



Vol. 16 No. 2 May–August 2021

# Mission Round Table

The OMF Journal for Reflective Practitioners



## Mission and Prayer

*Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison—that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak. (Colossians 4:2–4)*

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# Editorial

Walter McConnell

Prayer and mission. These words fit together like the proverbial hand and glove. Missionaries regularly write prayer letters to inform supporters of prayer needs. Mission societies and churches hold meetings and set aside portions of their services to pray for the spiritual needs of the world. University fellowships organize prayer cells to focus on specific peoples, nations, and/or societies. But even though this is so common, many of us still feel that our prayer lives are inadequate. We're missing something. We need help. We need guidance. And that is what this issue of *Mission Round Table* is designed to do. These articles have been assembled to help us examine prayer from a number of different perspectives so that we can enter into it more knowledgeably and, we hope, acceptably.

Prayer for mission must be authentically Christian prayer that springs from the heart of one who is responding to God's work in himself or herself and in the world. It is part of what Donald Bloesch calls a "dialogue between a living God and the one who has been touched by his grace."<sup>1</sup> This dialogue begins with God speaking to us through creation, through Scripture, and supremely through his Son Jesus Christ. It continues as the Holy Spirit enables us to respond through any of the distinct, yet overlapping, aspects of prayer—worship, praise, thanksgiving, adoration, devotion, communion, confession, petition, and intercession. While all of these can play a part in prayer for mission, the major missional foci will be petition and intercession.

This issue begins with Patrick Fung—OMF's General Director—examining the prayer life of Dixon E. Hoste—an earlier General Director of the CIM. Here, we learn the important lesson that prayer is not something to talk about, but to do. And though Hoste at times confessed his struggles with prayer, in the end, it was his prayerfulness that helped him gain and maintain the confidence of the members of the Mission through his long years of leadership.

We can learn much about prayer and mission from many outstanding Christian leaders. However, as Michael Widmer writes, our most important source for learning about prayer is none other than our Savior, Jesus Christ. The Gospels have much to say about his teaching and practice of prayer. But Jesus' prayer in John 17 has more to teach us about mission than any of the others, in part because it is "the longest intercessory prayer in the entire New Testament" and because it summarizes all of the themes of John's Gospel. From Jesus' point of view, missional prayer is incarnational and contextual. It seeks people whose relationships are unified with God and others, who express holiness of life, are open to all, submit to the Scriptures, accept the apostolic preaching of Christ in word and sacrament, and are committed to mission.

Like many of us, Laura-Jane Meas has often felt that something was missing from her prayer life. And though she had originally thought about writing a paper to illustrate a number of ways in which God has answered prayers, she came to see that it is more important to focus on God himself, as the *One* who answers prayer. Anytime we declare what he has done, we need to do it to give him the glory and praise due his name, not simply recall the answers given.

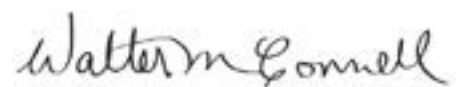
Another person who has felt that something is lacking from his ministry and prayer is Sijmen den Hartog, who found himself challenged by Paul's words in Colossians 4, asking his readers to "pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ." As he and his wife prayed for a door for God's word to open, he and some local Christians were led to replace a rickety bridge with a new one that made it possible for people living in a nearby neighborhood to attend a Bible study. This led to the erection of a metaphorical bridge as one attendee invited many family members to join them. And though their attraction to Jesus Christ has not produced a "happily ever after" story, lives are being changed as a

door for the gospel became open and the mystery of Christ was proclaimed.

Drawing on Romans 15:30–32, David Harley—another former OMF General Director—reminds us that in the busyness of mission work, we cannot do without prayer. As the passage teaches, the need for prayer is urgent and must be based upon the authority of Jesus Christ and the love of the Holy Spirit. Paul further highlights the symbiotic relationship between those who are engaged in prayer and those who are engaged in the work. Those who feel we aren't good enough at it are reminded that prayer is a struggle due to the spiritual battle going on around us and our own weaknesses. It is a good thing that prayer is effective not because of the one saying the prayer but because of the God who hears and responds to it.

Though our final article isn't expressly about prayer, it illustrates the need for sustained and specific prayer as the work of mission progresses. Reflecting on the role changes he has experienced over his career, Andy Smith introduces a number of processes that individual missionaries and organizations may need to work through as they find different ways to serve the church at different points in its life, particularly when the missionary becomes less and less essential as local leadership develops. Though mentioned only briefly, helping supporters learn about changes in ministry roles over time may give them essential fuel for ongoing prayer.

Prayer and mission will be inextricably linked as long as this world remains. Let us learn what we can about it and practice it "without ceasing" until all of God's people are gathered into his kingdom and mission will be no more.



Editor, *Mission Round Table*

<sup>1</sup> Donald G. Bloesch, *The Struggle of Prayer* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1980), vii.

# Dixon E. Hoste and Prayer

## Patrick Fung



Dr. Patrick Fung is the General Director of OMF International. He and his wife, Jennie, previously served as medical missionaries in South Asia. Patrick is actively involved in teaching and preaching ministry. He is currently a member of the Board of Directors of the Lausanne Movement and a member of the International Council of the Langham Partnership International (John Stott Ministries).

### At the disposal of others

On 13 June 1931, during one of the regular China Council meetings, without much warning, Dixon E. Hoste, the General Director of the China Inland Mission (CIM) at that time, vacated himself as Chair and handed the role to George W. Gibb, the China Director. Hoste requested Gibb to read out the letter, which he had prepared, to the China Council members on his behalf.

My wife and I feel that having regard to our age, we should place ourselves at the disposal of the Directors and Councils of the Mission, in China and in the three Home countries, with a view to our retirement. After prayer and thought in the light of conversations with colleagues, I do not feel able to offer any suggestion as to arrangements following upon my laying down my office; but I shall continue in prayer that guidance may be granted to those concerned. I cannot close without offering you my sincere thanks for your goodness to me since in March 1901, I became acting General Director. Your fellowship and co-operation have been valued more than I can say.<sup>1</sup>

Hoste had already been in leadership for over three decades. Looking back at his role, he wrote:

Perhaps the most important, and in some ways the most difficult part of a General Director's functions lies in the exercise of helpful influence on the minds and so on the work



Dixon Hoste and his wife Gertrude in 1936.

of important colleagues. For such a purpose he needs indeed to “speak as the oracles of God,” which, as I think we shall agree, involves a holy fear and trembling as to his own state of heart before God and in relation to his brethren. Unless he is constantly and faithfully wrestling in the heavenlies with the powers of darkness, there is real danger of him becoming involved in wrestling with his colleagues.<sup>2</sup>

If there is one thing that colleagues keenly remembered about Hoste, it was his prayer life. “Patient, persevering prayer,” wrote Hoste, “plays a more vital and practical part in the development of the Mission’s work than most people have any idea of.”<sup>3</sup> Hoste did not talk much about prayer,

*It was because of his prayerfulness, more than any other quality, that Hoste gained and maintained the confidence of the members of the Mission throughout his thirty-five years of leadership.*

or formulate a philosophy of prayer, or analyse its effects. Hoste prayed.

It was because of his prayerfulness, more than any other quality, that he gained and maintained the confidence of the members of the Mission throughout his thirty-five years of leadership. Bishop Frank Houghton wrote that “While Mr. Hoste, being human, was not immune from errors of judgment, yet criticism was silenced, dissatisfaction found no room to grow or spread, because our General Director was a man who spent much time with God.”<sup>4</sup>

## Talking to God

Dixon Edward Hoste was born on 23 July 1861, four years before the founding of the CIM. Both his father and his grandfather were military men, the former a Major General in the Royal Artillery and the latter a Colonel. It is therefore not surprising that Hoste, from his youth, learned the value of “military precision.”

When he was seventeen, Hoste entered the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich. At eighteen, he received his commission as a lieutenant to serve in his father’s regiment, the Royal Artillery. In 1882, Hoste was invited by his elder brother, William, to attend a special meeting in Brighton where the speaker was the American evangelist, D. L. Moody. Stepping into the middle of the platform, Moody quietly said, “Let us pray.” When Moody prayed, “never before had D. E. Hoste heard such a prayer. Moody talked to God. He talked as though God was there, as though he knew Him, as a man talks to a friend. He talked as though God could be depended upon to do His work in men’s hearts, right then and there.”<sup>5</sup> Hoste was converted at the meeting. Moody’s prayer left a deep impression upon him that shaped his own prayer life over the next forty years.

It did not take long before Hoste came across Hudson Taylor’s little book: *China: Its Spiritual Need and Claims*. Hoste was captured by these words:

Were all the subjects of the court of Peking marshalled in single rank and file, allowing one yard between man and man, they would encircle the globe more than ten times at its Equator. Were they to march past the spectator at the rate of thirty miles a

day, they would move on and on, day after day, week after week, month after month; and more than twenty-three and a half years would elapse before the last individual had passed by.... Four hundred millions of souls, “having no hope, and without God in the world!”<sup>6</sup>

In response, Hoste wrote to the London Office of the CIM in 1883 and offered himself to be a candidate.

However, the reference letter from W. T. Storrs, the vicar of Sandown, Isle of Wight, was not totally encouraging. Storrs characterized Hoste as naturally shy, a little impulsive, having just some ability to learn, not able to teach well, not very enterprising, and not fitted for missionary work, with a disclaimer “but I may be mistaken.”<sup>7</sup>

While the clergyman wasn’t very familiar with Hoste, members of the London Council took note of the spiritual stature of this quiet young man. He was clearly humble and sincere and, even in his youth, demonstrated balanced judgment and foresight. Though he was not particularly strong, the doctor’s report that he was healthy assured the Council that he would be able to endure physical hardship and privation. In the end, he was accepted as a “probationer” to join the CIM.

## Wandering in prayer

As a young man, Hoste admitted facing struggles in prayer. Like others, he tended to wander in his mind when he prayed. On one occasion, after he was

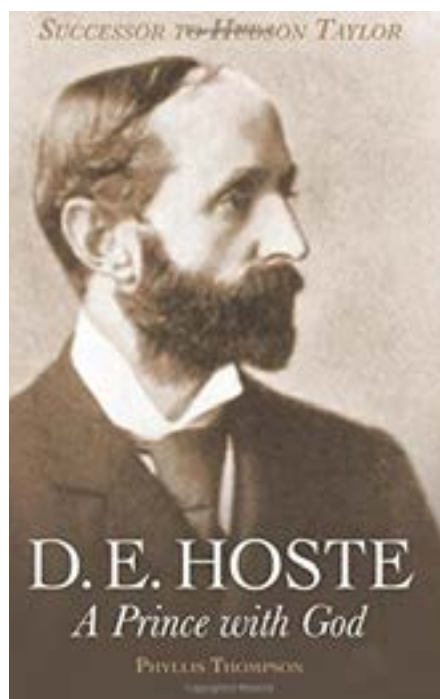
already serving in China, he wrote to Hudson Taylor seeking his advice.

I do long to be more godly. It seems so sad that the heart should wander from God and want other things. As this is a private and personal letter I want to ask your prayer and advice as to what is to me a great source of distress and perplexity in my inner life. I find that in prayer wandering thoughts come in, and then in confessing them, often more wandering thoughts come, and in this way often quite a considerable time will be taken up in a desperate struggle to get clear of the various thoughts and fix the heart and mind in an unwavering concentration on God. You can understand how exhausting this is for one’s head; and really now by the time one has been able to pray believingly for them all, one’s head is often throbbing, and one is quite wearied. When I see how many are, owing to neglect of private prayer, gross and heavy and more or less blind, I dare not give it up.<sup>8</sup>

Hudson Taylor wrote back to this young missionary with a reassuring note: “Regarding a wandering mind in prayer; I have found more help in praying aloud, and praying while walking about—talking as to a present Lord—than in any other way.... I do not think that wandering in thought at all necessarily indicates a loss of spiritual life.”<sup>9</sup> These words from a veteran missionary to a younger colleague were undoubtedly of great comfort.

With Taylor’s words of encouragement, Hoste developed a habit of walking while praying aloud that he continued even after he became the General Director. As Thompson records, “In the midst of his intercessions” at the Shanghai CIM Headquarters, he would often

suddenly stop, cross to his desk and make a note or two about something that had occurred to him, and then continue walking about, praying. After such a pause, however, he would occasionally turn to whoever was with him and ask, “Where had I got to?” When a mid-morning cup of tea or cocoa was brought to him, he would courteously accept it, and as likely as not pour half of it into the saucer, hand it to his companion with a murmured apology, and go on praying, taking occasional sips from his cup meanwhile! Prayer to him was as natural as a child talking to a father whose perfect love had cast out all fear.<sup>10</sup>



## Lowly in spirit

Hoste sailed to China as one of the Cambridge Band—later known as the Cambridge Seven—that rose from “comparative obscurity to an almost embarrassing prominence in 1885.”<sup>11</sup> All seven bright young men were sent to China under the banner of the CIM. Among the seven, Stanley Smith was probably the most prominent. Smith, a star athlete in the university, was most famous for being the captain of his college boats. He was also a natural public speaker. Hoste, by contrast, was unassuming and quiet, feeling rather comfortable to be in the background.



The Cambridge Seven upon arrival in China in 1885. Back row (from left): C. T. Studd, M. Beauchamp, S. P. Smith. Front row: A. T. Polhill, D. E. Hoste, C. H. Polhill, W. W. Cassels.

Besides, his thin, high-pitched voice and somewhat hesitant manner made his speech less effective.<sup>12</sup> Both Smith and Hoste were sent to work under Pastor Hsi in Shanxi—a strong, charismatic Chinese leader who ran opium refuges for the opium addicts.

About a year and a half after Hoste's arrival in China, he was asked by Smith to join him in a newly opened station in Hungtung (Hongtong today), Shanxi, to which he had been appointed.<sup>13</sup> As they had been sent out to China at the same time, Hoste did not feel prepared to accept this arrangement. “When he put the matter thus bluntly to me, I was ruffled in my spirit.”<sup>14</sup> However, subsequently, it was impressed upon Hoste's conscience that his refusal was not due to a pure desire for God's will and glory, but rather an unwillingness

to humble himself and take the low place. “The difficulty was in my own heart. It was impressed upon me that unwillingness persisted in would mean my having to part company with the Lord Jesus Christ, who dwells with the humble ones, those who willingly go down.”<sup>15</sup> Hoste reflected on this matter prayerfully and recognized that Smith was better qualified than himself for the leadership. His gifts as a speaker, his resourcefulness and quickness in current affairs, and his brightness of personality were all superior to his own. In the end, Hoste told Smith that he was prepared to accept his proposal.

Looking back into this matter in 1940, when Hoste was well over seventy years of age, he wrote:

Relationships with fellow-workers and others with whom we are closely associated can sometimes only be perfected in the sight of God through the working of death to self, as we learn to accommodate ourselves to their personalities and preferences, thus rendering it possible for the Lord to fit us together in His service. We do well to bear in mind He is Head over all.

All He wants, therefore, is someone who is poor in spirit, who lets his standing and rights go rather than strive; through whom He can work to will and to do His good pleasure.<sup>16</sup>

In a separate letter, Hoste wrote that we need to be “men and women of prayer, deeply distrustful of our own judgment and impulses, only forming opinions and expressing them as taught and guided by the Holy Spirit.”<sup>17</sup>

## Leadership in a time of crisis

The CIM faced one of its most severe crises in 1900 during the Boxer Incident. Fifty-eight CIM missionaries along with twenty-one children were killed. Taylor was unwell and realized that he could not provide leadership at such a critical time as he was far too weak. Even his wife Jennie dared not show him all the letters from China, fearing that they could prove to be too much for him. Before the Boxer Uprising, William Cooper was perceived to be a promising younger CIM colleague who could succeed Hudson Taylor. However, Cooper was killed during the Boxer Incident, and his body only found many months later. Taylor knew that he needed someone urgently to take on leadership, someone who understood the China situation well. Stevenson was the China Director at that time. But, Taylor approached Hoste instead, even though he was a much younger and comparatively less experienced person than Stevenson. Though Hoste had served in China since 1885, his work was mainly confined to Shanxi under Pastor Hsi and he had little exposure to the wider work of the CIM.

Thus, when Hoste received the letter via cable from Hudson Taylor, he almost straightaway declined the appointment by telegram. Hoste wrote:

Effects of an opposite and very grave character, which both Mr Stevenson and myself agree in thinking most likely (would) follow such an appointment ... It would have the effect of weakening and,

*Hoste considered himself to be the little man who could “sort of steer” quietly from the back. He never sought to be in the limelight, but, to the contrary, did his best to avoid it.*



**Pastor Hsi (center) and Hungtung church elders**

to a certain extent discrediting Mr Stevenson ... without inspiring confidence. (Stevenson had done well in his direction of affairs in the crisis, members of the China Council were agreed.) ... My appointment to act now on your behalf (during your present incapacity) would come as a complete surprise, and is one to which they would not agree, and ... would be calculated to weaken and even produce disruption in the Mission ... PS. I have not touched on the point of my own unfitness, mental and physical ...<sup>18</sup>

Soon after Hoste wrote, he went down with a life-threatening illness. After nearly four months of wrestling in prayer while unwell, Hoste finally wrote to Stevenson, his supervisor: "I feel I ought to accept the appointment; if, however, you do not see your way to agreeing . . . I shall [be] free from responsibility."<sup>19</sup> But Stevenson readily agreed, and called Hoste into his office and, with tears in his eyes, told

him that the Lord had given him not only peace about it but also joy in the assurance that it was of God and would be for blessing. In January 1901, Hudson Taylor confirmed the appointment of Hoste as the Acting General Director of the CIM.

One of Hoste's major contributions in handling the Boxer crisis was the decision that the CIM would not accept any compensation from the Chinese government even if offered. In February 1901, the *China's Millions* published the following in accordance with Hoste's decision:

it will be well for missionaries to take a more Christ-like course; and even gladly to suffer the loss of all things, that the gospel be not hindered. Our own Mission has decided to make no claim whatever, either for life or property, and has assumed the responsibility of the orphan children of the martyred Missionaries.<sup>20</sup>

## A little man to sort of steer

Even when working under Pastor Hsi in Shanxi for ten years, Hoste recognized Hsi's leadership. "Pastor Hsi was perfectly well able to stroke the boat, and he had got plenty of men to pull behind him. What was wanted was a little man to sort of steer," Hoste said.<sup>21</sup> Anyone who was to steer under someone like Hsi—who was known for his dominating personality and quick temper—required a great deal of patience and humility. Hoste, however, was willing to support Hsi and follow his leadership, even when others in the CIM disagreed. Hoste considered himself to be the little man who could "sort of steer" quietly from the back. He never sought to be in the limelight, but, to the contrary, did his best to avoid it.

After the Boxer Incident, Hoste wrote an article titled "Possible Changes and Developments in the Native Churches Arising out of the Present Crisis."<sup>22</sup> Instead of focusing on the suffering of the missionary community due to the Boxer Incident, Hoste emphasized the future of the Chinese church, believing that the Chinese church could only mature without the control of foreign missionaries. His article insisted that the only authority the missionaries should display is of a spiritual nature, and even there only as guides and exemplars. At all cost, they should seek to avoid dependency.

Nearly five years after he took the helm of the CIM, Hoste gave a public address to his colleagues. The transcription records that he said:

Now, may I ask for your prayers, your continued prayers that we may be guided in regard to these three things; first, that we may, as a Mission, retain the spirit of willingness to be small, to be despised, to be poor, to suffer hardness—the spirit which characterized Mr. Taylor and those with him.... Secondly, that we may keep to our own work of raising up a generation of intelligent Chinese Christians. And then, lastly, pray that the missionaries may have great wisdom in dealing with these large numbers of persons who are now desiring to receive instruction.<sup>23</sup>

Hoste had always prayed for the Chinese church to be led by the Chinese, and be self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating. Hoste's vision for the



**Hoste (last row, fourth from left) and his wife (front row, second from right) with other Shanxi workers in 1890.**

CIM was not that it would become big and influential. Rather, his dream was for CIM to retain the willingness to be small, despised, poor, and to suffer hardness.

### Prayer and fasting

Though Hoste often fasted, he never laid down any rules for other CIM colleagues on this matter. However, he mentioned fasting as “one thing needful.” As he said:

A source of spiritual weakness and defeat may be found in failure jealously to guard our time of secret prayer and study of God’s Word. These are needed not only for our own soul’s nourishment, but as part of our work and ministry on behalf of others. It is easy by negligence in these things to grieve the Holy Spirit, the consequence being that without our knowing it, we are living and working on a lower plane of blessing and efficiency than we otherwise might do. A practical way of testing ourselves in this matter is to apply the question: are we spending as much time in prayer and feeding upon God’s Word as we do in taking bodily nourishment at meals? It is those who habitually draw nigh to God, who will find that He draws nigh to them and uses them as His messengers to others.<sup>24</sup>

At another time, he wrote:

I find it a good thing to fast. I do not lay down rules for anyone in this matter, but I know it has been a good thing for me to go without meals to get time for prayer. So many say they have not sufficient time to pray. We think nothing of spending an hour or two in taking our meals. It is worth while trying out doing without sometimes. What a benefit it is spiritually, and I believe our digestions would benefit also!<sup>25</sup>

### Wrestling against the power of darkness

Hoste does not talk much about the unseen forces in his writings, but he was constantly aware of them. During his time working with Pastor Hsi, he frequently encountered spiritual forces when helping opium addicts. He reminded colleagues to choose the battle well, since unless a Christian worker “is constantly and faithfully wrestling



in the heavenlies with the powers of darkness, there is real danger of his becoming involved in wrestling with his colleagues.”<sup>26</sup> Intercessory prayer was a tremendous physical exercise. According to James Stark, Hoste, like Epaphras, “knew what it was to labour fervently in prayer for others, sometimes with fasting. On his own confession, he often found that this sacred exercise involved spiritual conflict.”<sup>27</sup>

In 1925, when he was on his way to Australia, Hoste became seriously ill. A colleague who accompanied him on this journey got a glimpse of the strain that the prayer ministry imposed upon him.

One morning, a few days before he would recognize that he was really ill, during our time of intercession, he simply wrestled in prayer, and cried to the Lord in agony to deliver poor China from the awful power of demons and principalities and powers, and he quite broke down and burst into tears—the only time I ever saw him weep. He could not possibly stand this strain when he was so ill, and was not able to maintain our daily periods of united prayer and intercession, but I have no doubt that he spent much time in silent prayer.<sup>28</sup>

Hoste shared his agonizing experience in prayer.

It must be remembered that there are “spiritual wickednesses” at the back of all confusion and discord in the work of God.... The servant of Christ must, therefore, practically recognize that his warfare is with these satanic beings and must be waged on his knees. In no other way can any one of us be used by God to deal effectively with troubles

in His Church. There must be persevering prayer and intercession before the powers of darkness are driven back. How blessed that this great truth lays it open to the weakest of us to prevail in matters which would otherwise be entirely beyond our strength and wisdom.

