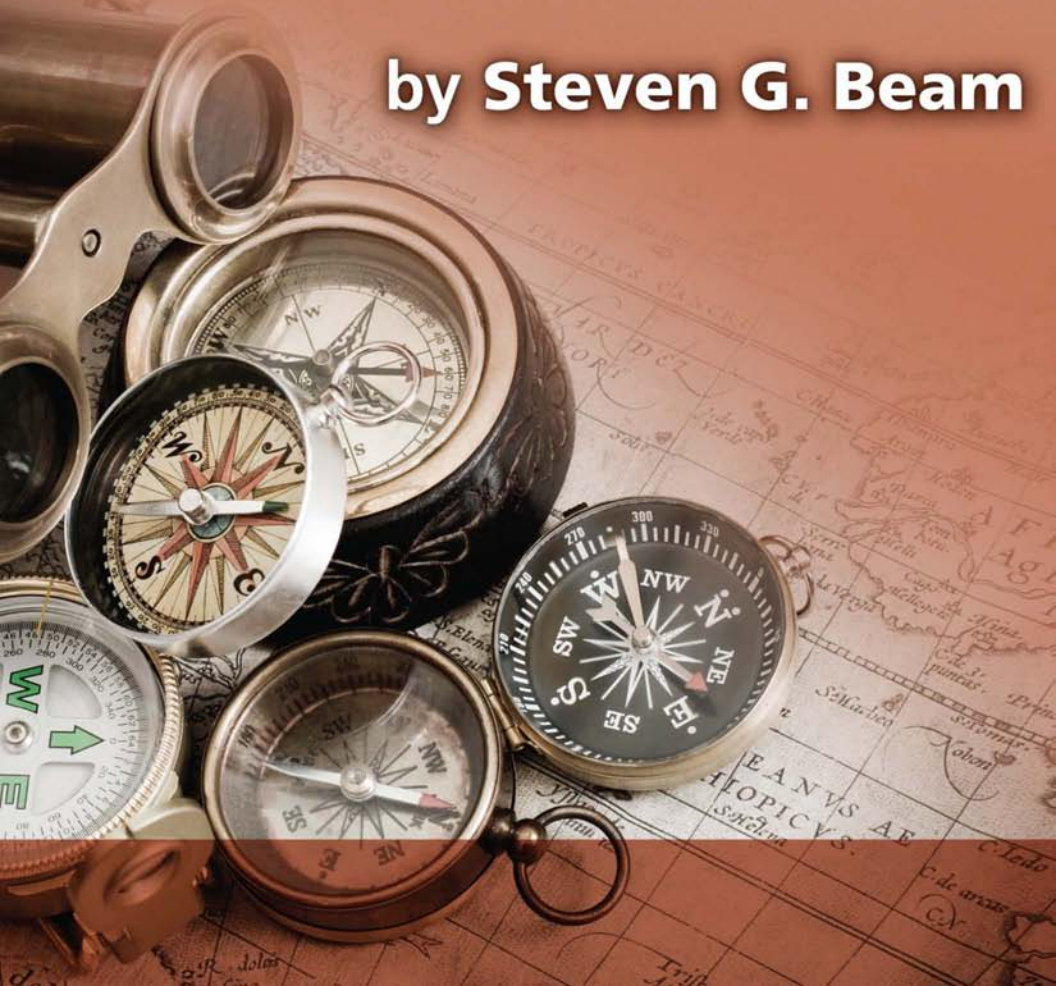


20 / 20 Vision

Why the World Waits for the Gospel
How We Can Reach the World by the Year 2020

by Steven G. Beam



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His latest focus is the establishment of The Foundation of Saint Peter, or “Feed My Lambs.” This is an interdenominational development organization to leverage funding to bring together government, charities, relief agencies, and churches to focus on making macro effects in developing countries.

Steve has also authored these other books:

Dear Scott and Jayne (A Brief History of MVI)

The Jesus Blessing

Walk with Me

Walk with Me a Little Further

Walk with Me a Few More Steps

Walk with Me to Another Horizon

Walk with Me Up the Mountain

20/20 Vision

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Preface

Walk with Me to Another Horizon Another Month of Devotions. Steven G. Beam

Paperback Used: Very Good Condition

Price: \$6.99 USD

Comments: Nice clean book. **APPEARS NEVER READ.**

The words: “appears never read” are highlighted from the original advertisement. During my years at Missionary Ventures I wrote monthly devotional books, sharing different events from my life and putting some devotional slant to them to provoke some divine thoughts. We published these devotional books every year and sent them out freely and generously to our financial partners around the globe.

The problem with this is that sometimes people only cherish what they pay for. A few times people would write and criticize me for something I wrote. I’d respond with something like: “Do you want us to send you your money back?” or “You get what you pay for.” My personal favorite was: “Well, it’s free. What do you expect?”

I’m aware of the same possibilities with this book. It’s meant to stir conversation and dialogue about the supreme purpose of our

lives as Christians. Its purpose is to stir some thoughts about missions, how we are doing and what we should be doing in order to get the job done. And...it’s free! Whenever something is free people think that no one paid the price. Believe me! I paid a hefty price for these thoughts and experiences.

I grew up in the church and in missions and was a minister for ten years and a missionary for almost thirty years. I’ve pastored three churches, worked in missions in almost one hundred countries, and enjoyed great success as well as experienced failures in each one.

There are three challenges

in writing a book like this.

The first is that it is free.

I've also come through personal trauma that I'd not even wish on any enemy. I've been estranged from my children, slandered around the globe, burned out, and suffered several nervous breakdowns. By the grace of God, I've successfully fought and survived cancer (surgery and chemo), heart attacks and heart surgery. I've been abandoned by my closest friends, hated by my co-workers, tormented night and day by mistakes, subjected to ridicule and countless embarrassing moments raising money, felt challenged beyond my strength, and had so many near-death experiences I've lost count. We've been so broke that we were within a day of

The second risk
is that it's written
simply and
reinforced with
experience and
very subjective.

being evicted. The electricity and water were turned off so many times I knew the technicians by their first names. Add to this list, being the brunt of lawsuits, being forsaken, ripped off many times, insulted, robbed and beaten. I've been assaulted with guns, knives and fists. I've been surrounded by military, as well as snakes and angry villagers. I've been broken down in the mountains and remote deserts, stranded at sea in storms, in car collisions with buses, trucks and cement mixers, even crashed in a helicopter, a plane and a few motorcycles. I've come within inches of falling off mountain cliffs, bridges and buildings. I've also been caught in the middle of wars, riots and gunfire in several different countries. I've wrestled the battles of traveling to over 100 countries...bad nights, hard days, long trips, lonely, tired and weary. Yes, the price has been paid for me to speak frankly and directly to you and the church about the subject of "Missions." It's been my life and work and love. May the Lord take these thoughts and help us to complete the job.

It's not meant to be the answer to all questions. It's rather written simply (because I'm simple), and the issues are not explored in depth. Indeed, volumes could be written about these subjects instead of short chapters. Hundreds of refer-

ences could be gathered instead of just sharing a few experiences. I believe, however, that most of these issues will resonate with you and once stated will be quite obvious. It doesn't take a genius to figure out that something isn't working properly, fully or completely.

Do you remember the Danish fairy tale by Hans Christian Anderson called "The Emperor's New Clothes?" It's a hilarious story of the king who was convinced by two scoundrels, Guido and Luigi, that they could produce such a fine new fabric that it was invisible to anyone who was poor, low class, and uneducated. Of course, the king was impressed and paraded his "new clothes" around town. No one wanted to say anything against the king or have anyone think they were poor, low class or uneducated so everyone shouted their acclaim for the new clothes. Until one little boy pointed and shouted in a loud voice: "He has nothing on!" The king, however, refused to listen and continued to parade around town—naked, but proud of it.

My intent is to point to a few general issues that are so blatantly obvious and to stir a few people who aren't afraid to begin the dialogue of why our job hasn't been completed and how we can "get 'er done."

I hope you will agree with me that it's time to explore how we can work together to complete the primary job Jesus gave us before returning to Heaven (Matthew 28:19ff) and the very thing that will usher His return (Matthew 24:14).

The other risk is that it will be interpreted as if I'm angry, bitter or resentful.

I stepped off the pulpit thinking that I'd done a great job of preaching that Sunday morning. So when Louise came up to me to shake my hand I thought she was going to thank me and encourage me. She shocked me when she asked: "Why are you so angry today, Pastor?"

"ANGRY?" I was stunned. "Did I sound angry?"

Later that day I went over the content of my message; it didn't seem angry. But then someone else asked me the same question the following day. I sounded angry, I guess. After some further investigation and some frank answers, I discovered that I sounded angry. It wasn't the content; it was how it was presented. I didn't mean to be harsh, judgmental and intense, but that's the way it came across. A few weeks later I heard a missionary speaker's message. He came across as being very arrogant and, like me, angry. It opened my eyes to how I must sound. I didn't invite him to come back to speak again.

That's the risk of writing a paper like this. It's bound to come across the same way. Then, instead of encouraging the Christian community to work together, it further alienates. The question is how can there be confrontation without exposure. At some point, the problem needs to be exposed. How can any physician heal without seeing and/or understanding the problem? How can a technician x anything without rst seeing the problem? It just can't happen. At some point, the church needs to look at itself, expose its problems and deal with them. The bottom line is that the church and the community of believers aren't working together. Therefore, the church is not doing its job of reaching the world for Christ and fulfilling the "Great Commission." It's time for us to recognize that this is so and to ask, "Why not? Why isn't this happening? Why is it that over half of the people in the world haven't been exposed to the Gospel and yet the Gospel message has been around for almost 2000 years?"

Will you just think with me about this? Let's step out of the middle of the "forest" for a few minutes and begin to analyze what we are doing, how we are doing it, and what is working and what isn't? Let's begin a dialogue on this issue. And, more importantly, let's discover how can we get the job done.

The purpose of this book is to begin that process. For me, it's kind of like managing missionaries. I am one, and my whole life is being and serving missionaries. How do I try to confront someone who has given up everything to work in

an extremely difficult village, to live in incredible sacrificial ways to share the message of Christ to people who don't even want them there? It's the most difficult thing, emotionally, for me to do. Yet, to leave issues without confronting them isn't love. To confront in love...that is the goal.

Every month I'm in a different mission field. My objective is to analyze the missionaries, the situation, and the work and to ensure all are moving to the next level of effectiveness. When there are issues or problems, the goal of my heart is to gain an understanding of what the issues are and to work together to create a plan to resolve the issues for the ultimate success of the mission. That's the objective of this book.

Let's take a look at the issues and begin the discussions so that we can learn what's not working and see what we can do, together, to make them start working. The point is to reach the hurting world with the love and message of Christ. If this is your heart as well, then we can begin there and discuss the issues together. Ready? Let's start with one of my favorite modern parables.

Behold, A Modern Parable

A shoe store owner was going away on a long trip and had given authority and responsibility to his store manager. A week went by when the store manager received a call from the owner. It went like this:

Store Owner: “How many shoes have you sold?”

Store Manager: “Well, you know, we started looking around and the place really needed to be painted and fixed up. So we have spent this entire time fixing up the store and restoring it to a perfect condition so that shoe buyers will come in.”

Store Owner: “That’s wonderful. But how many shoes have you sold?”

Store Manager: “None.”

Phone: “Click!”

One week later the phone rang again and the Store Manager answered the phone:

Store Owner: “How many shoes have you sold?”

Store Manager: “You know what? We really don’t know enough about shoes and how they are made. So we decided that we would spend our time getting to know all about shoes. Now we are learning about soles...real and synthetic materials...some believe in having tongues in their shoes and some don’t...”

Store Owner: “That’s fine. But how many shoes have you sold?”

Store Manager: “None.”

Phone: “Click!”

One week later the phone rang again and the Store Manager answered the call:

Store Owner: “How many shoes have you sold?”

Store Manager: “Well, Boss, we have discovered that we salespeople really don’t know each other very well. So we have spent the entire week fellowshipping and having dinners and sharing with each other. It’s been great. I think that we are all very encouraged and excited about working together now.

Store Owner: “That’s ok. But how many shoes have you sold?”

Store Manager: “None.”

Phone: “Click!”

One week later the phone rang again and the Store Manager answered the call:

Store Owner: “How many shoes have you sold?”

Store Manager: “You won’t believe this but we have discovered that everyone’s shoes are dirty so we have organized a campaign to go door-to-door and community to community telling people to clean up their shoes or else they will be destroyed. Some of the salespeople have been lobbying government agencies and Congress to get the shoe vote...”

Store Owner: “Please, tell me you have sold some shoes. How many shoes have you sold?”

Store Manager: “None.”

Phone: “Click!”

One week later the phone rang again and the Store Manager answered the call:

Store Owner: “How many shoes have you sold?”

Store Manager: “Guess what we have been doing for you? We have been raising money for the new shoe store. This one is too small and old so we are making plans for a much bigger, modern one. We have taken out a loan in your name and are raising pledges to pay it back, of course. But, obviously, you will have to pay it because we believe in YOU. We are all doing our best and pledged as much as we can. What a fellowship hall we are going to have...and wait till you see the educational wing and the activist offices....”

Store Owner: “What, you took out a loan in my name and didn’t even ask me? What do I need a loan for? You are building what? And you expect me to pay it? What...I’ll be back in a few days. You’re dead!”

Store Manager: “You can’t fire me...I’m in charge here!”

Phone: “Click!”

What do you think happened
to the store manager when the
Owner returned? What do you
think God is thinking right now?

Then Jesus came to them and said, "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 am with you always, to the very end of the age." The Owner, in Matthew 28:18-20

Why The World Waits

*“Lay me on an anvil, O God.
Beat me and hammer me into a crowbar.
Let me pry loose old walls.
Let me lift and loosen old foundations.”*

Prayers of Steel

We were walking single file down a path through the jungle in a remote Indian village in Honduras, the first missionaries to ever reach this village.

As we approached the end of the path we could see the thatched roofed huts peeking out of the coconut trees. Our steps quickened as we were eager to reach the remote shining community with the Gospel. Still focused intently on the clearing we were disturbed with a loud ringing...a bicycle bell. Turning around we leaped out of the way just in time for a bicycle to pass with a full load of soft drinks. We could hear the clanging of glass bottles as he passed by.

Sure enough, when we got to the village, one of the bamboo huts had a huge sign advertising the soft drink. How is it, I thought, that this soft drink company could be here? Isn't it amazing that a major soft drink company can be in every city, town and village of the world? When you think about it, isn't it even more amazing that that a product less than 100 years old can be in the entire world? And how is it that the Gospel has been around for almost 2000 years and has only gone to half of the world's population?

Is it possible that we (the
Christian community)
don't have any real ex-
cuses for not fulfilling the
“Great Commission?”

Here's another phenomenon that amazes me: How is it that you can talk to any teenager in China, India or even in the Middle East, and they can give you every detail of Brittany Spears' life and music and yet these same kids cannot tell you who Jesus is and what he did? And, more amazingly, Brittany's "career" is only 10 years old!

Is it possible that we (the Christian community) don't have any real excuses for not fulfilling the "Great Commission?" I'll bet you that if you gathered ten Christian businessmen as a team and gave them a budget of \$100,000,000 (North American missionary organizations used over ten billion dollars last year) with the same assignment of going into the entire world and making sure that everyone knew the Gospel, they would complete the task in less than five years.

So why hasn't it been done? Let me give you the top 20 reasons why and with them, the reasons why it can be done.

The Christian Mission Worldwide Operates Like The Secret Service

“Having a job as a special agent with the United States Secret Service is exciting and it's also hard work. Not only are the men and women of the Secret Service serving the country by helping to protect the nation's leaders and financial systems, but in the process, agents are required to travel a lot and are exposed to people and places that most people can only dream of. Throughout their careers, agents will perform a variety of assignments, both protective and investigative.”

United States Government

We were flying into the Bucharest Otopeni airport in 1992. There was a new look on the streets for the Romanian people. The “Iron Curtain” had fallen. Romanian’s cruel Communist dictator, Nicolae Ceausescu, had been executed by his own militia. The country was free from the tyranny of government oppression for the first time in 72 years.

For 72 years, Romania was imprisoned by the hatred of the freedoms that we enjoy in the west. It’s difficult for us in the West to imagine how difficult it is to understand the pressures of living without the freedom of speech, the freedom of assembly and the freedom of religion. We can meet and worship freely and speak out without fear. But in Romania, especially under the dictatorship of Ceausescu, many people “suddenly disappeared.” They challenged these restrictions privately (even by speaking quietly to a neighbor) or publicly. When a community spy revealed their actions to the secret police, they would disappear a few days later.

We heard story after story about fathers, cousins, uncles and aunts that disappeared without a trace. One daughter cried as she shared that the Romanian Police came to her home one evening to tell them that their father “fell” under a train and was killed. She still remembered hearing from some friends that saw the event. He was actually pushed.

As they shared, each one gave us the same look of despair and fear. Their relative was a “Christian.” Or he refused to spy for the KGB on the other Christians that would meet secretly in the forest. One special day we were actually taken to their hiding place deep in the woods. We had a picnic and many shared how much this place had meant to them, their faith and the “fellowship of suffering” (see Phil. 3) they all endured. Indeed, it was sacred place for them all.

