to their gods, yet nothing happened. The sky was cloudless. But when the evangelist called upon God to show

himself by signs and wonders, the Lord sent rain on the land. The people rejoiced, but the monks said it was a coincidence. The evangelist wasn't discouraged. After the rain ceased he said, "Let's try it again to see who really is God: Buddha or Jesus." The monks went through their prayers to no avail, but when the evangelist prayed a second time, God again sent rain. It is easy to understand why there are now several churches among the Arakan people. God is a God who answers by rain.

Wherever the gospel goes, it is accompanied by signs and wonders. After the Ascension, "the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it" (Mark 16:20). Today's missionaries can do the same, for our God never changes. 



**Scripture quotations are from the New International Version.*

Robert W. Houlihan is Division of Foreign Missions Asia Pacific field director, Springfield, Missouri.

As the gospel is preached to the unreached, miracles will take place to authenticate the coming of a greater Kingdom into the rule of Satan.

**The consuming desire of God's dream team
is to know the Lamb of God
and make Him known
around the world.**



God's Dream Team

BY DAVID E. GODWIN

Skeptics were silenced and millions of Americans cheered in amazement as the basketball team from the U.S. demonstrated its ability in the Barcelona Olympics a few years ago. Dubbed America's Dream Team, players set new records in the sports world. Whether in sports, business, or life in general, tough times call for dream teams.

Every successful team is built upon a dream. God's dream is to bring "many sons unto glory" (Hebrews 2:10). His dream of redeeming the lost lives on. But what about the team? A world living on the edge of eternity is in desperate need of help. Will God's dream team once again come to the forefront?

EARLY DREAM TEAM

A few years after Pentecost God raised up a special team for a crucial moment (cf. Acts 11:19,20). Opening doors that had locked the gospel into a room marked "For Jews Only," these champions dedicated themselves to winning the Gentile world to Christ. They came from Cyprus and Cyrene and took seriously the last command of the Lord. With only primitive transportation, they journeyed hundreds of miles to present Christ to a neglected group.

God's dream for lost humanity motivated them to leave the familiar and go to the Gentiles. This was God's dream team—God's pioneer missionaries of the Early Church.

**God's method for missions
is people willing to give their lives
to missions service.**

TODAY'S DREAM TEAM

Today, God's dream team continues on with the work of winning the lost. Almost daily we hear of their exploits: the pastor of a small church who secretly borrowed from the local bank to make sure the missionary did not

leave without an adequate offering; a pastor who said, "Even in hard times, the first disbursement each month is the support of our home and foreign missionaries"; or the presbyter who said, "I am so happy. My congregation gave 23 percent of the church income to missions last year."

Champions!

How can God's dream team be identified? Members of the team exchange personal priorities for the Lord's priorities. God is not their "cosmic bellboy." Rather, they ask, "What does God want us to do? What did Jesus command?" Jesus said, "Go!" The Great Commission sets the standard for ministry. The consuming desire of God's dream team is to know the Lamb of God and make Him known around the world.

**Members of the team
exchange personal priorities
for the Lord's priorities.**

**God is not their
"cosmic bellboy." Rather, they ask,
"What does God want us to do?"**

The dream team also asks how well is the work being done? Undoubtedly, the pioneers of the Assemblies of God would rejoice to see what has happened in a comparatively short time. The minutes of the 1914 General Council recorded, "We dedicate ourselves to the greatest evangelism the world has ever seen." What would our early missionaries say if they could see the millions who have been saved and the thousands preparing for ministry? They would rejoice over the indigenous church's victory in the midst of restrictions and opposition. They would rejoice knowing that after the dust of turmoil settles, indigenous churches continue

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The church must
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on, intact and vibrant, propagating themselves after the New Testament pattern.

This is not an attempt at self-congratulation. We are only one part of God's kingdom. Nonetheless, we stand responsible for the vision and call of God that has been passed on to us. It is our mission. The torch is in our hands.

Our dream team sees the increasing need. Approximately half the world's population has never heard the gospel. They are lost by default rather than by choice. Yet more doors are open than ever before with many crying out, "Why have you not sent someone to tell us about Christ?" Our dream team feels this question must be answered at any cost.

Future of Missions: Good News and Bad News

Globally, the missions news is good—never has the world been more receptive to the gospel. From a North American perspective, however, interest and support are waning. Jim Engel, author of *A Clouded Future?*, writes that unless God intervenes and moves churches and agencies to "cope with changing paradigms and realities, North America will become a secondary force in the global church."

George Murray of The Evangelical Alliance Mission suggests several causes for the deterioration. A whole generation of young people is being taught by their Christian parents that their first priority should be to buy a house and build security for the future.

Much of evangelical Christianity has bought into the "contemporary cult of self," says Robertson McQuilkin, general director of the Evangelical Missiological Society. The typical evangelical church has no missions theology and little missions involvement. In addition, a new universalism, suggesting that "those who have never heard the gospel are not inherently lost," has crept into many evangelical groups, killing missionary motivations.

Ralph Winter, founder of the U.S. Center for World Missions, believes another problem is the breakdown of so many American families. This causes people to focus more on family problems than on missions.

The worst enemy of missions progress, however, is a pervasive pessimism among evangelicals. The prevailing opinion is that the world is getting progressively worse. Yet both history and Scripture bear witness to the fact that the church has grown incredibly in the midst of all kinds of trouble.

We must continue to focus on the spiritual side of the Great Commission, not just the mechanics.

—Adapted from *Current Thoughts and Trends*, February 1997.
Summarized from Moody, November/December issue.
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MISSIONS OBSTACLES

What obstacles does a missions team face?

Generational Idiosyncrasies

Each generation has its own characteristics and weaknesses. The church, however, should never be limited by the weaknesses of the generations that make up its membership. Christianity is supracultural. The church must reflect the lordship of Jesus, not the tendencies of its age-groups. The elderly cannot retire from prayer and commitment because of age, nor can the young discard missions because some view it as a tradition of the establishment. The Great Commission is for every believer.

Cross-cultural Barriers

Are American missionaries still needed? A study of Scripture and history shows how God used people for cross-cultural ministry. God amazed us by declaring Paul the man for the Gentiles. It is said that God used a Jew to take the gospel to Rome, a Roman to take it to France, and a Frenchman to take it to Scandinavia.

**"Our career missionaries
are essential. They are
our frontline soldiers."**

—A DISTRICT MISSIONS DIRECTOR

Several years ago as my wife and I returned as missionaries to Panama, we chuckled when we realized God was using Caucasians from the U.S. to touch Panamanians. When we began our work in Panama, the canal crisis was acute. American cars were overturned; U.S. flags were burned; and Americans were resented. Yet Panamanians overwhelmingly accepted us and became our dearest friends. They looked beyond the cultural differences and responded to our love and the call of God upon our lives. God continues to call people to cross cultural barriers.

Lack of Missionary Support

Monthly missionary support is more and more difficult to raise. Some churches tend to support missions projects in which members of the congregation are involved. Although these projects are important, let us continue to support the career missionaries who live out the Christ life on the field. They establish the foundation upon which we build. After recent

ministry to Asia and visits to war-torn areas, a district missions director said, "Our career missionaries are essential. They are our front-line soldiers."

**Are churches not
setting aside services
where people are
called to obey
the Great Commission
and go?**

Saturation Point

When I pastored, there were times when I felt the church could give no more toward missions—we were maxed out. God used a young man in my congregation to show me God is never maxed out. We had just added a number of new missionaries to our support list, and new requests were coming in regularly. We had reached our limit. Then John shared with me that although he had never taken missions seriously, his life was impacted by the last missions convention. He said, "Pastor, I promised God that if He will supply, I will give \$1,000 monthly, above my tithes, for our missions program." One minute the church had reached its limit; the next minute the annual budget had increased by \$12,000!

Under 40 Age-group

Today's dream team must bring the under 40 age-group into the loop of missions support. American teens are more affluent than previous generations, and they have the desire for personal involvement in missions. We must involve them. Missions education must include the children. At an early age, they should be challenged to support missionaries through BGMC and Speed-the-Light.

When I hear pastors say, "Before our missionary speaks, we will ask the children to leave," I want to protest, "Wait! You have just dismissed my future supporters!"

Lack of Missions Conventions


How can we enlist more people in God's dream team? Every year thousands of churches fail to hold missions conventions. Are churches not setting aside services where people are called to obey the Great Commission and go? Do churches not have goal-setting sessions where people are challenged to respond to the

needs outside their four walls?

Missions conventions provide the opportunity for believers to hear the call of God and to find a place of ministry. During missions conventions, financial support for missions is multiplied by means of the faith promise and sacrificial cash offerings.

Certainly the absence of a missions convention does not necessarily indicate a lack of concern. Many churches reporting no convention have missionary services and sacrificially support God's work. A missions convention, however, increases a church's missions effectiveness.

CONCLUSION

It is time for God's dream team to press forward. Jesus is asking us to be faithful to the Great Commission. One day we will join with those around the throne of God that are there because of our partnership with God and through the efforts of God's dream team. 



David E. Godwin is Missions Convention and Prayer Task Force Ministries coordinator for the Division of Foreign Missions, Springfield, Missouri.

**Every year
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conventions.**





ILLUSTRATION: THE ART SOURCE

America: A Missions Challenge

BY KENT R. HUNTER

Someone once said, "It's hard to see history when you're in the middle of it." Even rapid and radical change, in historical perspective, happens slowly and suddenly. It catches us

like a time warp. It jolts us with a bolt of reality shock. Many Americans are suffering from a reaction to this new reality: The United States has become a mission field.

No one is surprised that the U.S. is the No. 1 sending country in the world. No other country sends more missionaries beyond its borders than the U.S. What will come as a surprise, however, is that the U.S. is the No. 2 receiving country in the world. Only Brazil receives more missionaries from the outside than does the U.S.

As Christians study the ecclesiastical demographics of most counties in America, they are shocked, dismayed, challenged, and surprised to discover the large percentage of self-declared unchurched people. Generally, areas in the Northeast and Northwest are less churched, by percentage of population, than other areas. The Bible Belt (mostly southern states) and the Midwest are more churched.

*The local congregation...
will either become a mission with a
self-awareness that is descriptive of
an outreach post on the mission field,
or it will cease to exist.*

WAKE-UP CALL

Many Christians are arising from a sleepy era from 1950 to 1970 when Christianity was in vogue and enjoyed a friendly atmosphere throughout the U.S. It was actually fashionable to go to church. With the phenomenon of the baby boom, biological growth caused Sunday schools to swell and pews to fill. However, by the 1970s significant erosion in denominational loyalty and institutional cohesiveness began to show up in serious decline reports from mainline denominations.

The figures became even more dramatic in the late 1970s and 1980s as the residual effect of grown children from apathetic and semi-churched parents began to become adults raised as pure secularists. Through the 1980s and into the early 1990s those at the forefront of the Christian movement were beginning to challenge the church to grasp the reality that major portions of the population were now secular. These unchurched masses felt neither obligated to attend a church nor guilty when they didn't. As they began having children, they felt no spiritual or traditional pressure to take their children to Sunday school or church.

During the last several years, some

outstanding work has been done to alert the church to these major changes:

- Leith Anderson, *Dying for Change*, outlines the new realities confronting churches. Anderson claims that among America's Protestant churches, 85 percent may have plateaued or are declining in membership. His sequel *A Church for the 21st Century* is specifically directed to what the church must do to face societal change.

- George Barna, *What Americans Believe*, underscores with statistics that many Americans believe in God but have little interest in the institutional church.

- Carl George, *Prepare Your Church for the Future*, looks at a structural paradigm identified as the metachurch model. Writing of churches open to change and built on a small group structure, George focuses on the ability to empower and multiply ministry.

- George Hunter, *How To Reach Secular People*, helps Christians understand the mindset and the worldview of the unchurched American. Hunter provides helpful insights for

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Profile of Christians Who Reach Secular People

Christians who reach secular people:

1. Understand the secularization of the West.
2. Are honest about themselves in all their relationships.
3. Are people of faith who trust in God.
4. Are acutely aware of the credibility factor.
5. Have role models in apostolic ministry.
6. Have clear objectives to achieve their outreach to secular people.
7. Believe in the possibilities of people, by grace through faith.
8. Research the population and culture they are called to reach.
9. Identify with the people they are called to reach.
10. Are not involved in witness alone but in ministries to a range of human needs.
11. Develop core convictions that they communicate over the decades.
12. Are apostles and apologists who engage in reasonable conversation with seeking people.
13. Are characterized by persistence in pursuing their apostolic vision.

Adapted from George G. Hunter III, How To Reach Secular People (Nashville: Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1992) 118–32. Used by permission.

Characteristics of Secular People

Secular people:

1. Are essentially ignorant of basic Christianity.
2. Seek life *before* death.
3. Are conscious of doubt more than guilt.
4. Have a negative image of the church.
5. Have multiple alienations.
6. Are untrusting.
7. Have low self-esteem.
8. Perceive history as out of control.
9. Experience forces in their personalities and families they cannot control.
10. Despair over their inability to find God.

Adapted from George G. Hunter III, How To Reach Secular People (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1992) 44–53. Used by permission.

God is raising
up a new breed
of mission-driven
churches...
They are outreach
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the communication process that must radically change if we are going to reach this audience effectively.

- Loren Mead, *The Once and Future Church*, lifts up the importance of the local congregation as he challenges Christians to reinvent the congregation for a new mission frontier.

- Lyle Schaller, *21 Bridges to the 21st Century*, wrestles with radical changes that have rendered many of the church's programs irrelevant.

- Lee Strobel, *Inside the Mind of Unchurched Harry and Mary*, a former "unchurched Harry" provides evangelistic handles.

- Leonard Sweet, *Faith Quakes*, seeks to help Christians identify the Christian religion in a dramatically changing culture.

INVASION

As secularism invades the U.S., the church becomes a mission. It also becomes an outcast, an irregularity, a minority, and a target for persecution. The church increasingly takes on the irrelevant stature that similarly emanates from the musty and archaic ruins of European cathedrals—testimonies to an era when Christianity triumphed institutionally but lost touch with the heartbeat of humanity. Christianity celebrated its day in the American spotlight 30 years ago. Now it struggles in bewilderment—the incarnation of the gospel that worked through vehicles in previous

years no longer makes sense to a whole new crowd that inhabits America today.

In this context, the local congregation has no choice. It will either become a mission with a self-awareness that is descriptive of an outreach post on the mission field, or it will cease to exist. Those congregations that fail to make this major change in what they do, the way they think, the way they understand themselves, and the way they set priorities will no longer be in existence by the year 2040. Entire brands of Christianity will disappear because they are unwilling or unable to become missionaries in what has become a new religious world order.

In the ashes of already rapidly declining churches and denominations, God is raising up a new breed of mission-driven churches—visitor friendly churches. They are outreach oriented, and the Great Commission is a high priority. They have either gone through the extremely difficult process of metamorphosing from an institutional church to a cutting-edge mission, or they are new entities that have been birthed as a mission. They are driven beyond institutional walls to enter into the marketplace physically with communication skills that are sensitive to the target audience. Their top priority is the salvation of the lost.

Mission-driven churches are driven
beyond institutional walls to
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Their top priority
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PARADIGM COLLISION

The great challenge for Christians in existing churches is that they did not sign up for the mission field. Many have enjoyed decades of the comfortable environment of the institutional church. Now they find it shocking to experience changes in programming, priorities, expenditures, and worship styles geared toward the unchurched. Christians who are accustomed to being the center of the church's attention find it challenging to hear pastors and leaders giving the battle cry and allowing the Great Commission to set the agenda. These are Christians who did not initiate,

themselves, a plan to move to the mission field. They were not trained to be missionaries. And they feel invaded. In fact, they are. As they are faced with those in their congregations who recognize the new realities of the mission field, they are overwhelmed by a paradigm that is new, foreign, and uncomfortable. They are experiencing a paradigm collision.

CHALLENGES FOR CHANGE

There are several significant challenges for the American church that wants to become a mission.

1. *The church needs to develop missions priorities.* These priorities are attitudinal frameworks that will shape the expenditure of time, money, and energy and reshape the institutional church into an outreach center that is an outpost of the secular landscape.

2. *The church needs to be centrifugal in its posture.* The typical American church has been centripetal, providing a sign on the front lawn and an ad in the Yellow Pages, inviting the community to come to the institutional church. The new paradigm will be a church that is going into the workforce, the political arena, the educational setting, and the marketplace. Instead of the quaint white building that looks much like a fortress to the secular person, the church might better be located in a shopping center.

3. *Christians need to become student missionaries, learning all they can about secular people.* Christians will be retrained to understand what it is like to speak Christianity to those who haven't a clue about the real reasons why Christians celebrate Christmas or Easter.

4. *Christians need to learn the landscape of the mission field.* It is filled with land mines. It is a world in which many of the rules have changed. Most of the assumptions of how people respond to Christianity are excess baggage in this new era.


5. *Christians need to be prepared for persecution.* It will come subtly. It will also be overt. It will come in political harassment. It may reach violent proportions. For some there will be a spiritual warfare they have not understood before. For those who have served on the mission field around the world, it will be nothing new. No longer will Christians be able to enjoy the luxury of arrogant independence

Strategies for Reaching Secular People

1. Provide ministries of instruction.
2. Invite people to dedicate their lives to serving God.
3. Help secular people find meaning to life.
4. Engage secular people in dialogue.
5. Address secular people's doubts and questions.
6. Provide opportunities to meet credible Christians.
7. Provide opportunities for people to overcome alienation.
8. Engage in ministries of affirmation.
9. Help people discover their dignity and self-worth.
10. Offer people hope in the kingdom of God.
11. Provide support groups for people with addictions.
12. Identify and reach receptive people.
13. Reach across social networks.
14. Offer culturally appropriate forms of ministry.
15. Multiply new groups in the church.
16. Offer ministries that meet needs.
17. Engage secular people on their turf.

Adapted from George G. Hunter III, How To Reach Secular People (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press) 55–72. Used by permission.

from one another. A new spirit of cooperation will be a characteristic of Christians who respect the diversity but depend upon Christian unity as a fact of survival.

The new mission field may be one of the greatest hardships that many U.S. Christians have ever experienced. However, it may also be the challenge and the impetus for spiritual renewal and meaningful Christianity. 

Adapted from "The U.S. Mission Field" by Kent R. Hunter, America: The New Mission Field—Evangelism Digest, January 1996, 9–15. Used by permission.

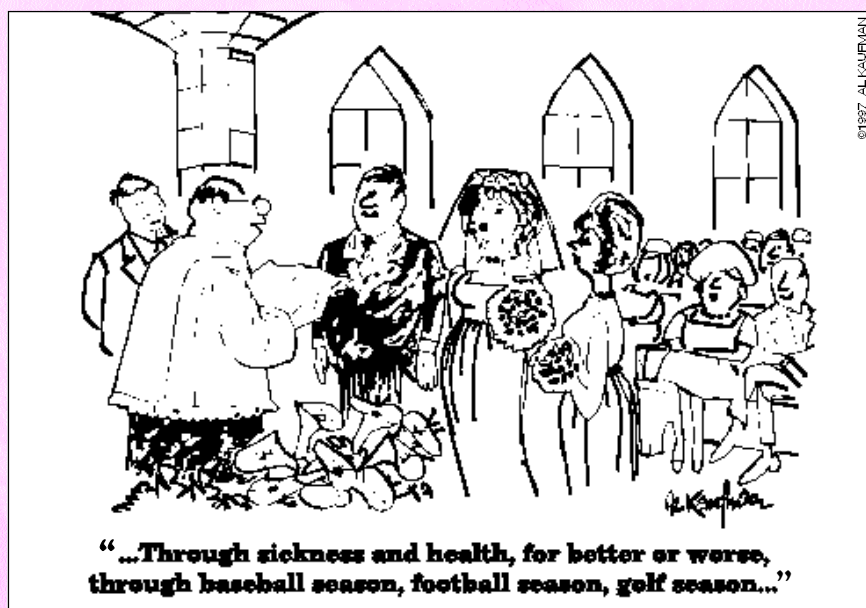


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The great challenge for Christians in existing churches is that they did not sign up for the mission field.

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Only Believe, All Things Are Possible! The Revival Legacy of

Smith Wigglesworth

BY GARY B. MCGEE

Wigglesworth's bold faith, colorful preaching, controversial methods, and the remarkable testimonies that followed his ministry made him legendary.

Running down a street in Vevey, Switzerland, young Kenneth Ware heard someone call out to him, "Come here, boy! Put out your tongue!" Since his mother had many English-speaking friends, he thought the man must be an American doctor. But far from a medical doctor, it was Smith Wigglesworth, one of the premier healing evangelists in the Pentecostal movement.

Ware had been a neglected child and now at age 15 stuttered badly. Standing before the evangelist, Wigglesworth took hold of the boy's tongue and abruptly declared, "Lad, this tongue will preach the gospel." From that moment the stuttering ceased, and Ware later became a missionary in France.

Pentecostals stood out from many of their evangelical brothers and sisters because of their bold faith in God's willingness to perform miracles in answer to prayer. In contrast, most Christians at the time had either concluded that miracles had ceased with the Apostolic Age or when they did occur, God had sovereignly chosen to do so. In either case, it was useless to pray and actually expect to see miracles happen. But to Pentecostals, Jesus had promised, "these signs shall follow them that believe" (Mark 16:17,18).

Wigglesworth's bold faith, colorful preaching, controversial methods, and the remarkable testimonies that followed his ministry made him legendary. In fact, after his death

and those of Aimee Semple McPherson and Charles S. Price in the 1940s, some of the faithful gloomily deduced that the Spirit's anointing on the Pentecostal movement had been buried with them. Yet today a younger generation seeking to experience the power and demonstration of the Holy Spirit for Christian witness asks: Who was Smith Wigglesworth?

Why do people call him the Apostle of Faith?

THE BRADFORD PLUMBER

Those who knew him in his earlier years couldn't have imagined that one day he would see thousands converted, have piles of discarded crutches and braces in his meetings, and have a foreign government take action against him.

Wigglesworth was converted at age 8 in a Wesleyan Methodist revival, and an Anglican bishop confirmed him 2 years later. A Plymouth Brethren friend gave him instruction in the Bible. With their radical view of faith, the Brethren encouraged those involved in the Lord's work to simply pray and trust God for material needs. This meant that sharing one's needs publicly could only indicate unbelief.

In his early years, the internationally acclaimed George Müller, another product of the Brethren, modeled the idealized "faith life" at his orphanage in Bristol. Without advertising the financial needs for the care of several

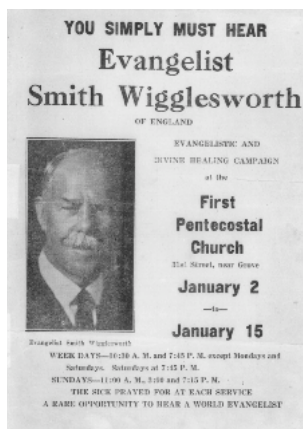


PHOTO FURNISHED BY: ASSEMBLIES OF GOD ARCHIVES



"Lord Send a Revival" (Psalm 85:6) was the Assemblies of God theme for 1997. To give special emphasis to this theme, *Enrichment* Journal has printed a series of articles on four of history's great revivalists. Previous issues featured the inspiring accounts of the lives of Aimee Semple McPherson, Jonathan Edwards, and George Whitefield. Last in our series is an article highlighting Smith Wigglesworth.

thousand children, God miraculously provided. The fame of Müller may have inspired Wigglesworth. Although he said he read only the Bible, it is likely that the influence of the Brethren laid the seeds for his later confidence in the “prayer of faith” (James 5:15).

In his late teens in Bradford, England, while preparing to become a master plumber, Wigglesworth became attracted to the Salvation Army because they seemed to have more spiritual power than any other group. And through this association, he met Polly Featherstone. Subsequent to their marriage in 1882, they shared in ministry by opening Bowland Street Mission in Bradford.

Visiting nearby Leeds, he attended a “divine healing service” and became convinced from Scripture that God still heals the sick. Polly accompanied him to one of the services and received a healing herself. Wigglesworth, however, continued to suffer from hemorrhoids and took salts every day to clear his lower digestive tract. When Polly challenged him with his own unbelief, he anointed himself with oil according to the instruction in James 5:14. Instantly, healing took place and the malady never returned.