It is far more difficult to continue steadfastly in intercession on behalf of those amongst whom we are called to minister, than to engage in outward activities for their good. And yet, if the powers of darkness, which are blinding the minds of men and hindering the work of God, are not overcome through sacrificial prayer, little, if anything, is really accomplished.

I have found that waiting upon God, and intercession on behalf of others, are really the most vital and effective parts of my service. You will remember the stress placed upon this in the Scripture, and also one or two figures of speech indicating that it is often attended with difficulty and suffering, due in part, at any rate, to the persistent opposition of the powers of darkness, who can only be overcome by perseverance and importunity in prayer.<sup>29</sup>

### Praying for the Two Hundred

In 1929, Hoste issued a call for prayer for two hundred new workers—an appeal known as the Forward Movement. In his typical fashion, he wrote a direct and unemotional letter stating the need so that all the friends and supporters of the Mission could hear. As described by Thompson,

In Australia and New Zealand, in North America and Great Britain, the appeal went forth. Pamphlets and cards were printed, and meetings convened

#### The Forward Movement chorus:

Lord, by the call of  
China’s need,  
And by the love of Calvary,  
Choose and send forth,  
we humbly plead,  
Two hundred witnesses  
for Thee

*China’s Millions*, British edition (June 1930): 84.

to make known the spiritual need of China and the new response that it had called forth from the Mission. Prayer was being made definitely for two hundred new recruits to be on their way to China before the end of 1931. What would be the answer of God?<sup>30</sup>

Hoste well recognized the spiritual issues involved. “It will involve perhaps the most tremendous conflict which we have yet had as a Mission and every part of it will need to be, as it were, steeped in prayer.”<sup>31</sup>

As the months passed, the need for prayer became apparent. Though many offered their service, only one in six were deemed suitable. The others were rejected due to health, age, and other issues. Neither natural nor spiritual qualifications could be lowered in order to meet the numerical objective. As 1930 came to an end, less than half the desired number of new workers had sailed for China. For the prayer for two hundred laborers to be sent by the end of 1931 to be answered, about one hundred and ten candidates needed to be accepted, trained, and sent forth in the next twelve months. Hoste declared: “We must have a day of prayer.” In her biography, Phyllis Thompson described the mood at the beginning of 1931.

Tuesday, February 10th, was set aside to be given up entirely to prayer that God would yet grant their request for the full number of two hundred new workers to be sent out before the end of the year. Cables were sent to North America, Australia, New Zealand and Shanghai, calling as many as possible in the fellowship of the Mission to unite in pleading with God on this day. And God answered! How often in the annals of the Mission has earnest, united prayer proved effective, and turned into victory what looked like being defeat and confusion of face. From February 10th onwards the tide began to turn. The General Director wrote “An Urgent Call to Action,” a leaflet which must have been read by thousands of people. Applications began to come in from promising young people ... And although there were many disappointments and unforeseen hindrances put in the way of the recruits, by the end of the year two hundred and three new workers had set sail for China—the last party, six young men, leaving England on December 31st!<sup>32</sup>

*Mentally, he refused to indulge himself. He practised self-denial. And he was willing to serve for years in a small station in inland Shanxi under a hot-tempered Chinese leader.*

Hoste witnessed God’s amazing answer to prayer at the age of seventy.

### Home call

On 23 May 1946, the prayer hall at the CIM building in Newington Green was full. The memorial service was presided by Rev. W. H. Aldis, the CIM Director for Britain. Representatives of various mission societies, church leaders, and colleagues paid the last tribute of respect to the man who for thirty-five years was the leader of the CIM, and the last of the Cambridge Seven. In his words about his former director, Aldis remarked that “it was his prayerfulness which was the great source of his equipment for high office.”<sup>33</sup>

Similar remarks came from James Stark, formerly the Secretary to the China Council, who had worked with Hoste for many years at the CIM Headquarters in Shanghai.

Above everything else, Mr Hoste was a man of prayer. He laboured in prayer; he was a great intercessor. In his prayer life, which was really the secret of his influence; in his self-denial, and he lived a life of great self-denial; in his devotion to the interests of God’s work which was always paramount to him, and in his loyalty to the teaching of

the Holy Scriptures, he set the whole Mission a very high standard, and we shall never know just what we owe to him and to his godly example.<sup>34</sup>

The most detailed and penetrating description about Hoste as a soldier and a mystic came from Phyllis Thompson, who later wrote his biography. In the memoriam she wrote in *China’s Millions*, she portrayed his outward life as characterised by simplicity and austerity despite his background—for he came from a prominent and wealthy family. She recalled that Hoste, while fingering a beautiful, expensive piece of cloth, once said, “I’d make a good rich man; I love nice things.”<sup>35</sup> This part of his background and life prompted her to say that “There is no doubt that he could have won for himself a name in a world of cultured society ... but he has voluntarily come amongst us people of lower stature—above whom he stands head and shoulders.”<sup>36</sup> Mentally, he refused to indulge himself. He practised self-denial. And he was willing to serve for years in a small station in inland Shanxi under a hot-tempered Chinese leader.

Thompson characterized his prayer life by saying:

Prayer was at once his native breath, his satisfying portion and his most



The China Council in 1915. Back row (from left): G. W. Gibb, J. Vale, A. R. Saunders, J. Stark, G. Howell, W. H. Aldis. Front row: W. W. Cassels, J. W. Stevenson, D. E. Hoste, J. N. Hayward, W. Taylor.

arduous work. It ever took first place in his life and service. It was usual for him to spend an hour, two hours, kneeling in his office each morning before beginning to attend to the stack of letters awaiting his attention. To pray aloud was his custom ... with his wife, his stenographer, or a colleague. Beginning with worship that was sometimes too sacred to be repeated, he would then pray for "all men." The wider interests of God's Kingdom, realms far beyond his own personal responsibility, engaged his earnest intercessory prayers. Then he would come to China, and the Mission of which he was the leader. Station after station, missionary after missionary, were brought before the Lord in a stream of quiet, intense supplication. The self-discipline of his natural life had released his spirit. His austerity of temperament may have held him somewhat aloof from his fellowmen, but there were no barriers between him and God."<sup>37</sup>

Several photos of Hoste have been reproduced in Phyllis Thompson's book, *D. E. Hoste: A Prince with God*. One stands out. This is not the impressive picture of the Cambridge Seven—including Hoste—dressed in Chinese clothes. Nor is it the wise-looking Hoste at his desk in full suit and tie. Rather, it is the picture of the unshaven Hoste sitting on a simple wooden stool in simple peasant clothes holding a bowl and chopsticks with a young Chinese brother squatting next to him. The background seems to be dirty and dusty with broken walls and gravel scattered around. Hoste was such a man.

Yes, Hoste could be like an eagle, flying high and in solitude while engaged in prayer. But he was also with the people. Throughout his time in China, he encouraged his Chinese brethren to lead the Chinese church. His dream was that the Chinese church might become fully self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating. From the perspective of today, it is clear that Hoste's dream has come true. His prayers have been answered. **MRT**



<sup>1</sup> Minutes of China Council meeting held in Shanghai on Saturday, June 13, 1931, at 10 a.m., Billy Graham Center Archives Collection 215 Box 2 Folder 40.

<sup>2</sup> Phyllis Thompson, *D. E. Hoste: A Prince with God* (London: China Inland Mission, 1947), 156, available for download from [https://missiology.org.uk/book\\_prince-with-god\\_thompson.php](https://missiology.org.uk/book_prince-with-god_thompson.php) (accessed 30 July 2021).

<sup>3</sup> Thompson, *D. E. Hoste*, 10.

<sup>4</sup> Thompson, *D. E. Hoste*, 95.

<sup>5</sup> Thompson, *D. E. Hoste*, 19.

<sup>6</sup> James Hudson Taylor, *China: Its Spiritual Need and Claims* (London: James Nisbet, 1865).

<sup>7</sup> Reference form from W. T. Storrs in the OMF UK Archives.

<sup>8</sup> Thompson, *D. E. Hoste*, 80.

<sup>9</sup> Thompson, *D. E. Hoste*, 80–81.

<sup>10</sup> Thompson, *D. E. Hoste*, 124.

<sup>11</sup> John C. Pollock, *A Cambridge Movement* (London: John Murray, 1953), 87.

<sup>12</sup> This was mentioned in his eulogy. Record from Billy Graham Center Archives Collection 215 Box 4 Folder 56.

<sup>13</sup> In his testimony published in the 1940 *China's Millions*, Hoste did not name Smith, but only referred to him as a fellow colleague. D. E. Hoste, "A Principle and a Testimony," *China's Millions*, British edition (July–August 1940): 99.

<sup>14</sup> Thompson, *D. E. Hoste*, 53.

<sup>15</sup> Thompson, *D. E. Hoste*, 53.

<sup>16</sup> Hoste, "A Principle and a Testimony," 99.

<sup>17</sup> Thompson, *D. E. Hoste*, 158.

<sup>18</sup> A. J. Broomhall, *The Shaping of Modern China: Hudson Taylor's Life and Legacy, Part VII It is Not Death to Die* (Carlisle: Piquant, 2005), 712.

<sup>19</sup> Broomhall, *The Shaping of Modern China*, 713–14.

<sup>20</sup> "Monthly Notes," *China's Millions*, North American edition (May 1901): 62, <https://archive.org/details/millions1901chin> (accessed 30 July 2021).

<sup>21</sup> Thompson, *D. E. Hoste*, 62.

<sup>22</sup> D. E. Hoste, "Possible Changes and Developments in the Native Churches Arising out of the Present Crisis," *Chinese Recorder* (October 1900): 509–12, <https://archive.org/details/chineserecorder31lodwuoft> (accessed 30 July 2021).

<sup>23</sup> D. E. Hoste, "Address by Mr. D. E. Hoste," *China's Millions*, British edition (January 1906): 6, <http://findit.library.yale.edu/catalog/digcoll:219091> (accessed 30 July 2021).

<sup>24</sup> Thompson, *D. E. Hoste*, 164–65.

<sup>25</sup> Thompson, *D. E. Hoste*, 165.

<sup>26</sup> Thompson, *D. E. Hoste*, 165.

<sup>27</sup> Thompson, *D. E. Hoste*, 116.

<sup>28</sup> Thompson, *D. E. Hoste*, 116.

<sup>29</sup> Thompson, *D. E. Hoste*, 117.

<sup>30</sup> Thompson, *D. E. Hoste*, 138.

<sup>31</sup> Thompson, *D. E. Hoste*, 138.

<sup>32</sup> Thompson, *D. E. Hoste*, 139–40.

<sup>33</sup> W. H. Aldis, "D. E. Hoste: The Administrator," *China's Millions*, British edition (July–August 1946): 27.

<sup>34</sup> "Dixon Edward Hoste," *China's Millions*, British edition (July–August 1946): 26.

<sup>35</sup> Phyllis Thompson, "D. E. Hoste: The Man Himself," *China's Millions*, British edition (July–August 1946): 28.

<sup>36</sup> Thompson, "D. E. Hoste: The Man Himself," 28.

<sup>37</sup> Thompson, "D. E. Hoste: The Man Himself," 28.

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# Jesus' Prayer for His Disciples and His Missional Church

## Michael Widmer



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In the following pages, I shall look at Jesus' prayer life and how he accompanies and enables his disciples in and through his intercession. With regard to the latter, I shall focus particularly on John 17, which contains Jesus' longest recorded intercessory prayer. It provides a majestic model of biblical spirituality as well as revealing Jesus' vision for his church. The departing Lord prays for and anticipates a missional church. This will become increasingly clear as we exegete Jesus' prayer and note the dominant theme of "sending" (John 17:3, 8, 18, 21, 23, 25). The notion of "sending" is central to the entire Gospel of John.<sup>1</sup> Out of love for the world, God sent his Son from eternity into space and time to save the world and to bring life (John 3:16–17; 20:31). Jesus is the missionary *par excellence*. Just as he was sent, Jesus sends his followers into the world (John 17:18; 20:21–22). As the ominous "hour" drew closer and Jesus' work was about to reach its climax, Jesus commissioned his disciples in prayer to continue his mission in the power of the Holy Spirit (John 14:26; 15:26; 17; 20:21–22).

How Jesus' followers were to achieve this and what characteristics and spiritual values his disciples and the emerging faith community should embody are in many ways the focus of Jesus' prayer.

A related topic that I shall attend to in the final section of this article is the relationship between intercessory prayer and human action. By looking briefly at the paradigmatic story of Israel's battle against Amalek and Moses' mediation, we shall gain another angle on the delicate interdependence of prayer and human action in God's purposes

(Exod 17:8–16). Even so, the main focus will be on John 17. Jesus' vision for his missional church is perhaps most clearly expressed in his magnificent prayer for his disciples and the future church. It is, however, to the third Gospel that we turn first, as Luke shows a particular interest in Jesus' prayer life.

## Aspects of Jesus' spirituality and the prayer of the early church

Jesus' public ministry was frequently interspersed by times of solitude and prayer (Luke 5:16; 9:18, 28; 11:1).<sup>2</sup> During these moments of withdrawal, Jesus not only sought God's strength to accomplish his mission, he also sought God's guidance and help before significant events. Jesus went out to the mountains to pray before he chose his disciples and before he revealed himself to them as Son of God and Messiah (cf. Luke 6:12–13).<sup>3</sup> On other occasions, Jesus interceded for his disciples that they will not give in to temptations or lose faith (Luke 22:31–32). Jesus'



*Christ Retreats to the Mountain at Night* by James Tissot. Opaque watercolor over graphite on gray wove paper, 19.1 x 18.4 cm. From Brooklyn Museum, <https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/objects/13464>.

prayers for his followers are essential for their faithful and effective witness (Acts 7:60; cf. John 17:20). There are eleven references to Jesus' prayers spread throughout the entire third Gospel.<sup>4</sup> Luke underlines that Jesus' life and ministry were fundamentally rooted in intimate dialogue with his heavenly Father. Marshall confirms:

Both the quantity and content of the material on prayer in Luke's Gospel suggests that the third evangelist was consciously aware of the significance of prayer in Jesus' ministry and teaching. The total picture regarding prayer in Luke, in fact, goes much beyond what we find in either Mark or Matthew—so much so that “prayer” is usually regarded by commentators as one of the distinctive facts of Luke's Gospel.<sup>5</sup>

Prayer is not just one of Luke's special interests—prayer is fundamental to Jesus' self-understanding and for his work both during his ministry and in the ongoing life of the church. For the Early Church, the praying Jesus is not just a role model, but also the reason for its existence. According to Feldkämper, the relation between the praying Jesus and the praying church is that the latter's prayers are mediated through the prayers of Jesus. The risen Lord enables the church to praise and witness in the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:49; Acts 2:4, 11; 19:6). When the disciples realized that Jesus is God's Son and Messiah, they bowed and worshiped Jesus (Luke 24:52; John 20:28; Acts 7:59–60). “Thus, the prayer of the disciples is mediated and enabled through Jesus. They pray *like him, to him and through him*.”<sup>6</sup>

Feldkämper sees this confirmed through comparing passages such as Luke 10:22 and 11:2. “No one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.” On the basis of this authority, Jesus teaches the disciples: “When you pray, say, *Father*, hallowed be your name ...” (Luke 11:2). As we shall see, when Jesus reveals God as Father to the disciples, he not only invites them to pray in a more intimate way, but also enables his followers to enter into an unprecedented relationship with God as their heavenly Father. One could argue though, that what came to be called the *Lord's Prayer*, is really the disciples' prayer or the Church's Prayer,<sup>7</sup> while John 17 contains what is really the “Lord's prayer.”

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### The “Lord's Prayer”: A missional prayer (John 17)

As already noted, John 17 contains the longest intercessory prayer in the entire New Testament. In numerous ways, it stands in the tradition of major Old Testament intercessions. Prophetic, royal, and priestly mediatory figures such as Moses, Solomon, and Ezra are known to have engaged in prolonged intercessory prayers.<sup>8</sup> A careful reading of John 17 reveals, however, a prayer unfathomably rich in theology. Jesus' prayer, Carson writes, summarizes most aspects of Johannine theology.

In some respects, the prayer is a summary of the entire Fourth Gospel to this point. Its principal themes include Jesus' obedience to his Father; the glorification of his Father through his death/exaltation, the revelation of God in Christ Jesus, the choosing of the disciples out of the world, their mission to the world, their unity modelled on the unity of the Father and the Son, and their final destiny in the presence of the Father and the Son.<sup>9</sup>



**Ezra Kneels in Prayer (Ezra 9:1-15), Doré's English Bible (Public domain), via Wikimedia Commons. The work is in the public domain in its country of origin, the U.S., and other countries and areas where the copyright term is the author's life plus 100 years or less.**

The immediate context of the prayer suggests that Jesus intended to be overheard by the disciples.<sup>10</sup> Listening to Jesus' prayer is like listening to a conversation in the heavenly throne room (royal image), the divine council (prophetic image), or the Holy of Holies (priestly image).

At least since the writings of Chytraeus (1531–1600)—one of the Lutheran fathers—Jesus' prayer has been referred to as a “High Priestly Prayer.”<sup>11</sup> As the Gospel of John nowhere directly refers to Jesus as a priest, nor explicitly describes him as such, this designation as a high-priestly prayer has been questioned by numerous scholars. Former Pope Benedict XVI, however, endorses the priestly nature of Jesus' intercession. He argues that the theology of John 17 corresponds exactly to that of the Letter to the Hebrews with its high-priestly portrayal of Jesus Christ.<sup>12</sup> Vischer prefers to call it a “prophetic intercession.” Given the dominant theme of sending, he argues that Jesus intercedes for his disciples like an Old Testament prophet.<sup>13</sup> Carson offers a nuanced judgment when he states that the designation “High Priestly Prayer” is not unfitting

inasmuch as Jesus prays for others in a distinctly mediatorial way—a priestly task—while he prays for himself with his self-oblation in view (vv. 5, 19). Even so, sacrificial language is not strong; more importantly, Christians have often thought of Christ's ‘high priestly ministry’ in terms of his post-ascension intercession (e.g. Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25; 1 Jn. 2:1), while this chapter finds Christ praying on the way to the cross.<sup>14</sup>

Regardless whether we label Jesus' prayer in John 17 as priestly or prophetic, or a combination of the two, according to the Gospel of John, Jesus intercedes on behalf of his followers as God's Messiah with the missionary purpose that “you may come to believe that he is the Christ, the Son of God and that by believing you may have life in his name” (John 20:31).

## An outline of Jesus' prayer

Jesus' intercession progressively expands from the centre to the outside. First, Jesus prays for himself (John 17:1–5), then for his disciples (John 17:6–19), and finally for all people who will come to believe and acknowledge the Father and Son through the mission of the disciples (John 17:20–26). The book of Acts testifies to this movement in geographical terms: from Jerusalem (Acts 1–7), via Judea and Samaria (Acts 10–21), to Rome (Acts 27–28), and eventually to the ends of the world (Acts 1:8). The following outline of Jesus' prayer emerges:

1. Jesus prays for his own glorification and that of the Father (vv. 1–5)
2. Jesus prays for his disciples (vv. 6–19)
  - a. Jesus gives reasons for praying for the disciples (vv. 6–11a)
  - b. Prayer that the disciples may be kept in God's Name (v. 11) and be protected from the evil one (v. 15; 11b–16)
  - c. Prayer that the disciples may be consecrated in the truth (vv. 17–19)
3. Jesus prays for the future church (vv. 20–26)
  - a. Prayer for unity among all believers (vv. 20–23)
  - b. Prayer that all believers may be perfected in his glory (vv. 24–26)<sup>15</sup>

The prayer moves from the “particular to the universal,” to use Bauckham's expression. In his booklet *Bible and Mission*, Bauckham expounds how God often works from the particular to the universal.<sup>16</sup> He notes that it was never God's intention to single out and bless Abraham purely for his and his descendants' sake. It was never God's intention to choose and reveal himself to Israel only for Israel's sake. It was never God's intention to limit his kingdom to Zion only. God's purpose in each of these singular choices was universal. Jesus' prayer confirms that his followers are always caught up in the movement of God's purpose from one to the many. God never singles out people and institutions for their own sake alone, but always for others to his glory.

### Jesus prays for his own glorification and that of the Father (John 17:1–5)

<sup>1</sup> Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you,  
<sup>2</sup> since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom

you have given him. <sup>3</sup> And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. <sup>4</sup> I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. <sup>5</sup> And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.

As Jesus anticipates the cross (“the hour has come”), he prays for his glorification (cf. John 12:23–24). When Jesus, the eternal Logos, became “flesh,” he laid down the glory that he had in eternity (John 1:14). Now he prays that through his forthcoming death and resurrection, the Father will give him back the glory the Son had “before the world existed” (John 17:1, 5). Here, we hear the pre-existent Son, who became a first-century Jew and is now preparing to “journey back to the Father.” Both verse 5 and verse 24 remind the reader of John's Prologue, where we read that the Logos was with God before creation (John 1:1–18). Both the Prologue and Jesus' prayer allow the reader to look beyond the this-worldly horizon into the

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eternal economy of God. Although the first part of Jesus' prayer is about the mutual glorification of Father and Son, the disciples are also on Jesus' mind and, as Ramsey notes, “the future glorification for which Jesus prays is, as we will see (v. 24), as much for their sakes as for his.”<sup>17</sup>

The glorification of the Son through the Father gives Jesus the authority to “give eternal life” to all who have been entrusted to him (John 17:2). Eternal life, according to John, is to know the Father and the Son. “Knowing” in this context stands for having intimate communion with the Triune God, as the church will come to confess (cf. 1 John 1:3; 5:20).<sup>18</sup>

### Jesus' intercessory prayer for his disciples (John 17:6–19)

The middle section of Jesus' prayer is the longest. Jesus brings the people who were entrusted to him before God. As Jesus is about to leave his disciples, he sends them back into the world where they will be exposed to dangers and temptations. Jesus prays that they will be kept in God's

truth, that they will be one, rooted in Son and Father, and that they will be sanctified by the truth of his words.

### Jesus gives his reason for praying for the disciples (vv. 6–11a)

<sup>6</sup> I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. <sup>7</sup> Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; <sup>8</sup> for the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. (John 17:6–8)

Back in verse 4, Jesus reported to his Father that he had accomplished the work that he had been entrusted with. Now, in verse 6, it becomes clear that a fundamental aspect of Jesus' work was to reveal God's name. How should we understand this? Has God not already revealed his Name and its meaning to

Moses and through him to Israel (Exod 3:14; 34:5–7)? Schlatter suggests that what is new is that Jesus reveals God to the disciples as Father.<sup>19</sup> Although YHWH has been referred to as a Father in the Old Testament (cf. Deut 32:6; Isa 63:16; Jer 31:9), there is good reason to think that Jesus revealed the Fatherhood of God in a new and more intimate way. The Fatherhood of God is central to Jesus' teaching (John 1:18; 5:17–23; 17:1–2, 5, 24; cf. Luke 11:2). Right from the outset of Jesus' ministry, he told the people that he came and ministered in the name of the Father (John 5:43). As the chosen disciples were getting to know “Jesus as Son of God, they come to know God in a new way, as Father of Jesus—and so, though still only implicitly, as their own Father (see 20:17).”<sup>20</sup> This is also reflected in the prayer that Jesus taught the disciples (Luke 11:2) and confirmed later in Jesus' intercessory prayer (John 17:23).