The way it worked for the KGB was that every floor of every apartment complex had an authorized spy that would give weekly reports on who came and went in and out of the building. They reported anything that might seem suspicious. These spies were given special privileges such as higher paying jobs, rent reductions, and extra health care. The more they reported, the more they were rewarded. Secrecy was imperative and no one knew who these spies were. In the end, it was reported that one out of five people worked for the KGB as spies. So, obviously, no one trusted anyone. Everyone was afraid. Everyone was suspicious of everyone. Secrecy ruled. Strangely, this same fear and secrecy rule in Christian missions.

The smell of the dump in Managua, Nicaragua, is very strong and penetrating. Whenever we visit the people living in the dump, the feeding center and school my clothes reek of the intense smoke and odor. About two hundred people live in this dump. They pick through the garbage brought in by the trucks. Each family has the “rights” to pick and recycle the plastic, cardboard, metal or glass. They live in cardboard shacks and their reclaimed treasures are usually stacked around their territory. The place is filthy, and so are the people.

Our missionaries discovered the place and began working with some of the local pastors to develop an outreach to

these people. We started by developing trust and building relationships and then sent a short-term mission team to build a roof to run a feeding program so the kids could get a nutritious meal, instead of the garbage, each day. Then we built a school in one of the nearby churches and invited the families to send their children. Most of them came. The second year, however, only a few showed up. Our staff was perplexed and so were the teachers of the school. After some inquiry we learned that another missionary organization had started a feeding center and school on the other side of the dump. They were offering more...and so we were “outbid.”

When we inquired why they didn’t work with us. They said they did not know we existed...and they had already begun...and couldn’t make any changes now. They had raised the funds and needed the classrooms full.

The obvious question is why didn’t they ask around? Why didn’t they make a survey? Why did they work in isolation and secrecy? Or, why didn’t anyone tell them about our work? So we dropped our duplicating efforts and moved on. The school building now sits empty. It’s a striking example of the inefficiency of “secret service” missions.

I cannot tell you how many times we’ve been working in an area only to find a new church being built across the street, a new feeding center competing to feed the same kids we feed, a new ministry doing exactly what we do, in the same place, with the same people, doing the same thing. We didn’t know and they didn’t know anyone else even existed doing the same thing there! How is it possible to mention a missionary’s name to another missionary and, even though they both work in the same community, neither one of them knows the other or anything about their work?

It’s as if the fear of being discovered as a missionary is so prevalent that no one tells anyone what they are doing. Indeed, many missionaries will not disclose who they are or what they are doing for this same fear that the Romanians feared during Communism. They work, relate, associate in complete anonymity. No wonder most countries think that

missionaries are all Secret Service Agents of the US government. We walk around in disguise. And no one who is not a Christian can believe that we live by “faith.” They all believe that we are supported by the US government and work the same way the spies do in their country.

In fact, most missionaries actually fit the same profile as the secret service agents. They have the same clean-cut look and wear the same clothing: white shirt uniforms. If you want, just watch at any airport and after a while you can pick out the missionaries, the tourists, the business people, etc. We all look the same. We all think we are fooling everyone, including the governments, the authorities, and even the locals. But they all know exactly who we are.

It’s time for us to wake up to the fact that we aren’t fooling anyone...but ourselves. We aren’t God’s secret servants, we are his public examples and on display for all to see (see Matthew 5:14 or I Cor. 4:9).

This type of missionary culture needs to stop, and we must start working openly and with each other! The open exchange of who we are, what we are doing, where we are working must begin so we can work TOGETHER!

Now, we are all aware of the dangers of working and living in intensely antagonistic areas and the need for anonymity, but most of the world isn’t antagonistic towards missions. They are just intensely frustrated.

So, most indigenous Christian leaders have been duped, disappointed and disillusioned by missionaries enough times to stay away and wait to see how the new missionary pans out. Time will tell what the missionary really wants and is going to do or not do...to work together with the local Christian community, or not.

Here is the other dimension of the problem from the world’s perspective. Have you ever been to Nigeria? The biggest industry in Nigeria is, of course, their oil production. The second has to be missions. It is the author’s opinion that it

represents one of the best examples of the complex problem of duplication of ministry and missions in the world. Most of the southern cities of Nigeria have churches on every corner. The dream of every pastor is to be connected to and supported by a foreign missionary organization or church. So, at any spot a good golfer could hit at least four different churches with a nine iron.

One of my most often heard prayer concerns is usually from a pastor who is asking for prayer because another church is moving in next door and they know their services will be drowned out by the noisier denomination. At the same time, further north there are few pastors and churches. The heavy Muslim population has made it difficult, even dangerous, for Christian workers. So why are there so many churches in the south? Because, it's easier and more productive in terms of fund raising. Perhaps you have heard the old joke about the boy looking for coin at night, under a street light. A man joins in the search and finally asks where the coin was lost. The boy responds with something like, "Down the street." When the older man asks why he is looking here the boy responds with, "Because the light is better here." So it is with missions fund raising and with the duplication from the secret service servants around the globe.

This brings us to the second reason why the Gospel still hasn't gone to the entire world: the competition for funding makes it extremely difficult to regulate what funds are used to pursue new areas and those that are used to continue the dependency of existing missions.

So it has been with missions. There are thousands of missionaries, hundreds of missionary organizations (over 700 in the US alone) and very little information is communicated between them. Collaboration and information sharing are rare. There are a few resources out that share a few basic components to missionary work; e.g., North American Handbook for Missionary Agencies published by MARC and the prayer manual by Johnstone called *Operation World: A Day-To-Day Guide to Praying for the World*. Some countries will try to host a yearly conference and/or fellowship of missionaries.

But unity of force is extremely rare.

What would happen if there were a free-flowing information base of all missionary organizations, their missionaries, their work, goals, objectives and methods? What would happen if there were a web site with information about all of these missionaries and their mission? Would it be possible for cooperation? Would there be a risk factor as well? What about the risk factor? What are the “down sides” of free information? Let’s list a few:

- Risk of being identified by the local governments about who we are and what we are doing in their country
- Risk of being identified as a possible mark for terrorism
- Risk of being made accountable for the funds and the work that is being done or not being done
- Risk of being identified as a possible resource from the local Christian community
- Risk of being identified by the other missionary community as a possible partner in missions

Of these five possible risk factors, the first two are the ones we’ll examine at this point. The other three are the reasons why missionaries and missionary agencies don’t publish and fully disclose this information.

So let’s look at the risk of being discovered by the local governments. The fact is that unless the government doesn’t have access to the Internet (and they all do...even Cuba) they know who we are, why we are there and what we are doing! If anyone has the time and Internet access, anyone can find out who anyone else is, especially if they are from the USA. Our identity has already been published in detail. Try it yourself. A few dollars, a few minutes, and you will know as much about anyone as their pastor, their banker, their insurance agent and possibly their physician.

Being identified as a possible target for terrorism is a very real threat and something most missionaries must face daily. But the real threat usually isn't because they are missionaries (most terrorists would prefer they weren't). Rather, it is because they appear to be either government workers or business people with great worth (I'll share more about this later). As a person tied to the government or business, terrorists believe that they will get a good ransom for their hostage. If they turn out to be missionaries (most won't believe it until so much time passes that they are convinced) they will be used and/or abused and then executed, as there is no missionary organization anywhere that will negotiate with terrorists. For one, they don't have the resources and, two, if they did negotiate then every missionary would be put at greater risk. So it's actually better that everyone know that they are missionaries, not government or wealthy business-people.

If the "Risk Factor" isn't the reason 99% of the time, why will a missionary go under cover within the country and among other missionaries? The reason is threefold:

If everyone knew what everyone else was doing, goals, methods, objectives then there would be horizontal accountability. They would have to accomplish and be responsible for their work. It's sad, but true that the lack of accountability has meant that many missionaries (not all, by any means) can do little more than teach a Sunday school class and still tell a big story and live a grand life overseas.

If everyone knew what everyone else was doing then there would be questions as to why there isn't more cooperation. Cooperation is so much more difficult than being on your own. Most missionaries are tenaciously independent (how else could they make such a bold move). It usually goes against every fiber of their character to work in a team environment. They are usually "soloists." However, missions that accomplish macro results over a long period of time need a choir. In the world of building armies for God there are too many "soloists" and not enough "members of the choir."

Working in a team environment necessitates shared leadership and ownership. We will discuss these at greater length later on but sharing ownership is one of the most difficult tasks for any missionary organization and/or missionary. Strong leaders (most missionaries are very strong and independent) don't share control very well. It's too frustrating and slow. The "just get out of my way" mentality doesn't blend well with a team. But, a team can pull ten times more with a tenth of the effort.

The question basically is this: What would happen if missionaries and missionary organizations pooled their information to share, cooperate, and work together for the common goal of the Gospel?

Let me give you an example of a couple of partnerships that are making huge impacts for the Lord:

One of my favorite examples is the cooperative spirit of the Christian Motorcyclists Association. In 1988, the CMA sponsored their first Run for the Son fund raiser. This program has raised millions of dollars for missions at home and abroad, and it has also produced a partnership of ministries accomplishing ten times more together than they could individually. Every year they partner with Missionary Ventures, Campus Crusade's "Jesus Film Project," and Open Doors with Brother Andrew. Together they have placed millions of Bibles in the hands of believers in oppressive countries, provided transportation for 5000 Christian leaders around the globe enabling the planting of churches in unreached areas, and produced and sent the "Jesus Film" so that more millions could hear and see the Gospel for the first time. It has been truly remarkable series of events. We are all amazed each year to hear the reports.

Another amazing example is the Nehemiah Center program in Nicaragua. The Nehemiah Center is a program developed by Joel Heyser, a Reformed Church Missionary and former attorney, who landed in Managua, Nicaragua after the Sandinista Civil War. All but one missionary family remained during the war and many were reluctant to return, so there

were only a handful of missionary organizations. As a result of being a “handful” they all knew each other and these agencies teamed up with Joel to form the Nehemiah Center. This cooperation focused on re-educating the Christian leaders in Nicaragua to a Biblical World View (we will discuss this more later), helping these Christian leaders reach their own people, and giving them tools to implement these programs. These partners were trained in the development of educational programs; e.g., Christian elementary schools, vocational schools and secondary educational programs.

The Nehemiah Center project is comprised of cooperative efforts of missions, people and resources coming together to make something greater for God. This use of resources brings us to the second reason why the Gospel has not gone to the entire globe, and it demonstrates that if we pool our resources, we can accomplish God’s purpose – together

Competition for Mission Dollars

*Emmanuel Children's Home
St. Luke Orphanage and School
Kingdom of God in Christ
Children of God Ministries*

Velcro Signs found in the back room
of an orphanage in Haiti

We had just come back from a short-term mission trip to Guatemala. One of the team members called to ask if I knew the missionaries that were speaking at their church that evening. When I said no, he invited me (rather insisted) that I attend that evening because the missionaries were going to share about their work in Guatemala at the "Tracks"...the very place where we just worked.

So that evening we attended the missions meeting and sat in the congregation. There was an impressive group of two-hundred people to see the slides (this was before computers) and to hear about their work. They shared a great deal about Guatemala and said that they were feeding 5000 children at the railroad tracks that go through the capital, Guatemala City.

Now here was the problem. Sam and I were just in Guatemala City the day beforehand. We both turned to each other and gave the same confused look. Number one, we were just there and, yes, there are lots of squatter shacks that line the railroad tracks. But there probably weren't more than 300 children there, tops. The Second problem was that we operated the only feeding center along the tracks that we knew of. We knew the area quite well and no one has ever mentioned or said that they saw another feeding program. Since we didn't want to duplicate or compete we went up to the missionaries for clarification after the service. They insisted that they were feeding 5000 children there and they were asking the church and congregation to help support them and this work with several thousand dollars every month. The church signed on for support but we didn't. Instead, we did

an investigation and found that they were dropping off a bag of beans and rice every week and one of the women along the tracks was passing it out to the neighbors.

Now, we are all glad when starving people are fed. That's not the point. The point is that the competition for mission dollars has become so difficult and challenging that no one knows what's happening or how much anything really costs. Nor do we know if there is duplication, competition or exaggeration...to say the least. It all seems like a "bottomless pit" of need.

The point is that the competition for mission dollars has become so difficult and challenging that no one knows what's happening or how much anything really costs.

I remember fund raising for a particular mission and one guy shot back with: "Haven't you reached everyone in that city by now?" I will never forget it. He was right. How much money and time and how many missionaries does it take to reach a community? I often feel like missions is like the analogy of the dummy who is asked to turn a light bulb but has to hire four guys to turn the chair while he tightly holds the bulb! Then we come back the next year

with the excuse that the bulb is only part way turned and we need more money to hire more chair turners.

I remember coming back from a trip to Romania and turning on the television set and hearing an evangelist claiming that they were reaching all of Romania with the Gospel. They had recorded over 70,000 conversions due to their television program. And, by the way, they needed another ten million dollars to continue the outreach. I thought to myself, wonder where they are? We saw a few people in each church...but not even close a tenth of their claim.

One time I sat and listened to an evangelist report that during his last crusade in the Ukraine over 80,000 people had come to Christ. He walked out of the meeting with a generous offering of \$23,000. Under further personal investigation I heard from him the story of how these people had “come to Christ.”

Apparently he was given the microphone and stage at a live interview on a television station. He quickly shared the Gospel before the television host could pull the microphone from his grip. He had been told that he had a possible audience of 80,000 people. And, I will never forget his big grin and huge acclamation: “And I claimed them all for Jesus.”

The axiom usually goes like this: the one that does the most fund raising is usually so busy fund raising that they usually have the least amount of real work to show for it...and need to exaggerate the most. The ones that are doing the most missionary work usually are the worst fund raisers, because they are too busy doing the work! They don't have to exaggerate, but they struggle every month to make ends meet. By the way, they usually are very open to personal visitation and accountability, too.

Now what if missionaries worked together so that a mutual plan could be accomplished and their funds pooled to make it happen? What if they shared resources and each could use their gifting for the common good? What if the entire world knew where, what, why and who was doing the work and how much was needed and budgeted. And, what if everyone knew what had come in and what still was needed? Amazingly, we would see ten times the work done, with a tenth of the cost, with everyone fulfilling their gifting (perhaps a lot happier missionaries too).

Don't you feel like the overall missions budget is somewhat like the US government budget? It's a huge number out there that no one really understands (trillions of dollars). No one really understands how much goes where and what it really accomplishes. But every year we are all taxed out of a huge percentage of our income to meet this nebulous bottomless

pit of need, the likes of which no one really knows what is being accomplished. And amazingly, each year the problem(s) that our tax dollars are supposed to meet aren't even close to being met! So the government "asks" for more money.

The answer lies not only in the missionaries but in the support agents; e.g., churches, missionary agencies, foundations, etc. They should require that there be networking, interconnectivity and relational partnerships when and if possible. Do on site research with the missionaries and their partners. What if we worked together to sort out proposals, plans and objectives, and learned what the challenges and difficulties are? What if we expected them, faced them and even embraced them together so that they could be overcome?

The more involved in missions a support group is the more accountability there will be for effective missionary endeavors.

There are so many examples of this; some of my favorites are always medical missions. For some reason, medical hospitals, clinics, specialized medical mission outreach programs are a common denominator in which many agencies and missionaries will partner alongside. It's also expedient for any medical outreach as these tend to be the most expensive and costly mission projects.

All the funds must be
accounted for and
publically displayed
for all to see.

Specifically, though, the best examples of cooperative funding are done on local community levels within Developing Countries. All the funds must be accounted for and publically displayed for all to see. There is greater accountability from their peers and less fear of being accused of any misconduct. And, it's all locally controlled.

Good examples can be witnessed in small villages in Honduras that are desperate for sound education. Working in co-

operation with government, church and community leaders, after school programs, extra-curricular activities, and scholarships can boost the educational standards remarkably. And the incredible advantage is that it costs a tenth to do ten times more! No threat to duplication, only addition and multiplication. Everyone benefits without anyone seizing more... which is why open disclosure is necessary in missions.

Now this is with developmental programs, what about church and cooperative efforts to reach communities for Christ? What would happen if the church could cooperate? Let's explore this for a minute.

3

Little Cooperation

“Every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and every city or household divided against itself will not stand.”

Jesus, Matthew 12:25

If you were in charge of an army and your job was to take over a city, how would you do it?

You would place a unit of soldiers on every corner and begin the process of taking the City for God! Ok, we have a church on every corner in the US. Why is it that most of the city dies and goes to Hell and hasn't even heard the Gospel once?

There are more than enough soldiers. There are more than enough resources. There is more than enough equipment, technology, expertise and manpower. Why, then, isn't it being done?

The problem is that there is very little, if any, cooperation.

In the author's opinion, the second greatest blessing that the Billy Graham Crusades brought to the world was that a cooperative spirit interrupted the individualist rhythm of the churches in a community. These crusades brought otherwise competitive churches and Christian leaders together for one common goal. For a few evenings, they dropped their denominational wardrobes and all wore the same color, had the same purpose, and worked together for one objective. However, within a few days all returned back to normal, and they returned to their denominational garb.

Why?

Because the religious machinery (the church) necessitates absolute focus upon itself in order to perpetuate its existence. If you don't believe this, examine the budget of your local church. How much is budgeted for operating expenses, buildings, maintenance, service of debt, and most important-

ly for mission, evangelism and outreach? Just like our own checkbooks, what we spend our money on is where our heart is and a true test of our priorities (see Matthew 6:24).

