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## **The Way Forward in Missions New Wine in New Wineskins**

**A Book on New Directions in World Missions  
by**

**E. Sudhir Isaiah, Ph.D.**

**President**

**Bethany International University  
Singapore**

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## Kingdom Priority!

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Whenever you read the Gospels you cannot miss our Lord's countless number of references to the "Kingdom of God." Every such instance is aimed at people coming into the Kingdom, to receive the "Good News" offered by Jesus and be saved.

It may seem paradoxical that whereas Jesus summoned men and women to receive the Kingdom, the apostles regarded those who responded to the Kingdom's message as members of the Church and heirs to the promises made to Israel (Rom 4: 13-15).

It was not through law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith. 14For if those who live by law are heirs, faith has no value and the promise is worthless, 15because law brings wrath. And where there is no law there is no transgression.

### **Church Planting, Kingdom and the Church**

This fact raises the issue of the relationship of the Kingdom and the Church and church-planting. Are they, then, the same or is there a difference between them. The purpose of this short article is to clarify this relationship, so that it can become a strategy for us in reaching the unreached.

Actually, when Jesus called people to repent and follow Him (Luke 9:23),

Then he said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.

He provided the normative witness for the Church for all time.

### **The Meaning of This Invitation**

This essential invitation to the Kingdom meant that God's reign (rule) could be accepted inwardly by men and women everywhere by simple submission in complete childlike obedience and trustful receptiveness.

Since the Kingdom of God had entered the human situation through Jesus and brought people into direct confrontation with Him to open one's heart to His mission, it meant that the Kingdom of God becomes dynamically active in one's life. Although the one responding may not be

instantly transformed and translated into the future age of consummation when God makes all things new, this encounter does involve an 'upheaval' type of a transformational change.

### **Missionary People of the Kingdom of God**

It is then crucial for us to know that the Church is nothing less than the missionary people of the Kingdom of God whose first and foremost priority is to summon the people to salvation in Jesus. But it is important for us to note at this point that the Church does not establish the Kingdom. It is rather the custodian of the Kingdom, because it is the Kingdom that creates the Church.

### **Institutional Growth Not Identical to the Advance of the Kingdom**

While we affirm that the Church is not the Kingdom, we should be careful not to fall prey to the temptation to mark the advance of the Kingdom merely in terms of institutional growth. Somehow the 'mega church' is a mentality that one must shun.

The reason being that while a mega church may show large numbers of people in its congregation, many of them may not have actually come under the Kingdom's rule, hence no commitment to the missionary cause, as observed in many parts of the world. Are we not struggling with this problem today?

A mega church with so many members in it and yet no commitment to spreading the "good news" of the Kingdom-how tragic!

We are living in a day where it is increasingly becoming difficult to have an institutionalized church, but the writer would like to assure the readers that there are no barriers to spreading the Kingdom-the little leaven the leavens the whole lump of dough!

### **Denominational Structures and the Kingdom of God**

Actually only the Church, which is His Body, constitutes the people of the Kingdom, but denominations and institutionalized structures, no matter how good they may appear to be, are not the Kingdom. This is not the age for ecclesiastical or denominational deification, but proclamation of the "good news" of the gospel of the Kingdom. The writer fears for some such ecclesiastical and denominational structures today that have made their agenda to 'plant' their "own kind" in countries where there is no Christian witness, rather than spreading the "Kingdom" and issuing summons to the people to it. In this age Christians should never cease to pray: "Thy Kingdom come."

### **God's Covenant and the Servant People**

What then is the specific relationship between the Church and the Kingdom? We believe Church is the true Israel or the spiritual Israel-God's covenant and servant people, called to be a sign of

the many-faceted righteousness and justice of the Kingdom. The Kingdom in contrast represents the dynamic activity of God and the sphere in which His rule is experienced, both today and in the future.

The Kingdom is the rule of God whereas the Church is His Body. The Kingdom of God is the conception placed above that of the Church. The Church is not the Kingdom, but the Church owes her existence to the Kingdom of God. She exists for the sake of the Kingdom; she represents the Kingdom of God on earth in the present age and until the return of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In the Kingdom of God the Church has her ultimate frontiers; from the Kingdom she receives all her substance, her power and hope. In the age of the church everything is characterized by the sign "till he comes."

### **Church Is the Sign of the Kingdom**

In this context we understand that salvation is receiving the "good news of the Kingdom," therefore, the Church is not to conduct missions and evangelism as one of her many activities, although sadly we find that to be the case in many churches of the world today. But the Church is primarily a missionary people, a sign of the Kingdom, whose chief agenda is to proclaim the "good news" of the Kingdom always and all the time without ceasing-if she does not do that, she is not the Church or the bride of Christ. Her gospel declares that the salvation of man lies only in the Kingdom of God, and that salvation she announces to the world, and summons men and women everywhere to come into it through repentance so that "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

Therefore, while we are to be busy in Church-planting, we need to ensure that we are spreading the Kingdom of God. A church in which the members are not under the Kingdom's rule is no church then.

Are we then spreading the "Good News" of the Kingdom among the unreached peoples of the world?

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## **Missiological Significance of God's Patience . . . that none should perish**

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### **God Is Patiently Waiting!**

Many of us are familiar with the old favorite hymn, "softly and tenderly Jesus is calling, He's calling for you and for me... He is patiently waiting for you to come home... Sinner, come home ...." We still sing this hymn but seldom do we realize that while we are singing about the sinner coming home, we may be overlooking the character of Father God as a patient God, as pictured by the hymn writer.