When Jesus says to the Father that the disciples “have kept your word” (John 17:6) and that they have come to know the truth about himself (v. 8), Jesus seems,

at first hearing, overly positive about the understanding of the disciples. Had the disciples not just made the confident statement: “we believe that you came from God” (John 16:30)? And yet they will all run away when the guards come to arrest Jesus.<sup>21</sup> Carson acknowledges that the disciples may not have understood

that their Messiah had to die and rise again, they may not have grasped how he was to embrace and fulfill in his own person Old Testament motifs of kingship, sacrifice, priesthood and suffering servant. But they have come to the deep conviction that Jesus was God’s messenger ...<sup>22</sup>

In order to understand fully Jesus’ messiahship and how God is working through his Son, the cross, resurrection, and the help of the Holy Spirit were necessary (John 16:12–15). The disciples’ incomplete understanding and still feeble faith underline the need for Jesus’ ongoing intercession for his disciples. Jesus prayed for Peter that his faith will not cease in the face of temptation and evil (Luke 22:32; cf. John 17:15). Jesus had a realistic view of the disciples’ fragile faith (cf. John 16:31–32). Hence, it makes good sense that Jesus’ prayer priorities are his disciples and not the world (John 17:9).

### ***“I am asking on their behalf, I am not asking on behalf of the world”***

<sup>9</sup> I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours. <sup>10</sup> All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them. <sup>11</sup> And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. (John 17:9–11a)

At first sight, this petition appears to stand in tension with God’s love for the world (John 3:16–17). Following the logic of Jesus’ prayer so far, however, it is understandable that he prays first for his disciples. Brown comments:

The prayer on behalf of his disciples (9) is an extension of the prayer for his own glorification (1); for it is in the perseverance and mission of these disciples that the name of God, given to Jesus, will be glorified on earth.<sup>23</sup>

We have already pointed to the overall movement of the prayer from the

centre (i.e. from the Son and Father), via the disciples, to the world (John 17:21, 23). Jesus’ initial intercessory focus on the disciples ought to be seen in the light of a much wider biblical paradigm of God’s way of “saving” (blessing, redeeming, transforming) all the nations through the faithful work of his chosen followers.<sup>24</sup> Just as the Father sent the Son, so Jesus sends out his followers in the power of the Holy Spirit to make disciples (John 17:18; 20:21–23; Matt 28:18–20). As noted by Cullmann, God often elects a minority in order to lead many to salvation.<sup>25</sup> The disciples are commissioned to continue Jesus’ mission. As they continue the overwhelming task of reaching the world for Christ, they need Jesus’ ongoing intercession (cf. Heb. 7:25).

After having laid the ground for the intercession for his disciples (John 17:1–11a), Jesus prays (i) that they be kept in the divine name (v. 11b); (ii) that they be protected from the evil one (v. 15); (iii) and that they be sanctified in the truth (v. 17–19).

Holy Father, protect them in your Name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one. (John 17:11b)

Only here the adjective “holy” is added to the intimate title “Father”—*πάτερ ἅγιε*. It is an interesting combination that connotes both love and holiness, as does the revealed name of God (Exod 34:6–7). The attribute “holy” prepares for the petition to “sanctify” the disciples—*ἀγιάσον αὐτοὺς* (John 17:17–19). Moreover, Jesus’ address anticipates verses 14 and following, where there is a clear distinction between the world and the disciples. The disciples do not belong to the world because they are set apart for God and his kingdom (John 17:14–16). In 1 Peter, we read: “as he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct; for it is written, ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy’” (1 Pet 1:15–16; cf. Lev 11:44).<sup>26</sup> God’s holiness is the fundamental base for the consecration of Jesus and the church (John 10:36).

Jesus embodied and revealed the attributes of God to the disciples (John 1:14; 14:9; cf. Exod 34:6–7). Now before his departure, Jesus prays that Father God will keep the disciples in this truth. Thus, it looks as if Jesus’ first concern is that his disciples will remain loyal to the revealed truth about

God (cf. John 17:17). This theological truth will be the foundation for the unity between God and his people.

I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one. (v. 15)

The disciples are not of this world and yet have a mission to the world. These two aspects create an unresolvable tension that characterizes the church. The church is always and at the same time “called out of the world and sent into the world.” These, as Bosch emphasizes with reference to the Lund meeting of “Faith and Order” (1952), are “not two separate movements but one”<sup>27</sup> that the church has been called to wrestle with. In this fundamental tension, there is, on the one hand, the danger of total assimilation into the world and, on the other hand, the temptation of total withdrawal from the world. The place of the people of God is in the world.

World in this context is an entity that is hostile to Jesus and to kingdom values and thus needs to be convicted of its sin (cf. John 16:9–11).<sup>28</sup> In order to fulfill their mission, the disciples need effective protection against any opposition and temptation (John 16:7–10; 20:22; cf. Luke 22:30–31). Ultimately, behind the hatred of the world is the “ruler of this world” (John 12:31; 16:11). The world is understood to be under the influence of the devil (John 8:44; 13:2), also called Satan (John 13:27).<sup>29</sup> The request to protect the disciples from the “evil one” (*ἐκ τοῦ πονηροῦ*) specifies Jesus’ earlier prayer for general protection (John 17:11).

### ***Jesus consecrates himself in order to sanctify his followers for mission (vv. 17–19)***

<sup>17</sup> Sanctify them in the truth (*ἀγιάσον αὐτοὺς ἐν τῇ ἀληθείᾳ*); your word is truth (*ὁ λόγος ὁ σὸς ἀλήθειά ἐστιν*).

<sup>18</sup> As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.

<sup>19</sup> And for their sakes I sanctify myself (*ἐγὼ ἀγιάζω ἑμαυτόν*), so that they also may be sanctified in truth (*ἵγιασμένοι ἐν ἀληθείᾳ*). (John 17:17–19)

In the Old Testament, priests and prophets were sanctified, which means that they were set apart for God and ministry. Jesus was set apart for God’s purposes and sent into the world (John 10:36). When Jesus prays for the sanctification of the disciples, he asks

that they be sanctified in the truth. Just as Jesus was sent into the world as *the truth* (John 3:17; 10:36; 14:6), Jesus' followers are set apart and consecrated to testify about the way, the life, and the truth in the world (John 3:16–17; 20:21–23, 31).

Jesus' petition suggests that the disciples cannot sanctify themselves. It requires Jesus' prayer (John 17:17) and an act that Jesus himself first has to undergo for them (John 17:19). The flow of the prayer makes it clear that the disciples' mission is somehow intrinsically related to Jesus sanctifying himself “for their sakes.” So, the question arises as to how Jesus sanctifies himself for the disciples and how this is related to the disciples' commissioning. Part of the difficulty in understanding the logic behind Jesus' prayer in verses 17–19 is that Jesus had already been “sanctified” (ἁγιάζω) by the Father in the sense of having been set apart for his mission to the world (John 10:36). Thus, it appears that the term “to sanctify” (ἁγιάζω) in John 10:36 and here in 17:19 contain different nuances. When Jesus speaks of his self-consecration for the consecration of the disciples (John 17:19), we seem to enter the domain of sacrificial categories. Westcott gave John 17 the title “The Prayer of Consecration” and sees in verse 19 the focal point of the entire prayer, namely, Jesus consecrating himself to death and his disciples to mission.<sup>30</sup>

Jesus consecrating himself for the consecration of his disciples most likely means that Jesus was preparing himself to die *on behalf* of his disciples (ὕπὲρ αὐτῶν, cf. John 1:29; 10:11; Mark 10:45). How do we know? Jesus revealed several times to his disciples that he was going to lay down his life for his people (cf. John 10:11, 17–18; 18:11; 19:30). The language in context, as Carson comments:

is evocative of atonement passages elsewhere (e.g. Mk. 14:24; Lk. 22:19; Jn. 6:51 ...). It is also evocative of Old Testament passages where the sacrificial animal was ‘consecrated’ or ‘set apart’ for death — indeed, of language where consecration becomes synonymous with the sacrificial death itself (e.g. Dt. 15:19, 21).<sup>31</sup>

One could say it is in these three pregnant verses that priestly and prophetic categories are fused into a new “messianic” witness (John 17:17–19). Jesus offers himself as a sacrifice for those whom God has given him so that they will be purified in the truth revealed by



**The Woman of Samaria at the Well by James Tissot. Opaque watercolor over graphite on gray wove paper, 26.2 x 37.6 cm. From Brooklyn Museum, <https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/objects/4469>.**

the Holy Spirit (John 7:39; 16:13).<sup>32</sup> Set apart and consecrated, the disciples will then be sent out by Jesus as Jesus was sent out by God to continue God's mission.

### **Jesus prays for the future church (John 17:20–26)**

#### ***Jesus prays for later generations of believers who will respond to the apostles' teaching (vv. 20–23)***

<sup>20</sup> I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, <sup>21</sup> that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. <sup>22</sup> The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, <sup>23</sup> I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. (John 17:20–23)

Jesus' prayer for those who come to faith through *the words* of the apostles is intrinsically related to the missionary purpose of the Gospel that was “written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ” (John 20:30). These new believers are seen as the fruit of the preaching of the apostles (John 17:20).

The dynamics of Jesus' prayer in verse 20 can be insightfully illustrated through the account of the Samaritan woman (John 4:1–42). It is fascinating to observe how the Samaritan woman

was led from a surface encounter with the truth—acknowledging Jesus as a “prophet” (John 4:19)—to making him known as the “Messiah” (John 4:29, 39). The climax of the chapter, however, comes when the inhabitants from the Samaritan town were led to believe by *the words* of the “Samaritan convert” that Jesus is not only the Messiah of the Jews, but the Savior of the world (John 4:42; Acts 1:8).<sup>33</sup> In conjunction with the account of the Samaritan woman and Jesus' prayer, Maier underlines that the Gospel of John is a missionary gospel (John 4:38; 10:16; 17:20–23).<sup>34</sup> Marshall finds this confirmed in John 17:20:

Here at last we have in unambiguous terms the commission of the disciples to be missionaries in the world, with the result that some will believe through their message.<sup>35</sup>

Jesus expands his prayer beyond later believers to the world (John 17:21). This universal goal qualifies his earlier statement in verse 9, where Jesus says that he does not ask on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom the Father has given him. Michaels writes: “God's plan for the world will come to realization not through Jesus during his limited time on earth, but through the band of disciples he has gathered around him.”<sup>36</sup> Jesus' prayer affirms the wider biblical paradigm noted earlier—that God often elects a minority to lead many to salvation.<sup>37</sup>

It is “through their word” that the future church will come into existence

(John 17:20). It is the very words that Jesus had received from his Father that were passed on to the disciples (John 17:8, 14, 17) and will eventually come alive through the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit (John 14:26; 16:13). There is a unity based on God's word (John 17:20). This unity between Father, Son, and the faith community has also important missiological and soteriological implications.

***Jesus prays that the world may know that God the Father loved the disciples as he loved his Son (John 17:23)***

In commissioning the disciples to be missionaries to the world, Jesus anticipates that some people will respond to their preaching (cf. John 17:18, 20). Here, in verses 22–23, however, it is the testimony of a loving unity among believers that will lead the world to acknowledge Jesus and his work. Interestingly, for the world, the process of coming to believe is, in a sense, evolving backwards. As non-believers observe the love-bond between members of the faith community, the world comes to see the source behind it, namely, that God has sent his Son out of love for the salvation of the world.

Amazingly, God's love for the emerging faith community is the same as the Father's love for his Son (John 17:23).<sup>38</sup> The belief that God is love is foundational to John's theology. Marshall comments:

Love is a much-used concept in John to describe the relationship between God and Jesus (Jn 17:23–26) and between God and Jesus and believers (Jn 13:1, 34, 14:21, 15:9, 21:15–17), and between believers and one another (Jn 13:34–35). As a mutual relationship it clearly does not apply to the relationship of believers to unbelievers, nevertheless there can be the one-sided relationship in which God loves the sinful world (Jn 3:16), and Jesus and his followers are sent out in mission to the world (Jn 20:21–23).<sup>39</sup>

***Jesus wishes that the disciples will be with him, see his heavenly glory, and share in the divine love (John 17:24–26)***

In the closing section of the prayer, Jesus summarizes the entire prayer; if not his entire ministry. It contains three prayer objectives that are introduced by a *ἵνα*



*The Descent of the Holy Spirit* by Domenico Campagnola. Engraving 18.9 x 17.3 cm. From National Gallery of Art, <https://www.nga.gov/collection/art-object-page.5855.html>.

clause: (1) “that believers will be with Jesus” (v. 24); (2) “that they see Jesus’ glory” (v. 24); (3) and “that the love of Father and Son may be in them” (v. 26).

<sup>24</sup> Father, I desire that those also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory, which you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.

<sup>25</sup> “Righteous Father, the world does not know you, but I know you; and these know that you have sent me. <sup>26</sup> I made your name known to them, and I will make it known, so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them. (John 17:24–26)

On the one hand, it is clearly an eschatological prayer. On the other hand, it refers back to Jesus’ pre-existent glory as mentioned in the Prologue (cf. John 1:1–3; 17:5). Jesus re-enforces here that he has and will continue to reveal God’s name to the disciples (John 17:26). By referring to the ongoing revelation and the loving communion between Father, Son, and believers, it looks as if Jesus is referring to his ongoing heavenly intercession (cf. Heb 7:25; 9:24) and the gift of the Holy Spirit (John 20:22). Jesus brings his majestic prayer to a close with another reference to the uniting love between Father, Son, and believers (cf. John 17:11, 21–23).

Thüsing argues that the love of which Jesus speaks in the final verse is the Holy Spirit in person. He finds a strong hint

in verse 26, where we read: “so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in the them.” Jesus leaves the world and goes to the Father, not to leave the disciples alone, but “in order that (*ἵνα*) he may abide in them and among them.”<sup>40</sup> Although exegesis does not allow absolute certainty that love equals the Holy Spirit here, it is clear that the eternal and mutual love between Father and Son is the source of Jesus’ mission (John 17:23, 26). It is this same (Spirit-) love that empowers and guides the church to love one another and witness to the world.

**Summary, further theological reflections, and application**

***All for the glory of the Father***

We have noted that the entire prayer is motivated by Jesus’ desire to see the Father glorified (John 17:1, 5). Turner comments insightfully on how Jesus’ prayer challenges the church to rethink its priorities in prayer and, indeed, its self-understanding:

The real challenge of Jesus’ prayer ..., is not merely to a new attitude towards church unity, as though our striving will attain that goal. ... The real challenge of the prayer is to nothing less than a Copernican revolution in our praying. Our prayers are too often centred on ourselves and spread out in concentric circles of our (often legitimate) interests, responsibilities, loves and imagined needs. Jesus’ prayer puts the Father’s glory at the centre, and spreads out in concentric circles of his will and purpose. Only as we, by God’s grace, become more deeply “rooted in the Father’s love, and more keen to know the One to whom we are reconciled through the cross, will that revolution become more possible, and the unity of which Jesus spoke (and for which he prayed) become a visible reality.”<sup>41</sup>

Jesus’ prayer for his disciples and the future church flows out of this desire to see the Father glorified. Father and Son are glorified when the church lives up to Jesus’ prayer vision. Looking ahead, Jesus anticipates the church to continue his mission and intercedes basically for four things:

1. That the disciples will be protected and kept in the revealed truth. This

theological truth lays the foundation for unity (John 17:11–12).

2. That the disciples will be sanctified in Jesus' work on the cross and set apart in the truth. That is, that the Word of God will purify them and set them free from evil and the temptations of the world (John 17:15).
3. That the disciples will be commissioned to continue Jesus' mission to bear witness to the truth in the world (John 17:18; 20:21).
4. That the disciples will be one. Their unity is rooted and sustained in the oneness of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (John 17:21–26).

Perhaps one could further summarize Jesus' prayer vision: (1) that God will protect the church in the revealed truth, (2) that God will sanctify his church, (3) that the church will be a missionary church, and (4) that the church will be one.<sup>42</sup>

### ***Jesus' vision for his church: Committed to truth, holiness, mission, and unity***

In a sermon on John 17, Stott makes the profound point that a biblically balanced interrelatedness of truth, holiness, mission, and unity is of fundamental importance for the church to glorify the Triune God and for it to be a credible witness in the world.<sup>43</sup> Stott points to the ongoing danger of losing the scriptural balance between these four characteristics.

There is a danger of protecting unity at the cost of truth and holiness. The relation between truth and unity lies at the heart of many church struggles. What exactly is the non-negotiable truth that lays the foundation for unity? To what degree does the church need to protect that truth in order to protect its unity? This makes for interesting discussion in Asia where harmony and unity are often valued higher than truth. According to Jesus' prayer, both truth and unity are absolutely central to the church. It is, however, the revealed truth about God in Jesus that forms the foundation on which unity must rest.

Having said that, some churches are so preoccupied with aspects of the biblical faith that are not at the very core of the revealed truth that they become harsh and exclusive (like the Pharisees).<sup>44</sup> They have lost Jesus' vision for unity and love (John 17:11, 24). Jesus anticipates generation after generation coming to faith through

the apostles' teaching and prays for a unity based on *their words* (John 17:20). He also prays for a oneness rooted in the perfect unity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and that it may be extended to the disciples' disciples (John 17:21; cf. Eph 4:5).

At the same time, other churches pursue holiness to such a degree that they have lost touch with the world. They neglect Jesus' teaching that the church is consecrated for the very purpose of being sent back into the world with a mission. Since the church is already in the world, what could "being sent back into the world" possibly mean? Among other things, it means entering the "worlds" of the people that God seeks to reach. Only when we manage to enter people's fears, doubts, hopes, and joys can we truly hope to reach their hearts. Mission is both incarnational and contextual. Yet other churches are so preoccupied with evangelistic activities that they do not realise that they lose credibility if they do not reflect truth, love, holiness, and unity.

Jesus prays that his disciples will reflect all these characteristics. Milne puts it like this: "A true church will be recognized by its unity in relationships, its holiness of life, its openness to all, its submission to the rule of the apostolic scriptures, its preaching of Christ in word and sacrament, and its commitment to mission."<sup>45</sup> Stott pleads memorably for BBC, that is, for a *Balanced Biblical Christianity*. Given the

fact that it is not just a matter of balance, but of an intrinsically and mutually dependent relationship between these four essential characteristics, perhaps the acronym IBM better catches the priorities of Jesus' prayer—IBM standing for *Interdependent or Integral Biblical Mission*.<sup>46</sup>

### **Partnership in mission: The relation between prayer and human action**

Having looked at Jesus' interdependent prayer foci and vision for the church, I would like to conclude with a brief exploration of a different aspect of interdependence in God's work. Full-time gospel workers, whether overseas or domestic, often have mission partners who accompany and support them and their ministry in prayer. Readers of this article know that both prayer and action are essential aspects of mission work. To complete my reflections on the relation between prayer and mission, I would like to ground this vital partnership in one paradigmatic Old Testament story—Israel's battle against Amalek and Moses' prayerful mediation. Exodus 17:8–16 provides helpful insights into the interdependence of intercessory prayer and frontline action.

The account lends itself well to illustrate the delicate balance between divine and human involvement in achieving God's purposes. It needed both Moses'



***The Victory of Joshua over the Amalekites by Nicolas Poussin (Public domain), via Wikimedia Commons. The work is in the public domain in its country of origin and other countries and areas where the copyright term is the author's life plus 100 years or fewer.***

prayer on the hill and Joshua's leading of the army in the valley. On their own, neither of them would have been able to win the battle. The picture of Moses' uplifted arms holding the staff of God overlooking the battlefield reminded some of the Church Fathers of Jesus' victory over evil on the cross.<sup>47</sup> We have explored how Jesus interceded for his "Joshuas" on the battlefields of the world. The outcome of the battle against Amalek was determined by the raising and lowering of Moses' arms (Exod 17:11). Although no actual prayer is recorded when Moses was on the hill with Aaron and Hur, early Jewish and Christian interpreters understood Moses' activity as prayer.<sup>48</sup> The focus of the account is on Moses and the happenings on the hill, while the battle in the valley receives less attention in the text. Although the author focuses on the importance of Moses' intercession, "in vain shall Moses be upon the hill, if Joshua be not in the valley"—as Hall notes and adds—"Prayer without means is a mockery of God."<sup>49</sup> Too often, as Bosch reinforces, we use prayer

as an escape from our responsibilities. We say so easily, when we have had a serious problem, 'I have prayed about it, and now I leave it in God's hands.' This appears to be pious and submissive, but it may, in fact, be just a cover-up for unwillingness to face realities.<sup>50</sup>

Exodus 17:11–13 illustrates well the interdependence of intercessory prayer and human action. Although prayer decides the outcome, Joshua's leading of the charge in the valley was necessary for victory.

### Chopsticks in the hands of God: The threefold partnership in God's mission

The above reading of Jesus' intercession (John 17) and the account of Israel's battle against Amalek (Exod 17) has underlined the importance of the intrinsic relation between prayer and action in God's purposes. This essential interdependent threefold relationship can be memorably and effectively communicated to prayer partners with a simple, interactive chopstick analogy.

*The Table Setup:* A pair of chopsticks (we labeled one with a Japanese flag and one with a Swiss one), some dry beans or rice grain, and an empty bowl.

*The Mission:* We invited our prayer partners to use the chopsticks and try to place the beans/rice grains ("seekers") into the bowl ("church/kingdom").

*Theological Point:* It takes both chopsticks—the prayer partner and the gospel worker—to fulfill the mission to lead people into the kingdom. Moreover, the pair of chopsticks on the table are useless unless they are "placed" in the hands of the Triune God who orchestrates and enables the entire mission! **MRT**

<sup>1</sup> See, e.g. John 1:6; 3:17, 34; 4:34; 5:23, 30; 6:38–40; 7:16; 8:35–36; 12:44–45; 13:20; 14:26; 15:26; 20:21.

<sup>2</sup> M. M. B. Turner, "Prayer in the Gospels and Acts," in *Teach us to Pray: Prayer in the Bible and the World*, ed. D. A. Carson (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2002), 58–83.

<sup>3</sup> See also Luke 9:28–29; 10:21; Matt 16:15–17.

<sup>4</sup> Luke 3:21; 5:16; 6:12; 9:18, 28–29; 10:21; 11:1; 22:32; 22:41–45; 23:34, 46.

<sup>5</sup> I. Howard Marshall, "Jesus—Example and Teacher of Prayer in the Synoptic Gospels," in *Into God's Presence: Prayer in the New Testament*, ed. R. N. Longenecker, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 115–16.

<sup>6</sup> Ludger Feldkämper, *Der betende Jesus als Heilmittler nach Lukas* (Bonn: Steyler, 1978), 337.

<sup>7</sup> In German and French, the prayer is not called the "Lord's Prayer," but, like in Latin ("Paternoster"), "Our Father."

<sup>8</sup> See Genesis 18:23–32; Exodus 32–34; 1 Kings 8; Ezra 9; Daniel 9; etc.

