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Survey and Questionnaire Design for Church-Based Research

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Abstract
To better understand behaviors, beliefs, and attitudes in churches, survey research can be very useful, especially to test a hypothesis that we believe to be true. Before creating a survey or questionnaire, the phenomena being examined need to be well understood and appropriate measures chosen. The items included in the survey need to measure the concepts desired and should be clear and unambiguous. The survey should be laid out to motivate maximum participation and minimize biased responses. This article provides many principles for how to accomplish these goals and to ensure that the research undertaken is credible.

Doing research in churches is very different from experimental research done in controlled conditions. The researcher cannot randomly assign participants to one of several conditions (e.g., those who are encouraged to memorize Bible verses vs. those who are not so encouraged) and then measure the consequences (e.g., the quality of the participants' marriage or their mental health). Rather, research in churches typically focuses on real-life events, beliefs, feelings, and thoughts that have long-term consequences. Since typically part of a church's mission is to respond to the needs of the congregants (Church Relevance, 2013), putting church members in an experimental condition that may be detrimental to their well-being would not be ethical (Lowman, 2006). In contrast to laboratory research, survey research is much more appropriate for churches.

Survey research seeks to capture a picture of participants' behaviors, thoughts, feelings, and attitudes at a specific moment in time. If the sample is large enough, the relationship between the variables measured can be detected, including the strength and direction of the relationship enabling hypotheses to be tested, such as "Christians who memorize Scripture regularly have more satisfying marriages." When we find evidence that specific behaviors or beliefs are correlated, and we have good reason to believe that one causes the other, then we can promote the beliefs and behaviors which best correspond to what Christ has commanded us, a critical aspect of fulfilling the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19-20).

What are Surveys and Questionnaires?

Surveys, typically used synonymously with questionnaires, are lists of questions or items to which participants respond to provide a measure of one or more of their characteristics that vary among them (Cameron & Duce, 2013; Crano et al., 2015; Dunaetz, 2020; Morling, 2021). The word "survey" emphasizes the idea that we need to ask these questions to a broad range of people in the population that we are studying. The word "questionnaire" emphasizes the many questions that need to be asked. If we want to measure a phenomenon, we usually need to ask many questions to capture the full range of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that characterize the phenomenon.

A survey differs from a census. A census (such as mandated by the U.S. Constitution) seeks to obtain information from every person in the population studied. In general, few or no inferences are needed to come to a reasonably accurate conclusion concerning the variables measured. In contrast, a survey only measures a sample of the population that interests us. Statistical tests (for example, correlations and differences between groups) are used to determine if we can make inferences (conclusions) about the whole population based on the data collected from the sample.

An example of a census in a church would be a vote at the business meeting. It is assumed that everyone who has an opinion expresses it, and each vote counts. In contrast, survey research does not require everyone concerned to participate. Once enough participants have completed the survey, the results are compiled, and statistical inferences are made. For example, a study may find that there is a positive correlation between how engaging church volunteers find the ministries in which they are involved and the degree to which they participate in these ministries (Dunaetz & Bocock, 2020). If this correlation is strong enough, we can infer that this relationship is true for all church members (not just those who participated in the survey). This inference should motivate church leaders to find and develop engaging ministries that correspond to the interests and gifts of their church members.

Why and When are Surveys Used?

Surveys can be used for both quantitative and qualitative research. Quantitative research studies narrow questions and seeks to reduce subjectivity by measuring the variables studied precisely. Qualitative research examines broader, more over-arching questions but they tend to be more subjective (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Dunaetz, 2023; Patton, 2014). Surveys tend to be less useful than interviews for qualitative research. Whereas humans are typically quite at ease discussing various topics with a person who comes across as reasonably trustworthy, they are quite resistant to writing sentences and paragraphs. It is generally much easier to get detailed verbal information from interviews than from surveys (For good examples, see Nehrbass, 2022, and Thigpen, 2023, in this issue).

When doing quantitative research, the goal is either to accurately measure a specific variable (e.g., how satisfied congregants are with the pastor's preaching, using a 1 to 5 scale) or test a hypothesis that is suspected to be true (Dunaetz, 2021). If the goal is to simply measure a specific variable (known as descriptive statistics), the utility of the information might be quite limited. Suppose a survey was used to measure congregants' satisfaction with their pastor's preaching and the average score was 4.0 out of 5 for the sample. We could also calculate the confidence interval, the range of values which probably contains the value of how much congregants like the pastor's preaching if the entire congregation had provided information. The confidence interval is typically calculated at 95% certainty, which in this case might produce a 95% confidence interval of something like 3.8 - 4.2 out of 5. However, such information in itself is not very useful. It says that on average, people like the pastor's preaching but not everyone likes it a lot, a statement that would be true for most churches.

However, quantitative research becomes much more interesting when hypotheses are tested. For example, the hypothesis "Congregants will value a sermon series on apologetics more than a sermon series on Leviticus." To test this hypothesis, the same measure of satisfaction with the pastor's preaching can be used, both after the series on apologetics and after the series on Leviticus. If the difference between average scores (e.g., apologetics is rated higher than Leviticus) is statistically significant (that is, there is less than a 5% chance of getting this difference from the sample measured if the congregation as a whole would rate the two series as equal), then conclusions can be made about what types of sermons are most valued by contemporary church members in churches like the one studied. These statistical inferences provide more information than simple descriptive statistics because they can be used for decision-making.

For surveys to be useful, they must be designed very carefully. Before focusing on the specific items to be used, researchers need to be clear about what should be measured.

What Should Be Measured in a Survey?

When doing church-based research, it is absolutely necessary for the researcher to clearly define the purpose of the research. In general, research is carried out to find at least a partial solution to a problem, often called the research problem. To define the problem, not only must the context be understood (e.g., a specific church, the technological context of the 21st century, or contemporary evangelicalism in the U.S.), but the phenomena surrounding the problem should also be understood to the degree that it is possible. Generally, this is done through a literature review (Cooper, 1988; Dunaetz, 2022b; Rosenthal & DiMatteo, 2001; Torraco, 2005) where past research relevant to the research problem is collected and analyzed. The end result is a hypothesis concerning a possible solution. The hypothesis is a specific statement involving the variables associated with the research problem that, if true, would contribute to at least a partial solution to the problem (Bordens & Abbott, 2011; Morling, 2021; Salkind, 2017).

Once the researcher believes that a hypothesis has the potential to be true and that its confirmation would provide useful information upon which one could act, the researcher can then list the constructs (variables) that need to be measured in the survey (Dunaetz, 2022a). Each hypothesis may involve two variables (e.g., "Time spent in Bible reading is positively correlated with life satisfaction.") or it may involve more variables (e.g., "Time spent in Bible reading is positively correlated with life satisfaction, and the strength of this relationship depends on educational level."). Apart from demographic information that is collected to paint a picture of the participants, only the constructs that are included in the hypotheses should be included in the survey. It is tempting to want to add other constructs out of curiosity ("I wonder how age of conversion relates to this phenomenon?"). However, if a literature review has not been done to understand the extra variable added, the likelihood of measuring the variable in a way that would provide useful information is not very high. Moreover, after the data is collected, the researcher risks "hypothesizing after the results are known" or HARKing, which artificially inflates the likelihood of finding significant results and is considered an unethical research practice (John et al., 2012; Kerr, 1998).

After the researcher determines what should be measured in the survey, the best way to measure these variables must be determined. The various ways of measuring a variable are called operationalizations. In general, it is better to use psychometrically validated measures that have already been demonstrated to measure the desired concept than to make up a new version of the measure, which may or may not work well. These operationalizations are found during the literature review, when all (or at least as much as is possible) of the past research conducted on these variables is studied. Even a concept as straightforward as church attendance can be quite complex to measure and a number of approaches have been developed to measure it (Marcum, 1999; Rossi & Scappini, 2014; Smith, 1998). When a variable is psychological or spiritual in nature, there are likely to be many ways to measure it, none of which are perfect (Hill & Hood, 1999). Researchers need to choose the measure that best corresponds to their conception of the variable, explaining why their chosen operationalization is the most appropriate for the study.

How Should the Questions Be Phrased?

In cases where new items need to be created, they must be clear enough to provide the information sought (Dillman et al., 2014; Dunaetz, 2020; Ekinci, 2015; Fowler, 2013). First, they need to be simple and understandable. People who read the *Great Commission Research Journal* or other academic journals are likely to be stronger readers than the majority of people in the churches they attend or lead. What is simple to the researcher is often not simple to a broader audience.

Second, the questions need to be unbiased. "When did you stop beating your wife?" is an extreme example of a biased question because it assumes that the participant used to beat his wife. "When did you become a Christian?" similarly assumes that the person is a Christian, which might not be true. "Do you think our forward-thinking and culturally sensitive church should change its name to better reach our community?" is biased because it is clear what the desired response is.

Third, the questions need to be unambiguous. "Do you use a computer for your devotions?" is ambiguous because not everyone is going to understand "devotions." Moreover, it is not clear if using tablets and phones counts. Rather, "Have you ever read the Bible on a digital device?"

or "Do you regularly read the Bible on a digital device?" are much less ambiguous questions; however, it should be noted that these two questions are measuring very different variables, again emphasizing the need for clear, specific hypotheses.

What to avoid?

Sometimes it is easier to think in terms of what to avoid when designing survey questions. Here is a list of nine things to avoid in surveys and questionnaires (Dillman et al., 2014; Dunaetz, 2020; Ekinci, 2015; Fowler, 2013).

1. Complexity. *Indicate on a scale of 1 to 10 how much you agree with the statement "My pastor has the personality necessary to lead a team in the creation of innovative ideas that will transform the church and our region."* This statement is too complex for most people. A ten-point scale is difficult to use (e.g., what's the difference between a 2 and a 3?). Most people have never thought about what type of personality is needed to lead a team, much less know how to determine if a person has it. Moreover, the item is not just asking about leading a team, but a very specific type of team that most people have not thought about. Complexity is increased by the length of the item, the number of clauses, and the average number of words in a clause (Yan & Tourangeau, 2008). For a complex question like this, people often mentally reduce it to "How much do I like my pastor?" The more participants like their pastor, the more likely they are to strongly agree with the long and complex statement.

2. Leading Questions. *What words would you use to describe the life-changing impact that our church has had on people?* Similar to biased questions, leading questions imply a certain answer or a certain type of answer. In this case, the question implies a very positive response is expected from the participant. This is due to the anchoring effect (Furnham & Boo, 2011; Jacowitz & Kahneman, 1995). When we try to measure or estimate something, we use the salient emotional concepts most available to us as an anchor to help us decide, in this case, "life-changing" and "impact." In this case, we could get better information with the use of more neutral terms, such as "What words would people around you use to describe our church?" or "How has our church influenced what you do?"

3. Ambiguous Categories. *Please indicate your age: A. 20-30. B. 30-39, C. 55+.* If the choices given to participants present an incomplete range (How do 19-year-olds answer? How do 45-year-olds answer?) or if the categories are not mutually exclusive (What response does a 30-year-old choose?), participants often cannot provide meaningful responses.

They tend to get frustrated with the survey and stop responding. "Please indicate your age: A. Under 30, B. 30-39, C. 40 and above" would be a better way to ask this question. However, even better would be a fill-in-the-blank question, "How old are you? ________?" By getting a more precise age, we would be better able to detect age-related trends.

4. Double-Barreled Questions. *On a 1 to 5 scale, please indicate how much you agree with the statement "I like my pastor because of his preaching style."* Double-barreled items ask about two ideas at one time (Menold, 2020). In this example, participants need to indicate how much they like their pastor specifically because of his (or her) preaching style. But what if the participant likes the pastor a lot but only tolerates his preaching? Or what if the participant does not like the pastor, but finds him to be a very entertaining preacher? Double-barreled items, which are often formed with a main clause and a dependent clause or by connecting two nouns with a conjunction like "or," need to be broken up into two separate items. "I like my pastor" and "I like my pastor's preaching style" will produce much more meaningful results. An especially important double-barreled question to avoid is "Are you a born-again or evangelical Christian?" The overlap in meaning between these words that used to be near-synonyms is getting smaller and smaller, especially for non-white people and people who are not politically conservative (Margolis, 2022).

5. Burdensome items. *Please list ten reasons why you started attending our church.* Burdensome items are cognitively demanding (Warriner, 1991). Humans, by nature, are cognitive misers; they do not want to think hard about something unless they see clear benefits from it (Stanovich, 2018). Asking participants to produce a list of something is burdensome and will result in lowered participation rates; participants who encounter a difficult item are more likely to give up on the survey.

In addition to the creation of lists, asking participants to rank order items is burdensome and discouraging. In general, participants should not be asked to rank more than four items in order of preference. Instead of an item such as "Please rank the following 10 ministries in order of how important they are to you," Likert scale items should be provided for each element being evaluated. Likert items are statements where participants are asked to indicate to what degree they agree or disagree with the statements (typically on a 5-point scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree, arranged like a multiple-choice quiz; Likert, 1932). Unlike ranked ordering items, participants can easily respond to them. In this example, participants would be given the prompt "Please indicate to what degree you agree with the statement 'This is an important ministry'" and then a list (typically in a grid) of the ten ministries would be provided, one on each line.

6. Items that Generate Little Variation in Responses. To maximize the power of statistics to detect significant results, answers should be distributed fairly symmetrically (when there are only two choices, such as true or false) or as a bell curve when multiple responses are possible (such as Likert items). Asking church attenders how much they agree with the statement "I believe Jesus said some things that are valuable" would generate little variation in the responses; almost everyone would answer that they strongly agree with that statement. The item used needs to be more specific or more extreme to generate variation in responses. The statement "I believe that Jesus' teachings need to influence every decision that I make" will perhaps capture the same idea (depending on the researcher's intention), but will be more normally distributed, that is, shaped like a bell curve.

7. Inapplicable Items. *What aspect of our church's Sunday School do your children enjoy the most? A. Interaction with the adults, B. The Bible teaching, C. The snacks*. Such an item would only be meaningful for adults with children in the church's Sunday School. If such a question is given to people without children, they risk being flustered and discontinuing the survey. The researcher can avoid such problems by including a statement such as "Questions 13 through 17 should only be answered by parents with children who attend the church's Sunday School." Or even better would be to use the survey tool "skip logic" which is available on many electronic survey platforms such as Google Forms or SurveyMonkey. An initial question determines what question comes next, such as "Do you have children who attend this church's Sunday School?" Those who respond that they do not have children will not be shown the irrelevant questions. This makes the survey go smoother and contributes to higher participation rates.

8. Forced Responses to Open-Ended or Controversial Items. **Explain how you first started coming to our church?* Most electronic survey tools allow for the researcher to make some or all of the items mandatory. These "forced choice" items are often indicated by an asterisk (*). Forced choice items are good when the responses are not cognitively demanding, as is the case for multiple-choice or Likert items. However, open-ended questions are much more difficult to answer and should rarely be mandatory. Requiring participants to type a phrase, a sentence, or a paragraph will decrease the participation rates dramatically for people who are not extremely motivated to complete the survey. Similarly, forced response items that are controversial, or which can reveal the participant's identity are also to be avoided.

For example, demographic items should not be mandatory (e.g., age, sex, race, residence). There is a high percentage of people who do not wish to respond to them. They may think that the information will be used against them, that revealing such information would make them identifiable, that the categories that the researcher has chosen for sex or race are offensive, or that it is morally inappropriate to collect such information.

To reduce negative reactions to demographic questions, not only should their completion be optional, but these questions should be at the end of the survey. Placing them at the beginning can demotivate people to complete the rest of the survey. The choices provided for sex and race/ethnicity should correspond to the intended audience of the survey. For a general audience (such as everyone who might ever visit the church), it may be appropriate to offer three possible answers to "What is your sex? A. Male, B. Female, C. Other/Prefer not to state." It is best not to include a fill-in-the-blank for the final choice unless this information is needed to test the hypotheses.

An item on race can be even more controversial than an item on sex. A list of expected races and ethnicities should be provided based on the intended audience. In the U.S., this list would probably include at least Asian, Black, Hispanic, and White. However, depending on the region or church, other races or ethnicities should be included (but generally there is no need to have separate questions for race and ethnicity). Moreover, a fill-in-the-blank option "Other: ________" should be provided so that all participants have the possibility of expressing their identity. This will also offer participants who do not like race-related items to express their discontent by responding with answers such as "human being" or "Jedi knight." Since many people have multiple racial and ethnic identities, participants should be given the option to choose more than one response and they should be encouraged to choose all that apply.

9. Items that Lead to Missing Data. *How much do you appreciate our church's present worship style? A. Not at all, B. A little, C. A lot, D. No opinion*. By giving options such as "No opinion," the researcher causes much useful data to be lost. We do not know why people who respond this way have no opinion. Perhaps they do not attend the worship service. Perhaps they have many complex thoughts about the worship service. Perhaps they are neutral about the worship style. But in any case, the "no opinion" response provides no useful information, and the data is lost. To avoid this problem, the use of Likert items allows the researcher to use all the data. In this case, the item could be rephrased, "Please indicate to what degree you agree with the following statement: I appreciate our church's present worship style. A. Strongly disagree, B. Disagree, C. Neither agree nor disagree, D. Agree, E. Strongly agree." All participants can respond to this item and no data is lost.