### **Our Wish and His Wish!**

No matter how evil and wicked this present world is getting to be, our God is waiting patiently for every sinner to return home to the Father. It is observed that many Christians are disillusioned and wonder as to why God does not just seem to zap this world by a snap of his fingers so that all the wicked and evil of this world disappear in a moment. This is what many Christians would wish that God would do, but God just does not seem to be doing that. And often one wonders why?

The answer to this question is rather a very simple one. It lies in the heart of God, and the character of God. One of the great characteristics of God is that He is "longsuffering" or in other words a very "patient" God. This aspect of God has tremendous significance for Missions. Let us consider the following from 2 Peter 3: 8-13:

### **Revelation Through Peter**

#### **1. Paradigm of *kairos* vs. *chronos***

Peter explains in 2 Peter 3:8 "But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day with the Lord is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." Peter made this statement at the beginning of this time of waiting, at the dawn of the age of grace. This idea of one thousand years like one day (God's timing) in the sight of God is sometimes really difficult to understand. This seems to imply how patient God is.

Is God really patient? He must be! He is waiting for EVERY sinner to return home to the Father. We are now living in the third millennium and it already looks very 'long' to us. If we are not

careful in understanding the difference between 'kairos' and the 'chronos' we might end up crying out saying 'how long' oh God?

## **2. The Father's desire**

Peter in his second epistle provides yet another dimension of the character of God--that is His heart-beat--"it is not the wish of the Father that any should perish, but come to repentance" (3:9). In other words God, in His salvation economy is allowing a long period of grace to this world so that they will have an opportunity to repent and turn from their wicked ways to the Father. Peter was absolutely right when he declared at Pentecost that the "last days" had begun (Acts 2:16,17), but that God had a secret plan to give the world a period of grace before putting down its rebellion and sending Christ to reign.

From what Peter says, it then becomes clear that God does not desire that sinners should die in their sins, but that every one must an opportunity to hear the life-saving message of salvation in Jesus Christ and repent from their wickedness and turn to the Father. Therefore, the grace of God is extended during this grace period. The "dispensation of the grace of God" is the subject of many of Paul's epistles for God continues to show His grace to a morally depraved humanity.

## **3. God's Patience and grace explained**

It is interesting to note that Peter's last message explains the reason for the delay in Christ's return to reign when he says "The Lord is not slack (or slow) concerning His promise, but is patiently waiting for us, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (V. 9). Therefore, this "delay" in Christ's return to judge and reign should not be counted "slowness" or "laxness" on the part of God, but His patience, "that the patience of our Lord is indeed salvation."

This is, indeed, tremendous spiritual wisdom and spiritual insight that Peter had. That is the best way that Peter could explain God's patience. But how did he know that the world had just entered into a new dispensation of the grace of God?

## **Paul Helps Us to Understand**

In this dispensation of God's "long-suffering," Paul, the Apostle to the Nations, in declaring "all the counsel of God" (Acts 20:27), helps Peter explain that his source of information was from Paul's spiritual insight when he says "Even as our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom given unto him, has written unto you" (1 Tim.1:15,16; 2 Pet.3:15). "For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, "if ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me toward you, how that by revelation He made known unto me the mystery...which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit" (Ephesians 3:1-5).

Peter immediately recognized the spiritual truth that to Paul was particularly committed "the gospel of the grace of God" (Gal. 2:2,7,9), which we proclaim today (Acts 20:24).

#### **4. A warning to be prepared**

In verse 10, there is this subtle warning from Peter that this "one day is like one thousand years" may end suddenly when "the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night" when some unimaginable and unthinkable cataclysmic changes may take place to usher-in the end of the age. Therefore, Peter is calling into question the kind of life we ought to be living since we believers have been warned that these things (the cataclysmic changes) will be taking place.

#### **The Missiological Significance**

It is clear that our God is a patient God who desires that every sinner repent and come to the Father, but it also seems clear that God's patience will come to an end at some point. Since we know that these changes will take place, Peter cautions the believers to live holy and righteous lives. When Peter writes this, we need to understand that the context and background he is writing from is Christ's imminent return! Peter required that all believers should live a life of "holiness and godliness" as though Christ is returning any time so that the Gospel message may be proclaimed to all the nations. The "holiness and godliness" lifestyle is every believer's garment in proclaiming the gospel.

The missiological significance of God's patience is some how integrated with the 1. kairos, 2. the Father's desire, 3. humanity's repentance, 4. the warning. May we then not be found to be taking for granted the patience of God while a large chunk of humanity is going into a Christ-less eternity every day, since we know that it is not our Father's wish that any sinner should go to hell.

**Wake up! Wake up! It is still day ... for soon the night will come!**

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# **Apostolic Way - The Way Forward**

## **New Wine in New Wineskins**

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### **Introduction**

70 percent of the world's unevangelized people are not going to be reached with our conventional methods. I may share some controversial things as part of my presentation but I would like you to bear with me. I may be touching upon some sacred cows in this paper, but it is not my intention to do that on purpose, but would like us to think beyond our boxes that we have been so used to.

I believe a time has come when we ought to step out into the deep waters, even as our Lord Jesus had said, "Launch out into the deep."

### **Paddling Safely**

It also seems to me as a missionary trainer, that for many years we have been paddling safely along the shores. And so much so, to our shock, more than half of the world still remains unreached. This may sound shocking to some of you.

In fact, about 15 years ago, when an analysis was done, it was discovered that about half of the world's population was unreached or least unevangelized. But today, 15 years later, we discover that more than half of the unreached or least evangelized number has grown to be more than half. How do we explain this?

### **Justifications Offered**

Some people say more workers are going out in the harvest field, I believe that. Some people say that more people are being trained today to become missionaries. I do not disagree with that. But my acid test question is, how do we explain the increasing number of the unreached and the least evangelized peoples today? That is our acid test question among the world conferences that we may have or we may hold in future.

