



*An Independent Church Journal
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It is my privilege to give an eye-witness account of what God is doing among the ladies of our IFCA sisters in India. For two weeks in October, I traveled with my husband, IFCA International Director of Church and Pastoral Ministries Dan Fredericks, and two Native American IFCA pastors, Dan Gutierrez and Mike Calvin. Other than travel time, our team kept a very full schedule of teaching and learning about several ministries being carried on in India...

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Many believers want to spend time in devotions and see the need for it, but somehow don't actually make it a spiritual discipline in their life, a regular time where they talk with the Lord and listen to Him speak to their heart. In this article I'd like to briefly share the why, when, what and how of having a quality quiet time with the Lord...

Cathy Howell

Balance in Missions

Les Lofquist

Executive Director, IFCA International

I grew up when circus performers were still regularly performing before large audiences. One of the most famous circus acts was The Flying Wallenda Family, known for their amazing balance on the highwire and trapeze. The nation was therefore stunned when patriarch Karl Wallenda plunged to his death while performing on a highwire strung between two buildings in San Juan, Puerto Rico in 1978. Simply put, he just lost his balance.

Imagine that: the veteran highwire performer Karl Wallenda lost his balance after decades of making his living by walking on a tightrope! This is a sobering realization about the importance of staying balanced.

Maintaining balance is hard in ministry

We admit how difficult it is to stay balanced in our ministries and in our churches. Rabbit-trails, diversions, hobby-horses, obstacles, and blind spots await all of us if we're not constantly focused on keeping our balance.

Missions is one aspect of ministry I've carefully observed over the last three decades. I was a Missions major in Bible College. I went to seminary to prepare for missionary service. I served ten years as a missionary among the Mormons in Utah. And I served as the Senior Pastor of a church which sent 41 missionary couples to the field.

And in all my experience I've seen many churches with an unbalanced view of missions. The pendulum seems to swing wildly from one extreme to the other for numerous churches when it comes to missionary involvement.

The Post-WW II Missions Extreme

When World War II ended in 1945, hundreds of thousands of American G.I.'s returned home with a new vision of the world. The United States went from its historic position of isolationism to an unprecedented internationalism. In the following half-century America became the undisputed leader of the entire world and the WW II generation of leaders thought in global terms.

The American church has been similarly effected by WW II. Those veterans saw the world in need beyond our own shores. Many Christians came home from the war with an immense burden for the world's lost, and they did something about it.

One perceptive article described the post-WW II era in the American church this way:

The American church followed the new internationalism. American money and missionaries flooded the world. The post War decades became the greatest period of missionary activity and world evangelization in Christian history. The United States became the primary sending nation. Churches gave growing percentages of their budgets to foreign missions, especially through popular "faith promise" programs. Annual missions conferences for fundraising, missionary reporting, recruitment, and prayer became popular. Christian colleges became fertile recruitment fields for missionaries. Bible institutes and Bible colleges were founded or expanded to educate future missionaries. Enormous advances were made in Bible translation, gospel broadcasting, and church planting.¹

In those golden days for foreign missions, those of us involved in home missions felt like the stereotypical stepchild: acknowledged, but unloved. We felt the need to explain the validity of our inclusion in church missions budgets. We had to justify our invitation to church Missions Conferences. We heard that our monthly funds were getting cut in favor of some foreign missionary endeavor. We felt that the American church was unbalanced in its understanding of missions. We felt that foreign missions was preferred in this unbalanced view. I know the feelings ... because I was there.

The Baby Boomers' Missions Extreme

The children born in the two decades after WW II are frequently called the Baby Boomers. For their generation, the defining experience was also a war ... the Viet Nam war. They grew suspicious of the international intentions of America's leaders. They became increasingly concerned about our own nation's problems: government corruption, racism, poverty, crime. Today it seems that many are advocating an isolationism for America. As the Baby Boomers have assumed positions of leadership, there are indications that Americans want to withdraw back into our own borders and take care of "America first." It may be premature, but it does seem that

Americans are moving from a global orientation to a local one as the WW II generation passes off the scene.

If this cultural shift indeed is occurring as outlined above, then it explains what I've recently been observing. These observations have come in the last years of ministry in the Midwest.

I've watched as a growing "America first" attitude has crept into our churches. Foreign missions giving is declining. The graying of foreign missions is happening. WWII era missionaries and donors are retiring and passing away without younger replacements stepping forward. I've talked to one foreign mission director who's worried whether they can keep going with the declining concern for the foreign field in today's churches. One missionary friend of mine who serves in Africa lost \$1,000 a month in support when his home church at one meeting decided "local outreach was more consistent with our church's vision than overseas evangelism." One church here in the Midwest entirely dropped the support of over 50 foreign missionaries so they could "have the resources to evangelize our city." One pastor friend of mine (a fellow Baby Boomer) confided to me that "foreign missions is a copout from local evangelism, a way the oldtimers can soothe their conscience for not reaching nextdoor neighbors." And many of the Baby Boomer new church plants have no money at all budgeted for foreign missionary support.

As hard as it is for this old home missionary to admit, it seems the pendulum has swung. The American church is still unbalanced in its understanding of missions. But foreign missions is no longer preferred. "America first" is the rallying cry among many Baby Boomers. Even more sadly, many American Christians are actually saying, "Me first."

This False Dichotomy Is Unbiblical

The biblical understanding of missions will not allow the wild swings of a pendulum. We are commanded by our Lord to go into all the world and make disciples (Matt. 28:19-20). He outlined the manner in which we should go about the job in Acts 1:8. We are to be His "witnesses both in Jerusalem and in Judea and in Samaria and to the ends of the earth."

According to Christ, we must not separate this task into two completely distinct parts with some sort of competitive relationship. This false dichotomy between foreign and home missions is a clear violation of Jesus Christ's commandment. He commanded us to be involved in the process of evangelism and discipling both across the street and across the sea.

A Plea for Balance in Missions

My plea is for balance! We must seek the biblical balance in missions for our churches.

We need to support home missionaries and foreign missionaries (and simply call all of them "missionaries"). We need to be praying for the cities of the world and sending our money to reach Chicago, Detroit, L.A., New York, New Delhi, Beijing, Kinshasa, and Moscow. We need to reach the people in the cornfields of Indiana and the rice patties of Asia. A teenager is just as lost in an American high school as on a Manila street. Let's reach them all. Let's plant churches in the community down the road and in the continent down under.

Pray for and actively seek to reach the lost Mormons, Moslems, and Methodists. People need the Gospel whether living in the 10/40 Window or along I-10 and I-40.

As American Christians and churches, when it comes to missions, we must obey Christ's balanced command and reject our culture's unbalanced concerns. Because if we don't, like Karl Wallenda, we'll learn the peril of losing our balance.

1 Leith Anderson "The Turn Inward," *Leadership* (Fall 1995), p. 99.

Celebrate the Cause of Missions

Robert Provost

I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents. Luke 15:10

When a sinner repents anywhere in the world the angels of God celebrate in heaven. And what a celebration it will be when we are all there, from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. The missionaries in the early church were frequently reporting back concerning what God had been doing through them, bringing great joy to all the brethren (Acts 15:3). The brethren gladly received the missionaries (Acts 21:17). When they heard the things which God had done, they began glorifying Him (21:19-20).

When the missionaries reported back to the churches that were praying for them, there was great rejoicing as they heard how God had been answering their prayer. (Acts 15:31). There was no higher priority in the early church!