<sup>9</sup> Donald A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans and Leicester: Apollos, 1994), 551.

<sup>10</sup> Turner thus says that "the disciples are intended to hear it and learn from it." Turner, "Prayer in the Gospels and Acts," 77.

<sup>11</sup> Although the designation of John 17 as Jesus' "High Priestly Prayer" most likely goes back to Chytraeus, the roots to understand it as such reach back at least to Cyril of Alexandria (fourth century). See Oscar Cullmann, *Das Gebet im Neuen Testament*, 2nd ed. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997), 140.

<sup>12</sup> Joseph Ratzinger Benedikt XVI, *Jesus von Nazareth: Vom Einzug in Jerusalem bis zur Auferstehung*, Bd. 2 (Freiburg: Herder, 2011), 94–120.

<sup>13</sup> Lukas Vischer, *Die Fürbitte* (Frankfurt am Main: Knecht, 1979), 57.

<sup>14</sup> Carson, *John*, 552–553. For an understanding that John 17 possibly makes allusions to a priestly prayer, see Andrew S. Malone, *God's Mediators: A Biblical Theology of Priesthood*, NSBT 43 (London: Apollos, 2017), 105–107.

<sup>15</sup> Adapted from Rudolf Schnackenburg, *Das Johannesevangelium: Kap. 13–21* (Freiburg: Herder, 1976), 191–2 and George R. Beasley-Murray, *John*, WBC (Milton Keynes: Word, 1991), 295–6.

<sup>16</sup> Richard Bauckham, *Bible and Mission: Christian Witness in a Postmodern World* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster and Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003).

<sup>17</sup> Ramsey J. Michaels, *The Gospel of John*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 863.

<sup>18</sup> In both Hebrew and Greek thinking, "to know" is semantically closely related to intimate communion.

<sup>19</sup> Adolf Schlatter, *Der Evangelist Johannes*, 4th ed. (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1975), 319–320.

<sup>20</sup> Michaels, *John*, 863.

<sup>21</sup> Michaels, *John*, 863–4.

<sup>22</sup> Carson, *John*, 559.

<sup>23</sup> E. Raymond Brown, *The Gospel of John XIII–XXI*:

*A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1970/2008), 763.

<sup>24</sup> Cullmann, *Das Gebet*, 141.

<sup>25</sup> Oscar Cullmann, *Christus und die Zeit: Die Urchristliche Zeit-Und Geschichtsauffassung*, 3rd ed. (Zürich: Evangelischer, 1962), 110–111.

<sup>26</sup> C. Kingsley Barrett, *The Gospel According to St John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1978), 423.

<sup>27</sup> David J. Bosch, *A Spirituality of the Road* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1979), 15.

<sup>28</sup> Turner, "Prayer," 79.

<sup>29</sup> This is not unlike Paul's reference to the "god of this age" (2 Cor 4:4).

<sup>30</sup> Brook Foss Westcott, *The Gospel According to St. John* (London: Murray, 1881), 494.

<sup>31</sup> Carson, *John*, 567.

<sup>32</sup> Schnackenburg points to Ephesians 5:25–27 as a helpful analogy to Jesus sanctifying himself for the disciples. Schnackenburg, *Johannesevangelium*, 212. See also, Hanna Stettler, *Heiligung bei Paulus* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 607–12.

<sup>33</sup> Brevard S. Childs, *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (London: SCM, 1992), 283.

<sup>34</sup> Gerhard Maier, *Johannes-Evangelium*, 2. Teil (Neuhausen-Stuttgart: Hänssler, 1986), 227.

<sup>35</sup> I. Howard Marshall, *New Testament Theology: Many Witnesses, One Gospel* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2004), 508–9.

<sup>36</sup> Michaels, *John*, 876.

<sup>37</sup> Cullmann, *Christus*, 110–111, cf. Bauckham, *Bible and Mission*, 27–54.

<sup>38</sup> We find a similar thought in 1 John: "No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us ... We love because he first loved us" (1 John 4:12, 19).

<sup>39</sup> Marshall, *New Testament Theology*, 522–3.

<sup>40</sup> Wilhelm Thüsing, *Herrlichkeit und Einheit: Eine Auslegung des Hohepriesterlichen Gebetes Jesu (Johannes 17)* (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1962), 132. Barrett discusses how this passage refers to the promised Parakletos (cf. John 14:5–6; 16:13–14). Barrett, *John*, 430.

<sup>41</sup> Turner, "Prayer in the Gospel," 80.

<sup>42</sup> This is in line with the Nicene Creed in which the church confesses: "We believe in one, holy, catholic (all embracing) and apostolic (sending) church." See Bruce Milne, *Know the Truth: A Handbook of Christian Belief*, 3rd ed. (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2009), 288–96.

<sup>43</sup> John Stott, "Jesus' vision for his church" (All Souls, 24 October 2004).

<sup>44</sup> Christian Haslebach discusses four levels of theological truth and to what level Evangelicals could compromise to protect the unity. Haslebach, "Theologie in einer V.U.K.A.—Welt: Wie Einheit trotz Theologischer Unterschiede möglich sein kann," *Communicatio* 1, no. 1 (2021): 7–11.

<sup>45</sup> Milne, *Know the Truth*, 296.

<sup>46</sup> Of course, *Incarnational*, or *Interceded Biblical Mission* would also be in tune with John 17.

<sup>47</sup> Origen sees Joshua as a type of Christ. (The Greek name for Joshua is Jesus.) It is Joshua who defeated Amalek, whom Origen equated with evil, and subsequently brought the people into the promised land. Origen, Exod. Hom. XI. 3. See Joseph T. Lienhard, Ronnie J. Rombs, and Thomas C. Oden, eds., *Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy*, ACCS 3; ICCS (Downers Grove: IVP, 2001), 92.

<sup>48</sup> See my book *Standing in the Breach: An Old Testament Theology and Spirituality of Intercessory Prayer*, Siphut 13 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2015), 61–4, for a discussion of various interpretations of Moses and his staff.

<sup>49</sup> Joseph Hall, *Contemplations*, cited from Brevard S. Childs, *The Book of Exodus*, OTL (Louisville: Westminster, 1974), 316.

<sup>50</sup> Bosch, *A Spirituality of the Road*, 17.

# Inspirer and Hearer of Prayer: Teach Me to Pray

## Laura-Jane Meas



Laura-Jane Meas joined OMF in 2000, first serving as Youth Worker for Ireland, then in Sapporo and Sendai, Japan. She and her husband, Ho, who is Cambodian, have mainly worked among Japanese and international students. They together took up the role of Mobilisation Coordinators for Diaspora Returnee Ministries in October 2020. She and Ho have two sons, aged 12 and 6.

**“T**his is the one for you.” Twenty-something years ago, our Bible College Principal placed Matthew Henry’s *The Secret of Communion with God* into my hands. I had gone to Bible College out of obedience, knowing God loves the world and wants people to know him. Compelled to cross cultures, seek his grace, and tell people about him, I prayed, but often felt something was still lacking. I have seen and know God answers prayer, but I have also felt a gap between dutiful, mechanical “prayer” and essential, life-and-breath relational prayer. Realising there are reams of untold stories of God’s answers to prayer in our mission community, I set out to write about some of his answers, but my focus has increasingly shifted to *God, the One who answers prayer*.

One of my last “real” pre-lockdown conversations was at a prayer breakfast, where joyful reunions merged with urgency, as the pandemic storm approached. We prayed about God’s work among East Asian people. One enthusiastic attendee was an elderly lady in whose home I had stayed overnight when visiting her prayer group a few months earlier.

Before I left her home, she ushered me into a room I had never been in, beside her front door. Holy excitement twinkled in her dimming eyes. “This is where I meet the Lord and pray. Here I tell him about everything,” she said, drawing me in. A magnifying glass lay beside a well-worn Bible. Small tables, chairs, and the arms of a sofa held orderly stacks of letters, prayer guides, maps, and photographs relating to God’s work worldwide. She was terribly unwell, but her personal discomfort seemed overtaken by anticipation of those morning prayers.

At the prayer breakfast, she grabbed my arm. “You have to get the word out about prayer!” she urged. “Who’s going to pray when we’ve all gone on?”

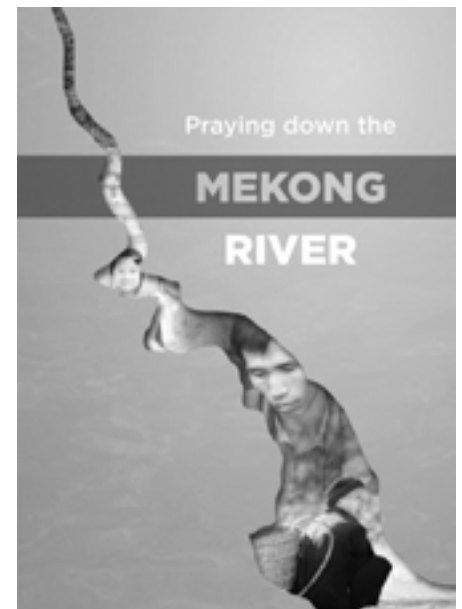
## PRAYER AT THE OUTSET

God’s people need prayer. Communion with God is what we were made for, and through it, God works for the good of others and the fulfilment of his kingdom purposes. Typical of many OMF publications, in *Praying Down the Mekong River* we read:

Prayer should be the basis of all our work. Not only our workers, their teams and supporting prayer partners, but also any churches and believers around the world who are called to pray for these peoples should cry out fervently to God to see the vision fulfilled.<sup>1</sup>

Though we often talk about it, we don’t easily grasp prayer’s priority. After planting two churches and seeing much evidence of God’s work through salvation, growth, and innovation, Pete Grieg, the founder of the 24/7 Prayer Movement, describes how

Inwardly I was dying. I was just so spiritually hungry; I was desperate to get to know God better. I felt that we were really weak and shallow on spirituality and prayer. Then I realised that prayer is the key to everything.<sup>2</sup>



*In God's grace, throughout life's journey, he continually calls us, giving opportunities to reorientate, discover, and engage him more deeply through prayer.*

Pastor, theologian, and apologist Tim Keller, too, describes “discovering prayer,” after many years, “as a matter of necessity.”<sup>3</sup> In God’s grace, throughout life’s journey, he continually calls us, giving opportunities to reorientate, discover, and engage him more deeply through prayer.

In April 2020, paralysed by COVID-induced strict lockdown, I lifted my eyes up from my Bible to a clean, aircraft-free sky. In that moment, I felt unexpectedly aware of the mighty connection to God’s throne, to the One who made, sustains, and rules everything. Though we are scattered across the globe, socially distant, and restricted, he provides portals for worship and communion at his mercy seat whether we are in prison cells, on beaches, in backyards, in offices, or on mountaintops. He connects us to praying friends around the world, and to the “great cloud of witnesses” (Heb 12:1–2) eternally joined to Christ. As we freely interact with our Heavenly Father, through Jesus, his Spirit generously involves us in his work, even when “locked down”.

During a recent online prayer meeting, I noticed a colleague in Asia express his total dependence on God for the matter we were praying about. Touched by his prayer, I later asked about it. He said:

Partly it’s about having enough life experience to really feel, rather than just know in my head that certain things are never going to happen by my own effort (in the case of my own life, or our ministry) or by the effort of the church more broadly (its own transformation or evangelistically). But it’s also come from a growth of in-heart understanding of God’s glory and holiness, so that I am more bothered by things that are not as they should be before him—again, whether in myself, or the church, or the world.

Another colleague in Japan—inspired by George Müller’s biography—has felt increased conviction about prayer “before all other things.” With the onset of the pandemic, her family started a daily fifteen-minute, after-lunch prayer time, praying about what God is doing

locally, in Japan, and throughout the world. The call to prayer comes from many angles, but the Holy Spirit himself calls and draws us to pray.

Prayer had no small part in our Fellowship’s beginnings, and remains the unchanging, necessary preparation for any ministry initiative. Our founder Hudson Taylor and his sister Amelia, as young, new Christians, “entered from the very first into the Lord’s yearning over the lost and perishing.” This, biographers Dr. and Mrs. Howard Taylor write, had much to do with their rapid spiritual growth as young believers.<sup>4</sup>

After they returned to England from China (1860–1866), in the later part of their so-called “hidden years,” Hudson and Maria “prayed over every line”<sup>5</sup> as they wrote *China’s Spiritual Need and Claims*, calling people to pray, support, and go. Prayer gatherings in their home went hand in hand with the birthing of the CIM and the sending out of “the first twenty-four.” The CIM’s principles were rooted in the conviction that God answers prayer.

Hudson Taylor ... had seen [God] ... quell the raging of a storm at sea, *in answer to definite prayer*, alter the direction of the wind, and give rain in a time of drought. He had seen Him, *in answer to prayer*, stay the hand of would-be murderers and quell the violence of enraged men. He had seen Him rebuke sickness *in answer to prayer*, and raise up the dying, when all hope of recovery had seemed gone. For more than eight

years he had proved His faithfulness in supplying the needs of his family and work *in answer to prayer*, unforeseen as many of those needs had been.<sup>6</sup>

## PRAYER IN ALL CIRCUMSTANCES

As we journey with the Lord we serve, we each identify unique, specific ways and times he has answered prayer. We need to keep telling what he has done, as we give him glory for his salvation, his provision, his protection, his building of his church. Perhaps these few examples will spark remembrance in each reader’s experience.

### Prayer in crisis

Phyllis Thompson delighted in telling the stories of how God moved people to prayer and action in his worldwide purposes. In *Proving God*, she tells of a young London bank clerk, Frank Parry, who in the 1930s was asking God daily for leading for his life. God led him to China, where, in 1941, he took charge of the CIM Finance Department. During “a long financial siege,” as his team prayed for guidance and sought solutions for seeming impossibilities, the Lord led them to a pathway of great personal risk and sacrifice—buying gold instead of currency to ensure their colleagues would be provided for. When war broke out, God enabled German missionaries who were not interned, “with ... earnest prayers, and with care and love,” to “scour Shanghai for the most nourishing, tasty, yet inexpensive food they could buy; packing it into separate cartons, one for each interned CIM missionary in the Shanghai area; and send them monthly into the internment camps.”<sup>7</sup>

May and Alfie Johnston were among the “49ers” who entered China in 1949 but had to leave just after their



The Forty-niners with staff and visitors at Chungking Language School, *China's Millions*, British edition (March 1950): 31. May and Alfie Johnstone are leftmost in the fourth row.

second Christmas in 1951. As dangers increased, with colleagues arrested and soldiers constantly outside their house, May was overwhelmed, fearful for the safety of their baby. She writes:

Then one evening, as I knelt beside our bed the Lord spoke to me. I definitely heard his voice, so clear that I turned round to see who was speaking. ‘I brought you to China,’ he said, ‘and I can take you out again if that’s my will. But remember, whatever happens, I am with you.’ My heart was stilled, the fear disappeared and peace came.<sup>8</sup>

May and Alfie went on to experience God’s faithfulness as they helped set up a chain of Christian bookshops in the Philippines, acknowledging the constant encouragement and strength they received through the prayers of faithful supporters.

### Prayer for all our needs

Today, God’s co-workers keep testifying to his provision in answer to prayer: just the right accommodation for a returning missionary following major surgery;

his encounters with Japanese friends were obviously God-directed.

Mark and Sarah’s son Caleb was sad he had lost touch with a former schoolmate when they changed to home schooling. When Caleb had shared about faith in God, his friend had been really interested, so every day Caleb prayed for him.

One day, the first day of a Minecraft Club at church, Caleb’s friend turned up, invited by another boy from their English Fun Club! The whole family praised God for his answer to prayer! Another time when Mark picked Caleb up from football, Caleb said, “One guy’s thinking about becoming a Christian.” A boy from their old school had found a Bible in the school library and read it right through. “We’d been praying for the school and saw nothing obvious happen, but look at what God was doing in the background,” says Mark.

### Prayer for our appointments

Miriam applied to take over a colleague’s teaching job in a Japanese university. Many people prayed, knowing Japanese

“but my email kept bouncing back. I wanted you to know I believe God is asking you to go to Japan.” This timely sequence sealed God’s direction for me and helped me to keep trusting him. Twenty years later, Soon Ok wrote, “I still remember you in my daily prayers.”

### Prayer for salvation

The McGintys and Schmidts worked together in Hokkaido, Japan. One by one, almost a whole family had trusted the Lord, but people around the world kept praying for *Ojiisan* (Grandad), a Shinto priest, to come to saving faith in Jesus. Mike McGinty remembers reading aloud from a large-print Bible every time he visited him at the shrine. Interested in his son’s family’s faith in Jesus, *Ojiisan* grew to love and respect the Bible. He later donated land he had previously earmarked for another Shinto shrine to the little church and took a big step towards freedom when he moved away from the shrine into a house built especially for him next to the very church his generous donation had made possible. *Ojiisan* requested a skylight be installed in the ceiling of that house so he could look up and see the cross on the church steeple. At the age of 92, though frail, he insisted on baptism by full immersion in that beloved little church. The legacy of faith in the family continues to this day. Mike longs that God’s people around the world will pray for many more stories like this to happen among Japanese people.

### Prayer for protection

The McKibbin family were moving sixteen hours away from Manila to the then remote and largely unreached province of Sorsogon. Praying Psalm 121 over them, their church family sent them off with verses 7–8: “The Lord will keep you from all harm—he will watch over your life. The Lord will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore.” Peter went ahead with their possessions on a “Saver Trucking” lorry. Sarah and the children followed by plane and bus the next morning. As their bus approached Sorsogon, Sarah saw a truck, far off the road. Without a phone signal, there was no way to know if Peter was safe. Almost two hours later, their friends, Pastor July and Pastor Mar, met Sarah on the road near their new home and rushed back to check on Peter. The driver of Peter’s truck had fallen asleep as the truck climbed a winding hill, ploughed through the village water pump, and became

*Prayer had no small part in our Fellowship’s beginnings, and remains the unchanging, necessary preparation for any ministry initiative.*

church meeting places and ministry centres; favourable landlords; protection from debt; solutions to complex problems; God’s perfect timing and action; healing for mind and body; God-ordained “coincidences”; even a pair of slippers arriving in the post after a passing prayer about cold feet. “God may come on the last bus, but He is never late,” said Serve Asia worker Michael Benson. A retired widower, Michael served several summers in Sapporo. Marked by humility and kindness, Michael spoke often of how the Lord answered prayer to finally bring him to Japan. For others, his presence was an answer to prayer as his presence brought people together and his maturity earned him the right to a respectful hearing when it came to sharing the gospel.

### Prayer for friends

Michael’s friendships with Japanese people were soaked in morning prayer. “If we really believe God works when we pray,” he would say, “the most important thing a friend can ever do for a friend is pray.” And day by day,

students would continue hearing the gospel if she was successful, but there were repeated postponements and little communication from the university. An OMF *Billions* publication with an article highlighting Miriam’s specific prayer need reached Miriam’s hands the day before the final decision was made in the university. Assured and at peace in God, the next day Miriam heard she had got the job.

I treasure the memory of the final time Soon Ok and I prayed together at Bible College. I was moved by her promise to pray for me daily. Two years later, when I was preparing to go to Cambodia, the Lord began overwhelming me with reasons why Japan needs his gospel. Knowing Soon Ok would be praying daily, I tried contacting her, but my email bounced back repeatedly. I listed all the evidence before God, and then wrote to leaders that I believed God was speaking to me about going to Japan. Within a short time of sending that letter, an email popped in from Soon Ok. “I’ve been trying to reach you,” she wrote,

wedged between a small house and a huge rock. Shaken and overwhelmed, but grateful that no one was hurt, they praised God for answering the believers' prayers.

### **Prayer in illness**

Citing 2 Chronicles 20:17—"You will not have to fight this battle. Take up your positions; stand firm and see the deliverance the LORD will give you."—Zia Muller, who has been facing a difficult journey with cancer, writes about learning to look to the Lord in all of life's circumstances, including the times of waiting. She describes how "waiting on him" includes our awareness that "he is likely to be drawing several people who are looking on at the situation into a relationship with himself."<sup>9</sup> "Taking refuge in him by calling on his name in the midst of some fiery trial when there is no way of escaping to be on your own," Zia has found the Lord has never let her down when she has called on him. "He may change circumstances, but more often he has been my strength in the midst of them."<sup>10</sup>

Before our first son was born, I found myself hospitalised in Japan. God moved a variety of people to visit and pray with me. One older Japanese lady knelt unashamedly by my bed, praying to God for me, our baby, and other women in the ward. It was possibly the first real prayer those other women had ever heard. A few weeks later, my anaesthetist in the operating theatre said, in hearing of the whole medical team, "I heard you are a Christian. I'm a Christian too. My hand will stay on your shoulder throughout this time and I will keep praying for you." In this land where there are few Christians, God not only helped me, but revealed himself to others through the prayer and witness of his people.

### **JUST MY TURN IN THE CIRCLE?**

God answers prayers in many ways. To these few stories, we could add countless more that would fill many books. So why is it that we can find prayer difficult or mundane?

J. Oswald Sanders wrote that "we are all plagued with a subtle aversion to praying" in spite of knowing "its privilege and necessity."<sup>11</sup> Having been part of OMF for twenty years and in prayer groups for much longer, I "know" God answers prayer. But when a Japanese

*When we intercede for others and for the world God loves, we reflect a real aspect of God's Trinitarian nature as we seek his preparation, intervention, and continuing work of grace for others.*

Christian student asked me a couple of years ago, "Do you never feel you're praying just because it's your turn in the circle?" I understood. Despite the help of apps, notifications, emails, printed resources, and even prayer meetings—prayer can feel mechanical. Perhaps because I am naturally more inclined to "human doing-ness" than "human being-ness," I can become coolly dutiful or forgetful and all the effort in the world cannot change my stiff lists into living engagement. Coldness, apathy, tiredness, sin; strategies, agendas, efforts at creative thinking and inventiveness—all easily compete for our focus on the Lord. Is my greater preoccupation the Lord himself, or the work in which he invites me to share? Thank God, he does not just make us try harder in the heat of our frustrations. He calls us again, and his Spirit actually helps us pray.

### **WHAT HELPS US PRAY WHEN WE CAN'T?**

#### **Recognise prayer as a gift of grace**

Prayer is a gift, a God-given trellis for our life in Christ. Through prayer, our communion with God is possible. Our will is trained and aligned so that our expression grows in keeping with his heart. In the words of Denis Lane:

Our intercession is directly related to our worship of and communion with God. This means that the effectiveness of our intercession is directly related to our own spiritual life in relation to God and our own personal prayer life.... Prayer is always the first step in involvement, but rarely the last, for prayer brings us into close contact with the will of God and is primarily intended to bring our wills in line with His.<sup>12</sup>

Back in China, in 1869, following a time of dark discouragement and battling temptation, stress, and weariness, Hudson Taylor received a letter from a friend who spoke about "abiding, not striving nor struggling." It continued with the exhortation to make "all that Jesus is and

all He is for us: His life, His death, His work, He Himself as revealed to us in the Word ... the subject of our constant thoughts."<sup>13</sup> Conscious "abiding" in Christ—enjoying being united to him—released Hudson into a different dimension of trust. He experienced prayer as daily dependence on God, resting more joyfully in his resources and promises, meeting him every morning. In a long letter to his sister Amelia—then a busy mother of ten—he used a "transaction" metaphor to describe how our union with Christ completely changes our confidence when we pray.