### **New Wine and the Old Wineskins!**

Ultimately, I believe, we have to wrestle with this issue, I am sure you agree with me on that. So, I am coming back to the words of our Lord Jesus, when He says that the new wine cannot be put in the old wineskins. A disaster takes place. Therefore, by implication, what Jesus is saying is that new wine can only be put in the new wineskins. But, unfortunately to my sadness, I discovered that we are continuing to use the new wine into the old wineskins, and that is the reason why we are not able to penetrate large sections of the human society today. Therefore, our growing numbers in the unreached and least evangelized peoples.

**The 21st century rapidly is a changing world. The challenges call for relevance.**

## **1. Political Dimensions and Globalization and Trade**

### **Coca Cola and the Gospel!**

The fact that we are able to communicate with the world even through our text messages while sitting in this conference proves the fact that we are in a rapidly changing world. And in this rapidly changing world, somehow it seems that we need to keep catching up with what the world is doing.

In fact you'll be amazed that Coca Cola has gone to places where the Gospel has never gone. Are you surprised? But Coca Cola has done it for commercial purposes, which is why William Carrey in his great treatise he says, "Well, as far as these commercial companies are concerned, they have gone out into the world for the sake of money." So he raises a very valid question in his thesis: "So, what stops the church from doing that?" I think this is something for us to think about. So, we are living in a time of political changes, globalization, and the world trade.

### **A Terror World- 9/11 Factor**

Some of the dynamics of these have changed because we live in a terror world today. I am sure we all have to put up with the inconveniences of travel. You cannot bring even your own toothpaste into the plane anymore. Is not that terrible? I am sure we wouldn't wish that, but we have to put up with that because we are living in a changed world, a rapidly changing world, where it seems that the security that we once used to enjoy is no more there. And therefore, we are in a rapidly changing world.

### **Nuclear Threats**

You know, some people have some secret information which is not published, but they say that if these nuclear reactors are activated, it will not take very long for the world to become a heap of ash. Very soon we will be gone. In fact, all the reactors around the world, if they start activating each other, this world will be no more. That is how close we are to annihilation. And we will be gone.

## **2. Economic Dimensions - Human Poverty and the World's Slums**

There seems to be a wide gap between the haves and the have-nots. Few years ago, my wife Vasanthi and I led a team to East Africa, where we ministered to the second largest slum in the world located in Nairobi, Kenya. And your eyes begin to open to see that here is a real world, a world of poverty, increasing poverty. And that is the real world: the Slums around the world, the social dimensions, the challenges of modernity and post-modernity.

## **3. Social Dimensions and Religious Dimensions**

Some of the things that we are still doing today in the postmodern world were done in the modern world. Modernistic philosophy was a baby that came out in the early 18th century, where even the evangelical theology was shaped during those times. It was during that time we started experiencing the waves that we have: the Traditional wave, the Pentecostal wave, and the Charismatic wave, and the Third wave. And so, Peter Wagner writes in his book, *Watch out, the Pentecostals are coming*. Now that speaks of a wave that has been spreading out into the world.

## **4. Evangelical Theology under Critical Evaluation**

Look at the Bible school curricula, look at the curricula of some of the missionary training schools. You will see, to your own amazement, that we are continuing to do things in a postmodern world that were done in the modern world.

As a result, we are training people that do not fit the job. Many of them go and become misfits. That is why in one of the conferences, a question was asked, "After all these things are being done, can your candidate go and plant a church?" And the answer given by the plenary speaker was, "Yes, we do show them some models of some churches." But the question was asked again, "Can your candidate plant a church?" The answer was silence.

It is not so much to do about planting churches, we all realize that, but I believe it is bringing the good news of the Gospel to the unreached and least evangelized of the world. And we are committed to that.

## **The Direction of Our Curriculum**

Therefore, I am calling into question our curriculum. Is our curriculum for the present time, a time when we are living in a postmodern world, Who shapes and who designs the curriculum? What are the desired outcomes that come out of that? And where are the candidates going?

In Bethany International University, we prayerfully sit down and re-examine to see whether our curriculum is on the cutting edge or not. We would not want to do things that have been done yesterday, and that is found today useless. We do not want to run a school for the sake of running a school per se, because we want to be able to send people with a love of God to reach out into this world in contextually and culturally relevant ways.

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E. Sudhir Isaiah, Ph.D.

*The Way Forward in Mission: New Wine in New Wineskins*

This is the challenge before us. And I am asking you all today to be able to open our eyes to the contextual realities of the world around us and critically evaluate our own theology, colonialism, paternalism, the giftings, the charisma, the signs and wonders, and the healings. I would like us to examine ourselves.

### **Charismatic and Pneumatic Hermeneutics**

This is what it is called the charismatic hermeneutics, pneumatic hermeneutics. This is done by those messengers of the gospel, who are sent out to the mission field, where under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, they are able to do cultural and pneumatic hermeneutics, only so that people in that given culture may be able to receive the gospel in understandable ways.

### **Ethnocentric Ways of Evangelism**

We know Donald McGavran has said this long time ago that "men would like to become believers without crossing social or racial barriers", and it is not right on our part to create any kind of those social or racial barriers as such, because we will be held accountable to them. The sacred cow, if I may say so, has been to propagate and to promote a brand of Christianity that we think in our ethnocentric ways as the best one. I call that into question now.

I plead with you to shed behind much of our ethnocentrism so that we may be able to open ourselves and become vulnerable even as our Lord Jesus said, "I send you like sheep among the wolves," and be able to see the reality of what the Holy Spirit is doing in different cultures of the world.