How Should the Survey Be Laid Out?

A survey is much more than a list of questions. It needs to be structured so that it is clear and provides motivation to participate. As Christians, we should try to make our survey an act of love and respect so that it is a positive experience for those participating. The following is a possible outline that researchers can follow when designing a survey.

I. Title
II. Introduction
III. Informed consent
IV. Main Body of the Survey
V. Demographics
VI. Conclusion

Parts of the Survey

Title. The survey should have an interesting title that provides a general idea of what it is about. However, the title must be general enough to not give away any of the hypotheses. If a survey has a title such as "Church Involvement and Mental Health," the participant, especially if they know the researcher or the organization sponsoring the research, may be able to guess that the hypothesis is that greater church involvement predicts better mental health. Although this is a legitimate research topic (Nooney & Woodrum, 2002; Wright et al., 1993), participants should not be aware of the hypothesis because it will bias their responses, especially if they want to support the researcher. Cues that reveal the hypothesis are called *demand characteristics* and act as an extraneous variable that influence the results (Nichols & Maner, 2008). A better title for this survey would be "Attitudes of Church Attenders." It provides a general idea about the topic of the survey, but not enough to reveal the hypothesis.

The Introduction. The purpose of the introduction is to motivate readers to participate in the survey and to provide enough information so that they know what they are getting into. It should begin with a warm greeting that demonstrates that the researcher values their experiences, thoughts, and feelings. It should describe the general purpose of the survey, without giving away the hypotheses. It should provide information about how long completing the survey will take. In general, a well-structured survey with all multiple-choice items (e.g., Likert items) can be completed quickly by most people, perhaps at the rate of 8-10 items/minute. This means that many surveys can be completed by most people in less than

5 minutes.

The introduction should also be clear concerning whether this is an anonymous survey or not. If it is anonymous, completion rates may be higher, especially if respondents are not accountable for participating, as would be the case in most church-based research. However, when sending reminders to complete the survey, the reminders will be sent to people who have already completed it, which risks annoying them. A lack of anonymity, however, may also influence responses so that they are more socially acceptable (Fuller, 1974; Randall & Fernandes, 1991). In any case, the introduction should make it clear if the data collected will be anonymous, confidential (not shared beyond the group conducting the research), or available to a broader audience.

The introduction should also motivate people to participate. Perhaps the research will contribute to something that the participant values and wants to support. For example, in research that would be appropriate for publication in the *Great Commission Research Journal*, the introduction could state "Your participation will help us to better understand how churches and individuals can better contribute to the fulfillment of the Great Commission." The introduction can also increase motivation by appealing to self-interest by including a statement such as "Participation in this survey may help you to reflect on your church involvement and your values in a new way and may give insight into your values and behaviors."

Informed Consent. To ethically conduct research, the participants' informed consent is often requested before the participant is allowed access to the survey questions. The purpose of the informed consent, originally developed in the world of medical testing to protect patients, is to inform the participants of the potential risks involved in participation (Faden & Beauchamp, 1986). The participant is given the right to not complete the survey and the assurance that there will be no negative consequences for their lack of participation. Although the right to not participate may seem obvious for surveys distributed for research on church-related phenomena, most universities, government institutions, and publishers require researchers to only use data from participants who have provided informed consent. Many institutions mandate that specific informed consent texts be used. Examples of informed consent documents may be easily found with an internet search in order to develop an informed consent appropriate for the study when there is no institutional standard.

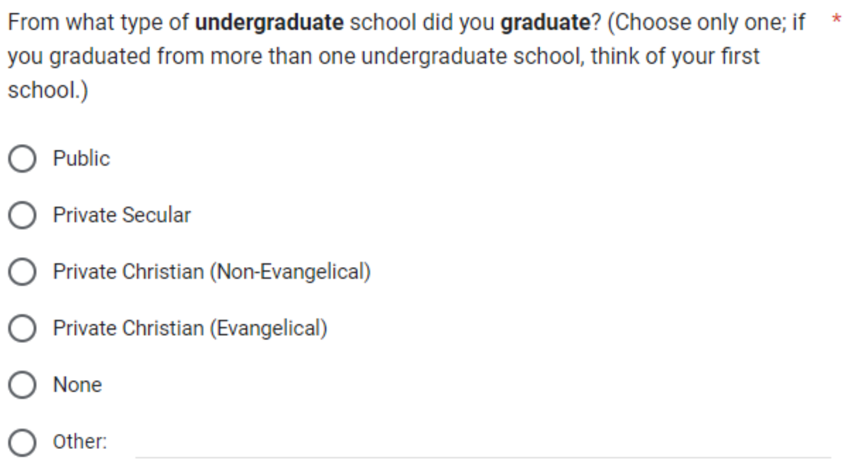
In paper-and-pencil surveys, the informed consent is usually a separate document that must be signed by the participants before they receive the survey which remains anonymous. However, most surveys are administered electronically today. About 93% of Americans have internet access (Pew Research Center, 2021). Those who do not have internet access tend to be elderly and less educated, a population that is less likely to participate in any survey. For participants to provide their informed consent before participating in a survey, the informed consent text is often shown after the introduction at the end of a page. The final line of the informed consent may say something like “By clicking NEXT below, I am providing my informed consent to participate in this survey.” Thus, only participants who have provided their informed consent will have access to the survey items found in the next section.

The Main Body of the Survey. This section presents the items that will measure the main variables that are the focus of the study, such as those used to test hypotheses. It is easiest for the participant if all the items measuring one variable are presented together, followed by another section for the next variable. For example, instead of mixing questions about church participation and mental health together, it is less cognitively demanding for the participants to answer all the questions about mental health first, followed by all the questions on church participation.

There are various ways of formatting items in surveys. The following examples are taken from (or are similar to) a survey-based study by Neherbass et al. (2023) examining the relationship between missionaries’ education and their Great Commission behaviors (evangelizing, baptizing, teaching, and teaching others to do the same). The study was done on Google Forms, a web-based survey app that is available for free to most people who have some sort of Google account.

Multiple Choice Items. The simplest type of item is the multiple-choice item. A prompt is provided and afterwards, the participant chooses a response (Figure 1). This is also called a radio button item because, like car radios, when a button is chosen, it deselects the previously chosen button.

Figure 1. A Multiple Choice Survey Item

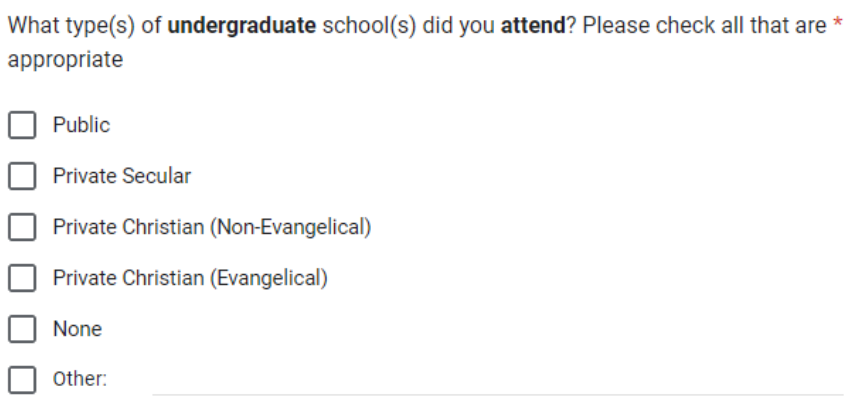

From what type of **undergraduate** school did you **graduate**? (Choose only one; if you graduated from more than one undergraduate school, think of your first school.) *

- ○ Public
- ○ Private Secular
- ○ Private Christian (Non-Evangelical)
- ○ Private Christian (Evangelical)
- ○ None
- ○ Other: ________

Note that the asterisk (*) indicates that when this question was set up, it was set as a mandatory response item; the participant is not able to go to the next page or submit the survey without completing this item. This is a good technique to reduce missing data that may cause a participant's responses to become unusable. Note also that the option "None" was included so that all participants would be able to answer this. The option "Other: _________" was provided so that participants could respond even if they did not think their school fit into one of the provided categories.

Checkbox Items. Unlike multiple choice, checkboxes allow participants to choose more than one response. This should be used when the options are not mutually exclusive or more than one response would be appropriate. Note that in survey software, checkbox items are often indicated with a square (□), whereas multiple choice items are indicated with an (○).

Figure 2. Checkbox

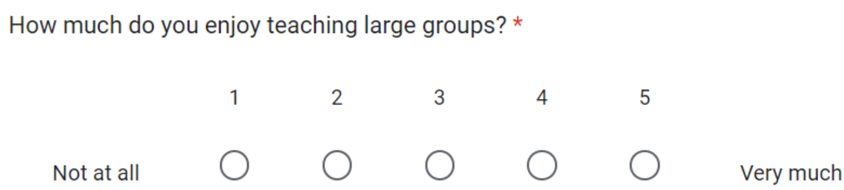


What type(s) of **undergraduate** school(s) did you **attend**? Please check all that are * appropriate

- [ ] Public
- [ ] Private Secular
- [ ] Private Christian (Non-Evangelical)
- [ ] Private Christian (Evangelical)
- [ ] None
- [ ] Other:

Linear Scale Items. Also known as scaling items, linear scale items provide two endpoints of a scale, but the meanings of the intermediate points are not specified. It is left up to the participant to determine their meaning. This type of scale is usually easy for participants to complete (See Figure 3). Some people tend to choose only the extreme responses (Batchelor & Miao, 2016), but with a large number of participants, the distribution will usually still be psychometrically valid.

Figure 3. Linear Scale

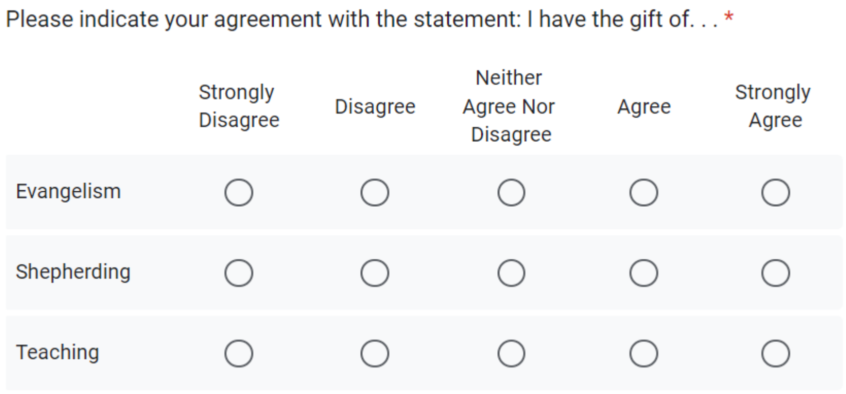


How much do you enjoy teaching large groups? *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not at all	○	○	○	○	○	Very much

Multiple Choice Grid. The best choice for reducing the cognitive demands of a survey in order to maximize completion rates is the multiple choice grid. This format is especially convenient for Likert items (Jamieson, 2004; Likert, 1932). When all the columns have the same meanings, the participants can respond to the prompts very quickly (Figure 4). They should be used whenever possible.

Figure 4. A Multiple Choice Grid


Please indicate your agreement with the statement: I have the gift of. . . *

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Evangelism	○	○	○	○	○
Shepherding	○	○	○	○	○
Teaching	○	○	○	○	○

Short Answer Items. When the participant is asked to type in a bit of data (rather than to click to indicate their choice), short answer or fill-in-the-blank items are used. These work best for very short answers that do not require complete sentences such as "What is your age?" or "How long (in years) have you attended this church? Please round your answer to the nearest year. If less than 6 months, please enter '0'."

Item Formats Less Frequently Used. Several other item formats are available in survey software but should be used sparingly, if at all, because they are prone to recording error or are burdensome. Dropdown menus (such as to indicate in what country the participant lives) often frustrate participants because they are time-consuming and often result in accidentally choosing the wrong answer. Long answer items or paragraph answer items provide one or more lines for the participants to provide their responses. Composing complex phrases, complete sentences, or paragraphs is cognitively taxing for many participants and these items are often skipped, sometimes leading to quitting the survey at the point they are encountered.

Demographics. At the end of the questions, demographic items should be included. The purpose of these items is to know what type of people participated in the survey. Often, no hypotheses are related to demographic differences, but knowing who participated in a survey helps readers of the research understand for whom it is most applicable. Demographic variables measured usually include age, sex, and race, but may also include education level, employment status, or church tenure (how long they have attended the church). People often fear becoming identifiable if too many questions are asked, so keeping them to a minimum is appropriate.

Conclusion. The survey should end with thanking the participants for their time and a reminder to click the final button (e.g., SUBMIT) so that their responses are recorded. The researcher may want to offer the participants the possibility of obtaining the results of the survey. To ensure anonymity, the participants should be informed that they can email the researcher directly at an email address that is included in the conclusion, rather than responding to an item that asks for their address. Researchers should make a list of such participants' email addresses as they receive them and then send the final report or a summary report to them when it is ready.

Other Survey Design Issues

Three other survey design issues should be addressed: question order, response order, and pretesting.

Question Order. As already mentioned, demographic questions should appear at the end of the survey. To begin the survey, the first questions should be interesting and easy to understand (e.g., no sentences with negations) in order to help motivate and situate the participant. When choosing which variables or constructs to measure first, the most general ones should be first so that the order does not influence responses. The question "How satisfied with life are you?" followed by "How satisfied with your love life are you?" may have a very different response than if the order were reversed. Starting off with specific questions makes that specific topic salient which can prevent the participant from responding to general questions from a more global perspective (Kalton & Schuman, 1982; Moore, 2002).

Response Order. For numeric responses (e.g., a scale from 1 to 5) or responses to Likert items (e.g., Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree), lower or more negative responses should be presented first (at the top or left) while the higher and the most positive responses should be at the end (at the bottom or right). This creates a natural flow to the responses and makes answering multiple items easier. Switching the order of the responses within the survey must be avoided at all costs; some participants are likely to not notice the change of order and will answer as if the order had not been changed.

When multiple-choice responses do not have a natural order (such as a numeric order), the order in which they are presented is likely to influence the response (e.g., "What do you put on the bread first when making a sandwich? A. Jelly B. Peanut Butter"). When people are not sure of a response, they are more likely to choose the first response presented that seems reasonable, a phenomenon known as the primacy effect (Krosnick & Alwin, 1987). To prevent this from biasing the responses, most electronic survey applications have an option to randomize (or shuffle) the order of the multiple-choice responses so that each response has an equal likelihood of being the first on each participant's survey.

Pretesting. Before being distributed to potential participants, the survey should be proofread and evaluated by a trustworthy critic (often one's spouse). Because so many errors can occur in survey design and because what is clear to us is often not clear to others, feedback should be sought through pretesting to make the survey as clear and unambiguous as possible.

In order to better understand how God works in people's lives and how we can more effectively carry out Christ's Great Commission, survey research can provide the data we need to test hypotheses and discover what people do, believe, feel, and experience. Creating a good survey can be difficult and time-consuming, but the information gained can help us better love others, both those who attend church now and those who will attend in the future.

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How a Novel Research Framework Resulted in Fruitful Evangelism and Discovery: Introducing Ethnoscopy and Spiritual Patronage

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Abstract

Faced with an unusual question from a Cambodian friend who had heard stories from God's Word, I embarked on a quest for an answer. He worshipped an unusual and unfamiliar object and wondered whether he must abandon it to serve Christ. I knew he did, but I needed to explore the meanings ascribed to that object of worship to communicate the gospel more clearly, just as Paul did in Acts 17 while in Athens. According to Jesus' parable of the soils in Matthew 13, fruitful evangelism involves understanding. How might individual missionaries and evangelists aid in that crucial need? With that question in mind, as well as my friend's question, I embarked on extensive interviewing, qualitative research, and participant observation. In that process, I followed a novel framework I termed "ethnoscopic analysis" or "ethnoscopy," which examines the problem scenario and the findings through four critical lenses. Through this grounded theory study, I came to understand that a spiritual entity, a "kru gom-nigh-uht" or birth teacher, was believed to dwell within the unusual object. That entity was perceived to offer

benefits to the worshipper in exchange for keeping its obligations. I recognized this as a form of patronage and called it "spiritual patronage." Acquiring that insight felt like Paul finding the altar to an unknown god. I was able to use the concept acquired through ethnoscopic analysis to begin sharing from their known beliefs and bridge to the previously unknown gospel, resulting in fruitful evangelism.

Keywords: evangelism, understanding, contextualization, patronage, folk religion.

Note: This story and a different portion of this research were presented at the 2015 EMS North Central Missiology Conference.