Now, here's a thought. What would happen if we shared church buildings? Doesn't it seem strange that we have a multi-million dollar facility sitting empty and unused all

Because the religious machinery (the church) necessitates absolute focus upon itself in order to perpetuate its existence.

but a few hours on Sunday morning? And it's not uncommon to drive down a major road in any city and see a magnificent structure on every corner. They consume billions of dollars each year for construction, maintenance and for "show." What if ten congregations went together and built one facility and shared it? What would happen?

For one thing, their construction and maintenance costs would be reduced to ten percent of what they were. So instead of spending 90% of their budget on a building they could spend these resources on further outreach, evangelism, missions and...being the kingdom of God in our lost world. Their emphasis would be on the product rather than the packaging, the next step to world evangelization.

Poverty sometimes has advantages. I ran across a small church in the Kalrayan Hills in south India. It was a small village of Coolies that lived in mud hut homes with dirt floors and thatched roofs. In this particular village there was one church building made of mud and straw. Since the village was so poor and the persecution of Christians so strong they were only allowed one church in the village. So all the different denominations shared it, each one having a day for their own worship and programs. It might have seemed like a hardship but in time the congregations grew to be united and their fellowship rich. Over time they focused on their mutual desire to see everyone in the village hear the Gospel. So they

joined in prayer, fellowship and this one all-encompassing focus. In time, most of the village heard and responded to the Gospel. The different congregations prospered and grew. In time, land was donated and the different congregations soon had their own church buildings. Now, if you were to go to the village you would find many church buildings, but over the years, the desire to reach the village has been lost and so have most of the villagers.

It seems that once each congregation had land, a building and place of their own, they were content and then the object of their attention was on the package over the product. Let's explore this for a minute.

Focus on the Package Instead of the Product

Many hands make light work.

Would ye both eat your cake and have your cake?

Haste makes waste

The nearer the church, the further from God.

John Haywood (1497 – 1580)

(Escaped persecution because he was a different denomination)

“Do you have a Christian Church anywhere?” The missionary asked me as we parted.

“Of course, I answered, they are all Christian. Just pick one.”

“No, a CHRISTIAN Church.” He shot back.

“What do you mean a Christian church? They are all Christian.” I asked.

“No, the denomination: “Christian.” He explained.

“Oh, well, you’ll have to look that one up in the Yellow Pages.” I didn’t know.

A potential sponsor visited Central America with me and wanted to help build churches. After a long visit amongst several countries he observed that all the churches we visited (Evangelical) didn’t have crosses on the outside of the church building. Many had crosses displayed inside the church but not on the church. So he asked why.

We explained that in Latino Cultures usually the Catholic churches have crosses on the outside and so the Protestant churches don’t. It distinguished the two. He insisted that this was wrong and that we needed to change this and that he wouldn’t support any church that didn’t have a cross displayed on the outside.

Both my brother and I smiled at the thought of changing this

cultural expression. He didn't help and we were not disappointed. For one, we understood the problem, but who can change these things? And, more importantly, what does it matter?

Can you imagine a well known brand of cola selling their product under ten thousand brands, labels, names, expressions, logos, and even colors?

There can be many things said about this but one thing is for sure, that for many cultural Christians the outside of the package is more important than the inside. The outside matters more than the inside. It is more important to wear a cross on the outside than on the inside. In other words, the package is more important than the product.

Can you imagine a well known brand of cola selling their product under ten thousand brands, labels, names, expressions, logos, and even colors? It would be the worst marketing strategy in the world. Yet, we in the church have done this with the simple "product" that is Jesus!

The Gospel is really quite simple:

"For God so loved the world..." You know it and so do I. We've memorized it from Sunday School days.

Ok, we can all agree (for the most part) on this but where, then, do we go from here? The Great Commission tells us we should be, "...teaching them all I have commanded you..." Matthew 28:19

What follows?

Is it possible to simplify this so that it is also the same worldwide?

Ah, what part of this is disposable package and what part is really product? That's the problem. With a cola, we can open the bottle or can and drink the product and throw away the package. The question is this: Is it possible to simplify, not reduce or de-value, but to make simple the tenants of the faith so that all can agree and work together as a team to get the job done (reaching everyone with the Gospel)? It is possible to bring this message to the entire world, giving all an opportunity to accept or reject, to grow in their faith with a local group of other believers, to provide a venue for all to say: "yes" or "no?"

Of course, it is possible, but not probable. Why?

Because the package has become the product. We have swapped the two.

When I was 16 I thought I knew everything. So my father and I would argue about many theological issues. One day he got a bit tired of my constant argumentative demeanor, especially at the dinner table. So he leaned over and asked if my stance (I don't remember what it was) was worth dying for? When I told him no, he inquired as to why I was "killing" him over it?

The easiest way to discern what is package and what is product is what is really worth dying for?

There was a lot of wisdom in that quip. The easiest way to discern what is package and what is product is what is really worth dying for?

One of the great privileges of my life has been working with the Persecuted Church. It is a humbling experience to worship, fellowship, and learn from these great people of God. The rest of the church needs to study under these saints.

It is a most curious thing. The first thing that strikes me whenever I'm with these mighty men and women of God is that they have discerned the difference between what is important and what isn't. They have discovered that when there is great suffering, pain and stress that the "fellowship of sharing in His suffering" (see Phil. 3:10) is more important than denominational or minor theological issues. They have learned that their first priority is to follow Christ in His sufferings and to encourage the others in their sufferings.

I have discovered such incredible blessing, anointing and power in their praise, their walk with the Lord and their priority of spreading the Gospel. Have you ever wondered why it is that the fastest growing church isn't in free societies (e.g., USA, Canada or Europe) but in nations that are persecuting and torturing Christians for their faith? It is not just because they are saints (they are) but because they have simplified their focus on Christ and Christ crucified and Christ resurrected and the sharing of this good news to everyone! There is only the focus on the product. There isn't time, money or energy to focus on the package.

When we think about it, theological discussions, controversies, contentions, and distinctions are actually a "luxury" of the rich and a diversion from the product. When a person is starving do they care about the package? No, they want to eat the product. The rich worry about the package, whether it's carpeted, color-coded, and padded.

Indeed, I remember visiting a Vietnamese village underground church that was heavily persecuted by the government. For some reason the subject of "end times" came up in our conversation. I asked them their theological viewpoint concerning the North American popular Pre-Millennialism (basically, that the church would be raptured before the persecution of the devil). They explained to me that this was North American theology. For them, how could it get any worse? They had already suffered terribly (I wouldn't begin to describe the cruelty of these governments to Christians. It is so terrible.). The packaging of the Gospel into a neat environment of safety, prosperity, and affluence is North American.

I remember meeting a group of simple sherman on the banks of a small Caribbean nation. They asked me if I knew a “prosperity” preacher from my area. I did know him and heard that he had crashed his plane upon returning from a mission trip to this island. He wasn’t hurt but his plane was totaled. The sherman looked to heaven and gave thanks.

I asked whether they were grateful that he wasn’t hurt or whether it was because he wouldn’t be returning soon. They smiled and said, “Both!”

It was hard enough to constantly combat the religious teachings of the holiness churches that first came to the island. These groups insisted that everyone dress like them (women wearing hats, going to church every night, and forfeiting all sports, to mention just a few requirements). Now they had to fight the concepts that the fruit of Christian life was owning more things...the pressures were already too great.

Today, if you were to go to most Caribbean islands you will find many churches, each claiming they have the truth and the way and the life. Each one is superior for some reason or the other. Yet, amazingly, in a limited space and number of people, most of the island still hasn’t heard the Gospel!

Missionaries/evangelists visit these islands every winter (for some reason the evangelists feel directed by the Lord to go to the Caribbean in the winter and not the summer)! And they...are more interested in making sure that their package is displayed than sharing the product.

An even better example of product neglect and package emphasis can be seen in most cities, towns and villages in North America. Nowhere is the luxury of packaging more evident. How is it possible that the simple message of Christ and the Gospel is so divided? There can be 2000 churches and denominations in one location, each proclaiming to have the “Truth, the life and the Way.” Each one in bitter competition and contrast to the other. And at the same time, most of the people in their neighborhood go to hell?

Behold Another Modern Parable:

A man was walking down the beach when he spotted a child screaming for help off in the distance. He realized the swimmer had been caught in the undertow of the surf and washed out to sea. In a few moments, the poor soul would drown. So the man jumped into a nearby rowboat and paddled out to the drowning child.

The family was overjoyed when he came in with their child and everyone applauded the rescue. The press published his heroic efforts and subsequent articles featured stories of the deadly undertow of the beaches in the area. Soon, patrols of lifeguards began to walk up and down the beach looking for the lost.

They enjoyed the fellowship and soon developed a club called the “Lifesavers.” They gathered regularly for fun, instruction and planning. Soon someone suggested they erect a building as a mission station for a clinic, fellowship and education. Huge fundraising efforts began, and in less than a year they had a building and offered classes on how to rescue the perishing, CPR, the proper code of conduct for a lifesaver, etc.

After a few years, however, some of the people began to get frustrated that the proper methods weren’t being taught and that the purpose of the club had been diluted with too much fellowship and activities aside from life saving. So they developed another club down the beach, and the process started over again... this time with a slightly different name, organizational chart and, of course, the true way to care for the lost. And of course, this club building was bigger and better than the other one.

Now it’s been over 2000 years since that first famous lifesaving event. There are millions of rescue mission centers lining the beach of the treacherous waters where so many people are caught and pulled out to sea. They scream for help but, ironically, most of them drown. Let’s talk about this priority for a minute?

5

Confused Priority

The checkbook register will tell more about a person's life than any autobiography.

Pastor Bill Miller

What is your church's budget? Do you know where and how the funds are being used? Do you know what percentage is being used for the product, the package and/or the maintenance of the package?

Early in my ministry years I was part of a team of ten associate pastors in a large church. The senior pastor was the visionary, fund raiser, communicator and puppeteer for the growing congregation. Through a series of circumstances he was led to take another church in a distant city. The new pastor was overwhelmed with the responsibility and his gifting didn't match his predecessor. It was an extremely difficult time and the church began to feel the stress. So he met with the elders and decided to make cuts in the staff. His first two cuts were the ministers of evangelism and missions, Phil and me.

Now think with me for a minute. I was in charge of recruiting and overseeing new members and the missions program of the church. My friend, Phil, was in charge of evangelism and outreach on the local level. I was leading mission teams and recruiting workers into the world harvest. Most of whom, came back on fire for the Gospel and were Phil's best recruits for local evangelism.

Phil was training and sending out teams under the Evangelism Explosion program. We were both seeing many members of the congregation active in "selling" and many new people coming to Christ. Yet, we were the first to be "let go."

Slowly these two programs dissipated and only "management" staff and programs remained. The congregation slow-

ly did the same. From a congregation of a few thousand it slowly dwindled down to a few hundred. Now, there were several other factors and it can't be simplified but if you ran a business and things were tough what would you do? The obvious answer would be to boost sales (sure, streamline expenses) but the incredible mystery for many Christian leaders is that they are puzzled that their churches aren't growing, expanding and experiencing the natural tendency of any living organism: Growth!

In fact, most are shrinking, declining and leaving "golden" museums behind for the faithful few to pay off outrageous (I'll speak to this later) mortgages. They will run from one new program to another. Hoping that becoming a "seeker" church or changing their worship to a loud "contemporary" chant of singing the same few words over and over again will bring in new people eager for this spiritual experience.

One day, while in Seminary, I visited the fastest growing church in our town. Amazingly, it wasn't of the denomination that basically "ruled" the community and had its Bible School and headquarters there. It was another mainline denomination that didn't believe in having instruments at all in the worship service. And this was during the early 70's when the "Pop" Christian Culture was just beginning and there was a huge demand for it in most Christian youth circles.

I sat in the church and watched as several new members were being introduced and welcomed. The message was mundane. The songs were sung out of old hymnbooks without piano or organ background to help. The lady next to me spoiled the melody so badly I just stood there in silence. It was hard to take. Yet this was the fastest growing church in the city. Why? I kept wondering why?

There was absolutely nothing about it that was appealing or that would ever attract me to coming back. At the end of the service, however, came the answer. The pastor asked for all the "Visiting Team Leaders" to meet him in his office after the service.

“Visiting Team Leaders?” So I asked what this was. The church sent out teams of people every evening and on Saturdays to visit, invite and witness. They had devised their own “sales” force.

Have you ever wondered what really “sells” people to the church? Was it the package? Or is it the product? If it’s the product then all we have to do is give people a taste and they will buy it! Jesus is enough by Himself!

The cigarette manufacturers know this. The cola manufacturers know this, and so they give people a free taste. That’s all it takes. As a small boy someone bought me a cola. I’ve been hooked ever since. How about you?

How about the real, real thing? Jesus. Does He need golden packaging to get people to buy into Him? Does Jesus need help from our world to make Him “go down better?” I should hope not. We only need to present him and He is more than able to do the rest.

Jesus is enough
by Himself!

Jesus alone is enough. Jesus alone is the answer. Jesus alone is the product. Jesus alone is what the world is hungry for. Forget the packaging. Throw it away like the disposable bottle or package the cola comes in. It’s Jesus!

So what then is our priority? It is offering the lost world a “taste” of the Savior! It is sending forth announcers, presenters, displayers, witnesses, tellers of the Gospel story. Simply, it is to show Christ to the world. Let them see HIM and let the Holy Spirit work.

Sounds simple, doesn’t it? It is.

So why is the package still the priority? It’s called “Ownership.” Let’s talk about this for a minute.

6

Ownership and Control

“Lawsuit asks, ‘Who owns this church?’

A minister, who has since left, signed a contract to sell Berean Baptist. Elders say they never agreed. Now a businessman says the church is rightfully his.”

Headlines from the *Brandon Times*,
published October 14, 2005

“**W**ho really owns the church?” We grew up in a small town church. It was a lovely fellowship and the simplicity of the preaching, worship and organizational structure really attracted my family. It was what we needed as a family at that time of our lives. God knew this and planted us two doors down from it. So, we were there whenever the doors were open. In fact, the pastor’s son was my best friend and our families got together often. We lived on one side of the church and the humble parsonage was on the other side of the church. It was great fun. Our whole family was saved during this time. So it was difficult to take the news that this pastor and his family had been “called” to pastor another church quite a distance away.

After we said goodbye, the church (us included) began to pray for his replacement. Within a year, another pastor was selected and plans were being made for his arrival. A committee was selected to prepare the modest parsonage for the new pastoral family. My mother was asked to be on the committee, and because of our love for the previous pastor and his family decided to try to do something special with the old parsonage. She recommended new paint, carpet and kitchen remodeling. One of the other committee members, though, fought it with all his might. He insisted that the church couldn’t afford it. Then my mother offered to pay for it. So he shot back that every pastor should live humbly... and cussed her out.

I remember how much it hurt her and, from that day onward, she never took another leadership position in the church. As time went on, I came to know this man and discovered that

he was what is often called the “Church Boss.” A Church Boss is someone who has taken ownership of a ministry, church or mission and firmly believes that he or she is the divine guardian of the welfare of the fellowship. Most pastors understand that, if they want something passed or approved, it must first be cleared by the Church Boss. Everyone will look to this person for the head nod...one way or the other. And if the Church Boss is bucked, he will threaten to take his proverbial marbles and go or to make so much trouble that the pastor will leave. Most major decisions are made from the Church Boss’s kitchen table, so to speak.

Don’t buck these people, they are control freaks. They are intimidators. They firmly believe that they are God’s ambassadors. They know how to get things done, sway the board, manipulate the committee and get their “will be done.” A

If they lose their place
or position they will no
longer be God’s
ambassadors to
make sure things are
done right!

smart Christian leader will identify them quickly and make friends; learning how to work within this overt or subversive structure. If they don’t, they won’t last long. After a number of years, these Church Bosses will have so much control that their insecurity will grow if new people are brought into the governing equation.

If they lose their place or position they will no longer be God’s ambassadors to make sure things are done right!

And as a result, these churches will grow, then decline (as new people don’t like con ict), then shrink...then a new pastor will be introduced...then the church will grow...then con ict...then shrink...then the cycle starts over again. That’s one of the reasons why churches stay small...and the lost aren’t found...and they become centers for seniors who believe it’s their church.

We smile at this but the issue of ownership is important. It is the golden rule. Whoever has the gold... rules. A captain may run the ship but if he doesn't own it, he will eventually walk the plank. As long as the owners are happy, he stays. When he/she no longer pleases the owners, they are history.

...ownership and control are the key issue for the Gospel not going to the ends of the earth.

Whether the owners are community or denominational, local or foreign, ownership and control are the key issue for the Gospel not going to the ends of the earth.

Because, when men rule for a day, it's for the Lord. When men/women rule for many years, it's for their ego, pride and position. Read John 11 and the decision of the Jewish leaders to get rid of Jesus. Their decision to terminate Jesus was based upon this very issue of ownership and control:

Therefore many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary, and had seen what Jesus did, put their faith in him. But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done. Then the chief priests and the Pharisees called a meeting of the Sanhedrin. "What are we accomplishing?" they asked. "Here is this man performing many miraculous signs. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and then the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation" ...So from that day on they plotted to take his life (John 11:45-48, 53).

Notice, they spoke saying OUR place and OUR nation. They were afraid of losing that which they had taken from God. It was never theirs. They assumed the ownership. They became the protectors of the faith, the temple and the nation. All along it was God's. It was never theirs. But know this, when there is conflict it will have its roots in ownership and control...and money.