### **The Urgent Need for Apostolic Beachhead**

What do we mean by an Apostolic beachhead? I would like us to look at Romans 15:19-20. In this passage, there's something that Paul makes very clear to us. He says, "in the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Spirit, so far as Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ and thus I aspire to preach the gospel not where Christ was already named, that I might not build up another man's foundation, but as it is written they who had no news of him shall see, and they who have not heard shall understand."

This is a very profound statement that Paul makes writing to the church at Rome. These are some things that come out of this passage.

- i. Paul says firstly, "I have fully proclaimed the gospel."
- ii. Secondly he says, "I do not build on someone else's foundation." And I do not think Paul was saying this arrogantly. I do not think Paul was saying this ethnocentrically either. But what he was trying to say is, here are groups and groups of people who have not yet heard the good news of the gospel, and to them the gospel must be preached, rather than going to those places where the gospel has been preached and someone else is coming and building on those foundations. Not

that it is wrong, but that is not a priority. If we continue to do that, I believe much of our world is going to remain unreached for the next hundred years. And we may have to explain for that.

iii. Thirdly he says, "There is no further place for me in these regions."

iv. And fourthly, "those who have not heard will understand." And I am going to (Spain?).

I would like us to appreciate Paul's thoughts in this small passage. What deeply impresses me is Paul's vision to the people who have not even heard the name of Jesus once.

I have a bunch of other statistics, which I would not be showing you here, to demonstrate that much of our missionary force is actually going to places where there is a work. And, to shock you further, some of our analysis has found out that only 1%, only 1% of our financial resources are being actually used for reaching the unreached. Now this should be shocking enough for us.

The question before us is, "Where is the 99% of the money going?" It is going actually to build up aquariums. Now, you know what I mean by that. I am not totally against that, but I believe, if you look at Paul's vision he says that there are still so many more who have not heard. And how are we going to reach out to these people?

### **Where are the Least Evangelized and Unreached Peoples Located?**

So the question before us is, "Where are the least evangelized and the unreached peoples located?" I am tempted to think that we are living in the twilight years of missionary work when the grand finale will be seen. I am tempted to think, although I do not want to be presumptuous, that we are at the final assault as it were, where we will have to deal with these strongholds before us. And the Greater 10/40 window world is that hard bed, where these are located. These giants, as we would call them to be, are still holding strong. I believe we are called to go and dismantle them.

### **Rediscovering the Apostolic Missiological Dimension**

This is what I call the radical way forward. There are six significant criteria.

#### **1. Biblical Theology Must Recover The Dynamic.**

Now, what I mean by that is biblical theology or revelation as has been presented by different speakers this morning, must seek to retain the dynamic element of revelation.

We all know by now that the Bible contains at least three cultures: the Hebrew, the Aramaic, and the Greek. And it is in this box as it were, the revelation of God was given. The people then understood it, they received it, they developed an ownership of that, and then they passed it on to the subsequent generations. But we need to remove or extract the revelation from this box or this

capsule, and be able to present that revelation in contextually and culturally relevant forms that are available within a receptive culture.

### **What Kind of a Cup We are Carrying?**

Going back to the words of Sadhu Sunder Singh, who said, "Give the Water of Life to an Indian in an Indian cup." What did he mean by that? He was a great Indian missiologist, who made a very profound statement that still means a lot to many. Why did he say that? Because he said those things against a time when there was an imperialism of theology and ecclesiology, and it was at that time he said that we need to break forth from these forms that do not seem to penetrate the hearts and minds of these thousands and millions of people. So where do we go into the world today friends, what kind of a cup are we carrying with us? Are we giving the water of life to a culture in a different cup?

### **Re-orient Our Ways of Evangelizing**

I am calling into question even some of our Bible translations. Some of our Bible translations need to radically change. Some of the methods we have been using to preach the gospel have to be changed. Some of them may look heretical. Some of them may look cultic. But that is a judgment we are making because of our own ethnocentrism, because we have our own box and brand of Christianity. If God were to think like that, He would never come down to this earth. Because God chose to incarnate Himself, our theologies, our methodologies need to be incarnational. That is the reason why we see an increasing number of least evangelized unreached peoples today.

The bishop in Iran said several years ago, "If these people have to be brought to Christ, it is not by your theology but by the life the Christians live." We understand we are human beings. We are culturally conditioned human beings. We are theologically conditioned human beings. Therefore, we would naturally go into new culture and we would like to preach our brand of Christianity.

But friends, if you and I are very serious about reaching an unreached world, I believe we need to rethink our theologies, our methodologies. Biblical revelation must retain its dynamic if the same God has to reveal Himself dynamically to any given culture.

## **2. The Covenantal Dimension**

We need to hold on to the covenantal dimension which will underscore the fact that divine truth, when communicated in contextually and culturally relevant ways, radically transforms cultures. I am slowly beginning to see some signs of hope from writers, from Asia and Africa and other places, who are beginning to talk about how to transform cultures.

Cultures are not going to be transformed by the advocates. By advocates, I mean an outsider missionary. Cultures are going to be transformed by the innovators of the culture, the people who are within. Because when the changes have some effects in the worldview level, I believe that such changes are going to be translated. Therefore, cultures are not going to necessarily replace the religion block of their cultures, but they are going to transform their society, because Christ becomes the transformer of the culture.

This is what our aim is. When we train a missionary and then send him, we tell them that 'you have a limited role to play.' Expression of theology, your methodologies will all be dictated by the innovators within a culture. The covenantal dimension demands that.

### **3. Theology**

Our theology must be culture-specific. I do not want you to misunderstand me. Please, I am not exonerating cultures or not elevating cultures as such. But as a missiologist, I do take cultures very seriously, because it is in these cultures that the divine revelation was made. Therefore, I cannot undermine the significance of cultures, because God deals with human beings in their societies. So our theology must be culture specific in recognition of the receptor oriented character of divine revelation.