In spite of Wigglesworth’s physical strength, he lacked self-confidence. He couldn’t speak from the pulpit for more than 2 or 3 minutes before breaking down in tears and asking someone else to finish for him. Polly was the preacher in the family. For Smith, these were years of intense personal struggle, which unfortunately resulted in a time of spiritual coldness. Nevertheless, his family grew (he and Polly had five children), and his prospering business was flooded with calls.

WHEN THE FIRE FELL

Two stirring spiritual experiences changed him and his ministry forever: (1) In 1893 while attending one of the famous “higher life” conferences at the resort town of Keswick, the equivalent of an American camp meeting, he testified to being sanctified or baptized in the Spirit, as taught by the Keswick preachers.



PHOTO: ASSEMBLIES OF GOD ARCHIVES

(2) A greater turning point in his life occurred in 1907. He heard that people were receiving the Holy Spirit at Sunderland and decided to go and see for himself. Convinced that he had already gotten the Pentecostal Baptism, he grew discouraged while attending the services at All Saints’ (Anglican) Church. Though “slain in the Spirit” several times, his spiritual hunger became even more intense.

Finally, after 4 days of seeking to speak in tongues, he decided to head home but first stopped by the vicarage to say good-bye. Mary Boddy, the vicar’s wife, said, “Brother

“The joy was so great that when I came to utter it my tongue failed, and I began to worship God in other tongues as the Spirit gave me utterance.”

—WIGGLESWORTH

**Those who
attended his meetings
remembered the
awesome presence
of the Spirit, his
fearless preaching,
the testimonies of
miraculous healings,
and his leading them
in the chorus
“Only Believe.”**

Wigglesworth, it is not the tongues you need but the Baptism. If you will allow God to baptize you, the other will be all right.” Although protesting that he had previously been baptized, he asked her to lay hands on him and pray that he would receive. After she did so and unexpectedly left the room, “the fire fell,” he recalled. “The joy was so great that when I came to utter it my tongue failed, and I began to worship God in other tongues as the Spirit gave me utterance.”

After arriving home, he found that Polly doubted his new experience. She claimed she was as much Spirit baptized as him without speaking in tongues. “I have been preaching for 20 years,” she asserted, “and you have sat beside me on the platform. But on Sunday you will preach yourself, and I’ll see what there is in it.”

The next Sunday he entered the pulpit and, prompted by the Spirit, preached from Isaiah 61:1–3: “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings....” The bold and fluent preaching that came forth startled his wife as she sat in the back of the mission. Speaking in

a voice loud enough that everyone around her heard, Polly sputtered, “That’s not my Smith, Lord; that’s not my Smith!”

Polly was filled with the Spirit soon after, and the Bowland Street Mission changed dramatically. They continued in ministry until Polly’s death 6 years later in 1913. Unknown to Wigglesworth, that humble beginning had ignited a preaching ministry that would eventually take him around the world.

**He preached that “faith is
the audacity that rejoices in
the fact that God cannot
break His own Word.”**

APOSTLE OF FAITH

Wigglesworth’s beliefs mirrored those of other Pentecostals, and robust faith characterized his life. Those who attended his meetings remembered the awesome presence of the Spirit, his fearless preaching, the testimonies of miraculous healings, and his leading them in the chorus “Only Believe.” Over and over in his services and in those of other evangelists, the words of this song brought hope to the suffering by telling them that “All things are possible, only believe.”

Indeed, he preached that “faith is the audacity that rejoices in the fact that God cannot break His own Word. Faith is not agitation; it is quiet confidence that God means what He says, and we act on His Word.” Yet there was nothing quiet or subtle about Wigglesworth. He had a voice to match the vigor of his faith.

At times he became so filled with joy that his vocal praise could rattle the serenity of the gravest of souls. On one occasion he went to a concert hall for a presentation of Handel’s *Messiah*. When the choir finished singing the last note of the “The Hallelujah Chorus,” he roared “Hallelujah!” Shocked concertgoers shuddered at this outlandish behavior. A reporter wrote in the morning paper the next day, “I never heard such a voice in my life!”

One must credit him with consistency in trusting God for his physical health, even as Pentecostals gradually accepted the complementary roles of prayer and medical science in healing. He and Polly agreed never to seek the help of doctors or take medicine but to trust Christ as their Healer. Suffering had no place



PHOTO: ASSEMBLIES OF GOD ARCHIVES

in God's plan for the believer. Wigglesworth saw praying for the sick as a contest between God and the devil: "I have no word for rheumatism only 'demon possessed.' Rheumatism, cancers, tumors, lumbago, neuralgia, all these things I give only one name, the power of the devil working in humanity. When I see consumption, I see demon working power there. All these things can be removed."

His notion of praying for the sick as an act of spiritual warfare helps account for his rough handling of people in his earlier ministry. He thought of striking a person where they hurt as actually hitting the devil. Although some reported healing as a result, others thought it best to avoid identifying the location of their pain. In one service, however, he met his match. At Glad Tidings Tabernacle in New York City, after he had struck an Irish immigrant woman who had gone forward for prayer, she immediately drew back her fist and shouted, "Begorra, if it's a fight you want, it's a fight you'll get!" Fortunately, calm prevailed and the service proceeded without further incident.

***He and Polly agreed never
to seek the help of doctors
or take medicine but to
trust Christ as their Healer.***

Wigglesworth's services never bored his audiences. At a meeting in Washington, D.C., a young girl on crutches entered the auditorium with the help of two other people. With no muscular ability, her legs dangled with her feet hanging vertically. When he invited those who wanted prayer to walk to the front, she struggled to go forward. Calling out to her, he said, "Stay right where you are. You are going to be a different girl when you leave this place." Inquiring about her condition, he learned she had never walked before. Laying his hands on her head in prayer, the former plumber from Bradford, England, commanded, "In the name of Jesus Christ, walk!" Suddenly, she dropped her crutches and began walking.

In Sweden, Wigglesworth triggered such a furor among the medical doctors and clergy of the Lutheran state church that they denounced his practice of praying for the sick. As a result, the government forbade him to lay hands on anyone for prayer. Undaunted, when a crowd



PHOTO: ASSEMBLIES OF GOD ARCHIVES

of 20,000 assembled at an outdoor service, he stayed within the law by telling the sick to stand and lay their hands on their afflicted parts while he prayed for them. Many claimed deliverance as they did in his campaigns elsewhere.

***Wigglesworth saw praying for the
sick as a contest between
God and the devil.***

THE DIVINE MYSTERY

The vision of expectant faith, however, inevitably becomes obscured by the cloud of mystery that sometimes shrouds the divine will: Why isn't everyone healed who seeks for it? Does God allow believers to suffer for reasons they may never understand this side of heaven? Those who focused much of their energies on praying for the sick often dismissed the importance of these questions, perhaps because they feared that such discussion might feed doubts and undercut peoples' faith for healing.

Though Wigglesworth believed mightily in God's promise to heal, he himself mourned the

***The former
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early deaths of his wife and a son. He prayed frequently for his daughter Alice Salter to be healed of deafness but to no avail. To add to his frustration, he endured excruciating pain for 3 years from a “thorn in the flesh”—kidney stones. Like others, he could only deduce that he hadn’t mustered sufficient faith.

Healing faith comes as a gift from God.

Nevertheless, two of his counterparts attempted to resolve the problem but with mixed results. F.F. Bosworth devoted a chapter in his popular *Christ the Healer* (1924) to explaining 22 reasons why people fail to receive healing. Unwittingly, Bosworth created a millstone of guilt that God never intended His children to bear. On the other hand, Charles S. Price suggested in *The Real Faith* (1940) that “healing is not dependent upon the development of perfect faith by any process of self at all; but rather on contact with Jesus...the giver of every good and perfect gift.” Healing faith comes as a gift from God.


A LEGACY OF FAITH AND WITNESS

While many evangelicals stood on the sidewalk pondering the details of the map at the turn of the century, Pentecostals grabbed the apostolic banner and marched down the parade route of the Great Commission testifying to God’s miraculous power as they preached the gospel. Spirit baptism had transformed them with empowerment for ministry and enlarged their understanding of what His power could do.

Pioneers like Wigglesworth passed on a legacy of expectant—some would say reckless—faith. Nonetheless, Pentecostals still had to return to the map for specifics. The Bible as the rule of faith and practice remains the indispensable guide for the contours of the tough questions. It would be unwise, however, to stop praying and asking for

demonstrations of supernatural might. Faith can stand on the divine paradox but falters when everything must depend on either human initiative or a misunderstanding of God’s sovereignty. In recent years, Pentecostals have profited from seeing the connection between signs and wonders and the advancing kingdom of God in understanding the function of miracles in the life and mission of the Church (Matthew 10:7,8; 1 Corinthians 4:20).

Pentecostals grabbed the apostolic banner and marched down the parade route of the Great Commission testifying to God’s miraculous power as they reached the gospel.

Contemporary Pentecostals hunger for a new outpouring of the Spirit to reach the nations for Christ. If alive today, Smith Wigglesworth with his booming voice would probably call the saints to repentance and cry out, “Oh God, let the fire fall!” 



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PREPARING

BY CHARLES T. CRABTREE

Are you one of a growing number of young ministers asking questions about revival and expressing frustration in knowing what to do when confronted with unusual moves of God? You are not alone.

All of us have had to work through unique spiritual challenges and human responses to divine visitations. The devil would like nothing better than to put you on a guilt trip for things beyond your control. In addition, people will pressure you to fit their mold and try to force you to do what only God can do.

Since God is not the author of confusion and you are God's minister, there are divine answers to spiritual challenges. You have the Bible, the Holy Spirit, and the elders of the church to help guide you. If you have an open heart and a teachable spirit, you will find yourself on good ground. Those who become spiritually proud and arrogant will find themselves in trouble.

Confusion about revival begins with definition and perception. Many perceive revival through the lens of limited personal experience and testimonies, which are wonderful in themselves but cannot define revival and spiritual renewal in totality.

A parallel lies between the definitions and applications of revival and Pentecost. For instance, people try to define a Pentecostal service by saying, "Now *that* was a real

Pentecostal service," referring to a service with no preaching or to an unusual move and unique demonstration of the Spirit.

If we are not careful, we measure a Pentecostal service by what is happening *to* people rather than how the Holy Spirit works *in* people. God's greatest work is usually done internally, not publicly. Ministers need to believe God is at work even when there is little evidence by people's response. A Pentecostal service is effective when Jesus is revealed, when people worship in spirit and in truth, and when the promises of God are actualized through faith in the Word of God.

Just as people have limited perception of Pentecostal services, they have the same limitations when trying to define revival. How many times have you heard: "We are experiencing a sovereign move of God"? Such a statement defines a certain type of revival. The danger is in limiting God to one or two paradigms of revival when there are many.

I define revival by talking about the whole scope of spiritual life and ministry. Revival brings back spiritual consciousness, life, and vigorous health—to flourish again after decline. Revival recovers the biblical standard of truth, doctrine, and lifestyle. It is a fresh awareness of the presence of God, a confession of sin leading to a restoration of holy living, a new initiative in fulfilling the Great Commission, a new hunger for the Word of God, and a new faith for the supernatural.

The subject of revival is the subject of

***People will pressure
you to fit their mold
and try to force
you to do what
only God can do.***

spiritual life. Most discussion on revival centers around supernatural incidents—effects but not causes, events but not context. This kind of approach can lead to the error of seeking demonstrations or evidences of revival as ends in themselves when they should be motivators to a deeper hunger for Jesus and a new passion to fulfill the purposes of God. I trust you want a true Pentecostal revival in your life and church.

My advice to you must be taken in the context of revival and is based on my study of the

Word, lifelong involvement in Pentecost, and study of the subject.

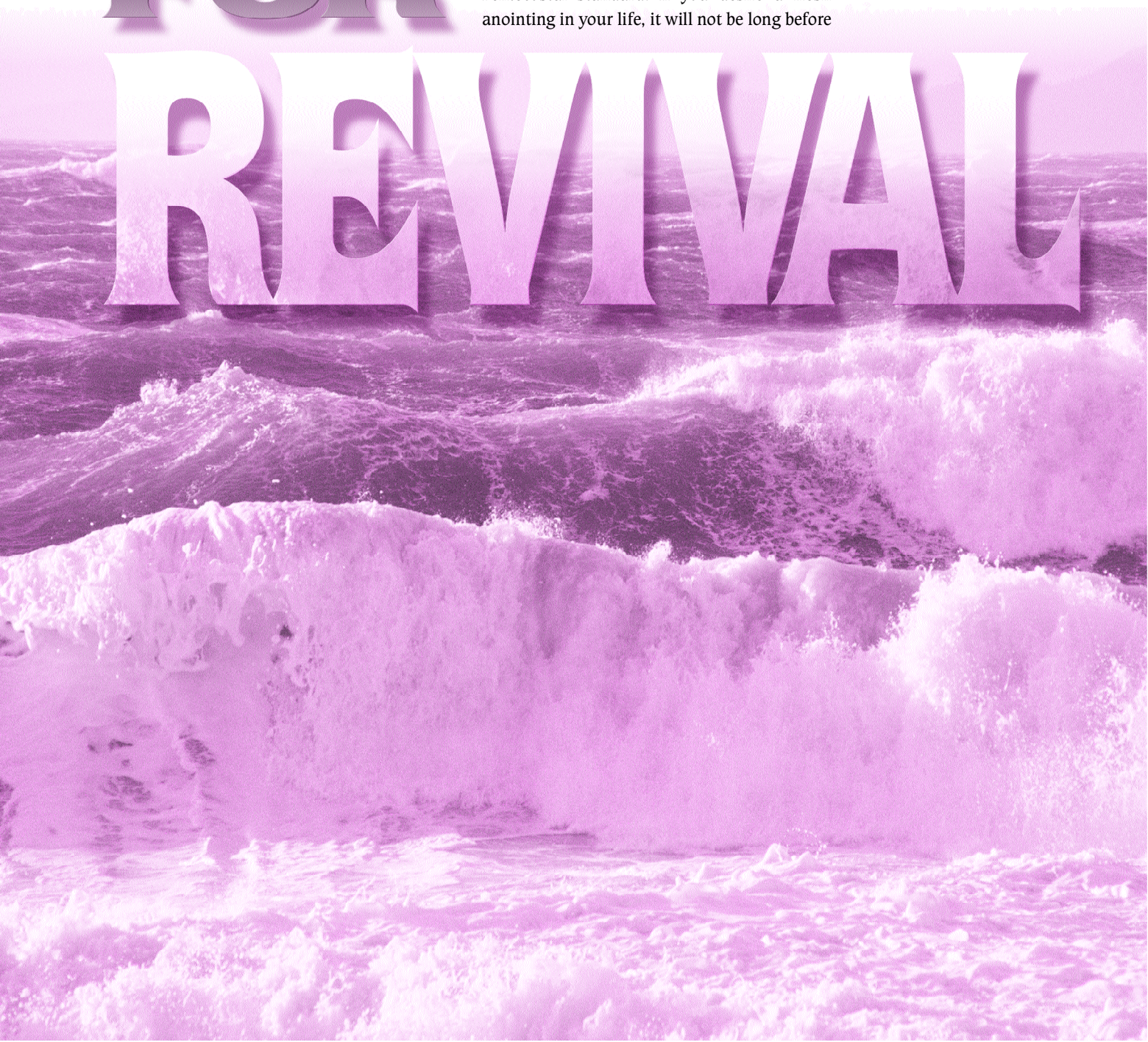
BEGIN WITH YOURSELF

Whenever people complain to me about apathy and lukewarmness in their church, I point out that they are the Church, and revival begins with them.

Allow God to do in your life what you believe needs to happen for revival to come to your church. Is there hidden sin? Repent. Is there a lack of prayer? Pray. Is there a lack of discipline in spiritual things such as Bible study and meditation? Get into the Word. Ask God to restore your life and ministry to a true Pentecostal standard. If you desire a fresh anointing in your life, it will not be long before

Many perceive revival through the lens of limited personal experience and testimonies.

FOR REVIVAL



you will begin to experience a fresh anointing upon your church.

As you prepare your life for revival, focus on God and divine possibilities. Faith comes by the Word of God. Study the promises of God. He is the source of revival. If you meet His conditions, He has promised to answer and show you great and mighty things.

Build your faith through contact and fellowship with people of faith. I am convinced a lot of ministries founder and die because ministers choose to listen to carnal people, unbelievers in the supernatural, and people with a critical spirit.

Build your faith by reading books on great revivals and testimonies of divine visitations. If possible, go to places where God is moving, not to copy what God is doing but to be encouraged to experience God's blessings. It disturbs me when some criticize people for traveling across the country to attend a revival. I hear no criticism about folks going across country to visit friends or relatives, to vacation, or to attend a sports event. A person does not need to attend a revival meeting to have a revival, but I cannot think of a better

place to visit than a place where there is a genuine outpouring of the Spirit and where people are enjoying a special presence of God.

RECRUIT INTERCESSORS

When you experience a fresh touch of God and gain faith to believe for a divine visitation to your church, then reach out to others to stand with you for revival.

One of the most valuable lessons I ever learned in pastoring was to work with those who were willing and to sweetly ignore those who were not. Revival begins with one. It is rare for revival to break out suddenly upon a whole church. When it does, it has been preceded by a few believers fasting, praying, and crying out to God. Part of revival is spiritual hunger. You will make people hungry for God by showing them the joy of the Lord in your own life and interceding with others for God to create a hunger for spiritual life and power.

Set aside specific times for prayer and fasting. No one will believe you are serious about revival if you put times of prayer and intercession on the calendar and fail to be there. It is up to you to

lead your people in the priority of revival.

During corporate prayer for revival, provide structured and nonstructured opportunities for intercession. Ask God for direction in leading the people in prayer. There is nothing like God's birthing a burden and allowing the Holy Spirit to pray it through to victory.

Many people are frustrated when they are asked to pray for Holy Spirit revival without specific direction. Have people join in intercession for conviction of sin, a spirit of prayer, baptisms in the Holy Spirit, and freedom in worship.

Focused and fervent united prayer is important in building the launching pad for revival.

BE FAITHFUL TO THE TRUTH IN YOUR FAITH

When God begins to answer your prayers, it is tempting for some to help God along by exaggerating events and results in order to impress or build faith.

I will always remember the account of a pastor who gave such a sensational report of how many people were saved in a revival that his district superintendent pressed him for more details. Finally, the pastor realized he was cornered and began to cry. He said, "If I lied, I lied for the glory of God." How sad when people think they have to lie about the work of God in order to advance His work.

We build faith in the hearts of God's people when we report the miraculous, but it is counterproductive to exaggerate results. People become disillusioned when they discover what has been reported as true is really false. God knows the truth, and we displease Him when we try to create or sustain revival by impressing people.

DON'T FORGET WISDOM AND DISCERNMENT

When my father began a new church many years ago, the Lord would not allow him to preach on the baptism in the Holy Spirit with the evidence of tongues for 6 months. He chafed under

How Should a Pastor Handle Excesses?

- *Study 1 Corinthians 12–14 carefully and know how to apply its principles.*
- *Know what you can tolerate and what you cannot tolerate in a public service.* You want to avoid embarrassing an individual if at all possible, but if behavior is clearly disruptive, then your task is to handle the situation. On three or four occasions, I remember stopping an utterance in tongues because it came at a tender moment in an altar call. I have also stopped people from screaming, and I have stopped people publicly whom I had asked privately not to give utterances.
- *Be confident in your own leadership—not prideful but strong in God.* As a young pastor, I was pressured to copy what was going on in another church where God was evidently doing a powerful thing. I was tempted to have music I did not like, structure a service with what I would not have been comfortable, and put aside methods that were effective. I responded to fear of people instead of responding to God. I wanted to be on the cutting edge rather than solid ground. God gave me revival, but it was different than the revival across town.
- *Learn the secret of walking in the Spirit and living in the Spirit, and you will then be able to lead in the Spirit.* Having started in the Spirit, never go back to leading a congregation in the flesh.

—Charles T. Crabtree

the restriction. But when God said, "It is time," and my father preached on Pentecost, God instantaneously filled three of the leading men in the community. In revival, there is a right message and a right time. Many pastors have discerned the right message but have not sought God on the right timing for their church.

Wise leaders gain the confidence of key leadership. Some churches have been thrown into turmoil because their pastors went to a revival or a seminar, received a powerful transformation, and then assumed their churches were ready for dramatic change.

***God's greatest work
is usually done internally,
not publicly.***

Every church needs revival, but God must first revive people and then changes are made through a process of edification, not legislation. People are not against revival, but they are against changes they do not understand.

Make sure the people who share your leadership understand the burden God has placed on your heart. Provide wise leadership, and use discernment when moving your congregation to a new level of spirituality.

DON'T BE AFRAID OF QUENCHING THE FLESH


Never fear revival. Never settle for anything less than a state of true Pentecostal revival. The joy of revival far outweighs all the problems that arise from the move of the Spirit.

Learn to move in spiritual authority without arrogance. You have been ordained by God. You have been assigned a leadership role. That role does not make you better or worse than anyone else. It simply means you are authorized and appointed by God to give the church guidance, perfect the saints to do the work of the ministry, and edify the body of Christ. Operate in faith.

Many churches have suffered because

some pastors have quenched the Spirit and not allowed the manifestations and gifts of the Spirit in public services. Strong spiritual leaders in the pulpit must discern the difference between manifestations of the flesh and manifestations of the Spirit and then have the wisdom and fortitude to know how and when to quench the flesh and give liberty to the work of the Spirit.

It has been my joy to minister within the framework of Pentecost. I would

rather deal with the problem of excesses a thousand times more than with the problems of spiritual apathy and death (See sidebar on handling excesses). 



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Jesus: Superior to the Sacrificial System

PART 7**TEXT: Hebrews 10:1–18, NIV**

BY RICHARD L.
DRESSELHAUS

*The old sacrificial
system...was
ineffective, inferior,
and waiting to be
superseded by
Jesus offering
himself as a
perfect sacrifice
for sin.*

The Inferiority of Repeated Sacrifices

The law is only a shadow...not the realities...



It can never, [by repeated sacrifices] make perfect those who draw near to worship (verse 1). (If it could...worshippers would have been cleansed once for all...it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sin [verses 2–4].) (Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties...which can never take away sins [verse 11].)

The Superiority of Christ's Sacrifice

Psalm 40:6–8 What did not please God: sacrifices...offerings...burnt offerings...sin offerings
What God did: A body...prepared
What Christ did: "Here I am...I have come to do Your will, O God."

He [Christ] set aside the first [repeated sacrifices] to establish the second [the offering of himself] (verse 9).

He [Christ] offered for all time one sacrifice for sins (verse 12).

The Meaning for Us

We have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ.

Jeremiah 31:33 I [God the Father] will put my laws in their hearts,
I [God the Father] will write them [laws] on their minds.

Jeremiah 31:34 Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more.
(where these have been forgiven, there is no longer any sacrifice for sin.)

Religious traditions are not easily broken. Not in A.D. 68. Not in 1997. Whether in the ancient East or the modern West, generations cling to the convictions, ideals, and practices of their ancestors.

The writer to the Hebrews knew this well. Here were first-century Jewish believers who had made a start but needed to be convinced that the new way was better—better by far.

The argument is clear. The old sacrificial system was flawed and had to be replaced. It was ineffective, inferior, and waiting to be superseded by Jesus offering himself as a perfect sacrifice for sin.

What does this say to us? Obviously, we have not had any personal experience with animal

sacrifices. In fact, the idea of slaying animals for religious purposes is not only repugnant to us, but there are laws to prevent it.

Pastor, here is an opportunity to translate an ancient requirement of God into a present-day revelation of truth. Let me illustrate. If I entertain the notion that my own efforts will contribute to my acceptance by God, then I have slipped back into the spirit of the sacrificial system. In reality, my only plea is Jesus' blood shed on my behalf.

Confusion on this issue robs many Christians of their joy and renders them ineffective—often causing fatigue and depression. Legalism is like poison. It kills both spirit and body.

Let's go a step further. Why is it that sincere Christians are sometimes gripped with fear, insecurity, and an overwhelming apprehension about life? Because people cannot effect their own salvation. There is nothing they can do to gain acceptance with the Father. The blood from repeated animal sacrifices is of no consequence. Animal sacrifices can never take away sins.

This is precisely why Christ offered himself for our sins. His sacrifice alone avails for sin. Acceptance by God is predicated on His work alone. Jesus paid it all.