We were helping a fledgling church planting operation in Uganda several years ago. It was a humble beginning with one dynamic leader and a handful of very poor pastors that had huddled together for strength and encouragement. Our mission teams loved visiting this ministry. It was a breath of fresh air to see how no one claimed anything for themselves but that all shared beautifully with each other. Love and the common goal of winning as many people to Christ was each day's objective.

As you can imagine, with a little financial fuel (we'll talk more about money and the church later) these handful of churches started a Bible school and began to train more pastors. Within a few years, they grew to almost 40 churches. Most of these met under trees and were simple little fellowships with new believers being disciplined by the Bible School graduate. Mission teams would go to help evangelize the area and get things rolling. It was pure delight for everyone.

After 20 more churches were planted these pastors prayed and believed God for a hundred. This small fellowship soon began to double every year, and within a few more years they were planting a new church every week and had dreams of setting up a new church every day. We all believed it as well...we could see it happening before our very eyes.

Then one day an American pastor visited the ministry. He was an evangelist himself and was so enamored by this work that he verbally promised the leadership that he would raise and send one million dollars to help them expand. They believed him. Why wouldn't they? Everyone in the poorest parts of the world firmly believes that every American walks around with briefcases full of money and that we are all millionaires. I guess compared to those who live in grass houses, dirt floors and are forced to scavenge for rice each day...we are "millionaires."

But the point is he promised the million dollars. To these pastors that is the equivalent of a billion to us. It is unbelievable. It is unfathomable. It would set them up for life... forever. It would be impossible to use it all...let alone en-

vision it. Unfortunately, the promise was given, understood and believed by these pastors.

When I heard about it, I groaned. I knew instantly it was the seed that would ruin this precious mission. It was directly from the pit of Hell. So I went to the pastor and asked for the money...because the pastors would be asking us for it. If we didn't present it, they would believe that we took it for ourselves.

When I confronted him, he admitted that he was just so moved and intended to ask some friends of his to help him raise the money. That he knew some people who knew some people that knew some professional baseball players who might be able to help. It was terrible. So I asked him if they could at least come up with \$20,000 thinking that we might be able to rescue the relationship and the mission by doing something. He agreed...but the damage was done.

Within six months we received an official letter from these pastors telling us that they would no longer work with us. That any funds coming to them would come directly to them and they would provide banking information to all donors for "direct" deposit and that no more designated giving would transpire. They would determine themselves how to use the funds. As you can imagine, this mighty force for God was toppled in a matter of weeks. Conflict, fighting, bitterness, anger and separation now permeated the once quiet, peaceful group of humble pastors that we once knew....and of course, the church planting stopped or was just limited to a local handful that have done their best to go on in spite of all the hardships,

Here is the test for your fellowship: How much joyful conversation is carried on as a result of people being saved and disciplined and more people being added to the church?

hostilities and divisions. In the words of one of their leaders “The joy has been ripped from our hearts as we spend most of our time together discussing the conflict against each other rather than the victory of new souls won and new churches being planted.”

Here is the test for your fellowship: How much joyful conversation is carried on as a result of people being saved and disciplined and more people being added to the church?

How much conversation is being carried on about the current conflict issues, the current gossip or the topic of the day?

Our family is much the same. When new little ones are born into the family we all rejoice. Weddings, births, children, youth bring life into the family. Who cares about a new boat, car, or house? They only bring jealousy or resentment into the family. Yes, we are glad when someone prospers but most of us would be happier with more family time around the bar-b-que and less focus about things.

True joy isn't found in an accumulation of things but in the love and care we have with each other in the Lord. We preach this from the pulpit but then build huge empires that no one can maintain or pay for ten years later. The next generation will only see them as museums or monuments to men's egos.

Now what would happen if we invested the same amount of energy into something that built up people? Even going so far as to let go of our control of the church and the Christian leader's control of the pulpit? This would lead us to the seventh reason why the Gospel has been tightly boxed. It's time to let it out. Are you with me? Read on...

Professionalism and Indigenous Missionaries

"It is time to open the windows of the Church to let in some fresh air."

Pope John Paul XXIII

Pope John Paul XXIII surprised the world three months after his election in January of 1959 with the announcement that he would reconvene the First Vatican Council (interrupted 100 years previously by the invasion of Rome by the Italian Unification Army). This council didn't make any doctrinal changes but just as significantly decided to change the language of Mass to the language of the people. No longer would the church continue the practice of using only Latin as the "holy" language of the scriptures and liturgy. Of course, hardly anyone worldwide spoke or understood this dead language and so the Church leaders held absolute control. Whoever speaks for God is God...

For over a thousand years the priesthood of the Catholic Church controlled the thought and theology of the church. It stood as the official spokesperson of God, the Bible and the Church. It was supreme in word, policy and polity of the Church. Now the congregation was allowed and encouraged to read the Bible themselves. The door was opened for lay participation in Christianity.

It's time to open
the door for lay
participation in
missions.

It's time to open the door for lay participation in missions. It will have the same effect.

It was January of 1982 when I approached fifteen people to go with me to Guatemala for a short-term mission trip to work in a squatter camp named the "Fourth of February," after the 1976 earthquake that created the refugees. The team was comprised of average people who weren't profession-

ally trained or educated in any Seminary or Bible School. Yet, after several short preparation classes the team was able to witness, work and win hundreds of people to Christ in this camp. At the end of the week, the church was strengthened and encouraged. The team left with a great sense of accomplishment and joy.

Indeed, when the report came back the following Sunday evening the entire sending congregation was moved to tears of joy and a sense of participating with God in His great Kingdom work. For the first time, many of the team members actually were used to bring someone else to Christ. They felt the Lord speak through them and use them in special ways to reach out to the poor and destitute. It changed the “Fourth of February” camp. It changed us. And, it changed the sending church. God was in this. It was the beginning wave of a God movement to activate everyone into missions. It was also the movement that propelled the establishment of Missionary Ventures that I pioneered and directed for 28 years.

I remember, though, the initial conflict that was also part of those days. It came from, of all sources, other missionaries, teachers and the “professionals” in the missions business. Their complaints were usually that these groups were untrained, ill-equipped and poorly focused. That they interrupted their work and many times actually interfered and destroyed their work of many years. The honest truth was that they sometimes did. As I mentioned earlier one exaggerated promise from an unwise pastor ruined an entire mission operation that some had worked with for ten years, and we all grieved.

At the same time, it was also quite evident that God was using the majority of these people in strategic ways. The point wasn't to completely eliminate short-term mission teams but to better prepare them, to better focus their efforts and to work as much as possible with the existing missionary leadership so that the team's ministry could be one link in a long chain of events. As a result, mission teams were formed around the globe. Christians were being activated everywhere.

Today, it's very common for churches in North America to have their own missions committee or board. They might have a missions budget and even their own missions pastor sending out mission teams around the globe. A local church in our community sent out over 50 mission teams last year. The movement has become an essential part of many growing churches. Pastors are realizing that their role isn't so much the performer as the orchestra leader enabling others to perform...even to the ends of the earth.

It has also multiplied the mission force with short- and long-term missionaries. It has multiplied the sending agencies, and the work force has been duplicated worldwide. In fact, the movement has taken root in Third World countries and many of the larger churches are sending mission teams to neighboring countries. They all are discovering the impact and excitement of participating with God in the Great Commission. It has brought new life in the local church and in world missions.

At the same time there was another movement afoot in the world and that was the development of indigenous missions: training and enabling Christian leaders within the very countries where we were working. The concept of "Indigenous Missions" was coined by a few missionary groups like Missionary Aid that sought to raise support for the enablement of these Christian leaders to be trained and sent out to work amongst their own people. It was this second movement that propelled Missionary Ventures for 28 years, and now it is the very fabric of every mission, denomination and agency.

Now what would happen
if this were to jump to
another level...?

Now what would happen if this were to jump to another level—the level where the professional missionary no longer came from North America or from Europe but from the developing world?

The same developing world that is raising, training and sending their own people to reach their own nation is ready to be trained and sent out to reach the world.

I was speaking at a 700-member church in Amatitlan, Guatemala, a few years ago. For some reason, I felt impressed to share this concept and challenged the congregation to begin thinking and praying about being a mission-sending church instead of a mission-receiving church. At the end of the service I asked for if there was anyone who had secretly been led by the Lord to become missionaries to a foreign land. To my surprise (and everyone else) over 30 people came forward for prayer. It surprised the pastor and the missionaries sitting in the service.

For some reason, we have immortalized the North American or European missionary and forgotten that this Great Commission was intended for all of God's people, worldwide. It is time open the door to the church worldwide to recruit, train and send forth missionaries to where ever the Lord directs.

We will discover a huge army for God that will be able to live and work amongst the people of the world. They will not need thousands of dollars every month to survive. They will be able to live and meld with the people where they are called to be a witness. Indeed, if the world is going to be reached, it will not be done by the handful of missionaries now being sent out, but by training and sending a force of millions from the developing world. They will get the job done.

Our job is to open the door for this possibility, encourage it, assist in the training and facilitate in the sending. While we are here, for one minute let's address the one issue that could and will stop this movement; the use of the North American system of educating Christian leaders.

8

Professionalism and the North American Educational Paradigm

It will take you seven years to go through Bible school and Seminary and it will take you seven years to get over it.

Marie Strong (Bible Teacher)

A luxury once tasted becomes a necessity.

Benjamin Franklin

I went through four years of undergraduate study for a BA in Theology. Three years later, I received a Masters of Divinity and five years later a Doctorate of Theology. And, I don't regret one day of it. It was a tremendous opportunity for intellectual growth, research and questioning. It was a time for exploring and interviewing. Every day was filled with old and new discoveries. I highly recommend it...if you have the time, energy, money and the luxury!

But for most of the world this is just that...a luxury.

Only the wealthy have the luxury of arguing, debating and separating over such issues as "predestination." The rest of the world is starving, and those with the food cannot unite to feed them. They are divided over concepts that can only be explained by the most theologically enlightened minds of the world. Yet, these issues have polarized Protestant denominations for centuries. On one side of the street one church claims to have the truth, and on the other side of the street, another church also claims to have the truth. Both are competing for the same people from the same neighborhood. It's ironic that this theological teaching handed down by John Calvin in the 16th Century to bring peace to a people who were worried about their salvation has become a weapon to divide the church.

But for most of the
world this is...
a luxury.

I remember walking through a squatter camp in Guatemala with a good Presbyterian friend of mine. He was trying to sort out God's plan in all of this. He could see the suffering of the people, the starvation, and the deplorable diseases that afflicted every family...to say nothing of the stench. I reminded him that I didn't know how much God had to do with this but I knew that God had showed it to us...to do something about it.

"But it must be God's will," he shot back.

"Is that an excuse to do nothing?" I asked.

How much education is really needed to do the job, anyway?

He didn't answer. As we walked along I asked him if these people cared about whether or not their help came from a Wesleyan Armenian or from a Calvinist. We both laughed. They wouldn't know the difference and wouldn't care.

Would a drowning man care if his rescuer were Presbyterian or Methodist, Baptist or Pentecostal? No, but for some reason it matters so much to the rescuers that it has divided and weakened the rescue mission.

How much education is really needed to do the job, anyway?

One of the most interesting discoveries in missions is learning that most of the world doesn't think like us, doesn't learn like us and doesn't even value what we value. For example, most of the world is taught to learn by repetition. Classroom learning is a matter of presenting information and reciting it over and over. That is why it is easier for these people to learn languages. It's not uncommon for an African to speak four or five languages, an Asian two or three, a European at least two, but an American, only one. Our curriculum is built on problem-solving and developing thinking patterns.

Its purpose is to provide training for the gathering of information in order to make decisions, solve problems, or something or, better, to create and build.

I remember homework assignments from our years of studying at Bombay International Elementary School were filled with poetry to memorize and recite the next day. When we returned to the U.S., I was surprised (and delighted) to learn that this wasn't a part of the homework. Rather we were given problems to solve and multiple choice worksheets. But I didn't realize how much of a barrier this would be in curriculum development until twenty years later.

When the "Iron Curtain" fell in the former Soviet Union and the doors to the world were being swung upon, we were one of the first to enter. Those were exciting days of visiting and learning about Russians. We stayed in their homes and walked and worked side by side with them. We discovered, much to our surprise, that they were brought up to fear Americans. I shared how every elementary school had regular drills to practice for the time when the Soviet Union was going to drop bombs on our heads. We laughed when they told us they went through the same practice in anticipation of being rained down with bombs from America. Here we were, now sipping tea together. It was a marvelous exchange.

Later that week, one of the pastors discussed with us the development of a special school to train up more pastors and evangelists. There was a great deal of missions work but not much leadership development in his area. So we agreed to work towards this objective, and within a few months we had some of the best theologians and Bible teachers from America in Russia to work out a curriculum with these pastors. They came back and drew up a seven-year program, much like the one that is the standard across denominational lines in North America. The same package was drawn up with just a few changes to include more teaching about the Russian Orthodox Church. I was actually impressed and agreed. After all, I was a product of this same institutional package.

When we presented the curriculum to the church in Russia, they balked. They needed leaders now...not in seven years. The swelling churches were already “killing” the handful of trained leaders they had. In fact, most of the new churches just enlisted the first person who was saved to be their leader. There were very few pastors and teachers, and many people were falling away because of lack of follow-up.

And they insisted most of the students would already have an equivalent of a college degree. What could we provide for them that would train pastors in one year? We didn't have anything or anyone to do the job. That very week I had a visitor from across town. Norm Flagg came into my office. He had heard about our need and challenge. He sat down in my office and looked me straight in the eye and said, “I'll go to Russia, develop a one year curriculum, oversee the program, and teach. But, you have to promise to stay out of my way.”

At first, I was a bit insulted but desperation has a way of humbling anyone. And, it all seemed like the Lord (He often asks me to get out of His way). I agreed, and Rev. Norm and Connie Flagg flew to Russia and started the school. They worked with the Christian leaders in Russia, compiled the essential teachings that were needed, brought lessons from their background and, most importantly, gave practical instruction about praying, worship, witnessing and outreach.

They only asked that we support the school and come for the graduation. That year we participated in the graduation and sent out twenty-nine new pastors and evangelists. Many of these went to existing churches in the region. Some actually stayed at the mother church to help with the growing congregation.

Ten years later, in Moscow, I visited one of the graduates who had met and married another student from that same class (so other God events happened that year, as well). He was working for the main office of the denomination. I shall never forget his comment about the school. He shared that there were many Bible schools in Russia but that he doesn't

know of one that has had as much of an impact as the one Norm and Connie brought. When I asked why it was having such an impact, he remarked that it “ t” the needs, the students and the work of missions in Russia. It was like a tailor made suit. He also shared that it had the highest percentage of graduates that are still in ministry today in Russia, Ukraine and Finland.

The problem with North American curriculum is that it is tailor-made for North America and, I’m sorry, with Bible Schools, one size does not t all. We must fashion our curriculum, methods, and training to t the level and educational abilities of the people we are working with.

Cookie-cutter Bible schools fashioned from North American standards will kill the growth of the Gospel worldwide. It has and will continue to stunt any growth. We learn differently, we think differently, and we have the luxury of long debates over things that won’t matter a hundred years from now.

The question in training is what is essential, what is practical, and what is expedient? When these three come together, there will be excellence. Yes, I said excellence. For some reason, this word has grown to become the Pavlovian word for all that is good and great in the North American church. It’s not uncommon for churches and, especially, Christian education to carry this word into their vision statement.

One time my home air conditioning unit broke down. If you know anything about Florida weather, you understand how essential a home air conditioner is to existing in the heat and humidity of our summers. It was a blistering hot Saturday when I woke up from my afternoon nap dripping with perspiration. After checking the thermostat I took a quick peek at the compressor, the breaker switches and the air mover. All seemed ok, but it wasn’t working. I knew it wasn’t working because it was hot, and I was very uncomfortable. So out came the Yellow Pages to nd a repair man that would come out and work on the unit on Saturday.

Finally, one of the high end repair service companies sent someone to look at it. In twenty minutes he handed me an estimate for a brand new system costing over \$2000. I thanked him and walked back into the house to look for some fans figuring that I was going to have to get used to it.

The next morning while at church I was bemoaning my problem to a friend when he introduced me to Frank. Frank was an air conditioning repairman and ran a small shop in town. He smiled and offered to come out that afternoon to look at it. I think it was easy to tell we were miserable. So after church, lunch, and time to change he rolled up in his thirty year old van, ladder and pipes hanging out the back. He apologized for his dirty overalls as he swung his flashlight to inspect the system. Within a few minutes he spotted the problem and returned to his van for a part. Thirty minutes later the unit was buzzing and cool, fresh air was again pouring out of the vents. We all shouted our praises to God and to Frank. He smiled and handed me a bill for the part and his time.

The issue of excellence
isn't about the school,
it's about the student.

As I was writing him a check, I asked why he was able to fix it and the other guys couldn't. He explained that he was in the business to help people not to make a lot of money. He could sell and install an entire unit each time, but most of the homes didn't need one, and it really only served the purpose of enriching the installer...not the home.

“That’s EXCELLENT!” I shouted.

The issue of excellence isn't about the school, it's about the student.

When a school says that its goal is to be a school that trains, equips and sends forth students of excellence, then they have it right. The same is true for the training of Christian leaders.