As much as God Himself made himself as an incarnation, so also the truth of the Gospel must be made incarnational likewise. Therefore, it must be culture specific.

We need to take the forms and symbols that are available within a culture. We need to take into serious consideration the redemptive analogies that are available to us within a culture. God has placed eye openers within every culture. And which is why I say that 70% of our methods today, if they are going to be practiced the way they are, we are not going to reach the world with the good news of the gospel. I am not saying that Jesus gave us a task per se. Evangelisms and missions cannot be a task, it cannot be a program, it cannot be an activity. It is an ongoing lifestyle of the church where we make disciples of all nations. And one of the ways to do that is through church planting, because churches are a visible demonstration of the tangibility of the good news that has been proclaimed.

### **4. Theology as Recapturing the Apostolic Mandate.**

In the process of doing theology, we seek to recapture the apostolic mandate and evangelistic task of theology, which means, if we were to look at the book of Acts chapter 2 verses 42 to 47, we will discover the apostolic mandate there, where the apostles went from house to house, the broken bread, the doctrine, and the fellowship that constituted the apostolic mandate. We need to recapture that.

I am not against mega churches, friends, but I am against mega churches at the expense of preaching the good news of the gospel. If our theology does not allow us to bring people in the



kingdom, we have failed. What good is theology anyway if it does not bring any light and hope of redemption to the peoples? What good is our theology anyway? We sometimes get so hung up in our own theological interpretations. And these theological interpretations have really divided the church to a great degree. We have formed camps, we get polarized. And in the whole process, the suffering segment is the unreached and least evangelized peoples of the world. To me, that is a great tragedy. Do not get hung up on our own theologies and our own interpretations. After all, we may be wrong.

### **Contextualization is the Key**

It is not wrong to begin with a presupposition that perhaps, my theology could be wrong. I have not been given a monopoly over theology. I could make every attempt to interpret that, but by no means must I claim that to be absolute interpretation. If you do, we have run the risk and danger of dividing the body of Christ. That is why contextualization is the key as part of the apostolic mandate to reach the unreached peoples.

And so, what is contextualization? It is preaching the good news or the unchanging word to a changing world, relevant to the culture and faithful to the revelation of the scripture. When I say faithful to the scripture, I mean it literally: the scripture, the revelation, not the biblical cultures that have wrapped themselves around those revelations.

### **5. Apostolic Theologies - Calling Needs To Be Prophetic**

How can it function to confront the human agendas of cultures and challenge the social cultural ideologies and the world's societies? These are the challenges we face today: terrorism, religious fanaticism, nuclear threats, ecological changes, homosexuality, same sex marriage, etc., etc., etc. There are a host of other issues that we are confronted with.

And I believe that apostolic mandate is to be a prophetic people, to be able to speak into those nations, to be able to speak on these issues with boldness and courage. To be a prophetic nation means to be able to speak with boldness and courage on these issues, because that is part of our apostolic mandate and I believe that God calls us to do that.

### **6. The Goal: Signs and Sign Of The End**

When is the mandate fulfilled? Whether you put these two together or not, the Matthews mandate and the Marks mandate together, the question will be: when will these be fulfilled? When do we consider the Great Commission to be fulfilled? Or when is it finished? Are we supposed to finish it, by the way? Do you find anywhere in Jesus' words that we need to finish it?

I believe that God has placed us in this world for a period of time. To some it is 70 years, 90 years, hundred years, 120 years, or whatever that may be. God has placed us in this world and he



would like to see as to what kind of stewards we are going to be with this kind of a timeframe with us. And yet, Jesus says in Matthew 28, "Make disciples of all nations." Mark says, preach the Gospel. But Matthew also goes on to say in 24:14, "This gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world as a testimony to all the peoples and then shall the end come."

What kind of an end are we talking about? Does it mean that Jesus is going to return? Does that mean that is the end? But, somehow we must keep that as a goal in mind and work towards that. Because this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached to all the nations of the world and then shall the end come.

Going back even further to the book of Genesis, chapter 12 and verses 2 and 3, I see this great statement, this great promise, that God makes with Abraham, "I am going to bless you so that you will be a blessing in this world" to be a very important statement. What kind of a blessing was God talking about when He told Abraham? I believe it was a whole package. It was a spiritual, mental, emotional, psychological, physical, etc. It was a total package of a blessing that I believe God was referring to when He spoke to Abraham.

Then again we find that Paul is making a bold statement in Galatians chapter 2 verses 8 and 9. In this passage Paul says, "For he who effectually worked for Peter and his apostleship to the circumcised, effectually worked for me also to the Gentiles, and recognizing the grace that has been given to me, James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me Barnabas' right hand of fellowship that we might go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised."

There are two classes of people that Paul talks about here, and that is the Gentiles and the circumcised. This, I believe, groups the entire world. We can keep that as our goal in mind. Where is God calling, where is God calling us to be?

The third one is a little bit of a statistics here. Amongst the 13, 000 odd people groups that were located a long time ago, it seems by now we have been able to reach by the year 2000 about 12, 000 people groups. We do not quite exactly know the exact number, but some kind of a rough figure we have. And these people groups are in the population of 10,000 and over, and they could be 35 million people, too. There's one such people group of 35 million people in Indonesia. But we have, it seems that we are left with the thousand odd large, unreached people groups that are yet to be reached with the good news of the Gospel.

### **What is the Current Progress?**

Today, slightly more than half of the world's population still lives in this unreached and unevangelized world. There is no access, or little access. Many of them are not able to do without outside help. Some of them are beginning to do with some help. In fact in one large people group, that I will not mention the name, Christianity has been preached among them for more than hundred years, and yet they are considered to be least evangelized. They are not able

to evangelize the rest of the people group without outside help. That says something for over a hundred years of work in this world.