Could a bank clerk say to a customer, "It was only your hand wrote that cheque, not you," or, "I cannot pay this sum to your hand, but only to yourself"? No more can your prayers, or mine, be discredited if offered in the Name of Jesus (i.e., not in our own name, or for the sake of Jesus merely, but on the ground that we are His, His members) so long as we keep within the extent of Christ's credit—a tolerably wide limit!<sup>14</sup>

#### **Recognize the blessing of fellowship with the Trinity**

We can understand neither the Trinity nor how prayer works. But when we intentionally commune with God, seeking his perspective, he engages with us and enables us. Prayer, more than a mere spiritual discipline, or even means of grace, can be a vibrant, living "means of communion" through which we can enjoy our relationship with him.<sup>15</sup> As we pray, God works out his will in us, in others, in communities, and in nations. Through Christ, by grace, we are brought into relationship with the Triune God. We experience his heart's passion as we come in close, relating to him as Father, Son, and Spirit—the Three in One and One in Three. In turn, God, through prayer, moves our hearts as we experience his care. This is all a gift through the grace of God, who allows us to experience the fellowship for which he made us.

When we intercede for others and for the world God loves, we reflect a real aspect of God's Trinitarian nature as we seek his preparation, intervention, and continuing

work of grace for others. Newbigin describes Christian mission as “crossing over into another human situation in which the Gospel has to be articulated in terms of that situation.”<sup>16</sup> As he sees it, our job is “finding out what the Holy Spirit has already done, and building on that.”<sup>17</sup> If we who “cross over” are to understand how God has worked and is working, prayer must be our priority—listening to God as he speaks through his word and through the wisdom of his Spirit. Then we can take action.

Widening the scope, when praying partners meet at the same throne, in the same grace-filled communion of Father, Son, and Spirit, the prayers of God’s people worldwide connect in a mighty expression of his intent. We wait on him, look up to him, and trust his will to be done. With this preparation, people who pray, as much as those who go, “can go through the battles of history not as master but as servant people, look up to their Father as the Lord of history, accepting His disposition of events as their context for obedience, relying on His Spirit as their guide.”<sup>18</sup>

The Holy Spirit—the “Helper” (John 14:26)—who “hovered” in readiness for the creation, prepares hearts and peoples for the gospel and strengthens believers to keep moving forward regardless of pressure or opposition. God’s people reflect his powerful helping role when they pray for one another and for others. As believers pray, the Holy Spirit “undergirds” God’s work by going before his servants and drawing people to Christ.

In prayerful cooperation, we shield one another by faith, sharing in the privileged fellowship of the Trinity. United to Jesus Christ and filled with his Spirit, we pray for the glory and goodness of the Father to be known in his church, in his world, and in the unseen “heavenlies” (Eph 3:10). Our prayers acknowledge and rely on the Holy Spirit, who prepares hearts and circumstances, and leads people to repentance, faith, new spiritual birth, abundant life united to Christ, and joy in glorifying him (John 16:8, John 3:5–8, Gal 3:5, Titus 3:5–6, Eph 5:18–19, Gal 5:22–23). The Spirit intercedes for us (Rom 8:26–27) and our prayers depend on his wisdom and energy. Drawing on his word through time spent with him, we find mercy and grace not only for ourselves, but for others (Heb 4:16). At God’s throne of grace, we worship and are assured of the Spirit’s intercession,

and more than that, of Christ’s intercession for us (Rom 8:26–27, 34). Through prayer, we are right at the place of the Father’s sovereign authority, growing in surrender, trust, and worship.

### **Recognize the help of mutual prayer**

During our years in Japan, one of the most frequent requests in our prayer letters was that God would make our message easy to understand. Where language barriers of speaker or hearer need to be crossed, it is miraculous when the Spirit of God removes the clutter on both sides, enabling people to hear his saving word and respond to his call.

J. O. Fraser, a pioneer in communicating the gospel among the Lisu people, wrote home:

I know you will never fail me in this matter of intercession ... but will you think and pray about getting a group of like-minded friends, whether few or many, whether in one place or scattered, to join in the same petitions? If you could form a small prayer circle, I would write regularly to the members.<sup>19</sup>

By working “on our knees,” urging prayer for the glory and honour of Jesus, “we are, as it were, God’s agents—used by Him to do His work, not ours.... if this is so, then Christians at home can do as much for foreign missions as those actually on the field.”<sup>20</sup> The help of intercessory prayer, from Fraser’s perspective, meant “rolling out the main responsibility of this prayer

warfare” on those who commit to pray so that they would take the burden of the Lisu people on their shoulders and “wrestle with God for them.” In this way, praying Christians would do their part to “bring in the day when He shall ‘be satisfied’.”<sup>21</sup>

Undaunted when plans did not work out to go short-term to East Asia, our friend joined a local OMF prayer group. Later, when that prayer group leader moved to serve in Indonesia, he and his wife started hosting the group in their home. I asked him what motivated them to continue leading for twenty years. “I’m not sure I ever felt a disconnect between home and field,” he commented. “We knew that people on the field were dependent on us praying. This was a task we could share in and we were happy to get on with it.” Their group and others prayed for months for a missionary family whose adopted child had been refused access to the home country. One Sunday, one lady heard a sermon on Jesus’ parable about the friend who would not give up until his neighbour woke to help (Luke 11:5–8). The speaker told a story about a missionary family with a very sick child. Regardless of neighbours and noise, the parents banged loudly on the doctor’s door until he finally appeared. With new resolve, she went home, chose a door in her own house, and physically banged on it while entreating God for the child’s visa with new confidence. She was overjoyed when the family could finally travel.

Mutual partnership in prayer opens up a wider-angle view. It becomes possible to understand answered prayer as deliverance



J.O. Fraser and the first group of Atsi Kachin inquirers.



**Alexander and Isabel Saunders (front row, third and fourth from left; Nellie Saunders standing behind them and Isabel carrying George) with other CIM workers and Pingyao Christians, 1895.**

not only *from* but also *for* God's purpose and *in* situations beyond what we see. Alexander Saunders wrote of God's "deliverances" on a torturous 840-mile journey during the Boxer Uprising. Six of the group died; eight survived. Amidst their grief and brokenness, the group remembered the Keswick Convention in England, where people would have been praying around that time. Saunders quotes in full a prayer from 28 July 1900 for "2000 servants of God in China." The praying leader, Meyer, appealed to God on the authority of his word for his protection, angelic deliverance, and greater glory through suffering. He also expressed repentance and sorrow for "the sin of England.... May this be the end of the opium traffic and all abuses that we have inflicted upon China."<sup>22</sup> God was surely at work in and through his servants' suffering, not only with physical deliverance in mind, but the good of both China and England, where his people prayed repentant, intercessory prayers.

Wherever we are in the world, we need God's mighty power. Mutual prayer—touching socio-political contexts, seeking divine intervention in individual lives, communities, and nations, and entering into the longing for Christ's church to be built—allows us to both share in God's heart and celebrate his glory. As those who "cross over" in mission themselves prioritise intercession, those partnering with them in prayer have a powerful tandem effect for both parties, developing a wide perspective on God's kingdom. Prayer relationships go beyond boundaries, magnifying and demonstrating Christ's victory at the heart of the Lord's eternal kingdom story.

### **Recognise our spiritual battle**

Growing up during the violence of Northern Ireland's "Troubles," I was uneasy with biblical images of "weapons" and "warfare". Yet spiritual battle is real—from within oneself, from the world, and from the devil. In Japan, I was grateful to be part of a Korean-led team for eight years, where expressive, extended prayer was normal and became liberating for me. As well as early morning prayer, our church's weekly prayer meeting had a lively, whole-church focus—learning from Scripture together, lifting the life of the church to God, engaging in personal prayer—with freedom to kneel, to show emotion, to call out to God. Using body language more freely in prayer helped me value God's provision of spiritual armour as outlined by Paul in Ephesians 6. Some people came to faith in Christ through those church prayer meetings as they encountered God. When someone was hindered by a weight of oppression or opposition, we continued in prayer until the Lord intervened. At times, we fasted and prayed. On one occasion, an international student trusted in Christ and was preparing for baptism, but suddenly panicked. Until that point, although captivated and convinced by the Bible, he had avoided telling anyone the full story about his own religious background. He feared antagonism and the distress he would cause his family and community

back home. The ministry team and several church members fasted and prayed, carried his struggle to God on his behalf, and waited for the Holy Spirit to work. When the day came, he was baptised, and his wife later joined him in following Jesus. Joy rippled round the world to many prayer partners.

The "battle against COVID" has introduced another context to the language of "warfare". Medical staff and "key workers" have become war heroes and PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) has become commonplace vocabulary. In God's kingdom, "Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" (Eph 6:12). There is more going on than any of us can handle, but God is able and we are not; we can stand up or kneel down to pray, in whichever way comes naturally to us. Paul concludes the spiritual armour inventory in Ephesians 6 with a strong call to pray.

Pray in the Spirit on all occasions with every kind of prayer and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people. Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should. (Eph 6:18–20)

St. Patrick's mission took him as God's ambassador to what seemed the ends of the earth—pre-Christian Ireland. "St. Patrick's Breastplate," as the prayer attributed to him came to be known, opens with an "arising" as though putting on spiritual armour—dressing himself in dependence on God for his prevenient, protecting, and powerful intervention. We are weak; he is strong. From him we gain strength for prayer and for everything else.

*I arise today  
Through a mighty strength, the  
invocation of the Trinity,*

*Mutual prayer—touching socio-political contexts, seeking divine intervention in individual lives, communities, and nations, and entering into the longing for Christ's church to be built—allows us to both share in God's heart and celebrate his glory.*

*Through a belief in the Threeness,  
Through confession of the Oneness  
Of the Creator of creation.*<sup>23</sup>

Reading on through his outline of the gospel—a series of a credal confessions—Patrick’s prayer seeks God’s help for internal temptation, spiritual attack, demons, and heresy. He finally returns to express total dependence on and assurance in Christ.

*Christ be with me, Christ within me,  
Christ behind me, Christ before me,  
Christ beside me, Christ to win me,  
Christ to comfort and restore me.  
Christ beneath me, Christ above me,  
Christ in quiet, Christ in danger,  
Christ in hearts of all that love me,  
Christ in mouth of friend and stranger.*

It is easy to become complacent about what we do not see or understand. As J. Oswald Sanders writes about prayer and the spiritual battle:

Between God and the devil, the god of this world, stands a praying man. Though pitifully weak in himself, he occupies a strategic role in this truceless warfare. His power and authority as he battles in faith are not inherent, but are his through his union with the Victor of Calvary.<sup>24</sup>

## PRAYER WILL HELP US FINISH WELL

One apartment where I lived in Japan seemed especially conducive to prayer. It overlooks countless, tall blocks filled with windows upon windows of lights at night. I felt I was a tiny presence among so many, but a wide, open sky beyond kept me looking up to the Lord for the

people around. Remembering Daniel, I often prayed from the window. And when I would explore the city or countryside on days off, the Lord often seemed to bring about meaningful, unexpected encounters, more than on more structured working days. Some prayers were barely a thought before him; others I am still bringing to him sixteen years later.

The more we know the value and privilege of prayer, the more confidently we can invite others to join us in interceding at God’s throne—for people, nations, and matters that Scripture teaches us are on his heart. On a personal level, coming back to Matthew Henry’s *The Secret of Communion with God*, the simple pattern—of starting the day with God, walking through the day with God, and closing the day with God—helps. When we reflect often and honestly, confessing where we fall short and submitting ourselves to listen to his word, the Holy Spirit guides us to reach the end of the day (and our days) with renewed gratitude, joyful dependence, and renewed faith. He will help prayer simmer on, so we know moments, encounters, and the next day’s work are prepared by him. Finding our union with him, our source of strength, even in pain or at personal cost, can draw us deeper into God’s heart. There, he will teach us how to pray for others.

In *Standing in the Breach*, Michael Widmer describes intercession as “an unselfish prayer, that puts others at the centre, spotlighting them and their needs before the Lord.” He highlights the relationship between God and intercessor, between God and the party being interceded for, and between the intercessor and those being prayed for.<sup>25</sup> As Jesus’ whole life, ministry, and death were the ultimate act of intercession, Jesus’ followers are also naturally called to learn from him “the precedence of prophetic intercession,” putting the needs of others before our own in prayer. “Standing in the breach” (Ps 106:23; Isa 58:12; Ezek 22:30), a praying individual stands between the Holy God and another person or people. The intercessor embraces individuals or nations as they pray before the Lord, appealing to the mercy of God on another’s behalf, as the Lord himself did for us.<sup>26</sup>

Living and serving in a new context, I am asking the Lord again, “Teach me to pray.” I long to see his answers, to speak out more about his works of mighty love and power, and to see the next generations carrying on from older

people who learned how to pray. As God’s people, we need to keep moving forward in prayer for the world he loves. Even more than seeking his hand’s work, however, may we seek his face. If seeking him—alone and together—becomes our highest priority, plans, strategies, and solutions will flow from the communion at the heart of our relationship with God. May the “Inspirer and Hearer of prayer”<sup>27</sup> allow the overflow of his heart to be experienced by us as we learn to pray as he wants us to. **MRT**

<sup>1</sup> Mekong Minorities, *Praying Down the Mekong River* (n.p.: OMF, 2020), 8; <https://omf.org/post/-/resources/2020/2/11/34194042/praying-down-the-mekong-river> (accessed 31 August 2021).

<sup>2</sup> Peter Wooding, “Still Bewildered!” *Real Life* (blog), 17 January 2020, <https://www.newlifepublishing.co.uk/articles/real-life/still-bewildered/> (accessed 4 August 2021).

<sup>3</sup> Timothy Keller, *Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2014), 9.

<sup>4</sup> Howard and Geraldine Taylor, *Hudson Taylor’s Spiritual Secret* (Chicago: Moody, 2009), 19.

<sup>5</sup> Taylor, *Spiritual Secret*, 117.

<sup>6</sup> Taylor, *Spiritual Secret*, 118–19.

<sup>7</sup> Phyllis Thompson, *Proving God: Financial Experiences of the China Inland Mission* (London: CIM/OMF, 1957), 37–9; [https://missiology.org.uk/book\\_proving-god\\_thompson.php](https://missiology.org.uk/book_proving-god_thompson.php) (accessed 4 August 2021).

<sup>8</sup> May Johnston, *A Missionary Mother’s Journal: Experiences in China, the Philippines and East Malaysia 1949–1985* (Tipton: Tentmaker, 2000), 9.

<sup>9</sup> Zia Muller, “Complete Surrender: Knowing God in Life’s Challenges and Anxieties,” (2000) Part 2, 7, unpublished devotional.

<sup>10</sup> Muller, 16.

<sup>11</sup> J. Oswald Sanders, *Effective Prayer* (London: CIM, 1961), 5–6.

<sup>12</sup> Denis Lane, foreword to *Praying for the World: Understanding God’s Heart for the Nations*, by J. Hudson Taylor, J. Oswald Sanders, James O. Fraser, and Will Bruce (Leyland, UK: 10 Publishing, 2017), 8–9.

<sup>13</sup> Taylor, *Spiritual Secret*, 158.

<sup>14</sup> Taylor, *Spiritual Secret*, 158.

<sup>15</sup> Tim Chester, *Enjoying God* (n.p.: The Good Book Company, 2020), 133.

<sup>16</sup> Lesslie Newbigin, *Trinitarian Doctrine for Today’s Mission* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1988), 46.

<sup>17</sup> Newbigin, *Today’s Mission*, 76.

<sup>18</sup> Newbigin, *Today’s Mission*, 41.

<sup>19</sup> Geraldine Taylor, *Behind the Ranges: Fraser of Lisuland S.W. China* (London: Lutterworth and CIM, 1944), 85; [https://missiology.org.uk/book\\_behind-the-ranges\\_taylor.php](https://missiology.org.uk/book_behind-the-ranges_taylor.php) (accessed 4 August 2021).

<sup>20</sup> Taylor, *Behind the Ranges*, 47.

<sup>21</sup> Taylor, *Behind the Ranges*, 191.

<sup>22</sup> Alexander R. Saunders, *A God of Deliverances* (London: Morgan and Scott and CIM, 1901), 78–9, [https://missiology.org.uk/book\\_god-of-deliverances-saunders.php](https://missiology.org.uk/book_god-of-deliverances-saunders.php) (accessed 4 August 2021).

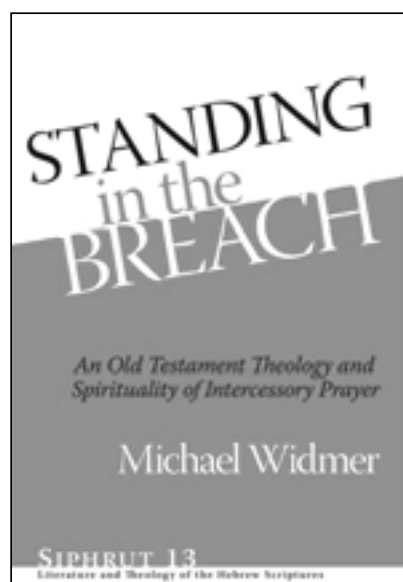
<sup>23</sup> The Prayer of St. Patrick, cited in *Journey with Jesus: A Weekly Webzine for the Global Church*, <https://www.journeywithjesus.net/poemsandprayers/668-saint-patrick-prayer> (accessed 4 August 2021).

<sup>24</sup> Sanders, *Effective Prayer*, 6–7.

<sup>25</sup> Michael Widmer, *Standing in the Breach: An Old Testament Theology and Spirituality of Intercessory Prayer* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2015), 8.

<sup>26</sup> Widmer, *Standing in the Breach*, 528–9.

<sup>27</sup> Augustus Montague Toplady, “Inspirer and Hearer of Prayer,” 1759.



# Gospel Doors and Gospel Bridges

## Sijmen den Hartog



Sijmen is from the Netherlands, married with Annelies, and blessed with three children: Daniel (12), Benj (10), and Marie (6). The den Hartogs have been working in Isaan, Northeast Thailand since 2006. After five years of regional leadership in Isaan, Sijmen and Annelies returned to fulltime church planting one-and-a-half years ago. They now focus on mobilizing and training the local church in Udonthani city to reach out and multiply.

*Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison—that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak. (Colossians 4:2–4)*

This text from Colossians 4 has caused me to reflect about something that happened on a recent Sunday. After worship, we met in a dark, little room on the ground floor of the church building. I was glad that the aircon was blowing at least some cool air around as I had been working overtime in my attempt to keep hydrated in the hot season. The pastor asked to continue our monthly meeting to align our team of church members with the roadmap for starting new groups. It was at that meeting when our brother in Christ, Lung Yong, took the courage to tell me that I should teach at a slower pace when visiting his family who lived along the railroad. As I later contemplated Paul's words in Colossians 4:4, I wondered: how much time do I spend in prayer and ask God to help me clearly convey the mysteries of Christ for all people? Though I know I lack a lot of skills and understanding of ministry, many people around me have branded me as a teacher at heart. Clear teaching is not usually the area I focus on in prayer; it comes naturally, right? Once again, I learned how self-reliance and self-achievement can creep in and impact my prayers and ministry.

One of the things my wife and I have been praying for—far more often than clear communication—was that the doors mentioned in verse 3 might be opened. In what follows, I'd like to share with you the journey we have been on over the past two years, a journey during which an open bridge took the place of the open door. Looking back, we can fully stand by the famous words “By God's grace ...”

For about ten years, we have lived in a rural town in Isaan in the northeast of Thailand. One church has been started

and though we had hoped for multiple churches, we enjoyed seeing the brothers and sisters—actually, mainly sisters—encouraging each other, growing in Christ together, and sharing the gospel with others around them. The natural lines of relationship that the brothers and sisters had ensured that many doors to share the gospel were opened. We were not the ones sharing the gospel anymore, as enough people were trained to do so. I guess this is one of the blessings we all long to see. It is the context in which we enjoy working. It is the time when we forget that there was no visible fruit in the first five years. It is the attractive part we can show when short term mission teams come over. It might be the thing that moves some to join our organization. But the truth is, for us, it's the moment we entrust the work to the local believers and move on to a place where the gospel has not yet been preached and where people are still without church. We enjoy the fruit, but from a distance.

### Praying for open doors and direction grows in intensity

An email pops up in my mail box asking if I would like to help facilitate one day of the “Perspective Course” for pastors at a Bible college. I have to think about this. We see so much training made available for church leaders that attracts many people who often do not actually use what was shared in their day-to-day ministry. Over time, I have come to wonder whether I should move away from these training sessions and start smaller mentoring groups. And though I often think it best to drop certain types of training, I am more positive when asked to facilitate a course on the multiplication paradigm in church planting. I firmly believe in the need to emphasize multiplication in the shaping of our ministries. Engaging in this training might be a great opportunity to reach out to church leaders to see how they could not just add new people to their churches, but see new groups started

by church members that also multiply themselves. Training church members and new believers to become leaders in churches that don't exist yet helps them become more than inwardly focused and gives them an intrinsic longing to see the gospel spread and church expand beyond their own control. In the end, this will force them to rely on others—people they might train. Far too often, I have seen pastors unconsciously protect and thus control the ministries that evolve from within their churches. Especially when it comes to new believers or house groups, there is a lot of fear of groups going off track, giving in to false teaching, or splitting. Instead of training people so that these possibilities are made less likely, pastors often block momentum and exercise control due to their own limited ability and their lack of time to invest in these groups.

I decided to facilitate the sessions on multiplication in the hope that some of the pastors will be enlightened by the paradigm. The result was excellent, as the participants did not just listen to what I shared, but considered it from a critical perspective and asked perceptive questions that led to helpful discussions. At the end of the day, two pastors asked for my contact details and requested some of the slides I had shared. I added their details to the main social media app in Thailand, sent them what they asked for, and, within a few days, they disappeared below the large number of messages I received from other groups and contacts.

### **Praying with my wife for guidance in our future ministry decisions**

A couple of years ago, we informed our church members that we were intending to move, though we were not yet sure where to go. Then, we heard about a Christian international school opening 150 km north of where we were living, in the same region, though in another province. For the past several years, there has been talk that this would happen. Home schooling for seven years has been fun, but it's also challenging. Could this schooling option be an answer to our prayers? But do we want to live in a city where we don't know anybody and have no connections? And what about the fact that it's not the nice, cozy, rural surrounding we have loved so much? And why would we move to a city if the most unreached areas are outside of the cities? We obviously need more prayer.

Visiting the international school helped change our minds. It would be a big move, but also a big relief from home schooling. It would also set both of us free to focus on ministry more than ever before. Consulting God and people around us gave us peace to make the move. Our move—which took place between Coronavirus lockdowns—went pretty smoothly. However, starting a new ministry during a lockdown has some negative aspects. Not knowing anybody while stuck in our village gave us time to rest and get to know the people nearby. But where and how would we start a ministry in this new setting? Previously, we could do whatever we wanted as we lived in an open field. There were no churches nearby and no Christians to work with. Now, in the city, we would not be able to do the same. Ignoring the existing church not only feels wrong, it is wrong.