Our goal is to produce a product of excellence. Who cares about the warehouse? It's the product that counts. The point isn't the school, it's the students. When training becomes student oriented and not reproducing schools, then we will reach the world for Christ.

Oh, one more thing about North American thinking that has to be brought up at this point, because most everyone will agree with this point but the next might be a little tougher to swallow. After reading the next chapter you may even throw the book away...

9

Knowing versus Being A Christian

"I'd be a Christian if it weren't for the Christians."

Mahatma Gandhi

We sat down in a posh restaurant for dinner, ordered our meals, prayed and waited. We waited some more... and some more. Finally the four of us couldn't find anything more to talk about and our guests were getting edgy. "Where are our meals?" He demanded to a passing server.

The girl could instantly tell he was upset and found our waitress who assured us the meals were on their way. By this time, his face was red and fists were hammering the table for service. It was an awkward scene as we were all dressed in Christian T-shirts decorated with crosses, prayer slogans and witnessing comments.

When the food finally arrived everyone got an earful of how much time had passed and how terrible the service was. Then, of all things, his food wasn't cooked right. The meat was sent back twice and each time the scene became worse and worse. It was the kind of event that makes you want to slide under the table and hope that no one sees you there. And to make matters even worse his wife chimed in with a loud voice about how terrible the restaurant was...as if to rally the entire place into a riot. The poor waitress was almost in tears as they verbally berated her.

Indeed, why is it
that Christians can
be so mean?

As everyone was walking out I slipped the waitress some money and apologized for our friends. When my wife and I got home, I confessed how embarrassed I was and how terrible I felt for the waitress. My brother told me not to worry, that he had slipped her a big tip and apologized. We laughed when we figured out how much she got between us. At the same time, shaking our heads in bewilderment as to why Christians can be so mean.

Indeed, why is it that Christians can be so mean?

And there can be an arrogant twist to it as well. Galatians 5:22 defines the fruit of the Spirit as love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, faithfulness, kindness, gentleness and self-control. At the same time the acts of the sinful nature are obvious: *“sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like.”* (Galatians 5:19-21).

Let’s compare “discord” with “peace.” How about “fits of rage” with “gentleness.” I’ve heard of churches splitting over the issue of the “gifts of the Spirit,” have you? How is this possible? How is it that verbal violence has become an acceptable Christian practice? How is it that it has become more important to be theologically correct than to be patient, gentle and humble?

If this is true, then it becomes as important to act like Christ as it is to share the Gospel—the two should be synonymous.	Did you know that it’s not what we believe that brings others to Christ but how we act!
If this is true, then it becomes as important to act like Christ as it is to share the Gospel—the two should be synonymous.	Did you know that it’s not what we believe that brings others to Christ but how we act!

In North America, we are taught, taught, and taught the truth. We know the truth. We are right. Everyone else is wrong. And being right is more important than anything else. In fact, knowing the truth and believing it as true has become the grounds on which a person becomes a Christian. We become a Christian in that we give our allegiance to a set of truths. Change is an intellectual assent to the truth as we have been told by our Christian leaders. And our Christian leaders are those who teach and preach (like gurus) the truth. We run from one to the other.

They are on the television all day and all night.

In the East, a person cannot live in a dual-world of belief and actions. In the East, one is what one believes. Holy people act first, and then people are attracted to them by their actions to hear what they have to say. If they perform a miracle, heal or deliver someone then they are worthy of being heard. They must do something extraordinary and then they are classified as a person worthy of dispensing truth. That is why “holy” men and women in India will crawl on their knees across the country. They must prove that they are special and, sadly, this is the best they can do.

They must foretell the future, forecast an event, bless and curse, etc. After they have demonstrated their godly position, then there can be teaching. That is why Mother Teresa was an incredible Christian witness. It was her demonstration of love and care that brought the world’s attention to her, not her words. In the West, it’s possible to never see a Christian leader exhibit any kind of love, mercy, or compassion, but they are still accepted because they “know” the truth. In fact, their actions and words can demonstrate judgment, legalism and arrogant accusations that make their congregations drip with guilt and fall at their knees, and we will return for more that evening. In non-Judeo-Christian cultures this is not only offensive, but hateful.

I remember going to hear an evangelist speak at one of the Orlando attractions. He thought he was doing God’s will by telling the mixed cultural audience all of their sins but, sadly, he offended most of those listening. I could hear Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists groan...and so did I. The evangelist didn’t know that you have to prove your holiness before you speak it. Your life must be witnessed before they will hear your testimony! Otherwise, there is nothing but arrogant clanging that irritates the ears of those who really don’t know the person...or the god that would speak with such hatefulness.

Now let’s take another step in this same direction and move into a territory that must be addressed or it is certain that the

world will not hear the Gospel. At the same time that those in the East cannot separate life and words, so it is that they cannot separate faith and culture. We can and do. The most obvious illustration of this is our arts and entertainment. In the West we can hold to certain laws, rules and morals, but they are not exhibited in our art or entertainment. Indeed, just the opposite is true. Our arts and entertainment usually exhibit the opposite of our community standards. This is not understood outside our culture. And it is even more difficult as most people in the East do not travel, and they only know about the West from what they watch and hear on television and in movies.

Now, these people hear that we are a Christian people; yet, what they see makes them spit. It embarrasses them, and their moral leadership doesn't want it to penetrate their culture. They see the violence, pornography, etc., coming out of our "Christian" culture and it repulses them. And anyone coming to their community claiming to be a Christian bringing their culture to them should be fought not embraced. Yes, many times only their high value of hospitality prohibits them from completely rejecting anyone from the West.

Now, if you can understand this you might also understand that we, also, in the West live in a dual world with our politics and faith. Westerners live in a dichotomy in that we live in a separation of "Church and State" not just politically but also practically. It is possible to be a Christian and to vote one way or the other. And so we vote for one leader, and another Christian can enter the booth and vote for the opposite leader. This is done for leadership, laws and for issues. This isn't usually the case in the East. Easterners cannot separate government from faith. The government actually is the leader of their faith. They speak and act on behalf of their faith and religion. Major international actions are done as the leaders are led by their god. If a Hindu people go to war with a Muslim people, it is a Theophany, an act of their god.

A North American Christian mission doesn't have anything to do with the decisions made in Washington, DC. It has absolutely no influence in wars or battle plans. This is incom-

prehensible to Easterners. They believe that the decisions made in Washington, DC, represent the Christian nation and its leaders...as it would from their country. As a result, the Gospel will never be allowed to penetrate the ears of the world unless it is unshackled from the politics of America.

The truth is that America isn't a Christian nation and doesn't represent the Kingdom of God. America has Christians living in it, just like Canada, Guatemala, South Africa, and Singapore, but identification of the nation and its politics with Christ must be stopped. America isn't the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of God isn't America. We Christians live in the Kingdom of God and may live in America, but they aren't the same. And to become a true Christian witness in the world, the Gospel must be de-Americanized. It is about Christ and Christ alone.

Please understand that I'm an American, born and bred an American. I love my country. I desperately pray for America and believe that the roots of its greatness were established by the Christians that founded her. But after 200 years, her leadership, for the most part, is not Christian and doesn't represent the values, standards, ethics, worldview, and truths it was built on. And even if it did, our job isn't to imperialize the world so that it becomes like America. It is to share the Gospel so that, through Christ, the lost world will come to God. His Kingdom is represented by those who have believed, followed and lived under God. That is our ultimate allegiance.

Identification with America and all of its politics has shrunk the effectiveness of the North American messengers. They will increase it by demonstrating the love of Christ in a hurting world and de-emphasizing any political banners. In fact, maybe this will lead to the propulsion of missionaries from the rest of the world. We can only hope so. May the Lord thrust the rest of the Christian people into missions...which leads us to our next hurdle of getting the Gospel to the world. Our methodology of evangelization is getting people to come instead of getting our people to go.

Car Lot Mentality or Box Mentality

"COME ON IN..."

Used Car Lot Sign

"COME ON IN..."

Church Sign

The object of a used car lot is to get as many people in as possible and to sell as many cars as possible. The lot is decorated to attract new people and posts friendly greeters waiting to become friends with anyone who comes within shouting distance. When new people bravely enter, very quickly names and addresses are acquired and someone will happily show you around; a song and dance, coffee and donuts are offered. Everyone is happy and smiling. A pitch is made and money collected. At the end of the day the people and money are counted...success or failure is based upon on how many came in and bought.

The object of the local church is to get as many people in as possible and to sell as much as possible. The church is decorated to attract new people and posts friendly greeters waiting to become friends with anyone who comes within shouting distance. When new people bravely enter, very quickly names and addresses are acquired and someone will happily show you around; a song and dance, coffee and donuts are offered. Everyone is happy and smiling. A pitch is made and money collected. At the end of the day the people and money are counted...success or failure is based upon on how many came in and bought.

It's all about getting as many people into the box (church building) as possible.

It's all about getting as many people into the box (church building) as possible.

The more people a church has the more successful it is. The first question a pastor will ask another pastor at conference

is what church they pastor and how many members they have. The more successful pastors will have larger numbers. Usually the conference speakers are those with the largest numbers and heralded as the most successful. They will tell the other “loser” pastors how to be a good leader, successful pastor, and get more members. Of course, they have written a book or two about how they did it...which they will sell, and they will make more money.

It is as if there were thousands of fish bowls scattered about the country. The object is to get as many fish into your bowl as possible. The more fish you have the greater the need to build a bigger fish bowl to hold them. So it doesn't matter that fish are just transferring from one bowl to the other. The fishbowl is still considered the fastest growing bowl in the city. And so the bowl keepers build bigger bowls to keep them in, and whoever has the biggest fish bowl in the end wins!

Isn't it strange that Jesus didn't build a building while He was here? He wasn't interested in crowds or numbers, either. Rather when these issues came up, he often warned his disciples to be cautious of the “yeast of the Pharisees...” This was a warning against the values of the world; i.e. religion for show, getting the numbers, material gain, popularity, etc. In fact, when crowds did follow Jesus, he usually did what he could to disperse them or to get away from them. He was wary of the crowds and warned his disciples about being swallowed up by them (see Matthew 16:4-6). Instead, His philosophy was to disciple a few men and women and send them OUT! The idea was to make them “fishers of men.” (Matthew 4:19). Real fishermen are out on the streams, rivers, lakes and seas FISHING. The method of real fishing is to plan, equip, and go fishing. No one who owns a fishing boat is proud of how many boats and fishermen are sitting in a comfortable hanger. Their objective is to get them out on the seas catching as many fish as possible. The delight is to find out how many are sent and how many are caught.

Jesus had a simple plan of training a few and sending them out. Let's do a simple exercise to find out how quickly this

would work. Let's say one wins two and two are trained to win two and train these two to go out to win and train two. Let's make it even simpler by saying that this was the only objective for one year. Each year every believer would win and train two to be sent out. I know this is very elementary but do the math. How many years would it take to reach the world? Ten? Twenty? Yes, twenty is the number of years it would take to reach everyone in the world with the Gospel. Yet, amazingly the Gospel has been around for almost 2000 years and more than half of the world's population doesn't know why Jesus came.

Amazingly, the Gospel did spread throughout Europe, Africa and Asia in the first few centuries. The persecution of believers dispersed believers across the world. They witnessed wherever they ended up and shared the Gospel and disciplined the new believers wherever they could meet. Even the Apostle Paul was delighted to find believers that were already there on his missionary journeys. *"Meanwhile a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures."* Acts 18:24.

Indeed, Paul and his companions were credited for spreading the Gospel all over the world as if they themselves had done this. *"But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some other brothers before the city of cials, shouting: 'These men who have caused trouble all over the world have now come here.'"* Acts 17:6. And, in Acts 24:5, *"We have found this man to be a troublemaker, stirring up riots among the Jews all over the world. He is a ringleader of the Nazarene sect."*

It is reported that by the end of the first century and seventy years after Christ, the Gospel had gone as far as the southern tip of India, the northern borders of Rome (England) and the farthest west coast of Africa. So when did the shift from spreading the Gospel change into the erection of churches, cathedrals, and basilicas? And, more importantly, why?

The New Testament is quite clear that the church is the peo-

ple of God. It is the followers of Christ. The believers, the “called-out ones” or ecclesia were the focus of the identity of the church. The people were the church and the church was the people. They were brought to a saving knowledge of Christ, they believed and put their trust in Him as their savior, were baptized, filled with the Spirit and disciplined by other Christian leaders. Divisions started early on as some claimed that the Jewish widows were being treated better than the Gentile widows (just begin reading the book of Acts). Divisions followed as other issues of inferiority and superiority rose as a result of who baptized them. *“Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and our brother Sosthenes, to the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ—their Lord and ours: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”* I Cor. 1. Or, because they followed “super” apostles *“But I do not think I am in the least inferior to those ‘super-apostles’.”* II Cor. 11:5.

All of these issues were addressed with basic truths. This worked as long as there wasn’t anything to fight over or to own. Once property was involved, there were power moves and in fighting for control. The loser went down the street and built again because the church became the building—not the people. If it had been the people, then there would’ve been only one possible solution, reconciliation.

For the most part congregations met in homes, open courtyards and sometimes in synagogues. When Christianity became a legal Roman religion it was granted permission to use the basilicas or public auditoriums of the community, kind of the town hall of the day. As Christianity grew in influence and power in the Roman Empire basilicas became dedicated for churches alone. And as the church became more integrated into government, its influence, power and wealth became second only to the king of the era.

To this day, this is the fulcrum on which the church moves up and down; to evangelize or to become powerful. This is

the basic decision made by Christian leaders: power or empowerment: To build up itself or to build up others.

History records the terrible abuse of power by the church as it rose and fell in power. Each nation has its wave of church growth and power until most nations, including our own, have a repulsion of Church running State. (Ironically, there is no such repulsion against the State controlling the Church.) Nevertheless, the issue for this author and this chapter is that the church isn't a box. Boxes are built to hold things in. Boxes are built so the owner can keep them securely inside. Boxes are built to shelter the contents of the box from the outside. Boxes are built so that someone can control the contents. Boxes are built for the glory of the builder. Boxes are built and maintained for men's egos. However, boxes are meant to be disposable, temporary, and insignificant when compared with the contents. When the focus of the church moves away from the box, then it will reach the world for Christ. Maybe the current economic struggles will help this to happen soon. Hope so...

In the meantime here are 20 signs your church is more like a car lot than a sending agency:

1. The church regularly posts the numbers, attendance, membership and offerings
2. The church has membership drives, “fill a pew” campaigns and attendance goals.
3. The church has full-time staff for maintenance, care, teaching, preaching—but none for evangelism or missions.
4. The church has a “missions” weekend. A special day of the year to emphasize evangelism and missions.
5. The church has a building fund drive regularly.

6. The church is in debt for their buildings and the interest on the debt is more than their budget for evangelism and missions combined.
7. The church building is used one day a week but cooled/heated every day of the week for a handful of people.
8. The church hasn't seen anyone come to the Lord in over a year.
9. The church's main source of growth is because of births.
10. The church is declining in numbers.
11. The church is declining in numbers, and the leadership insists that it is to "purify" the congregation.
12. The church is cutting back on evangelism and missions to save.
13. The church hasn't sent out a missionary, a mission team, or witness program in ten years.
14. The church's main topic of conversation is how well the pastor preached.
15. The second hottest topic of the Church is the color of the new carpet and walls.
16. The third hottest topic is the size of the bathrooms, fellowship hall and offices.
17. The church is going to split over one of these topics.
18. The church has several committees and boards for the maintenance of the church but only one (if that at all) for evangelism and missions.

19. The church's budget for evangelism and missions is a fraction less than 10% of the total maintenance budget and the leadership is proud of it.
20. The church doesn't care about the nineteen issues just mentioned.

It is as if the church has gone through a phase in which it has been focused on buildings, organization and infrastructure. Is it time for the church to revert back to when it was people, teaching and going?

Is it time for the church to revert back to when it was people, teaching and going?

While we are on this box, let's dispell one more myth about world evangelism and missions—the belief that Christian television equals world evangelism.

Christian Television is Not Missions (a tool maybe, but not missions)

It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill. The latter do so in love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the Gospel. The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains. But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice.

Paul, in his letter to the Philippians: Phil. 1:15-18

One of the greatest threats to authentic missions is the belief that television is the medium to send the Gospel.

Probably the greatest audio visual tool that exists today for communicating the Gospel is the “Jesus Film.” It was a film written from the book of Luke. Campus Crusade for Christ uses the film for evangelism. It has been dubbed into hundreds of languages and used by thousands of churches, missionaries, and agencies around the globe to spread the good news of Jesus’ life, death and resurrection. It contains no explanation of “why,” simply a narrative of the events.

The best evidence of how it works is with a trained local team that sets up the film, promotes it in the neighborhood and after the showing shares a short explanation of “Why” Jesus died and invites the audience to believe and follow Christ. They linger to pray and talk with those that remain. A local pastor is present to do follow-up and to introduce himself as someone they can come to for further questions. It works worldwide and is a marvelous tool. I highly recommend it in this context...the context of the wider method of personal interaction, building relationships, follow-up and discipleship, mentoring and integration into a local group of believers. Anything apart from this is superficial and will not only lead to despair, but hatred toward Christianity.

“Why do they hate us?” a short term missionary asked me as we walked through the Russian village. We had just finished a crusade, had shown the Jesus Film and were trying to plant a church. I didn’t know why there was so much opposition in this village, so I asked around.