Everywhere the missionaries traveled they ministered in the churches.

Through them God richly blessed the churches. Over and over again we read in the book of Acts that the missionaries strengthened and encouraged the churches (Acts 14:22, Acts 15:32, Acts 15:41, Acts 16:5, and Acts 18:23). When the missionaries came to town everyone was glad to see them...it was a very special time. There was great excitement, joy, and praise. It was a time of tremendous celebration. Through the reports and preaching of the missionaries, God's people in the churches were strengthened...and they were encouraged. It was no doubt the most exciting time of the year. And most of all, God was glorified for what He had done through the missionaries! Jesus was building His church and He was using them to do it. There is no greater cause for celebration known to mankind!

So what has happened to us? Why don't we still celebrate it this way? Sometimes the annual event isn't what it used to be. Sometimes it can be more a responsibility to be endured. Sometimes folks attend to avoid the guilt that would accompany staying at home. Sometimes it is difficult to fit the conference into the smothering church calendar. And sometimes the funds required for the conference would seem to push the already stretched church budget over the edge. At the same time, most would agree that a strong emphasis on the nations is very important to the Lord.

In fact, the authority for it is maximum. It originated in the personal command of the Lord of lords and King of kings, to Whom all authority has been given in heaven and on earth. The Lord of the harvest bought the harvest, chose and appointed us to gather it, told us how to do it, and showed us how to do it. He promised to help us do it, and promised that even the gates of Hades would not overpower it. He then chose the Apostle Paul to be His instrument to bear His name before the Gentiles and kings and sons of Israel and to show us how to plant churches. Jesus called it building His church. It was the central, driving purpose of the church. But we have learned to diminish its importance ... given it the label "missions" ... and reduced it to a minor role in our churches and in our personal lives. How could it possibly merit a big celebration?

Whatever we call it, and however we do it, it continues to be the first priority on the agenda of Christ. He came to seek and to save that which is lost. The first commandment is loving God and the first evidence of loving God is obeying God. The second commandment is loving our neighbor as ourselves, and the first evidence of such love is action related to the salvation of their souls. From Genesis to Revelation God tells us that He wants all nations to worship Him and be glad. He tells us that He gave His Beloved Son for the sins of all the world. Many times in His Word, He tells us that every tongue, tribe, people, and nation will be present in heaven. The New Testament

is replete with comments and examples which mandate it to be the essential, central, component of the life of a local church.

The purpose is abundantly clear . It is simply to obey God by making disciples of men, women, and children of all the tribes, tongues, peoples, and nations. The intended leadership responsibility is also unquestionable. It is top level elders' work ... the first priority of the elders.

The strategy has been given to us. It is simply the proclamation of repentance for forgiveness of sins in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. And even the method has been given to us. Local churches send preachers to be Christ's witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth. Local churches send preachers to make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that Jesus commanded us. The sent preachers (missionaries) organize the new disciples into Bible-preaching churches, encourage them to continue in the faith, appoint elders, pray and fast on their behalf, commend them to the Lord, and report back to their sending church. The sponsoring local church stays in touch with their new daughter churches, keeping them encouraged, helping them reach their communities, helping them deal with issues that come up, and in time, helping them send out preachers (missionaries) to other unreached locations.

The accountability for fulfillment is very sobering. Properly understood it should be a heavy weight. Every Christian will be called upon by Christ to give an account for our faithfulness to Him and for our obedience to His commands. This is His top priority! The personal accountability which every Christian has for faithfulness in this area cannot be overstated. The key issues are prayer and stewardship of time and resources. And as stewards of the mysteries of God, pastors and elders have a special higher level of accountability to Christ for faithfulness in it.

At the same time, the privilege is amazing! How remarkable that the God of the universe has chosen us, through no merit on our part, to be His servants to carry out the most important work in the universe. By His grace and in His power, the insignificant have been selected to do the most significant. It is our staggering privilege to serve Christ and suffer for Him, to be a sweet aroma for Him, to be the salt of the earth, to be the light of the world, to prepare the soil, to scatter the seed, to proclaim salvation, to gather the harvest, to make disciples, to plant churches, and to even make nations glad!

This is what we have learned to call "missions" and let dwindle in importance. It is time for all our churches to begin celebrating our Lord's love for all the nations appropriately! It is time to make the Great Commission, which IS the main thing, the main thing, indeed, in our churches. It is time for a church leadership international revival. The first question must not be whether or how to hold a missions conference, but what place missions should have in our church life? In fact, if we seriously revisit the Biblical importance of missions, we can only conclude that missions IS the church! Having another term to describe it has served to move it from the center of our focus. And it is time to bring it back.

First we should hold huge celebration gatherings in our churches just to glorify God for our privilege. Then we should begin holding major, multiple annual conferences to emphasize our responsibility and expand our efforts. At the same time we should begin observing regular times in our Sunday services to report and celebrate the fruit that God has granted. Then we'll be joining the angels of the Lord in heaven as they celebrate the victory every time a sinner repents somewhere in the world. They do it everyday. Jesus is building His church, and He is using us to do it! How could there possibly be a greater reason for celebration?

Dr. Robert Provost is President of Slavic Gospel Association and a member of IFCA International.

The High Cost of Missions

Paul Seger

The currency calculator had to be wrong. There's no way a cup of coffee could cost \$13.00. I was standing outside a European cafe, looking at their menu. The aroma of coffee had stopped me in my tracks; yet, there was the stewardship issue of paying that much for a cup of coffee.

Perhaps you have had that same reaction to the high cost of missions. Today's support levels range between \$25,000 and \$80,000 a year. It's startling to think that in the near future, missionaries will be raising \$100,000 a year for support. The price tag for missions is extremely high.

Our natural tendency is to revolt at these figures. There was a day when a missionary left for Africa with only a pith helmet and a Bible. Those days are over. There are presently 61 countries around the world where the cost of living is higher than if you lived downtown New York City. In some countries the cost of living index is four times as high as the United States. Could you imagine paying \$1,200 a month rent for a four hundred square foot apartment? Many missionaries around the world would consider paying \$3 a gallon for gas a bargain. They pay \$7 a gallon. Do you know missionaries serving in Tokyo, Moscow, Hong Kong, Seoul or Geneva? Those are cities in the top ten most expensive cities in the world. There is high cost in reaching Tokyo for sure. But to do so is absolutely necessary according to the Great Commission.

There was a time when most missionaries lived in rural settings. You could grow, catch or shoot your food. But most of the world's population has moved to the city. Cities are expensive. Add all of this to the weakening dollar and inflation rates of 15-20% in some countries around the world, and you have a recipe for high support schedules. In secular industry they say that "The cost of sending a mid-level manager on a three-year international assignment can easily exceed \$1 million," (Sherry Harsch-Porter, The Porter Bay Groups). From that vantage point, missionaries operate at bargain basement prices.

A missionary is a self-contained unit of ministry. They provide their own office, telephone, and secretary. They pay their own postage, office expenses, supplies, cost of travel, insurance, social security, retirement and sometimes pay taxes in two countries. There's no way around it; missions is expensive!

Then the obvious question is: "What can we do about it?" We do not have control over the world's economy. Therefore, our focus should be on that which we can control. It is obvious from Scripture that missions is not an option. In view of all of this, I have two suggestions:

(1) Examine our priorities, and (2) raise the standard.