At that time, I remembered one of the two pastors who had given me their contact details the year before during the “Perspective Course”. I recalled that he lived in this city. After scrolling through the Line app for some time and missing his face several times, I found him. Though I wasn't sure if he would remember me, see me as a threat, or welcome us, I made the call. The next day, we were warmly welcomed in the church and, the week after, I was invited to share more about our dreams of seeing new groups and churches started. The pastor was looking for a new perspective. This confirmed my idea that the “Perspective Course” was one of those training opportunities when many nice ideas are conveyed, but very few practiced when it is all over. I praise God that even though my negative thoughts about the effectiveness of training programs to some extent were confirmed, he also showed that the training had fit his purpose very effectively. The pastor was frustrated and tired and was very enthusiastic to see his church members participate more actively in church ministry. So, he offered us a mentor role in the church to train him and church members in starting new groups.

Wow! God opened the door wide. Even better, he had been opening this door for us for the year since the training had taken place. We just had

not seen it or known about it. Together with the church members, we started to make a prayer list of their relatives, friends, and neighbors. We encouraged each other to pray for opportunities and bridges into the community so that we could share the gospel.

Just a few weeks after this, Lung Yong walked into the church. One of the church members had shared the gospel with him when she passed by with her vegetable cart. He asked for prayer for his foot since a toe amputation resulted in an infection. When God answered his prayer, he was convinced to follow him and invited us to share the gospel with his family members. God had given us a bridge into a community, though we were actually still missing a bridge.

### **A gospel bridge**

On the edge of the city, hidden behind the trees that line the railway, lies a poorer neighborhood. For the people who lived there to enter civilization, they had to wade through a ditch or cross over “the bridge”—an old, wobbly structure. After two Bible studies in the poorer neighborhood, we saw that a number of people would rather wade through the ditch than lose their balance on “the bridge.” We instantly decided to build a new bridge. Within one day, a more solid bridge was built with the help of colleagues and two men from the neighborhood.

However, that tangible bridge wasn't the only one built. Our interaction with these people led to a warm welcome for more Bible study. More people were invited. Lung Yong tried to convince his family to follow Jesus. His alcoholic brother-in-law started trying to leave the bottle. The mother of this man was so impressed that she wanted to follow the Lord Jesus too.

Just two weeks later, we were invited into a new community five kilometers south





of the city. Several family members had heard bits and pieces of the gospel story and wanted to know more. What a joy to see several of them get baptized in March. Each Thursday and Friday, they meet for Bible study and a number of other interested people are joining too. We are thankful how God has reached into their hearts.

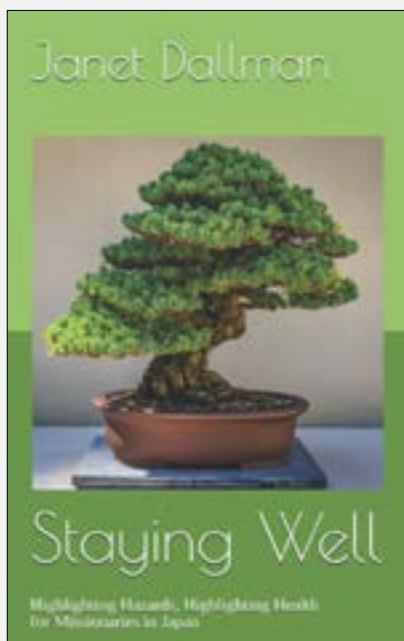
I have read too many stories written by missionaries that sound too nice to be true. And I am fully aware that some readers might wonder whether this is true for this story as well. It can't be right, can it? As most people are aware, all church planting projects somehow seem to face true challenges and go bad. And to those who are thinking this way, I have to admit that you are right! Lung Yong currently seems to be walking the wobbly bridge again. We are not sure if he is fighting a previous

addiction or if something else might be the cause. The oldest lady in the railway community is trying to keep her family members away from Christ. As a result, several people are not ready to take a stand for Christ. The alcoholic is still an alcoholic. And after their baptism, some people in the community south of the city ended up fighting and one family did not join the meetings for two months.

In the past, I would have been severely stressed about the things that are currently happening. But I've come to realize that the bridges opened into the community brought light into the lives of these people simply because God answered our prayers. We still see him at work and we know his work is much stronger than any stronghold of sin or Satan. Yes, we still see an alcoholic. But he is one who knows his need of Christ. We still see a lady trying to keep people

from following Christ. But she only does that because people are following Christ. We see people who fight with each other. But we have also seen them, after two months, forgive one another. And yes, we see people who are not following through on their commitments. But praise God that he follows them wherever they go.

We pray and rely on his work that he started and will finish. We do not know what the end will look like, but I am sure it will be an end filled by his grace and full of his glory. Pray for us, and for other missionaries you know, that God may open to us a door for the word, that we may boldly declare the mystery of Christ, and that we may make it clear so that many would know the love of God that he has demonstrated through his Son Jesus Christ and become members of his eternal kingdom. **MRT**



## Staying Well: Highlighting Hazards, Highlighting Health for Missionaries in Japan

By Janet Dallman. Janet Dallman, 2021. ISBN 9798517415547. 180 pp.

This book emerges from what Dallman has learned through growing up in a mission field, serving in Japan for more than two decades, and assessing missionary attrition and retention in her master's thesis. Her motivation in writing this book is to help missionaries, mission agencies, and sending churches identify life and ministry hazards that are commonly faced by missionaries and to provide resources so that they can develop the skills necessary to face and successfully deal with them. While grounded in solid research, the book remains highly readable as it presents real-world problems and eminently practical solutions.

Worksheets are provided throughout the book to help readers apply the concepts to their own situations and give them guidelines to assess their spiritual and relational health. Potential readers who do not work in Japan should not feel that there will be nothing here for them. While its major focus is on Japan, *Staying Well* addresses issues that are broadly transferrable to other nations and cultures. Member care specialists will find it particularly useful as they tailor the material to fit their own situation. Pick up the book, identify the hazards that can most readily impact your ministry, and learn what you need to do in order to stay well in your ministry.

# Prayer in Mission—the Essential Ingredient

## David Harley



Having lived in Africa, Asia and Europe, David and his wife, Rosemary, have expertise and experience in a variety of areas within Christian work, including that of Christian witness to people of other faiths. David has served as Principal at All Nations Christian College (1985 to 1993) and as General Director of OMF International (2001 to 2006). He studied at Cambridge University and holds doctorates in missiology from Columbia University in the USA and the University of Utrecht in Holland. He is the author of several books including *Preparing to Serve* and *Missionary Training*. Since his retirement, David has continued to minister through speaking and preaching around the world.

**T**he leaders of a mission were planning to spend a weekend away praying together for the Lord's blessing and guidance for the future direction of their ministry. One member of the leadership team argued that they did not have time for the luxury of a team retreat. The task was urgent. People were dying without Christ and there was no time to lose. I admire his enthusiasm and passion to share the good news, but I cannot agree with his sentiment. Yet how often, in our desire to share the gospel, do we neglect to spend sufficient time listening to the One we are seeking to serve? We are eager to spend all our energy in ministry, but sometimes forget that Jesus said: "apart from me, you can do nothing" (John 15:5). Those of us who serve in cross-cultural mission are deeply grateful to those who pray for us, though I wonder how far we realise how much depends on their prayers. When we get to heaven, we may discover that more was achieved for the kingdom of God by those who stayed at home and prayed than by those of us who went overseas and preached.

In his letter to the Romans, Paul makes it very clear that he recognised that the effectiveness of his ministry depended on the prayers of others. He appeals to his readers to pray for him and for his anticipated ministry in Rome and Spain:

I urge you, brothers and sisters, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to join me in my struggle by praying to God for me. Pray that I may be kept safe from the unbelievers in Judea and that the contribution I take to Jerusalem may be favourably received by the Lord's people there, so that I may come to you with joy, by God's will, and in your company be refreshed (Romans 15:30–32 NIV).

### The urgency of prayer

Paul writes: "I urge you." This is a cry for help. He desperately needs his

friends in Rome to pray for him. The success of his ministry, to a large measure, would be determined by the earnestness of their prayers. He wants them to be engaged with him in a great struggle, a spiritual war. Paul is well aware of the dangers and challenges ahead and he knows he cannot succeed without the prayerful support of other believers.

Paul's sense of urgency springs from his conviction of the greatness of the task in which he is engaged. By the grace of God, he has understood the mystery of God's eternal plan, that from the very beginning God wished to bless every nation and make his salvation available to all who would respond. Paul recognises he has been given the responsibility of carrying the name of Jesus before the Gentiles and their kings and the people of Israel (Acts 9:15), and that, in so doing, he was obeying the command of Jesus to go and make disciples of all nations.

Jesus told his disciples to pray for the coming of his kingdom. This is how our prayers should start. This should be our opening request and desire—for God to be hallowed and worshipped on earth, for his kingdom to come and his will to be done in the whole world. With Paul, we long that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow. We recognise the urgency of the task, because he alone brings salvation and those who spurn that salvation face judgement.

Paul began his letter by telling the Christians in Rome that he was constantly praying for them and, not unreasonably, he trusts that they in turn will be praying for him. In almost all his letters, Paul reminds his readers of their responsibility to pray. "Pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayer" (Eph 6:18); "Pray for us" (Col 4:3); "Devote yourselves to prayer" (1 Cor 7:5); "By prayer and petition make your requests known to God" (Phil 4:6).

Paul bases his own instructions on the model Jesus provided in Matthew 6 and

on his command that we should pray and not faint (Luke 11:1). Fervent, persistent, believing prayer is not an option for those who follow Jesus. It is an expectation incumbent upon them.

When Paul asked people to pray for him, he did so not only because he knew all Christians were commanded to pray. He did so because he expected those prayers would be answered and there would be results. From his early childhood, Paul had studied the Scriptures. He knew the story of Abraham praying for the people of Sodom (Gen 18); Moses interceding on behalf of the people of Israel (Exod 32:31–32); and Nehemiah pleading with God to forgive his sin and the sins of his nation (Neh 1). He was familiar with the Psalms, and so, aware of how often a psalm begins with intercession and ends with praise for answers given. He knew that Jesus promised God would do whatever we asked in his name (John 16:23). For Paul, prayer was so important because prayer was effective.

### The motive for prayer

Paul provides two reasons why we should engage so seriously in prayer and intercession for others. He appeals to his readers “by our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom 15:30). That is the authority that lies behind his request. Jesus expected his followers to pray (Matt 6:5, 7, 9). He commanded them to pray and to keep praying (Luke 11:2–4; 18:1–8; 21:36).

Secondly, Paul appeals to these Christians “by the love of the Spirit” (Rom 15:30). If the Holy Spirit dwells in their hearts, they will experience the love of God for others. Our natural tendency is to be self-centred, to love ourselves but to think only occasionally of others. The work of the Spirit is to change our loveless hearts and ingraft a love for others that does not come from our natural inclination. If we allow the Spirit to fill our hearts, we will pray for others because they are our brothers and sisters in Christ and we long for their work and witness to



**Victory, O Lord (Moses, supported by Aaron and Hur) by John Everett Millais, (Public domain), via Wikimedia Commons. The work is in the public domain in its country of origin and other countries and areas where the copyright term is the author's life plus 100 years or less.**

be effective. We will experience a deeper longing that those who have not heard about Jesus will hear and understand and come to faith. The genuineness of our Christian faith will be demonstrated by our concern for the salvation of others and our willingness to pray.

Paul is calling these Christians to a partnership, a partnership between those who go and those who pray. We may not always understand the mechanics of that partnership. But Paul is saying that those who pray have a vital part to play. A classic picture from the Old Testament is that of the partnership between Moses and Joshua in the battle between Israel and the Amalekites. Moses held his prayer meeting on the mountain with Aaron and Hur, while Joshua fought in the valley (Exod 17).

On occasion, we may unexpectedly be moved to pray for someone far away, only to discover subsequently that, at the very moment when we were motivated to pray, they were in particular need. Most of us are familiar with the story

of Hudson Taylor's mother, who prayed fervently for her wayward son and received assurance that her prayer had been answered, though he was far away at the time.

Such occurrences should encourage us to be more serious about the work of praying. At the same time, we should ask ourselves if there were other occasions when we failed to pray and our colleagues did not find help in time of need. When some have returned home prematurely from their ministry or failed to achieve expectations, there may have been numerous factors that impacted what happened. But we need to ask whether one of them was that those who said they would pray had failed to do so.

### The struggle of prayer

We all know that prayer is a struggle. Paul asks his readers to fight with him in prayer, to join him in the struggle. The word he uses describes the action of a soldier in the midst

of a battle who is using every nerve in his body and fighting to save his life. The Greek word is “to agonize.” We might think of Jacob struggling with God at Bethel, but there is no indication that Paul here is speaking of us fighting with God, trying to persuade him to do what we want. It is more likely that he is thinking of the spiritual battle that we are in as we engage in prayer. He reminds us in Ephesians that “we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (Eph 6:12). On the other hand, he may simply be referring to the struggle we have with ourselves, just to get down to the business of prayer and to align our wills with the will and purpose of God. Whatever thought is uppermost in Paul's mind, it is clear that he did not think of prayer as something in which we can be engaged casually or half-heartedly. It was an activity demanding seriousness, earnestness, and persistence.

Prayer may be the simplest form of communication. A child can pray. We are taught to be like children when we pray. Sometimes, it may appear easy. Often, it is difficult. We do not know how to pray as we ought. We haven't a clue what to say. We cannot concentrate. We are just too tired. Sometimes, we haven't the

*Fervent, persistent, believing prayer is not an option for those who follow Jesus. It is an expectation incumbent upon them.*

faith to believe that our prayers are going beyond the ceiling. But Paul reminds us that we are not alone. Even when we lack the energy to pray or the ability to express our deepest feelings, the Holy Spirit takes those feeble, unexpressed prayers and translates them into effective intercession at the throne of grace (Rom 8:26–27).

### The content of prayer

If we were to analyse the content of our own prayers, we might be surprised at how trivial and vague they often are. “Lord, make my cold better.” “Please, bless those missionaries in Timbuctoo.” I am not suggesting that God is not concerned with the smallest details of our lives, but sometimes we are so absorbed with our own relatively small problems that we forget the struggles that other Christians are engaged in or we are too lazy to take the trouble to find out what their needs really are. It is therefore instructive to see those things for which Paul requests prayer.

*Paul was aware of the spiritual battle in which he was involved and he was well aware that the only way he could succeed in his ministry or even survive was through the ardent prayers of others.*

First, he prays for rescue from unbelievers. He is concerned that he will be able to continue his ministry and that he will be saved from those who would threaten his life or seek to prevent him from preaching. Paul knows he has many enemies among the Jews who rejected his message and that his life will be in danger when he goes to Jerusalem. In the book of Acts, when Paul is warned of the dangers he will face there, he declares: “I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 21:13).

Jesus taught his disciples that they should expect opposition and persecution. That was the experience of the first disciples and it has been true of Christians in every subsequent generation. Stories abound in the annals of church history of those who travelled across the world to preach and faced constant dangers and threats to their lives. In 1900, during the Boxer Rebellion, thousands of Chinese Christians and 188 Protestant missionaries and their children died because of their faith. According to figures released by Open Doors, in 2020, 260 million Christians across the world faced extreme levels of persecution.<sup>1</sup>

Even when missionaries do not face physical persecution, they sometimes struggle with antagonistic government officials who refuse visas, with local authorities who refuse planning permission for the building of new churches, or with customs officers who refuse to release vital equipment and supplies without a bribe. Paul was aware of the spiritual battle in which he was involved and he was well aware that the only way he could succeed in his ministry or even survive was through the ardent prayers of others.

Secondly, Paul asks for prayer that his ministry will be relevant and acceptable. He took great pains to explain the gospel in terms that people could understand. He worked hard to find illustrations—from daily life, from the market, from the Temple worship, from the army or from the sports arena—that would enable people to grasp the meaning of Christ’s death and what it meant to follow him. Whether he was speaking

to Jews or Greeks, he wanted the gospel to make sense so they could respond and believe. What he was unwilling to do was to compromise the message of God’s grace by agreeing that Gentile believers should be required to keep the law of Moses.

In Romans 15, he expresses the hope that both his teaching and the financial gift he was bringing would be acceptable to the believers in Jerusalem. Paul knew there were a number of believers in Jerusalem who did not approve of the way he was sharing the gospel with Gentiles without encouraging them to take on the burden of Jewish traditions. If they gave him a warm welcome, it could be a good indication that they were beginning to understand the message of God’s grace to all people.

When Jesus sent the seventy into the villages around Galilee, he warned them that some people would accept them but others would not. When those who preach the gospel discover that neither they nor their message are acceptable, it is hard for them to know whether they should stay and persevere or “wipe the dust off their feet” and go somewhere else. When missionaries go to unreached people who have never heard the gospel before, we need to pray that they and their message will be well received. Similarly, when we support those engaged in disaster relief, medical work, or developmental projects, we need to pray they will be able to alleviate suffering and that their actions are not seen as a bribe to encourage conversion, but as a genuine expression of God’s love.

Thirdly, Paul asks for prayer that he may be able to have a joyful visit with the Christians in Rome and be spiritually refreshed by them. There were times in his life when he felt lonely, exhausted, and depressed. He once wrote to the church in Corinth: “We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed,



*He Sent them out Two by Two* by James Tissot. Opaque watercolor over graphite on gray wove paper, 14.6 x 24.8 cm. From Brooklyn Museum, <https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/objects/4517>.

but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed” (2 Cor 4:8–9). Like everyone else, he needed the encouragement and support of other Christians.

Missionaries can face tremendous pressure. They may work in isolated situations where they face many hardships but see little fruit from their labours. They may have little opportunity for fellowship and encouragement from other believers. When they go back to their own country for a home assignment or when they attend a conference with people working in similar ministries, they appreciate the opportunity to relax, rest, share, and pray with others.

There are times when the pressures missionaries face are increased because they simply do not take enough time to rest. They are so filled with zeal for the gospel that they are reluctant to take time off and try to be about the Lord’s work 24/7. Christopher Ash’s excellent book, *Zeal without Burnout*, warns those engaged in fulltime ministry to avoid the mistake of thinking that they are God and the salvation of the world rests on their shoulders.<sup>2</sup> The Lord Jesus took time to rest and encouraged his disciples to do so (Mark 6:31). Paul looked forward with eager anticipation to a time of relaxation and mutual encouragement with the Christians in Rome. We are wise to follow their example.

Churches that send out missionaries have a serious responsibility in this regard. When they commission new workers, they are committing themselves not only to support them financially but also to pray for them fervently. They can only do so if they keep abreast of what they are doing and pray on a regular basis for their ministry. I know from experience how disheartening it can be to return from several years of arduous and discouraging ministry to be received by church members who clearly have not the least idea of what you have been doing or in what country you have been working! A friend of ours who had been working for many years in Ethiopia met with the mission council in the UK to discuss strategic developments of his ministry. He was amazed and disheartened to be

## *Paul knew that he was engaged in a titanic conflict, involving both human and spiritual foes, and he pleaded with the believers to support him in this struggle.*

asked by one member of the council how his work in Argentina was progressing!

I once attended a mission conference that was held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The pastor of a vibrant, rapidly growing church spoke of the growing involvement of his church in cross-cultural mission. He said: “We have the resources, we have the personnel, we have the vision.” He then proceeded to tell the story of a young couple who had been sent out from that church a few years earlier. The couple had responded to the call to missionary service at the culmination of a week’s teaching on mission. Within a few weeks, they were sent out to another Asian country. They were given words of encouragement but no formal training or preparation. They struggled for two years but could not cope with the pressures and challenges they faced. Depressed and ashamed, they returned home to Malaysia to apologise to their church for their failure. As he recounted this sad story, the pastor commented that it was not the couple who had failed, but the church. They had not prepared them for the pressures and challenges they would face. They had not provided them with adequate emotional and practical support during those early years of ministry. Above all, they had not prayed.

### **The critical importance of prayer**

When Paul was sent out as a missionary from Antioch, the elders of the church fasted and prayed for him. They laid hands on him and showed how they identified with the work to which God had called him. Throughout his ministry, Paul relied on their prayers and support and, having asked them to pray, he was eager to share with them the ways in which their prayers had been answered. At the end of his first missionary journey, he returned to Antioch and reported to

the whole church all the things God had done and how he had opened a door of faith for the Gentiles (Acts 14:27–28).

In his letters, Paul repeatedly asked Christians to pray for him, for his team of co-workers, and for their ministry. He asked the believers in Ephesus to pray that every time he opened his mouth, he would boldly declare the good news (Eph 6:19). When he wrote to the Christians in Colossae and in Thessalonica, he appealed to them to pray for him and the continuing spread of the gospel (Col 4:3–4; 2 Thess 3:1). Even before he had visited Rome and met the Christians there, he asked them to pray for earnest and persistent prayer support.

In these few verses we have been considering from Romans 15, Paul demonstrated the importance he gave to fervent intercessory prayer. He knew he could not succeed in his anticipated ministry without the prayerful support of the Christians in Rome. He knew that he was engaged in a titanic conflict, involving both human and spiritual foes, and he pleaded with the believers to support him in this struggle. He assumed that, like himself, they would be motivated by the command of Jesus and inspired by the working of the Spirit in their hearts. He asked for prayer specifically that he would be kept safe, that he and his ministry would be accepted, and that he would be spiritually refreshed. I trust that when we pray for those engaged in mission, our prayers will similarly be urgent, persistent, and specific. **MRT**

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<sup>1</sup> Lindy Lowry, “The 10 Most Dangerous Places for Christians,” Open Doors USA, 15 January 2020, [www.opendoorsusa.org/christian-persecution/stories/the-10-most-dangerous-place](http://www.opendoorsusa.org/christian-persecution/stories/the-10-most-dangerous-place) (accessed 13 July 2021).

<sup>2</sup> Christopher Ash, *Zeal without Burnout: Seven Keys to a Lifelong Ministry of Sustainable Sacrifice* (n.p.: The Good Book Company, 2016).

# The Changing Role of Missionaries as Locals Take on More of the Work

## Andy Smith



Andy has served with OMF International in the Philippines since 1989. For several years, he planted churches before he served in field leadership and training roles. He is currently OMF's International Coordinator for Evangelization. He has completed an MA in missions at Columbia International University.

### Reasons for this paper

For several years, Patrick Fung—OMF International's General Director—has consistently urged us to get local people involved in our activities and to work towards turning our efforts over to them. We should trust God to see local believers, churches, and organizations raised up and equipped to lead and do the tasks which we foreign missionaries are doing.

Many of our colleagues are following his counsel. As a result, new questions are arising: *What should we do now? Are there still appropriate roles for us? Should we move to a less developed work? Should we end our service and return to our passport country?*

During a recent consultation, one of our field leaders shared a lesson that she is learning: "Indigenization does not mean that we stop working, but that our role changes."