Apparently, a passing evangelist had once come through the village. Many people came to Christ but there wasn’t any follow-up. Many “baby” Christians were born, but they were left abandoned, forsaken and orphaned. The tragedy of evangelism without discipleship is that it leaves those left behind disillusioned. Promises are made. Complex thoughts, issues and understandings are entered into without proper follow-up.

I remember my first computer. I just went down and bought it. Brought it home and turned it on. It didn’t work! It was the most frustrating thing in the world and I’d just paid a huge amount of money for it and the printer (which didn’t work either). Then someone came and began teaching me about the computer, the software, how it worked, connected, functioned, etc. Even now, after more than 15 years of using these horrid machines, I still feel frustrated and lost in the complexity of this other world. How much more frustrating for new Christians who come from a totally foreign culture! Indeed, it’s as transitional as learning a new language, culture, set of rules, life patterns, etc.

A mission without one-on-one training is really cruel. It only serves to frustrate and exasperate those who have signed on. In the end, these same people will become angry and even hate those that did this to them. It’s actually more difficult to share the Gospel with someone who has gone through this. It is almost as if they have been immunized against the Gospel. And that is what any medium does if it isn’t complemented by someone that will explain and explain, and teach and teach, share and share, and share some more. The Gospel must be proclaimed and then someone has to stick around to disciple. Otherwise, we are making things worse. And, indeed, it’s not only difficult to come behind these wizards of the big screen; it’s impossible.

The Apostle Paul suffered the same frustration following the “super apostles” of his day.

It is interesting how Paul combated this problem.

He reminded them of his persecutions and hardships, his weaknesses and failures. *“Why? Because I do not love you? God knows I do! And I will keep on doing what I am doing in order to cut the ground from under those who want an opportunity to be considered equal with us in the things they boast about.”* II Cor.

11, 12. He pointed to his humanity in an effort to focus the attention on Christ and Christ alone. This was all that mattered in the end, anyway. In my own experience, these are the people we work with, live with and love. The perfect and all powerful saints live and work alone... usually. This is the theme for the next chapter. At some time the church must realize that we are all human, must stop worshiping gods, must stop killing our wounded, and start acting like the army of God we are made to be.

The Apostle Paul
suffered the same frustra-
tion following the
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Christians in Conflict

"If the Lord can't get the church to multiply He'll get it to divide."

Unknown

“James son of Zebedee and his brother John (to them he gave the name Boanerges, which means Sons of Thunder).” Mark 3:17. James and John were called the “Sons of Thunder,” because they wanted Jesus to call re down on the Samaritan village that rejected Jesus. “As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem. And he sent messengers on ahead, who went into a Samaritan village to get things ready for him; but the people there did not welcome him, because he was heading for Jerusalem. When the disciples James and John saw this, they asked, ‘Lord, do you want us to call re down from heaven to destroy them?’ But Jesus turned and rebuked them, and they went to another village.” Luke 9:51ff.

Ironically, this incident happened just after the entire group of disciples asked which one was greater and a jealous statement about someone else who was casting out demons in Jesus’ name. It was these two disciples later on who asked for the supreme positions of sitting at Jesus’ right and left. They were seeking highest positions of authority. *“Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him. ‘Teacher,’ they said, ‘we want you to do for us whatever we ask.’ ‘What do you want me to do for you?’ he asked. They replied, ‘Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory.’ ‘You don’t know what you are asking,’ Jesus said. ‘Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?’ ‘We can,’ they answered. Jesus said to them, ‘You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with, but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared.’ When the ten heard about this, they became indignant with James and John. Jesus called them together and said, ‘You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever*

wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many'." Mark 10:35ff.

Jesus' answer was typical of the others that came in response to those who sought power, authority and position: the commission to be a servant or slave of all...this person would be the greatest in the Kingdom of God.

We don't have many servants in the West, let alone slaves. The idea is foreign to us. But, in the East slavery is still very much alive and practiced. And having servants is very common. In fact, most middle class families have several servants. As a child living in India, it was not uncommon to visit families with full-time servants, including a cook, a maid, a butler, a sweeper boy, a driver, and a nanny for every child under the age of ten. These servants were ranked in the order or class of the job. From the sweeper boy (lowest)

These disputes are
seldom over
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but position.

to the highest ranking maid everyone was well aware of his or her position, authority and responsibility. It was the ultimate social union from the top to bottom. Everyone responded to a clap of the hands or a call from the superior. Oh, the turmoil that existed when someone tried to exert his authority or position over some-

one who was in the same class. An incredible expression of anger and hatred was lashed like a bullwhip. It was all right for someone of higher authority, but not an equal or, worse, a subordinate, to give an order.

This hierarchy is even more evident for slaves. Wherever there is forced subjection, there is even more intense awareness of who is above and below on the positional chart.

These disputes are seldom over possessions, but position.

The same is true in our culture. Social standing matters. Social and political position is an undercurrent of how we function. It's just not talked about much...especially in the church.

Whether it's in the military, corporation or fellowship everyone is very aware of who is in charge, who is second, third and down the line. Status can be determined by popularity (Elementary school to High School), or by wealth (golden rule in business), or by education and title (corporate world), or it can be determined by friendships, family, or even by one's history with the group. However it's determined, it's there. It exists and it is one of the most powerful forces in any church or denomination.

James and John knew it; the other disciples knew it and were furious at being pushed aside for superior ranking with Jesus. We all know it exists, as well. We just don't talk about it. It doesn't matter if it's a small congregation or a large mega church, it exists. It may not exist in their formal structure, but usually it's under the informal structure with a few who wield the power and make the major decisions.

Every new pastor to a church will seek out the decision makers in that congregation and will find themselves at their kitchen tables to talk over matters—or they find themselves looking for a new church to pastor within a few years. These people usually are the ones who have been there the longest, have given a great deal of money to the church and have built up a very strong ownership to the ministry. The purpose of this treatise on the social order of the church is only to expose it, not to judge it or the people in these places. Indeed, most of them are good people with God's intentions in their thoughts and many hours of prayer behind them. The point is that the social order, from lowest to highest, exists. And because it exists, there will always be a reason to keep the machinery of the church going. The existence and sustenance of the machinery is the most important objective of the church. Survival is critical for the succession of the ministry or church...at all costs...even the destruction of a life, a split in the church, or the elimination of leader.

Every ministry goes through four basic phases.

The first is the man, the second is a movement, the third is machinery, and the fourth is a monument.

The first is the man, the second is a movement, the third is machinery, and the fourth is a monument.

Usually a powerful and charismatic leader emerges. This person is usually very eloquent and exciting. This leader attracts followers who sense the work of God and want to be a part of the ministry. Soon, many join, and a movement of people begins. As a result, machinery is developed to organize, plan and

facilitate their service. People are given positions, authority and responsibilities so that the vision can be accomplished.

This works wonderfully until the vision begins to fade, the objectives start to wane and the goals become impractical. A decision must be made at this point, to continue the “sacred” calling and course or to let it die. In over fifty years of experience in the church, I’ve only watched a handful of ministries and churches actually take the brave course of dying to themselves and resurrecting into something else. The guardians of the movement will keep it going, no matter what. Central Florida is littered with huge buildings and church facilities that are maintained by the remnant of what was. So it is true around the globe. Perhaps in desperation, assets will be sold (hardly ever given away to another church) to keep the “res” burning for the memories of what was and will never be again.

If this is true for the majority it is also true for the minority. Politics rule everywhere and in everything. From A to Z. Sorry if this is a new revelation. It’s not that it’s good or bad. It’s just that when a system is built to drive a movement of God, it will ultimately lead to a system that sustains itself, and sustaining itself will become primary unless there is a

conscious effort amongst the power brokers in the church or congregation to evaluate their vision and goals on a regular basis. Many times, business is smarter than the church. It will read the bottom line and reinvent itself or start over. But a church isn't a business. It's of God and therefore must be sustained as sacred, something that is holy because it reminds us of God or a God event in our lives.

That is the problem with political hierarchy in the church. How is it sustained? How are power and influence maintained? How does one graduate from one level to the next? It is done by jockeying for position. This is accomplished the same way it's done in a seventh grade boys' club; through exerting oneself, usually at the expense of others. Verbal skills, wealth and status will move a new member to the top of the political ladder very quickly. Indeed, it's not uncommon to take a new convert who is also a wealthy businessperson and place him as one of the trustees or directors but not do the same for a converted drug addict. James spoke about this in James 2. Politics matter and is the undercurrent of how the church works.

It is never so prevalent as in the midst of a conflict. Gossip and slander are used as powerful tools to eliminate or conquer a foe. There is no faster means of eliminating an adversary in the church than by spreading "prayer concerns" about them. Indeed, even the world has a courtroom to deal with such things, but there is no court, no justice, and limited opportunity to speak in the church world. It is not uncommon for someone's character to be assassinated to prove a point. Like wildebeests watching lions devour their brother, they will stand one hundred feet away watching but not making a move for fear that they might be caught in the frenzy. Or worse, they will participate with encouragement for "cleansing" the church and ridding it of the sin. After the foe has been vanquished, the church or ministry is safe.

This is why the "army of God" is so weak. This is why there are so few that last very long. They are wounded and wounded again by friendly fire, by those who are more interested in the machinery than the war. They are more motivated to

preserve the monument than the people. So the ranks are whittled down again and again.

Can you imagine a platoon leaving behind a fallen soldier?

Can you imagine the platoon watching their friend fall and not even going back to help? Can you imagine anything as horrible as that? Yet, this is so common. There isn't one person reading this that hasn't been betrayed, forsaken or judged... by those with whom they were in "battle".

Is it possible that the church is also called to die to itself?

Can you imagine a
platoon leaving behind
a fallen soldier?

Is it possible that the church, the body of Christ, is also commissioned to carry its cross and follow Jesus? It's amazing that the instructions of Jesus, meant to be heard in congregation and taken as a union of believers together, are usually taken individually in the West. That's why

it's so difficult to spread the Gospel in many parts of the world. It's not because of the actions of individual believers but the actions of the church at large. They cannot separate the two. They can't live in a dichotomy of believing that there are different rules for the church as an organization and those for the individual. When church leaders speak on behalf of their denomination in support of war, the political nation of Israel (versus the spiritual nation of Israel), or any actions of violence it becomes a huge stumbling block for the promotion of the simple Gospel.

Which brings us to the thirteenth reason the Gospel hasn't gone out to the entire world: if the political process of the church keeps most of the people down, it also raises up only a few.

Tip of the Iceberg Mentality

(Selection of Leaders only Amongst the Elite)

"If the military operated like the church, it would only send its generals to war."

Author Unknown

If you drew a pyramid on this page with a dot on the top you would have a perfect picture of the paradigm of North American missions. The pyramid, of course, represents all Christians. As people become believers, are disciplined, mentored in a local church, educated, live properly and are promoted up the political ladder of Christian success, they move to the top. When they get to the very top they are then worthy of being sent out to spread the Gospel.

I remember when Keith came to me in 1984 with the proposition that he would retire early (he was 55) and move to Guatemala to help me and my brother with the mission there. I was just 30 years old and Missionary Ventures was just getting started. It was just my brother in Guatemala and me in Tampa, Florida, trying to raise support and mission teams.

We were working in a squatter camp just outside of Guatemala City that had formed after the 1976 earthquake that killed over 23,000 people and left many more homeless and destitute. The needs were so great, the resources so scarce. We needed as much help as possible. It didn't occur to me that there should be an application process, interviewing, screening, or even training to help.

I had known Keith for a few years. He said he could support himself completely. I offered a van and place for him to stay. It was ideal. He even paid for breakfast that morning. Three months later he was in Guatemala studying Spanish and working with Dave hosting teams and channeling support. He did a fine job and became one of the most respected and admired missionaries in the country. He set up schools, helped pastors, delivered aid to countless, built churches and

trained a few more missionaries that followed. It was a real joy to learn of his engagement and marriage to Diane. They served for another three years before retiring to Wheaton, Illinois, and setting up a home to live with their grandchildren.

It was later on that I learned that we had done it all wrong. In fact, if Keith had gone before the average Missions Board he wouldn't have been accepted. He didn't have a theological degree. He was divorced and single. He had never served in a local church as more than a committee member. He wasn't a preacher or teacher (however he was often called upon to speak and, especially, interpret). He was a businessman who wanted to go and help out. And, we were fortunate enough to be the first he asked and naïve enough to send him.

In an attempt to keep
from making mistakes
we cut away anyone who
might not have made it to
the top of the Christian
social pyramid.

Later on, we made some mistakes and missionaries made some mistakes. Each time it made us lengthen our application process, extend our interviewing, and lengthen our training processes. It worked. We eventually eliminated any chance that another Keith would ever make it through the hoops.

In an attempt to keep from making mistakes we cut away anyone who might not have made it to the top of the Christian social pyramid.

Isn't it strange that Jesus' selection wasn't from the top of the social religious pyramid of his day? In fact, a careful study of the guys he chose will quickly show you that they were the average people of the day. They weren't even in the middle of the social religious pyramid. They were mostly from the bottom. They were from the masses.

Of course, he trained them and mentored them. That's why

they are called the disciples. The point is that they were from the average social group of the land. They weren't educated, trained professionals, linguistic geniuses, cultural pros, or even highly respected in their villages. They were plain fishermen, tax collectors, merchants, etc. They weren't wealthy or of high class and status. They were just plain guys.

Not one of them would have been approved by a missions committee or board. Not one of them would have passed the application process and interview program of any church, denomination or agency. They were average people...but these were the people that Jesus used to start the first missionary force. Today we have made it so that "perfection" and "missionary professionalism" are the hoops to pass through before consideration.

Anyone in missions for very long knows that it is because of this elitism that there are few workers and very little gets done. Because generals don't work...they command!

Jean Isbell was a good friend of mine. She took me to Honduras in late 1983 to show me her work and to gain our partnership. Back in the early 80's, it took five flights to get to the island of Roatan where Jean's ministry was based. Each time we switched planes they got smaller and older till we flew from La Ceiba to Roatan on an old DC3 prop plane with huge tires for landing on the dirt and mud runways. There were holes in the side of the plane big enough to stick a finger through and smoke from the exhaust filled the plane on takeoff. Chickens clucked and pigs snorted as the aircraft bounced a few thousand feet above the ocean to the small island.

Once on the ground (and having given thanks), we loaded our luggage into an old van that we had to push up most of the hills and chase down the valleys. It started raining the night we landed so my friend, Andrew Kimbrough, and I got sopping wet, dirty and tired by the time we reached the other end of the island to a small town called Oak Ridge. Then we boarded a flat boat to the key across the harbor to settle into a mission house Jean had built on stilts over the bay.

The next morning, we started our small missionary adventure on the island, getting lost in storms, getting sick from the local food and water, and trying to relate to people who didn't know exactly why we had come. Every night we held special services in churches that Jean's students had planted along the island. The believers were encouraged and we were too, having felt like we were doing something to help.

During this mission trip we worked in La Ceiba, Olancho and Tegucigalpa helping pastors, ministering to street children and encouraging believers. Our jeep got stuck a few times, someone threatened us with a gun, and we spent several nights crouched by the fire all night to keep the insects away.

At the end of the trip, while coming back I asked Jean how she got started. She explained that she had been in an abusive marriage and finally her alcoholic husband divorced her, abandoning her with three small children. During this crisis, she came to the Lord and attended a small church outside Tampa, Florida. One Sunday a visiting evangelist shared his burden for the women on the Honduran island of Roatan. He explained that many of them had abusive and alcoholic husbands who worked the oil, fishing and cargo ships around the Caribbean. Her heart went out to these women, and she felt the Lord call her to go and visit these women to share the same Gospel that had saved her.

When she went to her pastor, though, he refused to send her. She went to the denomination, and they refused to even talk to her. She then went to several missionary organizations and each time she was refused for her lack of education and because she was a divorced, single mother with small children. She sold whatever she could, but it wasn't enough for the tickets. So she went down to the Tampa Bay Harbor and convinced a banana cargo ship (they bring bananas from La Ceiba and Tampa) to let her and her children ride on the top of the boat to La Ceiba. He agreed, and they rode for three days and nights on deck to La Ceiba. From La Ceiba she boarded another cargo boat and landed on Roatan not knowing anyone or anything.

She found lodging and began to befriend some of the women. Soon she developed a Bible study and began to share the Gospel. In time, many of their husbands were saved and became a part of the fellowship. A church was started and then another one was planted down the coast. At the time of her passing a few years later she had planted 37 churches all over Honduras. Countless lives were touched by her ministry.

I often wonder why God didn't call eloquent preachers and teachers to go to Honduras to do this work. Or why didn't He beseech a wealthy businessman to go? Jean traveled back and forth several times a year to raise funds for her work. She lived a pauper's life and squeezed every penny for this ministry. Why didn't God call a great Christian leader to go? Why didn't he send someone who could really make the ministry famous? Maybe He did and they all said, "No." Maybe Jean was the first to say, "Yes."

Interestingly, we all preach and teach that God wants availability not ability. But when it comes down to sending, we really want "ability." You see, there are a hundred ordinary people willing and eager to go for everyone who is greatly "qualified" but won't go. We should be set up for those who will go. If we spent our efforts on training and equipping the masses for evangelism and missions, the ranks would swell by the millions and the job would have been done a long time ago.

We must open the
doors for everyone
to go.

We must open the doors for everyone to go.

Locking doors to keep people from becoming missionaries is the same sin as abortion. It doesn't allow them a chance to live for Jesus.