I believe that we need to dispel the myth that unreached is all rural, It is not right. Because the most unreached peoples may be located in the most urbanized parts of the world today. We need to look for them.

The question is, where are they located? There used to be a time when we thought that unreached peoples are all in the jungles. Not true. There are some, but not all. They could be in the most urbanized society, like Japan, or elsewhere. We need to look for them, because all unreached is not all rural.

### **Apostolic Beachhead**

We need to establish a beachhead. Apostolic beachhead means awareness of new wineskins. Please, please, and again, please, do not use the old wineskins for the new wine. It will burst. And when it bursts, it results in increasing unreached peoples today. We must establish a beachhead in every people group. That is the true witness of the Gospel.

Let me finish off by reading these two passages, and then shall the end come. Is not it really appropriate? "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals for you were slaughtered and by your blood ransom for God's saints for every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priest serving our God and they will reign on earth. After this I looked and there was a great multitude that no one could count. From every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the lamb, robed in white with palm branches in their hands, they cried out in a loud voice saying, 'Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne and to the Lamb.'"

Friends, the vision of Revelation 5:9 and 7:9 with blood-washed persons from every nation, every people, every tribe and language comes closer to fulfillment each time a new church is planted among the unreached people groups. And I believe, this is the way forward to us. God bless you.

## Faith to Persevere for the Mission Possible

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### **The Command to Persevere**

The Lord asks us to persevere and He is ever willing to reward us for our perseverance.

Because you've kept My command to persevere... Revelation 3:10

Christian life is like running a race, perhaps a marathon. Different people at different speeds run this race differently. Some run at slow speed, some at medium speed, and some run in the 'fast lane.' It is a well-known fact that in order to run this race the runner needs stamina - sustained energy - that helps us to last until the finish line.

### **Perseverance Means More Than Endurance**

Toward the end of his life, Paul was able to say, as he persevered by faith, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith and the crown of righteousness awaits me" (2 Timothy 4:7).

To Paul, to persevere meant more than to endure-much more than blindly holding on to something until the end. It is holding on to 'God Said So.'

### **A Bow and Arrow in the Hands of an Archer**

The believer's life in the hands of God is like a bow and arrow in the hands of an archer. God is always aiming at doing something in our lives that we cannot yet see due to our finiteness. God continues to stretch and strain to mould us into something that He wants us to be - a masterpiece of some sort. For many this is a painful stretching, and often we find ourselves saying, 'God, I can't take it any more, it's enough' and yet God, like an unmoved sculptor, seems to pay no attention at all. He goes on stretching until His purpose is in sight, and then He lets the arrow fly.

### **Intimate Relationship and Closer Walk as the Means**

Therefore, we really need to entrust ourselves into God's hands, possible only by an intimate relationship and a closer walk with Jesus Christ, which then becomes the basis for persevering by faith. It is only then we will be able to proclaim like Job, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him" (Job 13:15).

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E. Sudhir Isaiah, Ph.D.

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## **Faith to Persevere About**

Well, what is this "Faith" to persevere all about? Is it some weak and pitiful emotion? Or is mere presumption? Or is it some kind of wishful thinking? No! It is a strong and vigorous confidence built on the fact of hearing God's voice (John 10:27) that tells us that God is the ultimate source and strength of faith to persevere in the face of difficulties and trials, even though we cannot see Him, nor understand His purposes right now nor are fully able to comprehend what He is doing in our life.

This then, is the supreme effort of our life - throwing our self with 'abandon' and total confidence upon God, because "... faith is the substance of things hoped for and evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1).

God gave us His ALL in Jesus Christ to redeem us and to shape us into His likeness, therefore, He would desire that we give our ALL with total 'abandon' in Him so that we can become like Him. The more we become like Him, the more we will have the faith to persevere.

## **Quickening Through Overcoming Hindrances**

Perhaps, there are areas in our lives right now, where that "faith" to persevere has not yet been quickened within us, and areas in our life still untouched or partially touched by God.

From John 5:19, it is refreshing to note that in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ, there were no such areas where He had not heard God and where He had not walked by faith. Therefore, in our life also there ought to be no such areas.

The real meaning of faith and the faith to persevere, then, is a life that can face anything when we have heard from God and are willing to respond like Peter, "Lord, if you say so ..."

**This is the secret of Faith to Persevere.**

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# Missions & Ethno-worship

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## Westernized Patterns of Theology in Asian and African Cultures

Some of the ways in which the westernized patterns of theology crept into Asian and African cultures are as follows: emphasis on print media and literacy as a prerequisite for being a real disciple of Christ, concept of individualism, time, privacy, honesty, worldview of marriage which excludes categorically polygamy and other forms of family life, denominationalism, cultural ways of eating, dressing, urinating, washing, etc. This naturally resulted in a Church that is foreign in the eyes of nationals; hence it became an obstacle to people in coming to Christ. Well, this is the picture of the church that we find in many parts of the world today.

## The Nature of True Worship

Music and worship or worship and music must go together hand in hand. The Word of God makes it very clear that true worship comes from the heart ("Those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and truth").

Therefore, any worship that originates from the heart cannot be programmed, nor can there be programmed worship. The church service elements, and the forms (including the musical instruments) used in it are not in themselves the worship, but they are simply external cultural forms that aid in bringing out true worship in the worshipper to worship God and to draw into His presence.

## The Role of Spontaneity in True Worship

True worship does not happen spontaneously, it needs preparation, because we come from a world where our lives are filled or cluttered with things, which distract us from God. Therefore, preparation includes:

1. Things that need to be done by the worshipper prior to coming to the service.
2. Waiting on the Lord to receive fresh anointing prior to the start of the service.
3. Careful and prayerful preparation of the worship service.