I applaud her statement. Missionaries like me, who have served in the Philippines for several decades, have witnessed a remarkable work of God. We have watched the church grow and mature relatively quickly. As a result, we have been forced to adjust our roles in significant ways again and again. When I tell others what we have learned, they often ask if anyone has written down these lessons. This paper is my attempt to satisfy their request.

### Understanding processes

Some missionaries seem to be unaware that their role should change over time. I have noticed or sensed several reasons why this is the case.

- Historically, the work in certain places or among certain peoples

developed very slowly so that the role of missionaries did not seem to need to change.

- The need for our roles to change over time does not get discussed often enough.
- Some missionaries tend not to think in terms of processes.
- Some of the peoples we serve tend not to think in terms of processes.
- Some missionaries want to keep on doing what they are doing until they retire or until a natural break—such as a scheduled home assignment or a transition in the education of a child—takes place.
- Some of the peoples we serve are happy for us to keep on leading them even though they should now be leading certain aspects or all of the work.
- After learning a language, adapting to a culture, building relationships, and developing a ministry, we struggle to turn our work over to others and leave.
- Occasionally, field leaders may think that we should not engage in a less direct form of work.
- We may find it hard to justify the need for a less direct form of work to our supporters.
- Some of us recognize that our role should change over time. However, we realize that the transitions that such changes require are difficult. They sometimes lead to misunderstandings and to people getting hurt. As a result, we ignore the need for change in order to avoid the hard task of working through a transition.

J. Richard Hackman, who teaches social and organizational psychology at Harvard University, warns about the consequences that reasons like these can spawn:

*Indigenization does not mean that we stop working, but that our role changes.*

Reliance on established habitual routines is highly efficient because members do not have to actively deliberate anew about how to proceed with each piece of work. But such routines also invite significant process losses, especially when members are so focused on executing them that they fail to notice that the task or situation has changed.<sup>1</sup>

Faithful missionaries notice the developments in their ministry situations. They then adjust their roles and tasks accordingly. In this paper, I will describe six tools that can help us understand processes and work through transitions better. Examples of how each one was used in a specific ministry context will be given. Hopefully, these tools and examples will illustrate the kinds of changes that are often needed—and which can sometimes be planned—in missionary roles as local believers, churches, and organizations take on more of the work.

As we begin, I want to emphasize our need to depend on the Holy Spirit. He will lead us to change our roles which will result in our doing things we have never done before or in our greatly changing the way we do things. Our hearts and minds must be constantly aligned with his will.

### Personal experience



**Andy Smith and Roger Naranjo, long-time co-workers in ABCCOP work in Albay.**

While church planting in the Philippines, I worked under or alongside wonderful local Christians. Because my relationship with each one was healthy, we learned from each other. Perhaps the biggest thing they learned from me was to apply process thinking to ministry. Formerly, some of them saw matters as being at either point A or B. I helped them see that there might be several sub-points between the two.

*The Holy Spirit will lead us to change our roles which will result in our doing things we have never done before or in our greatly changing the way we do things. Our hearts and minds must be constantly aligned with his will.*

For example, I knew that OMF would eventually complete our on-the-ground work in Albay province. So, a few years before it happened, I began preparing the leaders of the ABCCOP<sup>2</sup> churches for the change. I explained that the work would shift from being partly led by OMF to being fully led by them. The change would not happen instantly. Instead, it would take place over a handful of years. I made charts to help them visualize the steps in the process. Each diagram represented a point along the line from point A when OMF was partly leading the work in Albay to point B when local leaders would be directing the entire work. The diagrams made the change much clearer and the transition much smoother.

### Tool 1: The MAWL reproduction cycle

The first tool is the MAWL cycle. MAWL stands for Model, Assist, Watch, and Leave. It was designed to guide people towards spiritual multiplication. OMF wants to see church movements among and mission movements from each East Asian people. This tool describes a process that, Lord willing, can help us contribute to such movements.

We initially model for a people or population segment what a group of followers of Jesus looks like. We show them what a church is and does. If the Holy Spirit moves, a first generation of communities of faith is established. They then begin to serve others. We assist them in showing others what a church looks like. If the Holy Spirit moves, a second generation of communities of faith comes into being. Next, we watch the first-generation churches assist the second-generation ones to serve still others. We encourage generation one to assist generation two in showing others what a church looks like. If the Holy Spirit continues to move, a third generation of communities of faith comes into being. We continue to watch until several generations of churches are working through the MAWL cycle with the churches they have started.

We can also work through the MAWL cycle with individuals, leading to, Lord willing, disciple making movements. Either way, I find that this cycle focuses nicely on both people and the task.

Some missionaries struggle with the concept of leaving. We work hard to develop the kind of relationship with locals that allows us to engage in deep ministry to, with, and through them. It is not easy to end such relationships. A second factor is that we sometimes fall short in honoring missionaries who complete the MAWL cycle.

This should not be the case. Schnabel reminds us that, “*when we define missionary work, intentionality and geographical movement are legitimate elements of such a definition.*”<sup>3</sup> It is right to intentionally work through processes that, Lord willing, will lead to church and mission movements. It is also right to relocate when we have completed a work. And as I will mention later in the paper, there are situations in which it is right for us to continue relating to those we have left.

### Singaporean government

Singapore’s development can be partly attributed to the use of this process. Its founding Prime Minister, Lee Kuan Yew, is praised for his efforts in developing the island state. Siong Guan Lim, who worked closely with the founding Prime Minister for many years while also teaching on leadership and change management, wrote the following about effective leadership:

Leading from the front, then moving to leading from the side, and then leading from behind are the stages involved in establishing oneself as a worthy leader and growing the next generation, but the ultimate goal in generating leaders is to be “leading from within.” This means that the leader has so successfully implanted values and generated capability, capacity, confidence, attitudes, and ways of thinking that the leader has developed the next generation of leaders that would be best able to lead the organisation in the future. This

process of leading from the front, to leading from the side, to leading from behind, to leading from within, can perhaps be more simply visualized as the process of moving from “I do, you watch” to “We do” to “You do, I watch” to “You do.” It is the ultimate gift the leader can offer his people.<sup>4</sup>

## **Tool 2: Three phases in establishing churches<sup>5</sup>**

The establishing of churches can be divided into phases, such as laying a foundation and building on the foundation (1 Cor 3:10). As a result, while serving in Albay province, I started applying this concept to the ABCCOP work in which I was involved. Both OMF and local workers there and elsewhere have found it helpful to think about their work in terms of these phases.

### ***Phase 1: Planting***

The Apostle Paul exemplifies this phase, for he “planted” the gospel seed (1 Cor 3:6). His ambition was to preach Christ where he had not already been named (Rom 15:20). He and his team entered a city and proclaimed the good news. The fruit of their visit was often a group of new believers that began to meet together.

In many contexts, OMF colleagues engage in this phase. We enter churchless communities and proclaim and demonstrate the gospel. Our desire, however, is that the fruit of our efforts will replace us in sharing the good news and laboring to see new congregations established. We want to see them doing such work both among their own people and among others.

### ***Phase 2: Watering***

Apollos and Timothy illustrate this phase. Apollos “greatly helped those who through grace had believed” (Acts 18:27). While Paul, the pioneer, “planted, Apollos watered” (1 Cor 3:6). Paul occasionally sent Timothy back to places where they had done initial evangelism and gathering of believers. He urged the young man to remain in certain places in order to remind the believers of what he had taught them and also gave him additional instructions to carry out or teach.

In many contexts, OMF colleagues engage in this phase, too. We carefully build on the foundation of Jesus Christ that has been laid. Our efforts



**Several of the ABCCOP and OMF workers in Albay and Sorsogon provinces in 1998.**

include discipling, training, and helps ministries. As in the first phase, our desire is that the churches will replace us in doing these ministries and so greatly help those who have believed.

### ***Phase 3: Sustaining***

Although Paul did not include this phase in his descriptions, we found it appropriate and helpful. We drew partial inspiration for it from Titus whom Paul left in Crete “so that [he] might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as [Paul] directed [him]” (Tit 1:5).

In many modern contexts, this phase includes leadership training, theological education, and addressing the unique challenges that congregations face. In some cases, it involves doing extra-biblical tasks that a denomination or government requires for a church to be registered, such as drafting a constitution and by-laws and incorporating the congregation.

In many contexts, OMF colleagues engage in this phase, too. We continue to build on the foundation. Our efforts include deeper levels of discipling and training. As in the other two phases, our desire is that the churches will replace us in doing these ministries to sustain themselves.

### **ABCCOP work in Albay province**

In the 1990s and early 2000s, up to five OMF missionaries were engaged in ABCCOP-related ministry in Albay province at any given time. During that period, the number of Filipinos involved in the same work steadily increased, eventually reaching fifteen.

We worked together in establishing a district of churches. While doing so, we

got to know each other well. It became clear that certain workers were especially gifted in planting. Others were more gifted in watering. A few excelled at sustaining.

This knowledge began to influence decisions about ministry designations. Bacon refers to this as the stewardship of gifts: “Stewardship of our primary gifts and calling should play a major role in deciding both when to undertake an assignment as well as when our part may be finished.”<sup>6</sup>

In our ABCCOP-related ministry, OMF and the district leaders first gauged the phase of a work. Then, we considered which workers were best suited to serve at that point. Workers started to thrive. This was because they were being placed in ministries at the phase in which they could make a significant contribution and because they were encouraged to move on once they had made that contribution. None felt like a square peg in a round hole. As a result, this tool helped locals happily take on more of the work.

The first two tools can be helpful in the short- and medium-term. Both can be used to guide individual workers. The following tools can be helpful in the medium- and long-term. All of them can guide organizations.

### **Tool 3: Six stages of a work**

The above section leads to an important conclusion: If we want the right people to become engaged in a work at the appropriate point, then we need to evaluate each work well so that we can discern the kinds of missionaries who will likely be needed in it in the coming years.

We did significant thinking about evaluating our evangelization

*The six stages of a work describe the process of moving from our having no work among a people or in a place to our contributing to a mission movement from that people or place.*

efforts before and during the 2016 Evangelization Consultation. The first thing we acknowledged was that our efforts are in a variety of stages. As a result, we knew we would not find or be able to create a single tool that can be used for all of them. Instead, we needed to create something that describes what we hope our work will look like in each stage. We decided to look at our work in six stages. We then developed a document that describes these stages.

The stages build on each other. They describe the process of moving from our having no work among a people or in a place to our contributing to a mission movement from that people or place. A given work may be in more than one stage at a time. Some of our works will not go through all of the stages. For example, we might be invited to join a local ministry that is already at one of the higher stages.

The titles of the stages and a short description of each are presented below.

### ***Stage 1: Pray about a possibility***

A church or ministry in either the sending or the receiving context has asked us to partner with them in starting a work among an East Asian people or population segment, or we are praying about starting a work among one.

### ***Stage 2: Learn enough to decide***

We further research the people or population segment's context, including visiting them. We make observations and gather information. We seek to understand what the government and community will allow among them. We may learn that the situation is more open or more restricted than official statements indicate.

We also seek to find churches and ministries with whom we could partner in the context. We make initial decisions about whether or not to begin this work and, if so, which partnership(s) to pursue.

We also develop partnerships with churches and ministries in sending

contexts that already serve this people or population segment or desire to do so.

### ***Stage 3: Engage in ministry activities***

We enter the country and take up longer-term residence. Through regular, natural interaction with the people or population segment, we develop quality relationships with them. However, in some contexts, we are required to spend much of our time with other people. In our discretionary time, we find ways to be with the desired people or population segment to develop quality relationships with them.

We continue to partner with the churches and ministries on the ground and/or in sending contexts discovered in earlier stages. If additional partners are needed, we look for potential ones.

### ***Stage 4: Share the good news***

We serve with integrity in the manner through which we gained entry, establishing an identity that local people welcome. We honor the work and visa commitments we have made. We begin to share the good news of Jesus Christ in all its fullness in the context of our occupation and/or our discretionary time.

We earn the people's respect. As a result, they open additional doors to us. We are able to send more workers to the same area or send workers to other areas, peoples, or population segments.

We continue to partner with the churches and ministries on the ground and/or in sending contexts discovered in earlier stages. If additional partners are needed, we look for potential ones.

### ***Stage 5: Contribute to an indigenous biblical church movement***

When members of the people or population segment repent and put their faith in Jesus Christ, we ensure that groups of new believers begin to meet regularly, are discipled, and are helped to develop into reproducing communities of

faith. In some cases, we do these tasks. In others, we point the new believers to those who can do some or all of these tasks.

We continue to partner with the churches and ministries on the ground and/or in sending contexts discovered in earlier stages. If additional partnerships are needed for this stage, then we look for and develop them.

### ***Stage 6: Contribute to an indigenous mission movement***

We ensure that communities of faith are encouraged to share the good news of Jesus Christ among other people groups and are trained and coached to do so. In some cases, we do these tasks. In others, we point the communities of faith to those who can do some or all of these tasks.

We continue to partner with the churches and ministries on the ground and/or in sending contexts discovered in earlier stages. If additional partnerships are needed for this stage, then we look for and develop them.

### ***An OMF experience***

Our field leaders found the Stages of a Work document very helpful. One took it with him when visiting teams engaged in evangelization. After explaining it to them, he asked them to diagnose themselves: in which stage(s) is their work? Then he read the more detailed description of that stage or those stages to them. The more detailed version of the document includes sample goals for typical key results in each stage.

As the teams listened, they evaluated their work. *Have we accomplished that goal? Are we seeing that key result in our work?*

The teams were able to identify which stage their work had reached. Some of them also acknowledged that they had accomplished the goals and were seeing the key results in their work for that stage. As a result, they realized that it was time for them to move on to the next stage.

### ***Tool 4: Harold Fuller's four stages of mission-church relations<sup>7</sup>***

Another helpful tool for mission organizations is Fuller's four stages of development. It describes how the relationship of a foreign mission organization to those they are serving should shift from (1) Pioneer to (2) Parent to (3) Partner to (4) Participant.

In the pioneering stage, the missionaries lead and do the work. In the parenting stage, the missionaries establish the church and equip it to do some of the work. In the partnering stage, the mission organization and the maturing church lead and do the work together. In the participant stage, the mature church leads and does most of the work while the remaining missionaries focus on church strengthening ministries.

The second chapter of Richard Schlitt's doctoral dissertation describes church/mission relationship models. In it, he states that "Fuller's model is particularly helpful when looking at a large mission work among a large people group."<sup>8</sup>

### OMF Philippines and ABCCOP

In 1953, OMF missionaries began serving the indigenous peoples of Mindoro island. Their ministry followed a cycle, working for a period in the mountains and then returning to their base house. When at the latter, they noticed that no one was spreading the good news of Jesus among their Tagalog folk-Catholic neighbors. So, they accepted the responsibility to reach these people. They entered the pioneering stage.

By 1956, OMF missionaries were doing similar pioneering work among Tagalog folk-Catholics in Batangas province. Workers of Far Eastern Gospel Crusade (FEGC is now known as SEND International) were already doing the same thing in the eastern part of the province. Although missionaries from both organizations found the work slow and difficult, people came to faith and churches were established.

As a result, both moved into the stage of being like parents to the new churches and believers. Imitating the Apostle Paul, they "were gentle among [them], like a nursing mother taking care of her own children" (1 Thess 2:7), and "like a father with his children, [they] exhorted each one of [them] and encouraged [them] and charged [them] to walk in a manner worthy of God" (1 Thess 2:11-12).

Harrison reported that, in Batangas, "the Christian Bible Church Fellowship (a regional fellowship of churches from both mission organizations) began to emerge as churches were established."<sup>9</sup> The purpose of this body was "to provide mutual fellowship as well as to help one another in certain areas of ministry.



An ABCCOP church planting team in Quezon that included both foreign and local workers (1987).

... Regional fellowship boards were elected and organization structures were set up."<sup>10</sup> A welcome result of such fellowships was that they "proved beneficial in providing experience in leadership as well as experience in working together."<sup>11</sup> In other words, these new local ministry structures accelerated the development of wider leadership skills in some of the local believers.

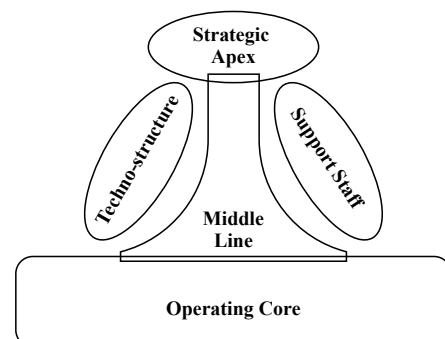
In 1972, these regional fellowships joined together and founded the Association of Bible Churches of the Philippines (ABCOP was later renamed ABCCOP: Alliance of Bible Christian Communities of the Philippines). OMF and FEGC entered into an official relationship with it. Both believed strongly that the local body should take the lead in the relationship.<sup>12</sup> The three became ministry partners, with the local partner in leadership. The mission-church relation entered stage three.

OMF started to move into the participant stage with ABCCOP in the 2000s. Our workers served on teams led by ABCCOP missionaries. Some facilitated training courses at the request of ABCCOP leadership. This move to stage four did not happen all at once but took place at different times, depending on the location.<sup>13</sup>

### Tool 5: Development of an indigenous ministry organization—Based on Henry Mintzberg's thoughts about organizational structure<sup>14</sup>

An earlier version of one of OMF's international training courses introduced participants to the five parts that Mintzberg believes organizations need:<sup>15</sup>

1. Strategic Apex: Full-time people who direct (supervise) the work
2. Middle Line: Hierarchy of authority between operating core and apex
3. Operating Core: People who do the work to accomplish the organization's mission
4. Techno-structure: Those who standardize the work (input skills, work processes, and outputs)
5. Support Staff: Provide indirect services (mailroom, MK education, mission/holiday homes, etc.)



Mintzberg also explained that an organization's type and environment influence the size and strength of each part. For example, some kinds of organizations need a larger techno-structure than others.

### Developing a local ministry organization

In the descriptions of the five parts above, the developers of the training course applied Mintzberg's ideas to mission organizations. Since then, I have found it helpful to think about the turning over of all five parts from missionaries to local people. When we begin doing initial evangelism among a people or community, we are the ministry organization in that place. Although we

may not need all five parts, we carry out the parts that are needed. As the work develops, it often reaches the point where all five parts are needed. However, at the same time, local people are coming to faith. Churches are being established. Additional programs and projects are undertaken to develop and strengthen the work.

Initially, the young churches may appear to belong to our organization. Local believers appear to be part of our Operating Core. As some of them move into ministry leadership, they appear to move into our Middle Line. Some might even seem to be part of our Strategic Apex. If we want them to become healthy indigenous churches, we will ensure that a second organization develops. Over time, this new association of local churches will become more and more separate from our organization, which we will encourage. It will increase in size and complexity while ours decreases.

Eventually, only a few of our colleagues will remain. Most likely, they will serve in the techno-structure and/or support staff parts of the local organization, doing ministries such as Bible translation and theological education. We sometimes reach the point where a few others serve from a distance as non-resident advisors.

It is right to celebrate a work that reaches this point, for the raising up of new sets of leaders is one of the most significant contributions that can be made in kingdom work.

## Tribal church association

OMF founded a tribal church association in the southern Philippines. The association grew and developed to the extent that our Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with it became out-of-date. The time had come for the association to lead much more of the work. However, such a change would be impossible to make while the long-time leading missionary was around. Wisely, that person asked Mark Chapman—who was involved in that ministry and later became Field Director—and me—then serving as Deputy Field Director—to do this task while he was on home assignment.

In 2006 and 2007, Mark and I held two meetings with the association leaders. During the first, I explained the previous sub-section of this paper (“Developing a local ministry organization”) to them using a series of drawings. They understood it and its implications right away. As a result, we had substantial conversations that led to a new MOA that named them as the leader of most areas of the ministry. It also expressed their desire for some of our colleagues to remain in the techno-structure and to do specialist work.

Thus, Mintzberg’s concepts helped spark a significant step forward in the development of the association. They showed the local leaders that their leadership role should increase. They also suggested appropriate roles for our workers and helped maintain a healthy relationship between the two organizations.

## Tool 6: Three generations of disciples

We want to see local believers, churches, and organizations raised up and equipped to lead and do the tasks that we foreign missionaries are doing. The tools described so far can help us contribute to making this a reality.

However, in some situations, certain kinds of missionaries should continue serving a mature church. A conversation I had with Elly van der Linden in the early 1990s explained why. A veteran missionary when I arrived in the Philippines, she served long and well among the Hanunoo people of Mindoro. Fortunately, I had two opportunities to engage in extended conversations with her.

She told me that it will be important for OMF to serve among previously non-Christian peoples for three generations, meaning organic—not spiritual—generations. She explained that the first generation of believers among such a people usually swings too far and rejects much of their culture, often in a legalistic way. Their children, the second generation, swing too far back and fall into syncretism. It is the third generation, the grandchildren of the first believers, that figures out how to be faithful communities of faith within their culture, using aspects of their culture in ways that please God.

Several years later, I found similar thinking in a book by Andrew F. Walls:

Discipling a nation involves Christ’s entry into the nation’s thought, the patterns of relationship within that nation, the way the society hangs together, the way decisions are made. This has several implications. For one thing it means that discipling is a long process—it takes generations. Christian proclamation is for the children and grandchildren of the people who hear it.<sup>16</sup>

More recently, Alan Hirsch taught that “Discipleship is the process of assimilating the gospel, done over a whole lifetime, into the whole of our lives.”<sup>17</sup> When this process is applied to the church among an entire people or population segment, it is easy to understand why something like seventy years can pass before the gospel makes a deep impact.



Some of the leaders of the Manobo Bible Church Association of Mindanao in 2005.

## Early generation leaders

I am thankful for the significant growth of the church in the Philippines since the early 1970s. It has been a privilege to be part of this work of God. I am also thankful for the fine leaders that God has raised up for it.

Some of the church leaders and local missionaries I have worked with are first- and second-generation believers. The gospel has reshaped aspects of their lives but not others. They are often unaware that some parts of their lives still need to be transformed by the good news. In one context, a church association leader told me that some of their churches still carry out a certain animistic practice. He asked me what I thought about the practice. Then he sought my advice on how to discuss it constructively with the leaders of those churches.

In such contexts, it may be appropriate for foreign missionaries to journey with the church over three generations. Workers with different gifts and skills, as described in other sections of this paper, will be needed at various times.

## ABCCOP-related work in the Philippines

Before I summarize the six tools and suggest ways to use them, I will further describe how roles in our ABCCOP-related work changed as local believers took over more of the work. The description will illustrate how some of these tools helped us make appropriate changes.

### *Individual ABCCOP leaders and members*

Although many of us did not learn about Tool 1: The MAWL Reproduction Cycle until the early 2000s, we practiced it before then. For instance, many churches in the Philippines start their worship service with thirty minutes of worshipping God through songs. In order to do so, they need to have members who can lead these times of singing. They need to have one or more singers and one or more instrumentalists.