By the way, when they've answered God's call, they are going to go anyway. We better join them or get left behind.

Worldview Paradigm Conflict

“How we view the world will lead us to our place in this world.”

Author Unknown

In Sunday school we were taught that God created the world and all that is in it. In church we were taught that God worked through history to bring about a special people that would be His. These people became numerous and through amazing events became the nation of Israel. Through this nation of Israel a “Savior” was born.

This Savior was God’s only begotten Son, and through Him we have redemption from our sins. Through Christ we become members of His people; we are adopted into his family. Our job is to grow in His grace and spread His message of salvation to everyone. God’s focus is the world reunited with Him. Our focus should be the same. Nothing else really matters.

In Elementary school we were taught that everything originated from atoms and molecules that evolved over billions of years into what we have today. In High School we were taught the evolution of man, the evolution of history and the events that came together to make our world. We were further convinced in University to regard the Bible as an evolution of thought and one perspective among many. We were taught to think for ourselves and to live for ourselves, individually and collectively. We were taught that the purpose of life is focused around one’s self.

Maslow’s hierarchy of need has become the framework of man’s existence on earth:

1. Physiological Needs: air, water, food, shelter, etc.
2. Safety and Security
3. Love and Belongingness

4. Self-Esteem
5. Self-Actualization: Vitality, creativity, self-sufficiency, authenticity, etc.

Maslow shaped this teaching in the form of a pyramid with the base of it encompassing the Physiological Needs. Self-Actualization was at the top of the pyramid.

...any Bible student should know the Biblical worldview and how it is juxtaposed to the secular worldview

It is interesting that Jesus' teaching about life, happiness and success directly counters this framework.

"For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it." Jesus, in Matthew 16:25.

Without belaboring this point much further, any Bible student should know the Biblical worldview and how it is juxtaposed to the secular worldview.

The secular worldview is in a battle for the minds and hearts of our children. Has it already won the heart of the church?

If you take Maslow's hierarchy of needs and compare it to the local church, they will align perfectly nine out of ten times. Let's look at the church's first priority: its physiological needs; second, its security; third, that it is a loving community, fourth, that its identity is established in the community and city; and lastly, that it's found itself.

The church is called to the same worldview as the individual Christian. The same commands for the person apply to the corporate community of the church. The values, ideals, morals, and purpose for existence are the same. There's no difference. If a person must lose himself to follow Christ then the church must do the same. If the person is called to world

evangelization, then how much more the corporate body? The worldview for the pastor and church leaders is the same for the congregation.

A word study on “nation” or “nations” will reveal God’s perspective towards this earth. In the West, we epitomize the individual. Biblical perspectives are usually directed towards the nation or the entire people group.

In North America everything is about the individual. It’s about finding one’s uniqueness, identity, or specialness. We even tailor our education to the individual (“no child lost...”). Our systems, processes, driving, clothing, style, arts, and life are all geared to the perspective of the individual. We need to consider a world where there are literally billions of people all around and seriously ask if there is time for so many individual concerns.

Looking at a typical family example, it’s easy to remember all the time spent to prepare a special bubble bath for the first-born child, and how enjoyable each step of the bathing process was for mom and dad, as well as baby. Usually, by the time baby number four or five comes along, she’s lucky to get a quick lather and rinse at the hands of an older sibling who happened to be in the room when a very busy mom said, “the baby needs a bath.”

So it is in most of the world. The perspective is on the entire family not just the baby. And with God, while he loves the baby completely, His perspective encompasses the whole world. If there is one thing that prohibits missions from reaching the entire nations it is that the focus is on just a handful. What would happen if our goal together were to focus on the entire nation? How would this change our methodology, our budgets and our cooperative spirit?

When the church finds itself in the picture of the Biblical worldview it will find its identity, its purpose and its methodology. And the world will know their love, hear their message and receive their God.

Pastor Thomas was typical of so many Christian leaders in Nicaragua. His little church in Ciudad Sandino was built out of tin and wood and held about forty adults. Services were held most evenings and most of his message was built around “coming out of the world” and living a life totally for God. The hermeneutic was that this meant going to church every day, wearing the right clothing, forsaking all sports and any secular activities (business, politics, socializing, etc.). It meant that anything literally of the “world” was evil and that the only thing that mattered was what happened inside the four walls of their tin church.

Then he attended the “Perspectives on World Missions” Course hosted by the Nehemiah Center. When he learned the Biblical worldview, his life was changed so much that he referred to it as another born-again experience.

It so impacted his life and devotion to God that the first thing he did was apologize to his congregation for not understanding their place in this world. He then went door to door in the village apologizing. Then he started to teach and train his congregation to go into the village to help other people, evangelize and become a lighthouse to the poor. They developed a primary school for impoverished children, a nutrition program for the hungry, micro-enterprises and a micro-loan program for the poor. Instead of repudiating sporting and community social activities they became actively involved in encouraging them for Christ. His church has gone from forty to hundreds, as so many people have been touched by the Gospel.

Today, every family in their village has been touched by the Gospel. Somehow, like yeast in dough, the love of Christ has penetrated every fabric of their society.

The purpose of yeast is to do this exact thing. The problem is that today most Christians believe that the yeast is to be kept apart, packaged and protected from the dough. We are meant to go, inspire, impact, change, reach out, help, aid, light up, and revitalize or revolutionize the world for Christ. That is our place in this hurting world. Until we realize that

is our identity, purpose, and methodology, we will continue to live for ourselves. The Kingdom of God was never meant to be preserved, protected and packaged. It was meant to infiltrate the entire world with the love of Christ...then Jesus will return.

Before we continue, let's talk a bit about this love for a minute. How far we will go depends on our perception of the love of Christ. This is, in the view of the author, the most misunderstood dimension of missions and one of the biggest reasons why we are stalled in completing the job.

Compassion and the Gospel

“One of the serious obstacles to the improvement of our race is indiscriminate charity.”

Andrew Carnegie, US businessman
& philanthropist (1835 - 1919)

The Gospel is brought to us out of the love of God. It is demonstrated beautifully in the life and teaching of Jesus. It is further amplified in our lives as Christians. It is most wonderfully described in the use of the word “Agape” love.

It is the love that seeks and fulfills the highest good for others. “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you,” which Jesus said, is the summation of the second greatest commandment. It’s the heart of Christian life and teaching. From raising children, marriage relationships, to work, to associating with others, to our call to the world, it is the engine that propels us, what makes us go, act and serve.

If love is the engine, then compassion is the fuel that makes it go. Compassion is the emotion that fuels our drive to do something. Without compassion for the lost, the hurting and the suffering, we remain parked in our garage safe and secure.

The difficulty in missions is that sometimes these two components can be confused.

The difficulty in missions is that sometimes these two components can be confused.

Do we act based upon love or compassion? Well, we are moved to compassion but our actions may not be the best for all.

A lady came to my church office when I was pastoring in southern Florida one day. Through tears, she explained the difficulties of their family and asked for help. Our hearts were filled with compassion for her and so we took her down to the grocery store to buy groceries and drove her home. When we dropped her off at the door she thanked us profusely as we helped carry the bags into her kitchen. As we were walking back to the car she remarked that she was so grateful as she thought for sure they'd have to draw out money from their savings!

We were shocked but didn't miss the chance to invite her to church that coming Sunday. She didn't come. In fact, we didn't see her again. To this day I wonder what we really accomplished. Our compassion was good, but our love was weak. We didn't do the highest good for her.

Ever read the signs of the homeless written on a piece of scrap cardboard? My favorite is: "I'll be honest with you. I need a beer." Amazingly, it gets response from motorists who dole out their change so the alcoholic can continue his path of self destruction. We label this as compassion without love. It's when the fuel isn't being used for an engine that gets us anywhere. It's like spilling gasoline on the ground. It doesn't do anything but pollute the earth. And, it is the view of the author that the world has been polluted enough with spilled compassion. It is why so many people, villages and nations are actually worse off than before they received well-intentioned (compassionate) aid.

Does that mean we stop being compassionate. Never! It's just that aid or welfare must be for a limited time only. It's what the Samaritan did for the man who was beaten and left in the ditch. No one else had compassion on him except the Samaritan. He helped him when he couldn't help himself... or until he could help himself. What we do with compassion is take it too far, too long, and too much. It's like medicine: given too much, it kills, which is worse than not giving it at all. The purpose of medicine is to help the body heal. Most of the time it's meant just for a short time till the body can take care of itself. If given too long, it's going to cripple the

body. I know that I am speaking in generalities, but the point holds true for compassion.

How is it that billions of dollars are used in aid, welfare, assistance and care for the poor and these people are worse off than before? It's because compassion is being fulfilled without love.

Have you ever watched a mother feed, care, bath and smother her son with a loving embrace? It's cute if the boy is two years old. But not when he's twenty-eight. Something is wrong here. We laugh but this is exactly what many mothers and fathers do with their children. Is it because they love them so much. Or is it because they don't really don't love them. How much greater the love is that forces a child to learn how to care for his own body, his own welfare, become learned and take responsibility for himself...even a family of his own. This is real love. The other is terrible. Yet this is exactly what has happened as a result of our distorted view of compassion and love.

Love will first of all seek to prevent, cure, if needed, and then ensure independence through education and development. This is all done because of our compassion. Compassion without loving wisdom is like a pharmacist who throws any medication from the window to anyone who may be walking by. Every now and then he might get it right but most of the time he is only serving to ease his "compassion guilt."

Yes, guilt is the prime mover here. It relieves our internal stress for wanting to do something but not knowing what, where or how. "We've got to do something... anything," or do we?

Unless this is clarified within the heart and mind of the church we won't be able to reach the world.

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Compassion without wisdom has created an anger barrier that will be difficult to penetrate amongst the poor. And it's one of the key reasons why Christianity isn't working...

The first step to understanding what we should be doing is to understand the poor.

Understanding The Impoverished

“The rich countries told the poor countries: Poverty is your own fault. Be like us (or what we imagine ourselves to be—free market oriented, entrepreneurial, scally responsible) and you, too, can enjoy the riches of private-sector-led economic development.”

Jeffrey D. Sachs

Robert Calderisi has lived and worked in Africa for most of his life. He has worked with several governments, the World Bank and many charities. After thirty years of trying to make an impact on the continent, he retired and wrote a book entitled, *The Trouble with Africa, Why Foreign Aid Isn't Working*. The heart of his research and conclusions is that there is a complete lack of understanding of the nature of the impoverished, their thinking processes, their culture and systems. After thirty years, he discovered that the very reasons why they are impoverished are actually fed by those from the West who are trying to help them.

Volumes have been written about the poor and how to help them. For the sake of keeping with our promise of simplicity we'll list three that especially relate to missions and missionaries.

Our mission team arrived on time but the bus driver wasn't there to pick us up. So, all sixteen of us waited, and waited, and waited some more. Finally the afternoon heat was too much for the team and we stretched out under the trees on the grass in front of the airport. There the team slept. I, however, paced up and down running through my head the exact conversation with the bus company. They knew that our flight was arriving at noon. It was now almost 5:00 PM. “Where were they?” I privately screamed.

The African bus driver smiled as big as possible as he drove up the ramp in front of the team with their luggage sprawled over the front lawn of the airport. He was expecting the same big smile from me...but I was furious. We had flown for two days to get there and were supposed to be at the mission

house by now sipping a cool drink and enjoying the evening view of the bush.

So I yelled at the driver: “Where have you been?”

He didn’t have a watch to look at. He just smiled bigger and remarked that it was Monday, wasn’t it?

For him, he was more than on time because he had arrived on the right day. For me it was a huge breach of business etiquette to be five hours late. If you are smiling at this, then you have encountered this type of experience once or twice yourself. Our cultural understanding of time differs tremendously from that of most of the rest of the world. It is said that people in Third World cultures don’t have any watches but have all the time in the world. People in the West all have watches but don’t have time for anything.

In the West, if you are late by a few minutes it is customary to call and apologize. In the East, you are not late ever. In fact, in many cultures being late is a sign of importance. Making someone else wait is a sign of power and is highly regarded. This small cultural difference is difficult for Westerners to understand and to tolerate.

I remember being late to visit some other missionaries in Costa Rica. We had set an early morning time, and when we arrived no one was awake yet. Our hosts apologized and said they had forgotten that Americans were coming. Costa Ricans wouldn’t have gotten there for another few hours. Interestingly, on that same day we were scheduled to visit another American missionary later in the afternoon but got lost and were thirty minutes late. When we knocked on the door the host opened the door and blurted out a tirade of angry words; all directed at us for wasting his time and being dishonest about our time of arrival. We apologized and he realized that he had lost it. He burst into tears and asked us to come in. He just couldn’t take the time differences in the culture. The poor man was having a nervous breakdown and confessed that he was actually packing up and going home as a result.

The point is that if time is viewed so differently, so are many other cultural issues, especially with the poor. Two come to mind relating to money. In the West we save, invest and designate money. Missionaries often think that this is how impoverished people also think about money. So they will give an indigenous pastor a \$1000 for Bibles. Later they return thinking that the money was used to buy many Bibles, but instead there might be one box of Bibles.

“Where are the rest of the Bibles?” you might ask.

“This is all I had to buy.” would be the answer.

“Where is the rest of the money?” you will ask.

“It’s gone.” will be the answer.

After a long time of intensive and insulting questioning, you might discover that some of it was given to an aunt who needed life-saving surgery and part was used for a neighbor who was in trouble with a debt. Then another part of it was used for another family emergency, some of it was used to go and buy the Bibles, and the rest was used to feed the entire family on the way. Actually, when you look at operating within their culture the fact that a box of Bibles was even purchased was pretty good. They would think so too.

You see, because they are poor, their culture has adapted a community and family bond (bondage) that connects your assets with everyone else. In these societies there is no such thing as privacy. When someone has money, everyone knows about it instantly. And in most of these cultures if anyone asks, even a distant neighbor, you must give. Yes, you must give or breach a huge cultural practice. To not give would be a disgrace. It’s impossible for them not to participate in their community. They are raised to think in these terms, and giving more money doesn’t help. It actually hurts them, as they are under such intense pressure from their extended family and community. They will automatically become the ATM of their village and, if they don’t spit out the dollars, they will be hated and shunned for many years.

Which brings us to the other perception of the poor, and that is that wealth from the West is unlimited, free and their right. Put yourself in the place of those living in this culture. If it is proper and correct to always give and share with those in need around you, then how is it possible that the West would not do the same with them, especially since we are Christians? And Christians are supposed share, if only for Christ's sake.

One day we worshipped in a remote village in Mozambique. The church was under the trees, and stumps and logs were used for pews. After the service food and water was passed out and we all shared. Everyone was happy. We talked about their need for a school and some community development programs, but at the end of the conversation the chief of the village stood up and asked if one of us would come and live with them. He beckoned and begged, "Come and live with us."

All of these other things were well and good, but what they really needed was for one of us from the West to become one with them. He believed with all his heart that if we came and lived with them, then whatever we had would become theirs and vice versa. According to his cultural mores, this would bring economic freedom to the village, because people from the wealthy West have unlimited resources.

Most of the world's poor firmly believe that North Americans walk around with briefcases full of money. They have seen it on TV and they have heard about our lifestyle from those that have come to the United States and returned. They don't understand our banking system so they think that every North American lives in a huge house, owns two huge cars and goes to the store and buys everything and anything they want just by passing a plastic "stick" to the teller.

In their countries, every house is built and paid for with cash. Cars are such a luxury that only the extremely wealthy have one, let alone two. In a land where it takes a year's income to buy a bicycle, the thought of having a car is as foreign to

their minds as thinking of owning one or two jets is to ours. It just doesn't happen. And those who do have two jets sitting by their home must have unlimited funds. The perception that everyone has this makes it even more confusing.

Most of these people only have one set of clothes, one pair of shoes and could package all of their personal belongings in a bag the size that most North American's would take to the gym. It is difficult for these men and women to understand how it is that we change clothes every day, use any kind of personal hygiene products and could eat three meals a day. If they get a chance to come to America they are shocked by the huge cars, the huge houses, and the huge people (who spend more on dieting than their country's gross national product). They make less than \$500 a year, live in grass houses with dirt floors, and struggle to obtain a few ounces of beans and rice each day to spread around for themselves and the children.

How many times I've watched the children peeking through the wall waiting to see if there are any crumbs left over from my plate. Most North Americans have no idea what poverty is.

Yes, and most impoverished people don't understand us, either.

Yes, and most impoverished people don't understand us, either.

If this is true in the Micro, it is also true in the Macro. Governments and political leadership in these countries view the West as their ATM machine as well as anyone that might be from these countries. When Westerners come to do business, they better know their way around or they will either lose their money or use it in an endless handout program that will bleed them dry. When the missionary arrives, do you think that these impoverished people are thinking: "Oh good, we are going to be taught the truth?"

Because missions is
money and money is

essential to the
maintenance, growth
and expansion of
ministry

No, they are thinking how we
can absorb him/her into our
program. It is an answer to
their need for resources.

Because missions is money
and money is essential to the
maintenance, growth and ex-
pansion of ministry.

It's called Community as-
similation. It's what keeps
missionaries coming back to
North America to raise more
and more funds only to return to the indigenous community
leaders with the funds from "heaven" and what they are now
able to do.

Which brings us to the next problem that stunts the growth of
any mission: It's the dependency on the missionary dollar.