I have found myself saying to counselees: "Your problem is theological." I explain that healing comes only when we finally believe we are fully accepted by God through the gift of the Father's grace in Christ. Good theology sets people free.

As you develop this theme, expose the error of legalism, and invite people to accept the victory and peace secured for them at the Cross.

THE INFERIORITY OF REPEATED SACRIFICE

Follow the flow of thought in this section: (1) The law is only a shadow, not the reality. (2) The law is powerless to perfect the worshiper. If it could, then repeated sacrifices would have achieved that purpose. (3) The blood of bulls and goats offered repetitively can never take away sins.

For a people who had only recently been drawn out of Judaism by the power of the gospel, the writer's truthful and effective argument was reassuring.

The application is clear. Whenever we are tempted to boast in our own acts of piety, we prove that the truth expressed here has not yet taken control of our hearts.

It also forces us to question our motives. Why do we do what we do? Is it because we are trying to prove our acceptability by God? Is it that we want to obligate God to look upon us with favor? Is it because we resist the fact of our utter inability to impress God? I

once heard it said: "There is nothing you can do to make God love you more, and nothing you can do to make Him love you less." There is nothing any of us can do that will complement and enhance the work of Christ on our behalf.

***There is nothing any of us
can do that will complement
and enhance the work
of Christ on our behalf.***

Confusion over justification (standing) and sanctification (living) sweeps us back into the spirit of the sacrificial system. When *living* is thought to be meritorious rather than consequential, the seeds of defeat are sown. Holy living is the result of a finished work, not the means by which the work is done.

THE SUPERIORITY OF CHRIST'S SACRIFICE

Psalms 40:6–8 is the context for the writer's instruction in this section. Three questions are assumed: (1) What does not please God? The entire sacrificial system. (2) What has God done? God has incarnated himself in a body of flesh. (3) What has Christ done? He has offered himself to do the perfect will of God.

The key word in the Book of Hebrews is *better*. This theme is dramatically expressed here. Jesus is *better* than the sacrificial system—setting it aside that He might replace it with himself, offering himself "once for all" for our sins.

The writer of Hebrews builds an impressive case. The thesis is stated; the flow of logic is established; and the conclusion is given. The reader is systematically drawn to the dramatic conclusion that Jesus is superior by far to the antiquated sacrificial system of the old economy.

THE MEANING FOR US

In this section we reach the pinnacle of applied truth: "We have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of

Jesus Christ" (Hebrews 10:10). Our holiness rests totally in His work at Calvary.

Twentieth-century Pentecostalism has its roots in the holiness movement that preceded it—separation from the world, abhorrence of evil, and the identification and denunciation of sins of the flesh. Its continuing impact is profound.

The challenge, however, is this: How do we discover authentic holiness? What produces holiness in our lives?

The answer will determine our spiritual health and doctrinal fidelity. Authentic holiness is through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ. Our holiness is to the credit of Jesus alone. Holy living is in Christ. It is His work in us. We are what we are solely because of Him.


Thankfully, grace has eclipsed sacrifice. The new has replaced the old. What could not be done by the blood of bulls and goats is now done in Christ. In Him we stand complete.

I heard a popular Bible teacher say, "I broke out of the prison of legalism many years ago, but I am still trying to live like a free man."

The idea of full acceptance in God through Christ's work alone is difficult to comprehend. We want to say: "This is too good to be true!" We think we must do something to deserve such acceptance.

To submit to God at this level is to uproot our pride and admit our total inability to cooperate with God in our salvation.

But what about the working out of our salvation? What about the progressive aspects of the salvation process? Sanctification involves process. I am actively involved in it. My good works count at this point. But justification? No. That is God's work alone in Jesus Christ.

Offer this indescribable gift of God's grace in Christ, and believe for a great response. 

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Spiritual Gifts in the Church Today

PART 3: Gifts of Power

BY DOUGLAS A. OSS

The power gifts found in 1 Corinthians 12:9,10—"faith," "healings," and "works of power"—are usually associated with the "signs and wonders" language of the New Testament. In 1 Corinthians 12 the discussion centers on their function within the body of Christ, although this setting does not exclude the possibility of healings and other miracles functioning as a witness to unbelievers who are present during a gathering of believers for corporate worship (e.g., 1 Corinthians 14:20–25).

DEFINITION OF POWER GIFTS

- "Gift of faith" (*pistis*) in this list does not refer to saving faith but rather to the miraculous faith that can work miracles (e.g., faith that can "move mountains"¹). Faith in this sense is foundational to working any sort of miracle but is distinguished from healings and works of power. Faith here is the divinely imparted and unwavering trust that God indeed will work in a particular circumstance and demonstrate the might of His glory through a supernatural act, totally apart from ordinary or merely human means. Faith is distinct from other miracles in the sense of its definition, but with regard to its function, it is an integral part of healings and works of power.

- "Gifts of healings" (*charismata iamatōn*), in this context, refer to physical miracles of healing. Granted, the transformation of the mind and spirit starting with the washing of regeneration (e.g., Titus 3:5–7) and continuing through renewal (e.g., Colossians 3:10,11) is at times associated with the idea of healing (e.g., 1 Peter 2:24,25). But in this setting, it is more likely that Paul had in view the kind of sign miracle that manifests the power of God (e.g., Acts 10:38). In the Greek, both "gifts" and "healings" are plural, which may indicate that each healing is a distinct gift. Deliverance

from sickness is God's infinite grace and power entering into cursed creation to show that He alone brings new creation to Adam's race. Furthermore, while physical healings are temporal in this age, in the age to come new creation will be eternal (e.g., 1 Corinthians 15:44–57).

***Miracles increase attention
on the Lord Jesus in whose
name and for whose glory
the miracle occurred.***

- "Works of power" (*energēmata dunameōn*; alternate translation: "miraculous powers," "workings of miracles," "workings of powers") probably includes all miraculous deeds other than healings. In the New Testament most common among these is the casting out of demons. As with healings, works of power are acts of God's infinite power in His creation to manifest in tangible and supernatural fashion His glory and kingdom to humankind. Both these terms are also plural ("workings of powers") in the Greek, which again would indicate the possibility that each miracle is viewed as a distinct gift.

HOW POWER GIFTS CONTRIBUTE TO MINISTRY

In contemporary worship settings power gifts are increasingly evident, which adds some urgency to the question of how they contribute to ministry.

1. *Miraculous events bring glory to the Creator* (as with all creative acts of God, e.g., Psalm 19:1–6). With regard to ministry, power signs grasp the observer's attention with their amazing and overwhelming force—placing the observer's attention on God's glory and commanding immediate response. Often the

***Power signs grasp
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response of the observer and/or recipient is to glorify God (cf. Mark 2:1–12; John 2:1–11; 9:1–41; 1 Corinthians 14:24,25), in stark contrast to the general response of humankind toward the Father (e.g., Romans 1:18–32).

**Miracles assure us that
God works on our behalf
in His capacity as the
all-powerful and sovereign
Lord of the universe.**

The response of those who witness God's glory is not always to acknowledge that it is God at work. Often in their rebellion, the religious of Jesus' day would denounce Him as a demonically empowered heretic (e.g., John 8:1–9:41), even though He did great signs and wonders in their midst, thus setting in clear relief their own spiritual pride and blindness (John 9:39–41).

2. *Miraculous deeds confirm the gospel.* Increased focus on the gospel message is evoked by miracles, providing increased opportunity to lead people into the kingdom of God through faith in Christ. Miracles increase attention on the Lord Jesus in whose name and for whose glory the miracle occurred. The hearts of unbelievers who are present are opened to receive the Spirit of Christ through the power of the miracle.

3. *Miracles encourage and build the faith of God's people.* Miracles assure us that God works on our behalf in His capacity as the all-powerful and sovereign Lord of the universe. We are increasingly aware of His presence among us in the light of His powerful working on our behalf. Miraculous deeds result in increased joy, loftier worship in praise, and intensified commitment to Christ and His gospel.

HOW TO RECEIVE POWER GIFTS


The common principles set forth in the previous article in this series apply equally to power gifts.² In addition,

there are some considerations that are especially important for this particular gifting. While in Ephesus, the place of Paul's greatest miracles, he learned what was required in order for the power of Christ to be manifested through him.

The vital lessons Paul learned in Asia are summarized in 2 Corinthians 12:7–10. It is necessary for those who would be used by God in works of power to be entirely abandoned to God (read 2 Corinthians 10–13)—to seek to know Him above all else and to do His will alone. Furthermore, they must allow God to sift them until Christ is all in all and they rely exclusively on the power of God (cf. 2 Corinthians 1:8–10). It is only in weakness that God's power is manifested. When we become nothing, then He can work powerfully through us—we rely on the sole sufficiency of His grace and power.

There is a cost to walking in the power of God. The price is absolute surrender of self and the temporal world.³ The power of Christ is manifested exclusively through surrendered vessels.

SUMMARY

God wants His people to walk in power, preaching the gospel boldly with signs following. There is no New Testament concept of the presence of the Spirit without the manifestation of the Spirit in works of power. The earliest Christians would not have conceived of the Spirit apart from miracles, signs, and wonders; it was an integral part of their common experience in Christ (cf. Galatians 3:5; Hebrews 2:4). God wants the same for His people today. We still live in the last days, and we still need last-days power. 

ENDNOTE

1. First Corinthians 13:2; cf. Colin Brown, ed., *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1981), 601–02.
2. See *Enrichment*, Fall 1997, 91.
3. I recommend you read a book written by Andrew Murray entitled *Absolute Surrender* (Springdale, Pa.: Whitaker House, 1981).

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ary to Salt Lake City, Utah.*





Missions Theology

BY JOHN V. YORK

The mission of God is viewed as the blessing of all peoples through Jesus Christ.

Missions theology begins with God's stated plan for history—the *mission of God*¹—and may be traced by following the major statements of divine intention using the *diachronic methodology* of biblical theology.² In this article, *the mission of God* is viewed as the blessing of all peoples through Jesus Christ. God's method to accomplish this mission is by His outbreaching presence among a covenant people. Covenant people are referred to as a Kingdom under God with a mission to bless the nations. This *mission of God* stands as the foundation for a missions theology.

While it is acknowledged that there are promises made by God to national Israel, which still await future fulfillment, a discussion of such promises is beyond the scope of this study. This article focuses on God's mission to all nations, including Israel, that He will accomplish in our time through the Church.

We will trace *the mission of God* from the Pentateuch, the Historical Books together with the poetic and prophetic writings, the Gospels, the Book of Acts, the Pauline and General Epistles, and finally the Book of Revelation.

MISSIONS IS BORN

Genesis 1:27 states, "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them."³ This verse implies two great truths foundational to a missions theology.

1. *All races, clans, languages and dialects, male and female are equally the objects of God's redemptive love.* Despite the fall of man (Genesis 3), no people are so sinful that God cannot save them if they repent, and no place is beyond God's love. Any tribal group, after believing, can participate fully in the ongoing *mission of God* to the nations.

2. *Being made in God's image implies the potential to act with authority as vice regents*

or ambassadors within God's kingdom. As early as Genesis 2:19,20, Adam's naming of the animals illustrates this point.⁴ Likewise, Noah represented God when he built the ark. There is, therefore, nothing surprising in God's repeated promise to Abraham that "all peoples on earth will be blessed through you" (Genesis 12:3; cf. 18:18; 22:18). This "image of God" concept later provides the basis for Christ's commissioning His disciples with authority for worldwide ministry, for the repeated endowment of power for witness upon successive groups throughout the Book of Acts, and for Paul's bold declaration, "We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God" (2 Corinthians 5:20). All believers are thus to seek the spiritual enablements provided by God to accomplish His mission (cf. Joel 2:28,29; Acts 1:8; 2:16–18; 1 Corinthians 12:31; 14:1,39).

God announced that the seed of the woman would bruise Satan's head (Genesis 3:15). Subsequent history focuses on God's plan to defeat Satan through this promised seed. The Flood demonstrated the jurisdiction of the Creator in judgment over the entire world (Genesis 6–9). Grace, as well, was shown in an everlasting covenant with all living creatures (9:15,16). Many commentators see in Genesis 9:27 a postdeluge promise of the manifest presence of God within the tents of Shem.⁵ The table of 70 nations (chapter 10) results from God's judgment at Babel upon those who in rebellion wished to "make a name" for themselves (11:4). Once the nations were thus established, God called Abraham with the specific mission of bringing blessing to those nations (12:3). God acted alone in a powerful theophany of promise to Abraham (chapter 15). The divine intention is further underscored when God made an "everlasting

covenant” with Abraham (17:7).

In Genesis 22:18, the phrase “through your seed” was added to the blessing previously promised Abraham in 12:3 and 18:18. The promise to bless the nations through Abraham can be linked with the earlier promise concerning the seed of the woman. This plan is further emphasized when the promise was renewed to Abraham’s son Isaac (26:3,4). Still later, God revealed himself to Jacob as the God of Abraham and Isaac, promising to bless all peoples on earth through Jacob’s seed (28:13,14).

***All races, clans, languages
and dialects, male and female
are equally the objects of
God’s redemptive love.***

Then at Sinai God entered into a sovereign/vassal covenant with Israel in which Israel promised to serve Him as their King (Exodus 19–40; Leviticus).⁶ Exodus 19:6 is a significant passage regarding *the mission of God*: “You will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” Israel, as a “kingdom of priests,” was to act corporately as God’s agent to bring this blessing to the nations in an early fulfillment of His promise plan. This could be accomplished through the priestly ministries of prayer and proclamation.⁷

THE KINGDOM IN MISSIONS

In the Book of Joshua, the people moving in covenant with the King were miraculously given a promised land. The land was taken when the people dared to advance in obedience to their King whose presence guaranteed their victory.⁸ Territory was allocated to each tribe and had to be possessed (Joshua 13:6; 18:1–10). God then blessed the people with rest, meaning secure borders and freedom

from threat from without or within. After Joshua twice renewed the covenant (8:30–35; 24:1–27), the covenant people were set to bless the nations (4:24).

Instead of being a blessing, however, a period of decline is shown in the Book of Judges. The main question about who is really the King is dramatized by the repeating cycles of apostasy, punishment, repentance, and restoration. These cycles bracket the central account in which Gideon declared, “The Lord will rule over you” (Judges 8:23). He is thus contrasted with Abimelech who as an anti-judge attempted to usurp the Lord’s kingdom (chapter 9).

The stage is thus ready for the calling of David. In 2 Samuel 7:16, David was promised an everlasting Kingdom (Genesis 49:10). It is evident that *the mission of God* involves the eternal Kingdom that will encompass all nations. The promised seed of blessing to the nations will come through David’s line.

LIFE IN THE KINGDOM

The mission of God is seen in the Wisdom Literature specifically through the themes of “Kingdom” and “the fear of the Lord.”⁹

The royal psalms celebrate the rule of the Lord’s anointed King (e.g., Psalms 2; 18; 20; 21; 45; 72; 89; 101; 110; 132; 144). While the kings of Israel/Judah were forbidden to expand their territory beyond the divinely appointed boundaries, these psalms portray the Messiah or Greater David ruling in glorious splendor over all the nations of the earth. The nations, in turn, have been brought under God’s covenant as “the people of the God of Abraham” (Psalm 47:9). The entirety of Psalm 67 is given to the theme that the Aaronic benediction of Numbers 6:24–26 had as its objective the extension of the rule and covenant blessing of God to the nations.¹⁰ In Psalm 117 all the nations are exhorted to join in praising

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Yahweh (Israel's covenant name for God).¹¹ *The mission of God* is seen as accomplished in a special day the Lord makes for this purpose (Psalm 118:22–26). This day began when the stone rejected by the builders became the capstone (verse 22). It ends with a kingly coronation: “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord” (verse 26). Between the rejection and the coronation is the prayer: “O Lord, save us; O Lord, grant us success” (verse 25). The Psalmist thus anticipated each component of the New Testament day of Christ: His rejection at the Crucifixion, the time of success in proclaiming salvation during the Church Age, and His coronation at the Second Coming.

The Wisdom Literature also teaches the fear of the Lord as being a life of blessing, wisdom, justice, and love (Hebrew, *hesed*). God intends this quality of life to serve as an invitation for the nations to enter His covenant.

JUDGMENT AND PROMISE

Throughout the centuries of the Old Testament, God's people rebelled against His rule. The bless-the-nations Abrahamic covenant could never be fulfilled by a people rebellious to the Mosaic covenant. It was in this context that God spoke through the prophets to arraign the nation in a *covenant lawsuit*. For example, in Micah 6:1–8, legal parlance is used to state *Yahweh's* case (Hebrew *rib*) against His people.¹² The anointed kings and all the people were guilty of breach of covenant, and all would be judged. Nor were the nations exempt from judgment. Though they were strangers to the promise, they lived in rebellion against the Sovereign Lord of the universe and would be judged.

Against this certainty of universal judgment, the prophets foretold the coming of a Messiah anointed as the Servant of Jehovah who would fully atone for the sins of Israel and the world. Good days were coming but only following national judgment, national repentance, and the coming of the

Servant who “will bring justice to the nations” (Isaiah 42:1).

The prophets insisted that when the kingdom of Jehovah was restored, then all nations would be counted among the redeemed. Isaiah saw the glory of the Servant as being so great that it would be too small a thing to redeem only Israel. Indeed, the light of the gospel would go to the Gentiles, even “to the ends of the earth” (49:6). He further saw God's house as being “a house of prayer for all nations” (56:7). Joel saw the universal outpouring of the Spirit upon all flesh so that all who called on the name of the Lord would be saved (Joel 2:28–32). Both Obadiah and Amos saw archenemy Edom as serving the Lord in a revived kingdom (Obadiah 21; Amos 9:11,12). Daniel saw the saints of the Most High receiving God's kingdom, which would crush all other kingdoms and then rule forever (Daniel 2:44; 7:18). Zechariah declared that many nations would be joined to Israel in that day to become God's people among whom God would dwell (Zechariah 2:11).

THE KING DECLARES HIS MISSION

The Gospels' primary function is that of a royal declaration that the King has now come. Matthew linked the promises to Abraham and David by stating that Jesus descended from both (Matthew 1:1). God's plan is being fulfilled in the Kingdom that is present in the person of the King. Since the promised Kingdom was to embrace all nations, the wise men came from the East to worship Him. Simeon declared that the infant Jesus was “a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel” (Luke 2:32).

Jesus advanced the Kingdom theme both in His preaching and in His miracles, openly advertising the international dominion to which His kingdom will grow. He delivered the daughter of a Canaanite woman from demonic oppression (Mark 7:24–30). He healed a Gentile centurion's servant and declared

the centurion's faith greater than what could be found among Israel (Matthew 8:5–13). Indeed, many (Gentiles) would “come from the east and the west,” but the sons of the Kingdom would remain outside (8:11,12). The unlikely hero to His most famous parable was, not surprisingly, a Samaritan. While Jewish cities were condemned, Jesus boldly stated that their Gentile counterparts would have repented if given equal opportunity (11:21–24).

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Harvest is central to Jesus' parables in anticipation of a mission to all nations. The Gospel of John is developed around a carefully selected list of key words and terms all of which are used to imply a Gentile mission. These terms include “word” (*logos*), “world” (*kosmos*), “believe,” “all men,” “every man,” “whosoever,” “other sheep,” “Greeks,” and “so send I you.” It was to a Samaritan woman that Jesus first openly revealed His identity as Messiah (John 4). He announced His upcoming crucifixion with the promise that when He was lifted up from the earth, He “will draw all men” unto himself (12:32). Though the Twelve were initially sent only to “the lost sheep of the house of Israel,” this limited commission is by nature transitory and is soon subsumed into a much greater commission to all nations (Matthew 10; 28).¹³

MISSIONS IN ACTION

The outline of the Book of Acts states the anticipated progression of Christ's mission: Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, uttermost part of the earth (Acts 1:8). This theme is energized by the events on the Day of Pentecost when the assembled believers were filled with the

Holy Spirit and burst out in a chorus of worship—in Gentile languages.¹⁴

Peter opened the door first to Jews, then to Gentiles. The Spirit then impressed the mixed Jewish-Gentile church at Antioch to send out missionaries (chapter 13). The success of the mission to Gentiles forced the council to consider their place within the Church (chapter 15). James interpreted the prophecy of Amos 9:11,12 to mean that once Jesus was revealed as King, the Gentiles were to be freely admitted as the covenant children of God without adhering to the requirements of Jewish legalism. From this decision, the Church grew rapidly until it reached Rome, the heart of the Gentile empire.

MISSIONARY CHURCHES AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Paul's epistles were written primarily to solve the problems of the new predominantly Gentile churches. Paul saw himself as a debtor to all men (Romans 1:14) since all have sinned and all alike stand guilty before God. He specifically referred to God as being not only the God of the Jews but "the God of Gentiles too" (3:29).¹⁵ The ancient promise concerning Abraham's seed is applied to Christ in order that the blessing might be for all people (Galatians 3:8,16). The promise from Exodus 19:6 of a "kingdom of priests" is in focus when Paul stated that his priestly duty was to proclaim "the gospel of God, so that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit" (Romans 15:16). In this same vein, Paul went on to state that his ambition was to preach where the gospel was not yet known (15:20).

In Ephesians, the doctrine of the Church was given in missionary terms: The wall is broken and Jews and Greeks stand on equal footing before God.¹⁶ In 2 Corinthians, Paul longed to go to "the regions beyond" (10:16). To the Philippians, Paul explained that Jesus humbled himself in the nature of a servant so that "every tongue [will] confess

that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God" (2:7–11).

The themes of the entire Bible concerning God's mission come together in the Book of Revelation.


Peter also referred to the priestly nature of God's new people in language that brings Exodus to mind (1 Peter 2:9). He then related that the delay in the return of Christ was due to God's patience in waiting for more to be saved. He urged the church to "speed its coming" (2 Peter 3:12).¹⁷ John referred to Christ as "the Savior of the world" (John 4:42; 1 John 4:14).

THE TRIUMPH OF THE KINGDOM

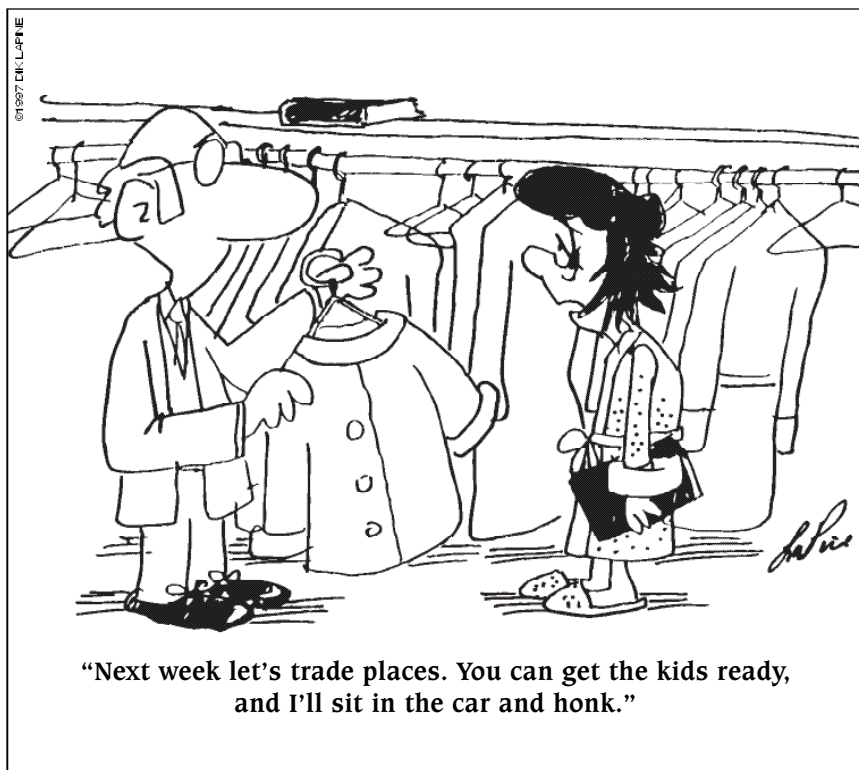
Finally, the themes of the entire Bible concerning God's mission come together in the Book of Revelation. The "every nation, tribe, people and language" theme is mentioned in 5:9 and 7:9. The term "nations" appears 19 times in Revelation. Christ, the Worthy One, takes up the key of David (3:7),

conquering as both the Lamb who was slain and the Lion of the tribe of Judah (chapter 5). In a grand triumphal note, victory is declared: "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever" (11:15). In anticipation of this great victory, a final invitation is issued to all who will heed: "The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!' And let him who hears say, 'Come!' Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life" (22:17).