"If I follow Jesus, do I need to get rid of my *kru gom-nigh-ut* (birth teacher)?" my Cambodian friend Somnang (a pseudonym) asked.

Each week, he had been listening to one Bible story after another, presented in chronological order, starting from Genesis and moving toward the second coming. While Somnang and his wife learned more about Jesus, they ushered me into a much-needed understanding of their worldview. By this time, I had lived in Cambodia for nearly fifteen years, but I did not know what a birth teacher was. Observing my ignorance, my friend entered his home and returned with a mass of paper and string from the altar at the apex of his ceiling. The object looked much like a child's art project. I thought, "This is keeping you from following Jesus? What on earth is it?"

While I called the teepee-like object "it," my friend talked in relational terms, calling the object a "he/she," using a personal pronoun in the Khmer language that encompasses both genders. Then I realized I had no clue of its significance, and I needed to explore further. Of course, I knew my friend could not have two masters, but I did not understand enough to converse about this enigma. That day we all launched on a journey of understanding. The question remained, "Would that journey result in conversion?"

The Role of Understanding in Evangelism

"When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one sown with seed beside the road," Jesus explained (Matthew 13:19, NASB). In contrast, fruitful or good soil was "the one who hears the word and understands it" (Matthew 13:23, NASB). This Greek word used for understanding, suniemi (συνίημι), means "to piece together" or "join together in the mind," according to the *New Testament Greek Lexicon*. We tend to think of the cognitive element and grasping information. "However, cognitive science research has shown that this received intellectualist conception is substantially out of touch with how humans actually make and experience meaning" (Johnson, 2015, p. 1). Johnson added, "Understanding is thus less a form of *knowing* or *thinking* than it is a matter of *experiencing and acting*" (Johnson, 2015, p. 3, emphasis in original). Those studying such philosophical concepts maintain, "One may know many unrelated pieces of information, but understanding is achieved only when informational items are pieced together by the subject in question" (Kvanvig, 2003, p. 192).

Somnang had bits and pieces of knowledge but did not yet understand the gospel, and herein lies a critical issue in evangelism. One may teach truth from Scripture, but Jesus emphasized understanding as a necessary component of fruitfulness. Mission history shows that new converts do not necessarily espouse new Christian propositions or messages, but rather, a way of life: "The issue that mattered to the recipients of the Christian mission was not theology or dogma…but the 'securing of life,'" in Balcomb's (2016, p. 46) research.

Little is written about the importance of this concept of understanding in evangelism except in the area of contextualization, where an abundance of literature exists. Moreau (2012) defined the goal of that process "to make the Christian faith as a whole – not only the message but also the means of living out of our faith in the local setting – understandable" (p. 36). Whiteman (1997) began his definition of contextualization as communicating the gospel "in ways that make sense to people" (p. 2). Understanding and making sense are vital to the situation.

Sitting on a dirt floor in Cambodia, sharing the unchanging gospel of Christ, and pondering the meaning of my friends' image, I was not doing a literature review or exploring the 249 proposed contextual models (Moreau, 2012, p. 371). Unfortunately, the process I needed was not readily evident to me. No one on our team had ever seen this object. No one could tell me how to handle the situation. Since Somnang had heard the gospel as I had conveyed it, the immediate reaction to his question might have been to burn the object. The family was not ready for that step, nor did I know how to properly prepare them. For my friends to understand the foreign gospel I presented, I had to first understand this object of worship foreign to me.

The core of presenting an understandable and truthful picture of God's grace could be summarized in Jesus' commission to Paul: "I am sending you to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me" (Acts 26:17b-18, NASB). While I wanted Somnang's eyes opened to the gospel and God magnified, I also needed an eye-opening experience. I could not see the meanings attached to this *kru gom-nigh-ut*. As Hiebert, et al. (1999) explained:

> To understand the world of signs for a given people requires learning to exegete their symbol systems…Exegesis is our effort to uncover deep meanings – to make explicit what often lies implicit in human statements and actions. (p. 252)

In this vein, Hiebert (1987) proposed critical contextualization, a process conducted in conjunction with the local church. Hiebert et al. (1999) described four steps for conducting this seemingly linear process: phenomenological analysis, ontological critique/theological reflection and reality testing, critical evaluation, and missiological transformations (p. 21). I certainly needed a process like Hiebert's but had no access to a local church body at the time. Chang et al. (2009) thought there may be additional dimensions to Hiebert's (1987) critical contextualization and explained, "Hiebert's article does not focus on initial evangelism and church-planting but presupposes the presence of an indigenous church, with the missionary simply a dialogue partner with an indigenous church doing the contextualization" (p. 205).

With that in mind, I developed and employed a novel exploratory framework using multiple lenses to explore all the issues in a process conducted where and when the local church is absent or unavailable to the evangelist or missionary. deVries (2021) called this personal "communication of the gospel message" X2 or missional contextualization: "The goal of X2 is to accurately communicate the gospel, within a different language and sociocultural context, in such a way that is understandable and without any unintended distractions, or misapplications" (p. 3). The following is the story of that exploration, the novel process used, the contextualization of the message based on research, and the results that ensued.

A Novel Research Framework: Ethnoscopy

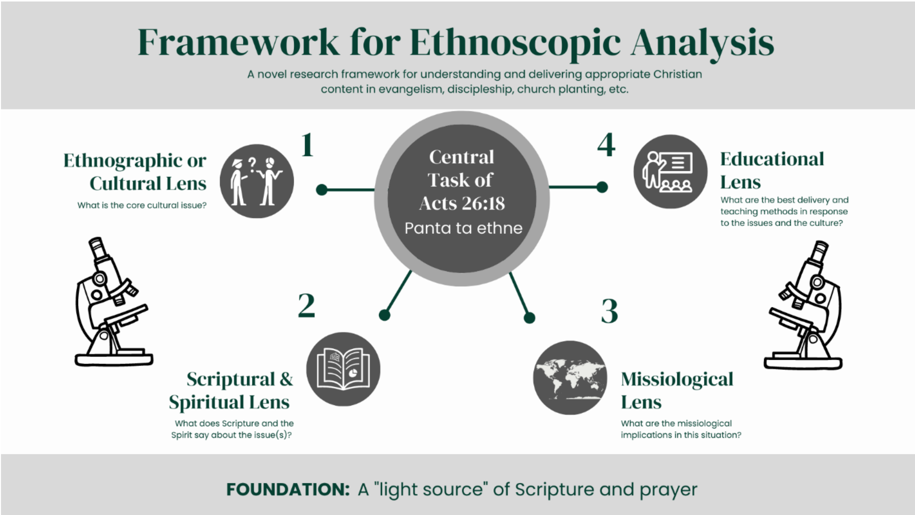
I had unexpectedly entered life in the "excluded middle" (Hiebert, 1982), was blind to that murky world, and ignorant of its ways. Hiebert, introducing this critical concept in evangelizing much of this world, explained the excluded middle as being the world of folk religion, of magic and astrology, as this-worldly, but unseen and occupying the supernatural realm. Many Westerners are blind to or unaware of this “world” of folk animists, of these foundational beliefs in and fear of the spirit world, as well as the use of shamans as mediators.

On the other hand, my friend was equally blind to my world of higher religion and the “upper realm” of worshipping a Creator God (Strand, 2014). What might an emic or insider perspective of this object expose? What meanings did the *kru gom-nigh-ut* hold? Challenged by Hiebert’s call to engage in human exegesis (2009), I set out to understand the meanings my friend ascribed to his birth teacher in order to adequately communicate the gospel message.

As a former clinical laboratory scientist, I frequently used microscopes. Beyond the cylindrical center allowing light to shine through, a microscope holds several objective lenses rotating on a turret. As the lenses move up and down, they bring the unseen into focus. When exploring a slide, one begins with a lower power and works up to using a higher magnification.

I believe the process of understanding an audience and helping them work toward understanding the gospel is similar to that of using a microscope. Hidden beneath macroscopic differences lie invisible beliefs, values, thoughts, and other cognitive and affective phenomena. Exploring that world requires light and lenses – a kind of “ethnoscope” instead of a microscope. Here I do not propose an instrument, but a systematic process for gaining an emic or insider perspective and responding appropriately. Ethnoscopic analysis is a proposed way of examining cultural issues in evangelism. I coined the term from the words, *ethne* or *ethnos,* meaning *nations* or *peoples,* and the word *skopein* meaning *to view*. As depicted in the figure below, ethnoscopic analysis includes employing or viewing a situation through the lens of ethnographic/cultural analysis, the lens of Scripture and the Spirit of God, as well as the lenses of missiology and education.

Figure 1: A Research Framework for Ethnoscopic Analysis



Ethnoscopic Analysis Applied

At the center of the analysis is God's call to open eyes (Acts 26:18) and the missional task to reach all peoples, *panta ta ethne* (Matthew 28:19). I see this analysis as having Christ and his mission at the core. He is the central illuminating power, with the foundational light source involving Scripture and prayer. Four lenses would then be available for examining and responding to cultural issues in evangelism, as represented in Figure 1. The following sections explore the problem scenario, apply ethnoscopic analysis under the scrutiny of each lens, and provide the final outcome.

Employing the Ethnographic/Cultural Lens

When Paul encountered the non-Jewish culture of Athens, Acts 17:16, 22-23 (NASB) states the following:

> Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was being provoked within him as he was observing the city full of idols... So Paul stood in the midst of the Aeropagus and said, "Men of Athens, I observe that you are very religious in all respects. For while I was passing through and examining the objects of your worship, I also found an altar with this inscription, 'TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.' Therefore, what you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you."

Paul passed through the town, examined worship practices, and found one altar that offered crucial information. Paul was first a participant observer. With research complete, he could respond more effectively to the Athenians, albeit with a troubled mind.

Hiebert advised similar phenomenological analysis "to carefully study the people in their contexts in order to understand them" (Hiebert, 1997, p. 204). Technically, phenomenology is "the study of phenomena and the discovery of their essence"; and "the goal of empirical phenomenological research flows from this and is to describe the world-as-experienced by the participants" (Baker, Wuest, & Stern, 1992, p. 1356). This "study of people" or anthropological practice (Hiebert, 1983, p. 1) aims to grasp the emic or insider's vantage point, but did Hiebert mean phenomenology was the only qualitative approach a researcher could espouse? In one of his last works, Hiebert (2008) explored various methods for worldview analysis and stated,

> There is no overarching set of methods for discovering worldviews; rather, several methods can be used. It is best to triangulate the findings of any one method with those produced by other methods. In the end, uncovering worldviews is often as much an art as a science. (p. 91)

Since I had been introduced to grounded theory, I chose that qualitative method in its classic or emergent form for my exploration. Baker, Wuest, & Stern (1992) maintained,

> The grounded theory method generates inductively based theoretical explanations of social and psychosocial processes...The object of grounded theory study is to discover a conceptual framework that explains the scene being investigated. (pp. 1357-1358)

Certainly, a beneficial research lens for ethnoscopic analysis, grounded theory developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) provides a strong framework for exploring "interaction grounded in the views of participants in a study" (Creswell, 2009, 13). Charmaz (1995), who extended the Glaser and Strauss legacy, elaborated:

> The hallmark of grounded theory studies consists of the researcher deriving his or her analytic categories directly from the data, not from preconceived concepts or hypotheses. Thus, grounded theory methods force the researcher to attend closely to what happens in the empirical

world he or she studies. (p. 32)

I believe Hiebert would approve.

Inherent in grounded theory study is theoretical sampling and purposeful selection of participants who fulfill certain criteria and who have the potential to inform the research question. My research involved locating Cambodians who had possessed a *kru gom-nigh-ut* as well as shamans who made them. To locate additional participants besides my friends, I utilized snowball or chain sampling as well as opportunistic sampling. The principle of data saturation in grounded theory determines that research continues until no new data emerges. Therefore, I conducted face-to-face, open-ended interviews with nine participants in Siem Reap, Cambodia, while I was a doctoral student in 2013. Every interview in that group-oriented culture had an audience, so I actually conversed with over twenty-eight people.

As for the nine major players, four were male and five were female and ranged in age from twenties to sixties. The men had more education than the women, a statistic true countrywide. In addition, while the interviews were conducted in one location, the participants hailed from across the country. The majority lived in rural settings, as is true for Cambodia as a whole. Therefore, this small study represented a range of ages and educational levels and included a variety of locations, reflecting the idea of generalizability championed by Glaser (2002).

Being acutely aware of pervasive animistic beliefs, I expected to have no problem finding people who had possessed a *kru gom-nigh-ut*, but I was wrong. In total, I talked with over fifty-six people, and received more than twenty-eight negative responses from Cambodians unfamiliar with the concept or never possessing a birth teacher. I wondered whether having a *kru gom-nigh-ut* might be a regional phenomenon. I finally encountered a fruit seller from Kampong Cham province who once had a *kru gom-nigh-ut* and confirmed others from her province and the capital had them.

In grounded theory, data analysis is an iterative process concurrent with data sourcing. After each interview, I transcribed audio files into QSR International's NVivo 10 qualitative data analysis software, analyzed the data line-by-line, and coded. I began with initial in vivo coding, then more focused codes emerged from a thorough analysis of patterns. Finally, the focused or intermediate codes served to inform a more complete framework represented by advanced or theoretical codes (Birks & Mills, 2006, 2011). During the entire process, I wrote memos tracking evolving trends. In the end, a central understanding emerged from this step-by-step analysis.

During each interview, I treated the individual participants and their information respectfully. I obtained verbal permission prior to each recording because signed permission forms would only have alarmed the participants, making them fear an "official" process. Use of pseudonyms protected identities. When appropriate, I also gave suitable tokens of appreciation, such as sharing a meal. Seeking to ensure valid and trustworthy results, I discussed analyses with participants on multiple occasions. Additionally, even though I had been in the country for over fifteen years at that time and spoke fluent Khmer, I consulted peers proficient in the language to confirm my understanding and translation. To produce dependable results, I used constant comparison during analysis and kept copious notes and memos.

What was the central understanding of this ethnographic exploration? Nearly everyone interviewed perceived the obligations of having a *kru-gom-nigh-ut*. They also understood the benefits of serving a *kru*. Those benefits seemed to outweigh any hardship or sacrifice. These elements - benefits, obligations, and unequal relationships - resembled a form of patronage. In the end, I found the meanings ascribed to this object of worship were akin to what I called "spiritual patronage," a variation of traditional patronage commonly practiced in Cambodia but in cooperation with the supernatural realm, with a tutelary deity, or spirit. I discuss further elements in the following sections.

After arriving at this central understanding, I felt a sense of epiphany, but when sharing the findings, people asked, "So what? What did you do with this knowledge? Did Somnang abandon his birth teacher?"

Employing the Scriptural/Spiritual Lens

Using the lens of qualitative ethnographic research produced enlightening information, but what were the implications? What did Scripture say in response? What reality lay behind the findings? The participants possessed a multi-faceted system, but what about the truth in Scripture of which they were unaware? "The social sciences stop with phenomenology, but we must move on to *ontology* - to judge our preliminary understandings in the light of Scripture," in Hiebert's (1997, p. 204) thinking. I now move to the second lens of ethnoscopic analysis - the scriptural and spiritual lens.

Many Cambodians interviewed received a similar object during an illness and used words that implied comfort when speaking of the spiritual entity indwelling the object. They also explained obligations to the *kru* as if they were minuscule in comparison to the benefits. Fasting from certain foods, heeding travel restrictions, burning incense, or making offerings seemed no burden. The *kru* seemed personal, present, and reliable. Belief ran deep in the efficacy of this remedy. I marveled how someone could deal so relationally with what I perceived to be merely an object.

During discussions of benefits, obligations, and meanings, participants talked about relatives, community, traditions, and ancient ways. One participant who had become a Christian apologized for his involvement and confessed, "Honestly, I cannot deny my relatives. I have to obey them, or they will not help me when I need it again." He added, "I don't want to walk in the old ways. We always had to do things for the kru. I don't want to do that anymore. If we do not follow them, they do bad things to us."

I understood the participants' viewpoint, but as a believer in the higher realm of the Creator, I could not agree with their reality. I learned that deep within many of these objects nestled two sticks, symbolizing Hanuman, the monkey god or *svah ohm*, the "grandfather monkey." For Cambodians, spiritual patronage seemed like being "under Grandpa's watchful eye" (Roveda, 2003). The ancient Khmer story, the Reamker from the sixth century (Marrison 1989, 126), described Hanuman as "powerful in deeds of prowess" (Jacob, 2007, p. 167). Eisenbruch's (1992) study of traditional healers in Cambodia confirmed this kind of invocation of "the monkey god Hanuman" (p. 297).

What did all this mean spiritually and scripturally? I believe it is no coincidence the monkey god is the son of the "king of the air." Ephesians 2:1-2 (NASB) reveals his true identity:

> And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.