Prioritize

The problem is not money. The Christian Booksellers Association recently reported that they are a five billion dollar a year business. That means as American Christians we have that amount of disposable income. American churches spend \$1 billion a year on short term trips to the mission field. We have the resources to fulfill the Great Commission. The only question is, "Where are we going to put those resources?" We also must prioritize what kind of missionaries we will support. The typical church supports many more missionaries doing support ministries than frontline warriors doing evangelism, discipleship, and church planting. Perhaps it would be wise to evaluate where the mission dollars of your church are going.

Raise the standard

When the Spirit of God in Acts 13 called out missionaries from the church at Antioch, He targeted leaders. At that point, Paul and Barnabas had a combined ministry experience of more than 30 years. God scraped the cream off the top of the church in Antioch and sent them to the mission field. One church I know has a policy to support only "proven disciplemaking leaders" to the mission field. This is profound! With the cost of missions skyrocketing, we need to be investing in those who have proven themselves in leadership by reproducing themselves. We need to be sending pastors and assistant pastors to the mission field, instead of novices.

The qualifications of a missionary fall into three major categories.

1. Godly character
2. Academic excellence
3. Skills in ministry

Most start off in ministry with strengths in the first two categories but are weak in the third area. It is often our lack of ministry skills that renders us ineffective. For instance, a missionary may be godly and know all his theology, but if he does not have people skills or cannot communicate well, the ministry is hampered. Colleges and seminaries are challenged by time and personnel constraints to provide equipping in ministry skills. The local church must take responsibility for training and evaluating the ministry skills of a potential missionary. In view of the high cost of missions we must be sending out the Pauls and Barnabases of our church.

Yes, missions is an extremely expensive proposition. I passed up that thirteen dollar cup of coffee. But we don't have that option when it comes to missions. It's a command of God. We are engaged in missions, not because it's cheap, but because God told us to.

Paul Seger is General Director of Biblical Ministries Worldwide headquartered in Atlanta. He was raised in Nigeria, West Africa. After his education, he and his wife Joan were involved in a church planting ministry in Johannesburg, South Africa before assuming his present position. They have two adult children.

Training African Pastors

Steve VanHorn

After serving 17 years as a pastor in Oregon, with a certain amount of fear and trembling I took my first trip to Africa in January of 1998 to teach a course at the Nairobi International School of Theology (NIST). About all that I knew about Africa at the time was that Nairobi was in Kenya. I was so naïve that I can remember asking the principal of the school, my good friend Dr. Lazarus Seruyange, "Is Africa all one country?" I was pretty sure there was more than one independent country on the continent. But I wanted to make sure. That was my introduction to the continent of Africa.

During one of our conversations during those two short weeks in Africa, Dr. Seruyange told me that researchers say that 20,000 people a day are turning to Christ on the Africa continent. He also told me that Christianity in Africa can be described as a river that is two miles wide but only an inch deep. When one hears that, they usually picture a continent where revival is taking place, and where there are baby Christians everywhere. Little did I know at the time the seriousness of the situation that is developing with so many baby Christians and so few trained pastors and teachers of the Word of God.

God used those two weeks in Nairobi, Kenya (just one of the over fifty countries on the African continent by the way) to change the focus of my ministry. I returned to teach a second course at the school in August of the same year, and continued teaching courses each January and August through January of 2005.

Each time I returned to the school, I learned more and more about the situation in Africa. There were students from all over the continent attending NIST so I heard comments and stories regarding all the continent. I began to hear about the traditional religions of Africa which include spiritism, animism, and witchcraft. I was introduced to the word "syncretism" which I learned means "combining different religions into a conglomerate religion." In other words, the Christianity being taught and lived by most Christians in Africa is a mixture of their traditional religions and what little they know about real Christianity. I can still remember what one student told me, "Steve, the difference between the Christian and the non-Christian in Africa is that the Christian goes to the witchdoctor at night." It was then I began to understand the situation we were facing there. But even then, I had no real idea of how bad the situation was.

During that first trip in January of 1998, one of my students was a pastor from Uganda. We became good friends during the two weeks of the class. As we talked, I asked him to pray for me as I was asking God if I should make these trips a part of my ongoing ministry. He did begin praying for me, and in the next few months we received the same confirmation from the Lord that we were to be involved in helping train pastors together in Uganda.

Two of my other students in that first class asked me if our church would like to begin planting churches in their country, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). One year later we, launched a church planting ministry in that country. Today there are at least ten solid churches in the DRC that we have had a part in starting.

As I continued to go back to teach at NIST, other students would hear what I was doing in Uganda, in the DRC, and some began asking me to do the same things in their country. By the summer of 1999 I had become a fulltime missions pastor, and the future of my ministry had been clearly established by the Lord. But I still was not really in touch with what I believe is the greatest crisis in Africa.

I was in charge of raising funds for a rapidly growing missions ministry (church planting in the DRC, and pastor training in Uganda, Kenya, Rwanda, and Nigeria). I began looking for motivational statistics to build a case for the need to plant churches and train pastors. I came across just what I needed, a list of statistics revealing the needs in Africa.

Immorality, corruption, tribalism, mismanagement of resources, political instability, HIV/AIDS, disease, and poverty became the themes of my presentation when I was raising funds for our church's missions projects. But my spiritual eyes still hadn't seen what, I believe, is the greatest need in Africa. There are issues that meet the eye, that make the headlines, that grab our attention, and they are all needs worthy of our attention both individually and corporately through our churches. But there is another need that desperately needs our attention, and I mean desperately! The greatest need in Africa, in my opinion after traveling there over twenty times, is the spiritual poverty, the spiritual malnutrition, and the spiritual famine that is plaguing the continent.

A missionary who has spent 28 years ministering in Uganda recently told me "Satan has used American religious broadcasting to hijack the church in Africa." Those are his exact words, and he is a mature man who chooses his words carefully.

The gospel is spreading like wildfire in most of Africa. In the year 2000, a survey revealed that 48.4% of those on the continent claim to be Christians. We are being told that an additional

20,000 a day are turning to Christ, and churches are popping up like popcorn pops in a popcorn popper. Yet I ask the question: what about the desperate need for trained pastors to feed these believers the pure milk of the Word?

What has captured my attention in the past two years is the wildfire of false teaching sweeping the continent. The health and wealth gospel dominates Christianity there. The missionary I mentioned earlier is Baptist, and told me that on any given Sunday, 90% of the Baptist churches in Kampala (Uganda's capital) will preach a prosperity gospel. The man who coordinates our ministry in Nigeria told me that probably 60% of the churches there preach a health and wealth gospel.

This is the situation everywhere I go in Africa. I sat in a church in Kenya where one of the leaders told the congregation that God didn't want Christians driving Toyotas but BMWs. I heard similar things in a church in Zambia.

But the false teaching is broader than this one issue. Self proclaimed "super apostles" offer prayers of deliverance for a fee. So-called "prophets" tell untaught, gullible church attenders who will be going to the United States next, who will get a nice car next, who will get a job next, and more. Then they take an offering. People seem anxious to give to these false prophets.

Besides the false teaching about prosperity, and the false prophets who fill the churches, the health gospel is driving people to witchdoctors. People are being told that God wants all believers to be healthy, and when Western medicine doesn't heal them, many often turn to the local witchdoctor.