CONCLUSION

While the diachronic methodology of biblical theology may not reconcile all differences in approach to missions, it helps greatly in identifying *the mission of God*. What, then, is missions all about? Missions occurs when the Spirit-empowered Church moves out in joyful and deliberate obedience as Christ's ambassadors fulfilling *the mission of God* to bless the nations. 

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ENDNOTES

1. The Latin term *missio Dei* is widely used by missiologists when discussing *the mission of God*. (Cf. Johannes Verkuyl, *Contemporary Missiology*, [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978], 2–5.)
2. This means that the Bible is viewed by time periods in the order in which it was written. *Diachronic methodology* was developed by Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., in *Toward an Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 5,6,9.
3. Scripture quotations are from the New International Version.
4. Naming the animals implies authority over them. It is God's authority that is entrusted to His representative Adam. (Cf. Gerhard Von Rad, *Genesis in The Old Testament Library*, eds. Peter Ackroyd, James Barr, Bernhard W. Anderson, James L. Mays [Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961], 83; and Eugene H. Merrill "A Theology of the Pentateuch" in *Biblical Theology of the Old Testament*, eds. Roy B. Zuck, Eugene H. Merrill, and Darrell L. Bock [Chicago: Moody Press, 1991], 15.) Merrill observes, "When *Yahweh* brought the animals to Adam to see what he would name them, He was in effect transferring from himself to Adam the dominion for which man was created."
5. E.g., Kaiser, 37–39. The passage is seen as a link between the promise of a seed (3:15) and the later promise to Abraham, himself a descendant of Shem.
6. See Roy B. Zuck, ed., *A Biblical Theology of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1989) on the topic of sovereign/vassal covenant.
7. Note this twofold concept of priesthood within the New Testament use of this text: proclamation in Romans 15:16 and prayers ("spiritual sacrifices") in 1 Peter 2:5.
8. Jesus' promise in Matthew 28:20 follows His statement of kingly authority (28:18) and His commission (28:19). This is parallel to Joshua, in which *Yahweh* stands as King through the sovereign/vassal treaty of Exodus. Jesus thus invokes the word of *Yahweh* to Joshua in order to equate His authority, mission, and presence as a guarantee of success with that of *Yahweh* to Joshua.
9. No attempt is made in this paper to distinguish between the terms *Poetic Books* and *Wisdom Literature*.
10. Specific reference is made to the extension of the knowledge of *Elohim* to the earth, the salvation of the nations (Psalm 67:2), the praise of "the peoples" for *Elohim* (verses 1,3,5), and the blessed state of the nations as they submit to the rule of *Elohim* (verses 4,5,7). The change from *Yahweh* in Numbers to *Elohim* in Psalm 67 may be a deliberate attempt to acknowledge the nature of the nations being blessed. Although the covenant name *Yahweh* is used in Numbers to a Jewish audience, the change of name in Psalm 67 would seem to be consistent with the wider public being addressed, i.e., people owing allegiance to the Creator though not part of the covenant with Israel.
11. For the nations to praise *Yahweh* is remarkable in that it would seem to indicate total absorption into the covenant people of God.
12. God involves the legal forms of the

- day to charge His people with breach of covenant. Restoration is then foretold as Messiah (Servant) is coming, and then, true to the original terms of the covenant, God's original purpose to bless the nations will be realized. (Cf. James Luther Mays, *Micah: A Commentary in The Old Testament Library*, eds. Bernhard W. Anderson, John Bright, James Barr, and Peter Ackroyd [Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976], 132.)
13. For a more detailed treatment of key texts foundational to world missions from the Gospels and Romans, see Robert Duncan Culver, *A Greater Commission: A Theology for World Missions* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1984).
14. For the significance of these Gentile languages, see Don Richardson, "The Hidden Message of Acts" in *Eternity in Their Heart* (Ventura, Calif.: Regal Books, 1984), 197–99.
15. For a detailed treatment of the Old Testament's antecedents to Romans 3:29, see David Filbeck, *Yes, God of the Gentiles, Too* (Wheaton: Billy Graham Center, 1994).
16. For a discussion of the relationship in Ephesians between the breaking down of this wall and the missions focus of the ministry gifts, see Charles Van Engen, *God's Missionary People: Rethinking the Purpose of the Local Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1991) 25–84.
17. For the implications of "speed its coming" (2 Peter 3:12), see Kenneth Barker, gen. ed., "2 Peter 3:12" in *NIV Study Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1985), 1903.

Missionaries: Effective Change Agents

BY CARY AND
FAYE TIDWELL

*Missionaries are
just normal people
called by God
for ministry.*

Missionaries are effective change agents—changing our world in a mighty and dynamic way as God enables them. It is vital for the individuals and churches supporting missions to have an understanding of the unique calling and challenges facing missionary families. Following are responses to several questions that provide us a glance into the window of missionary life.

WHAT SETS MISSIONARIES APART FROM OTHER PEOPLE?

Missionaries are just normal people called by God for ministry. Going overseas requires sacrifice on the part of adult missionaries and missionary children. They are responsible not only for effectiveness in a new environment, but for the quality and effectiveness of the missionary task.

Presently, the Assemblies of God has 1,775 adult missionaries along with over 2,500 missionary children ministering in 148 countries.

*World evangelization exacts a price
in human resources that can only
be balanced by the eternal
results that it produces.*

During every annual School of Missions, scores of new missionaries are commissioned to carry the gospel to the ends of the earth.

World evangelization exacts a price in human resources that can only be balanced by the eternal results that it produces. Sacrifice and suffering are the frequent companions of missionaries.

WHAT MAKES SOME MISSIONARIES MORE ABLE TO PERSEVERE?

Studies have found no significant relationship

between personality type and the degree to which missionaries adapt to their host culture. Those who hear the voice of God and keep their lives in balance are the ones who are able to persevere.

WHERE DO THESE CHANGE AGENTS COME FROM?

Missionaries come from churches across the U.S. Parents, church leaders, and church members all influence people to become change agents.

A recent survey of our Assemblies of God missionary family indicated that over 86 percent of those reporting were saved by the age of 19, and 42 percent said they were called to be missionaries between ages 5 and 19.

WHAT ARE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE CHANGE AGENTS?

Effective change agents are missionaries:

- Reaching the lost of their host country.
- Committed to lifelong learning and physical, intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual growth.
- Able to face and deal with dangers and uncertainties of life.
- Adaptable to and deeply moved by the pain of this world without being negatively affected.
- Who have God's heart and vision for a lost world.
- Who are willing to sacrifice and move beyond personal comfort in the face of tragedy, loss, and disillusionment.
- Who have interdependent and self-sustaining goals and attitudes.
- Who are resilient with a strong faith and trust in God to be with them.

Missionaries and their children go through an inordinate amount of change, separation, and loss of relationships whenever they go "to

the ends of the earth.” They can only do this by effectively balancing life’s priorities. They must recognize that they are half of every relationship they form with God, another person, nature, or things. Missionaries know the necessity of sacrifice to achieve balance in their relationships.

***Those who hear the voice
of God and keep their lives
in balance are the ones who
are able to persevere.***

Use of time is easily set off balance. Effective missionaries, through their best efforts and the help of the Holy Spirit, develop a management system that allows time for ministry, family, and free time.

The following characteristics are important for missionary perseverance and effectiveness:

- Emotional maturity and self-identity (with regard for cultural factors);
- Empathy;
- Tolerance of ambiguity;
- Interpersonal skills (willingness to relate to others, curiosity and natural respect toward others, a readiness to listen and get to know other people);
- Realistic but positive expectations;
- High educational level (personal discipline and the ability for perpetuating growth for self and others).

The Division of Foreign Mission uses the California Psychological Inventory to help candidate missionaries assess their personal attributes. Use of this inventory has shown that:

- Men and women desiring to become missionaries are more task-oriented.
- Women are generally more nurturing and people-oriented than men. Thus, they pay a higher price than men in terms of discomfort and pain caused by cultural uprooting.
- Missionaries from the U.S. suffer more culture shock in Africa than in Latin America.
- Missionary mothers obliged by circumstances to spend their time in the

home or office instead of moving among the nationals are at a disadvantage with acculturation and language.

HOW CAN MISSIONARIES CHECK FOR BALANCE IN THEIR RELATIONSHIP?

“Enrich,” a test produced by Olson and Fornier, is designed as a relationship tool for couples to evaluate themselves and their partners in 13 areas. During the last 3 years, about 900 furlough missionaries have taken this test. In addition, HealthCare personnel meet with single missionaries to evaluate their effectiveness and satisfaction.

Laura Mae Gardner, of Wycliffe Bible Translators, recently spoke on the topic, “What keeps the fruit from falling?” For missionaries to remain effective change agents they must:

- Commit to learn a culture and language, and build relationships that last in the host culture.

***Effective change agents are...
adaptable to and deeply
moved by the pain of this
world without being
negatively affected.***

- Live among the people and translate biblical concepts in daily living.
- Know how to make and maintain friendships across cultural boundaries and in another language.
- Care about people and be willing to change methods and approaches to reach the lost at all cost.
- Evaluate self and tasks.
- Have a nondefensive attitude with an appreciation for the opinion and contributions of others.

IS IT EASIER TO WORK FOR GOD WITH A CALL?

In *My Utmost for His Highest*, Oswald Chambers said, “It is easier to work for God without a call, because then you are not bothered by what God requires;

common sense is your guide, veneered over with Christian sentiment. You will be more prosperous and successful, more leisure-hearted, if you never realize the call of God. But if once you receive a commission from Jesus Christ, the memory of what God wants will always come like a goad: you will no longer be able to work for Him on the commonsense basis.”


Effective missionaries are acutely aware of God’s call upon their lives. This is the cement that makes them effective missionaries.

HOW CAN WE PRAY?

Our prayer should be: “Oh Lord, send forth laborers. May we, the body of Christ, continue to pray for our missionaries that they will be anointed for ministry and be strengthened in times of persecution and spiritual warfare. We pray for open doors of ministry and for Your guidance as our missionaries find effective ways to present the gospel in a foreign culture. We pray that our missionaries will know God’s priorities and use their time effectively. Provide them strength, health, and safety. And help them when they come home to itinerate to adjust back into American culture.”

***Effective change agents...
have God’s heart and
vision for a lost world.***

CONCLUSION

Effective change agents representing Christ in foreign lands need our prayers and support. Inspiration and strength come in knowing that we are working as a team to produce fruit and “keep the fruit from falling.” 

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What Missionaries Wish Pastors Knew

BY FRANK VICE

Without the sending of God-called missionaries, there can be no preaching on a foreign field.

Like the link between an airline pilot and an air-traffic controller, the relationship between a missionary and a pastor is vital to the fulfillment of the Great Commission. Many souls are at stake.

In foreign missions, there is a beautiful, God-ordained partnership between missionaries and pastors. Through prayer and financial support, pastors lead their congregations in sending missionaries (cf. Romans 10:12–15). Without the sending of God-called missionaries, there can be no preaching on a foreign field.

Recently, a survey was done among Assemblies of God missionaries and pastors. They were each asked to say to the other whatever was on their hearts. The responses—almost 400 missionary and 126 pastor comments—reinforced that together we are empowered to do what neither group can do alone.

“We’re just people too! We hurt; we mess up; we get tired; we’re overworked; and we face many of the same problems.”
—a missionary

The majority of missionaries expressed appreciation for pastors. Some areas of concern, if considered, can bring better understanding to the missionary/pastor relationship. The following are quotes from missionaries listed in order of the top five areas of response.

ENCOURAGEMENT/RESPECT

Missionaries earnestly desire to partner with pastors, as reflected in many comments about giving and receiving encouragement/respect.

“It is your charity that enables us to carry out our call. We have a great missions program because of our pastors.”

“We pray for [pastors] and their congregations.”

“How humbling it is to be treated like royalty in small churches by pastors who love missions—men [and women] who have to work to make ends meet, yet are so generous to us.”

“Our experience is that over 90 percent of pastors do not return our calls, even after we have called multiple times.”
—a missionary

“We’re just people too! We hurt; we mess up; we get tired; we’re overworked; and we face many of the same problems.”

“Because I appreciate your support, I sincerely want to minister to and encourage your congregation when you honor me by letting me step into your pulpit.”

Many missionaries expressed concern when pastors evaluate and compare them with other missionaries.

“Those of us who may not be considered ‘bell ringers’ by the American audience may have an effective and strategic ministry on the field. [We] are [still] worthy of prayer and financial support.”

“I don’t like being evaluated for support and compared with other missionaries for effectiveness. I have great stats, but I’m getting older. What then?”

“As a stateside-based missionary, I would like pastors to know that this is for reason of communication, logistics, and finance only and not that we want to live in the U.S.”

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What Pastors Wish Missionaries Knew

Oh, the romance of a missions-minded congregation and pastoral staff. I view firsthand every day the wonder of such ministry. We see miracles of God's divine provision in direct response to Jesus' promise: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel.... And these signs [the provision] shall follow...." (Mark 16:15,17). The provision never precedes obedience to the Great Commission; it invariably follows it.

I have the joy of pastoring a missions-minded church. Last year 67 foreign and home missionaries addressed our congregation. Our missions giving has escalated from \$16,000, 10 years ago, to over \$1 million this past year. I tell pastors in ministers' institutes across the country that a church can never go broke by hosting and supporting missionaries; however, they *can* go broke if they don't. As a district missions secretary, I have the stats to prove it. Yet I hear pastors moan, "Oh no, not another missionary." And then they quote Hezekiah 47:2, "There's only so much blood in a turnip!"

Over the past decade, I have observed hundreds of missionaries during their fund-raising efforts. What do pastors wish missionaries knew about pastors and itineration techniques? First, let me say how much I admire our missionaries. Their work is vital. They are spiritual marines, establishing beachheads on hostile soil. But I often see these dear people shooting themselves in the foot during itineration. I'll address some of these issues and offer my advice.

BUDGET

- *Don't be a shrinking violet.* Don't be embarrassed or shy about telling pastors what you need. Sometimes we almost have to pry the information out of you. You have been assigned a fair budget from our missions departments, so it is not a sin to say, "Pastor,

here's my budget; here's what I've got so far; here's what I need." It's difficult for pastors and congregations to undergird you if you are not forthright in your need.

- *Let the pastor receive the missionary offering.* The missionary tells the story and expresses the need, but the pastor is usually better at actually receiving the offering.

***A church can never go broke
by hosting and supporting
missionaries; however,
they can go broke if they don't.***

- *Show and tell.* If possible, motivate the congregation to give and demonstrate your information through multimedia, special effects, drama, and music. Most pastors and congregations still enjoy good slides, videos, artifacts, and mementos from the field. Notice I said good.

- *Present your burden with optimism, passion, and hope.* Your ministry should pour forth from you as a spring from the side of a mountain. Your words should edify and inspire. Cause us to believe you are in the will of God and are thrilled at the opportunity to minister in your mission field. Let us know what a privilege it is for us to share your ministry in the light of the coming judgment seat of Christ.

COMMUNICATION

- *Keep us informed.* We need to hear from our missionaries. Some kind of reasonable, regular communication to your supporting team at home is necessary. Pictures help, although they can be very expensive, especially in foreign lands.

We often receive special offerings for needs

BY DAN BETZER

***Don't be
embarrassed
or shy about
telling pastors
what you need.***

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COMMUNICATION

The most frequent comment from missionaries expressed a certain level of frustration that often pastors do not return their phone calls.

"I would rather hear a no than to call a dozen times and hear, 'He's not available right now.'"

"Please return our phone calls. Our experience is that over 90 percent of pastors do not return our calls, even after we have called multiple times."

"While they're on furlough, missionaries don't understand why a pastor can't return a call—sometimes six or seven calls."

"Churches that have fax numbers or E-mail should let us know for easier communication."

"The first 3 months on the field are the hardest, and regular correspondence and encouragement through this time would help."

OFFERINGS

The matter of receiving missionary offerings was the second most common area of comment.

"Please refer to the offering received as a 'cash offering for their work budget,' rather than a 'love offering for this missionary.' When they think of it as a love offering, they think of it as an

honorarium to us personally. Missionaries have both cash and pledge budgets that need to be met."

"Missionaries like to let the Lord lead by faith in the service. Don't just hand them a \$100 check before the service and say, 'This is what we can do.' Maybe the Lord has someone with \$1,000 to give."

"I wish pastors realized the minimum offering needed to meet the monthly cash needs and cash budget."

"Missionaries are not out just to get money. If all we wanted was money, we'd be doing something else."

***"If all we wanted was money,
we'd be doing something else."***

—a missionary

FURTHER MINISTRY

Pastors need to communicate to missionaries prior to the service date how they want them to minister.

Half of the responding pastors said basically, "Preach the Word; minister to the people." The other half said, "Don't preach a sermon; tell us what God is doing in your part of the world."

Missionaries responded:

"Last Sunday the pastor told me to preach the Word. At the next church, the pastor said to tell them about the mission field and not to preach. Just let us know!"

"Please advise missionaries what you expect of them. We are anxious to hear the pastor's expectations of a missions service."

"Adult Sunday school classes are a wonderful time for questions and answers."

HOUSING/FOOD ARRANGEMENTS

"When itinerating, missionaries need a clean, quiet place to rest, pray, and prepare for the meeting."

"Please mail or fax directions to the church and housing."

"Eating in a pastor's home is a welcomed privilege if the pastor and his

wife are comfortable with such entertainment. Staying in their home is good if privacy is given."

OTHER PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS

"As a missionary wife, I would like to be introduced to the pastor's wife before the service, so I don't wonder if she is the pianist or organist or if she is even there."

"We also appreciate an occasional letter from a pastor, especially when we're going through 'tough stuff' on the field. Even one letter in a 4-year term would be encouraging."

"Missions trips by churches should always be second to pledge support of on-site missionaries."

"Please pray with us before the service."

"Please wait and take the offering after the sermon or presentation."

"Please don't use missionaries as pulpit fill-ins without prior consultation. I feel cheated, (presumed upon), when I show up and discover you are not there."

***"Pastor, ask questions and
let us share our hearts."***


—a missionary

"Remember, veterans need support increases too, not just new missionaries."

"The wife and children (especially teenagers) cannot always go with Daddy. The children need some roots and need to be fed something other than missionary sermons and stories."

"Pastor, ask questions and let us share our hearts."

We joyfully desire to work together in the Great Commission. Together we send the messenger and the message!

For a complete copy of the survey, E-mail your request to dfm.ag.org or call (417) 862-2781, extension 2057. 

Frank Vice is DFM U.S. Relations/Communications Department deputation coordinator, Springfield, Missouri.

expressed in letters and faxes from our missionaries, but we also like to hear from you when everything is going great. Tell us of the conversions, the water and Spirit baptisms, the new churches, and the changed lives.

EXPECTATIONS WITHIN THE SERVICE

- *Don't expect an entire service.* With the exceptions of our annual missions convention, most of our 67 distinguished missionary guests last year had 10- or 15-minute windows within a given service. We don't bring missionaries to our congregations to preach three-point sermons. We want you to inform, to motivate, to inspire, to give us a global vision of the lost. Can this be done in a short time? Yes, better than you could imagine.

Your ministry should pour forth from you as a spring from the side of a mountain.

One precious young missionary lady had only 7 minutes in one of our Sunday morning services. In that 7-minute time slot, she left us breathless. What did she do? She spoke for 3 minutes and showed her 4-minute video. Then she sat down. That's all. Not only was her offering and monthly support large, but our congregation sent her nearly \$250,000 over the next 12 months.

I've had other missionaries go beyond their time allotment yet fail to communicate their purpose, burden, and need. As an old media person, I can tell you it is far more challenging and requires a lot more preparation to give a 10-minute presentation than a 30-minute one. And usually, it's more effective.

- *Be available to minister to the church in other ways than the pulpit presentation.* Many pastors would like the visiting missionary to teach a

Sunday school class, meet with the youth, speak to the singles, and be available for radio/television ministry. If you are musical, that's an added blessing and bonus. Don't hesitate to be creative.

- *Arrive at the church fresh and wrinkle free.* Some churches are very aware of exteriors, even at the expense of what's inside a person. When I was in evangelistic work, one pastor threatened me with near extinction if I ever wore white socks onto his platform. (Of course his threat made me want to do exactly that.) It is in your best interest to change from the clothes you've been driving in all day. I know, I know—this is superfluous stuff, but paying no attention to it can cost you a lot of money during the itineration process.

ADDITIONAL ADVICE

- *Be gracious and accepting of the housing and food arrangements that have been made.* Having spent years on the evangelistic field myself, I can attest to the variations of hospitality in our Fellowship. Every pastor should have had some itinerant ministry to truly appreciate this reality. My wife and I have had to swab out dingy hotel rooms with disinfectants before we would take our children inside. As pastors, we have a responsibility to be as gracious as possible to our guests. A great number of churches, however, cannot afford motels, so missionaries may stay in parsonages or other available homes.


Cause us to believe you are in the will of God and are thrilled at the opportunity to minister in your mission field.

- *Expect your children to be well-behaved.* I have observed some missionaries' kids disrupt services and be rude and ill-mannered. At missionary banquets, I have seen these children run around the tables and create

disturbances even during the presentation of the mission field. Then the missionary parents wonder why their offering was \$3.18! Missionary, we know you love your kids, but you are in our churches to touch our congregations, illuminate the missions burden in our hearts, and raise funds. Don't handicap yourself with children who can't behave in the house of God.

We need to hear from our missionaries.

- *Help the congregation see the world as God sees it.* We must have a global vision if we are to succeed in our calling. Help us embrace the world in God's love and the belief that He will provide through us to meet every need represented there. Many pastors grow weary and disillusioned; they need edification and inspiration. When you are in our churches, let every word you speak and every thought you think be acceptable in God's sight. In so doing, you will not only touch that church where you itinerate, you will touch the world.

Thank God for our great missionary champions around the world. We honor and respect you. We are here to lift your hands. Please, help us to do that. 

Dan Betzer is an executive presbyter and senior pastor of First Assembly of God, Fort Myers, Florida.

Handling Contributions for Specific Missionaries

Church members make contributions to missionaries in a number of ways. Unfortunately, many church members and church treasurers are not familiar with the tax rules that apply. This article summarizes the key rules.

RULE #1—DIRECT GIFTS TO MISSIONARIES

Church members sometimes send a check directly to a missionary. Occasionally an interested person will even give a missionary an item of property, such as a car, a home, or an item of jewelry. These gifts are not tax-deductible by the donor as charitable contributions. To be tax-deductible, a charitable contribution must be to or for the use of an organization the IRS has recognized as tax-exempt.

This requirement is not met when gifts are given directly to a missionary as opposed to a church or missions agency. While the donor cannot claim a charitable contribution deduction, the missionary who receives the gift may not have to report it as taxable income—if it truly meets the definition of a gift. Under federal tax law, gifts are not included in taxable income. But to be a gift, a transfer may not be compensation in disguise. In other words, if the donor is transferring money or property to a missionary to more fully compensate him or her for services rendered in the past, then the IRS may claim that the transfer is not a gift.

Key point:

Persons may still make direct contributions to individual missionaries or religious workers. Such contributions are not illegal—they merely are not tax-deductible as charitable contributions. The fact that taxpayers who cannot itemize their deductions on Schedule A (Form 1040) no longer may claim a charitable contribution deduction will reduce the impact of the court's decision, since it is estimated that nearly 70 percent of all taxpayers no longer are able to itemize their deductions.

This means that about 70 percent of all taxpayers will receive no tax benefit from making charitable contributions. It makes no difference whether such persons make their contributions to a missions board or directly to a missionary—the contributions are not deductible in either case.

RULE #2—GIFTS TO MISSIONARIES ACTING AS COLLECTING AGENTS

There is an exception to Rule 1. If a missionary conducts a service in a church, and the church collects an offering on the missionary's behalf, contributions directly to the missionary may be deductible as a charitable contribution if the missionary is acting as a collecting agent for his or her missions agency.

Example:

John is a commissioned Assemblies of God missionary. He raises his budget by speaking in local churches and collecting offerings and other support. He acts as a collecting agent for the Assemblies of God Division of Foreign Missions (DFM) and turns over all offerings to DFM. DFM exercises full control of the donated funds and has implemented detailed reporting procedures to verify John's missionary activities and the expenditure of missions funds. Church members often make contributions designating John when he conducts religious services. These contributions are tax-deductible as charitable contributions. While the contributions designate John by name, it is clear that in reality they are being made to or for the use of DFM.