In a few of the churches I helped establish, I initially led these times of singing and offered music lessons. I trained a handful of people in each to play instruments. In one, a young man showed great aptitude for the guitar, so I



**The last ABCCOP church planting team in Albay that included both foreign and local workers (2001).**

turned my attention to him. The two of us began practicing together and playing together during worship services. After a few months, we continued to practice together, but he alone played during our services. I also asked him to begin training others as I had trained him. Within six months, several members could play the guitar well enough to help lead our times of singing. At that point, I no longer needed to play guitar or train guitarists for this congregation.

I also used the MAWL Cycle to equip believers in other ministry skills. I used it to equip leaders in skills such as facilitating Bible discussion groups, giving messages, and chairing meetings. I found it an effective way to raise up local believers to take over our work.

### *Individual ABCCOP churches*

In the early 1990s, around forty OMF colleagues were engaged in establishing ABCCOP churches. Most served on teams consisting of a handful of foreign missionaries and one or two ABCCOP missionaries. An expat led each team. We were guided by Tool 2: Three Phases in Establishing Churches.

As a result, some of the teams began to be led by ABCCOP missionaries. Eventually, most of the teams were led by ABCCOP workers and consisted of a handful of ABCCOP missionaries and one or two OMF missionaries.

Teams worked hard to lead people to faith, disciple them, and gather them

into churches. They spent extra time and energy with those who showed leadership potential. Their goal was to leave behind a stable church with two or more members functioning as leaders. Once they reached this goal, they left the church and moved elsewhere.

However, a few times during my service in the Philippines, ABCCOP leaders told me that we left young churches too soon. They wished we had stayed longer, further strengthened each one, helped each grow in number and financial capacity, and put each in better order before pulling out. Referring back to Tool 2: Three Phases in Establishing Churches, it could be said that we did well in phase 1—*planting*—but only okay in phase 2—*watering*. In most cases, we took only the initial steps in phase 3—*sustaining*.

The analysis of these ABCCOP leaders suggests that we did not keep the agreement made in the 1992 TROAS Relationship Paper on Mission District Administration.<sup>18</sup> Foreign mission agencies, including OMF, agreed to press on in a church plant in a population center until it achieved the following criteria:

1. 100 active baptized believers, including at least ten family units;
2. Two full-time national pastors/leaders;
3. Twelve biblically qualified and trained lay leaders, including elders, deacons, and a trained treasurer or financial officer;
4. An adequate meeting place and self-sufficiency in finance, taking care of their own salaries, building/rent

- payments, and evangelistic outreach;
5. An ABCCOP member;
  6. An ongoing discipleship process in effect and a planned Christian education and leadership training program, including education/training for children, lay leaders, and potential full-time workers;
  7. The church should be responsive to human needs both in and out of the church family with a social conscience and involvement, an annual evangelistic training/outreach, and annual conversion growth with a planned daughter church outreach.

Since my arrival in 1989, if I am not mistaken, we have left every one of our ABCCOP church plants before it reached the above criteria. We left many of them with fifty members and a handful of trained lay leaders. We left nearly all of them with too small a financial capacity to support a full-time worker.

A few reasons for our falling short come to mind. The expectations were too high. We did not have enough of the right kinds of workers to develop churches to the desired point. I think that a significant one was a difference of vision—ABCCOP leaders wanted to see an alliance of strong churches, whereas we wanted to see a church in every community. Our founder's passion compelled us. Lyall explained that Hudson Taylor

believed that the C.I.M. must be "always advancing." Under his leadership, offensives were repeatedly launched just when the situation seemed most hopeless. A church or mission which has lost the initiative and the urge to advance, content merely to consolidate the ground already won, is certain to suffer spiritual loss.<sup>19</sup>

Still, we could have done better at phase 2—*watering*—and much better at phase 3—*sustaining*. We might have not reached all of the above criteria in every new church, but we could have pressed on until a few more of them were reached.

### ***ABCCOP district communities***

We not only helped to establish individual ABCCOP churches, but also sought to establish an ABCCOP community of churches in each province. This required us to change roles at another level and to develop local believers for this wider level of leadership. In these efforts, we



**Richard Schlitt—then Field Director—handing over complete administration of the ABCCOP work in Albay to local leaders in 2005.**

were guided by Tool 4: Fuller's Four Stages of Mission-Church Relations.

The 1992 TROAS Relationship Paper explained that, to become a District Community, a work needs to have a minimum of seven growing churches with at least 500 active baptized adult members, and the churches must show the ability to carry on the responsibility of evangelization, church planting, and development. Works that have not yet reached this point are called Mission Districts.

The same document assigned to OMF the responsibility of developing a District Community in Central Quezon, Albay/Sorsogon, and Davao. By that point, we had already helped develop a District Community in a few other places.

From 1989 to 2002, the Luzon Superintendent—later renamed Luzon Regional Director—exercised leadership over the Mission Districts in Albay and Central Quezon. Based in Manila, he travelled to each place once a quarter. However, he did not exercise sole leadership over these growing works. Instead, he was assisted by both a Regional Council that consisted of fellow OMF missionaries and a Mission District Council that functioned in each province.

These Mission District Councils consisted of five or more members. In the early years, roles included chair, secretary, treasurer, and members. As the work in a province grew, additional roles, such as Christian education director, evangelism director, and youth camp director, were added. Initially, most of the members of these councils were OMF missionaries,

usually the leader of each church planting team. Local believers were added as soon as possible. As each congregation developed, one of its leaders replaced the OMF missionary on the council. As soon as appropriate, local believers took over the leadership roles of these councils.

It caused much joy when three of the churches in Albay decided to send their pastor to Sorsogon to open ABCCOP work there in 1998. Although OMF had accepted responsibility for such work, God had not opened a door for us to do so. It was wonderful that the churches in Albay caught our vision for it and sacrificially made it happen. This new work belonged to the Albay Mission District and was supervised by its council for the first eight years.

In October 2002, OMF Philippines changed its structure. We did this for several reasons: the role of Regional Director had become too difficult; we wanted teams to be able to respond more quickly to ministry opportunities; and we wanted to more fully acknowledge growing groups of churches by being more intentional in turning over responsibility for those works to them.

The role of Regional Director ended. We appointed a Strategy Coordinator (SC) for each kind of church planting that we were doing. Where local people were already the primary leaders in a group of churches, we appointed a Ministry Coordinator (MC). We also acknowledged that, as works developed, some of our SCs would become MCs. At that time, Peter McKibbin became the MC of the work in Central Quezon; I became the SC of the newer work in Sorsogon.

On 27 November 2005, OMF Philippines turned over complete administration of the ABCCOP work in Albay to local leaders and it became a District Community. We estimated that OMF missionaries had served a total of 112 years in the province; ABCCOP workers from other provinces, 64 years; and local ABCCOP workers, 203 years. On the same day, the work in Sorsogon was separated from that in Albay. A council was appointed to oversee it as a new Mission District.

By 2012, the ABCCOP work in both Central Quezon and Sorsogon had expanded, mostly as the result of local workers. Peter and I found ourselves stretched in serving all the churches, church plants, and missionaries. So, we suggested to the ABCCOP national office that a Mission District Oversight Committee (MDOC) be formed. This committee, consisting of three ABCCOP leaders and two OMF leaders, would together oversee the work in Central Quezon and Sorsogon. It would also eventually oversee other new works where OMF was involved. In December 2012, the MDOC was established. It continues to function and oversees personnel, workers' support levels, church planting plans, church planting progress, and more. It occasionally establishes a policy for the ABCCOP workers. When a special financial gift is made, it discusses what to do with the funds. This committee has been a blessing to both ABCCOP and OMF.

## My roles

Below is a list of the roles I held for our ABCCOP-related work in Albay and Sorsogon provinces. It illustrates the changing nature of the roles that other OMF missionaries and I had in such places.

1991: Director of evangelism for an established church in Albay and church planting co-worker of an ABCCOP missionary in Albay.

1992: Last remaining missionary in a specific church plant in Albay.

1994: Teacher in the ABCCOP Theological Education by Extension program in Albay.

1994–96: Deputy Luzon Superintendent and temporary overseer of the Albay Mission District.

1996–98, 2000–02: Church planting co-worker of an ABCCOP missionary in Albay.

1997–98, 2000–02: Advisor of the ABCCOP team that opened the work in Sorsogon province.

2000–05: Strategy Coordinator of the work in Albay.

2000–12: Strategy Coordinator of the work in Sorsogon.

2000–14: Occasional leadership trainer in Albay and Sorsogon.

2003: I moved to Manila and continued some of the above roles on a non-residential basis.

2006–12: Ministry Coordinator of the work in Albay.

2012–present: Member of the ABCCOP Mission District Oversight Committee.

2013–17: Ministry Coordinator of the work in Sorsogon.

2018–present: Non-residential advisor of the work in Sorsogon.

## Traits of latter phase missionaries

The Bishop of the Philippine Council of Evangelical Churches and the Bishop of ABCCOP have occasionally told me that the church in the Philippines still needs certain kinds of missionaries. Based on their comments, I have listed the traits of those who might serve well in the latter phases of ministry among a group of churches.

- Christian maturity, including a firm understanding of Scripture and a prayerful spirit.
- Solid missiology, including a grasp of general best practices and the awareness that each context is unique.
- A quality relationship with the leaders of the group of churches.
- Fluency in the language of the group of churches.
- A deep understanding of the culture of the group of churches.
- Knowledge of the history of the work.
- The ability to serve in a way that supports the group's leaders and even extends their leadership.
- A commitment to point people with requests and questions to the group's leaders.
- A willingness to help the group raise the resources it needs for its work.

This list sets a high standard. It suggests that only certain veteran workers will qualify to serve in the latter phases of

ministry among a group of churches. In many contexts, they indeed will be the most appropriate.

However, I also believe that some new workers could develop these traits over their first decade of service. After completing their initial learning of language and culture, they could serve under a Filipino leader in a church, church plant, or training ministry. By humbly serving and learning in this way, they might gain the knowledge and build the relationships needed to make a significant contribution in the latter phases of ministry among a group of churches.

## Summary of the tools

Table 1 summarizes the six tools I have described above. In the following section, I will suggest a way for missionaries to apply them to specific efforts.

## Suggested application

Below are several questions to guide you in the use of Table 1. Hopefully, they will help you discern how you can better prepare locals to take on the work and how your role should change as they replace you in more and more of it.

Review the Mission Activities in the table. In which activities are you engaged?

Review the Tools for those Mission Activities. Which of them describes a process which might be helpful in your context?

Review the Description for that tool. Which of its phases describes you or those you serve?

What needs to be done for you or those you serve to reach the next phase in the Description of that tool? Specifically, what changes should be made in the roles of missionaries and in the roles of the people being served?

Review the Missionary Roles for that tool. Who else should be aware of that tool and how to use it? How might you introduce them to the tool and the process it describes?

How might you introduce your supporters to this tool so that they both understand the value of less direct forms of work and also know how to better pray for those engaged in them? **MRT**

**Table 1. The six tools**

Tool	Description	Mission Activities	Missionary Roles
MAWL reproduction cycle	Model Assist Watch Leave	Prayer Evangelism Disciple making Church planting Spiritual leadership Training	Evangelists Disciple makers Church planters Trainers Overseers of the above
Three phases in establishing churches	Planting Watering Sustaining	Prayer Evangelism Disciple making Church planting Training Pastoral ministry	Mobilizers Evangelists Disciple makers Church planters Trainers Overseers of the above
Six stages of a work	Pray about a possibility Learn enough to decide Engage in ministry activities Share the good news Contribute to a church movement Contribute to a missions movement	Planning mission endeavors Guiding evangelization activities Evaluating evangelization efforts	Leaders of foreign mission organizations Mobilizers Field leaders Missionaries Ministry partners
Four stages of mission-church relations	Pioneer Parent Partner Participant	Evangelism Disciple making Church planting Church strengthening Development of local church associations	Leaders of foreign mission organizations Mobilizers Field leaders Evangelists Disciple makers Church planters Trainers
Development of an indigenous ministry organization	One foreign organization, one foreign structure One foreign and one local organization, one foreign structure One local and one foreign organization, one local and one foreign structure One local organization, one local structure	Church planting Church strengthening Development of local church associations Development of local mission organizations	Leaders of foreign mission organizations Field leaders Missionaries Local churches Leaders of local church associations Leaders of new mission organizations
Three generations of disciples	Legalistic Syncretistic Faithful	Church planting Church strengthening Development of local church associations	Leaders of foreign mission organizations Mobilizers Field leaders Missionaries Leaders of local churches Leaders of local church associations

<sup>1</sup> J. Richard Hackman, *Collaborative Intelligence: Using Teams to Solve Hard Problems* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2011), Nook 51.

<sup>2</sup> Alliance of Bible Christian Communities of the Philippines.

<sup>3</sup> Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Paul the Missionary: Realities, Strategies and Methods* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2008), 27. Italics in the original.

<sup>4</sup> Siong Guan Lim with Joanne H. Lim, *The Leader, the Teacher and You: Leadership Through the Third Generation* (Singapore: World Scientific, 2014), 249.

<sup>5</sup> This section is similar to a section of the unpublished paper I presented at the April 2013 Mission Research Consultation titled “Contextualizing the Church: A Case Study from Southern Luzon, Philippines, with Special Reference to Stages of Development from Pioneering to the Present.”

<sup>6</sup> Daniel Bacon, “Discerning When We Have Completed What God Has Assigned to Us,” 1 July 2008, Missio Nexus, <https://missionexus.org/discerning-when-we-have-completed-what-god-has-assigned-to-us/> (accessed 2 August 2021).

<sup>7</sup> Harold W. Fuller, *Mission-Church Dynamics*

(Pasadena: William Carey, 1980).

<sup>8</sup> Richard E. Schlitt, *Final Stage Transitions from Mission to National Church: An OMF/ABCCOP Case Study* (unpublished PhD dissertation, AGST, 2001), 23.

<sup>9</sup> Myron S. Harrison, *Developing Multinational Teams: A Study of Factors Involved for the Development of Multinational Team Ministry within the Association of Bible Churches of the Philippines* (Singapore: OMF, 1984), 23.

<sup>10</sup> Harrison, *Developing Multinational Teams*, 23.

<sup>11</sup> Harrison, *Developing Multinational Teams*, 23–24.

<sup>12</sup> For a helpful description of these developments, see Franklin W. Allen, *Breaking the Barriers: A History of Church/Mission Relationships in the Philippines* (Singapore: OMF, 1990).

<sup>13</sup> Later in this paper, in a section titled “ABCCOP-Related Work in the Philippines,” the process and the impact it had on the roles filled by OMF missionaries will be further described. Harrison’s *Developing Multinational Teams* contains additional material on the development of ABCCOP in the 1970s and early 1980s and the impact it had on the roles of OMF missionaries in the Philippines during

that period.

<sup>14</sup> Henry Mintzberg, *Structure in Fives: Designing Effective Organizations* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1983).

<sup>15</sup> The short descriptions and the diagram are taken from the “Designing Learning Organizations” section of the unpublished workbook for Project Timothy Session 4: The Leader and the Organization, which was held in Manila from 19–21 September 2002. This portion of the workbook does not have page numbers.

<sup>16</sup> Andrew F. Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1996), 51.

<sup>17</sup> Alan Hirsch, *Disciplism: Reimagining Evangelism Through the Lens of Discipleship* (N.p.: Exponential Resources, 2014), Nook 60.

<sup>18</sup> TROAS stood for TEAM, RBMU, OMF, ABCCOP, and SEND International, the members of the partnership.

<sup>19</sup> Leslie T. Lyall, *A Passion for the Impossible: The Continuing Story of the Mission Hudson Taylor Began* (London: OMF, 1965), 98.

## The OMF Praying Hands Logo

Back in the seventies, with members increasingly being drawn from so many different nationalities—each with their own language and script—OMF leadership recognised the need for a simple, memorable logo that could convey the ethos and values of the Fellowship without the constraints of culture or language. What they looked for was a symbol so simple and obvious that it didn't need to have anything added or taken away to be instantly identifiable, a distinctive mark to be put on its publications.

Ideas for a suitable design poured in to IHQ. Most were too complicated. One impressive sample—drawn with flaming torches—was designed to convey the impression that OMF was a progressively dynamic mission. It earned the nickname “The Flaming Socks” and found a degree of acceptance until it was discovered to be too similar to the logo of a rather unsavoury militant organisation. It had to be binned.

### By David Ellis

David and his wife Adèle served with OMF in Asia for about two decades before they returned to the UK in 1982. There they served in Glasgow where David was Associate Minister at St. George's Tron until 1989 when he became the national director of OMF UK. David now lives in Dundee where he serves as an elder in the Free Church.

The idea that stuck visualized the reality that CIM/OMF was born in prayer. Hudson Taylor had discovered progressively what it meant to really “Have faith in God” and hold onto his faithfulness, no matter what the odds. From prayer and practical experience grew the conviction that God's work, done God's way, would not lack God's supply. And that way meant OMF would only progress when its members were on their knees. Could the significance of prayer and dependence on God for dynamic mission be encapsulated somehow into a simple logo that would project a message that was instantly recognisable?

Inspiration for the graphic design of hands in prayer came as I sat behind a truck in a Jakarta traffic jam, staring at a stencil on the side of a large crate illustrating two open hands under a box. No words were used, but its message was instantly recognisable—“This way up”!

So the hands together in prayer came to be sketched out with one unbroken line to

highlight dependence on God and the bond of fellowship in prayer—the vital link forged between missionaries and prayer partners. This logo was immediately simple, memorable, and understandable in any language or culture.

While originally a simple line drawing, the design was fine-tuned with graphic precision by Shirley Benn so it could be legally registered in Singapore as an official logo of OMF International. It was only after the drawing attained its final form that we became aware of three distinct shapes within the logo. A central arrow rising between the hands at prayer and two arrows coming down, one through each hand. More symbolism appeared. As the cry of prayer went up from the heart of his people, the needed supply came down from the hand of God. This up and down dynamic for effective mission is essential for anyone who seeks to do God's work, God's way.

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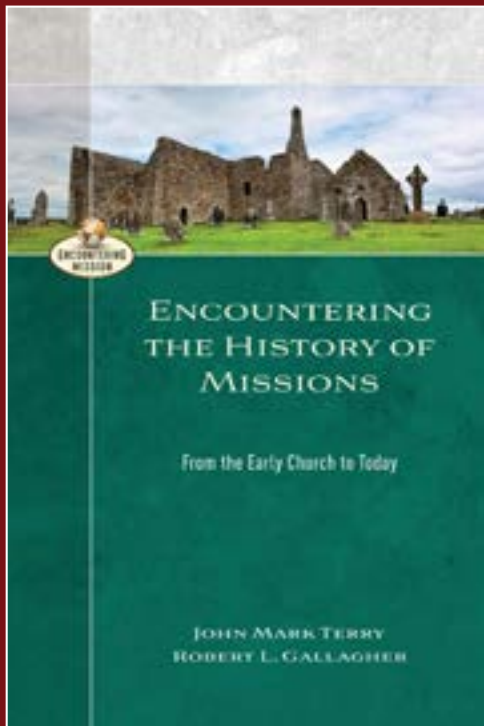
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# Encountering the History of Missions: From the Early Church to Today

By John Mark Terry and Robert L. Gallagher.

Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017. ISBN 978-1-64508-323-8. 149pp.

## Reviewed by Nathan Keller

As missionaries who labor in our specific tasks to fulfill the Great Commission, we can easily forget that we are simply one thread in the two-thousand-year tapestry of Christian missions. We need to learn (and often be reminded) of the many brothers and sisters in Christ whom God has used throughout history to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ to the nations.

To this end, *Encountering the History of Missions* is a very welcomed book. The historical characters and movements detailed within inspire us. They also teach us. In the preface, the authors write, “The history of missions instructs contemporary missionaries on what to do and what not to do” (vi). As reflective practitioners, we should reflect on those who have gone before us and put into practice what we learn from them.

The book, composed of 18 chapters, surveys the history of the church through a missional lens. Each chapter focuses on the leaders and mission methods of major movements throughout church history.

The first chapter details the spread of the early church before and after the Nicean Council. Chapter 2 deals with the Church of the East or the Nestorian Church. John Stewart, writing early in the twentieth century, described this church—which included Bishop Alopen who went to China—as “the most missionary church that the world has ever seen” (24). Chapter 3 introduces the Celtic mission movement, which is known for doing effective evangelism without denouncing the culture of the people ministered to.

Chapter four tells the story of the early Orthodox Church missions, characterized by a mission strategy of learning local languages, training local leaders, and planting indigenous churches. Chapter five tells the stories of the Dominican and Franciscan missions that were born out of a response to a corrupt medieval papacy. The following chapter tells the stories of several of the medieval renewal missions, including leaders such as Peter Waldo, John Wycliff, and Jan Huss.

Chapter seven focuses on the mission methods of the Protestant reformers Luther and Calvin. The next chapter deals with the Jesuits, the mission response of the Roman Catholic Church to the Protestant Reformation. In this chapter, the history and strategy of the Jesuits is related through the stories of Ignatius of Loyola and Matteo Ricci.

Chapters nine through eleven detail some early Protestant mission movements. The mission efforts of the Pietists are discussed first, with ample space given to the valuable story of Bartholomaeus Ziegenbalg, the Pietist missionary who went to India in 1706. Chapter 10 details the Moravian missions, which greatly influenced both William Carey and the founding of the London Mission Society. Chapter 11 tells the exciting story of Methodist missions in Europe and North America. This movement introduced new preaching methods and organizational structures, cultivated a place for women in ministry, and promoted the widespread use of hymns.

Chapters 12 and 13 detail Protestant missions history during what is known as “the Great Century”—the title coined by Kenneth Scott Latourette. These two chapters provide the biographies and mission strategies of well-known missionaries, such as Adoniram Judson, Robert Morrison, David Livingstone, and Hudson Taylor. The chapters also describe the rise of faith missions and missiologies that have promoted indigenous missions. Chapter 14 takes a reflective look at both the challenges and helps that the twentieth century brought to global missions.

Chapters 15–17 document special issues related to the last century of missions. These include missionary councils and congresses (chap 15), the rise of specialized missions, such as translation and student ministries (chap 16), and a reflection on the Church Growth Movement which greatly impacted both home and foreign missions for more than half a century (chap 17).

The final chapter, an appropriate summary to the entire book, is an honest reflection of what the authors believe missionaries have done wrong, what they have done right, and what still needs to be done to fulfil the Great Commission.

*Encountering the History of Missions* is a well-organized book. The chapters give thorough historical background to the leaders of the above-mentioned mission movements and to the mission strategies adopted by each. The book tells of the story of both well-known missionaries and missionaries that will be new to many. Throughout the book are numerous detailed sidebars and thought-provoking case studies, both of which are paired with questions for reflection.

The book, in my opinion, has one major limitation. Besides general summary statements, there is very little mention of modern mission movements from non-Western countries. This is an unfortunate omission, for these modern mission movements have accomplished much for the kingdom of God and have much to instruct the Western church.

All in all, I would recommend *Encountering the History of Missions* to anyone who wants to either learn about or be reminded of the people and movements God has used over the last 2000 years to make disciples of Christ among the nations. Reading this book will well serve those who desire to be reflective practitioners of Christian mission.