Many pastors manipulate the church members threatening them with God's judgment if they do not follow the directives of the pastor. Not only that, but they try to manipulate God as well. The missionary from Uganda told me that in many ways (in practice and position) the pastor functions like a witchdoctor only using a Christian vocabulary. They lead their members to appease God, hoping to get something in return. Part of the appeasement is giving money, hoping God will give more in return.

Then there is the problem of infidelity on the part of many pastors who use their position to gain certain favors from women. And it is common for a pastor to have more than one wife. It was revealed to me that one of my key volunteers was one of them. When I confronted him, he told me that he was man of God and the two families gave him permission to leave one and move in with another. Other pastors live with women and have families out of wedlock because they are unable to pay the dowry, and the culture allows for this.

There are a few sources where these false practices and heresies come from. The traditional religions taught ancestor worship, spiritism, and witchcraft is one source. Their culture which allows some of these unbiblical practices is another. But the primary source of the health and wealth gospel is American religious television which is broadcast into all of these countries.

Almost every home that I've been with a television has the channel set to whatever religious station there is, and as I watch I see many of the programs and personalities we see in the States. Most of the Africans appearing on these stations are carbon copies of their American counterparts. So pastors and church members alike watch these programs all week, and because the pastor is untrained and undiscerning they go into their church and preach what they hear on television, and the heresy spreads.

To make things worse, this is what much of the Christian populace wants. They see the health and wealth gospel as their ticket out of poverty and disease. That is why the health and wealth churches are flourishing, and why religious leaders encourage their pastors to preach a health and wealth gospel. It is an uphill battle we are fighting there, but a battle that must be fought.

The mission I serve under is International Training and Equipping Ministries. Our motto is "Using Scripture alone to train leaders for the church in the world." When our seminars begin we tell those in attendance "At this seminar the Bible will never close." We are not just teaching biblical principles when we train pastors, we are teaching them the Bible in an expository fashion letting the text define the topic not the other way around. We are trying to help them establish a biblical foundation upon which they can build their ministry.

We call our basic seminar The Institute in the Foundations of Church Leadership. We begin with a basic overview of bibliology in order to establish the Word of God as our sufficient and only resource. Once that is established we begin to look at what it says about the pastor, his role, and the purpose of the church. Before it is over we study Acts 20:28-35 and what Paul told the Ephesian elders. We survey the Pastoral Epistles since they were written to young pastors. We look in depth at the qualifications of leadership in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1, and ask the pastors to evaluate their own qualifications and lifestyle in light of those chapters.

In the advanced seminar we give an Old Testament overview in one lecture, and a New Testament overview in another. We cover the important theology in Romans and Ephesians, and confront head on the origin and teachings of the health and wealth gospel, plus the biblical approaches to spiritual warfare, and church discipline. New seminars we are working on are a biblical approach to women's ministries, a biblical approach to church growth, and a seminar on how to study the Bible which is directed to the lower level of education and the lack of resources that we find on the African continent. Our challenge to these men during each of these seminars is to be willing to "suffer hardship as a good soldier," and to "fight the good fight" in the war for the truth.

We are currently conducting seminars in five countries: Democratic Republic of Congo (where Les Lofquist our Executive Director was in August) Nigeria, Uganda, Kenya, and Zambia. We have requests from Kenya and Tanzania as well. There are other open doors that we have been unable to walk through due to a lack of manpower. Bob Allen, another IFCA member, was with me in the Democratic Republic of Congo in August, and is currently raising his support and will become director for our West African, French speaking ministry.

So we covet your prayers and solicit your help in bringing biblical accuracy and sound doctrine to the continent of Africa which has been overrun by false teachers and heresy but is also filled with willing and very teachable pastors who are eager to learn and be effective communicators of the Word of God.

Dr. Steve Van Horn is President of International Training and Equipping Ministries of Beaverton, OR. Learn more at www.iteministries.org or write him at steve@iteministries.org. He is a member of IFCA International.

A Strange Postmodern World

Steve Cornell

Those who desire to be effective in ministry must be aware of the cultural contexts of their ministries. They must understand the underlying ways people think and especially the way people view truth and reality. Missionaries have known this for many years. Those who minister in western cultures have fairly recently recognized some significant shifts in the way people view truth and reality. This shift has been identified as movement from a modern to a postmodern culture. Is this shift as significant as some profess it to be? If it is, what does it look like and how should we respond to it?

R. R. Reno wisely recommended, "If we care about evangelism, then surely we need to get our bearings in this strange postmodern world. If we wish to preach and teach effectively, than we must be clear about where the sharp and double-edged sword of the gospel cuts into the spirit of the age. This is especially important because our churches are awash with disorienting analysis. Some are eager to convince us that our sophisticated scientific culture just cannot accept the simplistic mythological worldview of traditional Christianity. Others are certain that the new global communication makes us so aware of cultural and religious diversity that the traditional exclusivist claims of Christianity are untenable. Still others drink deeply at the well of literary theory and in an intoxicated reverie announce that old ideas of meaning and truth have been transcended...Most however, offer a straight forward assessment: our postmodern world is so very, very, complex that the traditional forms of Christian preaching and teaching must be updated and revised." ¹

Admittedly, there is widespread misunderstanding and disagreement about the label 'postmodern'. D. A. Carson wrote, "The meaning of postmodernism is not transparent. Moreover, its range of application (it has been applied to literature, art, communication theory, architecture, epistemology, jurisprudence, the philosophy of science, and more) means that its associations for one person may be very different from its associations for someone else." ²

Craig M. Gay observed that, "There is very little agreement as yet as to what 'postmodernity' means. While the term occasionally simply denotes dissatisfaction with modernity, it is increasingly used to suggest that we have entered into an entirely new cultural situation in which none of the old 'modern' rules and habits of mind need be taken seriously anymore. All such suggestions are mistaken and misleading. ...the ideals of the modern project are still very firmly embedded in the central institutional realities of contemporary society. Although modernity may well be passé in certain intellectual circles, typically modern ideas and assumptions are still quite effectively communicated within contemporary culture by many of the institutional realities that surround us and by many of the ways we do things today. ...postmodernity represents only a kind of extension of modernity, a kind of 'hyper-modernity.'" ³

Along similar lines, British sociologist Anthony Giddens suggested that, "rather than entering a period of post-modernity, we are moving into one in which the consequences of modernity are becoming more radicalized and universalized than before." ⁴ Accordingly, it could be said that we are living in most-modern times instead of post-modern.

Whatever label one chooses, western culture in particular has experienced some significant changes that effect gospel ministry. For the purpose of this article, these changes will be explored in relation to modernity.

Understanding the shift: pre-modern to modern to post-modern

- 1. Pre-modern: Religion is the source of truth and reality (God's existence, attributes and revelation were givens in the culture)**
- 2. Modern: Science is the source for truth and reality (religion and morality are moved to the subjective realm)**
- 3. Postmodern: There is no single defining source for truth and reality beyond the individual--not even science or history.**

Modernism brought relativism and individualism into the realm of religion and morality. Science (and to a degree, history) remained bastions of objectivity.

Postmodernism radicalized relativism and individualism and applied it to all spheres of knowing--even science. In relation to this shift, a mood change has settled into western culture.

A mood change: from optimism to pessimism

Postmodernity has brought with it a shift from human optimism (based on scientific certainty and technological progress), to a pessimistic mood of skepticism, uncertainty and even angst. The people who fill our Churches have been affected by this shift---especially the young people. The postmodern mood is basically one of disbelief.