Key point:

Donors who want greater assurance that a contribution will be tax-deductible should follow Rule 3 (explained below). This will also expedite the processing of a contribution receipt and minimize the risk of the contribution being lost in the mail overseas.

*BY RICHARD
R. HAMMAR*

RULE #3— CONTRIBUTIONS TO A MISSIONS AGENCY DESIGNATING A PARTICULAR MISSIONARY

Church members can get around the limitations of Rule 1 by simply making their gift directly to a missions agency but designating a specific missionary to be benefited. This assumes that the missions agency exercises full control over these funds to ensure they will be used to carry out its purposes.

RULE #4— CONTRIBUTIONS TO AN INDEPENDENT MISSIONARY

Are contributions tax-deductible if made to a local church designating a particular missionary not associated with any missions agency? According to the IRS, such contributions are deductible only if the church has full control of the donated funds and discretion as to their use, so as to ensure that they will be used to carry out its functions and purposes. This means that the local church must assume the role of a missions agency and adopt procedures verifying that the funds are being spent to carry out its mission and purposes. How is this done? At a minimum, the church would need to do the following:

- *Require the missionary to complete a periodic (e.g., quarterly) activity report summarizing all missionary activities conducted for the previous period.* This would include services conducted, teaching activities, and any other missionary activities. In each case, the summary should list the date and location of the activity.

- *Require the missionary to complete a periodic accounting of the donated funds received from the church.* The church should prepare an appropriate form. The form should account for all dollars distributed by the church. Written receipts should be required for any expense of more than \$75. This report should indicate the date, amount,

location, and missionary purpose of each expense. It can be patterned after the expense report that is used for business travel. Keep in mind that religious purposes includes not only those expenses related directly to missionary activities, but also ordinary and necessary travel and living expenses while serving as a missionary.


- *The church board should approve each independent missionary's ministry as a legitimate activity in furtherance of the church's religious mission.*

- *Reconcile the expense summaries with the activity summaries.* That is, confirm that the expenses claimed on the expense reports correspond to the missionary activities described in the activity reports.

Such procedures can be burdensome for a church. However, Rule 1 serves as a warning that contributions to local churches for independent missionaries are not tax-deductible without such controls.

Key point:

A church that supports an independent missionary will need to issue him

or her a 1099 form at the end of each year, reporting all distributions (assuming they amount to at least \$600). This is not necessary for missionaries commissioned by or associated with recognized missions agencies and who receive W-2 or 1099 forms directly from their missions agency. In order to issue a 1099, a church will need to know the missionary's address and social security number. This information can be obtained by having the missionary complete and submit IRS Form W-9 prior to any distribution. If the missionary refuses to provide this information, then the church must engage in backup withholding (and withhold 31 percent of the distribution). 

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R

ecovering True Community

BY LAWRENCE
J. CRABB, JR.

**Perhaps people
with eating disorders,
anxiety problems, and
relational difficulties
are in fact struggling
with "soul trouble."**

Professional journals are not on my preferred reading list. Too often the articles on counseling reinforce the notion that the best counseling is the most technically informed. Research studies, complete with baffling statistics and implications for further study, give the false impression that quality relationship has little to do with successful outcome. The effect is to remind churches and mere pastoral counselors that the help they provide is not terribly substantial, that power to heal depends mostly on professional education.

Imagine my surprise when I read the October 1996 issue of *American Psychologist* that reviewed what 50 years of research in psychotherapy has "proven." One writer, a prestigious leader in the field, said, "All the research allows us to draw only one firm conclusion: It is a good idea for people with problems to talk to someone they trust."

When asked about the value of professional training, the writer suggested that graduate education in counseling achieves three things: (1) It increases the likelihood that counselors will be ethical. (2) It helps make them less defensive. (3) It encourages the development of more kindness and empathy in their efforts to help. No mention of technical knowledge. The journal seemed to acknowledge that relational issues have more to do with meaningful help than a mastery of theory or skills.

With the beginning of the idea of psychotherapy in 1895, western culture bought into an assumption that, in some circles, is now being questioned. We assumed that personal, nonmedically caused problems fell into two categories: (1) routine or normal and (2) serious or abnormal. Routine problems, such as temporary bouts with discouragement, could usually be resolved by encouragement from friends, a fun night out, or tackling avoided tasks or responsibilities. Serious problems—those springing from deep-seated

emotional roots and labeled psychopathological—were not easily resolved.

The church fell in line with this thinking. Its mandate was reduced to the task of helping normal people cope with life and mature in their spiritual commitment.

Serious problems were thought to involve difficulties that required more than what Christianity had to offer. Some within the church have reacted against this conformity to worldly thinking by insisting, correctly but without careful thought, that the Bible has all the answers. They then reduce everyone's problems to categories the Bible addresses directly. Neither option seems entirely correct. The result is a simplistic understanding of emotional suffering.

**Maybe the powerful ingredient
in soul care is
discerning involvement**

Maybe it's time to consider a distinctly non-modern idea. Could it be that words like *pathology*, *psychological disorder*, and *treatment* for diagnosed illness, when applied to counseling, have led us away from an important truth? Perhaps people with eating disorders, anxiety problems, and relational difficulties are in fact struggling with "soul trouble" and need what the church has been called to provide—soul care. And maybe the powerful ingredient in soul care is *discerning involvement*, an encounter with an individual that reflects Christ's profound acceptance of us, even at our ugliest, and a biblically controlled understanding of what the real issues are.

The advent of managed care is especially problematic for professional counselors. Insurance providers give therapists perhaps five sessions to fix a depression or treat an anxiety disorder. The assumption is that many

disorders are treatable by a specific technique, much like a physician eliminates infection with a 2-week dose of antibiotic. Counselors who believe that the quality of relationship they offer heals by penetrating into the lonely, stubborn recesses of a troubled soul are actively prevented from honoring that conviction.

Christian community is a place where time limits do not apply, where technique is not valued over relationship, and where the character of the helping person is more important than his or her credentials.

When I began my professional career more than 25 years ago, I chose a slogan to appear on all my business cards and brochures: Meeting Counseling Needs Through the Local Church. The simple idea expressed in that slogan is more culturally critical today than ever before. Christian community is a place where time limits do not apply, where technique is not valued over relationship, and where the character of the helping person is more important than his or her credentials.

For too long the church has been seen as a place where problems are handled by sermons, social times, a few Bible verses, and prayer. Those who don't respond to this regime are either farmed out to therapists or pressured into pretending that things are better than they are. We think wrongly about what it means to go to church. For most westerners, going to church means attending a worship service and getting involved in one or more programs that meet their needs. The idea of assembling together to consider how to encourage one another to love and good deeds

has fallen on hard times.

The church must meet the challenge to recover its mandate to maintain a true gospel community. Christian leaders need to dialogue and answer the question: What does it mean to accept each other the way Christ accepts us, to proclaim our message with the energy of Christ working powerfully in us, to struggle for others with labor pains till Christ is formed in them?

I see an unprecedented opportunity standing within reach of the church—to become healing communities where the gospel, the only real power for good available to the world, is released in all its dynamic splendor to touch lives. Secularists, disenchanted with postmodernism and its empty promise of technology to improve the quality of our lives, are open to words such as *spirituality* and *soul* and are leading the way toward valuing the impact of community.

But without the gospel, they cannot realize their dreams. And we Christians, with the gospel, dare not fall short.

The battle for community is fought at two levels: (1) in small groups where a few people seriously pursue a vision for connecting (cf. Ephesians 4:16), and (2) in the larger church structure, where pastoral leaders must decide to place community at the very center of all they do.

The idea of assembling together to consider how to encourage one another to love and good deeds has fallen on hard times.

Each level has its own challenges. Getting along with people we're not drawn to and people we really don't like is one of many challenges at the first level. At the second level, the entire church body will encounter equally

Getting along with people we're not drawn to and people we really don't like is one of the many challenges.

tough challenges when it determines to assign the highest priority to developing meaningful community. Many pastors and elders will have to venture into the unfamiliar world of shepherding.

Many Americans are looking to small groups for help in coping with life. They want community, and Christians must recapture the centrality of community in God's big plan.


I heard Dr. James Houston, professor of spiritual theology at Regent College in Vancouver, make this profound statement: "If the church is to realize its potential, it must recover the doctrine of the Trinity and its implications for human community." The way the three persons of the Godhead get along is the pattern for true community. And to the degree we relate in similar fashion, the deepest matters of our souls will be powerfully addressed.

I have a vision—simple to state, not so simple to realize—of Christians coming together in communities of shepherds and friends. We must not fall into the trap of "big-event Christianity"—rallies, crusades, and huge church services—where events that do not involve the richest form of community substitute for gatherings that do.

Community-centered Christianity must be recovered, and true community must be defined as something that cannot occur apart from the gospel. We cannot experience the power to see good in a fellow believer even when no good is visible, the power to detach from our own concerns and care more about someone else, or the power to believe every hardship of life is part of a wonderful plan to create Trinitarian-like community without drawing deeply from resources found only in the gospel.

Christian counselors need to see themselves as partners in community, not as providers of opportunity to retreat from it. And we must all ask ourselves: What would happen if we connect deeply to one another and help each other connect more meaningfully to God and to the elements in our lives that we fear?

As we approach the end of the century, the challenge faces the church to envision true community and move toward it. Let us be encouraged to accept the challenge by reflecting on two truths: (1) Jesus died so we could have fellowship with the Father, with the Son, through the Holy Spirit, and with fellow believers. He died so we could enjoy relationship. (2) Problems people experience—those that our culture calls

psychological difficulties that require professional treatment—are mainly the product of disconnection, of life outside community. As the church recovers true community, the healing power of the gospel will be seen in ways we cannot imagine. 

Lawrence J. Crabb, Jr., Ph.D., is distinguished scholar in residence, Colorado Christian University, Morrison, Colorado, and is author of 16 books.

Touching the World Through the Campus

BY SCOTT AND
CRYSTAL MARTIN
AND BARRY AND
ALICIA CHOLE

*Our God is a
missionary God....
His mission did not
begin with the
Great Commission
but with His cry
in the Garden of
"Where are you?"*

• **Wayne.** Wayne's life was transformed at a Chi Alpha meeting. Within 6 months after his new birth, he told his campus pastor, "I want to go to the hard places." After a year of learning Arabic, he started teaching Palestinian children in Jerusalem. Now Wayne and his wife look forward to a life filled with strategic visits to the hard places.

• **Lee.** Lee grew up in a country that prohibits Christianity. He came to the U.S. to pursue his doctorate and encountered a campus ministries group whose love intrigued him. After careful consideration, Lee committed his life to Jesus. In 2 years he will return to his nation—knowing the language and culture and taking Jesus into the marketplace of a closed country.

• **Jen.** So shy she would not even stand to introduce herself, Jen entered her state university with two goals: Graduate and get a job. Through her involvement in campus ministries, Jen's heart was burdened for the lost. After missions trips to Mexico, Hong Kong, and the Middle East, Jen is now lovingly calling Muslim women to Christ in the 10/40 window.

FOUNDATION: A MISSIONARY GOD

From the moment Adam and Eve took their first breath, they had the incredible opportunity to develop a relationship with their Creator. When they compromised this opportunity, we received our first glimpse of our Lord's missionary character. Our God is a missionary God. His mission is that all people might have a relationship with Him. His mission did not begin with the Great Commission but with His cry in the Garden of "Where are you?" (cf. Genesis 3:9). This first missionary cry is the same cry that has echoed generation after generation until it challenges us today to embrace His mission in our world.

FOUNDATION: A STRATEGIC GOD

Before the Ascension, Jesus told His disciples to wait in Jerusalem to "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 1:8, NIV).

*God's strategic mission is to reach
students from all over the world
and then send them from their
campuses to touch their nations.*

This verse is often used as a format for the progression of evangelism: First, to our hometowns; then, to surrounding areas; next, across cultural barriers; and finally, to overseas missions. Is this really what the Lord was saying to His disciples? They were all Galileans. Jerusalem was not their hometown. Why did Jesus tell them to wait in Jerusalem? Because our God is a strategic God. He knew that the Day of Pentecost would draw people from outside Jerusalem, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit would enable them to take the gospel from Jerusalem to their homes all over the known world. God's plan was to use Jerusalem as a center from which the gospel message could spread out—it was a cultural, social, and religious hub of its day.

Where are God's cultural hubs today? One of the key hubs is the university campus. God's strategic mission is to reach students from all over the world and then send them from their campuses to touch their nations.

University students have been pivotal in the development of missions during the modern missions era. In the early 1720s while at Halle University, Zinzendorf and his little group of Moravians were inspired to missions and began more missions works in 20 years than

all the Protestant churches started in the previous two centuries. The Student Volunteer Movement, formally organized in 1888, in 60 years placed over 20,000 students in the field for missions. Agnes Ozman received the baptism in the Holy Spirit in the early 1900s on a small college campus in Topeka, Kansas. This was among the first in a series of wondrous events, which included a new wave of Spirit-empowered missionary endeavor and even the formation of one of the most influential missions movements of the 20th century—the Assemblies of God.

God is once again stirring the hearts of university students. Thousands are digesting Jesus' call to evangelize the world. These college and university students are an incredible resource for missions outreach.

FOCUS: A MISSIONARY PEOPLE

The Assemblies of God was established with the mind-set of propagating the gospel throughout the world—we believe in missions. The secular university campus is a mission field in itself, and we are placing campus missionaries in the field through Chi Alpha to evangelize and train students. Its mission statement encompasses the idea of global missions: Reconciling students to Christ, transforming the university, the marketplace, and the world.

Chi Alpha's vision extends beyond the campus to reach into the communities and cultures where students are placed before and after graduation. We are working to see a generation of believers ready and willing to say yes to God's work regardless of the cost and regardless of where their pledge may take them. Thanks to the vision and prayers of the Assemblies of God, Jesus is raising up strategic world changers through campus ministries.

Of the world's 237 countries and territories, dozens of nations have little or no missionary presence—they are restricted or closed. Recognizing Jesus' mandate to reach the world, we ask: How will we permeate unreached countries with the gospel of Jesus when some forbid evangelism and even persecute converts? Particularly in countries officially closed to missions work, we must look for *creative access* means to carry out His mission.

In addition to the use of media, we believe that students are another creative means to reach around the world. The majority of countries, even those closed to overt missionary activity, are open to students and young professionals. Where can we find students and professionals with the abilities and degrees nations are looking for, who are filled with the Spirit and already skilled in being vibrant

University students have been pivotal in the development of missions during the modern missions era.

Is It Really Worth the Energy To Reach Out to the Campus?

"As a senior pastor with a church a few miles from the University of Texas in Austin, I can share with you that ministering to students who attend the university is one of our objectives. Through the outreach of Chi Alpha Campus Ministries, the secular campus provides us with a mission field of young men and women who need to know the truth about Jesus. We especially enjoy our ministry among the international students.

"Students add a dimension to our congregation that has blessed all those who worship with us. Not only have many students become Christians and experienced Spirit and water baptism, but many have shared their gifts and talents with us.

"University students are full of life, excited about learning, and eager to develop and deepen their spiritual interests. It is a pleasure to welcome them to our fellowship. In fact, we enthusiastically reach out to them. Why wouldn't any pastor or church be benefited and blessed by such beautiful young people?"

—Vic Schober is senior pastor of Church of Glad Tidings, Austin, Texas.

Chi Alpha's vision extends beyond the campus to reach into the communities and cultures where students are placed before and after graduation.

witnesses in secular environments? In college and university campus ministries.

FOCUS: A STRATEGIC DREAM

Consider the world Jesus has brought to our doorsteps. Of the 7,000 students currently involved in Chi Alpha, approximately 1,000 of them are visiting scholars from other nations. Of these, 84 percent are from countries that are restricted and/or in the 10/40 window.¹ Truly, the university campus is our modern-day Jerusalem—a hub where the nations have gathered and from where the gospel can reach around the world.


Overall, the U.S. hosts nearly 500,000 international students yearly. These future world leaders, representing every religion, race, creed, and culture in the world, are often from the brightest and most influential families in their countries. American university students interact with internationals daily. They have the rare opportunity to share Christ with students who have often never heard of Jesus before. Each international who is loved into Christ's kingdom may return home as Christ's ambassador—even to lands that do not allow Christian missions. We have a tremendous opportunity to reach the foreigners in our midst.

Consider the potential of this generation of

university students. Campus ministries are equipping and training collegians as soldiers of the Word in the mission field of the secular environment. These witnesses are gaining marketable skills and earning degrees that could become passports to creatively enter difficult areas. Although many restricted nations deny clergy access, they are requesting teachers, engineers, and doctors and are issuing student visas for study within their borders. This provides opportunity for well-trained, equipped, and called students and graduates to access these countries and begin to sensitively share Christ's love. Our Bible schools offer degrees to help strategically place creative access workers.

In addition, we possess a relatively untapped resource on America's secular universities. Chi Alpha works with the Division of Foreign Missions and local churches to spread the gospel. We believe our students are tremendous tools in the hands of our missionary God.

College students are mobile, daring, idealistic, and willing to work for Jesus. They want to be used and challenged. The Assemblies of God is challenging our university students to respond to God's call for global missions. Our Fellowship was birthed in the power of the Spirit to be His witnesses around the globe. Students involved in campus ministries long to transform their university, their marketplace, and their world. Like never before, students involved in campus ministries are experiencing a hunger for world evangelization. Thousands of students are giving their lives for the cause of Christ—from Manhattan to Mongolia, from the public school to the pulpit.

Chi Alpha is calling a generation to abandon themselves to Christ's missionary cause. Dream with us, for this is a dream the size of the world. 

How Churches Can Minister to College/University Students

- Pray for the campus, the students, and campus ministries.
- Provide transportation to church.
- Welcome students into the church family.
- Invite students over for a meal or a weekend getaway.
- Encourage families to adopt an international student for the school year.
- Offer a relevant college-level Sunday school class.
- Make your youth group aware of campus ministries.
- Connect graduating seniors with a Chi Alpha representative.
- Highlight Chi Alpha in your church service on National Campus Ministries Day.
- Invite campus missionaries to share with your congregation.
- Financially support campus missionaries.
- Offer the use of church facilities to your local campus ministries groups.

—Martins and Choles

ENDNOTE

1. Taken from statistics from the 1995/1996 Chi Alpha census.

Scott and Crystal Martin are Chi Alpha Campus Ministries Department student missions specialists, Springfield, Missouri.

Barry and Alicia Chole are Chi Alpha Campus Ministries Department mission mobilization coordinators, Springfield, Missouri.

Practical Prayer Commitments

The Fasting & Prayer column will appear frequently to highlight testimonies of the results of fasting and prayer.

Are fasting and prayer irrelevant or impractical today? No, not at all! God is calling the body of Christ to a renewed emphasis of this biblical mandate. Scripture reminds us: "Turn to Me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning" (Joel 2:12, NKJV). "Give yourselves to fasting and prayer" (1 Corinthians 7:5).

This topic is front and center in the Denominational Prayer Leaders Network. Representatives from 30 different prayer ministries, including the Assemblies of God, meet together annually to share reports, challenge each other with vision for the future, and uphold one another in ongoing, intercessory prayer. At the 1997 meeting, Dee Duke, pastor of a conservative Baptist church in Oregon, presented his testimony.

In 1976 Dee was pastoring a church of about 20 people. The church struggled for a number of years, and by 1988 he was so discouraged he submitted his letter of resignation.

At the same time he attended a Pastors Prayer Summit where pastors meet together for 4 days to pray specifically for and with one another. When Dee came back from the prayer gathering, he said, "I felt like I had been saved all over again." The Lord met him in such a special way that he postponed his resignation and developed seven prayer commitments to God, which have changed not only his life but the life of his church.

1. *Spend 1 hour a day in personal, uninterrupted prayer.*

2. *Spend a minimum of 1 hour a day praying with at least one other person.* He prays from 6 to 7 a.m. and 9 to 10 p.m. every day at the church with anyone who cares to join him.

He always takes 1 of his 8 children with him for these special prayer times, and up to 50 others join them.

3. *Pray for everyone in the church by name each week.* To guide him in this commitment, he uses a laptop computer that includes every member's picture and prayer requests.

4. *Pray at least once a month with another pastor in the area.* He now prays twice a month with 100 other ministers.

5. *Preach numerous sermons a year on prayer.*


6. *Plan four major prayer events a year.* For example, 10 days before Easter, church members write down 10 names of people they will invite to church who don't regularly attend church elsewhere. Then they pray for these people in 24-hour prayer meetings. The first

***Pray for everyone in the church
by name each week.***

time Pastor Duke's church did this, 57 people were saved. Now, in a town of 1,700, they have grown from 20 to 1,300 in attendance.

Every home in the area gets a letter and a phone call four times a year to let people know the church is interested in them and will pray for their needs.

7. *Make Jefferson Baptist known as the church that prays.* People who serve as intercessors walk around the local schools, hospitals, and businesses praying for those inside.

When asked why his church has had so much success, Pastor Duke said, "Because prayer is focused on lost people instead of on problems. Our church motto is: Much prayer—much blessing. Little prayer—little blessing. No prayer—no blessing." 

Sandra G. Clopine is coordinator of the Assemblies of God National Prayer Center, Springfield, Missouri.

***BY SANDRA
G. CLOPINE***

***Our church motto
is: Much prayer—
much blessing.
Little prayer—
little blessing.
No prayer—
no blessing.***



CHRISTMAS STILL TO COME

John 14:3

INTRODUCTION:

The glory of the Christmas story never fades—God came to earth in human flesh. But the greatest Christmas is still in the future, for Jesus said, “I will come again.”

MESSAGE:

1. When Christ came the first time:

- It was to settle the sin question (Luke 19:10; John 12:27; 18:37).
- Only a few knew of His coming (Matthew 2:2; Luke 2:8–12, 25–39).
- Most people rejected Him (Isaiah 53:3; John 1:11).

- Religious leaders ignored Him (Matthew 2:4–6; Acts 7:52, 53).
 - A minority accepted Him, and only a minority will be saved (Matthew 7:14).
- 2. When Christ comes the second time:**
- It will be as prophesied (1 Thessalonians 4:16–18; Revelation 22:12).
 - He will punish the wicked (Jude 14, 15).
 - He will reward the righteous (Revelation 22:12).
 - The work of salvation will then be completed (John 5:24; Romans 5:9; 2 Corinthians 1:10; Philippians 2:12, 13; 1 John 3:2).

- We shall receive a new body (Philippians 3:21).
- The curse will be lifted (Romans 8:20–22).
- There will be no more death, or sorrow, or pain (Revelation 21:4).

CONCLUSION:

Anticipation builds as we await the day when we celebrate His first coming. How much more exciting it is to think of that day when Christ shall come the second time.

—Herb Hull
Muncie, Indiana

THE CHRISTMAS PARADOX

Luke 2:1–7

INTRODUCTION:

Nowhere else in Scripture is the contrast between heaven and earth more evident than in the Christmas story. Luke takes us from the power and fame of Caesar to the weakness and obscurity of a baby in a stable. The world was paying no attention to what was going on in the manger, but God was.

MESSAGE:

Read 2 Corinthians 8:9. I call this verse the paradox of Christmas—the reversal of

- roles at God's cost for our benefit.
- He was *welcomed by lowly shepherds* so that we could be *welcomed by heavenly angels* (Luke 2:16–18).
 - He had a *human birth* so that we could have a *spiritual birth* (verse 7).
 - He *occupied a stable* so that we could *occupy a mansion* (verse 7).
 - He had an *earthly mother* so that we could have a *heavenly father* (verse 5).
 - He became *subject to human limitations* so that we could be *set free from sin's limitations* (Philippians 2:7, 8).
 - He *left His glory* so that we might

- share in His glory* (verse 7).
- He *came to where we were* so that we could *go to where He is* (John 1:14; 14:2, 3).

CONCLUSION:

The end of the story is not in Luke's Gospel but in the Book of Revelation where the baby Jesus, born in a manger, is given a name above every name (Revelation 5:11–13).

—James R. Swanson
Santa Ana, California

KEYS TO EFFECTIVE PRAYER

John 14–17

INTRODUCTION:

Prayer is an opportunity to establish relationship with God and apply His will to your life. Jesus gave four instructions about prayer.