## Hunger and Thirst to Worship

In the heart of worshipper, there must be a deep desire (a hunger and thirst) to worship God. Therefore, true worship must be preceded by a commitment of the will to seek the Lord.

A contemporary song "The Heart of Worship" captures this thought very well. It requires concentration and active involvement, as well as a spirit of expectancy.

### **True Worship Is Also Learned**

True worship does not come out of a vacuum. It is something which is experienced in dependence upon the working of the Holy Spirit in the heart of the believer, his cultural upbringing and the way he has been trained and conditioned to worship (enculturated forms). This does have an influence in the expression of true worship.

The worshipper needs to be taught what worship is, the importance of worship and music and on how to express worship. True worship also requires a degree of freedom to be spontaneous, without restrictions, although this freedom sometimes has its limits in a public service. The Apostle Paul writes:

What then shall we say, brothers? When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church. If anyone speaks in a tongue, two-or at the most three-should speak, one at a time, and someone must interpret. If there is no interpreter, the speaker should keep quiet in the church and speak to himself and God. Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said. And if a revelation comes to someone who is sitting down, the first speaker should stop. For you can all prophesy in turn so that everyone may be instructed and encouraged. The spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets. For God is not a God of disorder but of peace. (1 Corinthians 14:26-33)

### **Freedom in Worship**

Freedom in worship has certain responsibilities too, otherwise total freedom leads to confusion as has happened in some cases. So, there needs to be an element of control as well. This freedom will also be limited by consideration of the perceptions of non-believers, as this especially relevant in the context of living and worshipping among Muslims. The Apostle Paul writes to Corinthians,

But I have not used any of these rights. And I am not writing this in the hope that you will do such things for me. I would rather die than have anyone deprive me of this boast. Yet when I preach the gospel, I cannot boast, for I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel! If I preach voluntarily, I have a reward; if not voluntarily, I am simply discharging the trust committed to me. What then is my reward? Just this: that in preaching the gospel I may offer it free of charge, and so not make use of my rights in preaching it.

Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's

law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings. (1 Corinthians 9:15-23)

### **Individual's Feeling and Experience**

Another factor in freedom in music and worship is how an individual feels to follow his heart's leading as opposed to following the expectations that he perceives others have of him. This freedom to be spontaneous comes about as a result of having confidence in God, in one's own self as well as in the other worshippers present in the worship.

A person is unlikely to spontaneously fall to his knees if he has never seen anyone else ever do it in a worship service and if the service never called for kneeling or other similar postures as such as part of the service. On the other hand, routinely kneeling in a service does not necessarily result in spontaneous falling to the knees either.

### **Ethnomusicology and Contextualization**

What then do we make out of Ethnomusicology and Contextualization? It means that it is important to note that worship and music play a tremendous role in ushering the people into the presence of God. Music, which is 'in the bones' of the people, in a given culture needs to be discovered and used as a useable contextual vehicle for communicating the gospel. Imported music forms and patterns distance a believer's heart from the heart of God.

Therefore, whether we go on short-term or long-term missions, let us then remember to be culturally sensitive people when we want to lead them into worship of God, for this is always the danger that what is 'true' worship may be misunderstood to be 'mere performance' by some one in another culture that we have been called to minister.

# The Call to Leadership

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## **True Godly Leadership - A Rare Commodity**

True Godly leadership is a rare commodity today it seems, but true leadership is a very crucial area in the life of a ministry worker, be it a pastor, a missionary, a church worker, or even a market place worker.

## **Leaders with "Charisma" and Their Great Fall!**

There is much noise made about Christian leaders, who are required to be like our Master leader. There are many charismatic leaders who are able to move in the operation of gifts of the Holy Spirit, but deep down Christ-like character is somehow missing. This is quite evident in the lives of many 'great' leaders today who have fallen into sin and are no more used of the Lord. Indeed, great is their fall!

## **Call to Christian Ministry is a Call to Christian Leadership**

The call to Christian ministry is a call to Christian leadership. In fact when an individual comes into a personal relationship with our Lord, he immediately starts a journey of leadership training, more so, when he is called to full-time ministry of the field or the pulpit. In whatever full-time calling position we may be placed into, we need to allow the Holy Spirit to change and transform us into His likeness. The spiritual foundation of the leader must be built up before the Lord can use that leader. A high-rise building is a good illustration-the higher it is, the deeper its foundation is.

## **In the Likeness of Our Lord**

God is looking for leaders whose character is molded in the likeness of our Lord Jesus Christ. In the words of the prophet Samuel, "God looks on the inside, whereas man looks on the outside."

How true it is that many people are carried away by the so-called charisma of the person these days, although we are not to refrain from charismatic expressions. Of course, it is not always possible to know the inside of a person, only God knows. That is why "many are called but few are chosen (Matthew 22:14).

## **The Servant Leader**



We need to first take two passages in the gospels of Luke and Mark that speak volumes about who a leader should be in the eyes of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Also a dispute arose among them as to which of them was considered to be greatest. Jesus said to them,

The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves. You are those who have stood by me in my trials. And I confer on you a kingdom, just as my Father conferred one on me., so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Luke 22:24-30.

Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him, "Teacher," they said, "we want you to do for us whatever we ask." "What do you want me to do for you?" he asked. They replied, "Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory." "You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said. "Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?" "We can," they answered. Jesus said to them, "You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized, but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places to those for whom they been prepared." When the ten heard about this, they became indignant with James and John. Jesus called them together and said, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become a great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. Mark 10:35-45.

### **Our Lord's Emphasis on Serving, Not on Being Served**

Our Lord's emphasis always was on leaders who were willing to serve rather than being served. He Himself demonstrated that very purpose through His earthly life.