Contrasting modern and postmodern

The following contrasts between modern and postmodern offer another way to consider the mood change.

Modernity was confident.

Postmodernity is anxious.

Modernity had all the answers.

Postmodernity is full of questions.

Modernity reveled in reason, science and human ability.

Postmodernity wallows (with apparent contentment or nihilistic angst) in mysticism, relativism, and the incapacity to know anything with certainty. ⁵

Postmoderns on truth and reality

Postmodernity rejects individual autonomy, universal reason and absolute truth. Truth (under postmodernity) is completely perspectival and situational. History, social class, gender, culture, and religion all control the way we understand truth and reality. They shape the narratives and meanings of our lives as culturally embedded, localized social constructions without any universal application. Claims of universal meaning are viewed as efforts to marginalize and oppress the rights of others.

The most important value of postmodernity is the inadmissibility of all totalizing ways of viewing any dimension of life. Postmodernity, as a theory, refuses to allow any single defining source for truth and reality.

Kevin Vanhoozer illustrates the way postmoderns understand reality: "We do not simply look at a rose and evaluate its intrinsic beauty, fragrance and design, we consider ourselves as we look at the rose. The temptation is to think that the color of the rose is a product of our optical nerve, and its scent of our noses, so that in the end there is no rose left." ⁶

Challenge to gospel ministry

Applying this shift to gospel ministry, D. A. Carson wrote, "Initially, the removal of transcendent truth or values led to a restlessness that was seized for the gospel. Now, the restlessness is moving toward a carefree attitude. Postmoderns seem to have a striking capacity to endure groundlessness and incoherence calmly -to live as ironists with equanimity." ⁷

Kevin Vanhoozer believes that many of the people we desire to reach with the gospel "reject unifying, totalizing, and universal schemes in favor of a new emphasis on difference, plurality, fragmentation and complexity. Postmoderns are suspicious of truth claims, of 'getting it right.'" ⁸

The ethic of pluralistic civility is the social expectation. Tolerance is required of all. Lessons on good arguments and detecting error are unnecessary. Those who promote such things are suspected of imperialistic motives aimed at oppressing the weak and less fortunate.

R. R. Reno, perceptively observed the spirit of this age when he wrote, "Anxieties about the closed circuit of dogma, the exhausting weight of tradition, and the crushing force of institutional authority lead our postmodern culture to the extreme of denying the authority of truth itself."²

Elements of absurdity in postmodernity

Although people entrenched in a postmodern outlook profess to care little about consistency, it is wise to expose the significant logical inconsistencies in postmodern theory. Consider the following inconsistencies:

Postmodernity is the worldview that says no worldview exists.

Postmodernity is an anti-theory that uses theoretical tools to neutralize all theories.

Postmodernity demands an imposed uniformity in an effort to resist uniformity.

Postmoderns often use propositional statements to negate truth based on propositional statements.

Discovering and exposing these kinds of logical contradiction often invites the postmodern smirk that says--"poor soul, you are so bound by modernity." It is perhaps best to express these concerns as sincere questions. Our goal in evangelism is never to win an argument. It is always to lead a person to truth and freedom.

Effective ministry requires us to see through and gently expose the smokescreens people use to avoid truth. Many years ago, Blaise Pascal described what we observe in people today, "Being unable to cure death, wretchedness and ignorance, men have decided, in order to be happy, not to think about such things."¹⁰ The gospel, however, calls us to think about these things and to turn from death to life.

Postmodernity: A benefit and a danger

"The introduction of postmodernity has proved of some benefit to Christian faith. The Enlightenment sought to relegate matters of faith to the rear of the bus as either insignificant or nonexistent. Postmodernity returns value to faith and affirms the nurturing of our spiritual being as vital to humankind. Unfortunately, with the loss of truth, people will now seek faith without boundaries, categories, or definition. The old parameters of belief do not exist. As a result, people will be increasingly open to knowing God, but on their own terms."¹¹

"The willing conformity that characterizes so much postmodern life can give the evangelist hope that the prideful self-sufficiency of modernity has finally exhausted itself. These are, however, deceptions made possible by a fixation on pride as the primary barrier to faith. Sloth and cowardice in reality are just as deadly. Both slink away from the urgency of conviction. Both fear the sharp edge of demand and expectation. Both have a vested interest in cynicism, irony and outward conformity. These vices, not pride, now dominate our culture."¹²

Conclusion

Understanding the shift to postmodernity will become increasingly important for those called to minister in Western culture. In changing times, we must be willing to make changes in the way we do evangelism and ministry. But we must never make concessions to postmodernity that compromise the integrity of the gospel or diminish Scripture as the authoritative, univocal divine revelation for humanity. Any moderation of the demands of the gospel to accommodate the

postmodern spirit, will drain it of the power of God unto salvation. If the gospel is held hostage to the restrictions of postmodernity, it ceases to be the good news that humans so desperately need.

Eight truths for postmodern times

- 1. We are all sinners who receive the penalty of death (Romans 3:10, 23; 5:12)**
- 2. God has demonstrated His love for all (John 3:16; Romans 5:8).**
- 3. God desires salvation for all (1 Timothy 2:3-4; 2 Peter 3:9).**
- 4. God has made provision for salvation (1 Timothy 2:5-6; 4:9-10; Titus 2:11; 1 John 2:2).**
- 5. God commands all people to repent (Acts 17:30).**
- 6. God will hold all accountable for their response to His provision (Romans 2:4-11; 14:11; Acts 17:31).**
- 7. God takes no pleasure in the rejection of His provision (Ezekiel 18:23, 32).**
- 8. God will save all who place faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (John 3:16; 11:26; Romans 10:13).**

Footnotes:

1 R. R. Reno. Quoted from a resource essay, Mars Hill Audio, www.marshillaudio.org, p. 1

2 Modern Reformation Magazine, "The Dangers & Delights of Postmodernism", D. A. Carson, 2003, (July / August, 2003, Vol. 12.4)

3 Craig, Gay, The Way of the (modern) world Or, why It's tempting to Live as if God doesn't Exist, Eerdmans, 1998, pp. 17-18.

4 Giddens, Anthony, The Consequences of Modernity, Stanford Unity Press, 1990, p. 3

5 Graham Johnston, Preaching to a Postmodern World:A Guide to Reaching Twenty-First Century Listeners, Baker, 2001.

6 Vanhoozer, Kevin, Christianity and the Postmodern Turn: SixViews, ed., Myron B. Penner, pp. 75-76.

7 D. A. Carson, Telling the Truth, Zondervan, 2000.

8 Vanhoozer, Kevin, The Cambridge Companion to Postmodern Theology, Cambridge, 2003, p. 11.

9 R. R. Reno. Quoted from a resource essay, Mars Hill Audio, www.marshillaudio.org, p. 5.

10 Pascal, Blaise. Quoted from a resource essay, Mars Hill Audio, www.marshillaudio.org, p. 1.

11 Graham Johnston, Preaching to a Postmodern World, Baker, 2001.

12 R. R. Reno. Quoted from a resource essay, Mars Hill Audio, www.marshillaudio.org, p. 8.

Steve Cornell is Senior Pastor of Millersville (PA) Bible Church. He has a wide-ranging ministry on radio, in newspapers, among university students, and at Bible conferences.