MESSAGE:

- Approach God knowing He chose you** (John 15:16).
We approach God solely on the basis of

- His grace and our acceptance of that grace.
- Pray believing in Jesus** (John 14:12–14).
Believing prayer gives access to the resources of the Son of God.
 - Pray in His name** (verse 13).
Praying in Jesus' name means having an understanding of and relationship with Him.
 - Pray abiding in His Word** (John 15:7; 1 John 5:14, 15).

We will know God's will when we are saturated with the Word and are sensitive to the voice of the Spirit.

CONCLUSION:

Prayer is one of the keys to power and effectiveness. Don't let prayer be squeezed out of your daily routine.

—Jay Herndon
Burlingame, California



BORN A SAVIOR

Luke 2:6-14

INTRODUCTION:

Someone once said, "Angels are always present for the miracle of the birth of any child. A multitude was present when Jesus was born, for He was no ordinary baby."

MESSAGE:

1. Born of Mary.

a. Born of a woman (Galatians 4:4). He was Alpha and Omega (Revelation 1:8), with the Father before the world (Psalm 90:2), before Abraham was born (John 8:58), yet born 2,000 years after Abraham.

b. The Word made flesh (John 1:14). He took our nature upon Him (Hebrews

2:14-17).

2. Born of God.

a. The Savior of humanity. He might have chosen to be an emperor, a military leader, a prominent politician, or a business tycoon. Instead, He was born a Savior (Luke 19:10).

b. The Son of God. He was God by His very nature (Colossians 2:9). He was the Creator (Colossians 1:16). Yet to become humanity's Savior, the King of kings had to be born and then die.

3. Rejected by humanity.

a. No room in the inn (Luke 2:7).

b. Herod tried to kill Him (Matthew 2:13).

c. The Samaritans refused Him lodging (Luke 9:52).

d. The Gadarenes asked Him to leave (Mark 5:17).

e. His disciple betrayed Him (Matthew 27:3).

f. His people sentenced Him to death (Matthew 27:25).

CONCLUSION:

You can change the end of the story if you will reject Him no longer but accept Him as your Savior.

—Richard D. Exley
Broken Arrow, Oklahoma

GOD'S ASSURANCE TO A MISSIONARY CHURCH

Matthew 28:19,20

INTRODUCTION:

The late Morris Williams, Assemblies of God missionary to Africa, once said, "God's will for my best...always relates to the rest." I must remember that God's will for me—my choice of work, spouse, where I live, how I manage my money—is all related to His will for the rest of humanity who have yet to hear the gospel.

MESSAGE:

1. God's *priority*—redemption.

a. Redemption of humanity—God's heartbeat (Psalm 111:9; Isaiah 47:4).

b. Redeemed from all nations—His ultimate intention (Psalm 113:3,4;

Revelation 5:9).

c. Revealed at Calvary.

2. God's *plan*—the Church to carry out His *priority*.

a. God's call to Abraham and concern for Israel all predicated on His concern for nations (Genesis 18:18; Deuteronomy 4:6; Psalm 2:8).

b. God sent Messiah to bring redemption to all nations (Luke 1:68; 2:32).

c. Christ established His church to accomplish God's purpose (Matthew 16:18; 28:19; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:47).

d. His plan for the church: to preach redemption to all nations (Psalm 96:3).

3. God's *promise* to the church that obeys the Great Commission.

a. Assurance of *power* (Acts 1:8).

b. Assurance of *provision* (Philippians 4:19).

c. Assurance of *protection* (Jeremiah 29:11; 1 Peter 3:13).

d. Assurance of divine *presence* (Matthew 28:20).

CONCLUSION:

As to any projected plans or programs, church leadership should ask two questions:

1. Is this a valid missionary ministry?
2. Is this compatible with our missions priority?

—Howard Cummings
Aurora, Colorado

CHRISTMAS FAITH

Luke 1:26-38

INTRODUCTION:

Perhaps the hardest thing to understand about Jesus is His nature: divine, yet human; God, yet man; heavenly, yet earthly.

MESSAGE:

We believe in the miracle of the

Incarnation because of:

1. The *work* of the Holy Ghost (verse 35).

2. The *power* of God (verse 35).

3. The *testimony* of the angel (verse 37).

CONCLUSION:

If by faith we can accept the miracle of

the Incarnation, then by faith we can accept miracles for personal needs. For the same active, working Agent who caused the miracle of the Incarnation performs miracles on our behalf.

—R.L. Quackenbush
Sacramento, California



LOVE ENOUGH TO GIVE ENOUGH

John 3:16

INTRODUCTION:

God loved—then He gave. If we learn to love, we learn to give.

Is it possible that we don't love enough? Does love motivate us to reach out?

MESSAGE:

1. Love enough to hear.

a. Listen carefully to the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18–20; cf. Matthew 11:15; 13:13; 1 Corinthians 12:17). Do we hear so much, we fail to listen?

b. Listen to the cries of this generation of lost people.

2. Love enough to care.

a. A lost world asks: "Is it nothing to you?" (Lamentations 1:12). Is the church insensitive to the lost?

b. Love represents a costly commitment. Love cost Jesus something.

c. The church must have a commitment to care.

(1) To care that the majority of the world's population has never read a page of the Bible.

(2) To care that thousands die every day from starvation.

(3) To care that the majority of people have never heard the plan of salvation.

d. Love has a redemptive quality.

(1) Love sent Christ to the cross.

(2) Love determines how you see people.

(3) How you see people determines how you treat people.

3. Love enough to share.

a. Love enough to give.

b. Love enough to give above average.

c. Love enough to give until it hurts.

d. Love enough to give until it stops hurting.

CONCLUSION:

When will we reach the point where we have given enough? (cf. Matthew 24:24).

—Howard Cummings, Aurora, Colorado

MATTERS OF THE HARVEST

Luke 4:18,19

INTRODUCTION:

The "acceptable year of the Lord" refers to the year of grace. In the Old Testament it was the Year of Jubilee—the 50th year after 7 cycles of 7 years. During Jubilee, debts were canceled, slaves were released, and property was returned to original owners. Jubilee gave everyone a chance to start over.

Christ proclaimed the "acceptable year" as the era of salvation—the time of the harvest.

MESSAGE:

For the task of gathering the harvest,

the Holy Spirit enables us to:

1. Discern needs and opportunities.

a. There is work to be done (Matthew 9:36–38; John 4:34).

b. Time is limited (John 4:35).

c. The rewards are eternal (John 4:36–38).

2. Declare the truth of God's love.

a. We are carriers of God's message (Mark 16:15,16).

b. We are cloaked with divine authority (Mark 16:17,18).

c. We are comforted by His presence (Matthew 28:19,20).

3. Defeat Satan's strategies.

a. We have knowledge of Satan's operations (John 10:10; 2 Corinthians 2:11; 11:14).

b. We have access to spiritual weapons (Ephesians 6:10–15; Revelation 12:10,11).

c. We have the power to resist Satan's attacks (James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:8,9).

CONCLUSION:

This is the time of grace. We are to do the works that Jesus did, and even greater works (John 20:21).

—Roberta Bonnici
Chesapeake, Virginia

THREE CALLS OF MISSIONS

John 3:16

MESSAGE:

Our missions outreach is a response to three urgent calls:

1. The call from heaven.

a. The command to go (Mark 16:15).

b. The cause to go (John 3:3).

2. The call from hell.

a. The pain (Luke 16:23).

b. The plea (Luke 16:27,28).

c. The punishment (Luke 16:24).

d. The people (Mark 16:16).

3. The call from the heathen.

a. The problem (Romans 10:14,15).

b. The plight (Psalm 142:4).

c. The plea (Acts 16:9).

d. The preaching (Matthew 24:14).

CONCLUSION:

This call has been going forth for almost 2,000 years. We have heard the call, but are we obeying it?

—Croft M. Pentz
Waynesboro, Pennsylvania



THE NECESSITY OF MISSIONS

Exodus 20:3

INTRODUCTION:

Missions work is necessary because of the many false religions and gods that pull people from the one true God.

MESSAGE:

1. True or false worship?

Those who vary from true worship must be reached (Daniel 3:12,18,28).

2. Idol worship in Bible times.

(Cf. 2 Kings 23:5; Ezekiel 8:16; Daniel 3:7; Acts 10:25; 17:23; Revelation 22:8,9.)

3. The devil's most deadly weapon is idol worship.

His main effort is to prevent the worship

of the true God (Matthew 4:8,9).

4. God is a jealous God.

This is His first commandment (Exodus 20:3).

—Buddy Barnett
Mathis, Texas

MISSION IMPOSSIBLE

John 4:27–38

INTRODUCTION:

In this passage Jesus introduced the missionary purpose of the Church—doing the will of God.

MESSAGE:

1. Doing the will of God requires submission.

Jesus did what the Father wanted (verse

34).

2. Doing the will of God requires cooperation.

Cooperation is God's will (verse 37).

3. Doing the will of God is effective.

Jesus spoke to one woman and an entire village was saved. We need this effective conversation ability (verse 27–30).

4. Doing the will of God is satisfying.

You can work for yourself, but you will

never be satisfied until you work for God (verses 34,36).

CONCLUSION:

Some look at the task of missions as mission impossible. But we can complete the mission if we stay surrendered to God's will.

—Jay Herndon
Burlingame, California

HELPING THE HURTING

Luke 4:14–21

INTRODUCTION:

Jesus' ministry agenda was to preach the gospel to the poor, deliverance to the captives, and the acceptable year of the Lord. He touched those who were hurting—the brokenhearted, the blind, the downtrodden.

MESSAGE:

To participate in His ministry agenda, we will not only preach but will help the hurting by:

1. Partnering in human need (Matthew 25:35–40).

a. Jesus spoke to the basic issues of life (verses 35,36).

b. Our attitude toward those who are hurting reveals our attitude toward Christ (verse 40).

c. Partnering in human need is a

characteristic of righteousness (verse 37).

d. The King's acceptance and approval accompany benevolent activity.

2. Practicing pure religion (James 1:27).

a. The fatherless and widows—the disenfranchised—are a high priority with God.

b. Affliction is a common state of the helpless.

c. "To visit" means to care for or to help.

3. Proving faith's reality (James 2:14–16).

a. Faith plus works equals profit.

b. Words without action is a common response to need.

c. Hurting people rarely respond to the gospel unless it is accompanied by some tangible help.

d. Meeting spiritual and physical needs should not create conflict.

4. Providing Christlike compassion (Romans 12:20; 1 John 3:17).

a. Tension comes between the have's and the have-not's.

b. The Lord expects His people to respond to need when they become aware of it.

c. God's love operates in those who express compassion.

d. Christ's followers are to offer help to believers and nonbelievers in distress.

CONCLUSION:

Our world has multitudes of hurting people—people without hope. Believers have the opportunity to offer them help and hope through the gospel that touches the whole person.

—Earl Baldwin
Lutherville, Maryland



A DRIVE-BY CHRISTMAS

You have heard of a live nativity scene; why not a live story of the life of Jesus?

Using your church parking lot or outside edge of your church property, set up several drama stations beginning with the birth of Jesus and ending with the Ascension. Here are some scenes you might want to consider:

- The inn at Bethlehem,
- Mary, Joseph, and baby Jesus,
- Wise Men and star in the east,
- Shepherds and their gifts,
- Jesus at age 12 in the temple,
- Baptism of Jesus at the Jordan,
- Sermon on the Mount,
- Entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday,
- Last Supper,
- Jesus before Pilate,
- Crucifixion,
- Resurrection and tomb.

Record music and narration to fit each scene, and give portable cassette players to every car or group going through your presentation. At the last station, collect the player, invite each group to your church's special Christmas services, offer information about your church, and provide an outreach tract on how to receive Jesus as Savior.

For a lasting impression, use live animals and be as elaborate with your scenes and costumes as possible.

A drive-by Christmas has the potential to become one of your city's favorite Christmas attractions. You can offer it for one night or several nights. Expect a great trip!

—Larry Meeks, Springfield, Missouri

"GO YE INTO ALL THE WORLD" SERVICE

Jesus said, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel" (Mark 16:15). Most Christians are familiar with this command but wonder how they could personally go into *all* the world. God revealed a simple plan to me so that every person—toddler to senior—could obey Jesus' Great Commission.

Our church holds an annual "Go ye into all the world" service. Prior to the service, we label 160 individual paper-waxed buckets with the name of a different

nation/nation group. (Some churches attach flags of the countries to the buckets.) The buckets representing all the nations of the world are placed around the perimeter of the sanctuary for the "Go ye" service. Everyone is encouraged to bring 160 nickels, dimes, quarters, or bills to give to each nation.

As people fulfill Scripture by going to each nation (bucket) and giving and praying during the worship service, unity and a heart for missions and the lost are birthed.

The money is counted and recorded on a special offering form and sent to the Division of Foreign Missions where it is disbursed to each nation/nation group.

This service then illustrates how each person can go by giving to the nations:

My offering = My life

My offering to one nation = My life to one nation

My offering to all nations = My life to all nations

For a detailed booklet including service suggestions, answers to questions, testimonies, offering forms, and order form for materials contact: Go Ye Into All The World, c/o Northwest Assembly of God, 7055 Avery Road, Dublin, OH 43017, (614) 889-8364.

—Dennis Griffin, Dublin, Ohio

SIX WAYS TO SERVE YOUR COMMUNITY

1. *Project warmth.* Collect blankets, coats, and other warm clothing for the homeless. Try holding an annual "blanket run," and advertise in your church newsletter for donated items. Approach area businesses for donations to buy rain ponchos and socks (the most requested items). Deliver your bounty to local homeless shelters and soup kitchens for distribution.

2. *Graffiti cleanup.* Gather buckets, scrub brushes, sandpaper, and hoses, and throw a graffiti cleanup party. Concentrate on a single area, and you can achieve tangible results in 1 day.

3. *Urban garden.* Help urban dwellers turn an abandoned city lot into a garden by providing seeds, tools, and muscle. Check with City Hall for any required permits. Then set a time and work alongside

neighborhood residents to plant the garden. As you tend the garden, relationships will grow along with the plants.

4. *Park restoration.* Get permission from the appropriate local agency to clean up a neglected park. Besides trash bags, work gloves, brooms, garden tools, and tools for repairing fences, you'll need large pieces of screen to sift broken glass, gum, and dangerous objects from sandboxes. Paint hopscotch and foursquare courts on the asphalt. Ask local businesses to donate fresh sand and mulch.

Expect plenty of onlookers. Perhaps you could invite the curious to a cookout at the park to celebrate its restoration.

5. *Treats without tricks.* Instead of collecting treats October 31, provide hope and encouragement by having your youth or children's group dress in amusing, non-scary costumes and distribute treats (get permission first) at nearby orphanages or children's hospitals.

6. *Gleanings.* If area farms and orchards will allow you to, collect leftover fruit and vegetables for distribution to food ministries.

—Keith D. Wright
Kansas City, Missouri

THE SPOT

"The Hottest Hangout for East Bay Teens" was the headline story covering our new outreach to unchurched teens.

Your community is probably no different than mine—hundreds of teens with nothing to do. We decided to light a candle and set an example in our community by helping troubled teens.

Our idea is called The Spot—a free Friday-night youth center held in our church parking lot. We offer basketball, volleyball, pool, Ping-Pong, video games, trampolines, an eating area, a full-size climbing wall, go-carts, and a skate park.

But will they really come to a church parking lot? The local paper said, "They arrive in droves, many with wild-colored hair, nose rings, and baggy clothes...."

The reason our program hasn't failed is that our central goal is to lead people to Christ. Each "hot spot" has a 30-minute halftime where we present the gospel message at the "street level" through skits, power team presentations, music groups,



and martial art demonstrations. After the presentation, we always give an altar call. Not once in 3 years have we come up empty. Our youth ministry has experienced a 600 percent growth increase partially because of the new converts at The Spot.

The beauty of this outreach is that it will work any place you have teenagers. Light a candle for your community in your own church parking lot.

If you need additional information on the setup and operation of this type of ministry, call (510) 687-3600, ext. 11.

—Bret Allen, Concord, California

GIVING—THE REAL JOY OF CHRISTMAS

It used to be that every Christmas season my church board and I faced the same dilemma—what gifts to give each other for Christmas.

Although it's not an original idea with us, for the past 2 years we have tried something new. We put the money that we would spend on each other together to give to a home missions pastor or a foreign missionary that we know has a special need.

Now many others in our church are involved as well. Some give up personal gifts to help local needy families, children's homes, homeless shelters and missions, and other community projects.

It's more fun to give than to receive, and it makes Christmas a lot less stressful—at least for me, my board, and our congregation.

—Phil Kreiling
Overland Park, Kansas

SUCCESSFUL COLLEGE AND CAREER MINISTRY

Transitions occur when teenagers graduate from high school. They face adult decisions and ask: Do I get a job or go to college? Whom will I marry? How do I manage my money? Unfortunately, during this time when they need guidance and fellowship, they are not sure where they fit in anymore.

The average youth group is comprised of 12- to 18-year-olds. What appeals to young teenagers no longer appeals to the college and career age. And most singles

ministries are geared for the “single-again” group—a group that deals with the trauma of divorce and single parenting. Thus, the college and career age-group needs a ministry in the church designed especially for them.

To have a successful college and career ministry, you must work around these challenges:

- Many in this age-group work weekends and nights to accommodate their school schedule.
- Many go away to college yet want to stay in touch and be included in activities when they are home.
- Most are low on funds.
- You will have inconsistent attendance because of the first three challenges.

Fellowship activities need to be low or no cost. A day of hiking and a picnic at a local area is one possibility. Have individuals sign up beforehand for activities requiring a fee.

With the help of our leadership team, we plan the fellowship activities for our college and career group a year in advance. This gives us ample time to advertise events and allows those in the group time to plan their schedules.

With a little creative planning and consistency, you can have a successful college and career ministry.

—T. Suzanne Eller
Muskogee, Oklahoma

MISSIONS CONVENTION PROFILE

In an effort to present missions in the best possible light, to enlist quality workers, and to define our missions convention vision, our church developed a missions convention profile.

WHAT IS A MISSIONS CONVENTION?

The missions convention is a vital link to our congregation to share our plan for reaching the lost for Christ. Its purpose is to *inform*, *inspire*, and *motivate*.

Inform. It is vital that we inform the congregation of where our missionaries are working and what their needs are so that they continue to pray and support them. Our missions convention explains the specific goals of missions, how we can best support our missionaries, and how people can become missionaries if God

calls them. Each convention informs the congregation of all the missions programs our church supports and presents plans for the future.

Inspire. Each missions convention focuses on the Great Commission to influence our congregation to participate in



Christ's mandate. We seek to inspire all ages through sermons, video, drama, musicals, testimonies, and field reports. When a missions convention concludes, the congregation should be thrilled at the reports, touched by the Holy Spirit, and impressed by what God is doing through His church.

Motivate. We must go beyond factual information and emotional inspiration to motivate the church to be involved in missions through:

- *Prayer.* When the work of missions burns in our hearts, we will pray for a divine revelation of Christ among the people of every nation and for the faithful missionaries who have put their love of God ahead of their personal desires.

- *Giving.* Giving is the outgrowth of love. When we love, we give—of our time, our talents, and our finances.

- *Action.* The missions convention's objective is to encourage people to consider missions work as a personal responsibility—whether full or short term.

We formed 11 missions convention committees to accomplish our objectives.

Committees are:

1. *Prayer.* To organize prayer teams to pray specifically for the missions convention and world missions.

2. *Faith promise.* To inform members of the congregation of opportunities to give to missions and to encourage their participation.

3. *Promotions.* To acquaint the congregation with our worldwide missions program through use of maps, posters, book tables, name tags, and bulletin boards.

4. *Food.* To plan and oversee food preparation for the workers dinner and the missions banquet.

5. *Decorations.* To decorate the church for the missions convention, especially the fellowship hall and the sanctuary.

6. *Parade of the nations.* To organize a missions parade on the first Sunday of the convention featuring flags, costumes, banners, and artifacts.

7. *Foyer.* To prepare display tables of the nations our missionaries represent, and to decorate the main foyer and the entrance to the missions banquet.

8. *Banquet program.* To plan all

activities for the missions banquet and workers dinner.

9. *Hispanic.* To represent and report the Hispanic department's plans for the missions convention.

10. *Children.* To represent and report the children's department's plans for the missions convention and BGMC party.

11. *Youth.* To represent and report the youth department's plans for the missions convention.

Humanity's greatest need is the life-changing message of Jesus Christ. It is our sacred privilege to take this message to a waiting and often sin-ensnared population.

—David G. Rose
Houston, Texas

BGMC BANQUET

During our missions convention, we hold a BGMC (Boys and Girls Missionary Crusade) banquet for the children at the same time as the adult missions banquet.

For the meal each child has a Buddy Bag (similar to a Happy Meal®) with a hot dog, popcorn, grapes, cookies, and a juice box. The prize is a packet of five missionary All Star cards (available on the BGMC order form). We use white lunch bags and decorate them with BGMC clip art. The children can color their bags while waiting for everyone to finish eating. Later, they take their crafts and All Star cards home in their bags.

After the meal, children participate in a Missionary All Star Card Show, set up like a baseball card show. Children trade cards with each other and with "dealers" to complete their sets.

For craft time, the children make BGMC pennants using the color-on heat transfers (available on the BGMC order form), felt pennants, and scribble paints.

—Ted and Denise Wyatt
Coweta, Oklahoma

CHILDREN'S MISSIONS BANQUET ACTIVITIES

After the children's missions banquet, the group enjoys games that emphasize the theme of Prayer, Give, Go.

Three groups of children rotate through three areas—each area representing part of the theme. Workers explain

each part of the theme is an important part of missions and how each child can participate. They play games to reinforce the theme, and the children receive Missionary All Star cards (available on the BGMC order form) for the activities.

1. **Pray.** In the Intercessory Prayer game, the children experience the value of prayer by using intercessory prayer (foam dart guns) to shoot down targets with pictures showing problems missionaries might face (e.g., sickness, thieves, car trouble). The second game is Pin a Heart on the World. Blindfolded children put a heart sticker on a world map. Then a worker helps them pray for the chosen country's missionaries and people.

2. **Give.** Relay teams race to roll a Buddy Barrel with their noses across a marked course. Other teams play the Memory Game using Missionary All Star cards (the backs of the cards are covered with BGMC clip art). The children playing in this area also write down estimates of how many pennies are in a jar. The winner receives a small prize.

3. **Go.** In a large room, we distribute two sets of items itinerating missionaries might need to collect before going to the mission field: clothing, pillows, books, maps, toilet paper, etc. Two teams each choose one child to be their missionary representative. That child is given a child-sized suitcase and a checklist of items to collect. Team members race to collect and pack all of the articles in their team suitcase so that their missionary representative can carry everything across the finish line in one trip.

—Ted and Denise Wyatt
Coweta, Oklahoma

MINISTRY IDEAS WANTED

Enrichment will pay up to \$50 for each published account of a ministry idea. Send your ideas, along with a detailed description, to: Ministry Ideas That Work, *Enrichment* Journal, 1445 Boonville Ave., Springfield, MO 65802-1894.

E-mail: You may send your ministry ideas to Enrichment@ag.org



GETTING TO KNOW THE AUTHOR

The story is told of a young lady who borrowed a book from a friend. She tried very hard to understand and enjoy it but failed completely. Then one day she met a young man. They became acquainted, fell in love, and were soon engaged to be married. It turned out that he was the author of the book she thought was so dull and difficult. With a completely different outlook, she again took up the book, discovering that her relationship with the author made the book interesting and understandable. And if part of the book was not clear to her, she could ask the author its meaning.

To begin to understand and appreciate the Bible, you must first come to know and love the author. Then at any time, you can ask Him about the meaning of His Word.

—Adapted from "Reading God's Word" by Ross Rainey in *The Christian Life for the Kindred in Spirit*. Submitted by George Rennau, Tinian, Northern Marianna Islands

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE HILL

Few will question the value of a strong missions program. God is willing to change lives around the world if someone will go and tell the good news. The following story proves again that the message of Christ will impact the world.

Francis Peabody was a professor at Harvard. He had a caring heart for people and often prayed for their salvation. On one of his trips to a country in the Orient, his guide took him on a lengthy road tour through the rural areas. He saw miles of dilapidated homes, abject poverty, and villages that were more like garbage dumps.