The adage "we are saved to serve" cannot be over-emphasized. Christian service is, or rather ought to be the natural outcome of our spiritual experience and an intimate relationship with the Father. Christian service cannot be divorced from knowing and worshipping God. Hence the usual Church bulletin reminder to the Sunday worshipper: "Enter to worship, depart to serve" means a lot in our understanding of who a leader ought to be. Worship and Service go together like hand and glove.

### **We Serve the Lord**

After all, we were servants of Satan and sin before we came to Christ, but we serve the Lord now. In Romans 6:17-19, Paul reminds us that since we were servants of sin before coming to Christ, why not continue being "servants," but this time servants of righteousness?

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E. Sudhir Isaiah, Ph.D.

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## **How Do We Serve God?**

The question now is, "How do we serve God, especially as Leaders in God's Church" What attitude must we adopt in order to please our Master and serve His people?

On this, as we see in the scripture, our Lord Himself has much to say. We will examine the earlier cited passages to state the point: "Let him, who is the greatest among you be the least of all." "I am among you as 'The One Who Serves...'" (Luke 22:26,27); "And whoever wishes to be the first among you shall be SLAVE OF ALL, for even the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:44,45).

### **Serving versus Ruling- The Ministry of the Towel and Basin**

From the above passages, we observe that the activity of serving stands in contrast to ruling with the world's authority. Faithful service presupposes humility in the one who serves, in contrast to pride and arrogance. He who serves is in a position of dependence and his worldly freedom is limited, although his freedom in Christ is unlimited. This is the true spirit of leadership.

It is a voluntary act of his will to submit to humiliation on account of loving service to one another and mankind in the spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ. The leader is a servant by choice and compassion, and not by force as the world would like to have it. Generally, in our present day understanding, servant leadership is called "The Ministry of the Towel and Basin" (John 13).

I believe the world is looking for such leaders today, especially from the Christian church. Let us then ask the Lord to give us hearts to be the servant leaders in the model of our Lord Jesus Himself. Amen!

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# The Reluctant and the Runaway Missionary - An Exposition

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## The Forgotten Calling

In Genesis 12:2, our Father promises to Israel: "I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great and you will be a blessing." In Genesis 22:18, God tells Israel, "through your offering all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me."

Jonah and Israel have either forgotten or taken lightly their missionary calling to the nations to be a blessing. Jonah's book is a story of a reluctant and runaway missionary.

## Story of a Missionary God

In the book of Jonah, it is not so much the fish that we are so familiar with in the story that matters. It is the story of a missionary God and His missionary compassion and mercy for a sinful world. He continues to reach out to such a world to Jonah's great displeasure.

The 'church culture' of the book of Jonah introduces us to the typical present day 'church culture' with regard to the general apathy of its missionary life and calling. Sadly, much of the church is also like a 'runaway' missionary in a sense today. This explains why more than half of the world remains not fully reached or least reached with the gospel until today.

## Beginning with a Problem and a Solution!

The book of Jonah begins with a problem and a solution (chapter 1:2).

**Problem:** 'Their wickedness has come up before me.'

**Solution:** "Arise, Go!"

## Several Major Themes from the Book of Jonah

The book of Jonah has several major themes that speak of the missionary heart of God.

1. **Divine Sovereignty:** Jonah tried to run away, but God showed His loving character, by re-directing Jonah's path and by displaying His mercy for a sinful world.

The message of salvation is for the whole world and not just the Jews. God showed His love for every creature. 2 Peter 3:9 is clear when it says that "It is not the wish of the Father that any should perish, but come to repentance." God forgives all those who repent, but the preacher must GO - Jonah had to GO. God is patiently waiting for the sinners to repent and turn to him for forgiveness and salvation in Jesus Christ.

### **A great display of God's Love, Mercy, Compassion and Patience**

The Assyrians were so wicked and evil and did not deserve to be saved, but God's love reached out to them and He spared them destruction. Jonah was disobedient, but God did not reject him either.

## **2. Three Mission Distinctives**

Let us now briefly consider the mission distinctives in the book of Jonah.

### **Display of God's Character**

Throughout the book there is a magnificent display of the missionary heart of God. The wickedness of the Assyrians did not stop God from showing His missionary heart.

### **God's Humor**

The little plant that grew at God's bidding to provide some shelter for Jonah, and subsequently eaten by worm needs to be seen as God's humor in a difficult situation. This is rather humorous, but it brings out Jonah's character in its "true colors"!

### **God's Concern for the Spiritually Blind**

God was deeply concerned for the blind Nineveh people as they could not tell the difference between the "left and the right hand." The spiritual blindness and deception was so great that they could not know the difference.

## **3. Three Mission Lessons for Us**

1. God freely forgives when they repent, and has compassion toward those that we sometimes want "destroyed." Therefore, we need to preach the message of repentance and forgiveness and the missionary heart of God.
2. We did not deserve to be forgiven, but He freely forgave us. We need to always be mindful of the fact that God's grace is free, though not cheap!

3. It is so natural for us to be selfish and unconcerned. We become more concerned about our own needs and our reputation than the spiritual needs of those around us. Therefore, we need to rise above our own, "I, Me, and Myself" kind of philosophy and open our eyes to see a needy world around us. As a Church called to mission, we simply cannot afford to be a "Runaway," or "Reluctant" missionary Church.

All people in the world deserve to be saved. God desires that we bring healing to the nations because His heart beats for the nations. **What does your heart beat for?**

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E. Sudhir Isaiah, Ph.D.  
President  
Bethany International University, Singapore  
5001 Beach Road, Golden Mile Complex #04-05  
Singapore – 199588  
[president@biu.edu.sg](mailto:president@biu.edu.sg)