India & IFCA Women

Julie Fredericks

It is my privilege to give an eye-witness account of what God is doing among the ladies of our IFCA sisters in India. For two weeks in October, I traveled with my husband, IFCA International Director of Church and Pastoral Ministries Dan Fredericks, and two Native American IFCA pastors, Dan Gutierrez and Mike Calvin. Other than travel time, our team kept a very full schedule of teaching and learning about several ministries being carried on in India.

Upon our arrival in Delhi, we were hosted for two days by the Sanjeeb Sahu family. They are serving with Source of Light Ministries in ten of the northern states of India. Source of Light is a member mission of IFCA International with headquarters in Madison, GA. Anita Sahu helps her husband with secretarial responsibilities in between mothering their two school age children. I admired her courage as she related to me some of the difficult situations they've worked in. Then, as we departed for the airport, a situation arose where a good bit of courage on her part helped us to avoid missing our flight. When the taxi driver didn't show up, Anita had to drive two of us to the airport (not a familiar route for her, and she just recently acquired a license to drive). I can tell you that being a passenger in India traffic is scary enough, to say nothing of driving! Yes, we women who would serve the Lord alongside our husbands must be ready for anything at a moment's notice.

A couple of plane flights took us to Imphal, Manipur where we were greeted by a welcoming committee from the Zo Christian Bible Church and Thangkhal Bible Church. With their help, we were able to fulfill the security requirements, then we squeezed into two all-terrain vehicles that could handle the many bumps and holes in the road to Lamka. The first ladies I saw from the Zo and Thangkhal churches were at the official welcoming ceremony, immediately upon our arrival in Lamka. The ladies presented gifts of a necklace and skirt with shawl to me, and beaded pins and neckties to the three men. I noted that the ladies usually bring a similar special touch to the events in our American churches, just like my first observation of the Christian ladies in Lamka.

Hospitality was lavished on us, as we were given the best rooms in a guest house for our sleeping quarters. Three young ladies took great care in preparing our meals in a way that would not be upsetting to the American digestive system. They made sure we had plenty to eat, with a surprising variety of dishes. (I had forgotten how tender and tasty free-range chicken can be).

A thirty-something gal with intense dark eyes was my interpreter for the two seminars I was able to give during the Women's Bible Conference. Cecelia is self-taught in English. She wanted me to know that for a long time she has been hoping to have a friend in the U.S. Actually, there were several ladies at the Bible Conference who could communicate fairly well in English, and they are hoping to correspond with IFCA ladies in the United States, for mutual encouragement. For those who are interested, here is an address:

**Mrs. Niangzenching
Secretary, Thangkhal Bible Church Women
Pin. No. 795128
Post box no. 125
Churachandpur, Manipur, India**

I'm confident that as you find out the dedication these ladies have to help their churches, you will be spurred on in your own Christian service. I can also assure you that these ladies are eager to learn from us about what God desires of Christian women.

Not only would the IFCA ladies in Manipur like to correspond with Christian American ladies, but they are hoping for more visits by women Bible teachers. Good understanding and application of Biblical truth is a high priority with them.

A third request that I promised to convey concerns a project they hope will accomplish two purposes. Their desire is to purchase three or four looms with which they could produce beautiful traditional textiles for sale. The proceeds would be applied to construction costs of much needed buildings. In the process, the traditional skill of weaving could be practiced and passed on to the next generation.

Our travels then took us from Manipur to Delhi, where we were under the caring supervision of IFCA member Pastor Mani Subramanian. He had arranged for our safe travel and accommodations to the Pastors' Conference of North India. In order to assist me in ministry to the wives at the conference, Pastor Subramanian's wife, Rachel, and two of his daughters made the long train trip to meet us in the city of Raipur. After a hair-raising drive of four and a half hours to the Pamgarh Area Bible Church, I was able to spend some time talking with Rachel the evening before the conference started. I would like to share with you some of our conversation.

One testimony should greatly encourage our 2003 IFCA Women's Convention planners and participants. Rachel says the inspiration she drew from that time has given her a strong determination to make an impact for Christ in her world.

The ministry God has given Rachel involves some teaching. I sensed a greater intensity in her voice as she spoke of the widows she visits each week, to pray with them and make sure their needs are met. Many opportunities to share the gospel have opened up because of the consistent care she has shown. It is hard for us in the USA to comprehend the difficulties most women in India deal with on a daily basis. The Hindu culture suppresses any self-improvement or economic advancement. Rachel's heart is greatly burdened for the needs of those who are caught in the rape system and the dowry system. As God directs, she is hoping to rescue these girls through establishing a small school in the slums, "to raise up a new generation for God". Rachel assured me that she has the training and experience for such a challenging goal, and fully expects that it will be accomplished in the Lord's strength and in His time.

One important ministry that Rachel carefully makes time for is her family. I observed a lot of loving interaction with the two daughters in our company. It was clear they shared the benefits of Christian nurturing from their parents. Not only did they provide delightful company, but they both cheerfully served at the pastors' conference. Seven-year-old Sarah taught some songs to the children there, and 23-year-old Jasmin interpreted for my teaching sessions.

There is a special challenge in regard to the women who are under the ministry of "Hope for India", which is of concern to Rachel. God has seen fit to give physical healing to some of them in answer to prayer. The concern is that unless there is a corresponding desire for spiritual health, these women won't develop the depth of faith and understanding necessary to mature them, and to strengthen their churches. Thorough teaching of God's Word is a high priority, delivered with fervent prayer that both men and women will continue to mature.

Two years ago, the Pamgarh Area Bible Church had a new building. As Rachel accompanied Pastor Subramanian to the specially scheduled inauguration, they wondered how many would brave the horrendous rain storm to attend. They arrived to discover a good turnout of people who wanted to celebrate God's provision of a place to worship together. For Rachel this was another landmark where any doubt about the commitment of these Christian brothers and sisters was dispelled. Many of them do endure hardship and persecution because of their faith.

I thank God for the opportunity He gave me to meet these dear ones. With the Zo women of Manipur and Rachel Subramanian, my own heart was blessed to recognize a very special work of God in progress.

Julie Fredericks works part-time in the IFCA International Home Office.

Chaplain's Diary

CH (MAJ) Dan Smith is one of your IFCA International National Guard chaplains. Dan is also pastor of Vermontville Bible Church in Vermontville, MI. In December 2004 he was called into active duty by the National Guard. He is located in a Forward Operating Base (FOB) in Mahmudiyah just south of Baghdad. That is his main base but he is also chaplain for the small bases at Lutafiyah and Yusifiyah. Following is a snapshot of his ministry.

Monday 19 September 05

I would like to thank everyone for all of your love, prayers, and support. I can truly feel the Lord moving as a result of your ministry in prayer.

Right now I am in one of my battalion's smaller FOBs at Lutafiyah. I did a worship service for them in the chow hall, we had about 20, which is so much fun. I talked about David's grace to Mephibosheth, and compared it to God's grace to us. I gave the Gospel as clearly as I knew how, and had several conversations after. God is moving in lives as a result of your prayers. I shared that same message twice in Mahmudiyah yesterday, and hope to get to Yusifiyah Thursday and Friday.

Today I was up in one of the towers here that overlooks Route Jackson, a main North South road. Suddenly, I saw a very large fireball to the north, and then the boom 10 seconds later. There is a major Shiite pilgrimage past our fob to a town south. The fireball was a vehicle born bomb that vaporized the suicide bomber, and two Iraqi soldiers he had targeted, and a 16 year old boy who was bringing them water. Windows were shattered in buildings all around, and many others injured. We sent a couple of our tanks there, to quell the small arms fire. A second vehicle borne IED (improvised explosive device) was detonated a few moments later. The first blast shook our building, and we are a half mile away. That is the same road I had just taken to come from Mahmudiyah where I live here to Ludifiyah where I am now.