After several days of travel, the road led over a hill into another city. This town was different. The little houses had gardens, and the windows had attractive curtains. Unlike the other places, children played happily in the streets, and adults were busy at jobs and business.

When Professor Peabody asked his guide why this town was different from the rest, the reply was: "Christianity has already reached these folks."

Christ does make a difference. God forbid that we ever refuse to support

missions with prayer and offerings. It is within our power to change the world for the better if we choose to sacrifice some of our wealth to replace the poverty of the world. Act quickly; time is short.

—David G. Rose, Houston, Texas

WEALTH

At an archeological dig in northern Israel, the flooring of a wealthy home was unearthed still intact. The archeologists found one of the floor tiles was loose and lifted it gently. Beneath the tile was a small hole dug out of the earth. Inside was a container full of coins and jewels amounting to great wealth.

The home seemed to have been lived in by a wealthy Roman soldier who was called to war and never returned. A poor family moved in for a short time who never discovered the wealth.

Imagine living on meager means with great wealth beneath your feet! How many saints live spiritually poor lives with the abundance of God's riches within arm's reach?

—Jim Laudell, Watts, Oklahoma

WHOSE BIRTHDAY?

A family celebrated Christmas every year with a birthday party for Jesus. An extra

chair of honor at the table was the family's reminder of Jesus' presence. A cake with candles, along with singing a birthday song, expressed the family's joy in Jesus' presence.

One year a Christmas visitor asked 5-year-old Ruth, "Did you get everything you wanted for Christmas?" After a moment's hesitation, she answered, "No, but then it's not my birthday."

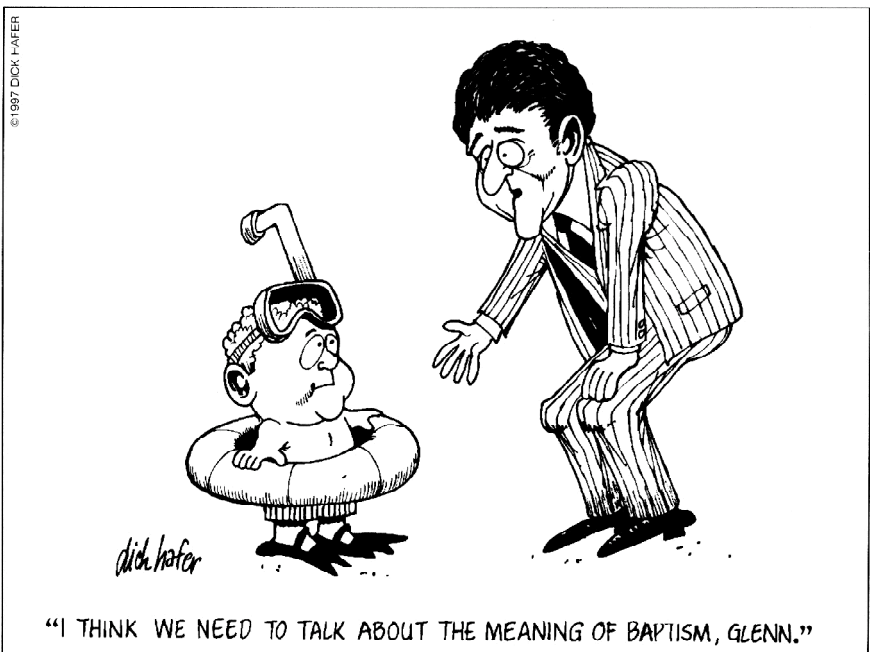
—James Hewett, Illustrations Unlimited

VALENTINES

Little Chad was a shy, quiet boy. One day he came home and told his mother he'd like to make a valentine for everyone in his class. Her heart sank. She thought, *I wish he wouldn't do that*. She had watched the children when they walked home from school. Her Chad was always behind them. They laughed and talked to each other, but Chad was never included. Nevertheless, she decided to go along with her son's wishes.

She purchased paper, glue, and crayons, and for 3 weeks, night after night, Chad painstakingly made 35 valentines.

Valentine's Day dawned, and Chad was beside himself with excitement. He carefully stacked his valentines, put them in a bag, and bolted out the door.





His mother just knew he would be disappointed, so to help ease his pain she baked his favorite cookies to serve him when he came home from school. It hurt her to think that he wouldn't get many valentines—maybe none at all.

That afternoon she had the cookies and milk on the table. When she heard the children outside, she looked out the window. Sure enough, here they came, laughing and having the best time. And as always, there was Chad in the rear. He walked a little faster than usual. She expected him to burst into tears as soon as he got inside. She noticed his arms were empty, and when the door opened she choked back her tears.

"Mommy has some warm cookies and milk for you," she said.

But he hardly heard her words. He just marched right on by, his face aglow. All he could say was: "Not a one...not a one." And then he added, "I didn't forget a one, not a single one!"

—Adapted from *Rebuilding Your Life* by Dale Galloway, Wilmore Kentucky.

THE SMALL GIFT

The story is told of a couple who were celebrating their golden wedding anniversary. The husband was asked what the secret was to his successful marriage. The old gentleman answered with a story.

His wife Sarah was the only girl he ever dated. He grew up in an orphanage and worked hard for everything he had. He never had time to date until Sarah swept him off his feet. Before he knew it, he asked her to marry him.

On their wedding day, Sarah's father took the new groom aside and handed him a small gift. He said, "This gift is all you really need to know to have a happy marriage." The nervous young man opened the box, and within lay a large gold watch. He saw etched across the face of the watch a prudent reminder he would see whenever he checked the time—words that if heeded held the secret to a successful marriage. They were, "Say something nice to Sarah."

—Adapted from *Stories for the Heart*. Selection by Morris Chalfant; retold by Marilyn K. McAuley (© 1996 Vision House). Used by permission.

COURAGE

It was a few weeks before Christmas 1917. The beautiful snowy landscapes of Europe were blackened by World War I.

The trenches on one side held the Germans, and on the other side, the trenches were filled with Americans. The firing exchange was intense. Separating them was a narrow strip of no-man's-land. A young German soldier attempted to cross and was entangled in the barbed wire. He cried out in pain.

Between the shells the Americans could hear him scream. One American soldier could stand it no longer and crawled on his stomach to the German soldier. When the American and German soldiers realized what he was doing, they stopped firing. A weird silence enveloped the area. The American made his way to the German and disentangled him. The American soldier stood up with the German soldier in his arms, walked straight to the German trenches, and placed him in the waiting arms of his comrades. Having done so, he turned and started back to the American trenches.

Suddenly there was a hand on his shoulder that spun him around. There stood a German officer who had won the Iron Cross, the highest German honor for bravery. He jerked it from his own uniform and placed it on the American, who walked back to the American trenches. When he was safely in the trenches, they resumed the insanity of war.

—Author Unknown. Adapted from *Stories for the Heart* (© 1996 Vision House).

WINNING A KEY PERSON

Almost every evangelical Christian has heard of the late evangelist Dwight L. Moody. But how many Christians know the name of the man who won him to Christ? It was his Sunday school teacher Edward Kimball.

On a rainy Saturday, Kimball was impressed by the Spirit to go to the shoe store where Moody worked and witness to him. Several times the teacher thought, *It's rainy; I'll speak to him tomorrow*. Finally, he obeyed the Spirit, went to the store, and won Dwight L. Moody to Christ.

A key person was won to Christ, who in turn was used by God to win thousands.

Andrew won his brother Peter, and Peter won thousands.

You too may win someone who will be the key person in winning thousands to Christ.

—Croft Pentz, Waynesboro, Pennsylvania

IS THAT ALL?

In a Florida town a kindly matron was in charge of a home for small, unwanted boys. She didn't have much in the way of luxuries, but she made it up to the boys. She loved them, mothered them, disciplined them, fed them, and taught them to love God, read their Bibles, pray, and become good citizens.

One day a well-to-do lady came from a distant city to adopt one of the boys. Everyone was pleased and happy that one fortunate boy would be chosen to live in a fine home with a successful father and a beautifully dressed mother.

After going through the selection process, a boy was chosen. Then the prospective mother asked him, "Do you have a bicycle?"

"No, ma'am," he said.

"Do you have your own radio?"

Again the reply was, "No, ma'am."

The questioning continued. To all the fine lady's questions about his possessions he answered, "No."

Finally, the little boy studied her and blurted out, "Please, ma'am, if that's all you're going to give me, I'd rather stay here!"

For weeks and maybe longer, we plan, shop, and prepare for Christmas. But before the final rush takes place, let's pause to hear the small boy's question, "Is that all you're going to give?"

—Abridged from *Moments for Christmas* by Robert Strand (© 1993 New Leaf Press). Used by permission.

TREE OF WHITE

Warden J. Scudder tells of a friend riding on a train next to an obviously troubled and anxious young man. Finally, the young man blurted out that he was a convict returning from prison. His crimes had brought shame on his poor but proud family, and they had never visited or written him during the years he was away. He hoped this was only because they were too



poor to travel the long distance and too uneducated to write. But he could not be sure they forgave him.

The youth went on to explain he wanted to make it easy for them. He wrote them a letter asking them to put up a signal near where the train would pass their

little farm near the outskirts of town. If they forgave him and wanted him to return home, they were to tie a white ribbon in the big apple tree near the tracks. If they did not want him back, they were to do nothing, and he would stay on the train, go West, and lose himself forever.

Nearing his hometown, the youth's suspense and discomfort grew to the point where he could not look. His new acquaintance offered to watch for him. A few minutes later he put his hand on the young man's shoulder and whispered in a broken voice, "Look, it's all right; the whole tree is white with ribbons!"

There is something exciting and miraculous about forgiving love—how it manages to bridge over troubled waters of a broken past.

This story was also the inspiration for a popular song. Perhaps you remember the words and melody to "Tie a Yellow Ribbon 'Round the Old Oak Tree."

—Abridged from Moments for Christmas
by Robert Strand (© 1993 New Leaf Press). Used by permission.

REPUTATION OR CHARACTER?

Reputation is what you make of yourself.
Character is what God makes of you.

Reputation is what others think of you.
Character is what God makes of you.

Reputation is temporary and geographical.
Character is eternal and heavenly.

Reputation can be stripped by people.
Character is guarded by God.

Reputation is what you believe is important.
Character is what God declares important.

Reputation is standing with dignitaries.
Character is kneeling to God.

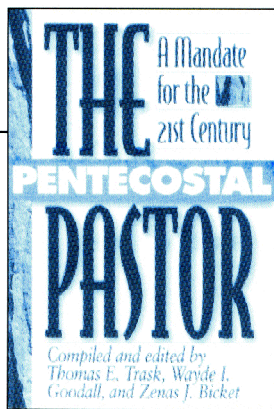
Reputation is walking in your own praise.
Character is standing in the glory of God.

—Jim Laudell
Watts, Oklahoma

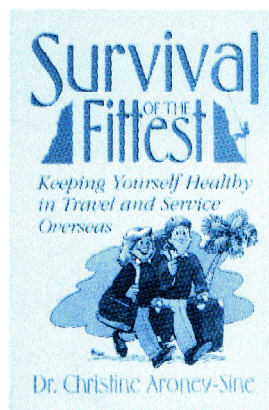
ILLUSTRATIONS WANTED

Enrichment will pay up to \$25 for each illustration we use. If the material has previously been published, please indicate the original source. Send your contributions to: Illustrate It, *Enrichment* Journal, 1445 Boonville Ave., Springfield, MO 65802-1894.

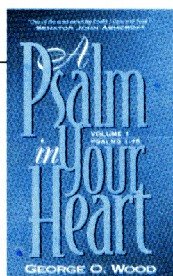
E-mail: You may send your illustrations to Enrichment@ag.org



Thomas E. Trask, Wayde I. Goodall, and Zenas J. Bicket, eds. (Gospel Publishing House, 640 pp., hardback, \$34.99, 020686)



Christine Aroney-Sine (MARC Publications, 112 pp., paperback, \$9.95)



A Psalm in Your Heart

George O. Wood (Gospel Publishing House, 304 pp., paperback, \$12.99, 020685).

The Psalms have provided comfort and help to Christians everywhere during times of trial and disaster. George O. Wood, Assemblies of God general secretary, journeyed through the Psalms during his own days of darkness. From his journals and experiences, he has brought wonderful insights from God's Word, which will bring strength and faith to those who read *A Psalm in Your Heart*. Published earlier in the *Pentecostal Evangel*, Psalms 1–75 are available now in volume 1.

Whatever your situation, you will see yourself again and again in the Psalms. And you will discover a song in your heart as you focus on God's great love, mercy, and faithfulness.

—Reviewed by Juleen Turnage, secretary, Office of Public Relations, Springfield, Missouri.

B O O K R E V I E W S

The Pentecostal Pastor: A Mandate for the 21st Century

Thomas E. Trask, Wayde I. Goodall, and Zenas J. Bicket, eds. (Gospel Publishing House, 640 pp., hardback, \$34.99, 020686)

Comprehensive is the first word that comes to mind when surveying *The Pentecostal Pastor*. The editors—Thomas E. Trask, Wayde I. Goodall, and Zenas J. Bicket—played a major role in coordinating the entire project.

At 640 pages, it comprises 85 chapters, which average 7 pages, grouped in 6 units: Priorities in the Pastor's Life, The Pastor's Personal Life, Preparing for Revival, Effective Accountability, Ministry to the Body, and Spirit-Anointed Worship. The six unit titles illustrate the emphases of the book, including that of the general superintendent in Unit 3: Preparing for Revival. Another emphasis shows up in the book's title—*Pentecostal*—which appears as much a natural expression of the writers as a deliberate emphasis.

Some contributors were responsible for more than one chapter; in all, 74 people, averaging almost 30 years in ministry, contributed to the work. The names read like a who's who in the Assemblies of God—from executive presbyters to headquarters

executives, from assistant district superintendents to assistant deans, from pastors to Bible college presidents. These are people who have plowed the ground and sowed the seed. The reader gets the fruit—a valuable resource tool for pastoral ministry.

With an excellent Scripture and subject index, the content is easily accessible to the reader. Every minister will benefit from reading *The Pentecostal Pastor*.

—Reviewed by Glen Ellard, senior book editor, Book Editing Department, Springfield, Missouri.

Survival of the Fittest: Keeping Yourself Healthy in Travel and Service Overseas

Christine Aroney-Sine (MARC Publications, 112 pp., paperback, \$9.95)

Finally, a medical book written in easy-to-read layperson's terms for travel overseas. *Survival of the Fittest* is a marvelous little book that will provide valuable help to anyone who must travel abroad, whether for ministry or personal reasons.

Dr. Aroney-Sine is a physician and served as the medical director for Mercy Ships for 12 years. She has been around the world—not only seeing the sights but becoming acquainted with the medical services and common diseases found in underdeveloped countries. She touches all the bases in this short paperback, covering the gamut from tetanus to typhoid.

A pretrip checklist is included, and time frames needed for numerous immunizations are also noted. She also discusses how to deal with the tropical sun and dangerously infested water found in many third-world countries.

Other chapters in the book deal with maintenance and preparation of emotional and spiritual health before, during, and after your travels. For those who have never traveled abroad, other helpful checklists are provided.

Dr. Aroney-Sine spends several pages talking about the HIV/AIDS world epidemic, the locations of particular danger, and how precautions can be taken. She even includes an inventory of helpful items to have in case of a blood-exposure emergency.

At a reasonable cost, this book is an excellent choice as required reading for church-sponsored missions trips.

—Reviewed by Emily Johns,
missionary to South Africa.

*This book may be ordered from MARC Publications, 121 E. Huntington Dr.,
Monrovia, CA 91016-3400; ISBN
0-912552-88-3.*

Missions: Biblical Foundations and Contemporary Strategies

Gailyn Van Rheen (Zondervan, 251 pp.,
hardcover, \$19.99)

Highly readable, up-to-date, and credible describe this introductory missions text. More than a cognitive approach, *Missions: Biblical Foundations and Contemporary Strategies* offers a spiritual challenge to the reader plus quality sermon material.

Insightful examinations of motives and techniques for missions will interest pastors, laypeople, youth, and especially prospective missionaries. Those already serving cross-culturally will be interested in the leadership and partnership strategies for planting tomorrow's church.

Van Rheen addresses a whole range of vital missions issues—from theological foundations to culture shock to communication skills. The author defines terms such as *extractionism*, *worldview dissonance*, and *mutual complementation*.

Van Rheen also commends and quotes Melvin Hodges' understanding of the indigenous church (186-7).

Following each chapter are excellent application questions, suggested activities,

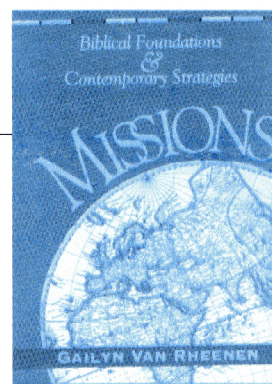
and case studies taken from the author's personal experiences in East Africa. These true-life examples make the book ideal for a Sunday school class or small group study.

The brief treatment of some topics is unavoidable in this kind of survey text, but the author points readers to other up-to-date resources with more in-depth discussions.

The theological emphasis leaves room for Pentecostal teachings as long as Christ is kept the foundational message of missions.

Missions Professor Van Rheen says the study of missions is "a transforming experience in which the heart and head are actively engaged in determining the will of God." Reading this book may be a significant step in that process.

—Reviewed by Barbara Cavaness,
visiting professor of missions and
director of Global Missions Track,
Assemblies of God Theological Seminary,
Springfield, Missouri.



Gailyn Van Rheen
(Zondervan, 251 pp., hard-
cover, \$19.99)

The Cry of Compassion: A Prophetic Call to Proclaim Biblical Values

John O. Anderson (Bridge Publishing Co., 238 pp., paperback, \$7.95)

John Anderson declares that "the moral condition of the world today is the same as it was in the days of Noah and Lot" and urges churches not to be apathetic or compromising. Churches must heed the voices of biblical prophets, speak out boldly regarding social issues, and take practical steps to teach what is right and wrong.

The prophets cried out in judgment with the force of God's love—a cry of compassion.

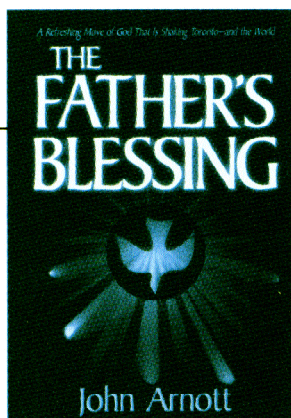
Anderson suggests that church leaders:

1. Recognize the problem.
2. Be precise about sin.
3. Be clear about judgment.
4. Understand and teach the importance of fatherhood.
5. Have a spiritual revival.

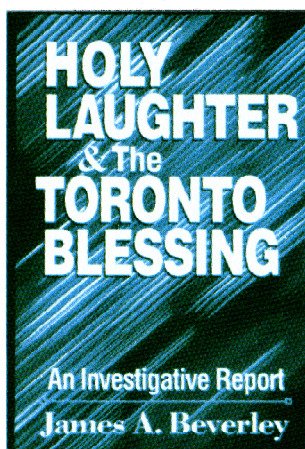
The book's value to Christian leaders may be to clarify their thinking about the social sins of our day and give direction to focused action.

—Reviewed by Billie Davis, Ed.D., professor emeritus of behavioral sciences,
Evangel College, Springfield, Missouri.

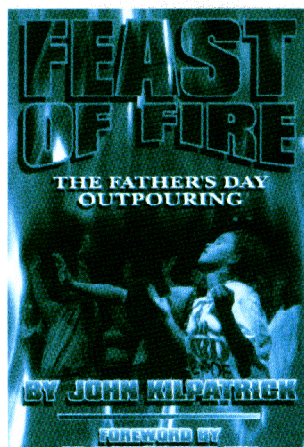




John Arnott (*Creation House*, 237 pp., paperback, \$10.99)



James A. Beverley (*Zondervan*, 184 pp., paperback, \$10.99)



John Kilpatrick (*Brownsville Assembly of God*, 132 pp., paperback, \$10, 031492)

The Father's Blessing

John Arnott (*Creation House*, 237 pp., paperback, \$10.99)

Holy Laughter and the Toronto Blessing

James A. Beverley (*Zondervan*, 184 pp., paperback, \$10.99)

Feast of Fire: The Father's Day Outpouring

John Kilpatrick (*Brownsville Assembly of God*, 132 pp., paperback, \$10, 031492)

After a long dry spell, renewal is occurring in churches across America, and people are experiencing a new intensity and spiritual passion. A number of books have been published that enthusiastically report or critically evaluate these congregational renewals.

What has been termed the *Toronto blessing* is the best known and most controversial congregational renewal in the 90s, primarily because of certain physical manifestations that have accompanied it. *The Father's Blessing*, written by John Arnott, pastor of the Toronto Airport Vineyard, relates what is happening in Toronto.

The book shares "the awe and wonder" of what has happened and attempts to "awaken...the heart" of the reader. It begins with "foundational issues of the heart"—God's love, the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, and abundant joy. The author then describes the progress of the renewal in Toronto, drawing extensively from first-person accounts to illustrate and support his understanding of renewal.

Arnott is passionate about renewal and communicates in a direct and engaging manner. His chapter on receiving the Spirit's power is insightful and practical.

There are several gaps in the book. Arnott seems too ready to accept phenomena as the work of the Holy Spirit and does not talk about the problems that accompany renewal. Notwithstanding the gaps, *The Father's Blessing* is indispensable to understanding

John Arnott's heart and the mental map of the leadership in Toronto.

The history of revivals demonstrates the need for careful stewardship. That process involves sober assessment—a serious attempt to think biblically, theologically, historically, and practically about what is happening. From Azusa Street to the present, Pentecostals and charismatics have shown a tendency to base faith and practice too heavily on experience.

James Beverley has contributed to our understanding of Toronto and related movements in an investigative report entitled *Holy Laughter and the Toronto Blessing*, which seeks to guide the reader through the issues surrounding John Wimber and the Vineyard movement, Rodney Howard-Browne, and Toronto and attempts to recognize the values in each.

As a professor of theology and ethics, the author has specialized in the study of modern religious movements. Though a non-charismatic, Beverley is not anticharismatic and is open and sympathetic to charismatic expressions of renewal.

The author seeks to be balanced and fair in his assessments. He raises legitimate questions concerning an overreliance on experience and warns about the dangers of expecting phenomena to be a regular part of a Christian's life. He also recognizes that the Vineyard, like any other young movement, needs time to mature.

Beverley's criteria of assessment are essentially conservative evangelical and tend to be rationalistic. This criticism notwithstanding, he has rendered a valuable service to the Christian community as it seeks to travel the sometimes rock-strewn road of renewal.

The renewal in Pensacola, Florida, is different in tone and emphasis. Beginning on Father's Day 1995, the Pensacola revival started as a congregational renewal at Brownsville Assembly of God but has become much bigger. At this writing, there have been over 120,000 professions of faith

with attendance averaging 3,000 to 5,000 per night—the revival shows no signs of abating. Pastor John Kilpatrick of Brownsville Assembly of God tells the story in *Feast of Fire*, which in many ways is a journal of the author's own spiritual pilgrimage to revival.

His openness is perhaps the greatest strength of *Feast of Fire*. He talks about his painful past, his frustrations in the ministry, and the inevitable challenges and changes that accompany revival.

Another strength is the way the book illustrates the ways revivals vary. The Pensacola revival is more than a congregational renewal; it is an extended evangelistic crusade.

Its third strength lies in Kilpatrick's treatment of the issue of phenomena. The author carefully distinguishes between the operations of the Holy Spirit and human responses to them.

The author reminds us of the time and spiritual preparation required of a pastor and congregation who want revival. He also offers a word of caution to church leaders who may be easily discouraged when revival does not happen quickly.

A full evaluation of what is happening in contemporary renewal can only occur over time. These three books are especially valuable as, in the words of St. Augustine, our "faith seeks understanding."

—Reviewed by Gary A. Kellner,
assistant professor of historical theology,
Assemblies of God Theological Seminary,
Springfield, Missouri.

A SERVICE

Enrichment reviews books we feel our readers would like to know about. These books are not always in accord with our point of view, and the reviews do not constitute a recommendation of the books. As a service to readers the Gospel Publishing House will supply any of these books, but books cannot be returned for credit.