The needy had unwittingly become subservient to the "prince of the power of the air" in exchange for certain benefits. Unfortunately, they did not realize the dangerous consequences. As Stein (1984) found in analyzing physical patron-client relationships:

> Patronage is an internalized relationship of reciprocal dependency which limits the developmental and therefore adaptive capacities of role participants. In this way, as a relationship of simultaneous exploitation and benefit, patronage perpetuates itself and is unchallenged by the social system it does not threaten. (p. 34)

The relationship between the client and the shaman (*kru k'my* or *kru tee-*

aye) is an integral part of this system, participating with the supernatural patron, keeping the client "in the dark" and under his/her power. Stein (1984) continued:

> Lamentably, the client does not learn within the symbiotic patron-client relationship that his anxieties might be unfounded; instead, they are experienced as realistic threats – from which he seeks protection by the fantasied omnipotence, omniscience, omnibenevolence, and the prescience of his patron. Patronage capitalizes on anxiety and is itself part of the stress. It requires the hostile universe it mediates. (p. 33)

I respect the beliefs of my Cambodian friends; but as a Christian who believes in Scripture, I viewed the entity with whom Somnang forged a relationship not as a kind and benevolent grandfather but as a malevolent spiritual force. The entity indwelling Somnang's object certainly did not desire the long-term best for his subject. According to Scripture, the entity behind the "kind" mask is a trickster and an enslaver. This entity had no right to "rule" or be worshipped but had usurped that position. While fascinating, it is not within the scope of this paper to explore the nature of these spiritual entities/gods and conduct an exhaustive Scriptural study. However, it would be appropriate to participate in such a study with national believers coming from animistic backgrounds.

In Scripture, we find that God alone is worthy of allegiance. Before the Israelites' sin in requesting, "Make us a god" in Exodus 32:1, Moses sang: "Who is like You among the gods, O Lord? Who is like You, majestic in holiness, awesome in praises, working wonders?" (Exodus 15:11, NASB). When we view the situation through the lens of Scripture, we see God alone should be magnified. Peter declared, "You are…a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9, NASB). Practically, how do we do this? How can we help our animistic friends understand this truth?

As part of this step, we must also ask the question, "What is the Spirit saying? How is he directing us to pray and to speak?" Too often, we gather information from Scripture but neglect to ask for the Holy Spirit's direction and intervention. Our mission is inherently spiritual, and without holy assistance, we are powerless. In my situation, we continued to share truth from God's Word with Somnang and his family. Many prayed for them to have dreams, and they did. Many prayed for open eyes and understanding, and we called for intercessory prayer. Combining these understandings with the use of the next lenses assisted in developing an effective and well-rounded approach. We found that "the Holy Spirit miraculously bridged linguistic, regional, and ethnic disparities" (Hertig, 2004, p. 64).

Employing the Missiological Lens

Returning to the concept of spiritual patronage and employing the lens of missiology, I came to understand leaving a familiar relationship or religious practices to follow God could be daunting for Somnang. Folk religionists can feel they are leaving "home" never to return, losing security for the unknown. I realized I was not asking this family to simply burn an object. I was asking them to divorce themselves from a trusted friend. Tienou (2004) spoke of the "kinship bonds" Africans had with deceased ancestors and the hold they had even on Christians (p. 214). In light of this research, how might we remedy that situation and help those involved in traditional religion see the primacy of God?

Some participants in the study remedied the prospect of alienation by avoiding family and community in their home villages. However, some of those who distanced themselves from countryside beliefs still seemed to hold to the model. One noticeable difference was the sophistication of the images. My urban neighbor proudly displayed his costly metal and cloth talismans (*yantras*) that had been blessed to ensure driving safety. Although more expensive than my friend's object, they served the same general purpose.

When another long-time friend saw the photo of Somnang's object, formally known as a *some-nome sawng-vah,* he labeled it "ancient" and assigned the term *ah-roop-ay-ee* (*animistic*, meaning "cannot be seen or held"). He explained most Cambodians do not follow the tenets of Buddhism until old age. Rather, they trusted fetishes, talismans, protective strings, amulets, etc. While "to be Khmer is to be Buddhist," the majority of participants readily confessed these animistic practices were profoundly Cambodian, not Buddhist – magical practices and a social "religion" living happily together. Van Rheenen (1991) defined *magic* as "the use of rituals and paraphernalia to manipulate spiritual powers;" differing from religion, magic seeks to manipulate the use of power and is unconcerned with relationship (218).

While no longer "in vogue" to refer to *fetishism* (Ellen, 1988) or even *animism* (Lutgendorf, 2007; Pool, 1990), these terms are still used in missiology. Lutgendorf (2007) explained the difficulty in classifying such sacred objects: "Nearly everyone, myself included, who writes in English about Hindu practice still grapples with terminological issues when it comes to sacred 'images'" (p. 21). Technically the object I studied could be called a “fetish” (popularized by De Brosses and presented in Ellen, 1988). So, to complete the definition mentioned earlier, the object, a *some-nome sawng-vah,* could be called a fetish used in shamanistic practice in rural Cambodia, a visual symbol of a protective entity – the *kru gom-nigh-ut*, a tutelary deity, or guardian spirit, according to Lutgendorf (2007). The addition of Hanuman, the monkey god, in the center of some fetishes represents a theriomorphic deity or one having an animal-like form (Lutgendorf, 2007).

After realizing the concept of spiritual or supernatural patronage was the central meaning behind the veneration of a *kru gom-nigh-ut*, I searched for similar terminology. With roots in ancient Rome, the patron-client notion stemmed from hierarchical relationships between the *patronus* and the *cliens*. The *patrocinium* of the *patronus* protected the *cliens* (Gruen, 1984; Westbrook, 2005). Stein (1984) added:

> Mediating the social universe in behalf of his clients, the patron offers protection in the face of danger, greater security in an insecure world, greater predictability for the powerless, more resources for the resource-starved or -deprived, reduction of stress, stability in the face of uncertainty, and reliability in an untrustworthy world. In short, if you cannot rely upon anyone else, at least you can count on the patron. (p. 31)

Stein mentioned the same benefits and themes Khmer ascribed to their *kru gom-nigh-ut*. The difference was this patron did not “exist” in the physical realm – only in the “excluded middle,” in the unseen or supernatural realm, but affecting this world.

I discovered that the term “spiritual patronage” was used mostly in a few discussions surrounding devotees and saints in the Catholic tradition, as a kind of ecclesiastical patronage (Boissevain, 1966; Eisenstadt & Roniger, 1984; Raj & Harmon, 2006). However, as Raj & Harmon (2006) maintained, in spiritual matters, “Humans replicate the norms and mechanics of social relations” (p. 8). It makes sense to assume such a strong patron-client society in the political and social arena would also have a system of dealing with spiritual entities, except heretofore scholars have not written about traditional folk religious practices in this light.

The supposedly powerful spiritual entity is expected to supply the needs of the loyal and trusting client. The “norm of reciprocity” and “the legitimacy of dependence” (Scott, as quoted in Ledgerwood, n.d.) undergirds the philosophy of the system. Ledgerwood (n.d.) succinctly explained the extensive patron-client relationships in Cambodia: “The only way to get something that is beyond your capacity is to attach yourself to a superior." Mazlish (2000) referred to the process as "an economy of power," emphasizing the importance of connections (p. 3). Mazlish entitled his article "Invisible Ties," apropos for this research, where invisible ties of spiritual patronage, trust, and loyalty bind a person to his or her *kru gom-nigh-ut*.

When presenting these results to colleagues, I originally used an illustration with two spreading shade trees, contrasting taking refuge in one of two different worlds. However, I came to realize portraying two trees of equal size did not accurately represent spiritual reality. The system of spiritual patronage was more like the "vine slips of a strange god" (Isaiah 17:10 NASB). People claimed to receive fruit and protection/shade from the system, but the majority seemed blind to God's greater system. If the Westerner suffers from the "flaw of the excluded middle" (Hiebert, 1982), the animist suffers from the flaw of the excluded upper level (Strand, 2014), unaware of the Creator God. We know primary confidence must be shifted, old patrons shed, and God's Kingdom embraced. How do we accomplish this? How might I help Somnang discover God to be a reliable spiritual Patron, jealous for exclusive worship and spiritual monogamy? I discuss that while presenting the next lens.

Employing the Educational Lens

Using the educational lens, we explore the question, "What is the best delivery method for the truth needed?" Given the findings from employing each lens, how do we communicate the message accurately? Here, we must continue to employ the understanding gained by viewing our audience through the first lens, through a firm grasp of culture and worldview. Are they mainly oral learners, needing recorded lessons, visual portrayals, songs, stories, proverbs, or bite-sized chunks of teaching? Are they group-oriented? Are they egalitarian or hierarchical? So many cultural values become important factors when employing the educational lens.

The roots of the folk religious system go deep, with a strong pull from kin and community. When people seek to renounce the old system and convert, they need new roots and a support system. They need deep and abiding kinship relationships with other believers and their Creator. They also need gospel presentations and discipleship processes that can be easily reproduced to share with friends and family.

I came to realize folk religionists have been socialized into their beliefs and traditions. They watch family, friends, and neighbors burn incense, visit shamans, receive sacred sprinklings, etc. How do we socialize new converts? What visible and tangible symbols can we offer for their observation? Do we model the Christian walk for them to view? Many Westerners seem to believe discipleship is a cognitive process. For animists, however, religion is acquired by observation and relationship. I came to understand the need to incorporate more relational and observational elements into evangelism, discipleship, and training.

Moreover, Cambodia is a predominantly oral culture (Thigpen, 2020). Even though my friend Somnang was educated, his wife was not. I knew from my storying experience people first needed the meta-narrative of Scripture to understand "the big picture" of God's grand story. They already had stories of the efficacy of animistic practices. Now they needed testimonies of God's power and Bible stories that illustrated the same, that God is worthy of allegiance and can be trusted.

With my own understanding of Somnang's worldview firmly in mind, I returned to share the gospel with his family. I prepared to share the Grand Narrative of Scripture with a patronage theme. I bridged the gap from the known to the unknown by first sharing what I learned about their *kru gom-nigh-ut*. I explained how I now understood the benefit of following the *kru* and the obligations, how living with the object and its spiritual entity was like living under the protective shade of a beloved grandfather. I crudely drew a picture of a spreading vine and them sitting underneath.

Then I launched into the gospel, but not any gospel presentation I had ever shared before. Because "information is giving out; communication is getting through," (Ascribed to Sydney Harris. See Muzychka, n.d.). I sought once and for all to "get through." I mentioned that they lived under the protective shade of their beloved *kru* but that there was another Person much greater and much more powerful. I then drew a huge, spreading tree that overshadowed Somnang's vine and filled the paper. I told them the One True and Living God, the Creator, was large enough that all people of all time and every place could live under His protection and care. Then I shared God's story from creation until the consummation. I talked about a wonderful Patron deserving of worship, allegiance, and honor, but who continually faced dishonor and disappointment from His creation and still finally came in person to deliver us from sin, sorrow, and shame.

Throughout my talk, Somnang and his wife gave numerous understanding nods, comments, and smiles, confirming I grasped their worldview. At the story of the crucifixion, Somnang's wife said, "We didn't ask Him to do this for us." At that moment, they grasped what Christ had done and their personal obligation to respond to such a precious gift. They finally understood.

After that presentation, I left them to ponder their choice. I continued to pray for them, thinking the spiritual entity might be too dear to be abandoned, too efficacious to leave for an unknown relationship. Fortunately, I was wrong.

Sometime later, after much prayer on the part of many, I returned to visit this dear family. I asked to take another picture of their *kru gom-nigh-ut* because it was difficult to discern the object's features in my dark photo. Somnang responded, "We don't have it anymore."

"What?" I queried.

He simply replied, "We got rid of it. We don't need it anymore. We follow Jesus."

I could hardly believe his response. That day we arranged for them to be baptized and become part of a local house group. Mission complete. Somnang and his family had come to understand – "not just an intellectual operation" (Baker, 2015, p. 3), but wholeheartedly with the experience of a sincere change of allegiance and evidence of a life transformation. Ethnoscopic analysis had done its job and was ready for another evangelistic endeavor.

Conclusion

In conclusion, to share the gospel with my friends in a way they understood, I needed to engage in a bit of research. It was not that I did not understand or know the gospel. The issue was how to convey those truths to people whose lives revolved around a completely different spiritual force.

Modifying Hiebert's work, I employed four different lenses in my research, in ethnoscopic analysis of the concept or problem. By first analyzing the problem from an ethnographic or cultural perspective, I discovered the answer to the question, "What is the core cultural issue?" Spiritual patronage emerged as a foundational concern.

With that understanding, I engaged the second lens of ethnoscopy, the Scriptural and spiritual lens used to answer the question, "What do Scripture and the Holy Spirit say about the issue at hand?" Of course, God's Word commands spiritual monogamy and avoiding dependence on any other entity. How do those who fear the spirit world, who have seemingly experienced its efficacy, leave those relationships and their accompanying ways? They need to see God as greater, as worthy of trust, as a faithful Patron.

The missiological lens then helped to answer the question, "What are the missiological implications?" Missiology shed light on the excluded middle and all that beliefs in the spirit world entail, as well as the difficulties in overcoming the fear of spirit beings and coming to serve the One True God.

Being aware of the issue, the potential pitfalls, and the truth of Scripture was not sufficient. How should this life-changing message be delivered? The fourth lens of ethnoscopic analysis, the educational lens, helped explore the question, “What are the best delivery and teaching methods in response to this information?” Knowing my friends were oral learners and knowing that biblical storying had been effective in the context, I crafted a Grand Narrative or “big picture” of the whole of Scripture with a theme focused on patronage. Utilizing that theme gleaned from the research was key to seeing the truth of God’s great story of faithful love for an unfaithful people penetrate the hearts of my friends.

As I gaze at a photo of those *kru gom-nigh-ut* perched on their altar, I now see what appears to be the image of a brown face with a red crown, straw plumage, and several sashes over a white body – a definite attempt at creating a deity for a makeshift throne. I could not see it at first. I was blind to the meaning such a symbol held, blind to the middle zone of fear of the spirit world, and ignorant of the concept of spiritual patronage. Now it all makes sense.

Exploring this situation through the four lenses of the proposed framework for ethnoscopic analysis helped me gain an understanding of spiritual patronage. I utilized this insight to help open the eyes of my friends, resulting in fruitful evangelism, Christ being magnified, and the mysterious process of 2 Corinthians 4:6 repeated: “For God, who said, ‘Light shall shine out of darkness,’ is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.”

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Disciple Making Starts at a Different Point Today

Brad Ransom

Presidential Address at the 2023 Annual Conference of the Great Commission Research Network
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Christians are called to make disciples. This is obvious when we read the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20 and other places in Scripture. "Go therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matt. 28:19-20, CSB).

We see the command that we are given and most of us understand our responsibility of telling others about Christ, but I'm not sure most Christians understand the difference between just "telling" and "making disciples." It seems pretty obvious to me that in most churches in America, we are not seeing people come to Christ in the same way that we did in generations past.

I started in ministry in the early 1980s. At the first church where I served on staff, I served as the minister of music, youth, and evangelism. Our church used the program Evangelism Explosion (EE). EE was a popular program in those days to train lay people to share the Gospel. It was a sixteen-week memorization program where participants had to memorize a five-point outline along with dozens of passages of Scripture, common objections, responses, and a multitude of other things. It was a commitment, to say the least. We trained most of the people in our church to share the Gospel using this method. We set aside Monday nights for training classes and to go out "on visitation" to share the Gospel. We knocked on doors, stopped people at malls and parks, and talked to thousands of people.

When I started in ministry, our usual method of evangelism was to walk up to a stranger's door, knock, ask a couple of diagnostic questions, and hopefully present the gospel by reciting the memorized five-point outline with Scripture references and built-in answers to the most common objections. At the conclusion, we would then ask that person for a commitment to follow Christ. Many times, we would be successful. After we would lead them in a prayer, we would give them a pamphlet, welcome them to the family of God, and go next door to do it all again.
In 1975, James Engel (Engel & Norton, 1975) published a helpful tool that is known as the Engel Scale of evangelism, which has been modified and adapted several times (Table 1).

Table 1. A Modified Version of the Engel Scale

-10	No God framework
-9	Experiencing emptiness
-8	Vaguely aware of Christianity
-7	Interested in Christianity
-6	Aware of the gospel
-5	Positive attitudes about God
-4	Experiences of Christian love
-3	Aware of personal need
-2	Grasp of implications of the Gospel
-1	Challenged to respond personally
0	Repentance and faith
+1	Evaluation of the decision
+2	Understanding the basics of the Christian life
+3	Functional member of a local church
+4	Continuing growth in character, lifestyle, and service
+5	Effective faith sharing

Note: This version of the Engel Scale is compiled from several sources (Dash, 2015; Engel & Norton, 1975; Gray & James, 1997; Hazelden, 2000).