Tomorrow is the dream of a lifetime. My old battalion commander has invited me to go with him to ancient Babylon, about 45 minutes from here.

I have pictures already. There are lots of ruins. Saddam built on top of some of them. But I am so excited to be going where the events recorded in the book of Daniel and during the Babylonian captivity took place. They are reported throughout so much of the Old Testament.

We will be moving South soon, to a much safer place. I talked to an active duty member of the 101st Airborne, and he mentioned again that we are in the most dangerous place in Iraq, the Sunni triangle of death. We will all be very glad to move out of here. Thanks for your prayers for safety.

One benefit of being shot at is that there are lots of opportunities to talk about eternity, and to give the Gospel one on one. Many of us here have led several to Christ. Some get hardened, but many become open, and begin to think about eternity.

This past Sunday, a soldier asked to be baptized and I know there are several others who are interested. We are trying to arrange a way to have a baptismal service. I cannot tell you how much I miss you all, and appreciate your support. Every soldier here is overwhelmed with the love and support constantly displayed by people back home. Thanks for all you are doing.

Chaplain Daniel Smith

Report from New Orleans Disaster Relief

by CH (MAJ) Marshall Peterson
82nd Airborne Division

Greetings!

CH (LTC) Will Laigaie and I are down in New Orleans now with the soldiers of the 82nd Airborne Division. After two weeks they are through with the mission here but can't get home due to the approach of Hurricane Rita. Transportation is taken up by the evacuations, etc.

The mission was as much a morale mission as anything. The populace is excited and very grateful about the cleaning up of schools and churches here. My mission is less dramatic but important. It involves taking care of the troops. I've had services, much troop visitation (very well received) and nightly Bible Studies. One troop from an abusive past has entered the Kingdom coming all the way to Louisiana to do so! Parks were also cleaned up and many troops are really soaring in morale as a result of having helped so many.

Grace and Peace!

Marshall Peterson, CH (MAJ) USA

Report from Hurricane Disaster Relief

by LT Mike Amedick (CHC, USN) Navy Chaplain ministering with the Marines

It's been a whirlwind three weeks, but I finally have a chance to write about some of the things that we have been up to out here.

On Friday 2 September the battalion had a formation at 0800 to commence our Labor Day weekend holiday. After doing some office work I went home later that morning. 15 minutes after getting home I was recalled. We spent the day making preparations and on Saturday we headed to Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, NC. We slept that night on the tarmac (literally; our packs with sleeping gear were already on pallets). The next day we boarded C-130's and flew into Stennis Airport in Mississippi.

We spent a night in a hangar at Stennis, and the next day we took 7-ton trucks to Slidell, LA. We spent several days in Slidell delivering food and water and working on the flooded homes of firefighters, police, and other first responders.

After a few days in Slidell we boarded the trucks again and moved to St. Bernard Parish just outside New Orleans. St Bernard Parish sustained some of the worst damage from Hurricane Katrina.

For about a week we stayed in tents (actually, the first night it was under the stars) at a Nasa facility in the parish. We sent out teams to search for bodies (we were still finding them two weeks after the hurricane), to mark houses, and to help with the water system in the parish.

Just when it seemed that our mission was over and we would be able to come home, Rita popped up. We drove to downtown New Orleans and boarded USS IWO JIMA (LHD 7). We sailed down the Mississippi River and IWO has been conducting search and rescue missions along the coast since the hurricane hit. The 647 Marines that we brought aboard are ready to go ashore to help out if called upon.

There have been a lot of ministry opportunities along the way. I have had numerous counseling sessions with sailors and Marines, I have consoled residents who were returning to devastated houses, and I have spoken with several exhausted police officers.

One interesting aspect has been the different places we have had chapel services. The first Sunday it was under a tree in the middle of the field in which we were camped. A week ago it was in a General Purpose tent. Yesterday we had our service in the chapel here aboard the IWO JIMA. That's a lot of variety for three weeks!

We are now waiting anxiously for word that we will be able to return home. It was a strain for many to leave their families on such short notice. We also have a lot of preparations to make for next summer's deployment, although, of course, no exercise works as well as a real-world operation such as this to work out a lot of kinks.

God Bless,

Mike Amedick

These reports give you a snapshot of the remarkable ministry opportunities and challenges your military chaplains are experiencing as they support the missions on which our military services are sent. Please remember all of them at home and abroad as they minister to military personnel and their families in these challenging times. Warren Dane, Director of Chaplaincy

EvanTell Spotlight

An Idea for Your Church

Valentine's Day - Use your love to focus on His

Valentine's Day -- a unique opportunity. Why not use this occasion to put together an evening in which the gospel is presented?

Here's the idea...plan a special Valentine's evening sponsored by the church. A candlelight dinner and an evening of entertainment provided by a vocalist from your church, local talent, a paid musician, a play or skit. You could even join with another church and host a well known talent. The concept is to create an event that will excite your members to invite their non-believing friends. Go all out...coat and tie, roses for the ladies, a fine meal (catered or provided by the church), candlelight, etc. Let the youth of the church serve as the wait staff to bring the generations together. For a better response, consider renting out a local restaurant or community center.

Have each church member invite their non-believing friends to join them. Members cover their cost, guest attend free. Consider subsidizing the cost by underwriting dinner expenses for non-Christian guests as some will undoubtedly want to bring more non-Christian friends than they can afford. They will enjoy a great meal, great fellowship, wonderful entertainment and, at the end of the evening, they will hear the gospel. As we celebrate the gift of love for our spouse or other special person the heart of the evening is to share that there is a gift of love that goes beyond the

evening...the gift of love given by God in His Son, Jesus Christ. Make the gospel clear and invite the non-believing guests to trust Christ and have a follow-up program in place.

Be creative and have fun! Pray and then watch God work as the good news of God's love is presented on a day that the world is focused on love. It's our opportunity to share the greatest love story ever told.

TO ANSWER YOUR QUESTION

Q. After I explained the plan of salvation to a woman with whom I work, she said two things: Christ was on an ego trip to feel He was the only way to heaven, and a God of love wouldn't let children die. What should I say?

A. Turn to Philippians 2:5-8 and ask her to read it carefully. It says: "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross." Then kindly ask her to explain Christ's ego from that paragraph.

You might also point out that when a person has the truth about a matter of life and death, to state that truth is not egotism; its demonstrating love and concern. For instance, some may consider airplane pilots "egotistical" when they act with confidence in flying their plane. But doing it right is a matter of life and death for their passengers. The reason Christ says He is the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6) is because He is. He's not egotistical, He's just right. To be the only way to heaven and not tell us would defy any claims He makes that He loves us.

The question often arises of God being loving when so many hardships exist. But if there is one question the cross has eliminated, it's the question of His love. Romans 5:7-8 reminds us, "For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." What we might consider doing for the best, Christ did for the least.

I've asked people to think of the most deplorable person they know. Then I ask, "Would you die for that person?" I've received only two answers: "Probably not" and "I don't know." I then point out that Christ would therefore have more reason to question their love than they have to question His.