Dependency Factor in Missions

“If character keeps Africans fatalistic and corruption binds their elites together, political correctness in the West adds a nal touch to Africa’s misery. This correctness takes several forms. The rst and most harmless is a general sympathy for a continent that has grown steadily poorer over the last 30 years.”

Robert Calderisi

Calvin went to Haiti with me about ten years ago. His heart was touched, and he used his business contacts and ingenuity to connect with some outstanding Haitian leaders in Miami to build ve Christian elementary schools in northern Haiti. These are extraordinary elementary schools built and developed from the highest models available in the country. So I was excited to meet with him a few weeks ago to get an update.

He was excited about the schools, the children that were being reached and the communities that were changing as a result. But when I asked him why he stopped building, he shot back the same answer you will hear from any missionary in the development business. The cost of operating the existing schools is such that every penny they can afford and raise is being burned up just keeping what they have going.

Indeed, being in the mission business is like running an orphanage. When you take in another project, it’s like another child to be fed and nurtured for at least eighteen years. The more children you have the more funds are needed every month to feed them. It builds and builds till someone drops...I’ve watched the wealthiest missionaries go bankrupt trying to meet all the needs of the “children” they have collected along the way. I’ve seen the best missionaries fall from exhaustion and lose their sanity, as well as their families, while trying to keep up with the demands of raising so much money every month. The poor missionary can’t get off; things are rolling too fast and furiously.

The problem is that the work, people and mission are dependent upon the monthly support. Without it, they starve.

Just like parents who are responsible for taking care of their children, missionaries become the “parents” of the mission responsible for its care and feeding...till death do they part.

It's a twofold
problem...
It's a twofold problem: the indig-
enous people expect the mission-
ary to become their provider, and
the missionary, by default and/or
compassion, strives to meet their
expectations.

Just as in the case of a dependent child and “enabling” parents, it is necessary for the missionaries to confront the problem, admit their mistakes, change and enforce independence. But this will hurt!

In the North American church, it is customary to nurture, teach and cuddle members forever. It is not uncommon for people to be born and raised in the church, going to every service, prayer meeting, Sunday School, Vacation Bible School, committee meetings, congregational retreats, special services, even Bible School and to still not be able to win anyone to Christ...not to reproduce themselves. In North America, Christians run from one teacher to another. They buy and devour the latest Christian books, literature and teachings. They run from one “miracle” worker to the next. They learn and learn and learn some more. Many Christians even have a small library; a compilation of what they have learned. Yet, they cannot show you one person they have given spiritual “birth” to, let alone disciples and encouraged to produce spiritual “grandchildren.” As a result the church has suffered with only addition and not multiplication.

The same is true in missions. I think there is a special ego gratification that comes from being the “provider” for so many. You often hear something like this:

They are just too poor...
They are just not able to do it on their own...
They are just too insecure...
They are just too weak...
They are just not ready...

The question is: When will they be ready? When do we FORCE our children to be on their own? It's usually a slow withdrawal but it is usually understood long beforehand and planned, timed and with days counted. Believe me, my parents raised four children, and we were all given advance knowledge that when we turned eighteen we either went to University or were OUT on our OWN. We laughed about it, but we all understood that it was going to happen. I think the look of excitement in my father's eyes as he contemplated a house and refrigerator of his own (we three teenage boys ate everything in sight) assured us that it was going to happen—the easy way or the hard way.

Ironically, Christendom hasn't followed suit. It's become more important to have as many "children" in the house as those that are sent out. In fact, the sign of a successful Christian leader is the one with as many "children" still home. Yes, I'm exaggerating to make a point. But the premise is true and contrary to the philosophy and methodology taught by our Lord.

The same is true in missions. The sign of success is how much is owned not how much has been made independent. This must change for financial reasons (we can't keep paying for this) and for practical reasons (we can't keep caring for older children if we are going to bring in new).

Yet, real Missions is the fulfillment of love, and love creates a process of independence.

Yet, real Missions is the fulfillment of love, and love creates a process of independence.

It builds up the strength of the person, family and community to sustain itself. Otherwise, it smothers. Let me tell you that if you feed a starving family today, they will be hungry tomorrow. If you feed them another day, and another and another...and stop, you will have an angry enemy. If we feed

them today, and tomorrow teach them to feed themselves, we will make a powerful friend.

The reason why we haven't been multiplying is because we can only add so much to our missionary "wagons." When these wagons fill up, we can build bigger wagons but eventually they will become full, and the poor little donkeys that are pulling them will fall, die or stop pulling. Then we are left with all these huge wagons to maintain and eventually they will become museums to that which was and will never be again.

Which brings us to the next reason why we haven't reached the world: the missionary culture itself.

Missionary Culture Must Change

De nitions:

Bwana: *Swahili for boss or master*

Missionary: *Someone who goes to a foreign country and attempts to convert others to a particular religion, doctrine or program.*

“Bwana”: *What the Swahili’s call the missionaries.*

The historical image of missionaries is portrayed in the rugged individualism of such men and women as William Carey (India), Amy Carmichael (India), Hudson Taylor (China), and David Livingstone (Africa). These heroes of our faith pioneered the concepts and images we think of when we speak of missionaries. They are ultra strong, unmovable and the ultimate determination of our dream spiritual missionary. “Just get out of my way...” kind of people.

Indeed, if it hadn’t been for their courage and fortitude they wouldn’t have lasted long. But the greatest strength of missionaries is also their greatest weakness. Today the “mission field” isn’t to be “conquered” for Jesus so much as to assist in the completion of what God has already started.

Lynn Stevenson was living on the island of Montserrat and for five years developed relationships and built working partnerships around the Caribbean islands for us to begin to do something big. At the time we believed that it was going to be a Youth Center, but before starting the project we decided to visit several of the islands to talk to the Christian leaders. So we bought LIAT passes and flew from island to island meeting with the leading pastors of each island.

With each visit we asked a series of questions and got a variety of answers but, for the most part, each Christian leader was grateful for our research and felt that the biggest need was for some kind of youth outreach. Over half of the islands were made up of those younger than sixteen and everyone believed they were losing their children to “the world.”

When we landed in San Lucas however, the pastor of the

largest church met us for lunch and when we shared why we were there he burst into uncontrollable tears and hugged us both many times. He explained that he had pastored there for over thirty years and had watched missionaries and evangelists come and go a “thousand” times. And this was the first time anyone had ever asked for his opinion or advice!

We were shocked. He laughed and said most of them “feel led by the Lord to come in the winter time.” They usually come and hold a crusade and start a new church. He pointed around the room and told us that they have churches on every corner...each one claiming to be the true church. They “blow in, blow up and blow out.” Leaving a handful to struggle inside another box and try to coerce others to come to their box. What they desperately needed was some help in reaching their youth and children. What could we do to help him reach the youth? If we could help him and the pastors reach the youth we could transform the island and be a blessing to everyone!

We sent Jim and Nancy Coons from Guatemala to Belize to start a new work. They asked me what they were to do. I didn’t know what, just that we felt led by the Lord to begin an outreach there. So they went (bless their faithfulness, because it changed my way of thinking), and the first thing they did was meet with as many Christian leaders as possible. Then they gathered as many names of these Christian leaders as they could and sent them all a survey. We were all shocked by their responses and their requests.

We assumed that God had sent us there to train up more Christian leaders. We discovered that there were already a huge number of Christian leaders and that the best thing we could do to help them was to provide additional training in worship, counseling and evangelism. So Jim and Nancy started working to complement the work that was already there with pastors’ conferences and training materials in these areas. There were some struggling Christian elementary schools that we helped expand and a few new ones built for impoverished villages, as well.

In America, we have the freedom to bear arms. Practically every home has a gun. Many homes have hundreds of guns. We also have the freedom of religion and every town has a church on every corner. Many towns have hundreds of churches! Anyone who feels led by the Lord can move in and start a new church right next to another church. There can be ten churches on one street alone. It doesn't matter and we don't think anything of it.

It's our culture to have diversity and variety.

It's our culture

It's always interesting to look on the face, though, of a foreigner when we drive them down "church row." Their mouths drop open and they are amazed at the opulence.

to have diversity and variety.

It's kind of like having ten shoe stores in a row. Who buys this many shoes and what kind of opulence is this when there are a thousand miles between churches in their country.

The same is true in missions. To have ten missionary organizations of ces on the same block is common. To see a dozen missionary organizations working in the same village is just as common. (And all of them are doing the same thing.) And no one has asked the indigenous Christian leaders for their opinion. In fact, the Indigenous Christian leaders are invited to participate and will (if they get something out of it) but only in that they help the mission accomplish the mission's goals.

If we are going to send the Gospel to the world we must transform the image of the missionary:

From the Master to the Servant

From a Teacher to a Learner

From being Independent to being a Networker

From being an Isolationist to being Cooperative

From being the Provider to being the Facilitator

From the Boss to the Enabler

From the Performer to the Orchestra Conductor

And lastly, from thinking Micro to thinking Macro. We must start thinking about the big picture. How can we work together to reach the entire nation for Christ? It is such an important part of this transformational plea that I've devoted an entire chapter to it.

Thinking Macro versus Micro Missions

“With the Rwandese genocide, its causes and its probable consequences, one is struck by a feeling of predictability, a social equivalent of the psychological mechanisms of Greek tragedy. Of course, hindsight encourages such a perspective.”

Gerard Pruneir in *The Rwanda Crises: History of a Genocide*

Pruneir wrote a remarkable chronology and historical analysis of the events that led up to the Rwandan Civil War, the genocide of almost a million people, and the problems that beset the nation today in dealing with the aftermath. His perspective is enlightening as he paints the whole picture of the problems that led to the fierce cultural hatred between the two tribes, the Tutsis and Hutus. He tells of their political history, Europe’s role, democratic governments, dictatorships, etc. The dimension that is missing is that of the Christian mission in Rwanda. For years missionaries have brought the Gospel to these tribes. In fact, most of these people groups claimed to be Christian and, if you were to visit them today, they would still insist they are Christian. This is similar to the Italians in World War I and Germans during World War II.

To view anything in the micro is to think only in terms of the immediate; the one issue in the midst of billions.

It is interesting that hindsight is macro thinking (looking at the big picture). Historians are like medical diagnosticians who can put the entire body into perspective and how it all relates to the illness in order to make a diagnosis and possible therapy. It’s too bad that this can’t be done for the present and the future. Most of this type of thinking is done in the micro.

To view anything in the micro is to think only in terms of the immediate; the one issue in the midst of billions.

It's to think in terms of only the soil one is standing on versus the entire village, city, region, nation, hemisphere or even the world.

I met with Joseph Tsong (a Romanian Christian Leader heavily persecuted and tortured for his faith) while he was passing through Orlando one evening. As we dined, he shared his perspective of leaders with me. He viewed leadership in terms not unlike the military. A private in the army only sees the ground he is standing on. A sergeant sees the hill. The lieutenant sees the city. A captain may see the district. The major sees the region. The colonel sees the nation but the generals see the entire world.

The question should be, yes, how can we reach the individual for Christ but ALSO how can we reach the nation for Christ?	Their perspective of the entire world leads the military in their pursuits and brings all the rest into plan and operation. His lament was that there were so few "generals" in the church. He lamented that most had been shot by the enemy or by the "friendly re" of their own people. I pressed him to name one and he was stumped.
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Indeed, most mission work is carried out with the thinking of Privates. They are concerned about the individual. We sponsor a child, a pastor, a person. One is reached for the Gospel and then another, one at a time. And, there is nothing wrong with this. This is as important as the Macro. My point is that this is most of missions as we know it. We have believed that by reaching the one we will eventually reach the masses. Let me make an announcement here. We can't. It isn't working. When we pursue Micro we will get Micro. When we pursue Macro we will get Macro. We must start thinking Micro

AND Macro. We must start thinking and acting on making an impact on the Macro if we want Macro results.

The question should be, yes, how can we reach the individual for Christ but ALSO how can we reach the nation for Christ?

One such General today is Brother Andrew. In a recent book, Brother Andrew writes that some people have asked him why Afghanistan has never had a breakthrough for Christianity. He replies that the best answer he has heard is that nobody has yet died for Afghanistan. He means that every country closed to the Gospel has to be sprinkled with someone's blood before the Gospel can penetrate it. The Muslim world waits for martyrs. Only when we can preach a Gospel that will make martyrs will the Muslim world be conquered for Christ.

Brother Andrew has lived and worked with these nations. His view is of the entire nation, the entire people group and the entire religious structure of Islam. This is the type of thinking, planning and praying that must transpire if we are going to complete the job.

The Military understands this principle. Business enterprise understands this principle. The Bible also speaks about this principle (sometime do a study on principalities and powers), but the church has missed this. Not only has the enemy separated us, but he has blinded our eyes to our ability to transform many lives at once the same way one is transformed. We can do Macro as well as Micro.

Is this any harder for God? What is one penny or a billion to God? What is one person or a nation to God? They are the same. Our perspective must be the same. We must see the penny and the billion at the same time. For most Christians, it's not difficult to believe that God is interested in the one person. We must also know that God is also interested and able to reach the billion, as well.

Hopefully, this will lead us to make at least one step in think-

ing, working and acting like we can get the job done. Let's conclude with this thought.

Lack of Vision and Focus to Get the Job Done

“If the highest aim of a captain were to preserve his ship, he would keep it in port forever.”

Thomas Aquinas

Extrême fundamentalist Muslim worldview necessitates that anarchy, destruction and chaos be brought upon the earth before Mohammed returns for his people. They believe that their job is to bring this upon the earth, especially against America and Israel, and when the destruction is at its peak the “end will come.” Their job will be complete. They will have ushered in the absolute reign of Allah.

The Christian mission stands juxtaposed to this Macro purpose. We believe that Jesus’ return will be ushered in when every people group (nation) has been given an opportunity to hear and receive the Gospel. We know that this will also coincide with the time of great destruction; famines, earthquakes, wars, etc. (see Matthew 24). Is it possible that as the world heats up with these that it should also be the signal for the completion of the task of the Gospel?

Let me give you three reasons why there has never been a more opportune time than now to reach the world and why it could be done by the year 2020.

First, technology will facilitate it.

First, technology will facilitate it.

I have been in the most remote jungles of Indonesia and been able to get on the Internet. I’ve seen a thatched roof, bamboo sided, dirt-oor hut covering twenty computers with twenty teenagers thumping keyboards, communicating with the rest of the world. In fact, most people in the West who think that we are the most advanced technological society, are utterly amazed when they travel to the East to find that there is a whole generation of technology that has yet to hit America. The reason for this is that America is such a large consumer

nation that most technology is tested and used elsewhere before it comes here. Besides, so much is produced here that it must be sold before the new comes in. Simply go to the duty free shops in Europe or Asia and you'll find the products that will finally come to the States in six months. The point remains, that there is absolutely no reason why we can't get

Second, I believe,
that many are ready

the Gospel to the world. After all, entertainers and teen idols are known worldwide within days...why is it taking us centuries?

for change.

If we have a mind to do it, we can!

Second, I believe, that many are ready for change.

We are tired of investing billions into buildings, debt and someone's ego. Most Christians are weary of continually being besieged with fund raising campaigns and never seeing any changes. So many Christians are just plain sick of hearing the same pitiful excuses for failure, for retreating, for no-win programs speaking of the need for change. But not change for change sake, but strategy that works.

Troubles, difficulties
and stresses will bring
people to their knees.

There is a "Vietnam War Mentality" (We can't win, we will lose anyway, we can only sustain till we can get out of here) that has prevailed in the church which must be challenged and reversed, and now is the time.

Troubles, difficulties and stresses will bring people to their knees.

It is during these times that people will be looking for a Savior. Many will fix their eyes on our own heroes, but soon these will disappoint them. They will be looking for the real thing. Jesus is the real thing and only He will satisfy. The

whole world has cancer, and we have the cure. They can try everything and anything else but Jesus really is the “Way, the Truth and the Life.”

Third, there has never been a time when there is so much spiritual activity.

The spiritual war is heating up and the spiritual armies are gathering.

We know how the last chapter will turn out (read the book of Revelation). We live in the era just before it.

Let's Get the Job Done!

The spiritual war is heating up and the spiritual armies are gathering.

Vision: I Have A Dream

1. What if Missionaries and Missionary Agencies worked in absolute transparency (where possible of course)?
2. What if Missions started pooling their resources?
3. What if Missionaries started working together?
4. What if we focused on Jesus alone?
5. What if we prioritized Jesus alone?
6. What if we didn't care who took the credit and gave all to Christ for His glory?
7. What if we developed bridges (not walls) for those to go?
8. What if we established training programs so everyone could go with the Gospel?
9. What if we acted like Christians in our hurting world?
10. What if we emptied our churches into the highways and byways?
11. What if we prioritized people in missions and not television?
12. What if we started being a hospital for the sick instead of a courtroom for judgments?
13. What if we sent everyone who was willing to be trained?
14. What if we saw the world as God sees it?

15. What if love were our only motivator?
16. What if we knew how to heal the hurting poor?
17. What if we birthed, trained and set our spiritual children free?
18. What if we went as servants instead of lords?
19. What if we thought in perspective of how we could win the entire nation to Christ?
20. What if our one encompassing vision were to send the Gospel to the world?

Then, we could easily do
it by the year 2020!

May the Lord bless you as you participate with God in His great purpose. After all, He paid the ultimate price for the world. He is coming back to claim her for His own.

“[Imitating Christ's Humility] If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose.”

Phil. 2:1-2



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