In the early 80s in the Midwest United States (where I lived), most people were probably at a -3 or -4 on the Engle Scale. They were certainly aware of God; most were interested in Jesus, and some were investigating Jesus. It was not a long journey from -3 or -4 to deciding to surrender to Christ.

In fact, one of the questions we would ask as a part of the EE program was, "Suppose you were to die today and stand before God in judgment and he were to ask you, 'Why should I let you into heaven?' What would you say?" In the 1980s more people would be at a similar starting point (not too far from 0) than people would be today. Today, members of younger generations tend to start at a much lower number on the Engel Scale. According to Pew Research, only 68% of younger Millennials even believe in heaven and I assume it would be lower with Generation Z.

So, my point is that disciple-making starts at a different place today than it did forty years ago. Now, I am not saying going up to a stranger's door today is bad or that it would never work, but in light of what we know about younger generations, how effective would this method be if the person that answers the door is at -8 or -9 on the Engel scale? We do not know them, and they do not know us. How effective would we be? Certainly, I'm not factoring in the power of prayer and conviction of the Holy Spirit. I know all things are possible, but the likelihood of this method of evangelism working is lower than it was in generations past.

One could argue that we do not know if a person we approach is at a -8 or -2, so asking him or her, "If you were to die today do you know for sure you'd go to heaven?" might be appropriate. However, we probably need to be asking, "Do you believe in God?" or "Do you believe the Bible is true?" If they don't believe in God or that the Bible is true, we need to start at a different place. Apologetics and a knowledgeable defense of the Bible are more important than ever. Most people who believe in heaven believe everyone is going there except murderers, rapists, child molesters, and terrorists.

The Gospel has not changed. We know that. The same Gospel truth is still the truth. Man is sinful and separated from God because God is holy and just and cannot ignore sin. We are saved by faith through the work of Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary. That is it. Nothing has changed except the people we are trying to reach.

Disciple-making is more than a memorized outline or five-step process we print on a pamphlet. Disciple-making is building relationships with people, loving them where they are, and helping move them from where they are closer and closer to the point of decision to surrender to Christ.

Let me give you three quick points of application.

1. Evangelism has become more of a process than an event. I believe in Romans 10:9, "If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." But I also believe getting to the place of belief is more of a process as we have to move most people from farther in the negative numbers to zero on the Engle Scale. I have come to realize and believe that discipleship usually begins with most people before they are born again.

2. Our practice of evangelism must begin with a non-judgmental acceptance of all people. Disciple-making begins in relationships. We can love sinners and not sin. My friend Jim McComas says, "Knowing there are people in your pews that are struggling with the sins you are preaching against should not change your tune, but it should change your tone." We should stand strong against sin, but we need to do it in a way that promotes relationships with the lost. How can we win those with whom we are at war? The popular Christian group Casting Crowns say it well in their song *Jesus, Friend of Sinners*: "What if we put down our signs, crossed over the line, and loved like he did?"

3. We must be willing to change. Many of us grew up seeing evangelism as an event like I did. We worked hard to get people to a point of decision then we signed them up for a Sunday School class or small group. A few followed through, but most did not. Discipleship is just as important as evangelism. In my opinion, they are two sides of the same coin. You really cannot have one without the other.

With that, I'd like to introduce to you next year's theme for the Annual Conference of the Great Commission Research Network to be held March 4-5, 2024, in Orlando, "Disciple-Making: From Doubting to Disciple." I believe this is an essential aspect of the Great Commission where we are told in Matthew 28:19, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations..." At next year's conference, we will address specific ways to help move people, regardless of where they are on the Engel scale to a place of understanding, acceptance, and obedience (See p. 91).

The mission of the GCRN is to help you and your church expand their participation in the Great Commission. We want to help you and your church be more effective by emphasizing three things.

1. Research. The GCRN includes many people in our network who are conducting important and relevant research on current trends and best practices related to the Great Commission. Many of our members are frontline soldiers blazing the trail for evangelism as it relates to this and the next generation.

2. Resources. We publish an academic journal twice a year that is filled with articles, book reviews, and other helpful information. We have a website that we are planning to expand and use more in the future. Also, through social media and our annual conference, we want to provide additional, high-quality resources.

3. Relationships. In 2016 I met someone who invited me to attend the Great Commission Research Network annual conference. That year

Gordon Penfold, Bud Brown, and Gary Westra spoke on the research conducted for their new book *Pastor Unique*. I met these three men that year and I still have a relationship with all of them. However, my friendship with Gordon has blossomed and I consider him a very good friend that has helped me in my ministry over and over. Attending the Great Commission Research Network conference also led me to build friendships with many other people who are influential in my life and ministry. These relationships are priceless.

Serving in ministry can be lonely and we can feel like we don't know where to go or what to do. Sometimes we may feel ineffective and perhaps aren't seeing too many results. It is not because the gospel has changed. We are confident in the fact that God is the same yesterday, today, and forever. I am just as confident that people change. Knowing our culture and the people around us will help us reach them with the message of the gospel. Many churches have lost their effectiveness because they act and do ministry the same way as they did two or three decades ago. They once thrived and were reaching new people, but the people around their church changed while they did not. Knowing how people think can help us reach them. Great Commission Research Network members are some of the best thinkers and researchers in the world. Working together, we can reach more people with the Gospel.

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Need-Oriented Evangelism: Encountering, Embracing, and Experiencing God

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Abstract
*This article provides a fresh perspective on evangelism by reflecting a belief in the Triune God--the source of saving truth and loving community. Mission is part of God's nature; he is the ultimate Missionary. Mission happens naturally whenever children of God intentionally invite and facilitate God's presence. Over time, the word "evangelism" has become contaminated by myths, a false understanding of God, and unpleasant religious experiences and practices. Genuine evangelism addresses the most burning issues of people's lives and should be treated as such. True evangelism involves caring about, praying for, and sharing with people. The practical part of this article introduces three **E**s of evangelism (**e**ncountering, **e**mbracing, and **e**xperiencing) that correspond to the three colors of Light, as introduced in* Color Your World with Natural Church Development *(Schwarz, 2005).*

Note: Parts of this essay have been published in *The Triune God Reflected in Church Life and Health: A Trinitarian Compass for Church Leaders* by the authors (NCD Publishers, 2023).

> But in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect.
>
> - 1 Peter 3:15 (ESV)

What does need-oriented evangelism mean? Mike Mazzalongo (2014) has described it as evangelism that "encourages each Christian to use their gifts and resources to serve non-Christians with whom they have a relationship and see to it that they hear the Gospel and create that all-important connection to the local church." Christian Schwarz (2005), the founder of Natural Church Development, suggests that there are three core components of need-oriented evangelism: prayer, caring, and sharing. While any church can easily incorporate one or maybe even two of these aspects into its evangelistic efforts, it is only when all three are present that evangelism is truly "need-oriented."

My (Petr) closest personal experience with need-oriented evangelism is not connected with an evangelism series or a campaign preceded by a felt-needs seminar (such as a seminar to stop smoking, stress-relieving seminar, parenting seminar, etc.), but instead having fun with youth. When we had a small church plant meeting for worship, my wife and I encouraged our three teenage sons to invite their friends. Many of their friends who had grown up in a church were leaving, and the boys had a whole list of reasons why their secular friends would not fit into church life. "Okay," I said, "Well, why not try having your own church meetings?" Eventually, my sons agreed, provided I would be there to support them.

After my oldest son (who was 17 at the time) and his friend Pavel (who had grown up atheist) were baptized, along with two other young ladies, they took this task seriously. They renamed their pop-punk band from "Fake City" to "Home for Real," and their occasional concerts in rock clubs became outreach events. Before we knew it, they were involved in a variety of different activities, exercises, and ministries—all focused on engaging young people. For example, they hosted a church sleepover event in our outreach center; on other occasions, they organized a church service on top of a high building or in someone's backyard. After their "church time," they participated in a "free hug" campaign, offering hugs to people on the street or randomly asking people about their spiritual needs or experiences. One year on Christmas Day, the group prepared sack lunches and shared them with the homeless, trying to apply Jesus's teachings.

Interestingly, around half of the kids in the group had not grown up in Christian homes, and many of them lived with only one biological parent.

Learning from the Bible was a new experience for them; belonging to a group of caring peers with whom they could have fun and having access to "a pastor for atheists" who would support, mentor, and pray for them as needed turned out to be the closest to "need-oriented evangelism" I have ever experienced. About a dozen of these young people were baptized in the first few years. Although some stopped being actively engaged in "church" after they moved away and the "youth generation" group was no longer available for them, at least they had experienced a sense of belonging. Moreover, this customized church experience provided my children and their church peers with reasons to not abandon the church completely when they became adults.

Pavel, the young man who had been baptized on the same day as my son, later completed a master's degree in theology at Charles University in Prague and is currently serving as a social media pastor. His online ministry has drawn the attention of young people—many who have expressed their desire to meet in person. As I am writing this, Pavel's church plant is preparing to have its first official weekend worship. I praise God for opening my heart to these young people who taught me what need-oriented evangelism is, and how sharing, prayer, and caring work together.

Evangelism for Everybody?

Our loving God is a sending God who sends to save and to transform. Because of who he is, he desires to work with us and through us in his mission. Evangelism, therefore, is an inevitable part of God's Kingdom and its expansion. (Think of Jesus comparing God's Kingdom to a grain of mustard seed or to leavened bread in Luke 13:18–21.) Most Christians have some idea of how evangelism is supposed to happen; after all, Jesus gave us the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18–20. What we often forget is that "the Great Commission is not a problem to be faced, nor an obligation to be fulfilled. It is not a duty to perform, but a possibility to be explored. In mission, we discover what God can do. Often Christians operate out of a sense of duty, but there is much better motivation than that" (Edgar, 2004, p. 193).

Should all believers be involved in evangelism? Well, it depends on what we mean by this word. Evangelism is not just a task for professionals; it is not simply a matter of telling people about God or an annual event, and it is definitely not us doing God a "favor." In reality, evangelism is God doing a favor for us. He wants us to experience him as the Triune God—the foundation, basis, authority, mandate, as well as fuel, for mission and evangelism. With that said, the key element is to cooperate with God (to let him do his work) by simply doing what he has asked us to do. "God wants to work through his people so that we can share in . . . His missionary love" (Edgar, 2004, p. 193).

What, then, is our role? Our part is more than you think. I like how Dickson frames it in his book *The Best Kept Secret of Christian Mission*—that evangelism is to promote the Gospel with more than our lips; it takes our prayers, our money, the works of the church, and our actions. We can promote the gospel by being friends with sinners, in daily conversations, as well as through clear presentations of the message (Dickson, 2013). Rosenberger (2007) writes:

> We have more opportunity to witness to the living Lord . . . than we recognize in our day-to-day lives . . . A role has been assigned to us . . . God has set us on fire that the world might watch us burn with goodness, compassion, truthfulness, righteousness, justice, generosity of spirit, and peace. God has set us on fire that, in burning with the Spirit of God yet not being consumed, the world might find its way toward the light and warmth of dwelling in communion with God. Nothing could be better than that . . . This is the ultimate joy that Jesus Christ came to bring, and brought abundantly. That abundance for all would mean scarcity for none. That every last person is caught up in this embrace and no one is left behind. That nothing should separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. (p. 117)

Along the same lines, Schwarz reminds us that healthy evangelism is need-oriented, a process of helping people not only to be saved to eternal life but to answer the key questions they have and reckon with the most burning issues of their life (Schwarz, 2005).

When Evangelism Goes Wrong

I am sure you know the story of Jonah the prophet; his story, especially the part about being swallowed by big fish, is a very popular children's Bible story. However, let's look at this story from a slightly different perspective, examining Jonah as an evangelist. Now, Jonah did not like the idea of evangelism at all. Being a prophet to deliver God's messages to Jonah's own people was doable, but when he was asked to travel out of his own country to share God's message with strangers, Jonah basically refused. We do not know what preceded boarding the boat; we do know, however, that Jonah decided to play hide and seek with God and headed in the opposite direction.

All this, even though God had made the job quite easy for him. Jonah did not need to nurture the soil of their hearts first, get to know the people, build relational bridges with them, or gain their confidence. His task was simply to declare God's judgment on them—literally announce a death sentence—nothing more, nothing less. But Jonah was not up for the task. It took the miracle of a torrential storm, being tossed in the sea, being rescued by a big fish, and three days in deep darkness for Jonah to agree to do what God had asked.

As it turned out, Jonah's delivery of God's message was exactly what the people of Nineveh needed. Indeed, God's love touched their hearts, and the harsh words of judgment brought them to their senses. Once Jonah, the foreign evangelist, was long gone (camping on a hill nearby, smugly watching for the city to be destroyed), the people of Nineveh took it from there and did the rest of evangelism themselves. They cared for each other and shared God's message among themselves with a unanimous and prayer-filled response, covering themselves with sackcloth and turning away from their sins.

This story demonstrates how God was able to turn Jonah's disastrous evangelistic attempt (or the lack thereof) into an amazing missional movement, resulting in societal transformation. How encouraging! God is in charge of evangelism, not us. What is discouraging is that Jonah did not want to save others; he is an example of a religiously blind person who could not see the big picture, even after all the drama God made. Perhaps he thought that God's message was only for "good" people; he did want to get dirty by involving himself with strangers and heathens. In the end, Jonah was angry at God when He showed mercy and compassion to the Ninevites—a true reflection of the state of his own sinful heart.

People Matter to God—Not Just Evangelism

Communication is not just what we say, but also how it is perceived by others and what they take away from it. Jonah did not care about the last part. Unfortunately, the same is true today. Some Christians assume that once a biblical truth is shared, the mission is accomplished. In Jonah's case, those to whom he evangelized took the rest of the process into their hands and finished the job. Jonah could not have cared less about helping the people to repent, but God did. This story provides a vivid example of what happens when the Gospel is not only proclaimed, but the recipients of the good news understand the meaning of the message and respond.

If simply delivering the message was all that mattered, why would Jesus endanger himself by eating with sinners? Why would He play with children, feed the hungry, heal the sick, resurrect the dead? Jesus interacted with others, served people, spoke the truth about God, invited people to follow Him, and never left His followers alone. He "mingled with people as one who desired their good. He showed sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He invited them, 'Follow Me'" (White, 1942, p. 143).

Evangelism in the ever-changing context of the world gets quite tricky; often, by the time a new successful evangelistic model becomes recognized and adopted, a shift is needed. The context changes, and our method of evangelism loses its impact because the next generation was "born in the context in which we no longer live" (Brown, 2013, p. 35). How does your church assess the needs of the local community? "Our understanding of evangelism must reconnect with the realities of our environment" (Brown, 2013, p. 47). Jesus did not memorize evangelistic formulas to use regardless of the situation. In addition to knowing the Scriptures by heart, Jesus was a master at reading people's minds, understanding their life situations, and responding to their needs, both immediate as well as ultimate.

The Three Colors of Need-Oriented Evangelism

From Jesus's example, we see that healthy evangelism reflects the Triune God and needs to be integrated. I propose evangelism takes a process of encountering, embracing, and experiencing God. I have seen great efforts to care for people go to waste, without any intentional connection to pray for them or share the Gospel with them in meaningful ways. If being good citizens, being honest, and engaging in acts of service in the community is an end in itself—not connected naturally to other "colors" of evangelism—God's triune mission is not complete.

The color green of evangelism is characterized by caring, facilitating encountering with God as the King, Creator, and Father who "makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matt. 5:45). This happens when someone's needs are met in a special way. Helping the poor, the oppressed, refugees, widows, orphans, the homeless, or those from broken marriages (just to name a few) means simply obeying God's blueprint (Micah 6:8). Caring happens when we offer acceptance to the rejected, when we mingle with people we would not usually mingle with, and when we do it with God's love in our hearts, in the name of Jesus, and through the power of the Holy Spirit in us. "Our social involvement has evangelistic consequences as we bear witness to the transforming grace of Jesus Christ" (Edgar, 2004, p. 196). Caring communicates the Gospel (often non-verbally), particularly to those who do not know God. However, if caring is left on its own without sharing or without praying, it is not fully evangelism. After all, "service is communication, and the message to be communicated is the love of God" (Brown, 2013, p. 113).

The color red of evangelism, characterized by sharing, allows us to embrace God through the teaching of His Word, through ministry, and by following the example of Jesus Christ. Those who teach and preach the Gospel may have the impression that they are doing "real" evangelism. The importance of sharing the Gospel, receiving the Word of God, and understanding the teaching of the Scriptures should not be minimized. In my own (painful) experience, I have seen how a lack of teaching from the Scripture has led those who initially were excited to encounter God's love through caring and feeling God (e.g., through music) to be attracted to the New Age movement, esoteric teachings, or even spiritism. Making disciples for Christ is essential. "Those who respond to the Spirit will be led towards Christ and will come to know the Father" (Edgar, 2004, p. 168). Evangelism is a process that has "social consequences as we call people to love and repentance in all areas of life" (Edgar, 2004, p. 196).