Many common objections are smoke screens behind which people hide to avoid facing their sinful condition and need of a Savior. The most loving thing you can do is to show them how they are failing to think objectively. Then ask God to use that to ultimately bring them to Christ.

Q. The other day I presented the gospel to a friend. Before we prayed and he told God he was trusting Christ alone to get him to heaven, I reminded him that saying a prayer doesn't save anyone; it's trusting Christ that saves.

I also wanted to ask him a few questions before we prayed to make sure he understood the plan of salvation. What questions do you normally use at that point?

A. After I've presented the gospel, I say "Let me see how well you understand it. If I said to you, 'What must I do to get to heaven?' what would you say?" If he cannot give back to me clearly what I've just presented, I pursue the areas of confusion. If he seems to understand salvation, I sometimes add, "But don't you think I could get to heaven by going to church, being baptized or

living a good life?" When people understand the gospel clearly, they respond that these have nothing to do with getting them to heaven.

I commend your desire to make sure a person understands the simplicity of the gospel. In our "instant" society, many are reluctant to give a lost person the time and attention he needs to come to grips with God's free offer of eternal life. Some understand the gospel in five minutes, but others need five hours.

Q. I've been asking God every day, "Bring someone across my path to witness to." Many days He doesn't. What's wrong?

A. Your prayer fosters a tendency to look for that special person or to wait for someone to indicate a spiritual need. You could be overlooking people you meet every day to whom you could talk. Dawson Trotman, found of the Navigators, reportedly said, "We don't need to pray for opportunities. We simply need to pray for the boldness to meet the opportunities we have." The emphasis in Scripture is not praying, "Bring someone across my path whom I may talk to about the Lord." Instead, the emphasis is on being open and obedient in evangelism toward anyone you have the opportunity to speak to.

As Paul ministered in Corinth, he undoubtedly rubbed shoulders with those he didn't have time to talk with, yet other times his schedule allowed for personal conversations. He continually asked God for open doors (Col.4:3; Eph. 6:19-20) and boldness to speak when those doors were provided.

I determine if God has opened the door by beginning to talk to a person. If he is open to me, I take that to be an open door for the gospel and try to turn the conversation to spiritual things. If he simply won't talk, there's little you can do. Just be open to God about the next person you meet.

Larry Moyer serves as Evangelism Consultant for IFCA International. If your church has an idea to encourage others in evangelism, send it to Larry Moyer at lmoyer@evantell.org. Visit EvanTell at www.evantell.org

Quality Quiet Time

Cathy Howell

As a New Year begins, many are looking at the priorities that they have set in their lives and readjusting what is most important for the days ahead. One thing that is a needed spiritual discipline is time alone with the Lord. A quiet time, although sometimes called by different names, is time spent in communion with God. A time of worship, prayer and praise.

When I began college someone shared these words with me: "Anytime spent in the Scriptures is better than no time at all." I have not forgotten these words of advice. I used to think they were a handy excuse not to do "real" devotions. I have since learned that sometimes our own expectations of ourselves or our own standards keep us from spending time in God's word.

A woman may find herself thinking that she doesn't have an hour or thirty minutes for time with the Lord in the morning. So she decides to skip this time for that particular day promising to spend more time with the Lord tomorrow. Others worry that they will have an inferior time with the Lord because of their schedule and so skip this time wanting to only spend quality time with the Lord.

There are different approaches to a quality quiet time. There is no right or wrong way. When it comes to time alone with the Lord, the most important thing is to have this time with Him. That is where a great many Christians hit the snag. Many believers want to spend time in devotions and see the need for it, but somehow don't actually make it a spiritual discipline in their life, a regular time where they talk with the Lord and listen to Him speak to their heart.

In this article I'd like to briefly share the why, when, what and how of having a quality quiet time with the Lord.

WHY HAVE A QUIET TIME?

God instructs us in Scripture to know Him and to hide His Word in our heart.

A few verses that encourage time spent with God outside of corporate worship are:

Psalm 46:10 "Be still and know that I am God."

Psalm 119:11 "Thy word have I hid in my heart that I may not sin against thee."

Psalm 119:148 "My eyes anticipate the night watches, that I may meditate on thy word."

Psalm 130:5 "I wait for the Lord, my soul does wait, and in His word do I hope."

We need daily contact with God and His Word so that He can guide us and bring about our sanctification.

John 17:17 "Sanctify them in the truth; thy word is truth."

Colossians 3:16 "Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God."

Hebrews 4:12 "For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart."

Psalm 119:105 "Thy word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path."

James 1:22 "But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves."

I Peter 2:2 "Like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the word, that by it you may grow in respect to salvation."

WHEN IS A GOOD TIME FOR DEVOTIONS?

A time of day when you have the fewest distractions.

A time of day when you are alert.

A time of day that fits your regular schedule.

WHAT DO I DO FOR DEVOTIONS?

There are many possibilities for what to do during the time you spend with the Lord. Below are just a few that you can consider and use. God promises to bless His Word. Therefore, it is wise to include the Scriptures in any approach to quiet time you choose.

Bible Reading:

Read a chapter

Read a passage (a verse or several verses)

Use a 'Read Through the Bible' schedule and read through the Bible in a year or two.

Prayer:

Use a prayer list for daily prayer

Use a list that includes a different prayer list for each day of the week

Pray what is on your heart

Singing:

Sing Praise Songs

Sing along with a CD Scriptural songs

Sing and play an instrument

Just sing unto the Lord

Meditate:

On a particular Scripture verse

On God's attributes (His omniscience, omnipotence etc)

On how you can apply a verse/passage to your life

On the grace of God, His mercy, His love

Reading:

Read Christian Literature

Read a commentary on the passage you are studying (John MacArthur has most of the New Testament completed and they are written for the layman, to understand).

Read a book of encouragement - a Christian biography

Read a book on biblical doctrine (Knowing God by J. I. Packer)

Read a book that challenges you to Godly living (Think Biblically by John MacArthur)

Study in depth:

Passage or Book of the Bible (the pastoral epistles are a good place to start)

Use commentaries

Use Greek helps

Memorize Scripture:

Memorize a verse a day/week

Work on memorizing a chapter

Use a verse memory program

Memorize verses that will help you in sharing the Gospel clearly

Do a Word Study (something from the passage you are reading; words that you come across that are of interest such as - hell, believe, mind, tongue)

Use a Vine's Dictionary of NT Words

Use Richard's Expository Dictionary of Bible Words

Here is an example of how you can use a variety during one week:

Monday- Read a passage and pray

Tuesday- Read a commentary on those verses and pray

Wednesday- Meditate on the passage and sing praises

Thursday- Memorize a verse from the passage and pray

Friday- Look up any verbs in the bible dictionary and pray

Saturday- Read a chapter from a Christian book that challenges you.

HOW DO I HAVE A QUALITY QUIET TIME?

Put a time with the Lord in your schedule. Make it a priority. Your quiet time is unique to you so there is no set format that all Christians must use. Start with a little time (10 min.) and increase it as your hunger for the Word increases.

It has been said, "The Bible should be our daily bread, not cake for special occasions."

In this New Year, make it a priority to go each day for daily spiritual nourishment to the living and powerful Word of God.

Cathy Howell has been married to her husband Pat, since 1979. They have two daughters, Rebecca and Elizabeth. Cathy has served alongside her husband in pastoral and mission's related ministries in Minnesota, California, and South Africa. Cathy leads a Grace Church Titus 2 ladies Bible study in her home.