Ministerial Ethics and Etiquette

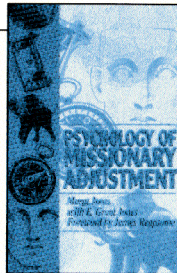
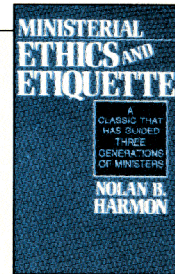
Nolan B. Harmon (Abingdon Press, paperback, 187 pp., \$13.99, 032038)

Nolan B. Harmon surveyed over 80 ministers in order to update this classic written over 50 years ago. This comprehensive, practical book contains a consensus on ministerial conduct in a wide range of pastoral duties.

The Assemblies of God reader will need to keep in mind that the book was written against the backdrop of 50 years of American mainline denominationalism.

Conversely, the book is helpful in providing commonsense information on points of ministerial ethics and etiquette. It could be used as a supplement to books written by Assemblies of God ministers such as *The Pentecostal Pastor* and *Ministerial Ethics: A Guide for Spirit-filled Leaders*, both published by Gospel Publishing House.

Reviewed by Richard L. Dresselhaus, pastor, First Assembly of God, San Diego, California.



Psychology of Missionary Adjustment

Marge Jones with E. Grant Jones (GPH Logion Press, 175 pp., paperback, \$12.95, 020321)

The authors present an overview of what is involved in becoming a missionary and living as a missionary. Their experiences and academic pursuits provide insights and sound knowledge of how people respond to life situations.

They acknowledge that adjustments can be expected for persons making major transitions that require movement from the familiar to the unknown. Each missionary family member experiences new learning challenges.

The psychological impact of missionary adjustments, from the call to ministry to retirement, is adequately covered. This information helps the reader understand the intra- and interpersonal experiences that missionaries will encounter.

The writers conclude with retired missionaries' personal testimonies of maturation and satisfaction, along with anonymous case studies of missionaries who have been overcome by the difficulties they faced.

—Reviewed by Faye Tidwell, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary staff
and former missionary, Springfield, Missouri.

NEWS & RESOURCES

ASSEMBLIES OF GOD PUBLICATIONS RECEIVE EPA AWARDS

Assemblies of God publications fared well at the 1997 Evangelical Press Association meeting held in Grand Rapids, Mich.

Enrichment Journal—Wayde I. Goodall, executive editor—received three awards:

- Award of Excellence for "Most Improved Publication."
- Award of Merit for the "Denominational" category.
- First place for "Best Redesign."

Mountain Movers magazine—Joyce Booze, editor for award issue; John Maempa, current editor—received a first place award for the photo feature "He Is Our Peace"—David Dobson, photographer; Jeff Jansen and Matt Key, graphic designers.

On Course magazine—Melinda Booze, editor—received a fifth place award in the "Higher Goals" fiction category for the story "Not Like Amber" by Terry Miller Shannon.

Two "Awakening the Giant" writing awards, cosponsored by EPA and the Amy Foundation, were presented to:

- Dr. Billie Davis for her article "Disciples Discipling," which appeared in the *Christian Education Counselor*—Sylvia Lee, editor.
- Joel Kilpatrick for his news feature "Los Angeles International Church," which appeared in the *Pentecostal Evangel*—Hal Donaldson, editor. (Both recipients received a \$1,000 prize check from the Amy Foundation for their entries.)

UPDATED ASSEMBLIES OF GOD DEPARTMENTAL DISK LOGOS AVAILABLE

An updated version of A/G Departmental Disk Logos is now available for computer layout and design needs.

A/G Disk Logos contains over 140 high-resolution logos from the Fellowship's national departments, ministries, and postsecondary schools.

A/G Disk Logos is available for Macintosh® and IBM® compatible computers and is formatted to meet the graphic needs of most major word processing and

desktop publishing programs.

To order A/G Disk Logos for \$37, call the Assemblies of God Office of Public Relations at (417) 862-2781, ext. 2117.

SPECIAL EDITIONS OF PENTECOSTAL EVANGEL STILL AVAILABLE

Introduce your congregations and visitors to the Assemblies of God—who we are and what we believe—by using the attractive, colorful *Pentecostal Evangel* visitors edition. A limited quantity is available (issue 69-6639; 20 cents per copy; minimum order of 50).

Readers can also use the full-color, 16-page *Pentecostal Evangel* evangelism edition—first issue of each month—as an effective soul-winning tool, ideal for outreach and discipleship.

Call toll free 1-800-641-4310 to subscribe or order extra copies of any issue.

BULLETIN AND NEWSLETTER SERVICE PROVIDES QUARTERLY HELPS

The Office of Public Relations publishes *BANS*, a quarterly issue of clip art drawings of seasonal, general, church, holiday, Assemblies of God, and Pentecostal images.

Included are bulletin fillers of various sizes with quotations from books, periodicals, and Bible verses; lists of significant events, holidays, and special observances during the quarter; church sign starters; calendar masters; short news items of relevance to the church world; and sermon illustrations. Each issue contains over 100

clip art images.

For computer graphics, *BANS* Disk Art is available for IBM® compatible or Macintosh® computers. The graphics are compatible with most major desktop publishing and word processing packages. With a subscription to *BANS* Disk Art, the cut/paste paper format is complimentary.

A subscription to *BANS* (paper only) is \$30 a year. The annual subscription rate for *BANS* Disk Art is \$75 (foreign orders slightly higher).

For more information call the Assemblies of God Office of Public Relations at (417) 862-2781, ext. 2117.

REVIVAL REPORTS ON WEB SITE

Revival reports published in the *Pentecostal Evangel* can be accessed on Berean University's web page (<http://www.berean.edu/chapel>). Review these exciting stories of revival throughout the U.S. including Miami, Okla.; Florence, Ky; Sacramento, Calif.; Galena, Mo.; Cedar Rapids, Iowa; and others.

HIGHLANDS BABY CALENDAR NOW AVAILABLE

Highlands still offers baby calendars free of charge. The calendars are a reminder to pastors and church family members to pray for the Highlands babies.

The calendar comes with a cute baby picture and quote for each month and notes national holidays and Benevolences events.

To order free Highlands calendars for you and your church families, fill out (indicate quantity) and mail in the

Highlands baby calendar reply card insert.

NEW 12-PAGE BENEVOLENCES GUIDE READY

Do you want to know more about the ministries and services of the national Benevolences Department? A new, updated 12-page Benevolences guide is now available for you and your church.

Check rsc #1 and indicate quantity.

HIGHLANDS BABY BOOTEE CLUB DAY IS FEB. 15

Hundreds of churches and church groups around the nation are a part of the Highlands Baby Bootee Club, an innovative program helping the babies at Highlands. On Sunday, Feb. 15, churches are asked to emphasize the Baby Bootee Club and the ministry of Highlands Child Placement Services and Maternity Home in their battle to save the lives of unborn children.

Check rsc #8 to receive a sample Highlands Baby Bootee Club quarterly

packet, baby bootee coin bank, and leader's guide.

NEW RELEASES FROM THE SPIRITUAL DISCOVERY SERIES

Radiant Life announces the release of two new titles in the Spiritual Discovery Series available for use in the winter 1997 quarter.

Living by the Spirit by Lorraine Mastrorio provides direction for Pentecostal believers in their quest to live a Spirit-led life. The author introduces readers to the experience of being baptized in the Spirit, describes the fruit of the Spirit, and encourages individuals to be instruments of God through the supernatural and ministry gifts. *Living by the Spirit* will help readers understand how the Holy Spirit works through believers who are willing and yielded to God's leading.

Freedom From Codependency by Steven Stiles is a step-by-step path to recovery from negative behaviors and addictions. Stiles provides insights for those dealing

personally with codependent situations or with other individuals within their circle of influence who struggle with addictive behavior. If followed, this biblically based system will provide a renewal process for hurting people.

The Spiritual Discovery Series offers individual and group study curriculum for contemporary adults. When completed, it will contain 40 titles divided into four tracks of study: foundations, life issues, book studies, and critical concerns.

Living by the Spirit and *Freedom From Codependency* join 18 titles already released in the Spiritual Discovery Series. See your Radiant Life curriculum order form for a full listing and prices.

ANNUAL LIGHT-FOR-THE-LOST CONVENTION

The annual Light-for-the-Lost convention will be held Apr. 23-25, 1998, in Colorado Springs, Colo.

Featured speakers include: George O. Wood, Assemblies of God general

NEWS & RESOURCES

secretary; Robert Holmes, missionary to West Africa; and Benny Ferguson, LFTL coordinator.

"What a tremendous opportunity to develop a world vision for lost souls," stated Ferguson. "You will be inspired and challenged to reach this dying world with the gospel."

Also planned are business meetings, evening banquets, activities for women, and opportunities to enjoy the Colorado Springs surroundings.

For more information on the convention, check rsc #10 or call the LFTL office at 417-862-2781.

IT'S ALL ABOUT UTH VIDEO SERIES

Youth Alive has an ideal video resource for campus clubs, youth groups, or small groups. Using the bold, straightforward discussion of four students, teens are provided relevant biblical solutions to challenging questions. In *Precious and Few*, the real life issues of friendship, dating, marriage, and divorce are presented. *More Than Feelings* confronts AIDS, sexually

transmitted diseases, abortion, and date rape. Each video is comprised of 4, 5- to 7-minute segments. A promotional video is available.

Precious and Few, IMF #731-331; and *More Than Feelings*, IMF #731-332, are \$15 each. *It's All About Uth* promotional video, IMF #731-330, is \$5. To order call 1-800-641-4310.

HELP SLAM DUNK AIDS AVAILABLE

The new booklet *Help Slam Dunk AIDS* is available for purchase. Targeting young adults, the comic-book-style tract gives essential information on the AIDS epidemic, along with a straightforward salvation message. A quality product, this booklet can be used for a variety of youth outreach functions.

For more information on *Help Slam Dunk AIDS* check rsc #11 or call the LFTL office at 417-862-2781.

UTH PRAISE TRAX, VOL. 2 AVAILABLE

This worship CD with all new orchestrations is a follow-up to volume 1. A split-track feature permits the worship leader to eliminate voices as desired. Contemporary songs are combined into four sets that flow together or may be individually selected. A guitar tuning aid is included.

Uth Praise Trax, Vol. 2, IMF #733-252; and accompanying songbook, IMF #733-253, may be ordered by calling 1-800-641-4310. Cost of the CD is \$20 plus shipping; songbook \$10 plus shipping.

YOUTH DEPARTMENT ANNOUNCES W-B-S SIGNATURE SERIES

The new *W-B-S Signature Series* (Win-Build-Send) is the threefold mission of the National Youth

Department) is comprised of four tape collections of six cassettes each. Each collection provides inspiring sermons that youth leaders can use in preparing their youth messages. Outlines for sermon preparation are included. Messages are by the National Youth Department team.

Passion for the Planet, IMF #733-301; *It's All About Uth*, IMF #733-302; *Two Worlds, One Choice*, IMF #733-303; and *Absolutely!*, IMF #733-304, are available by calling 1-800-641-4310. The cost of each collection is \$15.

NATIONAL WOMEN'S MINISTRIES DAY

Feb. 22 is National Women's Ministries Day. The 1998 theme is Growing in Godliness and correlates with the 1998 Assemblies of God theme We Build People.

Allowing the women in your church to present a National Women's Ministries Day service gives opportunity to recognize their contributions and makes all the women in the congregation aware of the various women's ministries available.

The offering received on National Women's Ministries Day for the national department helps cover the costs of ministries provided to over 400,000 women and girls in Women's Ministries groups and Missionettes clubs.

Last year Women's Ministries gave nearly \$12 million to Assemblies of God ministries around the world.

A packet containing program materials for a National Women's Ministries Day service will be mailed to local coordinators in December. The packet includes a program guide, a sample bulletin cover and offering envelope, and other theme-related items. The program guide is designed to help the coordinator plan the service with program choices, music, ideas for putting the theme into action, and resources. To receive a copy of the program guide, check rsc # 14.

SIXTH ANNUAL STEWARDSHIP AND DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE

The Assemblies of God Foundation is sponsoring its annual Stewardship and Development Conference to be held in February 1998. Attendees will include district superintendents, Assemblies of God



college presidents and development officers, certified stewardship directors and ministry representatives, executive presbyters, Teen Challenge regional representatives, and laypersons who are involved in planned giving and/or stewardship education.

The conference will target the areas of stewardship, planned giving, and development. Stewardship sessions are designed for individuals involved in church-based stewardship education programs and church capital campaigns. Planned giving sessions will cover the fundamentals of *inter vivos* planned giving as well as complex plans coordinated with other sophisticated estate planning and income tax planning tools. Development sessions will cover the "nuts and bolts" of a successful development program as well as sophisticated marketing strategies.

Anyone interested in attending this conference should call the Assemblies of God Foundation at (417) 865-4880.

1998 VBS THEME ANNOUNCED

An exciting, life-changing adventure awaits the children of your community next summer. The new 1998 Radiant Life vacation Bible school curriculum presents an underwater voyage into the wonders of God's creation entitled *Deep Sea Adventures: Exploring God's Treasures*. Children will investigate an underwater discovery reefs substation that will activate their imagination to discover God's treasures—Jonah and the great fish, Paul's journey and turbulent shipwreck, and other wonderful adventures. Children will discover the treasures of God's priceless creation, the miracle of salvation, obedience to God, and His protection and all-encompassing peace. *Deep Sea Adventures* is a journey that will have an eternal influence on the children you know. Contact your Radiant Life distributor or call 1-800-641-4310 for additional information.

POSTSECONDARY SCHOOLS ANNOUNCE FIRST DAY OF CLASSES, COLLEGE DAYS FOR SPRING 1998

The first day of spring 1998 classes and College Days (listed respectively) have

been announced by the following 17 endorsed Assemblies of God postsecondary schools:

American Indian College of the A/G, Phoenix, Ariz.—Jan. 8; Feb. 19,21

Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Springfield, Mo.—Jan. 5; NA.

Bethany College of the A/G, Scotts Valley, Calif.—Jan. 15; Mar. 5,6

Berean University of the A/G, Springfield, Mo.—Rolling enrollment (distance education courses and degrees)

Central Bible College, Springfield, Mo.—Jan. 8; Mar. 26,28

Central Indian Bible College, Mobridge, S. Dak.—Jan. 5; Apr. 3

Evangel College, Springfield, Mo.—Jan. 8; Mar. 19,20

Latin American Bible Institute, San Antonio, Tex.—Jan. 7; Mar. 13,14

Latin American Bible Institute, La Puente, Calif.—Jan. 20; Feb. 6,7

North Central Bible College, Minneapolis, Minn.—Jan. 15; Apr. 2,3

Northwest College of the A/G, Kirkland, Wash.—Jan. 12; Mar. 26,28

Southeastern A/G College, Lakeland, Fla.—Jan. 8; Feb. 5,6

Southern California College, Costa Mesa, Calif.—Jan. 14; NA.

Southwestern A/G University, Waxahachie, Tex.—Jan. 14; Feb. 19,20

Trinity Bible College, Ellendale, N. Dak.—Jan. 14; Apr. 16-18

Valley Forge Christian College, Phoenixville, Pa.—Jan. 14; Feb. 12,13, and Mar. 12,13

Western Bible Institute, Phoenix, Ariz.—Jan. 3; Mar. 9,10

SPEED-THE-LIGHT GOALS DUE IN DECEMBER

Become involved in giving to Speed-the-Light. To receive 1997 giving credit, funds raised must be received in the national office by Dec. 31, 1997. Assemblies of God youth raised \$7.3 million in 1996.

PRAISE AND WORSHIP CASSETTES PRODUCED BY MEDIA CENTER

The Michael Cardone Media Center has released two inspiring audio cassettes of praise and worship music by Ramona Crabtree and Dixie Hackett entitled *Music*

for the Altar and *Music for the Anointing*.

These powerful recordings of piano and organ music will provide an atmosphere of worship at the altar, in your home, and in your car. You will enjoy "Because He Lives," "Holy Ground," "Spirit of the Living God," "Come Holy Spirit," and many more.

The demand for these cassettes has been so great that the Michael Cardone Media Center is putting together a new release of Christmas music in the same format of piano and organ music. Watch for this new Christmas release as the holidays approach, and let this anointed music bless you and your family for years to come.

For information or to place an order write to the Michael Cardone Media Center at 1506 Boonville Ave., Springfield, Mo. 65803; call: (417) 869-8829, fax: (417) 862-5974, or E-mail: media@ag.org.

A/G SCHOLAR NAMED OFFICER FOR CENTRAL STATES SBL

Donald A. Johns, Ph.D., Assemblies of God ordained minister, was recently named to the highest office for the Central States Region of the Society of Biblical Literature. Johns served as treasurer the past 7 years and was unanimously elected as regional secretary.

The purpose of the 7,000-member national SBL organization is "to stimulate the critical investigation of biblical literature together with other related literature by the exchange of scholarly research both in published form and in public forum."

Johns taught a number of years at Central Bible College and the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary (where he is still adjunct faculty), Springfield, Mo. He is currently the assistant director of print translations for the American Bible Society and was one of the main translators for the Contemporary English Version, released in 1995 by the American Bible Society and Thomas Nelson Publishers.

"As a Pentecostal Bible scholar, I feel honored to be entrusted with the leadership of this region of the Society of Biblical Literature—a scholarly organization whose members come from such a wide range of denominations and traditions," Johns said.

With Christ

James L. Amick
Bedford, Indiana

Kenneth Bade
Fairbury, Nebraska

Katie Baker
Frostburg, Maryland

Walter L. Baldridge
Fort Smith, Arkansas

Christine Blankinship
Lawton, Oklahoma

Michael Bocchchio
Woodbridge, New Jersey

Joseph L. Boyle
Glendale, Arizona

Harriett M. Brann
Elizabethtown,
Kentucky

John M. Burroughs
Edgewater, Maryland

Willard G. Burrows
Marrero, Louisiana

Elizabeth M. Cawston
Edina, Minnesota

Robin R. Clair
Eaton Rapids,
Michigan

Floy Clingings
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California

Orville R. Cross
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Wilford M. David
Springfield, Missouri

E. Martha Davidson
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Roy J. Davidson
Springfield, Missouri

J. Reuben Davis
Vacaville, California

Sallie Ann Davis
Cypress, Texas

Disidoro F. De La Rosa
Lamesa, Texas

Laurence H. Donahue
Leander, Texas

Francis C. Drake
Silsbee, Texas

Cora R. Elkins
Chesapeake, Ohio

Charles V. Elliott
Saint Petersburg,
Florida

William B. Friend
Metairie, Louisiana

Edward E. Froats
Muskegon, Michigan

Judy L. Gentry
Bellflower, California

Forrest R. Gibbs
Broken Bow, Oklahoma

E.L. Gilliland
Orangeburg,
South Carolina

Rudolf K. Griessmann
Beavercreek, Oregon

Dale V. Helle
Salem, Oregon

John W. Hodges
Citrus Heights,
California

R. Harry Jackson
Conneaut, Ohio

L. Maye Johnson
Ozark, Alabama

W. Thelon Jones
Hamlin, Texas

Ferman P. King
Dallas, Texas

Delmar C. Kingsriter
Fridley, Minnesota

William C. Langford
Nashville, Tennessee

Samuel Lee
Sandusky, Ohio

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Mrs. Neuly Mercedes
Providence,
Rhode Island

Joseph Mignano
Rochester, New York

David E. Nissley
Lakeland, Florida

Arvid S. Nordlund
Waukegan, Illinois

Agustin M. Ochoa
San Bernardino,
California

John J. Pagano
New London,
Connecticut

Quinnie Powell
Oneonta, Alabama

Francisco Rivera
Pittsburg, California

Goldie C. Runyon
Lakeland, Florida

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Los Angeles, California

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Oscar M. Zamorano
Phoenix, Arizona



In Closing

BY LOREN TRIPLETT

We are living in an exciting yet crucial moment on the time line of the Great Commission. I believe we are in the last great harvesttime before the coming of our Lord. The following is a Great Commission equation:

Half a world does not know who Jesus is. +

They have never hardened their hearts against God or refused an altar call. They have never torn up a tract or walked out of a gospel service. They simply have never had an opportunity to accept what God offers through Jesus Christ. They are eternally lost: "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3).

Recently, a HealthCare Ministries team ministered to a 113-year-old Muslim in Bangladesh. As they shared the plan of salvation, the man admitted he had never heard of Jesus but readily accepted Christ as his Savior. Afterward, he explained that when he was 100 years old, he had a dream of a man who said, "Someone will come and explain to you the way to God." With deep emotion he said, "You have just fulfilled that dream." Like this man, billions of people wait for an opportunity to know Christ.

God does not want anyone to perish. +

"The Lord is not...willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). God's limitless love never ceases. He gave His only Son for those who are lost.

There are more Great Commission Christians than ever before. +

Great revivals in Brazil, Korea, Ethiopia, El Salvador, and Vietnam testify to the impact of the Lord's worldwide army. The exponential factor of the Kingdom is at work, bringing

many to righteousness.

Powerful and innovative communication tools are available. +

Information is a major commodity. Since we have the most important information to share, let's use all avenues of communication—radio, television, and cyberspace—to tell the gospel story.

During the great prayer rally at the first World Assemblies of God Congress, in Seoul, South Korea, Missionary David Spencer handed me a cellular telephone to speak to Latin America via radio broadcast by 180 radio stations. What an awesome thing to be in South Korea and speak to thousands in Latin America.

More doors are open than ever before. +

Our world has changed dramatically in the last few years. In His sovereignty, God has rearranged national boundaries, brought down walls, and opened doors. Jesus said, "Knock, and it shall be opened unto you" (Luke 11:9). Thousands of believers on both sides of the door have knocked, and God has answered.

Time is short. Jesus is coming soon. +

What we do we must do quickly: "Night is coming, when no man can work" (John 9:4, NIV). This is the engine that drives Great Commission Christians. One day soon the last church will be built, the last missionary will be sent, the last sermon will be preached, the last altar call will be given, and the last name will be written in the Lamb's Book of Life. The last harvest is our task: "He who sleeps during harvest is a disgraceful son (Proverbs 10:5, NIV).

The Holy Spirit is giving boldness to witness with signs following. =

Thankfully, through the enablement of the Holy Spirit, God is giving special faith and spiritual energy to His Church just before His Son returns (cf. Joel 2:28). Holy Spirit power is the secret to fulfilling the Great Commission. And the preached Word is being accompanied by signs following, filling witnesses with boldness.

The world's greatest revival.

We are in a moment of intense evangelistic activity. God's Spirit has stirred up the saints of the world and has placed upon them the responsibility of obedience to the Great Commission. It is a doable task. William Carey, the father of modern missions, said, "We must attempt great things for God." **E**



Loren Triplett is the Assemblies of God executive director of the Division of Foreign Missions, Springfield, Missouri.

A D V E R T I S I N G I N D E X

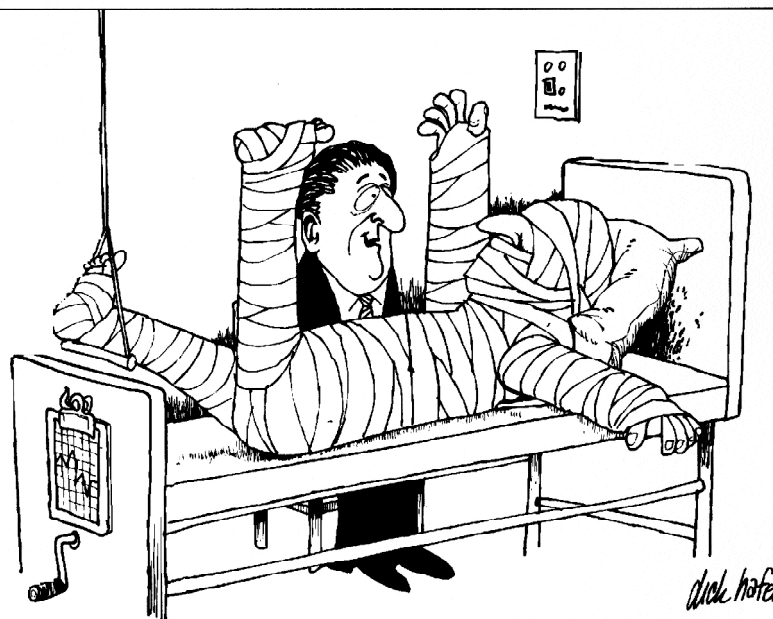
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" The good news is that the new cross looks real nice on top of the steeple. Thanks, Fred. "