The color blue of evangelism, characterized by praying, leads people to experience God through the powerful gifts and fruit of the Holy Spirit. The role of the Holy Spirit cannot be overestimated. Only God sees through us and knows our deepest thoughts and needs. "It is only through Jesus we can come to know God. Jesus leads us to the Father and sends us the Spirit" (Edgar, 2004, p. 181). As we pray, the Holy Spirit handles the convicting, cleansing, healing (emotional, relational, spiritual, and physical), and, ultimately, transforming. Evangelism without prayer, without God touching our hearts, without the intimate relational attachment, is incomplete. The Spirit creates a deep connection and bond with the Body of Christ and the desire to surrender and serve God. This is how you can experience a foretaste of the heavenly Kingdom on earth. Thus, our mandate as participants in the community of Christ "is to proclaim, support, and serve" (Grenz, 1998, p. 226).

As we conclude this section, I would like to share a snippet from Nissan's (1999) book *Beyond Maintenance to Mission*.

> First, we pay attention to the God whose rule Jesus proclaimed at the heart of his message . . . Second . . . it is the risen Jesus Christ who is still alive and ready to meet us when we gather together in worship . . .Third . . . while our justification is solely by grace through faith in Christ, the Holy Spirit continues to enliven the church with gifts freshly incarnated in the lives of believers. (p. 24)

What Do the Three Colors of Need-Oriented Evangelism Look Like in My Church?

As mentioned above, three-colored evangelism is not just about sharing. It includes ***e****mbracing* the Gospel and praying with/for the new disciples as they ***e**xperience* God's transforming power; it also involves caring for people, helping to facilitate their ***e**ncounters* with God. The American Natural Church Development survey found between 2008 and 2018 that close to four out of five respondents (78.6%) agreed to a great or very great extent that their church tries to help those in need (specifically through food, clothing, education, counsel, etc.). That is an encouraging number! However, this outreach is not always done intentionally with the goal of having people encounter God.

During my doctoral research overseas, I interviewed pastors of various denominations. When asking about evangelism, one well-educated pastor of a mainline church got upset with me; he told me that it was "God's business" to bring people to his kingdom, and we should not mess with his work. He felt that our part is simply to live honestly and truthfully. I specifically remember him saying: "Yes, we should help people in their needs, but we should not impose our beliefs on them. God will bring people to the church according to his will."

The word evangelism has become loaded with different meanings (both positive and negative) for different types of churches. However, in many cases, we do not know exactly what the word "evangelism" means. As a result, I believe that most of us embrace only one aspect of the Triune God, favoring one side or color of Him over the others. Evangelism is incomplete and often ineffective when we focus only on our favored color and do not focus on or cooperate with the Triune God as a whole. Responding to God as he is revealed in Scripture means being mission-minded.

Ask your local church folks: Is evangelism such a positive experience that everyone wants to be part of it—from the oldest to the youngest? If not, perhaps something is missing. One in three respondents (32.2%) in the American Natural Church Development survey stated that in their church, they hardly or not at all encourage new Christians to become involved in evangelism immediately. You may argue this is how it should be, that new members should mature first and grow in the knowledge of Scripture. Yet if evangelism in your church is reserved for only the spiritually mature, those who have been trained, or those who have the spiritual gift of evangelism, your church is missing the point of evangelism.

To be involved in evangelism is a way to be evangelized. By helping others, people help themselves. Remember the three colors and dimensions of evangelism: to sense God's presence (***e**ncounter*), to get to know Him (***e**mbrace*), and to hear His voice and enjoy listening to/obeying Him (***e**xperience*).

One in four (24.5%) American Natural Church Development survey respondents stated that the evangelistic activities in their church are hardly or not at all relevant for their friends and family who do not yet know Jesus Christ. Is evangelism in your church boring or wearing people out? What does it take in the context of your local church to make evangelism something natural - so much so that everyone desires to be part of it?

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Book Review

Multiplying Leaders in Intercultural Contexts: Recognizing and Developing Grassroots Potential

By Evelyn and Richard Hibbert
William Carey Publishing, 2023
169 pages
US$14.99, Paperback

Reviewed by: Mark D. Wood, PhD., Director of Kingdom Leadership Training Center, Darhan, Mongolia.

From the time of Jesus to the present, developing leaders is an ever-present need and challenge in intercultural ministry. Evelyn and Richard Hibbert, who served as pioneer church planters among Turkish speakers in Bulgaria and at Sydney Missionary and Bible College, are well-versed in understanding the need to develop leaders. They have applied their own experience to develop the lessons in this book, *Multiplying Leaders in Intercultural Contexts*. The book is dedicated to Richard who passed away in 2020.

Given the great need for leaders in intercultural contexts, the goal of the book is summed up as “We have to find ways of developing them where they are and which help them to apply the Bible practically to what they face in daily life” (p. 2).

At fourteen chapters and one hundred sixty-nine pages, the book is very accessible and readable; yet it contains a trove of wisdom. Chapters 1-5 explore basic cultural considerations and dimensions related to leadership and leadership development. The Hibberts situate leadership development within the spectrum of discipleship, and advocate that leaders are to be discipled like all other Christians (Chapter 4). They put it this way, "Although these leaders needed to be developed, the main issue was not leadership development. They needed to be discipled" (p. 42). Chapters 6-11 are organized around the four Cs: 1) Community; 2) Character; 3) Clarity; 4) Care. The remaining chapters, 12-14 explore how to apply the principles that are found throughout the book.

I recommend this book because it is a practical approach to developing leaders that reflects the heart of a practitioner. It is neither ethereal nor theoretical; instead, it is the distillation of lives spent training others to lead. I appreciate the recognition of needing to address women as leaders, especially in emerging contexts (pp. 6-7). The book articulates principles of leadership development but is not a step-by-step how-to manual. I view this approach as a benefit in that it is not a rigid plan but an encouragement on a journey asking us, "Have you considered this aspect?" My one suggestion for improvement is that there could be more. After some sections, I was left wanting a fuller treatment, such as a sample curriculum. However, due to the circumstances of Richard's death and Evelyn's struggle to finish it, I am truly grateful for her perseverance.

This book will be of interest to those specifically engaged in theological education and leadership development as well as those preparing to teach cross-culturally, whether short or long-term. The book would also be an excellent supplemental or elective text in a leadership development class.

On a personal note, I want to express my thanks to Richard and Evelyn Hibbert—they represent the finest in practical scholarship. Although I have never met them, their various journal articles have been helpful in my own development and research. I was saddened to hear of Richard's passing. This work stands as a testimony to his life and legacy. Well done, good and faithful servant.

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Book Review

Church Plantology: The Art and Science of Planting Churches

By Peyton Jones
Zondervan, 2021
443 pages
US$34.99, Hardcover

Reviewed by David Thiessen. David serves as the Executive Pastor at Mountain View Church in Fresno, California. He is a Doctor of Ministry Student in Church Growth at the Talbot School of Theology at Biola University.

The genre of comprehensive church planting textbooks received a major offering in 2021 in the form of *Church Plantology: The Art and Science of Planting Churches* by Peyton Jones. Jones has planted multiple churches himself, both in the U.S. and abroad. For the past 15 years, he has been training church planters, both for the North American Mission Board and for his own network, New Breed. Published by Zondervan Reflective and sponsored by Exponential Resources, *Church Plantology* weighs in at a substantial 443 pages (the author claims to have started with over 800 pages!) and includes a helpful bibliography along with scripture and subject indexes. Ed Stetzer, who along with Daniel Im is co-author of the standard church planting textbook *Planting Missional Churches*, provides the forward.

Jones' burden to write about church planting is driven by the paucity of what he calls level five churches, defined as "multiplying on multiple strands out to at least the fourth generation" (xv). True church plants, he asserts, have the goal of developing into a church planting network (403-

4) and are contrasted with church starts, where the goal is simply to start a church service (4). The book defines plantology as "the study of mission as modeled by Jesus and the apostles that results in church planting," and involves "the overlap of biblical principles, best missionary experience and practice, and church history" (10). Twenty chapters cover the ten principles of plantology that the author finds practiced by the first Christians in Acts:

1. They planted churches instead of starting churches;
2. They modeled their ministry after Jesus' apostolic model;
3. They rejected top-down leadership and embodied Christ on mission together;
4. They resisted stationary entrenchment and formed apostolic strike teams;
5. They forsook pragmatism but listened to God's heart for the community;
6. They refused to enable solo performers, but rather chose to equip team mobilizers;
7. They shunned bravado in favor of the Spirit's empowerment;
8. They didn't compartmentalize evangelism but lived as those who are sent;
9. They sacrificed full funding for apostolically agile mobility; and,
10. They didn't build upward but spread outward.

Church Plantology explores the biblical foundations for church planting and the various qualities necessary for the church planter, including gifting, calling, character, and health. The following are laid out in detail: Leadership development of the church planting team, the team's function, its role in the implementation of the specific mission, and the team's values and strategy. Outreach strategies are offered along with practical advice for fundraising and partnerships. Various mission models are explored, and the author's specific vision for networks of rapid multiplication is articulated as the book closes. A brief conclusion is followed by an extensive church planting bibliography. The book also includes scripture and author indexes.

Church Plantology has many strengths. First, it seeks to be thoroughly biblical, examining the Apostle Paul's mission strategy in detail and emphasizing a model of team leadership derived from Ephesians 4:11 "Now these are gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers" (NLT). The author also demonstrates a wide breadth of practical and theoretical knowledge of church planting scholarship, referencing virtually every major book that has been published on the subject in recent years.

Third, the author wisely places a heavy emphasis on church planting teams. Three full sections of the book are focused on the development and deployment of church planting teams. Some knowledge regarding the APEST model (Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Shepherds, Teachers), developed by Alan Hirsh, is assumed, because the model provides for a balanced team that can plant multiple healthy churches (87). Within this framework, the author identifies "Fist" teams that plant the church and stay as pastors and leaders, while "Strike" teams are immediately mobilized and sent out to plant new churches (127).

APEST teams also provide one of the three components for the development of missional direction and an eventual mission statement for the church. A combination of local needs evident in the community, the APEST drive that characterized the mix of spiritual gifts within the team, and divine opportunities to interact with the lost, come together to shape the unique missional strategy of each church plant (217). This process involves the whole church planting team, and practical advice for how the team can get to know the community is offered (232). APEST teams also shape the church services themselves, and the author offers examples of different kinds of service structures (267-268).

A fourth strength of the book is its clear view of the unique pressures and stresses that a church planter experiences. While the book certainly has a hopeful and even optimistic tone regarding church planting, Jones offers these sober words of caution to the aspiring church planter:

> Planting a church is a long internal process of internal surrender. Planting serves as both the anvil upon which God hammers out the impurities of our good and wrong desires, and the crucible burning away the mixed motives of spirit and flesh. Planters take a beating in their bodies, and souls, their expectations dying a hundred deaths through blessed crucifixion. (279)

A final strength of the book is its missional focus. The author envisions the church planting simply seeking to serve the community during the first year in it and provides a long list of ideas for connecting with lost people, including recreational activities, intellectual pursuits, social causes, hospitality, and proximity spaces (323-3). This practical advice on how to implement and maintain mission is further facilitated by questions for reflection, questions for discussion, and challenges to take action at the end of each chapter, making the book an ideal tool for a church planting team to read together and increasing the immediate applicability of the book's contents significantly.

One weakness of the book is that the author blames various church ills, without documentation, on the church growth movement. Church growth is fingered for encouraging the "church start" mentality instead of church plant mentality (6), and for the lack of concern regarding the health of church planters. Jones states hyperbolically, "During the church growth movement, America witnessed large ecclesiastical empires being built like pagan temples of old with the foundations being laid upon the sacrificial deaths of their firstborns" (109). The author further errs in describing Donald McGavran as the author of *Church Growth Principles* (one can only assume that he meant to say *Understanding Church Growth)* and in the next sentence, he suggests that those who "read Rick Warren's book *The Purpose Driven Church* and were inspired by it felt [that] they could grow beyond their means if they simply followed the formula" (270). This kind of faulty analysis of important historical figures in church planting and church growth also casts doubt as to the accuracy of the author's analysis in other areas.

A second challenge facing the readers is the books' somewhat frenetic and trying-too-hard-to-be-hip style. In his discussion of worship gatherings, for example, the author strains to fit references to improvisational music, *The Lion King*, Frank Gaebelein, and G. K. Chesterton all into one paragraph (262). In another place, one finds the phrase, "kick out my preaching jam" (419) which left this reader feeling old and puzzled.

A final weakness is one common to books attempting to be comprehensive: they tend to say too little about some subjects and too much about others. In the case of *Church Plantology* too much space is given to attempting a full-blown theology of spiritual gifts and too little is said about prayer.

But these critiques do not change the fact that overall, *Church Plantology* provides a vast goldmine of thoughtful and useful insight for all who are engaged in the work of church planting. Its biblical foundation and practical orientation make it an excellent resource that should quickly become required reading for today's church planters.

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Book Review

Portraits of Global Christianity: Research and Reflections in Honor of Todd M. Johnson

Edited by Gina Zurlo
William Carey Publishing, 2023
250 pages
US$35.99, Paperback

Reviewed by Joe Handley, Ph.D. He is the President of A3 (formerly Asian Access) and a Global Catalyst for Leader Development with the Lausanne Movement. Previously, he served as the lead mission pastor at Rolling Hills Covenant Church and the founding director of the Azusa Pacific University's Office of World Mission.

Gina Zurlo, the editor of this encouraging festschrift, described Todd Johnson as one who "lived global Christianity" (1). It is a fitting tribute to a wonderful man. I have only met Todd a few times over the years, but my team and I have interacted with him several times, and he is just as warm-spirited, insightful, and helpful as he is portrayed by the contributors of this book.

The book truly is a festival of Todd's brilliance and impact over the years. He has touched so many lives; and while I dove into this book expecting data and analysis, I was surprised at how much I was able to learn about Johnson and the way he embodies the hope of Christ in our world today. To me, this was the highlight of the book. I was inspired by his practice of the faith, and his generosity of time. His wisdom and perspectives shine through and through. He and his wife have influenced so many Christ-Followers in our world. Moreover, he interacts with those of other faiths in ways that bring the fragrance and aroma of Jesus.

Beyond Johnson's personal influence, the book also celebrates his impressive contribution to the study of Global Christianity. The last section includes a collection of statistics and charts from his work over the years that is impressive. It includes 42 pages of dense data and materials displaying the latest information on Global Christianity. This collection of data is worth the cost of the book just by itself. While it certainly helps academics of World Christianity, Intercultural Studies, and Mission Studies, it is also an accessible set of information for practitioners who are eager to learn about the religious landscape in our world today.

The book walks through Johnson's research over the years. Those who have worked alongside him, and those who have conducted research from other vantage points, highlight the strengths of his research approach and areas of distinction. These chapters were of keen interest, especially to those who, like me, have relied on such quantitative data over the years. It helps us better understand the data as they each unpack their research point of view.

While this critique is minor, it would have been nice to have had a list of Todd's full publication record in the back of the festschrift to better access the wealth of contributions he has made over the years. Of course, this is probably accessible online today but it would have been nice additional touch.

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Book Review

Smart Church Finances: A Pastor's Guide to Budgets, Spreadsheets, and Other Things You Didn't Learn in Seminary

By George Hillman, Jr., and John Reece
Lexham Press, 2020
187 pages
US$15.99, Paperback

Reviewed by Walter Castro, the preacher for the Capitol Hill Church of Christ in Oklahoma City, OK, where he has tripled his congregation's contributions in the last two years. Walter is creating a Discipleship Pipeline for the Churches of Christ as his DMin dissertation from Grace Theological Seminary and can be reached at wcastro@harding.edu.

Smart Church Finances is an extraordinary resource that shows practical ways to learn about finances— an area that many pastors and ministry leaders are unfamiliar with. Reece's experience from the business world brings practical tools and clarity to necessary processes that are involved in starting and running a ministry. This book guides ministerial leaders to maximize God's resources so they can become faithful servants and good stewards, regardless of ministry size.

Hillman and Reece are the perfect team to guide ministerial leaders into this unknown world of finances, which happens to be intertwined in messy ways with the world of ministry. In their own words: "John is a 'business guy who loves Jesus' and George is a 'ministry guy who does not know anything about business.' We guess it's true – opposites attract" (1).

Smart Church Finances explains finance concepts succinctly. The authors explain that "business in its simplest form is the exchange of money and time for goods and services" (9). In fact, running a church can involve major business-like operations, such as creating contractual agreements, registering for non-profit status, managing employees' compensation and benefits, understanding general liabilities for employees and volunteers, budgeting, planning, and/or maximizing storage space. The unfamiliarity or lack of knowledge of these concepts could take away the joy of ministry — or worse.

Vision and mission are critical parts of any organization. Running a church is not an exception. Hillman and Reece say, "Mission asks what you are about and why you exist as a church" (28), and "vision is an ideal and unique image of the future for the common good" (32). The authors argue that "vision does not happen in isolation by only the pastor" (32) but happens in community, among the church members. This vision needs to be "assemble[d] into a clearly articulated and understood vision that is both simple yet energizing" (33).

A budget, as a matter of stewardship, defines the church's resources (financial, facilities, and personnel) (56). A strategic plan that includes enough bandwidth or resources must also align with daily church activities. The church's budget should reflect the stewarding of resources and facilities. The authors state, "Your people are your greatest resource" (93). People are responsible for finding materials, curriculum, technology, and transportation. Furthermore, leaders need to factor in not only vehicles under the transportation budget, but also "insurance, fuel, maintenance, and licensing fees" (96).

Funding sources are also essential for the daily activities and success of any ministry because all operational budgets are based on money. The authors emphatically affirm the idea that "people give to people, not programs" (106, 150). The finance team or appointed leaders will handle the money, but they extend the invitation to individuals or organizations to invest in the lives of others. Depending on the size of the congregation, the people who handle the money need to be accountable to the church at large.

Even though all of the Church's ministries belong to the Lord, leaders are encouraged to seek tangible ways to measure growth. The authors state that "measuring supports decision-making, brings accountability, and tracks achievement of the mission" (129-131). Indeed, "if the church is on track, then that is something to both affirm and celebrate" (131). Reporting and forecasting are also critical for ministries to exist and thrive. Hillman and Reece write, "We don't want to waste our time or our money on a product that does not work as advertised" (143). When data is collected effectively in ministry, it is easier to support the wisdom of stewardship decisions.

Finally, ministry leaders should look for opportunities to be mentored by the business leaders. The authors argue that “personal growth happens best in the context of a relationship” (168). When ministers intentionally spend time with mentors, board members, serving leaders, fundraisers, or volunteers, they begin to learn the language of business. Therefore, pastors could even find joy in stewarding all that God gives to the business side of a church.

Smart Church Finances is an excellent guide for pastors who need to understand the business side of church leadership. Coming from two different worlds: spiritual and business, Hillman and Reece accomplish their purpose, not only explaining business concepts easily but also providing practical field notes at the end of each chapter. These field notes are brainstorming exercises that are meant to be completed with the pastor’s leadership team. For example, Field Note 6 invites leaders in the operational planning phase to brainstorm about a specific ministry’s objectives and to figure out what is needed to accomplish those objectives. The authors even encourage readers, “No detail is too small at this phase. Involve your leadership in this activity” (68). These exercises are practical, online, cost-free, and applicable to most ministries regardless of their size. Their colorful, single-page PDF templates are ready to download and print. The book is free of denominational or cultural perspectives that could bias the discussion of church finances. Every pastor or church leader would benefit from reading this book. It breaks down a variety of business topics that a new pastor would not know about. All the business concepts from Hillman and Reece in this book are applicable lessons for any ministry context. The CASE framework, a tool recommended by the authors, should be practiced and reviewed daily in every step that the church takes. The authors write, “There are four stages of the framework: Communicate vision, Align strategy, Steward resources, and Evaluate performance” (19). They go on to say, “Whether you know it or not, you take steps like this to plan your activities every day” (19).

Smart Church Finances is an extraordinary practical resource that should be available for any pastor, seminary student or church leader. This book teaches the ins and outs of finances — an area that most pastors and ministry leaders are unfamiliar with or not gifted in at all. The authors draw from experiences in the business world, and their loving hearts, to bring clarity to the necessary processes for starting and running a ministry. *Smart Church Finances* guides ministerial leaders to become faithful servants and good stewards with God’s resources. It will make you financially smart.

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Book Review

AdMinistry: The Nuts and Bolts of Church Administration

By Thomas F. Tumblin
Abingdon Press, 2017
108 pages
US$12.15, Paperback

Reviewed by Timothy Clothier, a pastor in south-central Pennsylvania, serving within the Charis Fellowship. His other published works include doctrinal statement papers for the Charis pastors network and a book on spiritual gifts (*To Each is Given*, BMH, 2020). He is currently enrolled at Grace Theological Seminary and plans to complete his doctoral work soon.

In *AdMinistry*, Thomas Tumblin sets out to outline and explain the various administrative aspects relevant to local church ministry. Given his extensive ministry experience (outlined on the back cover), Tumblin combines real-world insights and biblical principles to provide the reader with a how-to manual for beginners.

Those naturally inclined to administrative work will find *AdMinistry* lacking an in-depth and nuanced level of detail. However, those less inclined towards administrative work will find this book a helpful resource that will continually yield fruit. In many ways, Tumblin puts complex administrative cookies on the bottom shelf, allowing the reader to understand the basic administrative principles inherent to local church ministry.

One of the foundational aspects of *AdMinistry* is Tumblin's explanation of the book's title. Rather than merely seeing administrative work as a barrier to real ministry Tumblin believes that administrative functions are functions of ministry. Tumblin contends that the administrative functions of ministry are “the flesh and muscles of incarnational ministry” (viii) by which ministry is held together and built. Furthermore, “*Administry*...enlivens mission, paving the way for lives to be changed [by providing] pliable systems and structure that adjust to new context and unexpected circumstances” (2).

Consequently, Tumblin takes this foundational understanding of ministry administration and proceeds to outline six different “stewardships” that must be managed well. In order, they are People, Relationships, Resources, Places and Spaces, Fiduciary Responsibility, and the Mission of God.

Before proceeding through each of the six areas of stewardship, Tumblin first outlines his theological and philosophical convictions regarding administrative ministry. In summary, Tumblin sees the arc of creation, fall, redemption, and new creation being the prevailing way in which humanity finds itself within the story of the Bible. This arc not only provides the rationale for why administry is necessary (beyond mere legal requirements), it also explains why administry can be difficult. However, “as participants in God’s redemptive activity, we enjoy the down payment of the Spirit—God with us now in fullness of life while being the foretaste of the best yet to come” (15).

Therefore, Tumblin draws out five different implications from the theological model he outlines. They are:

1. How we honor every human being will lead to person-centered behaviors (15);
2. Love for God, and others, manifests in a relentless press toward God’s purposes (15);
3. We can live into what the King James translation calls longsuffering (ital. original, 16);
4. We practice administry in an imperfect world being redeemed by God’s grace (16); and,
5. The same incarnating presence of the Spirit precedes us into administry (16).

Administrative ministry does not exist for itself, nor does it exist to restrict ministry from taking place. Rather, rightly ordered administrative ministry provides the necessary structure and guidelines that allow the church to function and flourish. Furthermore, Tumblin asserts that such administry is inevitably Spirit-empowered ministry. The local church should pursue and expect nothing less, for “all things should be done decently and in order” (1 Cor. 14:39, KJV).

As a young pastor with a growing part-time ministry staff and lay ministry leaders, I found Tumblin's chapter on stewarding people to be particularly helpful. "Mission is not accomplished alone," he writes (19). Consequently, the church must continually strive to call out believers into lives of service and equip them for the task at hand (Eph. 4:12). Additionally, it is imperative to resist the pull towards "solo ministry performance" (19). Rather, we must recognize that the Holy Spirit has gifted each believer for the building up of the body.

Practically speaking, this means that we need to understand that the best way to lead is in dependence on God and interdependence on one another. This conviction should be woven into the DNA of the church so that it actively guides who we would consider hiring. As Tumblin states, "The danger is to consider the pastor [any staff position] the 'hired gun' who performs all of the ministry while the members and constituents watch from the sidelines" (24). Therefore, understanding what God has called and gifted His church for is vital in developing healthy teams of lay leaders and hiring staff to provide leadership to such teams.

Tumblin also touches upon an underdeveloped yet critically important part of ministry leadership: trust. He writes, "We may initially trust a person's title or position, but lasting trust builds as we experience trustworthiness through relationship" (32). As ministry leaders, we must recognize the significance that building trust, through biblical relationships, has in forming healthy ministries. Without trust, there is no biblical leadership.

In each of the other areas of stewardship, Tumblin offers additional wisdom to clarify both the purpose of an area of administrative ministry and its design. What follows are brief reflections from each remaining chapter.

Chapter 4: Stewarding Relationships. In this chapter, Tumblin interacts robustly with other professionals and published works on the subject. The chapter shed light on the diverse ways relationships are formed and the different relational settings that people engage in. Citing Edward T. Hall, Tumblin identifies four different relational settings or spaces. Public, social, personal, and intimate are equally important but for distinct reasons. What is more, "it is healthy to appropriately present different personas in different settings" (44). As a result, ministry leaders should actively consider how to lead people in forming healthy relationships through each of these spaces. This will include helping individuals navigate the different social challenges that each space provides, but it also means that churches should have "multiple relational entry points at each stage" of one's journey (48).

Chapter 5: Stewarding Resources. Building trust with those we lead happens in a variety of ways. While this is not exclusively related to money, it most certainly includes financial stewardship. Navigating the complexities of budgets, fund accounting guidelines, IRS regulations, offerings, and paying the utility bills are all areas a local church must succeed at. Churches must pursue financial excellence as both a means of worship—stewarding the resources God has given—and trust building. Tumblin could have done more to outline and demonstrate how a church's budget and balance sheet can be tools for ministry— not just for reporting. To be sure, he does touch on the difference between restricted and unrestricted funds, but what he leaves out of this chapter is how to use the budget to plan for future ministry, not just pay for current ministry.

Chapter 6: Stewarding Place and Spaces. The physical assets that a church has are also important tools for ministry. In today's world, this may include buildings owned for over a century or even trailers used to store all the belongings of a fledgling church plant. Regardless, the wise use of these resources is important. Connecting back to the point of critique in chapter five, Tumblin rightly exposes how churches often "defer maintenance and tolerate inefficiencies, particularly in times of financial constraint" (64). However, what is missing is how a church may proactively plan for the moments when a roofing system needs to be replaced, a boiler needs major work done, or the entire children's area needs a new coat of paint. How might local churches follow Joseph's lead, using the "years of plenty" to prepare for "years of want"?

Chapter 7: Stewarding Fiduciary Responsibility. This short chapter covers the basics of what churches need to know to maintain a minimum standard of legal compliance with the government. Best practices are outlined, and some helpful suggestions are offered. Nevertheless, this chapter could have been strengthened with specific steps or suggestions leaders could take if the legal documents of the church (deeds, wills, trusts, tax-exempt forms, articles of incorporation, etc.) are not accessible or have been lost. These documents are important, should be kept safe, and should always be available.

Chapter 8: Stewarding the Mission of God. In conclusion, Tumblin reminds local church leaders of who we serve and the significance of our work. He writes, "We are in service of the Lord God Almighty" (79). Jesus has commanded His church to make disciples (Matt. 28:19-20), and church leaders are responsible for right stewarding all the tools and resources God has given them towards that end.

AdMinistry is a helpful primer on the administrative aspects of local church ministry. As such, this resource can be a great tool for those just beginning to serve in such a role or those with basic questions regarding how best to use the tools and resources God has provided. However, the book lacks depth for those who are familiar with administration. Nevertheless, for those serving in small churches, or for those less administratively inclined, this book will provide significant and practical instructions.

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Book Review

New Funding Models in Global Mission: Learning from the Majority World

By Tim Welch
William Carey Publishing, 2023
134 pages
US$10.99

Reviewed by John Cheong, associate professor of world religions and intercultural studies at Grand Canyon University. He has written many articles in the areas of world religions, contextual theology, world Christianity, globalization, diaspora missiology, and urban missions, and co-edited or published six books, including *Christian Mission and Economic Systems* (William Carey, 2015).

According to the book *Missions and Money: Global Realities and*
According to Tim Welch, if the Great Commission is Christ's clarion call for all Christians to heed, knowing *how* to send followers to obey Jesus' command is highly significant (1). One of those ways in which the Church needs to send well is in the way it funds and sends mission workers to do God's work. In his book, *New Funding Models in Global Mission*, Welch examines how the global church does this. The foundational rationale of the book is to address the underlying weakness and obstacle in the funding of missionaries in the Majority World - in particular its reliance on a Western and individualistic way of fund-raising that involves soliciting people and churches for mission that is objectionable and countercultural (2).

To address this, Welch writes about the diverse ways in which funding can be done aside from the dominant model. His book has three objectives: to encourage reflective leadership by offering different perspectives on the subject, to stimulate global leadership towards an openness to a change in funding methods and practice, and to offer prophetic leadership by critiquing the problems of the dominant model (2-3).

The book is divided into eleven chapters. Chapters 1-5 discuss the rationale of the book – a review of mission funding thought and practice, and the pro and cons of the dominant model which he terms “Missionary Funding 1.0” (i.e., where the missionary solicits financial support from churches that are then funneled to a mission agency that later disburses the funds to the missionary on the field, minus some percentage going toward the agency’s administrative costs). Chapters 6-11 (and the appendix) examine the alternative funding models (termed “Mission Funding 2.0”) and their benefits. This section also discusses the biblical support for such funding models, and the new economic standing and ability of the Majority World to give to mission. Lastly, it answers leaders’ fears about such funding methods. Chapter 11 summarizes the entire book and the key global models of funding.

For Welch, the dominant model does possess certain strengths. For example, missionaries that go about soliciting funds from individuals and churches tend to cultivate stronger one-on-one familiarity and trust, as well as prayer support for their ministry (3). However, even when the practice is followed to the letter, problems still exist. Among them: 1) the sending of money from an external source to missionaries overseas leaves a paper trail in restricted nations that signals an ominous “foreign influence;” 2) the time it takes to visit many churches and raise support takes too long (some can last five years or more), which can discourage missionaries and delay their time to serve; and, 3) the local church plays a tangential, not primary role in much of the missionary’s life overseas while the relationship of the mission agency to the missionary becomes more important (14-16).

If this model were to be deployed overseas to raise support, another set of dynamics would create further issues for the Majority World: It could limit the circle of potential supporters to those who have sufficient disposable income, and there may be a generational hesitancy and cultural resistance to the idea of “begging” for monthly financial support. Welch notes that in Majority World settings, individuals who ask for funds for themselves are often considered self-serving and shameful (16, 27).

The book brims with excellent ideas and offers over twenty examples from Africa, a reflection of Welch’s long experience as a missionary who served for thirty-one years there. Some of his insights worth emulating are: “seeking support from the mission” (i.e., where the president or director seeks financial support for the missionary (38-39)), the “twelve church model” (i.e., a multi-church consortium that rotates to support a specific month of funding (39-41)), and my favorite, *buhfai tham* ("a handful of rice," where women set aside a handful of rice at each meal, bring it to church where it is then sold for proceeds that go to the mission (45)). Other more common and increasingly popular methods deployed in the Majority World are tentmaking, business as mission, partnerships, and crowdfunding. Less-considered but important funding streams are "living off the fruit of ministry" (i.e., ministries established that later provide financial support for the missionary such as tithes from churches planted, profits from publishing houses, or radio/media ministries that were started). The pros and cons of some Mission Funding 2.0 models are also discussed.

For a short book, there are many praiseworthy aspects. It is groundbreaking by its provision of fresh ideas and visions for fund-raising. It is accessible to all readers from lay to academic levels. Lastly, it is immensely practical and full of concrete funding-raising examples which encourage rapid adoption and execution. Everyone from mission executives, missionaries, mission pastors, and church leaders who are involved in the sending, financing, or raising of money for mission must read this book and seriously consider these options now.

However, mixed among its many gems are some overgeneralizations on funding models, unspoken problems in other models, troubling readings of some biblical texts, and shortcomings in the editing.

Concerning funding models, Welch seems to address examples from missionaries in agencies that encourage or teach them to verbally or openly articulate the need or amount to give. However, missionaries from various well-established agencies (such as OMF) are taught to never ask for nor mention money unless they are first asked by the church of the need. Elsewhere, in some church denominations, believers who have been confirmed in their call or service to missions need not ask for funds – the money is provided to them as part of their response if they have faithfully committed to serving.

There are also missed opportunities to discuss problems specific to some models. For example, situations can arise if a president or director who is corrupt or nepotistic seeks support for foreign missionaries (such as the infamous example of K. P. Yohannan who raised money for workers in Gospel for Asia) but actually embezzles the money for himself or his family. How accountability comes into such cases begs further discussion. Another model or path to fundraising, transferring money by doing banking via mobile phones, suffers from the dangers of hacking and phishing scams but they are not mentioned!

Concerning the reading of Scripture, the book sometimes has questionable exegesis of certain texts. For example, Welch states that "African presence in the New Testament does not address the financial aspect of mission." However, Acts 2 implies that all the foreigners, including those from Egypt and Libya, stayed in Jerusalem in order to have fellowship. As they stayed, they gave resources for the mission of the church (Acts 2:45-47). Later, in Acts 13:1-3, an African (Simon the Niger) in the Antiochian church *sent* Barnabas and Saul out for mission. Such examples are important because they remind and inspire many of us and the Majority World that even from the birth of the church, God has used many peoples to send others on mission.

It should be noted that Welch offers good possibilities and insights to understand specific theological words that connect to funding in mission (e.g. his exposition and chart (68-69) on the meaning of the word "send" in Paul's letters is noteworthy); but the exegetical and biblical data that he relies on to make his case deserve stronger evidentiary support other than references to study bibles by Alfred Kuen, John MacArthur, etc. as key sources (60-62). More disturbing is the editing of the book – most of the appendix section (101-108) is a verbatim repeat of chapter 9 (77-86), with near similar titles as well. One wonders why the author felt a need to duplicate whole paragraphs or pages instead of providing short summaries.

Despite such shortcomings, I heartily recommend the book for bringing to light the many funding practices that have been commonly practiced in the Majority World but are hardly known in the West. This book will serve the global church in its mission funding practices for many decades to come. For this, Welch deserves our gratitude. From personal experience, I would add another funding model that was not mentioned in the book.

In Matthew 10:9-11, Jesus instructs his disciples to "not get any gold or silver or copper to take with you … no bag for the journey or extra shirt or sandals or a staff [for] whatever town or village you enter, search there for some worthy person and stay at their house until you leave" (NIV). This model may seem highly impractical (who can plan their missions budget in such ways?) and improbable today (who will give in such a manner?); but in reality, this model is alive and well in the Middle East, parts of Central Asia, and in rural Southeast and South Asia. In such places, visitors who come upon a village are still received and hosted by people as a cultural practice. Through such hospitality, visitors are welcomed to stay and possibly even work and find means of support. More startlingly, a powerful corollary also exists in today's modern and urbanized world: I know of a Filipino missionary who was granted hospitality, housing, and money to stay in a Muslim city center and used this to missionize among

Muslims. He found this hospitality and the outworking of this model when he applied to study at a major university. In fact, he was granted a full scholarship with housing and a student visa for five years!

In conclusion, the book is a watershed publication that helps us to discover new ways of raising funds for mission. Even as the funding and sending of missionaries in the West for mission declines, the rise of the Majority World and its methods of supporting missions is a salient, salutary, and strong reminder that we have much to learn from how God works among other believers to send and support missionaries in such creative ways. By this, the Global Church teaches us much if we open our eyes to see and our hands to grasp and practice these things wisely.

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Book Review

No Shortcut to Success: A Manifesto for Modern Missions

By Matt Rhodes
Crossway, 2022
269 pages
US$19.99, Paperback

Reviewed by Kenneth Nehrbass, Ph.D. He is the author of *Advanced Missiology, God's Image and Global Cultures,* and *Christianity and Animism in Melanesia.* He is the director of assessment at California Baptist University, where he is also an assistant professor in the College of Behavioral and Social Sciences.

The non-residential missionary (NRM) model that undergirds the Church Planting Movement (CPM) may be well-meaning, but it may not be as efficacious in facilitating the Great Commission as many would hope. And it may not even be biblical. Rhodes's *No Shortcut to Success* develops a systematic critique of the NRM model and argues instead for an approach that involves linguistically capable missionaries who accept long-term assignments, so they can adequately address the worldviews and obstacles they encounter in the field.

Rhodes does not refute the "CPM style methods" (67) out of a mean spirit, but rather because he fears that such rhetoric can cause false expectations, disillusionment, and burnout. Further, some claims in CPM seem to be naïvely propagated (if not deliberately misleading).

Missiologists may be skeptical of the numbers of conversions reported in "multiplication" literature but may not know how to respond to such impressive reports. Rhodes demonstrates several ways to challenge these likely-inflated numbers. First, he argues that rapid growth is not the norm in the New Testament. If doubling the size of every church in 6 to 9 months was normal, the entire world would have been evangelized "within 8 to 12 years after Pentecost" (73). Second, he provides several published accounts of insiders who dispute the tales of mass conversions. Additionally, he carefully describes how selection bias can cause a surveyor to believe a movement is growing, even if it is, in fact, declining (64). Further, Rhodes explains that these impressive numbers are "audited" by outsiders who do not know the culture well enough to interpret the data. Besides, it would take nearly 20,000 census takers to gather credible information regarding 10 million converts (yet CPM literature relies on data collection techniques that are far less robust than this). Insightfully, Rhodes explains that even if the CPM numbers are accurate, the growth does not guarantee that those methods will work for us. Consider the mixed results of those who copied Rick Warren's methods (66). Last, Rhodes asks, if missionaries have been working in these cultures for decades, how can it be argued that the growth is actually attributable to the non-residential missionary CPM methods, and not to those missionaries who have been laboring in those fields for decades?

Rhodes is particularly concerned that CPM-inspired models remove the role of teaching. Drawing from extensive examples in the New Testament, he shows that Jesus was a teacher. And he provides data to show that many national Christians want missionaries to continue in the role of teaching and training.

Rhodes's critique of CPM literature also addresses the "man of peace" concept in CPM, as well as the orality movement, and "obedience-based discipleship." Indeed, there is enough polemic in this book to strike a nerve with any missiologist.

It is not all critique. The "manifesto" (as the subtitle says) contains prescriptions. Chapters 4 through 7 argue that missionaries must engage in prolonged language learning that enables them to engage in bold, clear communication of the gospel. We must learn the culture well enough to earn a right to be heard. He almost apologizes for laying out a method that seems so obvious- and one that (as he shows) was known by missionaries of past centuries. But he also shows that in the CPM movement, language learning and clear, explicit teaching are de-emphasized. He lays out an argument, largely from the Book of Acts, that evangelism is not just sharing stories about Jesus; it is listening carefully to the cultural logic of the target audience, so widely held misconceptions can be addressed.

In chapter 8, Rhodes addresses missionary recruiting. He suggests that rather than trying to weed out those who may experience burnout

(213), mission organizations should focus on those who have the gift of learning other languages and cultures. Therefore, he believes that missionary recruitment campaigns should not market the notion that all Christians have an obligation to go into the missionary field.

In addition to the timeliness and importance of the arguments, the book is enjoyable to read because the writing style is clearer than most missiological works. But more than that, Rhodes provides an example of how missiologists can listen carefully to those with whom they disagree and then lay out careful arguments for their own position. He does not second-guess his interlocutors' positions. In fact, he assumes the best, regarding their sincerity and interest in fulfilling the Great Commission.

No Shortcut to Success should be read and discussed by leaders of mission organizations and should be used in courses on contemporary missionary methods.

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Book Review

Christian Martyrdom: A Brief History with Reflections for Today

By Edward L. Smither
Cascade Books, 2020
98 pages
Paperback

Reviewed by Francis Kyle. He is a pastor and independent scholar near Roanoke Rapids, N.C., a graduate of The Prairie College, Toronto Baptist Seminary, and Western Seminary, and a member of the Evangelical Missiological Society, Evangelical Theological Society, American Society of Church History, and Nineteenth-Century Studies Association.

Christians must accept and embrace that suffering and martyrdom are key components to being a committed follower of Christ the Suffering Servant (Is. 53). The author appeals to the Bible, theology, missiology, and history to prove his argument while seeking to jolt and awaken the twenty-first century Christian in the West who craves a pain-free "blessed" life of comfort, affluence, material prosperity, and political power. With the blood of the martyrs being the "seed" of the church (Tertullian, *ca.* 155–240), those who have suffered and died on account of their public witness for Christ provide the church with three key inspirational themes and outcomes, namely, bold verbal witness unto Christ (Chapter 3), courageous prophetic voice against the kingdoms of this world (Chapter 4), and deliberate praise and worship of the living God (Chapter 5).

In contrast to Moss's revisionist approach in *Ancient Christian Martyrdom* (2012) and *The Myth of Persecution* (2013), Smither holds to the majority view that periodic persecution and martyrdom did indeed occur in the early church (xv), that such historical accounts were accurate and were not the invention of fourth-century Christians. The focus of Smither's slim, 98-page work is "admittedly simpler" (xvi) than other recent scholarly and popular books such as *Persecuted* (Marshall, Gilbert, Shea, 2013), *Martyrdom* (Middleton, 2011), *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church* (Frend, 1965, 2008), and *Their Blood Cries Out* (Marshall & Gilbert, 1997). It contains an introduction, bibliography, and index. Twelve pages is the average chapter length.

The author's compassionate pastoral tone and balanced approach are commendable. He avoids the extreme of exalting the martyr (hagiography) and avoids promoting an unscriptural martyr complex (the desire and intentional effort at heroically being killed for one's faith for posthumous fame or greater eternal reward). He also avoids the other extreme of being emotionally aloof to the martyr's hardship and pain. With an impressive economy of words, he masterfully covers the topic. He even addresses common questions and objections in addition to providing reflections for today's global church.

Smither's inclusion of non-persecuted, fourth- to sixteenth-century monks as the "new (spiritual) martyr" (21–25) might be a stretch. He bases it on the monk's asceticism and intentional effort at identifying with Christ's suffering and death. Besides this potential disagreement by some, the book's weaknesses are minimal.

Christian Martyrdom is ideal for the undergraduate student, missionary, church leader, or serious-minded layperson desiring a succinct, well-written, affordable, and scholarly yet accessible introduction to the topic. Its convincing message that suffering is a normal part of Christian discipleship—and that it allows one to identify more closely with the "rejected…man of sorrows" (Isa. 53:3) who "suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps" (1 Pet. 2:21)—is a tough sell to the non-persecuted who is "at ease in Zion" (Amos 6:1), such as the Western Christian. But it is a scriptural and much-needed message that is supported by history. This is a timely book that will challenge the reader and is highly recommended.

References

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2024 Great Commission Research Network National Conference

DISCIPLE-MAKING:

From To

DOUBTING DISCIPLE

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March 4-5, 2024

Orlando, Florida

This year's conference will be one of the Pre-Conferences at Exponential (Mar 4-5, 2024), a large conference focused on church multiplication (exponential.org). The conference is held at First Baptist Church of Orlando. Information on hotels can be found on Exponential's website.

The price for both the Great Commission Research Network (GCRN) Conference and Exponential is $178 when you buy through our website. Please register for both at GreatCommissionResearch.com

The GCRN conference begins on Monday, March 4, at 1:00pm and ends Tuesday, March 5, at Noon, after which the Exponential conference begins and continues through Thursday, March 7. Registration through the GCRN covers both conferences.

If you are interested in presenting research, please email a 100-200 word summary of your proposed presentation to Brad Ransom, President of the GCRN, at brad@nafwb.org. Proposals will be accepted based on quality of research, relevance to the theme of the conference, and potential for application in local churches.

GREAT COMMISSION RESEARCH NETWORK

(formerly: The American Society for Church Growth)

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GREAT COMMISSION RESEARCH NETWORK

greatcommissionresearch.com

MEMBERSHIP

What is the Great Commission Research Network?

The Great Commission Research Network (GCRN) is a worldwide and professional association of Christian leaders whose ministry activities have been influenced by the basic and key principles of church growth as originally developed by the late Donald McGavran. Founded by renowned missiologists George G. Hunter III and C. Peter Wagner, the GCRN has expanded into an affiliation of church leaders who share research, examine case studies, dialogue with cutting-edge leaders, and network with fellow church professionals who are committed to helping local churches expand the kingdom through disciple-making.

Who Can Join the GCRN?

GCRN membership is open to all who wish a professional affiliation with colleagues in the field. The membership includes theoreticians, such as professors of evangelism and missions, and practitioners, such as pastors, denominational executives, parachurch leaders, church planters, researchers, mission leaders, and consultants. Some members specialize in domestic or mono-cultural church growth, while others are cross-culturally oriented.

Why Join the GCRN?

The GCRN provides a forum for maximum interaction among leaders, ministries, and resources on the cutting edge of Great Commission research. The annual conference of the GCRN (typically held in March each year) offers the opportunity for research updates and information on new resources and developments, as well as fellowship and encouragement from colleagues in the field of church growth. Membership in the GCRN includes a subscription to the *Great Commission Research Journal* and a discount for the annual conference.

How Do I Join the GCRN?

For further information on membership and the annual conference, please visit greatcommissionresearch.com.

Membership Fees

- One-year regular membership (inside or outside USA) - $59
- One-year student/senior adult membership (inside or outside USA) - $39
- Three-year regular membership (inside or outside USA) - $177
- Three-year senior membership (inside or outside USA) - $117
- Membership includes a subscription to the *Great Commission Research Journal* which is in the process of transitioning to an electronic format.

GREAT COMMISSION RESEARCH NETWORK AWARDS

Donald A. McGavran Award for Outstanding Leadership in Great Commission Research

Normally once each year, the GCRN gives this award to an individual for exemplary scholarship, intellect, and leadership in the research and dissemination of the principles of effective disciple-making as described by Donald A. McGavran. The award recipients to date:

Win Arn	1989	Charles Arn	2005
C. Peter Wagner	1990	John Vaughan	2006
Carl F. George	1991	Waldo Werning	2006
Wilbert S. McKinley	1992	Bob Whitesel	2007
Robert Logan	1993	Bill Easum	2009
Bill Sullivan	1994	Thom S. Rainer	2010
Elmer Towns	1994	Ed Stetzer	2012
Flavil R. Yeakley Jr.	1995	Nelson Searcy	2013
George G. Hunter III	1996	J. D. Payne	2014
Eddie Gibbs	1997	Alan McMahan	2015
Gary L. McIntosh	1998	Steve Wilkes	2016
Kent R. Hunter	1999	Art McPhee	2016
R. Daniel Reeves	2000	Mike Morris	2017
Ray Ellis	2002	Bill Day	2019
John Ellas	2003	Warren Bird	2022
Rick Warren	2004	Gordon Penfold	2023

Win Arn Lifetime Achievement Award in Great Commission Research

This award is given to a person who has excelled in the field of American church growth over a long period of time. The award recipients to date:

Eddie Gibbs	2011	Kent R. Hunter	2017
Elmer Towns	2012	Carl George	2019
George G. Hunter III	2013	Charles Arn	2022
John Vaughan	2014	Bob Whitesel	2023
Gary McIntosh	2015		

American Society for Church Growth/GCRN Past Presidents

C. Peter Wagner	1986	Ray W. Ellis	1999-00
George G. Hunter III	1987	Charles Van Engen	2001-02
Kent R. Hunter	1988	Charles Arn	2003-04
Elmer Towns	1989	Alan McMahan	2005-06
Eddie Gibbs	1990	Eric Baumgartner	2007-08
Bill Sullivan	1991	Bob Whitesel	2009-12
Carl F. George	1992	Steve Wilkes	2013-14
Flavil Yeakley Jr.	1993	Mike Morris	2015-16
John Vaughan	1994	James Cho	2017-18
Gary L. McIntosh	1995-96	Gordon Penfold	2019-20
R. Daniel Reeves	1997-98	W. Jay Moon	2021-23

GREAT COMMISSION RESEARCH NETWORK SUBMISSIONS

The *Great Commission Research Journal* publishes both peer-reviewed articles reporting original research and reviews of recent books relevant to evangelism and disciple making.

The scope of the journal includes research focusing on evangelism, church planting, church growth, spiritual formation, church renewal, worship, or missions. Articles come from both members and non-members of the Great Commission Research Network and are generally unsolicited submissions, which are welcomed and will be considered for peer-review. There is no charge for submission or publication.

ARTICLES

All submissions should be emailed to the editor, David R. Dunaetz at ddunaetz@apu.edu.

Peer Review Process

Only the highest quality submissions presenting original research within the scope of the journal will be chosen for publication. To ensure this, all articles will go through a peer review process. Articles deemed by the editor to have potential for publication will be sent to reviewers (members of the editorial board or other reviewers with the needed expertise) for their recommendation. Upon receiving the reviewers' recommendations, the author will be notified that the submission was either rejected, that the submission has potential but needs to be significantly revised and resubmitted, that the submission is conditionally accepted if the noted issues are addressed, or that the submission is accepted unconditionally.

Format

Papers should be APA formatted according to the 7th edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*. Submissions should include a cover page, be double-spaced in Times New Roman, and be between 3,000 and 7,000 words (approximately 10-22 pages) in .docx format. Contact the editor for exceptions to this word count.

In-text references should be in the form (Smith, 2020) or (Smith, 2020, p.100). At the end of the article should be a References section. No footnotes should be used. Minimize the use of endnotes. If endnotes are necessary, more than two or three are strongly discouraged; rather than using Microsoft Word's endnote tool, place them manually before the References section.

Include an abstract of approximately 100-150 words at the beginning of your text.

After the References section, include a short biography (approximately 30 words) for each author.

BOOK REVIEWS

The purpose of our book reviews is to direct the reader to books that contribute to the broader disciple making endeavors of the church. The review (500-2000 words) is to help potential readers understand how the book will contribute to their ministry, especially those in North America or which have a large cross-cultural base. The review should consist of a summary of the contents, an evaluation of the book, and a description of how the book is applicable to practitioners.

Before submitting a book review, please contact the book review editor Ken Nehrbass (krnehrbass@liberty.edu) to either propose a book to be reviewed or to ask if there is a book that needs to be reviewed.

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